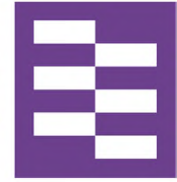




HM Prison &
Probation Service



Probation
Service



North West

Autism and LD – our journey so far

Kathryn Bruderer North West Probation
Clare Hughes, National Autistic Society

September 2021

Preventing victims by changing lives



North West Region Probation Service



1500 employees



4.5 million citizens



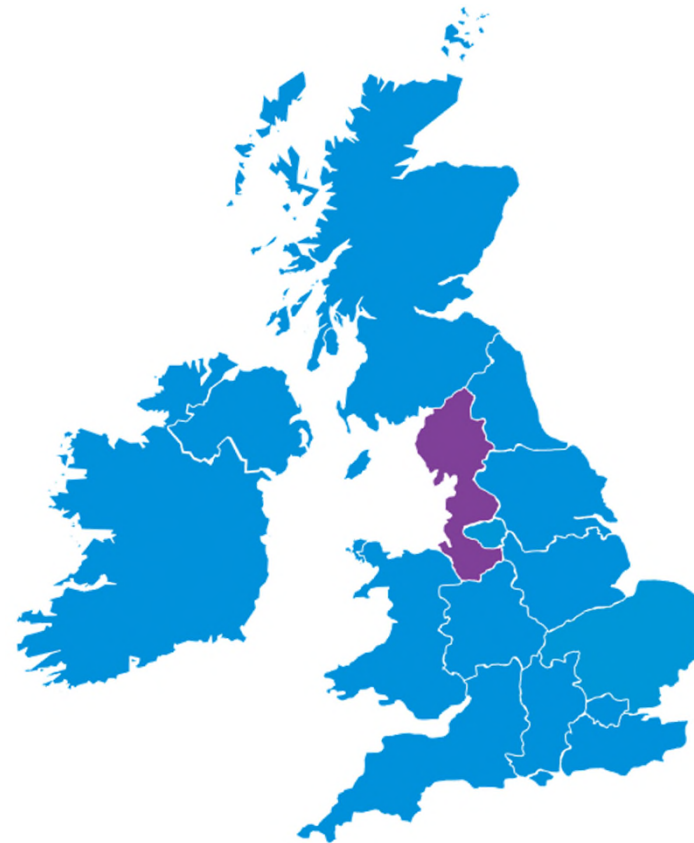
6 crown court locations and 29
magistrate courts in the region



12 Prisons in the Region



Working in partnership with
numerous public sector bodies and
voluntary organisations



Background

- HMIP review 2015
- MOJ project – Communication reflection tool and Keyring Training
- HMPPS Grants 2017 – 2020– Autism accreditation and probation and prisons projects
- HMIP review 2021

Autism Accreditation

- National Autistic Society Pilot
- Autism Champions Network

4 Key areas:

- Commitment
- Identification
- Enabling
- Outcomes

Accredited April 2018



‘John’ – Service User

<https://vimeo.com/album/5833579>

Responding to the issues

Adjustments

- Eye contact
- Questioning techniques
- Appointment times, location, length

Understanding and knowledge

- Training and Reflective Practice
- Consultation service
- Resources

Environment

- Environmental Audits
- Environmental checklist
- Autism-friendly interview rooms

2018 – 2020 project

- Working with NPS across the NW + 5 prisons in Lancashire/Cumbria to deliver:
 - Training
 - Introduction to autism/LD,
 - stress & anxiety,
 - offending behaviour,
 - Care Act
 - Reflective practice sessions & a consultation service
 - Specific training for the Sex Offender Resource Team delivering programmes
 - Developing a toolkit of resources
 - Service user group
 - Evaluation

Training for prison & probation staff

- ❑ **Trainees generally viewed the delivery of sessions very positively.** Examples of how to *adapt practice to the needs of autistic people/people with LD, applying legislative frameworks* such as the Care Act and *where to access resources* was especially helpful.
- ❑ **Pre-training attendees had varying autism/LD knowledge, experiences and confidence in their practice.** For more experienced officers the training was more of a refresher which helped consolidate their autism knowledge.
- ❑ **There was increased confidence in educating colleagues,** and an increase in insights of attendees who previously had little knowledge.
- ❑ **Before and after training attendees accessed information on autism/LD from a range of sources** including *intranet/Equip, internet, autism champions, internal and external agencies and research through 'a personal connection to autism'*.
- ❑ **The trainees overall had awareness of the complexities involved in distinguishing autism from co-occurring conditions.** Confidence in applying this to cases varied according to experience and many rely on advice from other agencies or colleagues.

Training for prison & probation staff

- ❑ **Immediate positive impacts** from attending the training included *adapting office environments to be low arousal, adapting means of communication when assessing risk or needs, giving offenders more time to process information and checking more thoroughly for understanding during appointments.*
- ❑ **Longer term impacts from the ability to reflect on practice** mainly revolved around *being guided by the individual and increased intuition when working with people who were undiagnosed.*
- ❑ **Most attendees could not recall any limitations to the training**, but some officers expressed the need for regular refresher sessions and mandatory autism/LD training for trainee probation staff.
- ❑ **General barriers to implementing new knowledge into practice** include *time constraints, accessing services and community support and lack of infrastructure to imbed good practice consistently across prisons.*

Feedback from people in prison

- *You can talk to staff, they are willing to help you out – staff on wing and in workplaces are good*
- *Find social environment very hard to cope with, and keep moving between different wings – ‘things get too much and people prey on my vulnerabilities’*
- *Prison is such an intense, social environment, but there is no support or guidance to help understand this if you have more challenges interpreting social interactions*
- *Came into prison system from psychiatric care, spent time on block – this was a lot less stressful, and was told could go here on request as needed – I found this a ‘huge comfort’ just to have as an option*
- *Originally placed on loud landing but when staff realised I was struggling to cope I was quickly moved to a quieter area*
- *‘I obey the rules I am aware of, I just don’t agree with most of them’*

Achievements & Outcomes

- Toolkit and wide range of resources
- Service user feedback
- Improved relationships with local autism partners
- Membership of NW CJ and autism forum
- Environmental audits and guidance
- Changes to national recording system
- Awareness and understanding
- Involvement in national work: APPG; MOJ group; HMIP review etc

The difference it makes...



Home



Explore



Notifications



Messages



Tweet



NW NPS SORT
@NpsNw



Coming to programmes will look and feel very different due to Co-vid. To help prepare our service users with autism to adjust to this, two of our facilitators are writing and illustrating a social story. Can't wait to see it! [#ValuingDiversity](#)



Family Member

‘The way they dealt with [son] was absolutely respectful, she dispersed some of his anxiety, ensured that everything was at his level of understanding... she made a very difficult situation bearable for me and him...the world of autism needs more people like her...’



Health Partner, Lancashire

“There has been a real move forward in the last 2 to 3 years in probation in their awareness of people with autism..... They have increased training of staff teams and look to make adjustments to meet people's needs. I have also seen probation push for appropriate social and psychological support for people with autism”.



What next....



- HMIP review and MOJ plan
- User forums
- Evaluation report prisons/probation project
- Women and autism/LD