



Healthwatch Hampshire Week 2014

'Working Together' with Autism Hampshire & FASS - Fareham Autistic Spectrum Support

It is estimated that more than 16,000 people are affected by autism in Hampshire alone!

Healthwatch Hampshire week coincided with World Autism Awareness Day, which aims to increase awareness about autism, especially in children. To promote Healthwatch Hampshire and raise awareness of autism we decided to work in collaboration with two local organisations; Autism Hampshire & Fareham Autistic Spectrum Support. Below are some common issues and experiences, which were fed back to us:

Autism Awareness

- General feeling there needs to be more understanding and appropriate support for the families with autistic children or young adults by their GP's and reception staff.
- Surgeries to provide a separate area for the family in case the child begins to become aggressive and also to allow them the first appointments of a session to avoid any waiting, which those on the autistic spectrum can find difficult.
- Children's disruptive behaviour is misunderstood by some professionals and there is a lack of empathy.
- More 'Autism Awareness' training should be given to GP's and other professionals. Staff to prioritise the carer's appointments and understand the impact of carers, especially sole carers becoming unwell. Also more training in mainstream schools for staff and pupils to promote a greater understanding.

Diagnostic routes & signposting

- Parents felt they are not being listened to early enough when they felt there was something wrong with their child even when they sometimes had another child who were diagnosed with autism.
- They felt diagnosis was often delayed, especially early diagnosis for boys. Often a boy's disruptive behaviour was labelled as 'bad behaviour'. Late diagnosis can affect how a family copes, what services and support they can access.
- GP's to have a signposting information route for therapists, relevant agencies and charities.

CAMHS - Children & Adult Mental Health Service

- A strong feeling that waiting times were far too long for an initial assessment and sometimes they were not able to access the service.
- They felt that the referral criteria was not clear to them and to professionals.

Parent Training & Family Support

- Carers would like to have some autism training available to them and they felt they would greatly benefit, grasp and have a better understanding of their child's condition.
- They also wanted to be able to easily access much needed respite.
- Carers are continually challenging professionals to get the service they felt their children were entitled to and it is extremely stressful for them!



The two main organisations involved during Healthwatch week were:

Autism Hampshire

An independent regional charity who offer a variety of direct services and outreach to children and adults on the autistic spectrum throughout Hampshire.

FASS - Fareham Autistic Spectrum Support

A local group for families in Hampshire who have a child or children on the autistic spectrum. They offer activities, a chance to have fun as a family, an opportunity to try activities at a very subsidised rate and also to meet other families who are sharing similar challenges.

Healthwatch Hampshire Week Events

There were three events where the team listened to the experiences and collected feedback from the carers, siblings and frontline staff. It was a great opportunity to 'spread the word' about Healthwatch Hampshire and recruit Champions.

Healthwatch Hampshire joined Autism Hampshire's Outreach Team & Carers at their local Support Group Coffee Morning held at the relaxing environment of the QE2 Activity Centre at Manor Farm in Bursledon.

During the evening Healthwatch Hampshire organised a fun group activity at Monkey Bizness in Gosport 19 families attended, 34 were children aged 2-14 years old this included 15 siblings. The softplay activity gave the families the opportunity to relax and be able to talk about their experiences of NHS and Adult / Childrens Social Services whilst their children played in a safe and familiar environment.

To celebrate World Autism Awareness Day we were invited by FASS to their Carers Coffee Morning kindly sponsored by Montagu's at Whiteley Village Shopping Centre.

At the events we recruited some of the Carers and Autism Hampshire Outreach Team (who give out advice & information to Carers) as Healthwatch Hampshire Champions. The Carer Champions were really enthusiastic and wanted to promote Healthwatch to their friends, other organisations they belong too and to other parents at the specialist and mainstream schools their children attend.



To find out more about FASS contact Susie Maddy on 07900 297267

FASS C/o 1 Angus Close Fareham Hants PO15 6BA

Email: FASSadmin@googlemail.com www.farehamautisticspectrumsupport.org.uk

Other organisations that may be of interest include:

Parent Voice www.parentvoice.info Family Liaison Autism Support Havant www.flashonline.org.uk

The National Autistic Society www.nas.org.uk Carers Direct www.nhs.uk/carersdirect

The Portsmouth Autism Support Network www.portsmouth-autism-support.co.uk



Outreach Services - Information & Advice Project

22 Midanbury Lane Bitterne Park Southampton SO18 4HP Tel: 02380 633951

email: outreach@autismhampshire.org.uk

Outreach Department Portsmouth Office T: 02392 814723

Services for Adults - Residential Care & Support Packages

Anglesey Lodge Anglesey Road Alverstoke Gosport PO12 2DX

Tel: 02392 524243 email: adultservices@autismhampshire.org.uk

The Bridge - Life Skills College, Education & Admissions

3 Bassett Avenue Southampton SO16 7DP Tel: 02380 766162 email: collegadmissions@autismhampshire.org.uk

Domiciliary Support Services - Supported Living, Employment and Education Support...

22 Midanbury Lane Bitterne Park Southampton SO18 4HP Tel: 02380 634346 email: domcare@autismhampshire.org.uk