

SUBMISSION FROM THE NATIONAL AUTISTIC SOCIETY (PERTH BRANCH)

1. As Branch Officer of the National Autistic Society in Perth, I work with many families who are adversely affected by the lack of provision for those who have an autistic spectrum disorder in Perthshire.

Section 1 – Autism strategy

2. In Perthshire, those with Asperger Syndrome do not fit the criteria set down by local government to get any kind of service. I know of many families who have a family member who either has a diagnosis of Asperger Syndrome, who are suspected of having Asperger Syndrome, or are attempting to get a diagnosis. These people are wholly reliant on their families for support in having something to do on a daily basis, helping them get any allowances, or trying to get them some kind of work experience, usually to no avail. Many people live with aging parents who are very worried as to what will happen to their adult offspring when they die, as there is literally no provision for them. I know of one man aged 48yrs who has been at home since the age of 14yrs, and there is no service for the family apart from any input I can give.
3. The lack of training across the board, involving all professionals, social workers, doctors, teachers, employers is having an extremely detrimental effect, which results in our people with an autistic spectrum disorders (ASD) being left at home, which in turn results in a deterioration in mental health.
4. The other problem associated with this is, according to the local government, Asperger Syndrome does not fit into either learning disability or mental health services and so nobody takes any kind of responsibility.

Section 2 – Guidance by the Scottish Ministers

5. Joined up thinking is required through local area coordinators so that families and professionals can communicate better. Training must be an ongoing continuous professional development (CPD) for all, which will enlighten people more as to the positive outcomes that a little insight into the condition can provide.

Section 3 – Local authorities and NHS bodies: duty to have regard to guidance

6. Having regard to guidance must be worded so that local authorities DO in fact have to take regard of the guidance, as unless this wording is considered properly, then local authorities may be able to say one thing and do another.

Section 4 - Interpretation

7. Appropriate stakeholders need to include people like the job centre plus, colleges, universities, places of work, sports organisations, leisure clubs and organisations.

Section 5 – Short title and commencement

8. References should be made to "The Autism Bill for Scotland"

Policy and Financial Memoranda

9. The cost of any new legislation would be more than compensated for by the reduction in costs where there is an early intervention in the form of social support or employment support.
10. I run the Spectrum Club Scotland, and have also done the same in Buckinghamshire for many years. I know therefore that early low level intervention and support can save money in the long run by greatly reducing the likelihood of mental health services being involved.
11. When people with an ASD receive support from those who have been trained in ASD, the outcomes are very positive and they can become fully included, and worthwhile members of the communities they live in.

Ann Barrett
Branch Officer
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