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| Our ReferenceYour ReferenceDirect line Main numberFaxE-mail | WM/12/06/021/17970191 374 42510191 301 13000191 374 4102cd-pct.foi@nhs.net | Information Governance DepartmentNHS County Durham and DarlingtonJohn Snow HouseDurham University Science ParkDurhamDH1 3YG |

9 July 2012

Ms Sarah McCulloch

e-mail only

Dear Ms McCulloch

# Freedom of Information Act 2000 - Request for Information

Thank you for your request received by us on 22 June 2012 for information held by NHS County Durham and Darlington under the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

Please find the information you requested on behalf of NHS County Durham and Darlington (NHSCD&D) as follows;

**1. How many adults you have with a diagnosis of autistic spectrum disorder (any, although if there are separate statistics for Asperger's, HFA, LFA, they would be appreciated) in your area?**

**NHSCD&D reply:** In Durham there are 261 service users known to the local authority with a recorded health diagnosis of autism.  This does not reflect the overall prevalence of Autism which we do not currently have accurate data on.

We do not currently have accurate systems to collect this information for people living in the Darlington area.

**2. How many children?**

**NHSCD&D reply:** Across County Durham there are an estimated 1,200 children and young people with ASD. We are currently developing a database across the county in order to be able to have a more accurate picture of our population of Children with ASD.

**3. What diagnostic services are available to a) adults and b) children?**

**NHSCD&D reply: a)** there is a specialist adult assessment and diagnosis service available across Durham and Darlington provided by Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust.  Early diagnosis is the main strategy for the prevention of further deterioration in the individual’s health.  This then will allow for reasonable adjustments to the individual’s environment and methods of communication.  Further specialist assessment and intervention will prevent any more severe mental health or behavioural issues to develop.

Individuals and their carers or support staff will be given intervention and maintenance strategies to ensure that where there are increased anxiety or behavioural, issues these can be managed or diffused accordingly.

In order to provide an integrated approach, the service is involved in:

* Assessment and Diagnosis
* Supporting on going interventions
* Supporting Residential services
* Specialist training to mainstream Mental Health and Learning Disability Services

**b)** There are currently 5 Multi Agency Teams across County Durham who work to assess and diagnose Children and Young People. The professionals represented in each team include; Paediatricians, Education Psychologists, Advisory Teachers, Clinical Psychologists and Therapists.

**4. What agencies or teams you have that work with autistic people, provide support/services, strategies, etc.?**

**NHSCD&D reply:** Please see document embedded below.



**5. An email address/website for each of these agencies or teams where possible.**

**NHSCD&D reply:** Please see document embedded above.

**6. What the typical process should be for an adult in your area first asking their GP for an assessment for autistic spectrum disorder to receiving a diagnosis/support.**

**NHSCD&D reply:** GPs can refer individuals to secondary mental health services (Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust) through which the specialist autism assessment and diagnosis service can be accessed.  Referrals to the service would normally be in writing and accepted from care co-ordinators or assessors in secondary mental health services. In exceptional cases, referrals can be received directly from primary care following discussion with the service lead about the individual case and the expectation of the referrer.  The circumstances under which GPs can make direct referrals to the specialist team are currently under review.

In line with the Information Commissioner’s directive on the disclosure of information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 your request will form part of our disclosure log. Therefore, a version of our response which will protect your anonymity will be posted on the NHS County Durham and Darlington website.

If you have any queries or wish to discuss the information supplied, please do not hesitate to contact me on the above telephone number or at the above address.

Any information we provide following your request under the Freedom of Information Act will not confer an automatic right for you to re-use that information, for example to publish it. If you wish to re-use the information that we provide and you do not specify this in your initial application for information then you must make a further request for its re-use as per the Re-Use of Public Sector Information Regulations 2005 [www.opsi.gov.uk](http://www.opsi.gov.uk) . This will not affect your initial information request.

Yours sincerely

WMarley

pp **Rob Milner**

**Information Risk & Governance Manager**