

PE1704/A

Angus Council and Angus Health and Social Care Partnership submission of 24 October 2018

The petition calls on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to ensure that an agenda of real and meaningful change for autistic people is pursued by introducing 4 targets and outcomes by 2021. The response from Angus Council and the Angus Health and Care Partnership regarding each individual target/outcome, is detailed below.

1. That every person in Scotland going through an autism diagnostic procedure will be assessed within a calendar year and receive a statutory services assessment from a qualified social worker as an integral part of this process, within twelve months from the date of their initial referral.

Currently, an individual referred for ASD diagnosis in Angus will wait between 6 and 14 months due to the high referral rate and resource capacity. The assessment target of within a calendar year would only be realistic if there were enough health professionals to meet this demand.

In relation to all individuals receiving a statutory services assessment from a qualified social worker – currently individuals (with or without autism) first receive a screening/initial assessment, in line with our legislative duties and eligibility criteria. This assessment may or may not be undertaken by a qualified social worker depending on the level of need/risk being presented. Low level need may be assessed by a Care Co-ordinator, for example, who will hold the relevant social care qualification. This differs from a Social Worker's grade and qualification. It would not be feasible, nor proportionate, for all individuals presenting with low level needs to be assessed by a qualified social worker as there are insufficient resources to do this and it would have an impact for people of greater need/risk/complexity who require the level of skill held by a qualified social worker. People with autism presenting with community care needs will continue to have the same right to an assessment of need as any other adult presenting with social care needs and, depending on their level of need, an assessment may be undertaken by either a qualified social worker or a qualified officer in social care.

2. That children with autism in mainstream schools will have their assessed needs for classroom support met by an ASL assistant with a recognised autism qualification as part of a mandatory registration process for ASL professionals.

A new Autism Outreach Team has been established comprised of 3 ASD teachers. This team provides support to schools and families.

9 teachers have undertaken the Autism qualification with Aberdeen University. In addition, some School and Pupil Support Assistants (SPSAs) have completed a Professional Development Award in Autism in conjunction with Dundee and Angus College. This is building a level of specialism and capacity to meet the need within Angus schools; however, it is not considered necessary or feasible for all SPSAs to have a recognised Autism qualification. There is a commitment to staff training in this area which includes the completion of an e-learning module in Autism for all staff.

Core and additional training in Autism has been included in the Learning and Development Strategy for ASN teachers and School and Pupil Support Assistants in Angus. Bespoke training is also provided to schools by the Educational Psychology Service and ASD Outreach Team.

All schools that have received Autism training have also received Autism resources. In addition, the Autism Toolbox has also been provided to support more Autism friendly environments.

There was input at the Children and Learning Festival by Angus Autism Awareness. This group has received support from Economic Development, Angus Council, to crowdfund in order to buy resources which promote awareness of Autism and the sensory issues experienced. This input is delivered by a former pupil who is Autistic. A range of awareness-raising sessions for professionals has also been delivered by this group.

Training to staff supporting adults with ASD has been delivered and staff given the opportunity to undertake the Open University K124 "Understanding the Autism Spectrum" course. Information is provided about Autism and opportunities for work experience promoted with local businesses, including ongoing support to ensure positive experiences. This is done by routinely offering to provide information during Health and Safety visits to all local businesses which offer work experience that are recorded on the local authority database.

An autism training needs analysis survey has been developed and circulated widely across Angus to public sector, third sector and voluntary groups as well as to community groups and facilities. Over 200 responses have been received. This survey will inform future training opportunities.

3. That young adults with autism will have a statutory right to specialist support from their local authority up to the age of 25.

Not all young people with autism wish to access formal support and some do not have an assessed social care need for support – introducing this as a statutory right would be at odds with our current legislative duties and eligibility criteria, should there not be an assessed need for support. This would also place further pressure

on existing resources. The principle of response being proportionate to assessed need should, in our view, be retained.

Currently, each young person with Autism in Angus has a Named Person to explain and facilitate the transition process. Transition Passports and other tools are used to support transitions and providers are familiar with these and the roles they play in supporting young people make successful transitions.

A review of school or college and Skills Development Scotland partnership agreements has been undertaken in relation to Career Information and Guidance (CIAG) services provided to young people / adults with Autism.

Information regarding suitable post school courses and links to agencies such as Skills Development Scotland are made available to young people/ adults with Autism. Partners (such as JCP, SDS, Angus Council Skills Team, Opportunities for All Team, Supported Employment Team and Learning Disabilities Teams and all Third Sector organisations) have access to the Autism Directory and an awareness of post-school provision and the ability to signpost Young People and their families.

Young people with autism are undertaking meaningful work placements and progressing into further/higher education, training and employment by the utilisation of employer engagement events to establish links with local businesses, colleges and universities with a view to promoting Autism awareness and necessary supports.

Enable Scotland has been undertaking training with local employers.

Support has been provided to support autistic people into Modern Apprenticeships at both foundation and graduate level.

A system is now in place to benchmark the number of young people with additional support needs including autism who are not in positive destinations. This is done by utilising Transition Conferences and school Joint Action Team (JAT) meetings to identify and encourage early engagement.

4. That an Autism Act will be in place within the next 5 years to enshrine specific rights and services for autistic people in our legal system.

Whilst we believe that the policy intent can be achieved through existing legislation, we feel that this is for Scottish Government to determine and not individual local authorities and Health and Social Care Partnerships. However, were this to be introduced we would urge the Scottish Government to ensure that this legislation is aligned to the current legislative duties of local authorities and HSC Partnerships and that funding is made available to implement any new legislative duties.