

Dear Colleague

February 2010

Better commissioning and better outcomes for children and young people on the Autism Spectrum

I am writing to you on behalf of the Autism Education Trust [www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk].

The Trust has been funded through the DCSF to work with the Commissioning Support Programme to improve the commissioning of services for children on the autism spectrum.

Effective Commissioning for ASD

Effective commissioning of services for children with autism, their families, young people approaching adulthood, and those adults who continue to need support, means that commissioners should:

- Be clear about the group of individuals they are considering
- Have started to engage at an early stage with these individuals and their advocates
- Understand the range of needs associated with Autism Spectrum Disorder
- Be able to tailor-make / adapt / reinforce / replicate provision that is effective
- Be able to articulate indicators and measures of effective commissioning
- Be able to ensure that unique issues associated with ASD are understood and that they inform decision making.

Practical support from the CSP and AET

The joint work of the Autism Education Trust with Commissioning Support Programme (CSP) will provide easier access to reports, guidance and exemplars of effective commissioning practice through the CSP web-site (www.commissioningsupport.org.uk).

It will provide, for those Local Authorities and Commissioners who believe it will be helpful, some free and focused support in developing or enhancing approaches to commissioning services for children and young people on the autism spectrum.

Action for you

I attach to this letter a series of questions that will take you no more than 5-7 minutes to respond to. They are designed to help you judge how far you are aware of what the AET sees as current challenges for the future commissioning of ASD services and provision.

The questions are designed to enable you, as an individual directly engaged in commissioning activity, to identify if there are gaps in your knowledge base in this area, and to judge if we may be able to help.

AET / CSP Consultancy Support offer

What sort of help is available?

The AET has access to individuals who have been directly involved in the commissioning of services for children and young people with an ASD. Varying levels of support (practical and consultancy) are available. This would be based on the identified support needs of the individual officer, but could include, for example:

- Considering a generic commissioning strategy to see if there were aspects that might need enhancing to include the unique needs of children and young people with an ASD
- Signposting commissioning officers to useful data sources, or examples of successful practice
- Creative joint thinking around developing local performance indicators

Any consultancy support provided will be free, and will be provided by consultants, or serving LA officers, who can demonstrate a well developed understanding of autism, and a successful track record in this area.

Next Steps

your completed form to me. You can do this by:

- a) downloading the questionnaire from the AET website (www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk) and e mailing it to me on penny.richardson1@ntlworld.com,
or
- b) returning a paper copy to me at 1, Jasper Close, Radcliffe on Trent, Nottingham, NG12 2EP

It would be very helpful to have received your responses **by the end of February**

Other Comments

Please feel free to add any other comments including:

- any specific documentation or information that you feel would be useful to share with other LAs, either through the AET or CSP web-site, or
- a suggestion that you would be able to provide mentor support (funded by the AET) to other LAs, or
- the focus of any consultancy support that you might find helpful to receive.

Meanwhile, I can be contacted by e mail on penny.richardson1@ntlworld.com , or by telephone on 07920 016947.

Yours sincerely

Penny Richardson
SEN and Children's Services Consultant

For the Autism Education Trust