



# All Party Parliamentary Group on Autism

## Minutes of Meeting on Implementing the Children's NSF 7<sup>th</sup> November 2006, Committee Room 16, House of Commons

### In attendance

Janet Dean MP (Chair)  
Lord Tim Clement-Jones  
Tim Loughton MP  
Tim Boswell MP  
Lynda Waltho MP  
Russell Brown MP

### Apologies

David Amess MP	Andrew George MP	Lord Rix
Lord Astor of Hever	Sandra Gidley MP	Chris Ruane MP
John Austin MP	Linda Gilroy MP	Bob Russell MP
Roger Berry MP	Baroness Gould	Joan Ryan MP
Tim Boswell MP	Mike Hancock MP	Marsha Singh MP
Peter Bottomley MP	Dr Evan Harris MP	Caroline Spelman MP
Colin Breed MP	Sir Alan Haselhurst MP	Ian Stewart MP
Annette Brooke MP	Oliver Heald MP	Mark Todd MP
Angela Browning MP	David Heathcoat-Amory MP	Rudi Vis MP
Paul Burstow MP	Stephen Hesford MP	Joan Walley MP
Sir Patrick Cormack MP	Jeremy Hunt MP	Robert Walter MP
Andrew Dismore MP	Eleanor Laing MP	Bill Wiggin MP
Jeffrey Donaldson MP	David Lepper MP	Betty Williams MP
Nadine Dorries MP	Anne Milton MP	Hywel Williams MP
David Drew MP	Stephen O'Brien MP	Roger Williams MP
Bill Etherington MP	Gwyn Prosser MP	
Roger Gale MP	John Randall MP	

### Meeting on Implementing the children's NSF and NAP-C

**Background:** The National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services (Children's NSF) was published in 2004. It includes standards to be met by local authorities and NHS bodies in relation to disabled children.

The NSF standard on disabled children includes an exemplar on autistic spectrum disorder. This exemplar outlines one child's journey through services and incorporates recommendations from the National Autism Plan for Children (NAP-C). NAP-C was produced by an expert multi-disciplinary working group in 2003 and established guidelines for identification, assessment and diagnosis of autism and access to early intervention.

Janet Dean MP approved minutes from the last meeting, and introduced speakers Dr. Sheila Shribman and Ana Santo.



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## Speakers

**Dr Sheila Shribman** has been National Clinical Director for Children since December 2005. Her background is as a consultant community paediatrician and her interests include childhood disability. One of her main roles is to oversee the implementation of the Children's NSF.

**Ana Santo** is currently Clinical Coordinator for School Health and Special Needs at Islington Primary Care Trust. She implemented both NAP-C and the children's NSF chapter on autism when she led a multi-agency project in Islington, across health, education and social services.

Both speakers' presentations are enclosed as separate documents.

## Questions

**Virginia Bovell, TreeHouse:** Frameworks can help, and top-down guidance can help but despite the kind of hard work put in by Islington PCT, deadlines aren't always met. What more is needed? Are standards even relevant if they are not achievable?

**Ana Santo:** While it is often the case that deadlines are not met, I still feel strongly that we should strive towards national guidelines. I'm happy for them to stay as they are, and to feed back to directors as to what more is needed. However, current services do need to be reorganized.

**Sheila Shribman:** We need standards to work towards. The first step in a process of improvement, is to evaluate where you are currently. Standards aid this by making you look clearly at how you work.

**John Phillipson, Tyne and Wear Autistic Society** said that In the Tyne and Wear area there is no lack of will to replicate the type of work undertaken by Islington PCT, but rather a lack of resources. There is simply not enough money on the ground. He asked whether the speakers would recommend the idea of ring-fencing funds for Speech and Language Therapists.

**Sheila Shribman** said there has been a move away from ring-fencing money and specific targeting. The concern is championing the children's agenda. Provision across the country is patchy, and more money needs to be channeled into rectifying this.

**A parent** raised the fact that children not having access to CAMHS is a major problem. Once a child has been assessed and a crisis framework put in place, what happens when an ad-hoc or emergency service is needed and is not available?

**Ana Santo** cited a new unit that opened in Islington fairly recently that may offer emergency respite. Currently CAMHS is separate, but there is hope for joint commissioning and a joint agenda from CAMHS and Children's Services in the future. It is a priority in Islington.

**Jane MacKenzie, Policy Officer, Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists** agreed that the problem is with resourcing and not the will to work in this way. Eight out of ten graduates in speech and language therapy can't get jobs, and it's a great pity with a condition like autism that needs involving communication difficulties are not being met. The RCSLT's own recent survey shows a real problem with local commissioning.

**Sheila Shribman** agreed that quality of commissioning is very important. Commissioning for quality should be what we expect; rather than the current focus on numbers and activity. There needs to be more substantial content.



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**Rhya Homewood, Kent County Council** cited the individual case of her sons' early diagnosis. The expectation of them seems to be higher the younger they are diagnosed, without the appropriate services being in place a lot of the time. She asked whether early diagnosis is always helpful.

**Sheila Shribman** said it is always good to identify difficulties early on. The challenge with young people is trying to fit services around them, rather than trying to make them fit into services that are inappropriate.

**Karen Woodissee** asked Ana Santo whether Islington PCT used 'Early Support' or 'Right from the Start' when implementing their pilot.

**Ana Santo** said that 'Early Support' was the basis of Islington's initial evaluation; it was used it across the frameworks and then the evaluation was matched to the NSF standards.

**Kate Williams, Every Disabled Child Matters** asked about Standard 8 and how it will be taken forward.

**Sheila Shribman** responded that progress was being made on standard 8, and that wheelchair provision and transport work were particular areas of progress. She noted that there remains plenty of work to do, but that we are heading in the right direction.

**Hilary Gilfoy, Autism Speaks** asked when NAP-C is going to be a standard part of assessment and benchmarking. There needs to be some way of enforcing guidance.

**Sheila Shribman** said that there needs to be a broader discussion around levers and mapping of services. Joint area reviews could offer a good way of monitoring how people work.