Proposed guidelines for Clinical Commissioning Groups to support implementation of the Autism Diagnostic Pathway

Issue

1. Following discussion at the July meeting of the Programme Board that not all local areas had a robust diagnostic autism pathway in place, it was agreed that it would be a helpful development if guidelines could be issued to Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) under the Joint Commissioning Panel for Mental Health and Learning Disabilities.

The Joint Commissioning Panel (JCP) for Mental Health

2. The Membership of the JCP brings together the Royal Colleges of GPs, Nursing and Psychiatrists, patients and carers, ADASS, and third sector partners. It has overseen work on learning disabilities and its remit is being extended to include autism.

Developments since the July Programme Board meeting

3. An expert group to help with this process had its first meeting on 18 October. Its membership is attached at Annex A. The group includes Programme Board members Neil Deuchar, Terry Brugha, Debi Evans, Zandrea Stewart and John Simpson.

4. The group saw its overarching aims as:

   • ensuring that any practical outputs it develops have the endorsement of those groups and bodies that make up the JCP for Mental Health, and has NICE and National Commissioning Board support;

   • considering how best to use commissioning enablers and levers to support CCGs to secure continuous improvements in diagnosis and outcomes for people with autism;

   • seeking to encourage clinical leaders and professional networks in Royal Colleges to be visible and offer good leadership on improving the diagnostic pathway in order to support implementation of the Adult Autism Strategy;

5. The group also agreed its initial task as scoping and describing a specification for a best practice guide for autism covering as a minimum, diagnostic pathways, to support implementation of the statutory and NICE guidance on autistic spectrum disorders.
6. Discussion at the meeting covered:

- what the NHS would look like from April 2013, where would responsibility and leadership around commissioning for diagnostic services lie, how collaborative commissioning could be promoted and what role the NHS Commissioning Board would play through its Local Area Teams;

- what NICE had identified as potential barriers to implementation of its guidelines and the tools developed to overcome these;

- the possible scope of the guidelines using a draft briefing developed by the DH sponsored Ad Hoc Commissioning Group with an interest in Aspergers' syndrome, which had looked at developing low cost, high impact services for adults with autism.

7. The expert group will meet again in January 2013. Before then work on the draft guidelines will be advanced through e-mail contact. Michael Swaffield will provide the Programme Board with a verbal update on the proposed scope of the guidelines.

Autism Programme Board Secretariat
November 2012
Annex A

Membership of the Autism Expert Group

Clinical leader - Neil Deuchar, Associate Medical Director East Midlands and Commissioning Lead RCPsych.

Joint Chairs - John Simpson (service user on Autism Programme Board) and Dr Yasmin Delargy-Aziz (GP)

Project support - Michael Swaffield (DH)

Panel Group members

Ian Ensum – Consultant Psychologist Bristol Autism Spectrum Service

Chris Mitchell - Team Manager, Nottingham Adults with Asperger's Team

Sandy Bering - Lead Commissioner/Consultant NHS Trafford

Dr Jamie Nicholls - Retired GP

Sarah Lambert - National Autistic Society

Debi Evans - service user and carer on Autism Programme Board

Terry Brugha - Psychiatrist and Academic

Zandrea Stewart - ADASS Lead for Autism

Russell Stronanch - service user and representing the Autistic Rights Movement

Lawrence Moulin - West Midlands SHA

Alexa Biesty - NICE Implementation Adviser