

SUBMISSION FROM LOTHIAN AUTISTIC SOCIETY

1. Lothian Autistic Society (LAS) – www.lothianautistic.org - is committed to meaningful participation and choice in all aspects of life for children and young people on the autism spectrum and their families.
2. Our organisation aims to make a positive difference in the lives of children and young people with an autism spectrum condition (ASC) and their families and carers by providing accessible high quality autism-specific support services in Edinburgh and the Lothians. To achieve our aims we work in close collaboration with a successful network of parent members and supporters.
3. LAS was founded in 1992 by a small group of parents of children with autism, who were at that time concerned about education for their children. It soon became apparent that education was not the only concern that they shared. They found themselves in an environment where there was a lack of understanding on the part of most professionals and the public, regarding the nature of autism and the effect it has on families, carers and the children themselves.
4. The following year LAS was registered as a charity and began its work through the efforts of a volunteer committee of parents of children with autism. Membership grew rapidly across Edinburgh, West Lothian and Midlothian. The committee worked to create an organisation that could provide its members - fellow parents and carers of children with autism, and the children themselves - with help and support to meet their needs, and address their concerns.
5. LAS's current emphasis is on play and social opportunities for children with ASCs and respite for their parents. We provide access to funded one-to-one care for their child, or access to popular special needs holiday play schemes for children with autism - giving children some high quality holiday play time, and parents reliable and regular respite.
6. Parents have always remained the driving force behind LAS, giving leadership to its activities and direction to its work. We now have over 450 family members and interested party members and provide services which are geared to support the whole family.
7. It has been our experience that a lack of understanding on the part of most professionals continues and those who have not had the opportunity to work with individuals with ASCs do not fully appreciate the impact of this condition on every aspects of the individual's life. Throughout their lifetime these individuals, and those who care for them, constantly struggle against the notion that ASC is just another additional support need which will respond to 'identikit' intervention and support. As a result the support services available are not always appropriate and can, in fact, prove detrimental.

8. The National Autistic Society (NAS), in their response to the call for evidence for the Autism (Scotland) Bill, provide concise statistical data, up-to-date information and a succinct conclusion which LAS fully endorses as evidence that the Bill should be passed. LAS fully support the need for an autism bill.

LAS Management Committee
8 October 2010