

Putting NICE guidance into practice

Implementation pack: Developing a multi-agency local autism team

Case study example

This example of an effective autism service has been reproduced with permission of the Joint Commissioning Panel for Mental Health from a forthcoming guide to support clinical commissioning groups in implementing the adult autism strategy.

Published: January 2014

Bristol Autism Spectrum Service (BASS)

BASS is a multi-agency specialist autism team, set up in 2006 and led by a senior consultant level clinician. The remit of the team is to enable adults with autism to access appropriate mainstream services, to support these services in working effectively with adults with autism, and to provide a range of targeted interventions to enable the identification, support and social inclusion of people on the autism spectrum. The team engages in two main areas of activity:

- **Workforce support:** providing specialist training, supervision and liaison for agencies across the care pathway, including health, social care and voluntary sector providers, to develop their competences in working effectively and efficiently with adults with autism;
- **Direct work:** with adults with AS who would not otherwise be able to access mainstream services, providing: diagnosis, post-diagnostic support, signposting, employment support, and a range of low-cost preventative group and 1:1 interventions.

The fundamental assumption on which this model is based is that people with autism should be able to access good quality timely support from mainstream health, social care and independent sector providers, as opposed to having all their needs met by a specialist autism service. It is recognised however that currently mainstream services lack the necessary skills and experience to

enable them to work effectively with this client group. The role of the specialist team is therefore primarily a facilitative one – working closely with agencies across the care pathway to help them work better with adults with autism, whilst targeting what limited resources they have towards providing a range of low-cost, high-impact interventions designed to improve the quality of life and social inclusion of adults with AS.

Consequently, the team does not take on care management responsibility for people referred to the service, this remains with the referring agency, but instead offers intensive ongoing support and supervision to health and social care professionals to enable them to provide the best and most autism friendly service possible to their clients. In addition, the team have recently set up a new one-stop-shop which is accessible by anyone with autism in the local area. This offers a range of 1:1 and group interventions designed to promote wellbeing and social inclusion. This service is specifically targeted at people with autism who are not eligible for social care services, to maximize their quality of life and to prevent them from going into crisis.

The team also work closely with a range of agencies across the care pathway, including IAPT, supported employment, primary care and welfare rights providers, to enable them to develop good quality, innovative services for people with autism in the local area.

The staff mix per 500 000 total population is:

- 0.8 wte Consultant Psychologist
- 1.0 wte Team Manager
- 1.0 wte Clinical Psychologist
- 1.0 wte Specialist Nurse
- 1.8 wte Social Work
- 1.0 wte Assistant Psychologist
- 0.7 wte Psychiatry
- 1.0 wte Admin

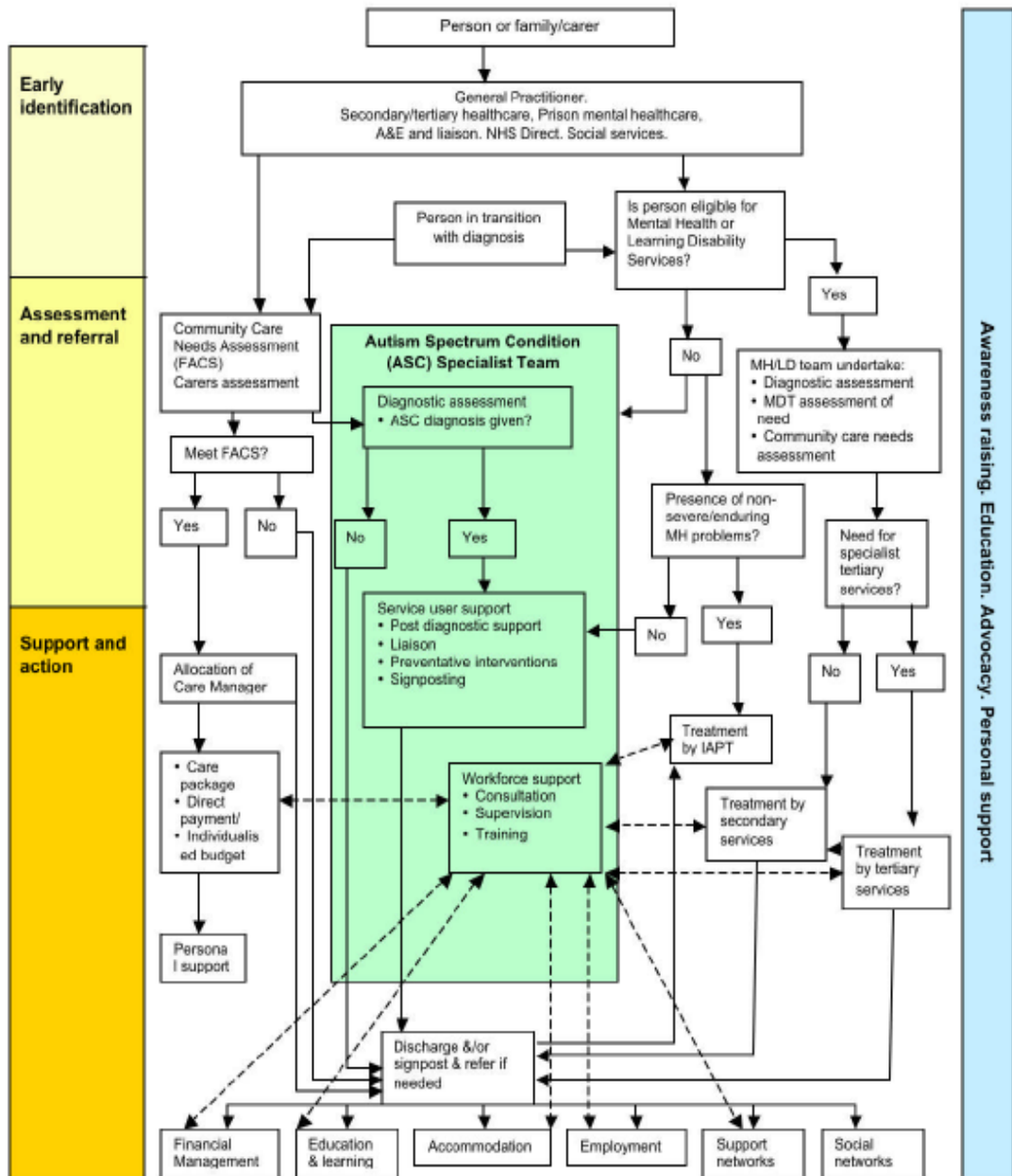
The total cost is approximately £360,000.

This model aims to deliver substantial cost savings to health and social care budgets primarily by:

- providing high quality local diagnostic assessment, meaning that people no longer have to be funded to be assessed out of area;
- supporting local secondary mental health and learning disability professionals to diagnose and manage people with autism on their caseloads effectively and efficiently;
- engaging in preventative treatment work with those at risk of losing their independence, minimising contact with mental health services, with a particular focus on reducing the current over-reliance on crisis intervention and/or acute admissions;
- joint-working with care managers to evaluate the quality and value-for-money offered by out-of-area providers, with a view to facilitating the return of people, as appropriate, to the local area.

Contact Dr Ian Ensum, Consultant Psychologist, BASS for further information at ian.ensum@nhs.net

Autism Spectrum Condition Adult Care Pathway



GP Referral

Is this person eligible for mental health/learning disability services?

No

Yes

Specialist ASC Team

Direct work

- Diagnostic assessment
- Post-diagnostic support
- Needs' assessment

FACS eligible?

Yes

No

Autism Advice Service

1:1 support

- Emotional support, education, employment, benefits, housing, relationships, signposting

Group support

- Mindfulness, anxiety management, social skills, post-diagnostic support
- Post-diagnostic support

Indirect work

- Training
- Liaison
- Supervision
- Consultation

Secondary Provider

(Mental health or Learning disability services)

- Assessment supervised by specialist ASC team
- Management

Mainstream services

Local Authority

Employment

- Jobcentre
- Supported employment

Further education

Housing

Criminal Justice System

Service User Journey

