**Wiltshire Autism Forum**

**4th October 2017 – County Hall Trowbridge**

Terms of Reference

Why we should have WAP

* People don’t understand the views of a person with autism unless they have the condition
* Two members of the forum (Melaine & Jane) asked whether they could be on the panel
* Concerns were raised about the number of panel members attending the Meeting as even though the forum is well attended the number of Panel members are few & the forum felt that their views were not heard.
* Nick pointed out that there is a legal requirement to have a WAP
* Last year 5 meetings held this year 4 which was thought to be a minimum as time lag between meetings

What is working?

* Libraries are starting to stock suitable books
* The play for the Criminal Justice Service was a success
* Training for autism awareness – This is essential for professionals and is better delivered face to face rather than online. Members are still receiving comments such as “they don’t look autistic”
* Doctors surgeries now more aware of autism & training available
* Social aspect of meeting like minded people
* Meetings are laid back

What is Not Working & what can we do better?

Venue:

* Venues are not always appropriate (Busy areas, non-adjustable lighting)
* Some thought the room layout was very formal but soon decided that they liked it as they were all facing each other & had the table to rest their paperwork & drinks on.
* They did not like the idea of restricted access as they were afraid that they would not be able to escape in case of fire –( their concerns were addressed)
* Reception staff at county hall were not trained on meeting the needs of people with Autism
* Would it be possible to bring own IT (tablets etc) with presentations emailed in advance as some people find it easier reading from the screen while others find paper handouts easier to read

Forum Membership:

* 189 people expressed an interest in giving their views but have not engaged in the forum meetings – Possibly due to not liking attending meetings therefore social media may be better than actual gatherings
* Facebook closed groups to feed back thoughts
* Facebook live broadcasts
* Have meetings in smaller communities as large towns are daunting. Must have good transport links, close to bus stops & have good parking ( East Wiltshire has poor public transport)
* Get more members interested by advertising in the media, doctors surgeries
* Volunteers / Service users feel undervalued & members feel that they can run their own meetings without professional help
* Forums are not felt to be automatous and open to all as large Wiltshire council involvement
* Board meeting does not need to be after the actual forum meeting as long as the views are passed on. This would mean that forum can be subdivided into sub meetings where smaller meetings can be held throughout the county & views collated before being presented to the board – therefore more participation.

What else can we achieve though WAP board & Forum?

* Allotments and community interest gardening aimed at people with autism
* Catering prepared by autistic community prepared in village halls & provided to the elderly
* Autistic community also suffer from Depression & anxiety & conventional CBT does not work therefore more awareness of autism specific CBT
* Volunteer mentoring at GP surgeries for new diagnosis. (Can Shirley in diagnostic team pass on details of peer support?)
* Job Coaching & peer support in the workplace
* Training for employers of reasonable adjustments
* Diagnostic funding cut – could forum help post diagnosis
* Spouse/ Partner support group via Facebook also training

Autism Awareness week

* Sofa Tour
* Red socks – wear red socks to show support
* Training videos posted on social media & in schools
* Events / festivals with Art & poetry describing what having autism means to you
* Giving away fidget spinners
* Small towns to be targeted as well as larger venues ( libraries)
* Virtual reality & Films to give insight into the neurotypical world
* NAS too much info video
* Autistic film nights at cinemas ( already hold performances on a limited scale)
* Clarkes shoe shop offers autistic friendly appointments with no waiting around
* Supermarkets autistic slots – no canned music & less crowded
* Stand up comedy night presented by people with autism

As a foot note, several members who attended the Forum this time particularly want to say how much they enjoy this Forum.