

Welsh Assembly Government
New Ideas Research Fund 2006

Identifying and Supporting People with Autistic Spectrum
Disorders within the Youth Justice System in Wrexham
and Flintshire



Elusen genedlaethol Cymru ar gyfer Awtistiaeth
Wales' National Charity for Autism

Title: Identifying and Supporting People with Autistic Spectrum Disorders within the Youth Justice System in Wrexham and Flintshire

This project quantifies and evaluates the experiences of young people with autistic spectrum disorders (ASDs) coming into the contact with the Police in Wrexham and Flintshire. A major thrust of the project has been to produce key recommendations for the Police to enable and assist them in their task of identifying and preventing young people with an ASD from entering the criminal justice system. It could be argued that the pioneering model developed in the research could be of considerable benefit to other parts of Wales.

Relevance to Wales: A Better Country (2003)

This groundbreaking if small scale research project is relevant to several of the 'big issues' contained with the Welsh Assembly Government document 'Wales-A Better Country' and indeed to the key themes covered in the policy areas of the Social Justice and Regeneration Department. Individuals with an autistic spectrum disorder have patterns of behaviour which, when displayed in public settings, can lead to misinterpretation by members of the public, and also the police. In such situations this behaviour may be construed as being anti-social, even threatening. This group, can therefore, experience considerable disadvantage and discrimination.

This aim of this project was to help the police to better understand the thinking and behavioural patterns of people with ASDs and to support such individuals and the communities in which they live. The project was about communities; the safety of individuals, and social equality and inclusion. The project arose from a partnership between the Police and the voluntary sector.

Aims of Project:

1. To identify the number of people with ASDs coming into contact with the Community Beat Officers; Custody Sergeants; School Liaison Officers; Youth Offending Teams (YOTs) and so on, within Wrexham and Flintshire.
2. To encapsulate some experiences of individuals and of the Police/YOT through small case vignettes and by gauging reactions to the Attention card scheme
3. To assess how the Police and YOT can increase their understanding of ASDs as the basis for aiding the effectiveness of the 'Prevent and Deter' aspects of community policing

4. To produce key recommendations for action which can be realistically employed at a local level but which could also be used as a model throughout Wales

The Criminal Justice System and ASDs in Wales

Currently in Wales, the Welsh Assembly Government is developing an All-Wales Strategy for Autistic Spectrum Disorders. However, whilst this will eventually be an all-age strategy it is unlikely to make a big impact in those areas for which the WAG has limited devolved responsibility. One such area is the Criminal Justice System. During the development of the All-Wales Strategy for ASDs in early 2004 a sub-group consisting of Flintshire YOT, Police, magistrates, practitioners in the field and Autism Cymru met to focus on ASDs and the Youth Justice System. Following the inaugural meeting of this group, joint meetings between Autism Cymru and Wrexham & Flintshire Police have taken place with the support of local Assembly Members, Carl Sargent and Sandy Mewies

Wrexham and Flintshire Police acknowledge that, at some point, in the normal course of their duties, operational officers will deal with persons with learning disabilities and mental health issues including ASDs. At the moment the majority of police officers will not have any knowledge of ASDs and if even if they have, there is no point of contact for them to get advice on how to respond to such individuals appropriately. Ultimately, this research project aims to support the Police by identifying how they can best prevent individuals with ASDs getting caught up with the Youth Justice System (often inadvertently). One aspect has been to discover the level of knowledge and experience that certain professionals have of ASDs, details of which are discussed in the research findings.

In October 2005, Autism Cymru in partnership with North Wales Police (Eastern Division) introduced an Attention Card Scheme for individuals with ASDs in Wrexham and Flintshire. Young People with ASDs can now carry a card (the Attention Card) which alerts police officers to their particular difficulties. Police stations at this time were also issued with Posters alerting them to the existence of the card and information leaflets giving them details of the disability and suggesting ways in which they might help. Part of this project has been to evaluate the effectiveness of the card. The scheme now operates across the whole of North Wales and in Ceredigion (Dyfed Powys Police). To date 341 cards have been issued in North Wales and 15 in Ceredigion. Details of the card holders are recorded on a database and held at Autism Cymru's offices in Aberystwyth.

What are Autistic Spectrum Disorders?

Autistic Spectrum Disorders (or ASDs) is a diagnostic term applied to individuals who have features in common and who are affected in their ability to:

- Understand and use verbal and non-verbal communication
- Interpret social behaviour which in turn affects their ability to interact with children and adults
- Think and behave flexibly (i.e. to know how to adapt their behaviour to suit specific situations)

- They also might be quite different from each other in their abilities and areas of strength and weaknesses
- One way in which ASD may manifest itself is by an over literal interpretation of what other people say.

ASD is believed to affect 60 per 10,000 of the population. Within Wales this means that around 20,000 of the population will fall within the autistic spectrum. The wider autism 'community' in Wales is really very sizeable if one includes families and practitioners working in the field. Using published Census population data for the Wrexham and Flintshire area, it can be estimated that there are approximately 1660 people with an ASD living locally. Many of these have not been clinically identified and may enter a wide range of generic public services especially in mental health and in the youth and adult criminal justice system. Here their needs are often neither recognised nor met.

ASDs and Offending Behaviour

Sometimes individuals with ASDs might come into contact with the Criminal Justice System (CJS) because of the nature of their social difficulties, their trusting and open personality, their particular 'special interests' or their sensitivity to sensory experiences.

Sometimes the problems may be exacerbated following a crime because of perceived anti social behaviour of the individual with ASDs. For example, in a situation that involved interaction with a police officer they could:

- Behave in an extremely socially inappropriate way;
- Cause offence without being aware they are doing so;
- Appear aloof, rude, egocentric or insensitive;
- Not know how to react to certain unknown situations and other people's feelings;
- Have difficulty understanding and using non-verbal communication;
- Not like being touched;

- Have extreme intolerance to certain sounds and smells or other sensory stimuli;
- Take things literally or
- Not be able to understand implied meaning or follow a long set of instructions.

We spoke to a group of youngsters about their experiences with the police. Some of them had found themselves in situations where their social communication had led to misunderstandings. For example, one young man said “I have been in trouble and they (the police) thought I was being cheeky but I was just being honest”. When asked by a police officer ‘Do you promise never to do this again?’ one young man had answered, ‘No I do not know if I will ever do it again’. In his mind, he did not want to make a promise that he truly did not know if he would be able to keep. Another, when asked if he had been *involved* in a shop lifting incident answered ‘Yes’. He had not committed the crime but he had been in the shop at the time when the incident occurred. His interpretation of the word ‘*involved*’ was very different from that of the police officer. In short, therefore, individuals with an ASD may appear to be behaving in an uncooperative way when actually they are trying to be as open and honest as they can be.

An overview of some of the literature relating to ASD’s and offending behaviour can be found in Annex 1.

Research Methodology

This research has been undertaken by Brad Nicholas, from Bangor University who is skilled in research methodology. The techniques involved have included a literature search; questionnaire design; sampling techniques, face to face and telephone interviews; data collation; and analysis and evaluation.

Individual mentoring support and guidance and qualitative data collection was carried out by Autism Cymru’s Head of Public and Voluntary Sector Partnerships/Deputy CEO Maggie Bowen. Both individuals were supported throughout the project by personnel from North Wales Police, in particular Constable Jillian Williams, Health and Mental Liaison Officer for North Wales.

1. The questionnaire

The study was not likely to generate sufficient data for rigorous statistical testing, due to the limited area covered by the pilot. The questionnaire responses were, therefore, analysed descriptively.

The police staff and associated workers responded to three categories of question:-

- 1) The level of awareness and understanding of ASDs by the professionals.
- 2) The level of contact the professionals had with people with ASDs.
- 3) The perceived need (of the professionals) for more training in recognising and managing people with ASDs.

The responses were analysed to gain an appreciation of the need and perceived value of a “card scheme” for youngsters with ASDs and also the training of police staff and associated workers in best practice in dealing with individuals with an ASD who may come into contact with the Criminal Justice System.

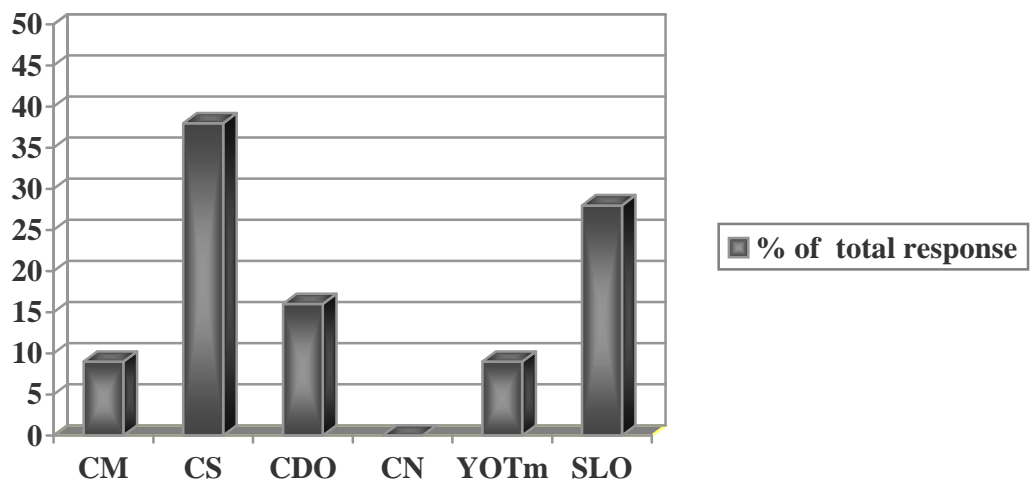
Responses to the open ended question “Any further brief comments?”, were analysed separately.

The questionnaire is presented as Annex 2 at the end of this report

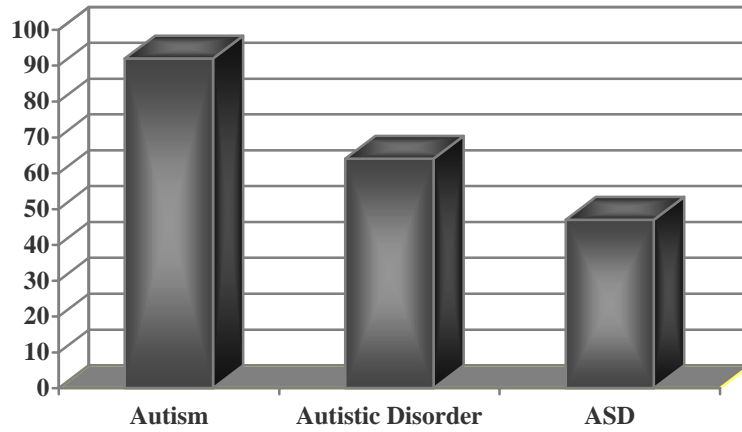
A summary of the data obtained from the questionnaire is presented in the following charts and tables.

| Respondent categories | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| CM | Custody Managers |
| CS | Custody Sergeants |
| CDO | Custody Detention Officers |
| CN | Custody Nurses |
| YOT | Youth Offenders Team Member |
| SLO | School Liaison Officer |

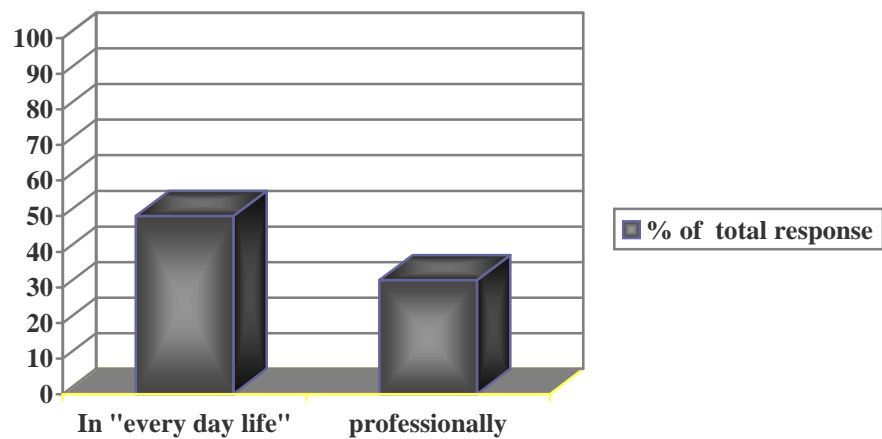
Respondent categories as a % of the total replies (34)
 (80 questionnaires circulated, ~43% response rate)



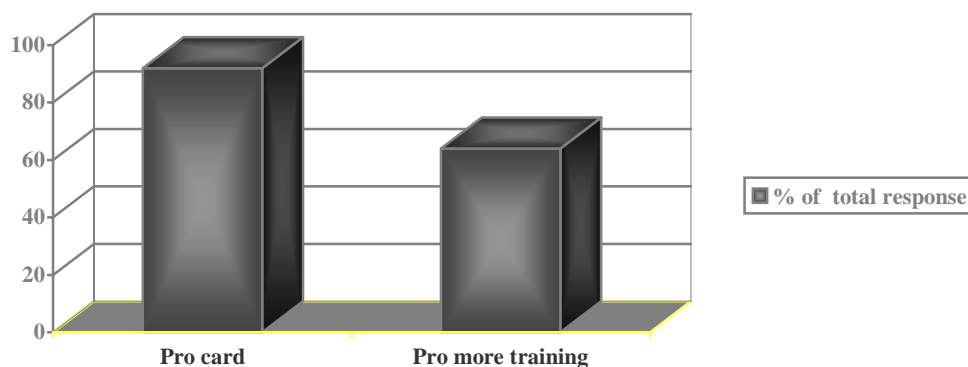
Are the respondents familiar with the terms Autism etc.? (% saying 'yes')



Have the respondents ever met a person with an ASD? (% saying 'yes')



Would more training and an information card be useful? (%saying 'yes')



Open-ended responses from the professionals

“It would be very helpful to have information on what are considered Autistic Spectrum Disorders” “SLOs are encouraged to attend SEN/PRU establishments within their own beats. Prior to attendance at same, no specific training has been received, which in itself is a failing”. (School Liaison Officer)

“If further training is given this should include an introduction to both Asperger Syndrome and Dyspraxia which could confuse those who are unaware of the conditions”. (School Liaison Officer)

“This is an area of which I have had little experience despite having 23+ yrs. Service” (Custody Sergeant)

“As these conditions are so broad in the way that they present, training will assist in recognising people with these issues and how to deal with them on a professional basis”. (Custody Sergeant)

“I have had training but this was quite intensive and I felt that there was an awful lot covered in a short time. Any further training would be greatly appreciated”. (Youth Offending Team, member of).

“Training was given to Conwy/Denbs YOT on this very subject on 28/4/06 delivered by BIBIC (British Institute for Brain Injured Children)” (Youth Offending Team, member of).

“I am familiar with Autism. I can not answer the other questions as I am unsure whether I have dealt with someone suffering Autism or AD or ASDs? I

believe I have had no training to differentiate between the three". (Custody Sergeant)

"I have received some input re Autism and other specialist needs as part of our ongoing training for our SLO role. In schools children with special needs within main-stream school usually have a classroom assistant with them". (School Liaison Officer)

"I do not know what the symptoms of this disorder are and therefore I do not know whether I have encountered anyone with it". (Custody Manager)

"I embrace any such input/training that will assist me with my current role. I have day to day contact with children and young persons that suffer with different disorders and have special educational needs. I am aware that there are different types of Autism but my knowledge of approaches is limited" (School Liaison Officer).

Conclusions from the data gained from the questionnaire.

Respondents were generally uncertain about the meaning and significance of the different terms associated with the Autistic Spectrum.

There was a tendency for the SLOs to be more familiar with Autism than the other categories of staff.

There was a very strong positive response for more training and for a card system to inform of special needs.

Some respondents felt they probably had dealt with an autistic person in the course of their work but had not recognised the person's specific problem.

2. Interviews with teachers, young people with ASDs and their families

As part of the research, interviews were carried out by talking directly to two teachers of pupils with ASDs and small groups of youngsters with ASDs in two secondary schools with a specialist resource base. The Deputy Head Teacher of a specialist residential school for pupils with ASDs was also interviewed. Autism Cymru has worked closely with three teachers on other projects and so they welcomed the opportunity to discuss the value of the card scheme and the issues that they feel are a cause for concern. Telephone interviews also took place with parents who called to make a request for an Attention Card for their son or daughter.

The qualitative research was undertaken to determine the value of the card and to hear about the main concerns directly from those living and working with individuals with ASDs. Interviews with pupils gave us the chance to gain an understanding of the issues from the perspective of the person with an ASD, aside from any preconceptions that we might have.

Interviews with Teachers

The teachers were asked what they considered to be the main issues. They stated that behaviours which may have been tolerated in children are often not tolerated in young people post 16 e.g. touching, asking personal questions, and pushing into people and not apologising. They said that times when youngsters lost control in public places would be seen as aggressive outbursts or a public disturbance, rather than a reaction to feeling over-stressed in a particular social situation. Such outbursts are often not as easy to control or excuse in adolescence. They said that the card scheme would be especially useful in these situations.

Concern was also expressed over the fact that youngsters with ASDs can be very vulnerable. They often do not comply with peer group pressure to follow trends in fashion or music and can therefore easily become the target of bullying and ridicule. Their poor social skills might lead to others in to thinking they are being arrogant, rude, provocative and confrontational.

The teachers were asked about their involvement with the police in education, in particular the school liaison officers. The secondary school teachers said the involvement tended to be on a generic level in school meetings e.g. Year Seven pupils had a talk recently, and pupils from the resource base attended. They said it would be very useful to have someone to talk specifically to the pupils about road safety issues.

The Deputy Head Teacher from the residential special school praised the work of their school liaison officer. The Officer has altered the generic curriculum to meet the specific needs of youngsters with ASDs. He spent time at the school observing lessons and pupils in order to produce a 12 month curriculum with ASD friendly lessons and activities. The programme is delivered as part of the Personal Social and Health Education curriculum. For less able youngsters, sessions may simply include familiarisation with police car and uniform.

Teachers were asked to provide examples of when they knew pupils had involvement with the police. Responses fell in into the following categories:

- **Domestic**

These included incidences of confrontation between parents and car theft and damage.

- **Running away**

The following examples were provided:

One teacher explained the difficulties that can arise when a child without speech runs away. One of his pupils managed to unlock doors at night and caught a train from Rhyl to Crewe. He was discovered when the train terminated. The same child was also found at a local supermarket in the night. In these situations, he is often mistaken for being deaf because he cannot respond to questioning. The teacher said that the Attention card – recorded on data base – would be a useful means of ID in these circumstances.

The same teacher told us of another child (aged 8 – no speech) who went on a trip to London with his father the week before Xmas. He ran off in Oxford St, and was found at a tube station two and a half hours later, by a cleaner.

- **Theft and damage to property**

Some of youngsters with ASDs can be coaxed into committing petty theft or drug dealing by 'neurotypicals'. Neurotypical is a term very often used by individuals with ASDs to describe people who are not on the autistic spectrum. Individuals with ASDs can be easily led astray because of their desire to please others and make friends. Often they find it very difficult to make and maintain friendships and this can lead to feelings of great loneliness, isolation and depression in later life.

'Special interests' can also lead to crime if they are not managed properly. We heard about a young boy who loved making fire bombs and throwing them out of the window. The same boy, because of his fascination for fire, set a neighbour's caravan on fire.

- **Misunderstandings**

Individuals with ASDs can get into trouble because of misunderstandings. As already mentioned, public misunderstanding can arise when individuals with ASDs have an outburst of temper.

Sometimes misunderstanding can arise because youngsters with ASDs do not fully understand the meaning of a procedure. For example, some youngsters do not understand the idea of the Attention Card-the concept is too abstract, and cards have particular associations. Some think of cards in terms of football. One youngster ripped the card in two and threw it on the floor. This young man who has ADHD and Asperger Syndrome is taken home by the police on a regular basis and can show signs of aggression. His attitude and behaviour is often difficult for officers to understand.

Youngsters with ASDs are very honest which may not be helpful in some situations. For example, one boy when asked by a police officer, 'Do you promise never to do this again?', replied- 'I can not promise because I do not know if I will do it again'.

Interviews with Pupils

Pupils were interviewed informally in small groups or individually. They were encouraged to contribute openly and honestly and only if they really wanted to.

Question 1.

What do police officers do? (Pupil response)

Answers to this question were quite simplistic and based on how the pupils had seen the police represented in the media, in particular TV programmes. They did not really draw on their own experiences to answer the questions but that is possibly due to the fact that they were not directly asked to do so. Individuals with ASDs tend to interpret questions literally and will answer in a very direct way.

- 'Arrest bad people and keep the law'
- 'Hold up the law. Stop fights. Make people feel safe.'
- 'There to help us'.
- 'Stop bad people from doing naughty things.'
- 'Help you if you call them up.'
- 'Go to concerts and footy matches to make sure everyone is sociable.'
- 'Go around town and ask if you are OK'.
- 'Stop crime.'
- 'Make streets safe.'
- 'Stop people selling drugs.'
- 'Stop crimes such as shop lifting, vandalism, drug dealing, help old people who have been assaulted, anti-social behaviour, child abuse.'

Question 2

How do you feel when you see a police officer?

On the whole, pupils had a very positive attitude towards the police, although because of personal experiences one youngster was very nervous in their presence and felt that they were there to criticise rather than to help.

'I'm nervous of the police. I don't like them. I worry how to look at them. I was only watching a squirrel once and the policeman thought I was up to no good.'

'I'd think something was wrong. I'm not that good with authority. I do not know how to talk to them. Perhaps the card might help.'

'I would wonder what had happened. I am not frightened of the police and would ask for help.'

'I feel great. I usually wave and say hello but sometimes they don't answer. I feel great because I feel safe.'

'Safe because they are there to help people.'

Question 3

What involvement have you ever had with the police?

Answers to this question varied considerably. Some youngsters had involvement with the police because they had no sense of danger e.g. crossing the road. Others had been involved in prankish behaviour and some, as a result of their difficulties with social communication and interaction had been misinterpreted as being rude and cheeky.

Some youngsters had had been into contact with the police when they had needed help e.g. getting lost or when there had been an incident in the family such as a family friend dying. One young man proudly told everyone about how he had helped the police to catch some thieves.

'I was told off by a policeman for running across the road.'

'I was messing about with a crate down by the marsh. It was the night they were turning on the lights and there were lots of police about. We threw the crate into the river and shouted out. The police man came over and asked 'Are you a prat or just practicing? I said 'I was just practicing, Sir'. I was serious because I did not want to say that I was a prat. He thought I was being cheeky. '

'I get attacked a lot and beaten up, mugged and stuff taken off me. I have had lots of police interviews and have had to pick someone out from a line.'

'Came to my house when my mum's friend died. '

'When we were little my brother and I looked in the directory and made prank calls. The police came to the house and warned us.'

'Someone threw a brick at our window. The policeman came to ask us about it. He was dead nice. '

'In school they brought sniffer dogs to find drugs.'

'They gave a talk on anti-social behaviour in Mynydd Isaf- drinking, drugs and smoking.'

'I get on with the police. I think they are nice. I always say hello. '

'One time I went for a walk and my dad sent them to find me. They asked me if I was lost and I said 'No'. I used to get lost a lot when I lived in Telford.'

'I don't go out alone I worry what might happen to me.'

'I don't go out by myself and mum doesn't want me to go in case I get into trouble.'

'I was in the paper because I chased after some boys who had stolen some stuff from the golf shop.'

Question 4

Why do you think the Attention Card is useful?

There was an overwhelming support for the card scheme from the youngsters especially those who had found themselves in difficult situations. The fact that the youngsters had a card to show police officers seem to give them confidence. These able young men were aware of their difficulties and the way in which they can often be perceived by 'neurotypicals'. They felt that the card would help the public to understand them better.

'In case I get apprehended wrongly and get stressed.'

'In case police start asking me questions. I have been in trouble. They thought I was being cheeky but I was just being honest.'

'Could use it if you got lost.'

"Going to use the card. I think it is a good idea."

'Instead of 'disability' would rather see 'AS is a unique condition'.

'My mum thinks it is a brilliant idea!'

'My mum thinks it is cracking! It is the best idea!'

'I could be in the wrong place at the wrong time and the police might ask me questions and get the wrong idea. I would probably react worse than the ones committing the crime. A few years ago I might have hit someone.'

'If I throw a wobbly in the street, the police would know my problem. '

'It is cool because if you do throw a wobbly when you are lost, stuck, stressed or angry with people, the police might be less harsh. '

'It will help me stay out of trouble.'

'It's very good. My dad thinks it's excellent.'

'I'd use the card in tricky situations or when I am too traumatised to speak.'

'Someone with Autism or Asperger's could be stuck without this card.'

Telephone Conversations with parents

Many parents have telephoned Autism Cymru requesting cards for their son or daughter. They recalled incidences where their child had been involved with police in situations where criminal intent had been misconceived.

One parent recalled the following incident and was very impressed with the way in which the police officer dealt with her son:

Incident: Social Worker called police following incident when youngster with ASDs almost suffocated his mother.

Procedure: Youngster ran through the house when he saw the police officer. He eventually found refuge behind a settee in the conservatory. Police went into room after youngster and spoke to him calmly. The mother is not sure whether her son really listened to his words but he remained silent.

The mother said she thought that the police officer in question showed an awareness of her son's difficulties. He said that she could call if there were any more problems. He also said that he would be happy to give the young man a tour around the police station and talk to him further.

We were pleased to receive the following e-mail from a parent requesting a card which showed that the leaflets sent out to police stations are taking effect:

'I would be grateful if you could send me information on how to obtain an ASD card for my twenty year old son. He is constantly being stopped by the police for looking different. He was given a leaflet regarding the card by the police who are now aware of my son's complex diagnosis of Asperger's, ADHD and multiple disorders. He feels that the card may help him when he is in other parts of the country'.

3. Custody Records

A search was undertaken using the following words: *autism, Asperger, ADHD, autistic* using the RMS data base computer system for the period April 2005 to April 2006. In Eastern Division four records were shown. Three records were for assault causing actual bodily harm and one incidence involved a threat to kill. In each case, the individual with an ASD was the victim rather than the perpetrator of the crime.

4. Training

Both Wrexham and Flintshire Youth Offending Teams have undergone awareness training following a request to Autism Cymru. During this training some discussion centred around the use of the Asset, an assessment framework for young people involved in the youth justice system. Certain sections on the Asset could give rise to specific responses from individuals with ASDs and might therefore be an indicator of need (See Annex 3)

Debbaudt (1998) argues that educating the public about the needs of individuals with ASDs could reduce the potential of an individual with ASD being perceived as criminal in nature and if arrested, to ensure more humane treatment. He states that training should be provided for police and fire departments and all personnel included in the criminal justice system.

Conclusions

- The research was not able to estimate the number of people coming into contact with the Police and YOTS in Wrexham and Flintshire. At present the data to do this does not seem to be available
- The research showed that, of those who responded to the survey, only 30% of police officers and YOT team members said they had met people with an ASD professionally. An overwhelming majority (85%) were in favour of the Attention Card, and over 60% in favour of more training.
- The qualitative research clearly showed the ways in which young people with ASDs can sometimes be misunderstood by the Police and treated inappropriately. There were also examples of good practice by the Police, where individual officers took care to put young people with ASDs at ease.

Recommendations

1. Professionals within the Criminal Justice System, in particular Youth Offending Teams and Police Officers undergo awareness training in relation to ASDs. In the case of the latter this could be an integral part of 'Diversity Training'.
2. A training DVD/CD ROM should be produced and circulated to all professionals in the CJS.
3. The Attention Card scheme and police information leaflets should be operational across Wales

4. The proposed expansion of the Attention Card scheme across Wales should be monitored and evaluated. A system to do this should be agreed with police and implemented from the outset.
5. There should be some indication on custody records that person carries an ASD Attention card or has an ASD so that statistical information about incidences can be easily retrieved
6. The interview schedule and procedures in custody should be examined in terms of 'ASD friendliness' and adjusted accordingly for these individuals. The Guidance for Vulnerable or Intimidated Witnesses, including Children issued by the Welsh Assembly Government, Crown Prosecution Service, Department of Health and the Home Office could provide a starting point for discussion on this issue.
7. The content of Asset should be examined further as a possible tool to alert YOTs to the needs of individuals who have or may have an ASD

Dissemination

There is good potential the findings and actions arising from this project to be disseminated in the following ways:

- Through a joint Police/Autism Cymru conference or seminar in North Wales
- By publication in a relevant journal
- By features in local media
- Report to the Social justice and Regeneration Department and the Welsh Assembly Government

References

Allen, D. (2006) '*Asperger Syndrome and Offending Behaviour*', Paper presented at Wales 2nd International Conference on ASD, Cardiff, awares.org

Autism Cymru/Ceredigion Child and Family Support Team (2003) *All About Autistic Spectrum Disorders*,

Davis ,B. and Schunick , W.G. (2002) '*Dangerous Encounters. Avoiding Perilous Situations with Autism*, London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers

Debbaudt,D. (1998), 'Law Enforcement and Autism: A National Perspective, *The Advocate* May-June 1998, Volume 31, No.3 (www.autism-society.org)

Howlin, P. (2006) '*Improving Outcomes in Adult Life for People with ASDs*', Paper presented at Wales 2nd International Conference on ASD, Cardiff, awares.org

Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) (2003) *Wales A Better Country*

WAG/Home Office/CPS/DoH '*Achieving Best Practice in Criminal Proceedings: Guidance for Vulnerable or Intimidated Witnesses including Children*'. Volumes 1 and 2.

ANNEX 1 : OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH ON ASDs AND OFFENDING BEHAVIOUR

Howlin (2006) states that individuals with ASDs might be particularly vulnerable to crime for the following reasons:

- A fascination or 'special interest' could be fatal e.g. fire or poison. She cites the example of a young man who had such an interest in washing machines that he would break into shops and people's houses to examine them!
- A strong dislike such as the sound of a baby crying or a dog barking could lead to an aggressive outburst;
- A lack of knowledge of appropriate and inappropriate touch could lead to accusations of sexual harassment. Individuals may love the feel of a particular texture or material such as velvet and think nothing of stroking the back of the lady in front of them if she happens to be wearing a velvet jacket.
- Unexpected violence and outbursts provoked by certain triggers in the environment that are not directly evident.
- A pre-occupation/adoration for an individual could lead to stalking.
- Activities appropriate in childhood can be perceived as inappropriate in adulthood e.g. picking up or tickling toddlers that belong to complete strangers.

Allen (2006) adds to this a vulnerability to get involved in computer crime, property destruction, drug offences and theft.

We asked some teachers of youngsters with ASDs what they considered to be some of the major issues. They expressed concerns around the fact that behaviours tolerated in childhood have different connotations in adulthood e.g. touching, asking inappropriate, highly personal questions, pushing into people and not apologising and temper tantrums/outbursts in public places. One teacher expressed concern over the fact that the youngsters can sometimes be provocative and confrontational. Another mentioned the vulnerability of individuals with ASDs to be coerced by neurotypicals into crimes such as petty theft and property destruction.

Davis and Schunick (2002, pp.45-46) argue that individuals with ASDs might come into contact with the police for the following reasons:

- Self stimulatory and self-injurious behaviour such as hand flapping, pinching self, self-biting, repetitive actions and thrashing.
- Wandering alone e.g. children dressed inappropriately for the weather wandering alone or darting into traffic. (Here they do point out that some children with ASDs are attracted to water and may therefore be especially at risk near pools, ponds and lakes).
- Peering into windows.
- Turning water faucets on and off
- Behaviour may mimic drug abuse or mental illness

- Bizarre or disruptive behaviour such as lining up objects, Pica (eating inappropriate objects), Toe walking, robotic like speech.
- Hitting or biting people.
- Involvement in altercations e.g. they may commit a crime without realising what they have done wrong.
- Suspected child abuse- parents may be restraining child with what may appear questionable force.

ANNEX 2



Wales' National Charity for Autism
Elusen genedlaethol Cymru ar gyfer Awtistiaeth

Questionnaire

Please tick the appropriate box in answer to the questions set out below.
There are **10** questions

1. Before you received this questionnaire were you familiar with the terms in table 1.

Table 1

| Term | yes | no |
|------------------------------------|-----|----|
| Autism | | |
| Autistic Disorder (AD) | | |
| Autistic Spectrum Disorders (ASDs) | | |

2. Have you ever met a person with an Autistic Spectrum Disorder
Yes () No ()
3. Have you dealt professionally with anyone who has an ASD
Yes () No ()
4. Did you recognise the person's special needs at the time.
Yes () No ()

5. Did their special needs come to light later on?
Yes () No ()
6. Have you had any specific training to recognise behaviours that indicate your clients may have an Autistic Spectrum Disorder
Yes () No ()
7. Did the training help in recognising a person with an Autistic Spectrum Disorder
Yes () No ()
8. Do you think that a credit card style notification card, carried by people with an Autistic Spectrum Disorder, would help you to recognise and interact with clients with an Autistic Spectrum Disorder
Yes () No ()
9. Would you appreciate training in how to recognise Autistic Spectrum Disorders amongst your clients
Yes () No()
10. Please indicate your professional role by ticking a box

| | |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| Custody Manager | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Custody Sergeants | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Custody Detention Officer | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Custody Nurses | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Youth Offending Team | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| School Liaison Officers | <input type="checkbox"/> |

11. Any further brief comments?

ANNEX 3

Using Asset for Identification and Assessment of ASDs

Asset is an assessment tool that aims to look at the young person's offence or offences and identify a multitude of factors and circumstances- ranging from lack of educational attainment to mental health problems- which may have contributed to such behaviour. Certain aspects of this assessment tool could be used to alert YOTs to the possibility that a young person may have an autistic spectrum disorder.

Certain aspects of the evidence collected in the Core Profile could be particularly useful in the identification process. The following questions may act as key indicators:

Offence Analysis

What was the offence?

What degree of planning was involved?

What were the young person's motives?

What were the young person's attitudes?

Does the young person think what they did was wrong?

Does the young person have any particular beliefs which may have influenced the offence?

Education, training and employment

The educational placement and indication of poor language skills and poor social relationships could be explored more fully in this section through Education Inclusion Services.

Lifestyle

Lack of age appropriate friendships.

Having a special interest/hobby that takes over lifestyle.

Physical Health

Some individuals with ASDs do suffer from epilepsy. There would be liaison and cooperation with the multi-agency Integrated Children's Team

Emotional and Mental Health

Current circumstances (e.g. feelings of anger, sadness, worry/anxiety)

Concerns about the future (e.g. feelings of worry/anxiety, fear, uncertainty)

S/he is affected by other emotional or psychological difficulties (e.g. phobias, eating or sleeping disorders, obsessive compulsive disorder)

Perception of self and others

S/he has difficulties with self-identity

Sees him/herself as the victim

Thinking and behaviour

Lack of understanding of consequences

Impulsiveness

Poor control of temper

Inappropriate social and communication skills

Attitude to offending

Reluctance to accept responsibility

Lack of understanding of the effect of the behaviour on the victim

Lack of remorse

Lack of understanding of effects of behaviour on family/carers

A belief that certain types of offences are acceptable

A belief that certain people/groups are acceptable targets for offending behaviour.

Motivation to change

'No' answers to this range of questions could serve as an indicator that the individual has an ASD in conjunction with a range of other replies.

A small scale research project could analyse the responses from those youngsters in the system in Flintshire who are known to have an ASD and others, who following the analysis, could be suspected of having an ASD.