



Department  
of Health

**To: Directors of Adult Social Services**

**Copied to: Directors of Public Health  
Directors of Children's Services  
Clinical Commissioning Group Leads and  
Accountable Officers  
Chairs of Health and Wellbeing Boards**

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**2 August 2013**

**Dear Colleague**

**The 2010 Adult Autism Strategy *Fulfilling and Rewarding Lives:*  
Evaluating Progress – the second national exercise.**

This letter is to obtain your assistance in taking forward the second self-assessment exercise for the implementation of the Adult Autism Strategy. Local Authorities play a key role in implementing the recommendations of the Strategy and the statutory guidance that supports it.

The purpose of the self assessment is to:

- assist Local Authorities and their partners in assessing progress in implementing the 2010 Adult Autism Strategy;
- see how much progress has been made since the baseline survey, as at February 2012;
- provide evidence of examples of good progress made that can be shared and of remaining challenges.

An on-line return to Public Health England via the Improving health and lives website is required **by Monday 30 September 2013**.

I am sorry that this exercise is to a broadly similar timescale as the one on Learning Disabilities. We had tried to avoid this but with the information

that is submitted being a vital part of the Review of the Adult Autism Strategy and the unavoidable timetable for the Learning Disabilities self assessment, this has not proved possible.

## **The Adult Autism Strategy**

The Adult Autism Strategy *Fulfilling and Rewarding Lives* was published in 2010. It is an essential step towards realising the Government's long term vision for transforming the lives of and outcomes for adults with autism. The Department of Health is the lead policy department for the Strategy but with delivery shared across a range of government departments and agencies, and local health and social service providers.

The Autism Strategy has five areas for action aimed at improving the lives of adults with autism:

- increasing awareness and understanding of autism;
- developing a clear, consistent pathway for diagnosis of autism;
- improving access for adults with autism to services and support;
- helping adults with autism into work; and
- enabling local partners to develop relevant services.

The Strategy is not just about putting in place autism services but about enabling equal access to mainstream services, support and opportunities through reasonable adjustments, training and awareness raising.

## **Review of the Strategy**

The Department of Health is currently leading a formal review of progress against the Strategy. This is an opportunity for Government to assess whether the objectives of the Strategy remain fundamentally the right ones, to be assured of the progress that is being achieved by Local Authorities and the NHS, and consider what should happen to continue to make progress and what barriers could be resolved. The investigative stage of the Review will last until the end of October and the Strategy will be revised as necessary by March 2014.

## **The self-assessment exercise**

This exercise builds on the first self assessment exercise which looked at what progress had been made since February 2012. This was based around the self-assessment framework which the Department of Health

launched in April 2011 to support localities with the delivery of the Adult Autism Strategy and the statutory guidance for health and social care which was issued in December 2010. The individual returns received and related reports from February 2012 can be found at [www.improvinghealthandlives.org.uk/projects/autsaf2011](http://www.improvinghealthandlives.org.uk/projects/autsaf2011).

We hope to get a national overview of local area implementation of the strategy, identify the good progress made with examples of the impact for people with autism where possible and for this to assist the review in developing next steps for the strategy. We are also keen to understand the challenges which may be impacting on progress and local solutions.

The list of questions is more focused than last time but will still enable a comparison with results from the 2012 exercise. For some questions there is a RAG rating system with scoring criteria for that question. If a question is scored Red or Amber, respondents will be asked to say what is stopping progress and for Green scores there will be the opportunity to say what actions have enabled progress. Examples of good practice and where actions have made a positive impact on individuals are also being sought.

It is important to come to a multi-agency perspective, including liaison with Clinical Commissioning Groups, to reflect the requirements of the implementation of the strategy, although the Local Authority is tasked with the consolidation of the return as the lead body locally. The returns will be analysed by the Public Health England learning disabilities observatory. The on-line questionnaire can be accessed at [www.improvinghealthandlives.org.uk/projects/autism2013](http://www.improvinghealthandlives.org.uk/projects/autism2013).

Respondents should be aware that all local responses will be published in full online.

### **Action needed**

I would be grateful if you could draw attention to and discuss this letter with the person who is responsible for adult autism within your authority, so that they lead the co-ordination of the return in your area. The timescale for completion of this part of the exercise is **Monday 30 September 2013**.

The response for your Local Authority area should be agreed by the Autism Partnership Board or equivalent group, and the ratings validated by people who have autism. I am also asking that you are aware of the content of the return when it is submitted and that it is discussed by the local Health and Well Being Board by the end of January 2014 as

evidence for local planning and health needs assessment strategy development and supporting local implementation work.

Technical detail on how the returns are to be made can be found on the improving health and lives website.

Queries on:

- The Autism Strategy Review itself can be sent to [autism@dh.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:autism@dh.gsi.gov.uk)
- Questions on the self assessment exercise can be sent via the ADASS Network e-mail address [Team@ADASS.org.uk](mailto:Team@ADASS.org.uk) for the attention of Zandrea Stewart, the ADASS National Autism Lead.

The letter has been prepared with the support of Zandrea Stewart and Sam Cramond (Head of Partnerships, NHS England). A briefing for all Directors of Social Care on the Review will also be sent via the ADASS network. The letter will be circulated to CCGs via the NHS England CCG bulletin on 8 August.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Norman Lamb', with a horizontal line underneath.

**NORMAN LAMB**