

SUBMISSION FROM KIERAN PENTLAND

1. I am writing to the Committee, to voice my full support for the proposed Autism (Scotland) Bill. I am a 41 year old man, who was diagnosed in February 1999, with Asperger's Syndrome, the "higher functioning" end of the autistic spectrum (AS). I currently work part time as an employment consultant with Prospects, the employment services department of the National Autistic Society (NAS).
2. Prior to diagnosis, by Professor Tantom at the University of Sheffield, I had suffered severe anxiety and crippling depression (common in the majority of AS individuals), and had subsequently underachieved academically, performed disastrously in job interviews, was unable to hold down positions of employment for more than a few weeks, and struggled with relationships.
3. Having attained a diagnosis, with my mother's help, I was able to seek assistance from organisations such as the NAS and Prospects, that could help me come to terms with my condition, learn how to handle my emotions better, prepare for interviews, plan my future, and apply for suitable courses to further my academic development, and ultimately attain a career in an area I would be good at, enjoy, and do well in.
4. I already had a third class honours degree from the University of Hertfordshire, from 1993, but wanted to better it, so I attended the University of Strathclyde for two years, from there I attained an upper second class honours degree in biochemistry/ pharmacology joint honours in July 2002. Having always wanted to be a psychiatrist, I tried several times thereafter to get into medicine at various institutions, but was repeatedly unsuccessful.
5. Given assistance by the NAS and Prospects, I landed my first permanent job with Employability, part of the Stirling Council public sector services. There I worked as an Autistic Spectrum Development Worker, for nearly two years, between October 2005 and September 2007, whereupon funding ran out. After a brief four month period out of work, a part time vacancy arose with Prospects, as an employment consultant. My post started in January 2008, and I have been working there ever since.
6. I have been given the chance to lead a "normal" and far more fulfilling life, thanks to services such as these. I was able to turn my life around, put something back into society, and have the dignity, which everyone has a right to, of having a job, and leading a relatively normal life. With legislation, there will be many more people whose lives will be improved for the better, and not just the lucky few, such as myself.

Kieran Pentland
7 October 2010