

The Calderdale Autism Development Project



'A joint initiative between the Borough
Council of Calderdale and the National
Autistic Society'

Matthew Lowe

What is the Calderdale Autism Development Project?

Calderdale Council have identified the demand for an Autism development project to be commissioned locally. This project is:

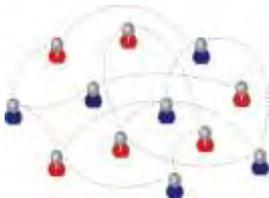
- A joint initiative between the Borough Council of Calderdale and The National Autistic Society, for a total of 16 months (between December 2013-April 2015).
- A source of support for a variety of people with Autism in Calderdale, many of who do not meet the eligibility criteria to access social care services, despite presenting low level social care needs.
- An opportunity to work in collaboration and partnership with a variety of locally based universal services to identify their development needs and make services more accessible for people with Autism.



What are the aims of the Calderdale Autism Development Project?

The Calderdale Autism Development Project has a clear set of aims and objectives which are hoped to be achieved over the course of the project. These are:

- To maximise and facilitate the processes of social and community participation for people with Autism
- To build social capital at individual and community levels
- To raise the profile of Autism through awareness raising and capacity building activities
- To facilitate the co-production of low level intervention, community-led initiatives, grounded in the ideas of people accessing services.
- To tackle and address issues such as unemployment, social isolation, loneliness and lifestyle choices through a variety of methods.



What is the Role of the NAS Autism Development Worker?

Some of the responsibilities of the NAS Development Worker are:



- To work in partnership with a variety of services including health services, social services, education providers, employment agencies and support groups
- To offer one to one and group-based support to identify need at an individual and community level, purposeful of signposting information and advice, in addition to offering support to individuals and their families.
- To empower, encourage and facilitate people with Autism and their parents/carers to co-produce community based activities and low level intervention services to meet the collective needs of the community.
- To improve access to services by responding to the feedback and experiences of people with Autism and increase capacity within health, social care and universal services by increasing awareness and understanding of Autism.
- To work with people with Autism and their families during the transition from Children to

Adult services by increasing knowledge about what is available in their community and surrounding local social care processes and protocols

- To work closely with the local Autism Strategy Group and contribute to delivering the key messages from Government's *Autism Strategy, Fulfilling and Rewarding Lives 2012*.
- To produce accessible documents to be used by people and professionals in the local community
- To create voluntary and employment opportunities for people with Autism



What is Co-Production?

It refers to active input by the people who use services, as well as, or instead of, those who have traditionally provided them. So it contrasts with approaches that treat people as passive recipients of services designed and delivered by someone else. It emphasises that the people who use services have assets which can help to improve those services, rather than simply needs which must be met' (Co-production: an emerging evidence base for adult social care transformation, 2009)



Through the values of co-production, the Calderdale Autism Development Project aims to:

- Recognise people as assets, utilise people's skill bases and promote and value equality in the design, implementation and delivery of services.
- Build on peoples existing capabilities, provide new opportunities for personal development

and actively facilitate individuals to put these into use.

- Work towards collective responsibilities, expectations and goals, as agreed upon by those involved
- Establish peer support networks
- Ensure that professionals are facilitating services opposed to delivering them, purposeful of promoting individual, community and social change (at micro levels)

What are the Proposed Outcomes of the Calderdale Autism Development Project?

The Calderdale Autism Development Project anticipates that a variety of outcomes will be achieved (or worked towards) as a result of the project. These include:

- People will increase and develop their skill bases and gain qualifications
- People will prepare for and secure meaningful employment
- People will become active citizens
- Public, private and voluntary organisations will adopt an autism friendly charter
- People will have improved personal and professional networks
- People will have reduced levels of social isolation/loneliness
- People will have improved perceptions of community and neighbourhood
- People have increased levels of social and community participation
- People have access to community infrastructure and resources

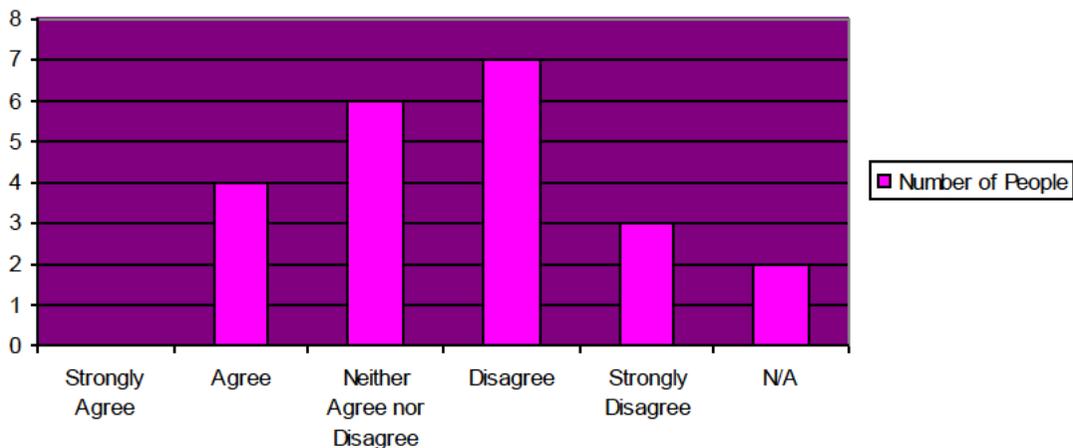


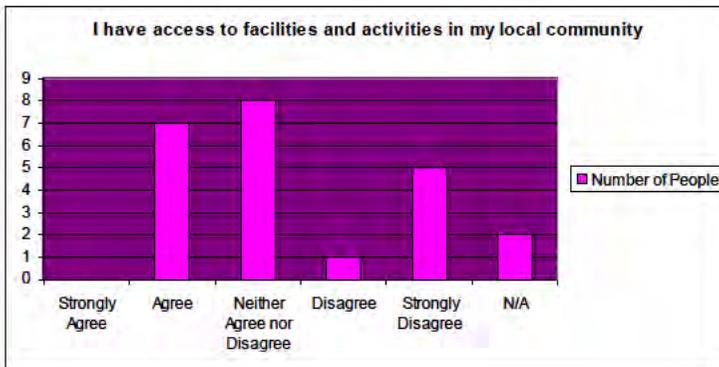
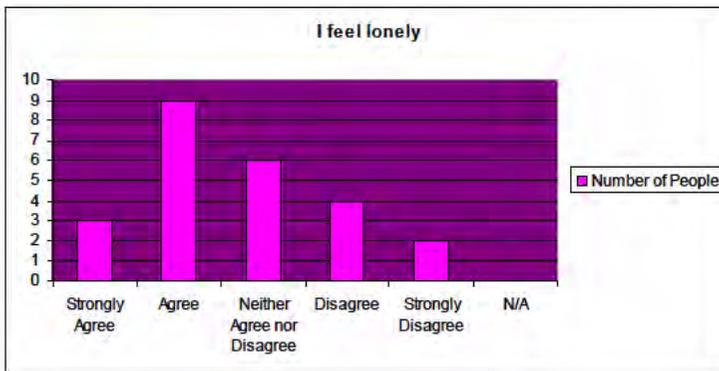
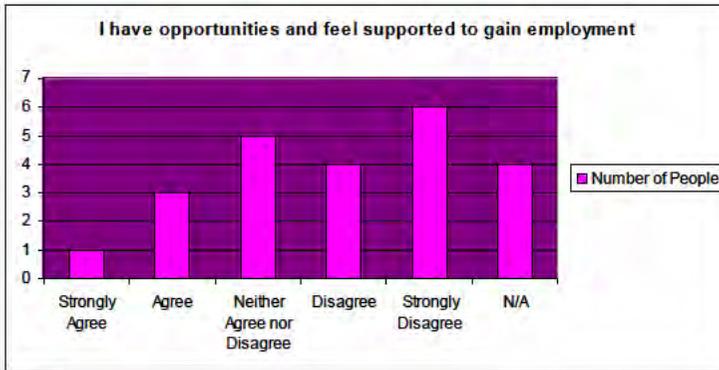
What has the Calderdale Autism Development Project has learnt so far?

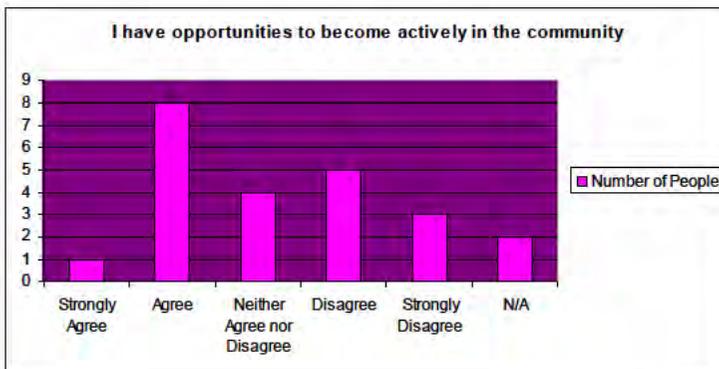
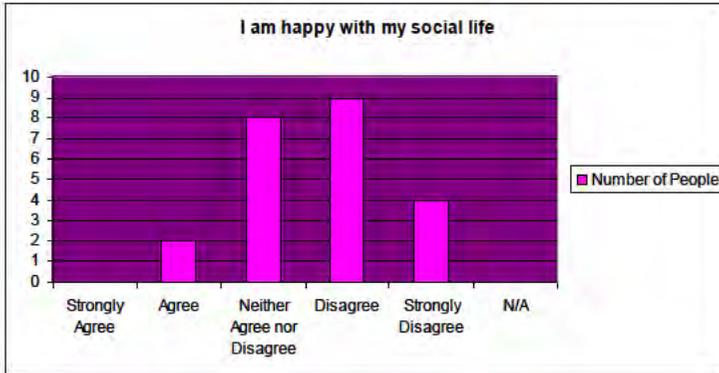
As part of the Calderdale Autism Development Project, an impact questionnaire has been developed in order to establish how people with Autism perceive their local community.

25 people have currently completed this questionnaire which has enabled us to identify trends and patterns which are being used to inform the direction of the project. Some of the results can be found below:

Services I use have a good understanding of Autism







What has the Calderdale Autism Development Project Achieved so far?

- Various links have been made with services, groups and organisations
- Various people have been signposted to services, groups and organisations
- Several presentations have been developed and delivered to services, groups and organisations
- A newsletter editor has been recruited
- People with Autism have co-delivered presentations
- An Autism information sharing event has been planned
- An Autism prevalence data booklet has been produced
- An Autism-led training group proposal is in the process of development
- An adult social group has been developed
- An Autism services directory has been developed
- An Autistic support group are being supported to become constituted
- Parents and carers are being supported to explore the development of a transition

support group and a young persons social group

- Questionnaires have been distributed, completed and analysed
- An information booklet for students entering transition and their families has been produced.



Feedback on the Calderdale Autism Development Project

'I am really pleased that Calderdale council are working with the NAS to improve services for Autism within the community and have funded this project. The presentation was really useful and definitely a starter for what we can access going forward, thank you'

'I enjoyed the presentation that Matt had put together. I did not know of the services available in Calderdale. If any other meetings as today are taking place it would be beneficial for more young Autistic people to talk about their transitions, thank you.'

'Very useful evening and certainly has made us feel more positive about the future, thank you' (Transition presentation)

'The lack of a link between child and adult services for ASD children and young people needs addressing. In our experience there is a lot of support through school for ASD kids but once they are out of education then what next?! If a plan for transition can be working on involving all agencies and families that would be great. Glad the NAS are bringing this together, thank you Matt.'

'The Calderdale Autism Development Project has enabled me to be successful in securing a voluntary opportunity. I have also noticed a more united front between Autism groups in various locations across Calderdale'

'The Calderdale Autism Development Project has helped me to recognise my own strengths, skills and abilities and I find it beneficial to have someone like Matt to voice our concerns and answer our questions'