

SUBMISSION FROM KIRSTEN GRAHAM

1. As a parent of a 10 year old with Autism, I would like to give my views on the Autism (Scotland) Bill.
2. The new Bill is essential in order to ensure local authorities and health boards actually provide the services which people with autism and their families need. Too many families in Scotland have to fight too hard to get the services their loved ones need.
3. Standards must be set across Scotland for the waiting time for diagnosis, and for which personnel are to be involved in making a diagnosis.
4. Accurate information on the number of people with autism in each local authority, and their age groups, is urgently required to improve planning for, and provision of, services.
5. Current legislation, such as the Education (Additional Support for Learning) Act 2004, does not go far enough to help those with autism. In fact, it perpetuates the idea that autism only affects a person's education, when in reality it impacts on every area of their life. From personal experience, I know that a coordinated support plan only focuses on factors which impact on a child's education and excludes all their other needs.
6. Currently "integrated services" does not happen. A Bill is needed to ensure that the various services have to work together to meet the very complex needs of people with autism.
7. Training for teachers, classroom assistants, social workers, speech therapists and psychologists who work with people with autism must be made mandatory.
8. My son has been let down many times by untrained professionals, who were supposed to assess his needs but did not even have a basic grasp of autism.
9. Social workers in particular must be trained in behaviour and sensory aspects of autism before they carry out an assessment of needs for a care package.
10. I cannot comment on all the points of the Bill, such as transition to adult services as we have no direct experience of that yet. However I hope that my response has been sufficient.

Kirsten Graham
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