

SUBMISSION FROM JOHN WRIGHT

1. This work highlights why I feel it is necessary to have an autism bill in Scotland.
2. My own experience can be characterised by first of all summarising that there were essentially no services in the area in which I live, and that I achieved anything approaching a diagnosis was entirely down to my own efforts and those of our local MP.
3. I live in the town of Invergordon, about 22 miles from Inverness where I work.
4. I am now 60 years of age, and have worked nearly all of my life since I left Leicester University, where I got a degree in Physics and Astrophysics. There was a short interlude after a company I worked for closed when I went to Brunel University and did an M.Sc in Non Destructive Testing of Materials. When I was 51, I got a new job much to my surprise. In early 2005 at the age of 55, I became aware that I was being bullied at work – this had actually commenced in 2004 but was such that I did not really notice until 2005. My attention was thus drawn to wondering what if anything was hampering my work apart from the bullying. Later that year I watched two consecutive programmes on BBC4, one a documentary on the family of Luke Jackson, and one a dramatisation of how their life had been to that point. (for anyone who is unfamiliar with this it tells of a woman with five children whose husband left her. All five of the children are somewhere on the autism spectrum. Luke Jackson has been credited with the authorship of a book arising from this called *Freaks, Geeks and Asperger's Syndrome*). Having watched these programmes I became persuaded that I too might have asperger's syndrome.
5. Accordingly I sought out some information on this and eventually found the AQ test authored by Simon Baron-Cohen et al:

http://www.autismresearchcentre.com/docs/papers/2001_BCetal_AQ.pdf
6. I downloaded the paper and did the test in the form of a spreadsheet so I could print it out. (I had got a score of 47 out of a possible 50). Having done this I printed it out and took the results to my GP. She said "I will see who I can refer you to". After some weeks she reported that she had not found anyone.
7. I then set out to find some way I could get a proper diagnosis. Having myself only found some organisation in Scotland who wanted £2,000 for the privilege of giving me a diagnosis. My GP said that she probably would not be able to get funding for the £2,000 test so I then wrote to my local MP to say I could not find anyone to do anything for me.
8. He wrote back to me in a few weeks to say that he had been in touch

with the head of the local NHS to say that I would be dealt with within nine months. Some 18 months later I got a letter from the local mental health hospital giving me an appointment for some time ahead. In August 2007 I finally got to see a psychologist who after several hours of interview said I was definitely on the spectrum. By this time I had (after many failed iterations) got somewhere at work, and my then boss asked me if I could get a proper diagnosis. She said that she was a) not qualified to do this and b) did not know how to do it. Thus I had to coach her into how to do this and eventually in early 2008 we produced something that looked sufficiently like a diagnosis to convince people at work that that's what it was.

9. As it happens she was on a temporary contract at the hospital and while my wife and I went for several sessions of counselling with her this came to an end when her contract was terminated.
10. It should therefore be apparent from my experiences that there are no services in the local area for people like myself. A proper strategy would ensure that the local council paid some attention to everyone on the spectrum, and not think "Oh, we've sorted kids out, that's us finished". It's not.
11. To expand this a little, it is truly ironic that while there are services for children on the autism spectrum, nothing for adults is available. Adults with autism spectrum conditions are invisible. Many remain unnecessarily unemployed.
12. More information on people like me can be found at:

http://www.iancommunity.org/cs/articles/very_late_diagnosis_of_asperger_syndrome

John Wright
14 October 2010