

SUBMISSION FROM DAVID AND DEBRA REID

1. Our son is ten years old and has a diagnosis of Aspergers Syndrome, which at present is identified as an autistic spectrum disorder (ASD), along with other related and un-related conditions.
2. We have found our local education authority unable to meet our son's educational needs at this time, as described in the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004, and we are in the process of a placement request to an independent school which specialises in ASD.
3. It is of concern that, amongst others, our council feels there is no need for a law to be passed which ensures the needs of people on the autistic spectrum are met, and we particularly take issue with comments provided through evidence that the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004, *'ensures that ALL children and young people are provided with the necessary support to achieve their full potential.'*
4. This statement is simply untrue, as our son is a case in point, having been failed thus far by this particular education authority. Therefore, the 2004 Act, on our own experience, does not go far enough in ensuring that the needs of those on the ASD are FULLY met, and we would go as far to say that it is a minimum requirement.
5. We would also like to point out the further comments seem to question the actual point of a separate piece of legislation to cover autism. This, for us, sums up the total lack of understanding which is evident throughout local government and society as a whole. It is for the very reason that autism is so misunderstood that Scotland, like England, needs legislation in this area to ensure that it IS UNDERSTOOD, and that ignorance of the condition can no longer be an excuse.
6. Unlike other conditions, autism presents a whole spectrum of differing symptoms and behaviours, some of which are unique to the particular person. **Proper** training in ASD for staff who provide relevant services to persons with such conditions, which the Bill proposes, is DESPERATELY needed to ensure that local authorities are placed under a legal duty to meet the needs, as far as is possible, of those on the autistic spectrum, so that the multitude of symptoms and behaviours can be addressed to the benefit of the autistic person. A code of practice based on the existing legislation does not guarantee that this will be done as it has very little, or no, legal force. An act of the Scottish Parliament would set out national requirements, thereby not only showing the world that Scotland is at the forefront of caring for those who have a condition which is becoming more common and less understood throughout the world, but also ensuring that Local Authorities who seem only willing to take a minimalist approach, are placed under a legal duty, enforceable through court procedure, to meet the needs of those on the AS.

7. Local authorities, in our experience, have made us fight for every service provision that our son requires; an Autism (Scotland) Act would address the balance in the favour of those who need the most help, and finally put to an end ignorance of the condition.
8. Thank you for allowing us this opportunity to express our opinion in this very important issue.

David and Debra Reid
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