

BOLTON ADULT ASPERGERS SUPPORT GROUP

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 30TH JANUARY 2013 AT THICKETFORD CARERS' CENTRE

The meeting was led by Eira Heywood

Item 1. Welcome and Introductions

There were 17 members in attendance and a visiting speaker. For the benefit of the visiting speaker and new members, everyone introduced themselves.

A very warm welcome was extended to all present and particularly to Ralph and Cath and Marlene this being their first attendance at the group.

Item 2. Minutes of the meeting of the 29th November 2012

Graham Heywood reported that there were unfortunately, no minutes available from the above meeting but that from now on it was intended that formal minutes of each meeting would be available in accordance with standard procedure once we had set up a committee. The committee itself would hold formal meetings separately from the Parents' meetings. The Parents' meetings will therefore be relaxed informal chat self-help meetings except for those parts of the meetings where a visiting speaker is present. Also these Parents meetings will deal with other requests/needs- information about which will be included on the invitation to each meeting.

Item 3. Presentation by Mr Richard Sly, Policy and public Relations Manager- Childrens' and Adult Services Department, Bolton Council

Richard Sly thanked the group for the opportunity to give this presentation on the Council's Autism Strategy. He outlined the work so far and indicated that it was the Council's intention to publish the Autism Strategy in April this year, following some two and a half years development of awareness knowledge. The Council had recently undertaken a consultation exercise.

Following this consultation, proposals had now been worked up that it was hoped would help further inform the strategy, these included:

- the importance of openness,
- provision of help with Diagnosis of Aspergers,
- the needs of people moving from childhood to adulthood, to enable people to make a supported transition.
- substantially increase information/awareness of Aspergers amongst professional groups, including; Police, Probation service, CMHT, Politicians, GP's, other Clinicians, care groups, and the wider public generally.
- a care pathway that would aid diagnosis and an eventual statement of condition to an eventual care package.

Richard Sly asked members if they had any comments or observations on the issues he had highlighted and invited examples from members' personal experiences.

All members agreed that awareness of Aspergers amongst professional groups was seriously lacking and that awareness training in Aspergers should be a priority for health professionals. A number of members' highlighted personal and in some cases heart- rending experiences of disappointing engagement with GP's, Police and Mental Health organisations.

Graham Heywood raised the question of funding of the strategy once it had been launched and wondered if it was likely that funds might be ring fenced.

Richard Sly replied that for some years now, very few services had been ring fenced and it was not likely that funds would be ring fenced in support of the Autism strategy.

Group members further offered suggestions for improving the lives of people (our children) with Aspergers, including for example, availability of bus passes in areas of Greater Manchester, assistance (in some areas) with funding to access training/social activities.

Kath Martin asked Richard Sly who was involved in commissioning the report. RS replied the report had been commissioned by local councillors and senior officers had been working on the strategy for some considerable time and would soon be reporting fully to the appropriate committee by the end of April.

Kath Martin further asked who had overall responsibility within the Council? Richard Sly replied it was Margaret Asquith, Director of Childrens' and Adult Services.

There being no further questions, Richard Sly thanked the group for the invitation to meet the group and expressed the hope that the group would, in the future, be an important source of consultation for and support to the Council on the subject of Aspergers Syndrome. Eira Heywood thanked Richard Sly for his presentation and said the group will look forward with eagerness to the publication of the report.

Item 4. Update on Grant Aid

Barbara Kerks (representing Time 2 Organisation) informed the group that grant aid of a little under £12k had been secured for training opportunities for the group and asked members for ideas for its use. A number of suggestions were made, including; the need for assistance with completion of benefit forms (Eira Heywood to help determine content, e.g. scenario and role play) and relaxation therapy (Susan Daubney); Role Play; Coping Strategies and Social Etiquette. Also National Autistic Society packages: "Being Me" and "Socialise" if they are still available.

Item 5. Information sharing

Eira Heywood asked members for any items they wished to share. Barbara Kerks drew members' attention to two events scheduled to take place in future months. These were;

1. The Greater Manchester Autism Consortium will host a presentation by group professionals and parents between 9.30am and 4.30pm on Wednesday 22nd May 2013 at THE Bredbury Hall and Country Club Osborne Street, Bredbury, Stockport.

2. An evening with Rudy Simone, author and international speaker, on Thursday March 7th at Kings House Conference Centre, Manchester. Fees apply. More information on;
<http://www.autism.org.uk/conferences/rudysimone>

Barbara Kerks also gave feedback on the Saturday group meeting of 26th which she said had been quite useful despite problems of access to the designated meeting room.

Tony Shaw drew attention to flyers given / emailed to members of the group that sought information including personal details from Saturday group members and said that he was concerned at their use because permission had not been sought from parents for the use of the flyers or any other literature pertaining to the Saturday group. Barbara Kerks apologised for not having sought parents/carers permission in this instance but assured members that such would not happen in future.

Item 6. Any Other Business

At the end of the meeting Stephanie Shaw pointed out that we should have our own logo on all literature relating to the group. She held up the leaflet given out by Barbara Kerks in January and which has Time2 Communities as a title. This refers to the business of which our group is not a part.

Item 6. Date and time of next meeting.

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 27th March at the Thicketford Road Centre between 2.00pm and 4.00pm

Future dates: Wednesday 24th April between 2.00pm and 4.00pm

Wednesday 29th May between 2.00pm and 4.00pm

The meeting closed at 4.10pm.