

SUBMISSION FROM MALCOLM MILL

1. I am writing to put forward my personal support for the Autism (Scotland) Bill.
2. As I understand it, the Bill proposes that there be a legal duty upon NHS and local authorities to have regard to an 'autism strategy'. Also, this strategy must be produced in consultation with appropriate stakeholders and be kept regularly under review by Scottish Ministers. Also, the strategy must deal with certain important areas specifically mentioned in section 2(5) of the Bill.
3. These measures are much needed and could prove to be the first steps towards a framework that fairly and effectively provides for the very specific needs of people with an autistic spectrum disorder (ASD). Currently people with an ASD all too often fall between the cracks of different care regimes. Thus, although many with an ASD have clear learning disabilities and mental health problems, many do not. While learning disability and mental health services treat specific problems of some individuals they ignore the autism specific issues of everyone with an ASD. This is not to mention employment schemes which are even further removed from knowing how to effectively work with ASD.
4. If people with ASD are to develop strategies to cope with learning, mental health, employability and other problems, statutory bodies absolutely must be made to take account of their exceptional needs and cannot be allowed to continue pigeon-holing client cases into inappropriate care regimes.
5. The heart of ASD problems is communication. ASD sufferers exist very much as individuals with no innate ability to form a group conscience and identity, such as is essential of any pressure group, or coalition for change. They rely very much on caring, understanding services being provided which help them find their place in society and make a contribution worthy of their many, often exceptional, talents and attributes. Autism services as they stand have long been under threat of cancellation or inclusion under other service regimes. This Bill, if passed, would ensure they can continue to help people with ASD be a part of society, fulfil their potential and make the contribution to the common good which every person of conscience must make to feel a part of society.
6. I ask the members of the Scottish Parliament, for my sake, the sake of the many good people with ASD I have met - and the sake of those professionals whose tireless work has helped so many - to pass this Bill and give autistic people the recognition they deserve and the chance to develop in society in a way that works for everyone.

Malcolm Mill.
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