

David, the experience of a young man with atypical autism

(Names have been changed)

I am sharing my thoughts and ideas for the Commission CWAC has launched into the future of adult social care. I am providing these ideas as a parent and informal carer for my son David who is in his twenties and has a diagnosis of atypical autism and from my professional experience acquired from my former roles as a Local Authority Adult Social Care Lawyer.

I am aware that CWAC has recently undertaken a consultation on learning disability and Autism services. I do not know the outcome of that consultations.

I understand the purpose of the consultation was to review w and make improvements to services in the future in line with the progression model, which focuses on helping people to reach their goals and aspirations and become as independent as possible. The services which were covered included Daycare, Outreach, Supported Living, Short term care, short break and residential/nursing care.

Apart from outreach services, the other services whilst relevant for people with a complex LD or autism are not suitable to meet the needs of people who, like David, have high functioning autism.

It is my view that there is a gap in CWAC's adult social care services for people with a disability who are 'high functioning' and a heavy reliance is placed on their support and accommodation, being provided by family. This can result in substantial care packages being provided, once the family are no longer around or able to provide it. However, if there were the appropriate services available, which could be accessed from when the young person turns 18, this may achieve the outcome of people becoming independent, reaching goals and aspirations at an earlier age and requiring smaller care packages throughout adulthood.

Before detailing the services I am suggesting, I will provide a 'pen picture' of David, to show the category of disability the services could support.

David attended Greenbank school leaving at 18. From 13, he accessed the school's residential provision and in his final 2 years, stayed twice a week. He gained no qualifications.

On leaving, he attended a supported living placement in Whitby, established by CWAC for young people attending West Cheshire College.

He studied an Entry Level 1 general course gaining no qualifications. He then did a Supported Internship with Total People gaining Level 1 in Maths and Level 2 in English and a placement at Storyhouse.

When the Internship ended, through my communication with Storyhouse, they offered him a Cinema Assistant role. Pre-COVID David worked 3 days for 5 hours each day. He currently is working 1 day for 5 hours. At work, David doesn't have 1:1 support, but doesn't cover a shift on his own and has someone who 'oversees/assists' him during each shift.

For the last few years, he has lived with his sister at what was our family home, but I moved out at that time. David receives Housing Benefit to assist with the rent. When he moved back he did receive support 2 mornings a week to assist with the transition until this ended. David moved back to the former family home, because he had acquired the skills which meant a Supported Living Placement was no longer suitable, but CWAC had no suitable properties he could move to. The bungalows at the ExtraCare Housing scheme by West Cheshire College in Ellesmere Port, were planned for young adults like David but when built their design meant they were suitable for couples and not single/shared occupancies. David was considered 'too able' for the scheme ran by 1<sup>st</sup> Enable by Ellesmere Port Police Station and didn't have a mental health condition required for the Magenta scheme on Wellington Road. We were told to bid on the general housing scheme for a one bedroom flat, but that only had properties for over 55s or in locations where David would have been vulnerable.

David receives PIP for the areas of preparing food, prompts re washing, assistance with reading, mixing with other people and making budget decisions and planning an unfamiliar journey. Activity wise, David currently attends the Special Olympics sessions twice a week and a virtual group and 1:1 sessions run by Crossroads. He's

also a member of the Grosvenor Rowing Adaptive Club. He has no friends and doesn't socialise with non-family members away from work or the club.

The services/support I am suggesting for people with the same level of disability as David are:

- 1) Extra Care / sheltered housing schemes for younger adults which could be accessed from 18, where there are different levels of support which the adult could access depending on what their needs are and communal areas where the young people could socialise and take part in activities
- 2) Clubs specifically to make friendships which exist outside of the formal club setting
- 3) Dating clubs
- 4) Classes teaching basic house management skills – like cooking a meal from scratch, ironing, cleaning and money management for running a household
- 5) Reading and writing classes which are specifically for people with a disability
- 6) Expanding the Local Supported Employment Service