

Bolton Adult Asperger Support

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 25th June 2014

- 1 Apologies: Apologies were received from Stephanie Shaw and Julie Farrar.
- 2 Minutes – The minutes of the meeting held in May were accepted.
- 3 Matters Arising: There were no matters arising.

4. The Chairman introduced PC Jane Wilcox, a member of the Bolton Partnership and Licensing section. Jane's main objective is to support the force in implementing strategic policy and in particular the delivery of Asperger awareness training within the force. Jane indicated she was first introduced to Asperger Syndrome and autistic spectrum disorders through her training at Castle Hill Training Centre Bolton.

Jane also works with partnership agencies, and one in particular called 'New Openings' which operate from the Justica Shop situated on Newport Street, Bolton, under the guidance of Eileen Bennett and Ian Waring. This group meets every Wednesday 10-12pm. This is an opportunity to Discuss common misconceptions held by the public and public services, particularly young people and adults with Asperger Syndrome and others on the Autism spectrum in the community.

Jane also advised the group of the 'I'm not laughing' campaign involving the police force, local groups and supporting agencies and traders. This was as a direct result of an 'unfortunate incident' involving a particular vulnerable adult in which the police were involved and which, on reflection highlighted the 'gap' in awareness and the need to look at how all support agencies can interact with one another with 'more joined up thinking'.

Jane advised the Group of the Equality and Diversity Strategy document 'looking at new ways' which has helped to shape and create new ways to improve the services within the community. The Chairman advised Jane of the discussion that had taken place several months ago with Phil Keyes and the use of ID cards, and of training in awareness of use of the ID cards which had recently been undertaken by Marie Saaki of NAS (National Autistic Society) and her ongoing involvement with the Metropolitan Police Training Centre at Sedgeley Park. Marie felt that feedback from the force during training had been rather a 'mixed response' and Chairman asked Jane what her view was from her own experience, Jane stated that this was still very much a 'hit and miss' area but through her ongoing partnership with agencies such as 'New Openings' was hopeful that greater awareness would improve police protocol, particularly when attending incidents where a young adult on the autism spectrum may be in 'melt down' could be dealt with in a more sensitive way. At this point Jane suggested that perhaps the use of a wrist bracelet, 'particularly as it seems to be a fashion item at present' could be more instantly recognisable than an ID card. This idea will be carried forward by the Group and discussed with NAS. Also, Jane states that the ongoing work within the force on awareness will have greater impact in meeting the needs of vulnerable adults in the future. The Chairman asked PC Jane if more interaction from the Group with 'New Openings' would be of benefit. PC Jane Wilcox welcomed this idea and it was agreed that a member of the Group attend the next meeting to secure stronger links with other associated agencies in the community. Jane advised that the force had recently set up an Advisory Groups (following the Stephen Lawrence incident) called the Independent Advisory Group which has members from all areas of the community, who discuss policy and procedure and report on any critical incidents in the area. This has proved to be very successful and has been instrumental in changes in the way the police operate and decision making within the force. The Chairman asked if either he or a member of the group could attend these meetings in the future, which would also be an invaluable way of 'raising the profile', Jane advised that the group meet about four times a year and would advise the

Group of the date of the next meeting via e-mail. There is also an information and guidance pack which will also be sent to the Group.

Jane also advised the Group that there was a 'code of practice' of police procedure and protocol when attending an incident leading to arrest and this will also be sent to the Chairman.

Jane explained the present code of practice when attending any incident, as follows:

If there is an arrest, the detainee receives a copy of 'entitlement' but it does not necessarily follow that they are entitled to a phone call, this may be at the discretion of the custody officer at the police station and could depend on 'time constraints'.

If it is obvious that the person arrested could be deemed a vulnerable adult then steps are taken to engage an appropriate adult to act as advocate before an interview takes place (which is deemed as their human right). Unfortunately, in practice this again depends on 'time constraints' However, Jane stated that at present PACE does not make 'any provision' and hoped that in the future this could be improved which would have a greater impact on de-escalating a situation which otherwise could, if not handled correctly, go completely 'out of control'.

PC Jane Wilcox stated that at present, unfortunately, the priority when attending an incident is to make it 'safe and secure' but hopes that further training awareness in the future would help the arresting officers to handle the matter in a more sensitive and supporting way.

The Chairman asked PC Jane Wilcox if the 'appropriate adult' service required training or qualifications. Jane advised that selection was made from adults who had the appropriate skills base, knowledge and experience, and would provide this information to the group via e-mail.

The Chairman and the Group thanked PC Wilcox for her attendance and valuable input to the Group.

5. Chairman's Report - The chairman reported that an IT Company called Luxon has now been engaged to create a web domain and logo. Examples of proposed logo's were produced for the group to look at and decide their preferences. One was selected but the group would still like to see further examples of art work around the logo before a final decision was made. All the Group felt they would like to see something 'more graphic' that would be easily identified as to who we were and who we represented. The colours blue and grey were chosen as these are easily assimilated by any one on the autism spectrum and associated disorders.

The Chairman stated that we were still trying to obtain 'charitable status' and the submission to the Charity Commission would have to be re-submitted. He is to contact BCVS for further advice before re-submission.

The Chairman asked the group if any member had any further suggestions with regards holding an event that would benefit the carers. Several suggestions were made and the Chairman asked the Group if a collective decision could be made soon, particularly as we may lose the funding.

6. Dates of next meetings

The next Drop- In is on Saturday 28th June at Bridgeman Place, Bolton and the date of the Next Meeting is Wednesday 30th July at 2pm – Thicketford Health Centre.