

Autism Support Meeting – Minutes

Tuesday 15th January 13:00 – 14:00

Why is this meeting necessary?

- There is a lot of difficulty getting help, support and a diagnosis in our area.
- There is a big push in the NHS in the 10 year plan.
- There are a lot of patients and families dealing with autism in the home environment without help.
- Looking at what support there is that the surgery can offer and what support people in the surrounding area can offer.
- The surgery possibly does not see a lot of our autistic patients due to the surgery environment.

Response to setting up this meeting.

- We have had a very good response and received letters from patients about how they were diagnosed and what helped them.
- We have received info about groups offering help.

Diagnosis in the NHS.

- Adults are referred to Kingwood for diagnosis.
- Children are referred to PCAMHS for diagnosis.
- There is a very long wait for patient to be seen for assessment by both of these services, 6-18 months.
- Women are diagnosed very late in life with autism as it is more easily masked. This can cause deterioration in the patient's mental health.
- There was a study day in Oxford for GPs to help with diagnosis and signs of autism.
 - There are a huge number of presentations of autism.
 - GPs are in a good position follow through with signs of autism and diagnosis.
 - Unfortunately autism is not well understood by the medical profession.
 - There is a huge spectrum.
- There has recently been a module released to help with the diagnosis of autism.
- There are lots of self-diagnosis questionnaires available online, but they can be very long and difficult to complete.
- Diagnostic criteria are more based on male presentation of autism.
- There is a difference in the presentation of autism in men and women.
 - Men present with more obsessive behaviour.
 - Women get diagnosed with anxiety, and the diagnosis of autism come a lot later in life.
- When patients present at the surgery they are often referred to mental health as GPs tend to think the patient has a mental illness.

- Schools and colleges now have very good services in place for the support of patients with autism and understanding presentations.

Support in the Surgery.

- NHS Guidelines on how to best support patients – passed out during meeting and will be available on surgery website.
- GPs need to bring it to the forefront of their minds when treating patients.
- The surgery holds a register of autistic patients, however there will be undiagnosed patient at the surgery who could fall through the gaps.
 - The surgery did not focus on the register when setting up this meeting, but invited the whole practice population.
- The surgery to create an ease of access and set up alerts to make GPs aware a patient is autistic. This can also help with prescribing as some medications can cause different side effects to patients with autism.
- The surgery has created a section on their website to store information regarding autism, and minutes to these meetings.

Next meeting to be in a month

- Everyone to bring practical ideas on how we are going to move forward.
- 12th February 2019 6pm at The Hart Surgery

Useful links:

- National Autism Society: www.autism.org.uk
- Kingwood: www.kingwood.org.uk
- Exposure Anxiety – The Invisible Cage by Donna Williams:
www.amazon.co.uk/Exposure-Anxiety-Invisible-Exploration-Self-Protection/dp/1843100517/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1547719169&sr=8-1&keywords=exposure+anxiety+the+invisible+cage