



# West Sussex Autism Partnership Board (APB)

## Minutes

**Meeting:** Thursday 21 November 2024, 11am – 1pm (zoom)

### Attendees:

Diana Bernhardt – Commissioning Service Manager (WSCC) Chair  
Anna Lansley – ASSA  
Vicky Littlejohn - ASSA  
Graham Sargeant - ASSA  
Dan Gregory – Aspective  
Maggie – Aspective  
Katie Green – Access All Areas  
Jayne Simpson – parent carer  
Martin Ford – Aldingbourne Trust, LIMA  
Cole Andrew – NHS NDS Service  
Simona Giunta – Commissioning and Contracts Officer (WSCC) Minutes  
Gary Capelin – Peer Support Co-Ordinator (WSCC)  
Katie Glover (WSCC)  
Tom Elsam (WSCC Lifelong Service)

### Guests:

Liz Miles – WorkAid, Aldingbourne Trust

### Apologies:

Jess Dare – NHS; Sheryl Bunting, Carers Support; Rachel Benson – Aldingbourne Trust.

## Notes and Actions

### **1. Welcome and Introductions**

The Board welcomed Liz Miles who works with Aldingbourne Trust/WorkAid and attended to present the SEWS provision. Andrew Cole - NHS Neuro Developmental Service.

The Board's chair Diana Bernhardt provided a quick reminder of the APB rules and conventions for our meetings -

- The APB meeting is a safe space where people can express their views. People may have different views which may be difficult for some people to hear in the meeting.
- If people find a discussion or topic difficult, individuals can turn their camera off, have some space and time and return to the meeting when they are ready.
- Gary is available during the meeting if people want to speak to someone. Diana, Simona and Gary are also available after the meeting if people want to talk things through. Please message or e mail Simona if you want to arrange to talk to us.
- Presentations – we need to follow the times on the agenda to make sure we can discuss everything before the meeting ends. To help to keep the meetings on time, we will firstly listen to the presentation and then discuss questions or feedback once the presentation is finished. If there is not enough time for everyone's questions or feedback within the time allowed, please use the chat or message your questions to us to follow up.
- Please try to avoid 'side conversations' in the chat that are not about the topic that we are discussing at the time.

A member commented that they find it difficult to limit exploration of a topic through a question limited to one answer and not being able to ask further questions due to time limits. Diana clarified that longer conversations on specific points could be taken outside of the meeting if needed.

Another member shared they find it easier and useful to participate using the chat. They appreciate it can sometimes go sideways and maybe distract some people.

## **2. Last meeting notes**

Minutes of the last meeting approved. They will be uploaded on WSCC website.

### **3. Matters arising**

All actions from last meeting complete.

### **4. Supported Employment West Sussex presentation – Liz Miles (Aldingbourne Trust)**

Liz answered some questions from members.

Q: Is The supported employment available to people who are not yet diagnosed as autistic?

A: Yes. We can see people, including those who are older than 50 who do not have Education Health Plans. If we cannot help, we can signpost. People can also come back to us once they get a diagnosis.

Q: Is there a waiting list?

A: At present there is a long waiting list. On average we work with people for 12 weeks but in some cases, it takes less time and some takes longer. Support to individuals is regularly reviewed by management.

Q: Is it more difficult to get older people into work?

A: It depends, sometimes people want a change of direction, or have not worked for a while and lost skills - this is why we suggest 'taster' sessions, which give people the opportunity to find out more and understand what aspects of working they like e.g. customer-facing or not.

Q: Do you only support with customer-facing work? What about people who want something different, maybe creative and may have higher qualifications e.g. an engineer degree. What about those who work from home?

A: Supported Employment West Sussex aim to be inclusive. We can support to identify what type of role would be a good fit. Sometimes people with qualifications may not have a lot of work experience so it pays to do an experience to add to people's skillset and Curriculum Vitae (CV).

Re Homeworking: we can look at self-employment, e.g. marketing business, we can link to others so people can build up their portfolio. We can pursue any company that is willing to give people a chance.

### **5. Autism Strategy update - Katie Green**

Consultation ends in early December. 2 workshops have taken place and 2 further planned. One workshop was co-facilitated with a self-advocate which was good. The group have also invited people from workshops to attend the online workshop. Children services running their own workshops. Another stage of workshops planned for February 2025.

Survey: 200 unpaid carers, 100 autistic people and 50 staff completed the survey. Very good engagement, but lower than expected. This may be due to length of survey. Group looking at other ways to get feedback.

Starting to think about ways to analyse the data.

Discussed that there had been an issue with booking system for workshops but this has been resolved now.

**Action:** agreed all APB members who can, please advertise the survey.

Simona will circulate the link for the Survey to members again.

## **6. Market position Statement presentation – Diana Bernhardt (WSCC)**

Discussion after presentation.

- Diana clarified that community activities are things like drop-ins and support hubs throughout county. **Action:** Diana to share info on these.
- Members raised concerns around the lack of social services staff and personal assistants showing understanding of autistic people.  
**Action:** Diana noted about training for SW teams and carers  
**Action:** Tom Elsam will provide an individual member feedback re their estimated waiting time to receive service
- Autism and complex needs services are needed but there is also a service gap in autism/lower needs - at present lots of shared accommodation for this but more provision with self-contained, own front door needed because of customers' challenges in sharing and living with other people.
- Member attended a workshop recently - lot of people felt we need a lot of education/training across services around autism and how to talk to autistic people. However, there is a newly qualified cohort of social workers that have been trained also by Powerful Trainers.
- Diana clarified that access to exercise, keeping healthy and early support is a separate provision which is being commissioned separately.
- A member raised that Direct Payments can be an issue for people e.g. criteria on what to spend on Direct Payments needs to correlate with support plan. **Action:** Simona will pass comments to Direct Payments Support Service recommissioning working group.

- Agreed to add 'etc' to first bullet point in slide 4 – important that providers get to know the person as there will be other needs customers have individually.
- A member reflected that their DWP Disability Employment Advisor talked about strength with their autism – some members disagreed with this approach as they don't feel there are strengths in their autism.
- Re lighting – would be helpful to be more specific about what things are difficult e.g. lights flickering, needing warm bulbs not cold ones. Transport to places for autistic people is also a consideration

**Action:** Diana takes forward the MPS as per feedback received by the Board.

## **7. APB Terms of Reference updated draft.**

Discussed and agreed final changes;

In quoracy heading it should read 'one family or unpaid carer'.

RE meeting arrangements – take out the 'in person' meeting once a year as hybrid meeting was hard.

Page 4 typo, capital E where there should be a lower case 'e'.

We will update the Terms of Reference and circulate with the minutes.

## **8. AOB**

### Neuro Developmental Service waiting list update

Andrew Cole explained list is still very long. The service will meet to discuss future planning. Diana will bring updates to the Board when they are received.

A member asked if there are any plans to link up with mental health services. Andrew confirms this is being looked at and Neuro Developmental Service are aware of service gaps.

WSSC work on Autism strategy will gather a lot of feedback data that will illustrate, and evidence needs and service gaps – this will be shared with the relevant teams for consideration in their planning.

### Future agenda items

Confirmed for 20 Feb 2025: Autistica and Citizen Advice Bureau support update.

**Actions agreed:**

<b>Action</b>	<b>Who by</b>	<b>Timescale</b>
Publish approved Sept 2024 minutes on website	Meeting Administrator Simona Giunta	Dec 2024
Update Terms of Reference and circulate final version to members	Diana Bernhardt/Simona Giunta	Jan 2025
Circulate the link to Autism Strategy Survey to members again.	Meeting Administrator Simona Giunta	Dec 2024
Take forward Market Position Statement with Board's feedback	Diana Bernhardt - Service Manager Commissioning	Jan 2025
Circulate information on community hubs	Simona Giunta	Dec 2024
Feedback to individual member about estimated waiting list time to access Lifelong service	Tom Elsam – WSCC Lifelong Service	Dec 2024
Pass on comments re criteria for Direct Payment expenditure to Direct Payment Support Service working group	Meeting Administrator Simona Giunta	Dec 2024

**Date of next meeting:**

20 February 2025, 11am - 1pm (online, Zoom)

Zoom link will be circulated 2 weeks prior.