





We
are grateful to the
children, young people
and adults with Autism in
Angus and to their parents
and carers who helped
with the development
of this Autism
strategy.

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1 Foreword

The Scottish Strategy for Autism (2011) identified Autism as a national priority and aims to ensure that progress will continue to be made in delivering quality services for those with Autism. The National Strategy stressed the need for action in supporting those with Autism at a national and local level.

As such, Angus has devised a local strategy to ensure that the needs of those with Autism are met. The development of this strategy has been informed by:

- The Transitions Project and Scottish Government Mapping Exercise
- Local engagement events in 2015 with children, parents, carers, adults and their families
- The Angus Autism Strategy Planning Group
- The Angus Community Plan and Single Outcome Agreement (2011-2014)
- Good practice that currently exists in Angus and within other Local Authorities
- The Scottish Strategy for Autism – Menu of Interventions
- National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) Autism Pathway
- Angus Carers' Strategy (2013 -2016)
- Policies and legislation such as:
 - Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act (2004) (amended 2009)
 - Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014
 - Commissioning Services for People on the Autistic Spectrum (2008)
 - The Social Care, Self-Directed Support (Scotland) Act (2013)
 - The Keys to Life, National Learning Disability Strategy (2013)
 - Mental Health Strategy for Scotland (2011-2015)
 - Public Bill (Joint Working) Scotland Act (2014)
 - Carers (Scotland) Bill – This reached Royal Assent in March 2016, and the Act will be implemented from April 2017

See Appendix 1 for further information with regard to policies and legislation.

2 Who is this Strategy for?

This strategy has been written for all people working and living within Angus. It aims to summarise for all, what supports and services people with Autism and their families' value and wish to be developed further within Angus. Based on recommendations from the Scottish Strategy for Autism on how services should be improved and from the views gathered from those with Autism and their families, the strategy provides a plan for the future. It provides a vision, for all, regarding how Angus Council, the Angus Health and Social Care Partnership, NHS Tayside and other local partners can support those with Autism and their families. It aims to recognise work that has already taken place over the last two years and to set out a plan for how the outcomes might be achieved locally over the next 5 and 10 year period.

3 What is Autism?

Autism is a complex, lifelong developmental disorder more commonly referred to as Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) but also known as Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC). It includes conditions such as classic Autism and Asperger's Syndrome.

Autism is a spectrum condition that affects people differently. However, what everyone with Autism will have in common is difficulty in 3 areas of functioning, sometimes referred to as the triad of impairments. People with Autism will experience difficulties with:

- Communication – both verbal and non-verbal (e.g. eye contact, facial expression, gestures and voice intonation)

- Interacting socially with others and recognising what others might be thinking
- Repetitive or obsessive behaviour (e.g. engaging frequently in the same kind of activity or having a restricted range of interests)

In addition, many people with Autism may also be over or under-sensitive to sensory information such as noise, textures, smell, balance, taste and proprioception (sense of movement and spatial orientation). These sensitivities to sensory information can be a cause of distress and anxiety for those individuals with Autism.

4 Why do we need a Strategy?

The Scottish Strategy for Autism was published by the Scottish Government in 2011, marking growing recognition that Autism is a national priority and deserves an agenda in its own right. The development of the national strategy ensures progress will continue to be made in delivering quality services for individuals on the spectrum across the country, wherever they have chosen to live.

One of the main recommendations of the Scottish Strategy is that each local authority area has an Autism Strategy. At a local level within Angus, the Strategy provides a plan, to enable children, young people, and adults with Autism, and their families/carers, to receive the help they need. The Angus Autism Strategy outlines the short and long term targets. In Angus, it has been agreed that our Strategy will be shared by the Local Authority, the Angus Health and Social Care Partnership, NHS Tayside and our partners, using the same underpinning values as agreed in the Scottish Autism Strategy.

The Scottish Strategy for Autism

The National Strategy for Autism identified 10 ways in which services for Autism should be developed. Each Local Authority area should have:

- A local Autism Strategy
- Access to training and development
- Easy access to useful and practical information about Autism
- An Autism training plan
- A process for data collection which improves the reporting of how many people with Autism are receiving services and informs the planning of those services
- A multi-agency care pathway for assessment, diagnosis and intervention to improve the support for people with Autism and remove barriers
- A way to get feedback to inform service improvement and encourage engagement
- A multi-agency and coordinated approach to meeting the needs of people with Autism
- Clear transitions at each important life-stage
- A self-evaluation framework to ensure best practice implementation and monitoring

The strategy also made 26 recommendations which, in summary, said that:

- The Scottish Government would provide strategic leadership and create a strategic vision for the development of services and support for those with, or affected by, Autism
- Resources would be effectively targeted with the aim of improving people's lives
- People with Autism and their families should be involved in decision making
- Cross agency working would be developed
- Adults should be able to get a diagnosis and support following diagnosis
- People with Autism should be supported to gain employment

Four Priority Outcomes

Local Authorities are now encouraged to consider and site the 26 recommended actions within a broader framework, for the purpose of being clearer about intended outcomes that can result from the implementation of the Scottish Strategy for Autism at a local level. As the introduction of national health and wellbeing outcomes, along with the integration of health and social care, will bring changes to how services for people with Autism and others will be planned and developed, the national strategy has been reframed to align with the four priority outcomes of:

- **A Healthy Life** – People with Autism enjoy the highest attainable standard of living, health and family life and have timely access to diagnostic assessment and integrated support services
- **Choice and Control** – People with Autism are treated with dignity and respect and services are able to identify their needs and are responsive to meet those needs
- **Independence** – People with Autism are able to live independently in the community with equal access to all aspects of society. Services have the capacity and awareness to ensure that people are met with recognition and understanding
- **Active Citizenship** – People with Autism are able to participate in all aspects of community and society by successfully transitioning from school into meaningful educational or employment opportunities

The Ten Year Plan

To ensure the Scottish Government address their recommendations by the time the National Strategy concludes, goals were set over 2, 5 and 10 year time periods. This is shown below and will guide the timeline of our local delivery plan.

Foundations: 2 year goals	Whole Life Journey: 5 year goals	Holistic, Personalised Approaches: 10 year goals
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Access to mainstream services where these are appropriate to meet individual needs. 2 Access to services which understand and are able to meet the needs of people specifically related to their autism. 3 Removal of short term barriers such as unaddressed diagnoses and delayed intervention. 4 Access to appropriate post-diagnostic support for individuals and families (particularly when there has been a late diagnosis). 5 Implementation of existing commissioning guidelines by local authorities, the NHS, and other relevant service providers. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Integrated service provision across the lifespan to address the multi-dimensional aspects of autism. 2 People with ASD have access to appropriate transition planning across the lifespan. 3 Consistent adoption of good practice guidance in key areas of education, health and social care across local authorities. 4 Capacity and awareness-building in mainstream services to ensure people are met with recognition and understanding of autism. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Meaningful partnership between central and local government and the independent sector. 2 Creative and collaborative use of service budgets to meet individual need (irrespective of what entry route to the system is). 3 Access to appropriate assessment of needs throughout life. 4 Access to consistent levels of appropriate support across the lifespan including into older age.

Scottish Strategy for Autism, 2011

5 Consultation

Shaping the Future:

In March 2011, the Transitions Project was developed in partnership with Angus Social Work and Health, and Capability Scotland. The Project aimed to stimulate debate with families, on how services for young people and adults with Autism could be developed and improved. The main focus was around transition from school to adult life. The subsequent report, entitled 'Shaping the Future', summarised the main findings and identified that the main issues and gaps, as perceived by families, were:

- Information issues
- Lack of social activities for young people and adults aged 14 +
- A need for respite and short breaks specifically for adults with Autism
- Transition issues
- A need for wider access to further education opportunities
- Comprehensive Autism training and awareness for staff

Scottish Government Mapping Project:

As part of the implementation of the National Strategy for Autism, the Scottish Government funded a mapping project to support Community Planning Partnerships to use an independent approach to consulting with people with Autism and their carers and identify the current position of local services. This has developed a snap shot of the local position, which reaffirms our understanding of local needs and hopes for future service development.



The word cloud above represents proportionally the things that parent/carers felt contributed to a good quality of life for the people they care for and the things that they felt were working well in Angus. The larger the word the more often the word was said.

Table 1. Respondents who took part in the Scottish Government Mapping Project Consultation		
Population	Number of Participants	
	Focus Groups	Questionnaires
Children	5	0
Young People and Adults	10	1
Parents/Carers	17	19
Professionals	18	19
Service Providers	0	3

The views of stakeholders were sought using a mixture of focus groups and questionnaires. They were asked to give their views about current provision and what they felt needed to improve. Table 1 summarises the number of respondents who took part in the consultation.

A number of key messages emerged from the consultation. Those consulted said they wanted:

- Raised understanding and awareness of Autism within society, in mainstream services and core services.
- More information post diagnosis and a clearer pathway for support including signposting to ensure that people are aware of the services and opportunities that are available.
- Improved co-ordination, communication and information-sharing between core services such as health and education.
- Consideration of environmental and sensory factors in different settings.
- Greater services and support both before a crisis and while in crisis, including social support, respite provision and advocacy support.
- Practical support with daily living tasks such as filling out forms.
- Further opportunities to be more actively involved in the community and have access to a choice of clubs and recreational activities. It was suggested that there should be increased social opportunities with others of a similar age.
- Better transport and access to services in rural areas.
- More employment and vocational training opportunities, for example work experience options, advice in self-employment, and support in finding employment.



The word cloud represents proportionally the things that parent/carers felt needed to improve in Angus. The larger the word the more often the word was said.

6 The Angus Strategy for Autism

Based on the findings of the consultation work; Shaping the Future and The Scottish Government Mapping Project, 8 priority areas for development have been identified as the focus for the Angus Strategy for Autism.

These are:

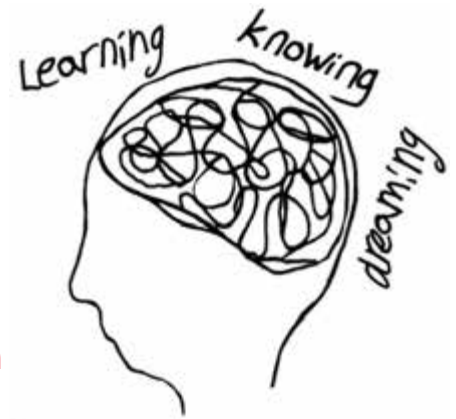
- 1 Improving Knowledge and Understanding of Autism**
- 2 Steps To and Beyond Diagnosis**
- 3 Support for Children, Adults and Families**
- 4 Improved Information Sharing Between Agencies**
- 5 Planning for Transitions Throughout Life**
- 6 Improved Learning Opportunities for Adults**
- 7 Purposeful Occupational Opportunities**
- 8 Supporting Adults to Live Independently**

In 2015, 211 families of children and young people with Autism, in Angus, were consulted on the priority areas and associated visions through a parental/ carer survey. Returns were received from 41 families. The vast majority of respondents agreed with the priority areas and vision proposed. As such, these key priority areas will be addressed through the Community Planning Partnership 2, 5 and 10 year Autism Strategy Plan. Each local priority area sits within one of the National Outcomes of Health, Choice and Control, Independence and Active Citizenship.

1 Improving Knowledge and Understanding of Autism

Vision :

Children and adults with Autism, their families and others in their local community, will be informed about Autism and know about local plans relating to Autism. They will be involved in contributing to the design and content of local plans.



Outcome:

We aim to continue to:

- Enable children, young people and adults with Autism, and their families to inform strategic plans in relation to Autism, through effective engagement.
- Provide Autism training and resources to support pupils in all Angus schools. Parents will be informed of training provided.
- Deliver training to staff supporting adults with Autism and offer such staff the opportunity to undertake the Open University, K124, Understanding the Autism Spectrum Course.
- Offer training to school/post school transport providers by Angus Additional Support Needs Team.

"It's tough when adults give you into trouble and not let you explain why you think or say certain things. Whilst it's good for other people to know why you might say certain things, it's not always their business."

*Ewan,
Primary 7 Pupil*

We plan to:

- Update and make available, electronically and in hard copy when requested, the Angus Autism Directory.
- Develop an e-learning tool for staff within Angus Council and for staff in the Angus Health and Social Care Partnership that emphasises the importance of sensory and environmental factors.
- Raise awareness with the general public using community events in different localities and liaising with national organisations.
- Promote training in Autism with Additional Support Needs staff.
- Identify an appropriate range of Autism training for staff at all levels.

2 Steps To and Beyond Diagnosis

Vision:

Adults and the parents/carers of those with Autism will know who they should speak to about a possible diagnosis and what to expect throughout that process and afterwards. After diagnosis, they will be given the information they need to access the appropriate support.



Outcome:

We aim to continue to:

- Provide post diagnosis support for families of newly diagnosed children and young people through the New Pathways parent information and training programme. This will continue to be delivered by Speech and Language Therapy in partnership with Educational Psychology and the Principal Teacher for Autism.
- Tailor the New Pathways programme to the needs of each group of families and the age group of the children. Adaptation of the programme will be based on the continual formal evaluation and informal feedback.

"Sometimes people with Autism get very anxious - we need to raise awareness that the National Autistic Society is there."

*Aiden,
Primary 5 Pupil*

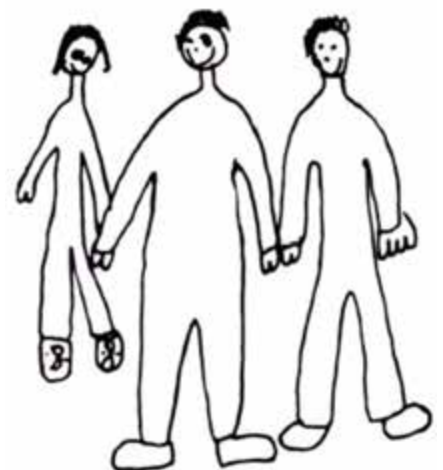
We plan to:

- Ensure the steps to diagnosis and post diagnosis support for children and adults are clear, transparent and communicated effectively within localities.
- Ensure access to the Tayside wide Autism service for Adults, including a specialist assessment, (with assessment for capacity) where the need is identified.
- Ensure that those with Autism and their parent/carers are informed of local support organisations.

3 Support for Children, Adults and Families

Vision:

Children and adults with Autism and their families, will feel accepted, included and supported by their local community. They will receive the right support, at the right time, from the right professional. Those with Autism will have greater opportunities to be more actively involved in their community and have access to a wider range of recreational activities.



Outcome:

We aim to continue to:

- Provide an adult respite database, detailing current and future respite requirements to be developed, through regular engagement with individuals and family members.

We plan to:

- Review transport arrangements for access to services in rural areas.
- Develop Autism friendly environments within mainstream and specialist services for adults.
- Further develop social opportunities and activities for children, young people and adults with Autism, where possible in the local community.
- Establish support groups for those with Autism and for those who live and care for children and adults with Autism.
- Implement Self-Directed Support (SDS) effectively to ensure greater choice and control over support arrangements for families and individuals on an ongoing basis and at times of crisis.
- Increase the number of Autism accredited specialist services for adults in Angus.

4 Improved Information Sharing Between Agencies

Vision:

Individuals with Autism and their families will feel confident that information and agreed actions will be shared and communicated well between professionals. This will ensure next steps and planned interventions will be followed through effectively.



Outcome:

We aim to continue to:

- Share information, following consent being given, within and between relevant professionals and agencies.
- Use the Getting It Right for Every Child Model (See Appendix 1) to ensure sharing of information between and within Children's Services and Adult Services.

We plan to:

- Establish a database of the number of children and adults with Autism receiving support in Angus.
- Improve coordination, communication and information sharing between core services such as health and education.
- Establish a system to highlight the needs of adults to service providers, with advice, basic guidelines and helpful contacts issued to staff in such services in advance.

"If anyone has questions about our Autism and how we cope with it, they should just ask us"

*Morgan
Primary 5 Pupil*

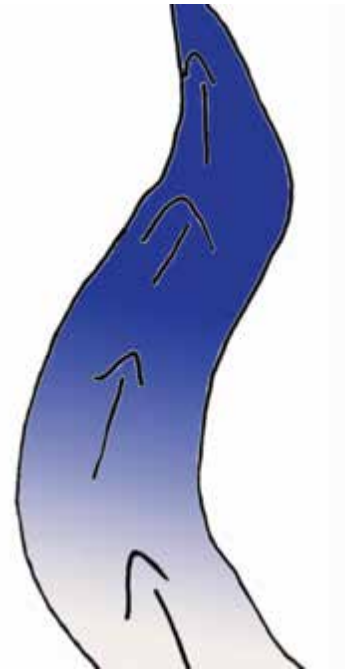
5 Planning for Transitions Throughout Life

Vision:

Parents, carers and young people with Autism will be involved in planning for their own or their child's future and will have confidence in professionals to provide appropriate support during transitions and into adult life.

Good communication and partnership working between professionals and families during transitions will take place.

Parents and carers, along with young people and adults with Autism will know who to speak to regarding advice about post school support, and will find the advice and support received to be helpful.



Outcome:

We aim to continue to:

- Ensure good coordination between school and post school providers through the current post school transition process and the annual multi-agency transition conferences.
- Plan and target support for early years and school age children through the Projections process.
- Ensure that each young person with Autism has a Named Person to explain and facilitate the transition process. (See Appendix 1 - Children and Young People Scotland Act).

We plan to:

- Promote the use of Transition Passports when children and young people move to a different provision or change teachers.
- Provide information regarding the transition from personnel within Children and Young People's Services/Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) into Adult Services and ensure this is communicated effectively with young people, parents, carers and relevant others.

"Since I have Autism I need time to get used to my surroundings. When I have the best teacher, that can help me and smiles, then I don't want to leave her to move to another class."

Libby

Primary 5 Pupil

"I felt supported, within Educational Conferences and meetings about my son, by the care manager and the resource centre management."

Parent of a Young Person with Autism.

6 Improved Learning Opportunities for Adults

Vision:

Adults with Autism will feel confident that they have the appropriate information to make good post school choices and the right kind of support to successfully complete their chosen courses.

Outcome:

We aim to continue to:

- Provide information regarding suitable post school courses and links to agencies, such as Skills Development Scotland, to young people/adults with Autism.

We plan to:

- Provide training to all staff to ensure that adults with Autism can be included within mainstream learning programmes.
- Establish links to local businesses, colleges and universities with a view to promoting Autism awareness and the necessary supports.



"I'd like someone to show me around College or University... and it would be good to get extra help."

Morgan,
Primary 5 Pupil

7 Purposeful Occupational Opportunities

Vision:

Young people and adults with Autism will have their vocational needs understood and be given clear guidance when seeking employment, education or training. Young people and adults with Autism will have the opportunity to be in employment, education or training and to have voluntary, training and work experiences that have clear options for career progression.

Outcome:

We aim to continue to:

- Support young people by identifying and engaging those who are not in education, training or employment through the 'Opportunities For All Partnership' and other training providers in Angus.



"If someone is nervous because they are away from their family and friends, it would be good if they could 'Facetime' from work."

Libby
Primary 5 Pupil

- Support people with Autism who are not yet in work through employability programmes with a range of partners. These programmes include literacy, numeracy, job search, information and communications technology and softer skills.

We plan to:

- Provide information about Autism and promote opportunities for work experience with local businesses including ongoing support to ensure positive experiences.

*"I am still working and still enjoy my work. I feel I am a valued member of the team. If I have any issues, which I don't, I feel I could approach my supervisor."
Adult with Autism, living and working in Angus.*

8 Supporting Adults to Live Independently

Vision:

People with Autism will feel assisted to plan for their future and will progress towards the level of independence that is right for them. They will feel safe, secure, supported and cared for within their home environment and neighbourhood, with an awareness of the range of housing options that are available and suitable for them.



Outcome:

We aim to continue to:

- Use the needs based Self-Directed Support (SDS) assessment to consider support options for adults with Autism, e.g. support for activities of daily living, social support, respite and emergency planning.
- Consult service users with Autism regarding their housing needs and ensure this information is fed into the Local Housing Strategy for Angus.
- Increase supported accommodation and the availability of mainstream tenancies for people with Autism.
- Be informed by the accommodation database in place for adults with Autism which details current and future accommodation requirements.

We plan to:

- Develop an Autism accredited specialist housing development for adults in Brechin.
- Make available to families, information on activities in day centres.

*"When I am grown up, I'll need a place to live, a job, things that remind me of my family, someone to love and someone to love me for who I am."
Aiden, Morgan, Libby and Ewan, Primary Pupils in Angus*

*"I like earning my own money to buy the things I want."
Adult with Autism, living and working in Angus*

Appendix 1

Other National Drivers that have influenced and informed the development of our Action Plan:

1 Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act (2004)

Under the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 (amended 2009), Angus Council is required to make arrangements to identify additional support needs and to make adequate and efficient provision for the additional support required for each child or young person, with additional support needs, for whose school education they are responsible.

This duty demands that the needs of children should be identified regardless of the presence or absence of any medical diagnosis. The support provided should assist them in overcoming their barriers to learning.

Support needs are also identified using duties of assessment in relation to children with disabilities in the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968, the NHS and Community Care Act 1990 and the Children (Scotland) Act 1995. Support for the family is assessed using legislation and guidance aimed at assessing and supporting the needs of carers.

2 Getting it Right for Every Child

All children and young people have their needs assessed using the Angus Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) staged intervention process. This is an approach that addresses the needs of children and young people and their families, by taking a holistic perspective, considering the child and the child's wellbeing within the context of their home, their community and their school environment. It uses a common, coordinated, staged intervention framework for shared assessment, planning and action to address the needs of children and young people. This model avoids duplication of effort, improves information sharing and makes it easier for parents and carers to participate in the planning and meeting of needs.

3 Commissioning Services for People on the Autism Spectrum

In 2008 the Scottish Government published this policy and practice guidance to inform the commissioning of health and social care services for people with Autism Spectrum Disorders in Scotland. The guidance identified five outcomes to be achieved from the commissioning of services. These outcomes have been adopted through the National Strategy for Autism.

4 Self-Directed Support (2013)

The Scottish Government has challenged local authorities in its National Strategy for Self-Directed Support to improve outcomes for all people who require support, putting people at the centre of their service so that people have a life, not a service. The National Strategy is underpinned by the Social Care (Self-Directed Support) Scotland Act 2013.

Self-Directed Support aims to:

- Increase control and choice by the person in relation to the support they need and how it is delivered
- Promote equal access to opportunity for people with support needs
- Enhance the role of citizenship
- Contribute to improving health and wellbeing and tackling health inequalities
- Develop quality of life outcomes for people.

Self-Directed Support is underpinned by the following values:

- Choice - for all accessing support
- Control - as much or as little as wanted
- Dignity and respect
- Right to community involvement
- Fairness and transparency
- Rights - and responsibilities
- Safety - but not over-protection.

To deliver on the new legislation, local authorities will need to develop forms of self-assessment backed by professional support; a transparent approach to the allocation of resources and creating opportunities to exercise choice by having a range of support providers working in the area. These developments affect all individuals with support needs including those with Autism.

5 The Keys to Life (2013)

The Keys to Life is a Scottish Government strategy for people with learning disability published in 2013. Whilst people with Autism are not the focus of this strategy, many people with Autism also have a learning disability and this national strategy will have an impact on the development of services. This strategy builds on the progress delivered through the "Same as You?" Scottish Government review of services for people with learning disabilities, published in 2000. The emphasis is on human rights, independence, choice and control, some of which will be delivered through the transformation of social work services required by the Social Care (Self-Directed) Support Act 2013 and the underpinning Self-Directed Support Strategy. Similar to the recommendations within the National Autism Strategy, there is a spotlight on information, staff training and access to appropriate support as well as improving health and wellbeing outcomes for people with learning disability.

6 Mental Health Strategy for Scotland (2011-2015)

The Mental Health Strategy for Scotland raises the profile of mental health by the Scottish Government and covers 14 important outcomes which include:

- i. People and communities - protecting their mental wellbeing
- ii People having a better understanding of their mental health
- ii Care and treatment that focuses on the whole person
- iv Professionals understanding the role of families and carers

Autism services will therefore be influenced by these expected outcomes and they should be shaped to include mental health improvement and the prevention of mental health problems.

7 Public Bill (Joint Working) (Scotland) (2013)

This Bill seeks to improve outcomes for individuals by improving the joined up delivery of support and intervention by health and social care services.

8 National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) Autism Pathway NICE guidelines

[CG142] Published date: June 2012. This guideline was previously called 'Autism: Recognition, Referral, Diagnosis and Management of Adults on the Autistic Spectrum'. It is a clinical guideline that offers evidence based advice on the diagnosis and management of Autism in adults.

9 Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014

The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act aims to put children at the centre of planning and to provide services with the goal of ensuring their rights are respected across the public sector through:

- Duties and responsibilities, for local authority staff, associated with Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) – named person, single planning process, focus on wellbeing outcomes and reporting on such outcomes
- Increased hours of free early learning and child care from 475 hours to 600 hours
- Improved permanence for Looked After Children
- Ensuring the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child properly influences the design and delivery of policies and services
- New rights to appeal local authority decisions in relation to placement or secure accommodation

10 Carers (Scotland) Bill

The Carers Scotland Bill reached Royal Assent in March 2016. The Carers (Scotland) Act will be implemented from April 2017 and regulations and guidance are awaited. The objective of this Act is to extend and enhance the rights of both adult and young carers in Scotland, with all carers being better supported and for young carers to have a childhood similar to non-carer peers.

11 The Angus Community Plan and Single Outcome Agreement 2011 - 2014

This plan and agreement supports the Angus Community Planning Partnership Vision that "Angus is a place where a first class quality of life can be enjoyed by all".

Local outcomes associated with this vision include:

- Our children and young people are confident individuals, effective contributors, successful learners and responsible citizens
- Individuals and families are involved in decisions which affect them
- Individuals are involved in their communities
- We have improved the lives of our people and inequalities are reduced
- Individuals are supported in their own communities with good quality services

Appendix 2

Understanding the Angus Population

Information regarding children and young people with any additional support need, including Autism, is maintained by schools and collated by the authority. This information is submitted annually to the Scottish Government and presented to Parliament in an annual report.

Information regarding adults accessing services, including social work community care services and Angus College, is collated by social work and provided to the national information service managed by the Scottish Centre for Learning Disability. The national average of adults living in Scotland, known to local authorities as being on the Autism Spectrum, is 13%. 15.6% of the adult population in Angus currently have Autism which ranks Angus as being the 8th highest nationally.

Research is constantly being undertaken into the prevalence of Autism and population data demonstrates increasing numbers of people with the diagnosis. There is no single explanation for the increasing prevalence of Autism. It is likely due to a combination of factors including increasing public and professional awareness, improved diagnosis, wider diagnostic criteria or a combination of all the above.

Both the National Autistic Society and the Office of National Statistics suggest that a rate of around 1 in 100 is currently the best estimate of the prevalence in children in Scotland. This would mean that there are around 6,900 pupils with Autism in Scotland. Additionally, Autism is more common amongst males than females by a ratio of 4:1.

Not all of these individuals will need formal health and/or community services and may not be known to services. However, many people will need life-long support. Despite this, differences in demographics and rates and methods of diagnosis across Scotland mean that it may not be possible to estimate numbers of individuals with Autism in Angus based on the national census data alone.

It is possible that there might be a discrepancy between the estimated prevalence of Autism and the recorded figures because:

- Some people with Autism can live independently and are thus never known to services
- Some people may also have other conditions such as a mental health condition or learning disability that may mask their Autism
- Some individuals may have other conditions which include Autistic traits such as Fragile X, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder and Obsessive Compulsive Disorder and may be recorded as such
- Assessment procedures for diagnosing Autism have improved greatly. As a consequence many adults who would now meet the criteria for Autism would not have been identified in the past.

The Community Planning Partnership also recognises that there are gaps in information locally about people with Autism, particularly in relation to individuals in touch with the Criminal Justice System.

