

SUBMISSION FROM MARGARET WILLIAMS

1. I am writing in support of the Autism (Scotland) Bill.
2. I am a Carer Support and Development Worker with The Princess Royal Trust West Glasgow Carers Centre, Glasgow and have been involved in a Parent Carers Support Group for children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) for about eight years. There have been continuing themes over these years and despite recommendations, and even the Education (Additional Support for Learning (Scotland) Bills 2004 and 2009, and other legislation, our young people are being failed in terms of adequate resources and legislative practices being afforded to them.
3. Common concerns expressed by parent carers over the years are—
 - The length of time taken for identification and assessment of autism;
 - Reluctance of professionals to take on board the concerns expressed parents – parents being fobbed off with “it is just challenging behaviour” – “there are parenting issues which need to be addressed” – “this is normal behaviour for a four/five year old” and so it goes on;
 - Lack of knowledge and understanding about autism within the education and health services;
 - Lack of appropriate support for both parent carers and young people with autism;
 - Insufficient additional support for learning staff in schools;
 - Lack of funding to provide respite, befriending and other support services; and
 - A determination to place children in mainstream school system without the appropriate resources and back up to assist the young people in the school. This is seen as almost setting the child up to fail.
4. I recognise that work has been done in trying to develop services for children with autism but there is much further to go. There may be some legislation, practice guides, new training materials but for many young people the impact of these is not being felt. There needs to be a legal duty on local authorities and health boards to provide the necessary resources and support for children, young people and adults with autism otherwise many lives will be restricted, wasted and in some cases ruined in the long term.
5. I would endorse what National Autism Society (NAS) Scotland is asking the Scottish Government for—
 - A duty to identify and record the numbers of children and adults with autism;
 - People with autism to be able to get an appropriate assessment of their needs;

- Each local area to plan for services that meet the needs of people with autism;
 - Appropriate training of staff to deliver high quality services;
 - Local areas to establish cross-agency leadership arrangements to develop joint working; and
 - A duty to engage with and consult people who have autism.
6. I would urge that approval is given for the progression of the Autism (Scotland) Bill.

Margaret A Williams

Carers Support and Development Worker, Glasgow

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