

SUBMISSION FROM GORDON INGLIS

1. I make this representation on behalf of the Autism (Scotland) Bill. As the parent of a child diagnosed as being on the autistic spectrum I believe that I am well placed to comment on the current support arrangements.
2. The main issues which individuals suffering from autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) face are:
 - A timely diagnosis of their condition
 - Access to appropriate support services
 - Understanding and support of schools, employers, work-mates or school-mates.
3. Although we were living in England at the time when my child was diagnosed as suffering from ASD the process was both lengthy and frustrating, taking around one to one and a half years, before medical professionals reached their conclusion. At this stage our child was three years old. Following this diagnosis and with the help of local support groups we invested in the support of a speech and language therapist – funding of such therapy was not available via social services. I am convinced that this therapy was fundamental in the early (albeit delayed) development of language.
4. On returning to Scotland and meeting other parents at the National Autistic Society (NAS) or VSA (Voluntary Services Aberdeen) organised training we came to realise that although the diagnosis process in England had seemed protracted and frustrating anecdotes indicated that a diagnosis in Scotland would almost certainly have taken a much longer period if indeed it had been undertaken.
5. Whilst spectrum illnesses are not easy to diagnose giving priority to an early diagnosis presents an opportunity for early intervention which is likely to be more successful.
6. Since moving back to Scotland we have been fortunate in that our child has received a significant level of support during her primary school education. Although the level of support has been significant the quality of support, both teaching and support for learning, has varied considerably. As a result we have encountered periodic issues where our child has, although being high-functioning, suffered considerable stress through individuals taking a “one size fits all” approach to support.
7. Development of a more standardised approach to the provision of support including mandatory training on the requirements of children suffering from ASD would represent progress in this area.
8. So far as the provision of support is concerned it would appear, anecdotally, is a bit of a lottery in terms of what could be expected in different areas of Scotland. From our experience provision of sufficient

high quality support at an early stage can make a huge difference to a child's development.

9. The support of children suffering from ASD should also include work on integrating them, so far as possible, with their class-mates. Children suffering from ASD often suffer from loneliness, alienation, and confusion as, due to their illness, they do not necessarily have the same set of values or feelings as those around them.

Gordon Inglis
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