

SUMBISSION FROM SHELIA McKAY

1. This Bill is needed to ensure integration of services for children and adults with autism. "Joined up working" is not just a paper exercise where different agencies attend review meetings and give individual reports. There must be a more robust system put in place that places a clear duty on all professionals dealing with a child on the autistic spectrum to work together for the benefit of the child and their family. This includes timely passing on of relevant details between education, health and social work services. So often it is left to already stressed out parents to push for service deliverers to co-ordinate one with the other.
2. Many parents, faced with their child's diagnosis, are bewildered and feel lost. Systems need to be put in place to properly support these families so that their children can truly reach their full potential!
3. Training needs must be met. Training schemes must be established – too often it is the least qualified person who is left to support the most vulnerable children. This must be addressed! Training for work with children with an autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) must be brought up to date, using some of the more interactive strategies that are used in other countries. The level of training required for those who wish to work with people with autism must be raised. In many establishments staff seem content to simply "contain" the behaviours rather than raising the attainment and, therefore, self esteem of those they work with.
4. I have seen these issues at first hand – I was a nursery Head, I am at present a Lecturer in Early Education and Childcare and, most important of all, my beautiful, talented grandson has autism.

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