

**Issue 10**

**Improving autism services**

**INDEPENDENCE FOR PEOPLE WITH AUTISM**

**The DH has announced a range of measures to ensure that people with autistic spectrum conditions receive the right support to live life independently and to the full.**

To coincide with World Autism Day on 2 April, the DH published best practice guidance for NHS staff.

Services for adults with autistic spectrum disorder: good practice advice for primary care trust and local authority commissioners sets out how to plan services, develop a better understanding of the needs of people with autism and make sure the right services are available to everyone who needs them.

**Developing the strategy**

A consultation on the first national strategy for adults with autism started on 29 April and members of the social care workforce and the public are encouraged to participate.

Specialist Advisor for Autism Elaine Hill explains how the strategy will make a difference to service users, their carers and the social care workforce...

**Why is it important to have a strategy for adults with autism?**

People with autism, and their families and carers, are a hidden minority. Some are falling through the cracks in local services, or getting inappropriate ones.

The aim of the cross-Government autism strategy, which will be published by December 2009, is to support adults in England who have autistic spectrum conditions to live independently as equal and included citizens. It will also support their families and carers.

This is in line with our priority to achieve equality for disabled people, and it means ensuring that mainstream public services become more inclusive.

**What will the strategy mean for the social care workforce and for service users?**

We hope that, along with the good practice guidance, it will help:

- plan services that give young people the right support as they move from using child to adult services
- develop a better understanding of the needs of people with autism to help it services to their individual requirements
- make sure the right services are available to everyone who needs them
- provide staff and the social care workforce in general training in the needs of people with autistic spectrum conditions.

**What are the main challenges in implementing the strategy?**

With the strategy's external reference group, chaired by the Chief Executive of the National Autistic Society, we have identified five key themes. Addressing and delivering these will be the key challenges we face:

- Choice and control
- Training
- Health
- Employment
- Social inclusion

**What is your background in this area?**

I have worked for over 20 years in health and social care, starting in social work then working in a range of posts including a commissioner for mental health services. Before taking up my DH post, I was Head of the

North East Autism Consortium (NEAC) for almost two years. I helped to establish the consortium of 12 local authorities and PCTs and it is working to improve strategic planning, commissioning and delivery of services for people with autism.

### **How do you feel about the strategy?**

Following on from my work with the NEAC, I was absolutely committed to the development of a national strategy. This is a good time for it, with initiatives like the drive for personalisation – for example, through personal budgets – having the potential to make a real difference to people with autistic spectrum conditions.

- [Download the guidance from the DH website](#)

## **REFORMING THE CARE AND SUPPORT SYSTEM**

### **The DH is publishing the Care and Support Green Paper in the spring, outlining reform options for the care and support system in England.**

The paper is a cross-Government initiative, led by the DH, which aims to reform the system to respond to people's changing needs.

'We have the opportunity and scope now to build a fairer and sustainable system for everyone that ensures people's needs are met well into the future,' says Catherine Davies, Head of stakeholder engagement on the Green Paper team.

'People are generally living longer and disabled people are living fuller lives – which is great news – but we need a system that reflects that.'

The team engaged with stakeholders and the general public before starting to write the paper, and a consultation will follow publication, giving people the opportunity to have their say on the reform options.

Alexandra Norrish, Head of the Green Paper team, adds: 'This reform is going to affect every adult in England – whether they need care and support, provide care for a loved one, or pay taxes. So, right from the beginning, we wanted people's opinions about the fundamental principles a new system should be based on.'

- [Read more about the Green Paper on the DH website](#)
- [Visit the care and support website](#)

## **VOICEPIECE**

### **David Behan, Director General, Social Care, Local Government and Care Partnerships, highlights the importance of engaging widely on all areas of social care work.**

#### **Welcome to the latest edition of the Social Care Bulletin**

This bulletin is full of information about the work that is under way across the sector for a range of people who use social care and health services.

I believe that, implemented well, the work on dementia, carers, autism, mental health, or learning disabilities will lead to real improvements in the way people can be supported to live independently and afforded choice and control over their lives. These strategies have been developed with key stakeholders – people who use services and carers – working alongside civil servants.

The approach is open and ensures that the policies are relevant and authentic. After all, policies are a means to an end, not an end in themselves. The end is to ensure people receive high-quality care and support that maintains their independence.

This edition is significant for two other initiatives – firstly, the launch of the National Quality Board, which has a very strong social care presence. Its purpose is to drive improvements in quality, health and social care services.

The second significant event is the launch of the social care workforce strategy. Social care and health is a people-intensive sector. While technology and science will always make significant contributions to how we provide care, the essential tasks are carried out by people, with and for people.

How we develop, support and enable the workforce will be a crucial element in the success of delivering the strategies that are covered in this bulletin. We know from the literature on management and leadership that successful organisations need to be well led, but they also, critically, engage positively and constructively with frontline workers.

The workforce strategy lays out a framework which is designed to support the workforce in our common and shared goal of improving the quality of care for people in the early 21st century in England.

## **Dementia strategy in action**

### **BUILDING A BETTER LIFE**

**Bryan Welling, 71, has been looking after his wife, Pat, since she was first diagnosed with Alzheimer's in 2002.**

'Some carers are ashamed of their patient,' he says. 'They like to hush it up and keep it to themselves. I'm not ashamed of my wife at all. I want her to get out there, meet people, and enjoy herself.'

'I know our life is different to what it was – and sometimes very difficult – but she's still the woman I married 43 years ago. She's still the woman I love.'

### **Changing the face of social care**

The recently published [national dementia strategy](#) aims to radically improve the quality of care that people with the condition receive.

Backed by £150 million over the first two years, the strategy's proposals include the identification of a dementia lead in every general hospital and care home, and memory services in every area to enable early diagnosis and intervention for people with dementia and their carers.

'The implications for social care are considerable,' says Sube Banerjee, clinical lead for the strategy. 'The strategy offers the chance to deliver a flexible, reliable, personalised service that will be available universally for people with dementia and their carers. It represents a huge improvement, enabling people to live well with dementia.'

Bryan Welling, too, has welcomed the strategy, and recently attended a discussion group to talk through what it will offer.

'Early diagnosis is so important,' he says. 'It's come too late for us, but not for the generations to come. And the more people who know, the better.'

### **Updating the strategy for an ageing society**

One in four children born today will live to 100, and it is no longer uncommon for people to spend a third of their life in retirement.

In light of this, in summer 2008, the Government announced it was beginning a review of Opportunity Age, the strategy published in 2005 setting out plans for meeting the challenges and opportunities of the UK's ageing society.

In November 2008, a Cabinet committee was established and it published a discussion paper to help identify what key issues people felt should be included in the review of the ageing strategy.

Discussion events hosted by ministers were held across the country, engaging with older and working-age people to identify the key areas that are important for people's later life.

The Government will publish a summary of the discussions alongside the ageing strategy later in the year. Updates will be included in this bulletin and on the DH website.

[Visit the DWP website for more information](#)

## **Social care workforce strategy**

### **BOOSTING RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION IN SOCIAL CARE**

The DH has worked with key sector and delivery partner organisations to develop a workforce strategy for adult social care, as part of delivering *Putting People First*.

The strategy's launch on 29 April follows a 12-week stakeholder engagement exercise with frontline workers, delivery partners and representatives from the health sector. As a result, six objectives were set, summarising what the workforce needs to do to deliver personalised care effectively. These are:

- leadership of local employers in workforce planning and directors of adult social services in their strategic workforce commissioning role
- workforce remodelling and commissioning to achieve service transformation
- recruitment, retention and career pathways to provide the many talents the workforce needs
- workforce development so that the right people with the right skills are in place
- joint and integrated working between social, healthcare and other sectors
- regulation for quality in services as well as public assurance.
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Each theme sets out existing commitments at national level and local examples that will help to deliver the transformation of adult social care.

A group will be set up to monitor the ongoing programme of work to ensure the strategy delivers on its objectives.

A more detailed agreement for implementation – with specific short, medium and long-term actions – will be published later this year.

- [Download the strategy from the DH website](#)

### **Building the social care workforce**

A campaign to increase awareness and interest in social care as a worthwhile job has proved to be a big success – and the results are still coming in.

The social care recruitment campaign saw DH teams join forces with local employers at recruitment stands in more than 20 shopping centres.

Visitors to the stands learned what social care work involves, what qualifications and experience are needed, and where to look for work. They could also leave behind their contact details so local employers can get in touch when vacancies arise.

The DH also ran a campaign starring care workers, on national TV, regional radio and press and online. It was targeted towards areas of greatest need: London, the South East, the West Midlands, the South West and the North West of England.

On Social Work Day in March, Care Services Minister Phil Hope announced that newly-qualified adult social workers will soon be offered more support throughout their first year of practice, with £4 million of funding, which includes a personal development planning tool, outcome statements, a toolkit to support induction, a good practice checklist and tools to record and evaluate continuous professional development and post-registration training.

People wanting more information about jobs and careers in social care should call 0300 123 1055 or visit the [social care careers website](#).

### **Recruitment campaign results**

As of 6 April:

- Helpline handled over 32,000 queries
- 389,456 visitors to the website
- More than 40,000 visitors to the recruitment stands
- Nearly 5,000 people filled in forms passed to local employers

### **World Social Work Day**

Social workers from both the adult and children's workforce gathered in London and across the country to celebrate World Social Work Day, on 17 March.

A special conference, 'World Social Work Day: making a world of difference', in Westminster was attended by almost 200 frontline social workers. They celebrated the contribution of social workers to our communities, and discussed changes in social work practice.

Some 43 percent of those invited said the most important change Government could make to encourage people to become social workers is to raise the status of social work in the eyes of the general public.

It was also an opportunity to contribute formally, through group discussions, to the work of the task force on social work.

David N Jones, President of the International Federation of Social Workers, said of the event: 'This day offers an opportunity to recognise social work as a highly-skilled profession that supports a diverse range of adults and children across the world.'

### **Improving child protection**

On 13 March, Lord Laming presented his progress report on the safeguarding of children – The Protection of Children in England: a progress report – which was commissioned by the Department of Schools, Children and Families (DCSF) following the Baby P case.

After it was published, Ed Balls and Alan Johnson sent a joint letter to social workers, outlining their commitment to improving, supporting and raising the status of all social work. The letter also makes clear that, while social workers are not the sole focus of the review, they are 'crucial to the protection both of vulnerable children and of adults in vulnerable circumstances'.

This was highlighted in Laming's review, which outlined specific recommendations for social care, including encouraging mid-career professionals in other sectors to retrain to enter the social care workforce, and working with higher education institutions and employers to raise the quality and consistency of social work degrees. Lord Laming also welcomed the establishment of the Social Care Task Force. A detailed action plan on all 58 recommendations will be published by the Government shortly.

- [Download the full review](#)

- [Download the letter to social workers](#)

## Reforming learning disability services

### EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR PEOPLE WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES

Improving the commissioning of services to help people with learning disabilities is among the measures introduced in a new strategy.

*Valuing People Now – a three-year strategy for people with learning disabilities* follows the same basic principle set out in 2001's *Valuing People*: that all people with a learning disability, their families and carers are entitled to the same aspirations and life chances as other citizens.

But it expands that across health, housing, employment and community care services, following a consultation involving more than 10,000 people. The new strategy's main aims include ensuring that people with learning disabilities:

- get the healthcare and support they need to live healthy lives
- are supported into paid work and supported accommodation
- are given the choice to have relationships, become and continue to be parents
- have opportunities to study and enjoy leisure and social activities
- all benefit from the strategy, including carers and those with complex needs.

Deputy regional directors for social care are identified as key partners in delivering the strategy, which is aligned with the transformation of social care and the personalisation agenda.

A new national Learning Disability Programme Board and regional boards will review progress annually.

- [Download the strategy](#)
- [Read more about the launch](#)

### MENTAL HEALTH AND THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

Earlier this year, Lord Bradley submitted his review of the treatment of people with severe mental health problems in the criminal justice system.

This review drew on expertise and views from professional bodies, service providers and other interested groups to make recommendations on how offenders with mental health problems or learning disabilities can, when appropriate, be diverted from prison to other services, and the services needed to support them.

The Government is now working on its response, which will be published alongside the review at the end of April. Accepted recommendations will be incorporated into the Offender Health and Social Care Strategy, due to be launched later this year.

- [Visit the DH website for more on the Bradley Review,](#)
- [Or email Susannah Nisbett](#)

## Mental health update

### NEW MENTAL HEALTH UNIT TO SUPPORT DELIVERY OF MORE PERSONAL CARE

A new agency will help develop improvements in mental health services for users and carers.

The National Mental Health Development Unit (NMHDU) succeeded the National Institute for Mental Health on 1 April, to become the lead agency for supporting the implementation of mental health policy at national level.

It will advise and co-ordinate national and international best practice and help the SHAs and local authorities to translate national policies into practical and personalised mental health outcomes for people who receive services.

The NMHDU will not be involved in the actual delivery of services, but will work with key partners, such as the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS), the NHS Confederation and third sector groups to promote high-quality care.

- The unit will also continue the momentum in co-ordinating support for key mental health projects such as: improving access to talking therapies
- promoting equalities in mental health services irrespective of age, gender and race
- promoting social inclusion and justice for people with mental health problems
- promoting well-being and mental health for everyone
- supporting effective mental health commissioning.

Dr Ian McPherson, who is leading the unit, says: 'The NMHDU is committed to working with local authorities and social care agencies to promote the importance of social factors in determining well-being, recovery and inclusion for all those affected by mental health issues.'

- [Find out more about the NMHDU on their website](#)

## **A NEW ERA IN MENTAL HEALTH**

A new strategy will promote well-being and improve services for people who have mental health problems.

New Horizons will come into effect at the end of the year and builds on the National Service Framework, which ends in 2009.

Listening events will be held over the next three months to gather views on what the new strategy should cover.

Phil Hope, Care Services Minister, says: 'I'm particularly interested in looking at how we can help people to look after their mental health and prevent them from becoming ill.

'I'm keen to tackle the stigma that's associated with it – this isn't something we can shy away from, mental ill health is as serious as physical illnesses such as heart disease and cancer.

'Individuals, employers and all sorts of organisations have a role to play in helping to achieve good mental health for all.'

- **Have your say by emailing [newhorizons@dh.gso.gov.uk](mailto:newhorizons@dh.gso.gov.uk)**
- [Read more about New Horizons](#)

## **Implementing the carers strategy**

### **PUTTING WORDS INTO ACTION**

The carers strategy, *Carers at the heart of 21st century families and communities*, was published in June 2008 and a number of initiatives currently under way are putting it into practice.

### **New service for carers on NHS Choices website**

[Carers Direct](#) has launched on [NHS Choices](#) to improve support for the UK's growing number of carers. It is a single and comprehensive online resource for carer-specific information, including guidance on the different stages of caring, information for claiming benefits, advice for young carers and case studies with videos. The service also includes a telephone advice line launching at the start of May. Future developments to Carers Direct will allow carers to receive answers to email enquiries and join online forums.

- [Visit the Carers Direct website](#)

### **The impact of individual budgets on carers**

Individual budgets are improving carers' quality of life. That is just one of the findings from a recent study, 'Individual budgets: impacts and outcomes for carers'. 'Among the plus points, the study suggests that some carers now have more time to themselves,' says Paul Brittain, Individual Budgets Project Manager. The study also found that there are more opportunities for carers to get involved in support planning with service users.

Individual budgets have been piloted in 13 English local authorities. They aim to provide greater choice and control for people needing support, and to place the person who is supported at the centre of the process.

- [Access the report on the DH website](#)

### **Demonstrating the impact of carer support schemes**

In June, the DH is planning to announce the locations of demonstrator sites, which are being introduced to evaluate the effectiveness and value for money of different initiatives to support carers.

This work forms part of the national carers strategy, and the DH invited all local authorities with social services responsibilities and all primary care trusts in the country to bid to develop the sites. They will cover breaks, better NHS support and health checks for carers.

Following the June announcement of the 24 successful bids, the sites will start up by October 2009.

### **Standing Commission on Carers (SCOC) annual report**

The SCOC plans to publish its first annual report in June, after the Prime Minister set up the commission in 2007. One of the SCOC's responsibilities has been monitoring the implementation of the national carers strategy. The report in June will highlight progress on the strategy, as well as aspirations for the future and the likely challenges ahead.

- [Read more about the SCOC](#)

### **Recognising the vital role of carers**

The UK will increasingly rely on carers to deliver the ambitious reforms set out in Putting People First. This is one of the messages in Putting People First without putting carers second, a report funded by the DH and published jointly by The Princess Royal Trust for Carers and Crossroads Caring for Carers. It looks at the challenges local councils and health trusts face in making personalisation a reality for carers and for the people they care for.

The report's key recommendation is that choice and control must be made a reality for whole families and communities, not just individuals, and that this requires closer working relationships among people receiving care, carers and professionals. It also highlights a range of local partnerships that are already in place to achieve this.

[Read the report on The Princess Royal Trust for Carers website](#)

## **SOCIAL CARE LEADERS JOIN THE NQB**

Lord Victor Adebawale, Chief Executive of Turning Point, and Don Brereton, Chair of Carers UK, are among new members of the National Quality Board (NQB).

Their appointment will help to ensure that social care contributes to delivering high-quality care throughout the NHS.

They are among six lay members appointed to the board earlier in March, along with six expert members – all of whom have experience as patients, carers, healthcare practitioners, clinicians and academics.

‘I’m very pleased to be on this board, and to have the opportunity to connect the frontline with policy to help improve the experience for everyone receiving treatment and care,’ says Victor.

‘Health and social care services have had a big impact on our lives because we are carers of our son Sam,’ says Don. ‘I passionately believe that the most vulnerable and needy deserve the best quality services and it is vital they are provided in partnership with patients, family and carers. I feel excited and privileged to be invited to contribute to the work of the National Quality Board.’

The NQB will advise on ways to align the health system, maximise the potential for quality improvement and reduce complexity. The board will also offer leadership on quality by challenging the NHS and social care services to improve and agree on priorities for action.

- [Visit the DH website for more information on the NQB](#)

## **NEWS IN BRIEF**

### **Swine Flu update**

As you will be aware, there have been confirmed human cases of swine flu in the UK. We have been preparing for this possibility for a number of years and are among the most prepared countries in the world. The DH is closely monitoring the situation and is working alongside the World Health Organisation and other partners to review any threat this poses to the UK. Alan Johnson, Secretary of State for Health, has made a statement to the House of Commons about the emerging situation. Further information is available for health and social care staff on the DH website, including tools and resources for commissioners and providers of social care to plan for and meet the challenges posed by pandemic flu. Updated information is also available on [NHS Choices](#).

- [Access National Framework and supporting guidance](#)
- [Download Alan Johnson’s statement](#)

### **Care Quality Commission comes into effect**

On 1 April, the Care Quality Commission (CQC) took over responsibility for the quality of health and social care and the interests of people detained under the Mental Health Act. It combines the work of the Healthcare Commission, the Commission for Social Care Inspection and the Mental Health Act Commission. Under the CQC people will have one port of call for all health and social care information and it will take advantage of the best inspection and regulation methods developed by each previous commission. The CQC’s manifesto outlining its values and approaches will guide its early development.

- [Visit the CQC website](#)

### **Integrated care pilots announced**

On 1 April, 16 sites were selected as integrated care pilots. These partnerships of primary, secondary and social care, and the voluntary and private sectors will consider patients’ social care needs in looking at how services can be improved. Each of them has developed ways to meet local health needs, and the £4 million scheme will assess the benefits of these different approaches and identify best practice that could be used more widely.

- [Read more](#)

### **Pre-election guidance**

In the lead up to European Parliament and local authority elections on 4 June, the DH recommends a 'business as usual' approach. If a candidate or political party representative wants to visit an NHS site, NHS chief executives are expected to use their judgement and discretion to ensure that the same visiting opportunities are available to all political parties and, most importantly, that the focus remains on providing services for patients. This period of sensitivity generally runs from three weeks before the elections – that is from 14 May.

- [Download the pre-election guidance](#)

### **About the Social Care Bulletin**

This bulletin has been specially developed for all staff working in social care. Its aim is to inform, promote good practice and support you in your everyday role, bringing you up-to-date and easy to read explanations of the latest policy news and initiatives. Links to more information about all the stories in this issue are in the electronic version of the bulletin, available at [www.dh.gov.uk/socialcarebulletin](http://www.dh.gov.uk/socialcarebulletin)

### **Guide to the ageing society housing strategy**

A series of leaflets has been published to explore issues such as housing design, housing's links with health and care, private sector involvement and the role of home improvement agencies. Lifetime Homes, Lifetime Neighbourhoods: a user's guide was produced by the Housing Learning and Improvement Programme – one of the DH Care Networks – and the Housing and Older People Development Group (HOPDEV). 'We hope that this pack will help planners, commissioners and practitioners ... make a difference to older people's lives today and pave the way for future generations,' says HOPDEV Co-Chair Sue Adams.

- [Download the leaflets](#)

### **CMO's annual report**

Chief Medical Officer Sir Liam Donaldson has called for more teamwork between clinicians and social care to deliver high-quality healthcare. 'Vulnerable patients need occupational therapists, physiotherapists, pharmacists and social workers to work together with doctors and nurses to ensure a safe discharge from hospital,' he writes in his report. Other proposals include measures to tackle the effects of a person's drinking on those around them and improve outcomes for chronic pain sufferers.

[Read the report](#)

### **2009 Accolades**

Accolades 2009 – a partnership between Skills for Care and the DH – celebrates and rewards employers and organisations for their commitment to social care workforce development and innovation. This year, nominations are welcome in eleven categories – eight for adult social care. Nominations close on 1 May 2009.

- [Visit the Skills for Care website for nomination information](#)

### **Health and Social Care Awards update**

The nominations period has now closed and regional judging is under way in all 10 SHAs. This process is chaired by the chief executive in each area and is supported by the deputy regional directors for social care. Regional awards ceremonies will take place throughout May and the national winners will be announced at a ceremony on 8 July. The awards celebrate innovation and excellence across health and social care and encourage working with other organisations and professions, service users and local communities.

- [Visit the website for updates](#)

### **Disabled children's services indicator**

Two new leaflets have been produced to give parents, carers and stakeholders more information on the disabled children's national indicator and the parental survey. The indicator – the first for disabled children –

will examine parental experiences of services for disabled people up to the age of 19. Responses from the survey will be used to assess how services are delivered, and how local authorities compare to each other.

- [Read the parents leaflet](#)
- [Read the stakeholder leaflet](#)

#### **DIARY**

##### **Carers' Week**

**Date: 8 to 14 June 2009**

The week will highlight and celebrate the contribution that carers make and share their positive experiences as well as their more difficult ones.

- [Visit the website for more information](#)

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