

Appendix 2

Autism Services in Barnet

Healthwatch Barnet has collaborated with eleven charity partners to help co-ordinate and devise activities and events that can be used to provide experiences for and gather opinions from members of the community. Barnet Mencap is a well-established local voluntary organisation for Barnet residents with learning disabilities and/or autism and their families. In 2013 Barnet Mencap, as part of Healthwatch Barnet, conducted research on the healthcare experiences of people with learning disabilities and autism, and in February 2014 published the Healthwatch report 'Talk to Me'.

In this report Barnet Mencap conducts additional research with the focus on adults with autism spectrum condition only.

Recommendations

1. People with autism should routinely be given additional time for their medical appointments, preferably early or end-of-day slots to reduce their waiting time.
2. Raise autism awareness in primary care staff and look into the viability of some Borough wide training sessions for primary care professionals. We would suggest approaching the BEHMT for funding for 2 Borough wide training days.
3. It should not be assumed that people with high-functioning autism/Asperger syndrome or with high IQs are able to cope better while receiving medical consultation/treatment or are able to communicate their health concerns and symptoms.
4. Many people with autism are unable to talk about their health problems and symptoms. Any unusual behaviour should not be automatically attributed to psychological causes, as it may signal underlying physical condition/symptoms/pain.
5. People with ASC should be encouraged to attend their medical consultation/treatment with their carer or advocate. Medical staff should always address patients with ASC directly and avoid talking to their carers only but ensure that there is joint understanding of what is being discussed.
6. Adopt recommendations of the National Autistic Society for medical professionals.
7. Whenever possible, patients with ASC should be seen by the same allocated staff member, ie GP, nurse, etc, each time. This would reduce the patient's stress around attachment to their routine and enable better communication.