1.4. Recommendations

While recognising today's particular financial constraints, it is the aspiration of all the major organisations involved in this review, including Kent County Council, Eastern and Coastal Kent Primary Care Trust, West Kent Primary Care Trust and Kent and Medway NHS and Social Care Partnership Trust, to deliver the objectives set out in this report.

Recommendation 1
The Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Select Committee recommends that the Kent Adult Social Services Directorate, through the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment for adults in Kent, establishes the most effective way of conducting a county-wide study investigating:

• the prevalence and incidence of adults with ASD in need of support And not currently receiving service provision
• levels of service satisfaction of those adults with autism living at home and currently receiving support.

This investigation will inform the planning and commissioning of future services for adults with ASD. The study could involve sponsoring a bursary for a student to carry out a research project at the Tizard Centre, University of Kent (please refer to Chapter 3).

Recommendation 2
KCC should encourage the inclusion of autism-related services, in the form of “care pathways”, amongst the services provided by multi-disciplinary mental health teams in the County. The local authority should also explore the possibility of setting up, in partnership with the NHS, a highly specialised autism service in Kent, such as the one offered by the South London and Maudsley Hospital (Chapter 4, Section 4.1 and Section 4.2).

Recommendation 3
The Kent Adult Social Services Directorate should ensure that:

• all its staff involved in the assessment of autism are fully trained to understand the uniqueness, complexity and implications of the condition. This training should be coupled with an increasing number of early interventions aimed at diverting people with autism from care pathways that are inappropriate and expensive
• adequate advocacy services with ASD-specific knowledge are offered to all people with autism who require them (Chapter 4, Sections 4.1, 4.3 and Section 4.4).

**Recommendation 4**
The Kent Adult Social Services Directorate should aim to achieve greater access to person-centred planning for, and a greater usage of Direct Payments by, people with ASD. It will liaise with the recently appointed Specialist Advisor for Autism at the Department of Health in an effort to expand its capacity, expertise and leadership on autism in Kent (Chapter 5).

**Recommendation 5**
The Managing Director of Kent Adult Social Services should oversee and ensure the prompt production and implementation of a protocol for joint working between KCC’s learning disability and mental health teams, in order to provide a more inclusive and responsive service to individuals with ASD (Chapter 6, Section 6.1).

**Recommendation 6**
The Select Committee endorses the production of Transition Protocols, which can enhance data sharing between children and adult social services in Kent, and recommends that the impact of these protocols on service planning and provision for young people with ASD – including those with Asperger syndrome - is specifically monitored (Chapter 6, Section 6.2).

**Recommendation 7**
Kent Adult Social Services should lead on the establishment of a multidisciplinary task group with representation from agencies including health, social care, housing, employment services, education, independent sector providers and the voluntary sector. The task group - which should liaise with the Kent Learning Disability Partnership Board - will widen and strengthen the interdependence and joint working amongst all these agencies, to provide more efficient and effective services to people with autism and individuals with learning disabilities (Chapter 6, Section 6.3).

**Recommendation 8**
KCC should make sure that transition planning offered to young people with autism should start at the age of 14, and that it should be in place before they reach statutory school leaving age. The local authority should ensure well coordinated, seamless transitions into adulthood, involving person-centred, effective planning and support. Planning should be coupled with a mechanism to monitor progress and to secure a smooth transition (Chapter 7, Section 7.1, Section 7.2 and Section 7.3).
Recommendation 9
Kent County Council should review the availability of specialist psychology, psychiatry and speech therapy health services to people with autism both during transition and into adulthood (Chapter 7, Section 7.4).

Recommendation 10
Kent County Council should support a campaign to raise awareness in the community about autism. KCC should also urge internal and partner agencies, including the NHS, the Criminal Justice System, the police and the housing, employment and education services, to enhance awareness amongst their staff about autism, its complexities and the implications for their service delivery (Chapter 8, Section 8.1 and Section 8.2).

Recommendation 11
KCC should contribute to the development of a website which provides up-to-date national guidance as well as local information on all the services and support available to people with ASD and their families in Kent. Information and guidance should be presented in a clear, unambiguous and user-friendly form (Chapter 8, Section 8.3).

Recommendation 12
Kent County Council should:

• review its recruitment practices and selection criteria so that they support and enable the employment of more people with autistic spectrum conditions within the Authority

• explore the potential of further education colleges in Kent to maximise the employment opportunities of people with autism in the County

• require the Supporting Independence Programme team to carry out a project, possibly with the Tizard Centre, aimed at helping people with ASD to access employment (Chapter 9, Section 9.1 and Section 9.2).

Recommendation 13
Kent County Council should:

• carry out an audit involving all Kent District Councils to ascertain accurately the housing options available to people with ASD and those with learning disabilities

• urge both District Councils and the Joint Planning and Policy Board to
take particular account of the needs of people with autism when discussing and deciding housing options
• encourage both District Councils and the Kent Adult Social Services Directorate to consider allocating some of their PFI housing options to people with autism (Chapter 9, Section 9.3).

Recommendation 14
Kent County Council should:

• start a pilot scheme in Kent in which a drop-in facility providing Autism related information and guidance is available one day a week. The Committee suggests using an existing local setting, such as the successful Ashford Gateway, as the base for this pilot scheme. In order to maximise the effectiveness of this initiative, it is essential that the staff working in the premises are made aware both of the initiative and about the condition of autism

• contribute to the funding of a befriending scheme, using trained volunteers, which may be run in collaboration with The National Autistic Society (Chapter 10, Section 10.1 and Section 10.2).

Recommendation 15
The Kent Adult Social Services Directorate should carry out a county-wide audit to quantify the need for respite of people with ASD and their families. The purpose of this study is to inform the planning of future respite service provision in Kent, taking into account the Authority’s financial constraints (Chapter 10, Section 10.3).