

SUBMISSION FROM KATHY SMITH

1. I am writing to view a few opinions and support regarding the importance of the Autism (Scotland) Bill.
2. Working in the higher education sector means I have, over the past few years, seen an increasing number of students both diagnosed and undiagnosed with asperger's Syndrome. The level of appropriate support in university needs to be addressed and further research is necessary in order to encourage the best learning environments for those on the autistic spectrum.
3. The diagnostic service for some individuals is woefully inadequate and difficult to negotiate not to mention time consuming. I have seen a number of undiagnosed students fail courses whilst on waiting lists for diagnosis and support. Without a diagnosis, support is not forthcoming in higher education as a Disabled Student Award is not accessible without the diagnostic evidence.
4. There is a general lack of understanding and awareness of the difficulties individuals with asperger's encounter on a daily basis and the services available to support them is very sparse.
5. However with appropriate support mechanisms and regular contacts to help explain the world around them many individuals can and do very well.
6. Some GPs are reluctant to refer whilst others do not seem to understand the difficulties or even know where to refer clients to.
7. Diagnostic training courses are only available for NHS personnel despite the wide range of experienced, knowledgeable and more than capable individuals in other professional areas who would willingly take up training if available. Consideration should be given to opening up the training to other appropriately qualified individuals. This can help to ensure easier and quicker diagnosis.
8. Education and work opportunities are also very poor. Work around appropriate support issues in both settings needs to be encouraged and improved.
9. I would urge the Bill to go further and state some more strict conditions for enforcing action rather than just suggestions or good practice/guidelines which can be ignored. Resources need to be in place to deliver the recommendations and services vitally necessary.

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8 October 2010