

BOLTON ADULT ASPERGER SUPPORT

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday February 26th 2014

1. In attendance: 13 members and 3 guests

Apologies were received from Julie Farrar and Kath Martin

2. Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday January 26th

The minutes of the above meeting were accepted as a true record

3. Matters arising

The Chairman referred to a grammatical error in the minutes. There were no other matters arising.

4. Presentation by Mr Mathieu Culverhouse on the Mental Capacity Act 2005

The Chairman introduced Mr Mathieu Culverhouse, a Solicitor with the Irwin Mitchell partnership.

Mathieu outlined his area of work within the firm indicating that his work related largely to two areas, namely, THE Mental Capacity Act 2005 and The Community Care Act 1998 Mathieu was to concentrate on The Mental Capacity Act 2005.

The MCA was passed by Parliament following wide consultation and covers England and Wales, and came into effect in 2007. Scotland he said had its own legislation. It established a single and comprehensive legal framework for decision making for people over the age of 16 who “ may not be able to make their own decisions due to illness, learning disability or mental health problems”.

There remains however a grey area in respect of people aged 16-17 years, a so called transitional period from childhood to adulthood. And therefore young people are protected by the family court until the age of 18years.

A new act was required because it was estimated that more than 2million people in England and Wales lack the capacity to make decisions for themselves, due to dementia, learning disability, mental health problems, stroke or brain injury.

Lack of capacity to make decisions means in relation to financial affairs; e.g., consenting to power of attorney; health and personal welfare, e.g., consent to medical treatment and where to live; personal conduct, for example who to associate with, marriage and sexual relations and the litigation process.

Mathieu continued and explained the meaning of capacity as determined by the act, i.e a person is unable to make a decision for him/herself if he/she is unable to understand the information relevant to the decision, communicate his/her decision whether by talking, using sign language, or any other means.

Mathieu went on to outline the 5 key principles of the act and the duties of people acting on those without capacity to act in the best interests of that person for whom they have power of attorney

He then went on to outline the functions of the New Court of Protection; the appointment of deputies and the appointing of Independent mental Capacity Advocates (IMCA's (those people acting on behalf of the person lacking capacity to ensure that an independent unbiased opinion can prevail on behalf of the relevant person). In the Bolton and surrounding districts SHAP (www.shap.org.uk) have been awarded IMCA status.

There followed a lively question and answer session at the end of which the Chairman once again thanked Mathieu for his attendance and for his most informative and enlightening presentation. The group gave Mathieu a warm round of applause. Mathieu thanked the group for inviting him and said that if anyone wished to ask further questions on this topic after today or had a particular problem then he would be happy to be consulted.

5. Presentation by Mr Richard Sly and Mr Mark Fraser Bolton Children's and Adults department, Bolton Council.

The Chairman introduced the above speakers, and said it was good to have Richard Sly with us again.

Mark Fraser confirmed his title as Community Manager with responsibility for people with disabilities and mental health aged 18-65.

Richard thanked the Chairman and group members for agreeing at short notice their coming along to this meeting, the purpose of which was to give the group an update on progress of the Council's Autism Strategy. Mark explained that the department had recently undergone the final stages of a re-organisation with the appointment of new Assistant Directors. Rachel Tanner had been appointed Assistant Director with responsibility for the Autism Strategy. Adrian Crook had been appointed Assistant Director for Integration and Provider Services.

Richard explained that the recent changes within the department had delayed progress on the strategy but with the appointment of the above officers, the work was now 'back on track'.

Nationally, the Strategy was still in the consultancy phase. The local strategy was being redrafted and the opinions of group members were sought in order to help with the process.

Richard explained there were 7 priorities to the strategy. A plan was now in place; it was theme related and was able to accommodate reasonable adjustments. All staff contributing to the strategy and staff whose work was likely to be affected by the strategy had/were undergoing appropriate training. The training was led by Jill Whitehead, Work Force Development Officer. The training package had been developed to enable the council and partners to improve practice.

Richard explained that on the question of diagnosis, there would be clear and consistent post diagnostic support. Other priorities included Information and Advice, which had to be fit for purpose. Work on this priority was ongoing. On the question of accessibility, members pointed out that whilst there was a general assumption to people accessing information online, this left a greater many people at a disadvantage, because whilst many autistic people were high functioning, many were not and either did not have access to a computer or were not computer literate. Therefore it was strongly felt that there was an important need for information to be made available in the written form, i.e., leaflets and posters. Distribution was thought important by members, as many

professionals were ignorant of the needs of Autistic people and were unable to read the signs of someone with Autism/AS.

Transitional support, employment, local planning of services (multi-agency) and specialist support were other priorities. TS felt that on the question of multi-agency working, continued links with the National Autism Society were very important and we (group members) were acutely aware of the need for continuing financial support for the NAS from Bolton Council. Mark Fraser believed that funding of NAS (M/C would continue subject to NAS being able to demonstrate achievement of required outcomes). Regarding transitional support, this was now believed by the Council to be a smooth process for affected persons.

Phillip Martin felt that when deciding upon support, there was a tendency to overlook the main carers (especially elderly carers) He asked for due regard to be given to carers of people with Asperger Syndrome, especially those who themselves might be infirm. This was duly noted by RS and MF.

The discussion continued with a lively question and answer session at the close of which the guest speakers expressed gratitude to the group for their once more valuable contribution to the work of the Council and once more thanked the group for the invitation to attend the meeting.

6. Chairman's report

The Chairman informed the group that he had confirmed with Steph' Sherrat that the group would, from the last Saturday in March, be holding a drop-in session at the new premises at Bridgman Place. The sessions would start at 2pm whilst ABAG members were in the building. This arrangement would assist those parents/carers who might find it easier to attend BAAS meetings whilst their Sons/Daughters were at their own meeting.

The Chairman confirmed that at that moment there had been no feed-back on the group's grant application to the Council.

The Chairman confirmed that at the next meeting, Marie Saeki would be attending together with Barbara Whillans from the Welfare rights section of NAS who would be delivering a workshop on welfare rights. This meant that we would be hosting this workshop for other interested parties. The Chairman would need to determine the maximum numbers (non group members) who could be accommodated at Thicketford House. **Action:** Chairman.

7. Date and time of next meeting

The next meeting will take place on March 26th at **2.00 pm**

The meeting closed at 4.45pm