

SUBMISSION FROM THE BORDERS ASPERGER AND AUTISM GROUP SUPPORT (BAAGS)

1. I write in relation to the Autism (Scotland) Bill and to alert you to my experiences gained during the six years I have chaired the support group. During that time I have supported numerous families and persons with autism, all of whom have, and are still, struggling through life with little or no support, being 'helped' by professionals who have almost no understanding, empathy or information regarding the behaviour an autistic person can portray and how to avoid inflicting further suffering, anxiety and abuse onto an autistic person.
2. Social Services and similar care providers constantly arrange social get-togethers for autistic people to enjoy. This is abuse. Autistic people do not want to be made to attend get-togethers, or other manufactured social events. They do not want to be taught to live without autism. Autism is part of their character, they can no more stop feeling and behaving autistically than a person with no limbs can grow replacement limbs! If a person who is blind had their guide dog/stick removed, that would be considered abuse, so why is trying to stop autistic behaviour not considered abusive?
3. Autism affects a person's senses; they can be super sensitive to anything touching them, to sights & sounds. Dentists, doctors, hospitals & out-patient departments such as chiropody, physiotherapy, anaesthetics, cardiology, diagnostic imaging, E.N.T, A & E, general surgery etc should all be responsible for training and educating their staff and workers in the behaviours associated with autism.
4. In the six years of my chairmanship, I have attended a number of diagnosis appointments with adults who have requested a formal diagnosis of their autism, in the services and support will help make their lives easier to cope with and for them to be accepted into our society. Unfortunately, once a diagnosis has been made, little has changed. There are no specialist support services available to guide a newly diagnosed person to have a better life. No specialist social worker, employment officer, housing officer, etc.
5. My support group has been confidante, supporter, informant, advocate and counsellor to a over 50 people, and their families, over the past six years. We are a very small independent support group who receive no financial support from either the NHS, Scottish Borders Council, or other funders. We are the only organisation within Scottish Borders who is able to offer support, guidance, information, advocacy, consultation, training and respite to persons with autism and their families. My support group is run by a committee of four people, myself

and wife, both parents of an autistic young man, and our treasurer and her husband, also parents of an autistic young man. Our only qualification for what we do and offer is our personal experiences learnt from parenting with no additional support or help from education, social work, employers or other 'professionals'. Our children were lucky to have us, many people are not so fortunate.

Derek Purvis
Chairman
29 September 2010