

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

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| COMMITTEE | Operational Delivery Committee |
| DATE | 27 May 2021 |
| EXEMPT | No |
| CONFIDENTIAL | No |
| REPORT TITLE | Aberdeen City Autism Strategy Update Report |
| REPORT NUMBER | 21/078 |
| DIRECTOR | Rob Polkinghorne, Chief Operating Officer |
| CHIEF OFFICER | Graeme Simpson, Chief Officer Children's and Family Services |
| REPORT AUTHOR | Jenny Rae, Deputy Service Manager, Aberdeen City Health and Social Care Partnership |
| TERMS OF REFERENCE | 1.1.5 |

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report provides an update to the Operational Delivery Committee on the implementation of the Aberdeen City Autism Strategy and Action Plan 2019-22.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the Committee:-

- 2.1 Note the report and the information on progress against the action plan as presented in Appendix A.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Aberdeen City Autism Strategy and Action Plan 2019-22 (Appendix A) was approved by the Integration Joint Board (IJB) on 11 December 2018 and by Operational Delivery Committee in January 2019 and commenced implementation from April 2019.
- 3.2 Since the last update provided to Committee in January 2020 the way in which services are delivered across the Public Sector, particularly within the health and social care sector, have changed due to Covid-19. Critical pandemic response services were prioritised, which has affected the Autism Strategy and Action Plan.
- 3.3 A review of the Action Plan took place in March 2020 to ascertain priorities during the first Covid-19 wave, aligned to broader pandemic response service reviews.

3.4 Aberdeen City Health and Social Care Partnership

- 3.4.1 In September 2020 preparatory work took place to create the Adult Autism Assessment Team. Recruitment took place in late 2020 and post-holders were appointed and commenced work in early January 2021.
- 3.4.2 The Adult Autism Assessment Team have developed relevant referral and assessment pathways in conjunction with the National Autism Implementation Team. The Team is multidisciplinary, with a clinical lead appointed, in addition to a project support role. Further information on the Team and the progress to date can be found in Appendix B.
- 3.4.3 Post-diagnostic support is available following diagnosis. Work is ongoing nationally on the provision of post-diagnostic support and the Adult Autism Assessment Team will link into this work.
- 3.4.4 The Adult Autism Assessment Team is funded through Scottish Government non-recurring monies aligned to the implementation of the national Autism Strategy. Diagnostic services are a key priority nationally and there may be further opportunities to bid for monies aligned to transformational change. The funds received are being monitored closely to ensure best value in service provision established. The Assessment service forms a test of change, and evaluation of the Team, processes, referral and diagnosis rates will be undertaken and inform any future planning, including budgetary planning.
- 3.4.5 Oversight of the Autism Strategy implementation moved to Leadership and Operational meetings within Mental Health and Learning Disability services within Aberdeen City Health and Social Care Partnership.

3.5 Children's and Family Services

- 3.5.1 The Education Service has a Supporting Learners Workstream and the progress of the Workstream is routinely reported to Elected Members at the Education Operational Delivery Committee (EODC) (last reported [January 2021](#).)
- 3.5.2 Morgan's (2020) Report '*Support for Learning: All our Children and All their Potential*' reviewed the implementation of additional support for learning legislation in Scotland; the report was published in June 2020. The recommendations were built into the work of this workstream in advance of any national instruction to implement to ensure proactivity in response. Further update on this will be reported to the EODC in June 2021.

3.5.3 The following table shows the proportion of school-aged children/young people with a recorded additional support need during that period:

| Academic Year Commencing: | Proportion of Aberdeen City Learner Population | Proportion of Scottish Learner Population |
|----------------------------------|---|--|
| August 2020 | 33.7% | 30.9%* |

*National data for session 2020-2021 will not be published until mid-2021. This figure is taken from the National Review of Additional Support for Learning (Morgan, 2020).

As of January 2021, 3.1% of school-aged learners are recorded as having an autistic spectrum condition (ASC), which closely aligns with the national figure.

- 3.5.4 A new professional learning framework was developed by a Task and Finish Group of experienced ‘supporting learners’ professionals from across the Education Service. The framework is based on four levels of progression, which mirrors a similar system used by the National Health Service (NHS): Informed, Skilled, Enhanced, Expert. Presenting professional learning in this way is designed to promote progression whilst recognising the differing roles professionals play across the education service. It is also designed to engender consistency with regards the level of role-commensurate training accessed by professionals across the service.
- 3.5.5 The Autism Outreach Service in collaboration with Speech and Language colleagues are piloting the introduction of the Nursery CIRCLE Framework to three schools in May 2021. Following the initial pilot, Nursery CIRCLE support will then be offered to all education and partner nurseries in Aberdeen City. The CIRCLE Frameworks provide evidence-based resources, developed through extensive qualitative research with teachers to define universal best practice for inclusion in schools and nurseries for children and young people with an ASN, including those with an ASC. The CIRCLE Framework is a Universal/Targeted level support and links to GIRFEC and the Aberdeen City model of tiered intervention.
- 3.5.6 In response to feedback from staff and parents, the initial contents of the Inclusive Practices professional learning focuses on areas of priority: Autistic Spectrum Conditions (ASC); Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD); Dyslexia; Trauma and Attachment; Down’s Syndrome; Mental Health & Wellbeing; Sensory Support; and Universal Inclusive Approaches. The contents of the framework will be kept under regular review and additions/amendments made, particularly as our working practices continue to evolve in response to COVID-19 guidance.

- 3.5.7 The impact of Covid-19 on children and young people with an ASC diagnosis has unsurprisingly been significant given the importance for this group, on routine and stability in their day to day supports. For this reason, those with additional support needs and their families have made up a significant percentage of those offered targeted support or specialist provision. This group have also been supported via the Fit Like Wellbeing hubs over this period as appropriate and some have required to have their allocated care packages increased to meet need. None the less, this group of individuals and their families have also shown considerable resilience given the disruptions and the restrictions imposed on service provision.
- 3.5.8 Over the past year, there has been steady progress in the development of an Aberdeen City Wide Transitions Pathway Plan for all young people with additional support needs which includes those who have Autism (Appendix C).

3.6 Strategic Development

- 3.6.1 The Scottish Government recently published the report [Learning/Intellectual Disability and Autism Towards Transformation](#). The Cross Party Group on Autism have also published their review of the Scottish Strategy for Autism, [The Accountability Gap](#). Both reports provide recommendations and actions focused on ensuring autistic peoples human rights are respected, protected and advanced.
- 3.6.2 Within 2021-22 the Aberdeen City Autism Strategy and Action Plan will be reviewed in line with the refresh of the Aberdeen City Health and Social Care Partnership (ACHSCP) Strategic Plan and other related planning activity (such as the Local Outcome Improvement Plan), as well as within the context of the aforementioned national policy reviews and potential legislative changes.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The action plan associated with the Autism Strategy identifies where and how resources are to be aligned. Funding has been allocated and received from Scottish Government for the development of an autism assessment and diagnostic pathway for adults. All other actions are being undertaken within current budget availability.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

6. MANAGEMENT OF RISK

| Category | Risk | Low (L) Medium (M) High (H) | Mitigation |
|------------------------------|--|-----------------------------------|---|
| Strategic Risk | Covid-19 Response may delay implementation of strategy/actions. | M | Priorities have identified through service reviews and seek to address the core issues identified by the public during co-production of the strategy/action plan. This will be continually reviewed. |
| Compliance | N/A | | |
| Operational | Capacity of Staff to deliver on strategic outcomes and operational delivery requirements. | M | Prioritisation of actions and activity mitigates the risk and will be review continually. |
| Financial | Lack of financial resource available within current budgets or through ringfenced Scottish Government Grant. | L | Actions to be undertaken were developed with resource constraints in mind, and prioritisation of actions mitigates further against this risk. |
| Reputational | Failure to implement the strategy and action plan has the potential likelihood to end in complaints and challenge, with a risk of reputational damage. | M | A process of scrutiny is already in place through operational management groups and through committee reporting. Engagement with communities through existing channels will further mitigate this risk. |
| Environment / Climate | N/A | | |

7. OUTCOMES

| <u>COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN</u> | |
|---|--|
| | Impact of Report |
| Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement | The delivery of the Autism Strategy and Action Plan detailed within this report support the delivery of Policy Statement(s) 1 - Completion of school estate review (P1) and development of estate strategy for next 5-10 years (P2), 5 - Appoint a mental health champion and 7 - Commit to closing the attainment gap in education while working with partners in the city. The needs of autistic children and learners is of key importance to the successful delivery of the Autism Strategy and Action Plan. Services involved |

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| | in these policy statements will continue to consider the needs of autistic children and learners within the development and implementation of the Policy Statement areas. |
| Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan | |
| Prosperous Economy Stretch Outcomes | The proposals in this report have no impact on the Council Delivery Plan. |
| Prosperous People Stretch Outcomes | <p>The proposals within this report support the delivery of all Children & Young People Stretch Outcomes 3 to 7 in the LOIP. The needs of autistic children and learners are represented within these outcomes and should be considered in the delivery of relevant improvement projects.</p> <p>This report supports the delivery of LOIP Stretch Outcome 11 – Healthy life expectancy is five years longer by 2026. The report details the development of an Adult Autism Assessment service which supports the delivery of holistic health and care services and increased good outcomes for the population.</p> |
| Prosperous Place Stretch Outcomes | The proposals in this report have no impact on the Council Delivery Plan. |
| UK and Scottish Legislative and Policy Programmes | The report has alignment to the requirements placed upon the Council by the Continuing Care (Scotland) Amendment Order 2019 and the Community Care (Personal Care and Nursing Care) (Scotland) Amendment (<u>No. 2</u>) Regulations 2018 |

8. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

| Assessment | Outcome |
|--|---|
| Impact Assessment | A Full Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessment has been completed (2019) which found the impact to be positive. The impact of the Autism Assessment service will be included in a refreshed Impact Assessment once further embedded into practice and aligned to a review of the wider Autism Strategy. |
| Data Protection Impact Assessment | Not required. |

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Scottish Government report [Learning/Intellectual Disability and Autism Towards Transformation](#)

Cross Party Group on Autism review of the Scottish Strategy for Autism, [The Accountability Gap](#)

10. APPENDICES

Appendix A - Aberdeen City Autism Strategy and Action Plan 2019-22

Appendix B - Adult Autism Assessment Team

Appendix C - Transition Update

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