

PE1837/C

Autism Resources Co-ordination Hub (ARCH) - South Lanarkshire submission of 24 December 2020

With respect to the current Learning Disability and Autism Transition and Recovery Plans ARCH South Lanarkshire would respectfully submit the following for the committee's consideration;

- The current review of the 10 year Scottish Strategy for Autism has been commissioned from Blake Stevenson research. A total of 9 Local Authorities have been selected by the National Autism Implementation Team (NAIT), Scottish Autism and National Autistic Society Scotland with the result that the remaining 23 Authorities have been excluded from the substantive consultation – leaving the vast majority of the autistic community within the rest of Scotland without any representation from locality resources who are much better acquainted with local need on the ground. The concerns are that it seems the narrative relating to the Transition and Recovery plan is becoming increasingly centralised with only a few stakeholder organisations views being given prominence.
- ARCH would like to draw the committee's attention to the revised outcome consultation undertaken by Autism Network Scotland (ANS) in 2017/2018 throughout several key locations in Scotland. This process was inclusive and participatory and resulted in actions and revised outcomes which were subsequently incorporated into the 'Scottish Strategy for Autism - Revised Outcomes' document in 2018. ARCH was then invited by ANS to take part in the Advocacy Roundtable Collaborative meetings with the Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance and a range of other stakeholders tasked with developing more comprehensive advocacy services at local level alongside Professional Independent Advocacy provision. This roundtable seems to have been abandoned in spite of the Scottish Government commitment to fulfilling the clear message conveyed by all stakeholders during the revised outcomes events.
- The fact that ARCH South Lanarkshire have represented a unique alternative to third sector provision means we have influenced Local Authority policy and practice in a manner inconceivable by third sector organisations. ARCH has drafted and had approved the South Lanarkshire Local Autism Action Plan 2018-2023, which in many respects is echoed in much of the Transitions and Recovery plan published by the Cross Party Group on Autism (CPGA). However ARCH has had no part in any consultation events in spite of our presence being known by principle CPGA contributors.
- ARCH has been embodying the Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) approach to service design and delivery for nearly 5 years. In spite of the Autism Post Diagnostic Pilot recently announced by NAIT , there has been no formal or informal approaches made to us by the pilot participants to consult on our experience of such provision or our ongoing collaboration with stakeholders in all sectors in identifying unmet autism support needs , then setting about collaborating,

designing and co-delivering supports and services with all these partners in the private, statutory, third and peer led sectors in what has become a 'bottom up' as opposed to 'top-down' model.

- The fact that the Learning Disability and Autism Transition and Recovery Plans mentions community based approaches; it is unclear why ARCH's experience in this area has not been sought.
- The collective lived experience of the 10 year long Scottish Strategy for Autism is that all of its stated outcomes (original as revised) have in no way been met. ARCH remains clear that workforce and community development/capacity building must be a priority if even a basic 'autism-informed' level of understanding is to be realised. This is in line with the NES Optimising Outcomes Training Framework document published in 2014 and which remains the best 'benchmark' of autism levels of training; Informed, Skilled Enhanced and Expertise.
- ARCH has also seen nothing by way of additional funding from the Scottish Government, and all costs have been met from existing HSCP budgets. By contrast all additional funding announced had been focused on a handful of autism organisations.
- ARCH remains concerned that third sector organisations are being used by NHS Scotland to provide adult autism diagnostic services, which are already provisioned by NHS within Children and Families services CAMHS and Neurodevelopmental services This has resulted in piecemeal and inconsistent provision for crucial adult diagnostics for those who do not have Mental Health conditions or an Intellectual Disability - 66% of all Scotland's Autistic people do not have a learning disability as articulated in the Microsegmentation report 2018.
- The recent Neurodevelopmental Service Specification draft issued by the Children and Young People's Mental Health and Wellbeing Programme Board appears to have focused on applying a highly 'medicalised' model of service delivery for the autism community which directly contradicts all Autism/LD related policies published by the Scottish Government since the Christie commission in 2011.
- ARCH is gravely concerned that Autism Network Scotland has been informed it will no longer receive Scottish Government funding from 2021, with the result that Autism Lead Officers from all of Scotland's 32 Local Authorities will be excluded from the development of autism policies and practice throughout the country. This matter has already been raised by ARCH South Lanarkshire with COSLA and Social Work Scotland as a particular area of concern.