

SUBMISSION FROM STRATHCLYDE AUTISTIC SOCIETY

Section 1: Autism strategy

1. Strathclyde Autistic Society (SAS) is a small voluntary organisation which was established in the early 1990s by parents in the former Strathclyde region area whose children had newly received a diagnosis of autism. These parents felt the need to develop support groups and services for families affected by autism, due to the lack of provision in their local area.
2. We are currently based in the multi agency Autism Resource Centre in Glasgow. We offer a wide range of services to children, adults and families affected by autism.
3. We feel it is necessary to have an Autism (Scotland) Bill as autism, a lifelong condition, can severely impact and disrupt all aspects of an individual's life.
4. In our working experience, autistic spectrum disorders may impact upon:
 - early years
 - diagnosis/post diagnostic support
 - education
 - school transitions
 - independent living
 - housing
 - employment
 - mental welfare
 - family
 - social life
 - finance
 - ageing
 - criminal justice
 - communication.
5. We believe that it is imperative to promote early intervention followed by appropriate schooling, social support, transition and understanding, as this could decrease the chance of system failure. Our experiences of working with individuals and families affected by autism have highlighted the importance of relevant and appropriate services. We believe that legislation in this area is essential to ensure that action is taken so that both children and adults with autism across Scotland are provided with essential support. It is for this reason that SAS fully supports the proposal for an Autism (Scotland) Bill.

Section 2: Guidance

6. An autism strategy will work well with all agencies that impact on the life of an individual or family affected by autism. A strategy of this type will allow all services to offer relevant and appropriate support and develop such provision in a manner that is specific to autism.
7. Due to the current financial climate, many people affected by autism are likely to be left in an extremely vulnerable situation if support is withdrawn. This could be catastrophic for the local authorities and health boards as support and intervention prevents a deterioration of mental health which would cost more money. Alternatively, if appropriate resources at an early stage are provided this can support an individual to fulfil as full an independent life as possible. An Autism (Scotland) Bill would ensure that available resources are used to maximum affect.

Section 3

8. We agree that action should be taken against local authorities or health boards and organisations who do not follow the Guidance. SAS supports the Bill's commitment to the creation and implementation of regularly reviewed statutory, rather than discretionary, guidance.

Sections 4 and 5

9. No comment on these sections

Conclusion

10. SAS supports the Autism (Scotland) Bill as we see on a constant basis people in Scotland facing exclusion, inequality and disruption in their lives. We therefore believe that there is a need to have this legislation in place in Scotland to deal with the range of situations that we have described in our evidence submission.

Strathclyde Autistic Society
8 October 2010