

## **PE1704/U**

Falkirk Council submission of 14 June 2019

Falkirk Autism Strategy Group offers the following view on the above named petition.

*Calling 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 the following targets and outcomes by 2021:*

- *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.*

This question is best answered by the NHS as the assessment and diagnosis process is coordinated and overseen by them. Council staff such as Educational Psychologists, social workers and school staff contribute to the multi-agency assessment process, when it is relevant and from their area of expertise. This comment is provided in that context.

The assessment and diagnostic process can, for some children, be straightforward and is already completed within a calendar year. However, there are many children for whom the nature of their difficulties require a longer assessment period, including periods of intervention through an ongoing cycle of assessment, such as plan-do-review. Mandating that the assessment and diagnostic process is completed within a calendar year is likely to provide these children with incomplete or inaccurate assessments. This does not mean that the children are provided with an inadequate service. Far from it. These children often receive the most intensive forms of assessment, support and care. It is our view that clinical judgment is required in determining the duration of the assessment period.

It is also our view that professional judgement is required to consider for each child or adult the appropriate professionals to become involved. This is in line with Getting it Right for Every Child. It is unhelpful to mandate that all children require a specific service such as a social work assessment.

Our view is that a similar level of service and provision for adults and children would be beneficial, and that professional judgment is required on the duration of the assessment for the benefit of the adult or child that is the ultimate service user.

- *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.*

Children with autism have a variety of support needs, not all of whom require the specified type of support in this petition. Falkirk Council agrees that all staff working with children with autism benefit from training on autism as well as other Additional Support Needs, child development and barriers to learning. A training programme

and scheme for workforce development needs to be far more sophisticated than what might be conceived of in a mandatory registration process. Support from Scottish Government would be welcome in ensuring that the workforce for children are skilled and competent in working with children with Autism, including the assistants that work in mainstream classes and schools.

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

Young adults with autism already have the right to have a community care assessment and to have any eligible needs met. Any support that they receive would be “specialist” by nature as there would be a requirement for staff within health and social care to design a specific plan around any support required.

- *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.*

It is difficult to comment on the benefits of a specific Act for this group of our population which is estimated at approximately 1%, without seeing what would be the contents of it. The rights of autistic people are important, although it is difficult to see what benefit legislation for this group within the population will achieve that cannot be achieved through legislation that benefits the rights and services for children and adults with other disorders, disabilities or differences.