



Where Autism
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The Welsh Integrated Autism Service

In March 2017 the Welsh Minister for Health and Social Services announced additional investment in the development of an Integrated Autism Service for Wales, taking the funding to a total of £13 million. The National ASD Development Team, based in the [Welsh Local Government Association \(WLGA\)](#) are currently supporting and coordinating the development of the service - an ambitious plan that will provide support for autistic individuals across the age range, and their families/carers.

Background

As part of the refresh of the [ASD Strategic Action Plan for Wales](#), scoping work was undertaken by the WLGA National ASD Development Team and included both consultation on the needs of over 1000 autistic individuals in Wales and a review of existing services, both in and outside of Wales.

The evidence and learning from the exercise was incorporated into a proposal for an Integrated Autism Service (IAS), which was subsequently accepted and funded by the Welsh Government.

A needs-led autism service

Many autistic individuals have unmet support needs, yet are not eligible for that support or find it difficult to access services. For children there is a gap between support in education and support for parents and carers at home. Many adults fall into a gap between mental health and learning disability services.

Being unable to access support frequently means that needs escalate, leading to crisis. This can result in emotional/mental health problems for both the autistic individual and those who support them.

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From our consultation work, the most frequently reported areas of unmet need were:

- support for lower level emotional / behavioural difficulties
- support to access social and leisure opportunities
- support for ASD specific issues / life skills.

We also learned that in order to meet the needs of those affected by autism, a service would need to be:

- age wide (to avoid service transition points)
- responsive to need
- integrated between health and social care
- linked with education and employment services
- flexible
- easily accessible

The IAS for Wales will therefore be an all age service that is integrated between health and social care, to which individuals, parents and carers can self-refer in order to access timely support.

The service will include a range of professionals including Psychologists, Speech and Language Therapists, Occupational Therapists, Specialist Practitioners and Support Workers.

What the service will provide

Children and families

The service will support parents and carers by providing advice, support and signposting to other services. It will also deliver programmes for young people to help manage difficulties such as:

- sleep problems
- issues with eating
- challenging behaviour
- anxiety
- developing social skills

The integrated autism service will support autistic adults by providing advice and support, signposting to other services and delivering programmes. This will include support and advice to help manage difficulties such as:

- anxiety
- social skills
- accessing leisure and recreational activities
- developing daily living skills (such as paying bills, shopping and cooking)

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- accessing other services such as healthcare or employment support

For those with more complex needs (where other services such as mental health support is needed), staff from the IAS will work with other professionals to ensure they are able to provide appropriate support.

Promoting awareness, understanding and acceptance

From our scoping work, we understand that autistic children and adults often require support to access the resources and activities that neurotypical individuals access on a regular basis.

Autistic people want to be active members of society, access activities and engage with others and the IAS will have a pivotal role in supporting this. However community provision and wider society will need to be aware of the needs of autistic individuals and how to best support them in order for this to happen.

Under the direction of the [ASD Strategic Action Plan for Wales](#), the National ASD Development Team will continue to raise awareness of autism and develop training, awareness raising and supportive autism resources that can be utilised by the IAS, wider services, autistic individuals and all those who support them.

The team also manage the [National ASD website](#), provide support and advice for all professionals and ensure that the needs of autistic people are communicated to key stakeholders.

Further Information

We actively seek opportunities to engage with partners and ensure that stakeholders are engaged and updated. If you would like more information, advice, support or to share your views please contact us:

Website www.ASDinfoWales.co.uk

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