

SUBMISSION FROM KARIN ULBRICH

1. I feel that, in general, Dundee and the surrounding area has been somewhat overlooked, for example, I see that there are “one-stop shops” operating in both Glasgow and in Lothian which are exactly what is needed, if only there was something even remotely similar in Tayside or further north!!
2. Reading the comments from service users, I feel a mixture of happiness [on their behalf] and also a sense of sadness, or rather of missing out on something which could be beneficial. If it wasn't for the tireless work of the National Autistic Society (NAS), who organise monthly social groups for those of us with high functioning autism and asperger's syndrome in the Tayside area, I don't know where I would be emotionally. The very nature of autism makes it particularly difficult to reach out to people, especially in times of difficulty, and my only real point of contact for ANY help, since my diagnosis has been through the NAS, specifically through a most wonderful lady by the name of Sandra Buckley, who organises and leads our monthly groups. She really is a wonderful woman who I feel goes “above and beyond” to help both myself and the rest of our social group enjoys ourselves, and to get help and advice.
3. Even so, Sandra must travel through from Glasgow every month to take our group which is a considerable journey. I would be absolutely devastated to lose Sandra as our group leader but at the same time this, I feel, highlights the lack of any real service provision for people with autistic spectrum disorders (ASDs) in this area, otherwise there would be no need for her to make such journeys every month!
4. In an ideal world, I would love to see both a clear and coherent autism strategy implemented across the whole of Scotland, offering support to EVERYONE on the autism spectrum, rather than the somewhat patchwork affair we have available at the moment. I think that further information on both autism and available services at the point of assessment/diagnosis would also be useful, and that healthcare providers perhaps need to understand that the nature of autism can make it difficult for us to know how to ask for help and further support.
5. I would also like to see schemes such as the autism-training undertaken by the Strathclyde Fire and Police services extended throughout Scotland, with a view to training all emergency service employees, and other first-contact staff, about autism.
6. Just before I finish, I would like to thank the Scottish Parliament for considering this Bill, and for giving me an opportunity to voice my opinions as a person with asperger's syndrome. I am sure that this Bill will make a real difference to the lives of people on the spectrum and that there will be greater understanding of autism and ASD.

Karin Ulbrich
8 October 2010