

Your Ref: 01101889

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8 JUL 2010

Dr Tessa

Thank you for your letter of 9 June enclosing an example of correspondence you have received from a number of your constituents about the provision of mental health services for children and young people with autistic spectrum conditions (ASCs).

My colleague Paul Burstow was pleased to be able to attend and speak at the launch of the National Autistic Society's report. As he said, it is unacceptable that so many families of autistic children do not feel supported, especially if the children also have mental health problems.

On the specific points your constituents raise, it is for local organisations, including Primary Care Trusts, to make joint assessments of the health needs of individuals in their local populations. The assessments should help local partners to commission appropriate services to meet those needs, including services that have access to the knowledge and skills needed to provide effective help to those children and young people who have both ASCs and mental health issues. Emotional well-being and mental health services are wide-ranging – provision varies from health promotion activity in universal settings, through targeted services to highly specialised ones. Where individual children and young people have both a mental health problem and an ASC, local partners should meet their complex needs by developing the right package of care within the overall local commissioning framework.

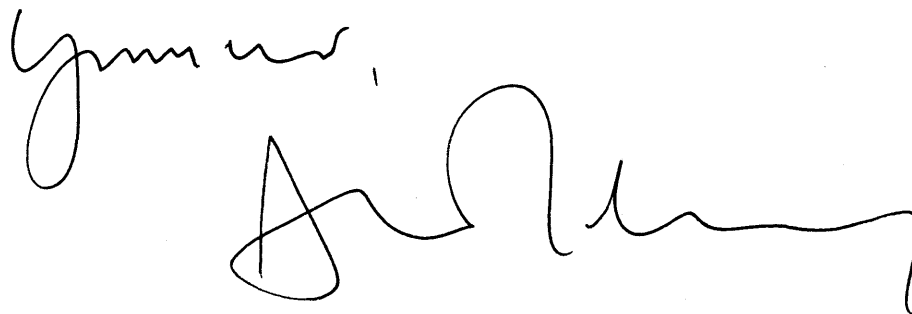
The National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence is, at the Department of Health's request, preparing a clinical guideline in relation to the initial

recognition, referral and diagnosis of ASCs in children and adolescents. The guideline is due to be published in September 2011.

The Department of Health is considering what more it can do to help local services ensure that they offer proper support to children with ASCs and their families.

I hope this reply is helpful.

11.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Andrew Lansley', written in a cursive style.

ANDREW LANSLEY CBE