

Cover Sheet Autism Programme Board Papers

Date of meeting

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Title of paper

Update from NICE on autism.

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Summary

The paper covers NICE clinical guidelines, the quality standard for autism and resources that support the guidance.

Action required / recommendation

For information and discussion.

National Institute for Health and Care Excellence

Report for the Autism Programme Board meeting

An update on what NICE has produced related to autism

3 February 2014

The provision of services for people with autism is varied across the country. In order to standardise and improve the care and management of autism and to enable health and social care services to support people with autism more effectively NICE has published 3 clinical guidelines on autism and a quality standard. In addition, NICE has produced a number of implementation resources to support the uptake of this guidance.

Meeting NICE guidance will achieve key elements of the national autism strategy, 'Fulfilling and rewarding lives' ([Department of Health 2010](#)), and will help to prepare children's services for the Children and Families Bill.

NICE clinical guidelines

NICE has published 3 clinical guidelines on autism.

- [Autism: recognition, referral and diagnosis of children and young people on the autism spectrum. NICE clinical guideline 128 \(2011\).](#)
- [Autism: the management and support of children and young people on the autism spectrum. NICE clinical guideline 170 \(2013\).](#)
- [Autism: recognition, referral, diagnosis and management of adults on the autism spectrum. NICE clinical guideline 142 \(2012\).](#)

Statutory guidance, 'Implementing fulfilling and rewarding lives: the strategy for adults with autism in England' ([Department of Health 2010](#)), indicates that there should be an identified commissioning lead for adult autism services and a multi-agency group to take forward the autism strategy for adults. NICE guidance supports this and extends it to children's services. Both statutory guidance and NICE guidance recommend the establishment of local autism teams and the NICE quality standard for autism is premised on the fact that services are organised in this way.

NICE quality standard for autism

The NICE quality standard on autism can be used alongside the autism strategy and NICE clinical guidelines, to inform the commissioning of autism services for children, young people and adults focusing on the key areas for improving the quality of existing services.

The 3 autism guidelines were grouped together into one quality standard to ensure that commissioners and other users of quality standards have as few standards as possible to consider when they are considering care in a given topic area. This topic grouping was agreed with NHS England.

The quality standard is made up of 8 quality statements underpinned by the 3 NICE guidelines, and covers recognition, diagnosis, management and support of the condition. The markers of high quality care outlined in the statements include that people with suspected autism should be referred for prompt diagnostic assessment (within 3 months) so that appropriate health and social care interventions, advice and support can be offered. Medication should not be prescribed to address the core features of autism, instead consideration should be given to whether psychosocial intervention would be beneficial. In addition, people with autism should be assessed for the physical health, mental health and social and environmental 'triggers' that can sometimes cause them to display challenging behaviour.

Support for commissioners

NICE has published, Support for Commissioning, which clearly outlines the key actions that commissioners should take to deliver the quality improvement outlined in the NICE quality standard. The report also outlines the costs and savings associated with this.

The advice is aimed at local authority, social care and education commissioners and clinical commissioning groups working in partnership with Health and Wellbeing Boards to improve the integration of services across the local pathway.

Supporting organisations to assess how they are meeting the recommendations

NICE has produced baseline assessment tools for each of the autism guidelines that can be used by organisations to identify how services are currently operating in relation to the recommendations. To help plan activity to meet the recommendations NICE has also produced a range of clinical audit tools which contain audit standards, a data collection form and an action plan template.

NICE resources to support implementation

NICE and the National Collaborating Centre for Social Care jointly carried out a needs assessment to identify areas of the quality standard which might require additional support for implementation. Similar needs assessments were carried out by NICE for each of the clinical guidelines. Tools were produced to aid uptake of the guidance in the following areas.

- Awareness and diagnosis of autism

The signs and symptoms for autism are varied and may be confounded by coexisting psychiatric disorders which can make identification, referral and diagnosis difficult. NICE has produced a number of clinical case scenarios aimed at clinicians which illustrate the process of recognition, referral, diagnosis and management in both adults and children presenting with a range of signs and symptoms.

In addition, for people working with children, the signs and symptoms tables contained in appendix C of clinical guideline 128 were developed into three checklists for pre-school, primary school and secondary school children.

To help professionals decide if referral for assessment is required for adults with suspected autism, NICE, in collaboration with Cambridge University, has reformatted the Autism-Spectrum Quotient-10 items (AQ-10) recommended in the guideline and made it available via the NICE website.

- Establishment of multi-agency local autism teams

Needs assessments carried out for all 3 NICE guidelines on autism identified lack of support for the establishment of local autism teams necessary to enable multi-agency working. NICE has produced an implementation pack to help senior professionals from different disciplines and organisations create a multi-agency autism team to best meet local needs. If an area does not yet have a multi-agency strategy group, the implementation pack will help determine who needs to be involved in the strategy group, and if there is an existing forum that can fulfil this function. The pack also includes a set of resources, including case study examples of existing services, a local autism team information sheet, an introductory slide set and audit tools for adult and children's services. It is not expected that setting up local autism teams will have a significant impact on costs. Potential costs should be assessed locally and NICE has a series of costing tools to help with this.

Shared learning

The NICE Shared Learning database includes examples from practice which show how recommendations from NICE guidance have been implemented. Any organisation can submit an example, which then goes through a quality assurance process before being uploaded to the NICE website.

Currently there are 3 examples supporting the autism guidelines.

- [Hampshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust](#): autism management in children and young people - recognising and overcoming barriers to accessing care.
- [Isaac Newton Professional Development Centre, London](#). The Behaviour and Family Support Team - a specialist child and adolescent mental health service for children with disabilities and their families.
- [Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust](#). Nottingham City Asperger Service is a multidisciplinary diagnostic assessment and support service for adults with Asperger syndrome living in Nottingham city.