



# All Party Parliamentary Group on Autism

**Policy into Practice: Implementation of the Children's NSF by Local Authorities**  
**17 July 2007, Meeting Room M, Portcullis House**

## **Present**

Lord Astor  
Russell Brown MP  
Annette Brooke MP  
Lord Clement-Jones  
Janet Dean MP  
Tim Loughton MP  
Baroness Uddin

## **Apologies**

David Amess MP  
Anne Begg MP  
Bob Blizzard MP  
Tim Boswell MP  
Peter Bottomley MP  
Colin Breed MP  
Angela Browning MP  
Paul Burstow MP  
Sir Patrick Cormack MP  
Claire Curtis-Thomas MP  
Nadine Dorries MP  
David Drew MP  
Clive Efford MP  
Bill Etherington MP  
Roger Gale MP

Sandra Gidley MP  
Linda Gilroy MP  
Andrew Gwynne MP  
Dr Evan Harris MP  
David Heathcoat-Amory MP  
Stephen Hesford MP  
Paul Holmes MP  
Joan Humble MP  
Jeremy Hunt MP  
Eleanor Laing MP  
David Lepper MP  
Anne Milton MP  
Rt Hon Lord Morris of Manchester  
Stephen O'Brien MP

Gwyn Prosser MP  
John Randall MP  
Lord Rix  
Chris Ruane MP  
Joan Ruddock MP  
Bob Russell MP  
Christine Russell MP  
Ian Stewart MP  
Mark Todd MP  
Rudi Vis MP  
Joan Walley MP  
Lynda Waltho MP  
Betty Williams MP  
Hywel Williams MP  
Roger Williams MP  
Bill Wiggin MP

**Janet Dean MP** opened the meeting with the business of the AGM. All present agreed to reappoint the existing officers of the APPGA with the exception of Bob Blizzard MP. Joan Humble MP was appointed in his place. Paul Holmes MP has been appointed to the Shadow Cabinet of the Liberal Democrats and will therefore be unlikely to attend meetings regularly. Nominations are invited for a suitable replacement. All present also agreed to the adoption of the Draft Terms of Reference of the Advisory Group to the APPGA.

**Robert Yuille (NAS)** launched the report of the APPGA, *Policy into practice: Implementation of the National service framework for children, young people and maternity services by local authorities*.

**Janet Dean MP** expressed surprise at the numbers of people who answered 'don't know' to questions asked in the survey on which the report was based, suggesting



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cause for concern. However, it was clear from some responses that some people did put a lot of time into completing the questionnaire.

**Nigel Fulton (DCSF)** asked whether there was a difference between the types of Local Authority found to be using the autism exemplar. This information is not currently available but Robert Yuille agreed to look into this.

**Baroness Uddin** commented that the report was an indication of how much more there is to do. She asked whether there has been any thought as to how to support MPs and Peers to act more effectively on these issues. She also highlighted the lack of support, knowledge and awareness of the issues facing parents of adult children with autistic spectrum disorders and asked whether the survey identified the extent of awareness, particularly within BME communities.

**Robert Yuille** responded to Baroness Uddin's first question with reference to the list of actions for parliamentarians found on the second page of the executive summary of *Policy into practice*. In answer to her second question, he stated that because it was a survey of Local Authorities, it didn't give much of a sense of general awareness. However, those Local Authorities who gave examples of named managers for autism probably indicated that there was a good degree of local awareness and lobbying in those areas.

**Baroness Uddin** asked whether examples of good practice can be released as both positive examples for others and to give a boost to those Local Authorities that were performing well.

**Robert Yuille** agreed that this was a good idea. The report does contain some examples of good practice but there is scope for more coverage.

**Amanda Allard (TreeHouse)** further suggested that it may be worth considering holding a joint meeting with other All-Party Groups concerned with disability to spread awareness and examples of good practice.

**Russell Brown MP** highlighted the problem of the transition period of adolescence. He asked if there were any indications of whether England was showing more or less progress than Scotland.

**Amanda Batten (NAS)** replied, mentioning that there were a number of good autism specific initiatives in Scotland. There are questions as to whether these can be fully translated into the English context but she felt that there are lessons that can be learnt from both sides. She also pointed to guidelines similar to those issued by NICE which have recently been published in Scotland. Similar guidelines will be developed in England and Wales and these have potential to have an impact around diagnosis.



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**Hilary Gilfoy (Autism Speaks)** asked whether it would be worthwhile to ask again if the Autism exemplar should be given more force. It was agreed that this will be included in a letter to the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families alerting him to the report.

**Janet Dean MP** argued, after discussion, that it would be a good idea for there to be a duty for Local Authorities to have someone with specific experience in autism in children appointed as a manager.

**Nigel Fulton** agreed that this was, in principle, a good idea. However, with the current push away from central direction of Local Authorities he felt that this would prove difficult to implement.

**Keith Brumfitt (Children's Workforce Development Council)** stated that he had not had any discussions with the DCSF specifically around autism. He also felt that the APPGA meeting had highlighted the need to revisit their recent analysis of Children and Young People's Plans and see how much the NSF is being used.