

Learning Disability and Autism Strategy

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Contents

1.	Introduction	3
2.	Background	3
3.	Purpose	4
4.	The Vision for ELFT Learning Disability and Autism Services	5
5.	Current Learning Disability Services	5
6.	Current Autism Services	6
7.	Quality Assurance	6
8.	Developing a Strategic Approach	6
9.	Service User Experience	7
10.	Governance and Information	7
11.	Partnership and Strategy	8
12.	Communications	9
13.	Bibliography	9

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Mental Health National Service Framework (1999) and the White Paper *Valuing People: A new strategy for learning disability in the 21st Century* (2001) signaled how services should be developing for people with mental and physical health problems who have learning disabilities. The National Service Framework applies to all adults of working age. Its provisions are intended to encompass everyone who has mental health problems, including people who have learning disabilities. Valuing People promotes a more holistic view of the needs of people with learning disabilities but also identifies the barriers in existence across all health and social care agencies.
- 1.2 Valuing People emphasises that people with learning disabilities should use the same services, resources and facilities as the rest of the population. It emphasises social inclusion: *“Most Psychiatric Disorders are more common amongst people with learning disabilities than in the general population. As with their other health needs, people with learning disabilities should be enabled to access general psychiatric services whenever possible.”* Valuing People also highlighted the disproportionately high levels of physical morbidity and mortality rates amongst people with learning disabilities as well the widespread inequalities they suffer in terms of access to mainstream healthcare.
- 1.3 It is acknowledged, though, that there needs to be *“...access to an acute assessment and treatment resource for the small number of individuals with significant learning disabilities and mental health problems who cannot be appropriately admitted to general psychiatric services, even with specialist support.”*
- 1.4 In 2009, “Valuing People Now: a new three-year strategy for people with learning disabilities” was published. This includes the government’s response to the ten main recommendations in Healthcare for All, the report of the independent inquiry into access to healthcare for people with learning disabilities. The inquiry found that “people with learning disabilities receive less effective care than they are entitled to receive”, and further emphasised the disproportionately high levels of physical morbidity and mortality amongst people with learning disabilities.
- 1.5 The Department of Health Winterbourne Review, published in December 2012, makes clear that health and social care commissioners are required to keep the use of specialist assessment and treatment unit (ATU) beds to an absolute minimum by ensuring that appropriate community services are available.
- 1.6 This strategy is the product of the Learning Disability and Autism Spectrum Project which was set up in January 2012 led by the Director of Operations and included senior clinicians from specialist learning disabilities services across the Trust.

2. Background

- 2.1 The quality and accessibility of all services for people with Learning Disabilities has been high on the national agenda for the past decade following various high profile investigations into support and care for this client group.
- 2.2 Recent landmark reports have included Valuing People (2001/9) and the Winterbourne View Interim report (2012). These reports have focussed on respect and dignity, in addition to the importance of people with learning disabilities having access to quality services.

- 2.3 Winterbourne View Review - Good Practice Examples pulls together a number of good practice examples sent in by stakeholders and people who use services across England. This includes an in-depth case study of Tower Hamlets Community Learning Disability Service which makes extensive use of the Trust's mental health services, and has an agreed protocol with the Trust under a Section 75 agreement, for the provision of our psychiatrists in the Community Learning Disability Service, which enhances local and strategic links. The service is an example of good practice where there is minimal use of inpatient services for assessment and treatment and of how good services can be provided locally to include:
- Genuine person centred, culturally appropriate health and social care helping to prevent the development of mental health problems
 - A reactive service with a pooled budget that actively uses social care alternatives to hospital admission in a crisis
 - Very close and intensive working with adult mental health services to allow use of crisis services and brief, focussed inpatient admissions in the generic mental health service
- 2.4 There is significant evidence that people with Learning Disabilities experience health inequalities and do not fare well from a *'one size fits all'* approach from service providers. On 14 November 2012, the Trust's Service Delivery Board gave approval for a new project with the central aim of improving Trust services for people with Learning Disabilities.
- 2.4 The Autism Act became law in November 2009 and was something of a landmark as the first ever condition-specific piece of legislation in England and Wales. The Act placed new responsibilities on NHS bodies and local authorities for the planning and provision of services for adults with Autistic Spectrum Condition [ASC].
- 2.5 In response to the Act coming into effect, the Department of Health published Fulfilling and Rewarding Lives in March 2010, a national strategy for adults with autism. The guidance sets out the following vision:

".....for all adults with ASC to be able to live fulfilling and rewarding lives within a society that accepts and understands them. They can get a diagnosis and accept support if they need it, and they can depend upon mainstream public services to treat them fairly as individuals, helping them to make the most of their talents."

3. Purpose

- 3.1 The purpose of this strategy is to outline the Trust's vision and planning for the improvement of its services for people with Learning Disabilities and Autism Spectrum Condition including people with high functioning autism/Asperger's Syndrome.
- 3.2 The Strategy outlines the joint plan with stakeholders, including the local authority, Barts Health NHS Trust and Homerton University NHS Trust, mainstream services and provider agencies, to ensure high quality care and support services for all people with learning disabilities or autism and mental health conditions or behaviour described as challenging, in line with best practice.
- 3.3 The Strategy is underpinned by the aim of improved engagement with service users, carers and key partner agencies as well as ensured compliance with the Winterbourne concordat.

3.4 The Strategy summarises the Trust's current provision of services for meeting the needs of people with learning disability and the following four main areas of development which the Project Board has identified in its work thus far:

- i. Service User Experience
- ii. Governance and Information
- iii. Partnership and Strategy
- iv. Communications

These are covered in sections 9-12 of this document.

4. The Vision for ELFT Learning Disability and Autism Services

4.1 The Trust has a wealth of clinical expertise in providing services to people with learning disabilities and autism spectrum disorder which we aim to harness in order to:

- Enhance the quality of mainstream services
- Improve the understanding of the needs of people with Learning Disabilities and Autism Spectrum Condition including high functioning autism
- Ensure the physical health care needs of service users with Learning Disabilities and Autism Spectrum Condition are fully recognised and responded to, including physical health problems associated with specific genetic and biological conditions
- Increase the engagement of people with learning disabilities and autism spectrum disorder and their carers, in improving, monitoring and developing services
- Be the provider of choice in East London and beyond, of services to people with learning disability and autism spectrum disorder by taking over the running of Community Learning Disability Services, developing more specialist secure services and services for people with Autism
- Provide expert clinical leadership across the Trust
- Promote innovative and high quality psychological therapies for people with learning disabilities and autism spectrum disorder by creating identified capacity

5. Current Learning Disability Services

5.1 The Trust provides services for people with learning disabilities and ASD, in a variety of specialist and generic settings:

5.2 Specialist

- Low secure forensic services on Woodbury Ward at Wolfson House
- Medium secure forensic services on Shoreditch Ward at the John Howard Centre
- Community Learning Disability Services in Newham - A specialist health team
- Dedicated psychiatric services to community learning disability teams in Newham, Tower Hamlets and City & Hackney. The Community Learning Disability Service in Newham is provided by the Trust. The Hackney and Tower Hamlets teams are both local authority led, integrated services with health staff (apart from psychiatrists) being provided by Homerton University Hospital NHS Trust and Barts Health NHS Trust respectively

- 5.3 **Generic Services**
All of the Trust's services are potentially accessed by people with learning disabilities and the Trust is required to ensure that people have access to appropriate mental health and community services, irrespective of their learning disability.
- 5.4 Services for people with learning disabilities are primarily commissioned by Clinical Commissioning Groups but the formal strategic leadership in each borough is via the Local Authority. The Local Authorities also lead on the implementation of the national Autism Strategy (2011). Each borough has a form of Partnership Board which includes service users and carers.
- 5.5 The Low and Medium Secure learning disability services are commissioned by the NHS England.
- 5.6 The external context is vitally important for the development of learning disability services in particular the issue of inpatient placements, delayed discharge, interface with local authority services and funding, and the availability of support in the community.

6. Current Autism Services

- 6.1 The Trust is currently commissioned to provide a limited service to people with Asperger's Syndrome in Newham.
- 6.2 Further to the Autism Act 2009, the Department of Health published "Fulfilling and rewarding lives - The strategy for adults with autism in England (2010)" This provides statutory guidance for local councils and local NHS bodies setting out what they have to do to ensure they meet the needs of adults with autism in England as required by the Act.
- 6.3 The London Borough of Tower Hamlets has recently agreed to commission an Autism assessment and treatment service which it will do so via the formal procurement procedures of competitive tendering.
- 6.4 In addition to compliance with the statutory requirements, the Trust's vision is to be the provider of choice for people with Autism Spectrum Condition.

7. Quality Assurance

- 7.1 The quality of all our services is monitored externally by the Care Quality Commission and Monitor.
- 7.2 The Trust is required to make a formal quarterly declaration to Monitor, regarding compliance with the following standards for meeting the needs of people with learning disabilities:
- I. Care pathways
 - II. Accessibility
 - III. Identification and support for carers
 - IV. Training and awareness for all staff
 - V. Representation and engagement of users and carers
 - VI. Regular, published audit regarding quality of services for people with LD
- 7.3 The implementation of this strategy will be monitored internally by a clinically led steering group.

8. Developing a Strategic Approach

8.1 The trust has developed significant expertise in working with people with learning disability, particularly in its specialist services. It does not however, currently have an overarching strategic approach to planning, developing and delivering services to this important group, or a strategic approach for ensuring its generic community or mental health services are accessible to all. Whilst the Trust has a comprehensive governance and performance framework, it does not currently have learning disabilities specific systems for:

- Sharing learning from research and serious incident reviews
- Disseminating national good practice such as the NICE guidance for the management of challenging behaviour in people with learning disability which is currently being developed
- Systematically ensuring that universal services are accessible and appropriate for someone with learning disabilities who meets our thresholds
- Providing specialist and universal training
- Ensuring people with learning disabilities, their families and carers have a say in the governance of the Trust
- Ensuring service users, carers and their families are recognised as stakeholders in Trust services
- Ensuring strategic interfaces with Clinical Commissioning Groups, Local Authorities and Specialist Commissioning
- Ensuring that all service users with learning disabilities within the criminal justice system get appropriate mental health input, care and support

8.2 Systems will be put in place to address these identified gaps.

9. Service User Experience

9.1 In order to ensure that services provided are responsive to the people who receive them, it is necessary to involve them in planning and doing so in an accessible and transparent way. Service user experience is paramount to the delivery of high quality care and for this reason the Trust will ensure the following:

- Each inpatient area has a system to routinely identify service users with learning disabilities/autism
- Systems are in place for routine capture of service user experience
- Advocacy arrangements on specialist wards for people with learning disability are fit for purpose and general mental health advocacy services are appropriate for people with learning disability
- There is an action plan to meet the gaps identified in the analysis of Trust provision for people with autism, in accordance with the requirements of the Autism Act 2009 and subsequent policy guidance
- Priority service areas where people with autism/learning disabilities are not able to easily access services, are identified along with the actions required in order to address these barriers

- Learning from best practice and implementation of solutions to improve the environment and access arrangements in relation to information, assessment and buildings
- Audit of the availability of accessible information for people with learning disabilities in inpatient and community areas

10. Governance and Information

10.1 Effective information sharing is key to safe, consistent and continuous clinical care. It is therefore important that clinical and governance recording systems are designed and formatted so as to capture the full range of activity carried out in relation to the care provided to people with learning disabilities. The Trust also has a duty under the Equality Act to ensure that institutional barriers to equality are identified and addressed and inclusivity is actively promoted and encouraged. The following actions will be taken to ensure that systems are designed to support these principles:

- Review of current Trust policy framework and where differences currently exist, make recommendations for possible standardisation (for example, where service specifications make it hard for people with learning disabilities to access the service)
- Ensure Trustwide systems are in place for learning disability specialists to have access to and be engaged in:
 - appropriate clinical supervision
 - continuous quality improvement
 - peer review
 - Continuous Professional Development
- Ensure arrangements are in place for learning from untoward incidents and critical incident review across learning disability teams
- Ensure that systematic training is in place so that Trust staff are aware of the needs of service users and carers in relation to learning disabilities and Autism
- Ensure learning disabilities activity is captured on all trust systems
- Ensure clinical and governance informatics systems such as RiO and Datix support the clinical and governance activities of learning disability services
- Ensure clinicians embedded in multi-disciplinary, multi-agency teams including non-ELFT services, have access to RiO and Datix systems

11. Partnership and Strategy

11.1 A range of providers and professions are currently involved in supporting people with mental health problems who have learning disabilities. This requires different agencies to work in partnership to plan and deliver good quality, joined-up services and support. In order to ensure that services provided are responsive to the people who receive them, it is necessary to involve them in planning and doing so in an accessible and transparent way. To put these underlying principles into action the Trust will carry out the following actions:

- Develop a detailed overview and evaluate the current range of partnership arrangements to which the Trust is currently party, in terms of the degree to which they support good services and partnership working

- Engage with partners to ascertain likely future strategic intentions
- Scope the national and local market context in terms of possible future opportunities and risks including women's services, adolescents, transitions, Autism and providing more community learning disability services
- Make recommendations for future service/business development

12. Communications

12.1 Devise a strategy to inform and regularly update:

- Executive & Trust Board
- Commissioners
- User/Carer groups
- Staff-side & staff groups
- Local Authority
- Trust as a whole
- LINK
Health and Wellbeing Board / GP's

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