



**Notes of the Autism Norfolk Forum (ANF) Meeting
Topic: Mental Health**

Held on: 11 July 2023

Venue: Online via Zoom

Please note: These notes represent an overview summary of this meeting rather than a verbatim transcript.

Name of Attendee	Organisation and/or Role
Lee Gibbons	ASD Helping Hands, Norfolk Autism Partnership Co-ordinator
Trevor Key	Co-Chair
Tracey Walton	Autism Commissioning Manager
Sehar Hussain	
Members of the public (26)	

Agenda Item 1	Welcome and Introduction
1.1	Welcome and introductions made: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• This Forum was held using Zoom• Communication prompts and their use explained.• Acknowledged a note taker is provided.• Norfolk Autism Partnership Board's (NAPB) Code of Conduct and Coproduction principles introduced and explained.

Agenda Item 2	Update from the Board
2.1	Lee Gibbons updated the forum on the progression of the Oversight board set up for the Norfolk Autism Partnership. The Oversight Board had its first meeting on 10/07/2023 and was attended by 5 Autistic Adults and 1 Parent/Carer This group was set up to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Set the priorities for the Norfolk Autism Partnership Board

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that the Norfolk Autism Partnership is progressing work and action plans. • Ensure that the work of the Norfolk Autism Partnership reflects the true priorities and experiences of Autistic People in Norfolk <p>The Group will do this by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gather views of Autistic people and their parent's and carers through different means • Set priorities for the Norfolk Autism Partnership Board to work towards and focus on • Ensure that Autistic people's views are the core of everything we do.
2.2	<p>The support/social groups offer in conjunction with the Library Service continue to grow.</p> <p>There are now 32 support/socials groups offered by the Library service across Norfolk with an aim of having at least one autism specific group per Library cluster.</p>
2.2	<p>The 'What's on?' page is continually updated with upcoming autism specific events across Norfolk. This can be accessed by:</p> <p>www.norfolkautismpartnership.org.uk/whats-on</p>
2.3	<p>An update on the Norfolk Autism Partnership Board representation across different groups/boards was given:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SENDIASS Steering Group – 14th June 2023 • All age Autism Strategy development planning – 27th June 2023 • Re-engineering Adult Diagnostic Pathways – 28th June 2023 • Norfolk Adult Safeguarding Board (NASB) Summit – 4th July 2023 • Improving Autism Services for Adults Norfolk – 10th July 2023 • Mental Health Forums (various)
2.4	<p>An update was given on the 'you said we did' we did work that will form the assessment of the current Norfolk Autism Strategy and how this will feed into the refresh of the strategy.</p>

2.5	<p>The Forum was told of upcoming Co-Production opportunities. These opportunities are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Norfolk All-age Autism Strategy • Re-engineering Adult Autism Diagnostic Pathways • Designing Adult Social Care Assessment Information for Autistic Adults • Evaluation of a New Short-Term Service <p>People who wish to get involved in these opportunities are invited to contact Tracey Walton on tracey.walton@norfolk.gov.uk or contact@norfolkautismpartnership.org.uk</p>
2.6	<p>Forum members were invited to take part in the renaming of the new short term support service for Autistic Adults and this can be done by visiting: https://forms.office.com/e/v0uQSdsHEH</p>
2.7	<p>Lee Gibbons reminded Forum members about how to get involved in the Norfolk Autism Partnership and the different types of memberships and levels.</p>

Agenda Item 3	Talking Therapies
3.1	<p>Sehar Hussain was invited to the forum to talk to the members about the re procurement of the Talking Therapies service and asked for feedback on the current service and peoples experience.</p>
3.2	<p>The current talking therapies service is for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anxiety or depression based conditions that can be supported by a single clinician • Uses evidence based talking therapies • Trains and supervises a workforce • Monitors outcomes <p>It is available for anyone over the age of 16. The service aims to support 30,000+ people a year</p>
3.3	<p>The current contract was issued in 2008 and is due for renewal in 2024. The Talking Therapies service is consulting with a wide range of people and groups to see how the service can be improved</p>
3.4	<p>There are some things that can be influenced by service users:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How people find out about the service • How people access the service e.g., through telephone, online or face-to-face options • Accessibility of the service – how the service adapts to needs in different groups to enable engagement

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How the service communicates with users of the service, the public and professionals • How the service connects across the 'system'
3.5	<p>There are somethings that cannot be changed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Range of needs treated • Treatment offered <p>(These are set out by National Institute for Health and Care Excellence)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training required <p>(This is set out by National Health Service England / Health Education England)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flow of data to national reporting
3.6	<p>Talking Therapies have already spoken to a wide group of people:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Voices • Healthwatch Norfolk and Healthwatch Suffolk • <i>'Lets Talk About Mental Health'</i> report as a result of the Integrated Care Board public survey • "We still need to talk" report from 2013 but still has useful feedback on Service User experience • Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust staff survey feedback • Mental Health in primary care feedback • Feedback received by the service from service users, including complaints and compliments • Current data reports
3.7	<p>They have launched selection of surveys for the public, key stake holders and professionals who work within the service.</p>
3.8	<p>To access the public survey please click this link : https://improvinglivesnw.org.uk/lets-talk-talking-therapy/</p> <p>This survey is live until 24th July 2024</p>
3.9	<p>Talking Therapies invited feedback on the service from the forum</p>

Agenda Item 4	Break
----------------------	--------------

Agenda Item 5	Feedback regarding Mental Health Services in Norfolk
5.1	Talking therapy is difficult to engage in and explaining emotions is not easy especially in those under the age of 25. Is there a possibility of offering other therapies such as play therapy or art therapy?
5.2	How will the service adapt the therapies to cater for Autistic people and their difficulties?
5.3	There is no peer support in Norfolk. One of the forum members is part of an online peer group that they became involved in while living in Leeds. This has helped as there is no pressure to talk about your feelings and you can get advice from real life experiences and people with the same differences as you.
5.4	<p>What Training cause the service had in the past 15 years?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The staff have had the core training stipulated by statutory services. • Unable to give specifics on named training without first checking. • Has there been any training on specific local needs?
5.5	<p>How do you support those who have a Mental Health condition that would be considered severe?</p> <p>The service operates on a step model. If a person ahs a mental health need that needs a more intensive piece of work, they will be referred up to the next step. The talking therapies practitioner is always the first contact. This second tier is also up for procurement alongside the Talking Therapies.</p>
5.6	<p>NSFT have delivered Autism training that is facilitated by an Autistic person. There is still some reluctance to take on the training by staff. All staff will have had the tier on Autism training and the level 2 is not mandatory.</p> <p>With the introduction of the Oliver McGowan Mandatory training all staff will be required to complete the Tier 2 training. A note was made that this is not Mental Health training, so NSFT are looking to adapt to make relevant to a Mental Health Service.</p>
5.7	A forum member has stated that Stuart Richardson (NSFT Director) has said that Level 2 training has or will become mandatory.
5.8	<p>There was mention of the courses and projects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Living well with Autism (recovery College) -Green Light project

	Suicide Prevention course (Making Families count) (currently only being piloted in Surrey) -Anne Fraud – Train the trainer has been released to the Acute Trusts
5.9	How ill the service handle patients who Mental Health needs fluctuate? Sometimes Autistic People can feel really good and positive and others very down.
5.10	Parent/Carer Assessments – one forum member was accused of refusing help after stating that they had tried certain therapies in the past and they did not help. They felt that the Social worker did not fully understand or have any training on the difficulties that Autism can present.

Agenda Item 6	Chat Box Headline
6.1	Below are the headlines that were entered into chat box during the forum:
6.2	I would ask for peri-menopausal and menopausal women to be highlighted as a group of people at particular risk of mental health issues which are often just dismissed as "menopause" and not treated as a mental health condition!
6.3	Don't know if it is still the case - but when the service got rid of link workers in GP surgeries and the self-referral by telephone service was put in place - referrals dropped - hardly surprising as when you have depression and/or anxiety, picking up the 'phone to an unknown place to talk about how you are feeling to be triaged by a faceless person is horrible. And doesn't work. !!!
6.4	Many GP practices have mental health practitioners who provide face to face therapy sessions in the GP surgery
6.5	Initially only get offered groups and not 1to1 support so the support is generic and not focussed on individual needs - so making more 1to1 opportunities available will be vital to improving someone's wellbeing and recovery. Group sessions might work for some people but you still need time to talk about yourself to just one qualified person to identify what specifically works for you.
6.6	When talking about accessibility of the IAPT service, will this include how the treatment offered to ensure it is accessible for autistic people. https://www.autism.org.uk/what-we-do/news/adapt-mental-health-talking-therapies
6.7	I actually think the approach/therapy/treatment needs to be as unique to the individual as the individual is unique themselves

	I have been under wellbeing and offered CBT, this was online and in a group session This just did not work for me, I found it so challenging. At that time it was that or nothing. I ended up under secondary services
6.8	Wellbeing Service experiences back in 2015-2016 was so poor as an undiagnosed autistic person, forced to boycott them.
6.9	Groups are horrible when you have anxiety and/or depression - just don't work - please please please build in 1to1 support as primary means of support for any individual, regardless of their protected characteristic/s. I think this is an individual needs issue, sometimes I need support from those like me who get it and other times I want to hide. I have anxiety meeting one "professional" but happy in a group of other autistic people. I don't know what bias the "professional" is going to bring with them, but other autistic people know our struggles and can help each other feel connected. both are certainly important.
6.10	Some people are medically vulnerable so getting out and about further afield is not easy to do. Need local support. Norwich isn't local. Society doesn't care about disabled folk. And not everyone has family support or friends... Have to do everything alone usually.
6.11	There needs to be a huge shift towards Autism-affirming practice within healthcare.
6.12	The Puffin's parent programme, which we co-facilitate with Family Action, is accessible for parents of young people diagnosed either privately or via the NHS route. It's a 4 week course (1 morning a week), covering an overview of Autism, communication, sensory processing and educational advice. It's also a good way to network with other parents and share experiences :)

Date, time, and location of next meeting

The next Autism Norfolk Forum will be held on:
Wednesday 13 December 2023 13:00-15:00

Sign-up details will be posted to the Partnership's webpage and sent to members. The topic of this forum has not yet been decided.

Future Forum meeting dates:

Tuesday 27 February 2024 13:00-15:00

Tuesday 30 April 2024 13:00-15:00
Tuesday 02 July 2024 13:00-15:00
Tuesday 29 October 2024 13:00-15:00
Tuesday 25 February 2025 13:00-15:00
Tuesday 29 April 2025 13:00-15:00
Tuesday 01 July 2025 13:00-15:00
Tuesday 02 September 2025 13:00-15:00

Glossary

ANF: Autism Norfolk Forum
ASD: Autism Spectrum Disorder
ASB: Autism Service Norfolk
ICB: Integrated Care Board
ICS: Integrated Care System
EHCP: Education, Health and Care Plan
FOIA: Freedom of Information Act
GDPR: General Data Protection Regulations
NAP: Norfolk Autism Partnership
NAPB: Norfolk Autism Partnership Board
NAS: National Autistic Society
NCC: Norfolk County Council
NCH&C: Norfolk Community Health and Care
N&SFT: Norfolk and Suffolk Foundation Trust
SEND: Special Educational Need and Disabilities
UEA: University of East Anglia
WAW: World Autism Week
WG: Working Group
WG Lead: Working Group Lead