

SUBMISSION FROM THE MORAY COUNCIL

Section 1: autism strategy

1. In principle, the Moray Council supports the proposal to direct the Scottish Ministers to prepare and publish a document setting out a strategy for meeting the needs of persons in Scotland with autistic spectrum conditions. However the Moray Council will be submitting detailed evidence on the content of the autism strategy and the 26 recommendations for improving the provision of relevant services to such persons by local authorities and NHS bodies.

Section 2: guidance by the Scottish Ministers

2. In the current economic climate it would be desirable that any guidance to local authorities and the NHS about the exercise of their function concerned with the provision of relevant services for persons in Scotland with autistic spectrum conditions be linked to funding in relation to any anticipatory cost related to the requirements of that guidance.
3. The Moray Council would like it noted that in respect of points (a) and (b) it would view the provision of relevant services for the purpose of diagnosing autistic spectrum conditions as being a function of the NHS bodies. Therefore the identification of persons with autistic spectrum conditions would also be seen as a function of the NHS rather than a function of the local authority. Any local authority will only be able to identify people with autistic spectrum conditions who are in receipt of community services and many people with autistic spectrum conditions function well in the community with only informal support from family and friends.
4. Furthermore accurate diagnosis will be essential to enable local authority staff to identify when people meet the community services eligibility criteria for a service and to carryout a correct assessment of an individual's needs in order to correctly define the support they require.
5. It is also noted that the guidance outline in section 2(5) would require a multidisciplinary/multi-agency approach that would require a co-ordinated approach that could work across services, care groups and between adult and children's services. Therefore guidance on local arrangements for leadership as indicated in section 2(5)(g) for the provision of local services would need to be definitive in purpose but flexible enough to meet local and regional needs.

Section 3: local authorities and NHS bodies: duty to have regard to guidance.

6. Again it must be reiterated that in the current economic climate it would be desirable that any guidance to local authorities and the NHS about the exercise of their function concerned with the provision of relevant services for persons in Scotland with autistic spectrum conditions be

linked to a source of funding in relation to any anticipatory cost related to the requirements of that guidance.

Section 4: interpretation

7. The Moray Council would only note again that it would view the provision of relevant services for the purpose of diagnosing autistic spectrum conditions as being a function of the NHS bodies. Furthermore that any relevant services provided by the Moray Council would need to be supported by that initial diagnosis with the assessment; care and support being provided in line with that diagnosis. Therefore the identification of persons with autistic spectrum conditions should be seen as a function of the NHS rather than a function of the local authority and that accurate diagnosis of the condition is essential. The local authority are only able to identify people with autistic spectrum conditions who are in receipt of community services and many people with autistic spectrum conditions are often supported by informal care from family and friends.

Section 5: short title and commencement

8. The Moray Council does not have any concerns in relation to the short title and commencement.

The Policy and Financial Memorandums

9. The Policy Memorandum provided very good background information on the objectives, and policy issues that have given rise to the proposal for an autism bill. This was very useful in understanding the basis for the Bill and in relation to the proposed autism strategy document.
10. In relation to the Financial Memorandum it is understood that the Bill does not dictate the content of the strategy or in what way the substance of the strategy should be addressed. It is also understood that any cost implications will not be directly attributable to the Bill. Therefore the Moray Council will be considering any cost implications for the local authority as part of its response to the proposed autism strategy.

Moray Council
8 October 2010