

## **PE1704/W**

Shetland Islands Council submission of 17 June 2019

Please find the collated responses for Shetland Islands Council from Adult services and Children's social work and education services below each bullet point within the Petition.

- *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.*

We feel this is an appropriate priority. However, currently there are very limited resources in Shetland for ASD diagnosis and a waiting list exists. The assessment target of within a calendar year would only be realistic if there were enough health professionals to meet this demand.

Not every person would necessarily want or require the involvement of social work services. Additionally, it would not be essential in all cases for a qualified social worker to undertake an assessment - a care coordinator/family support officer or equivalent other may provide a more appropriate solution.

Initial screening assessment, in line with legislative duties and eligibility criteria would be undertaken. Autistic people 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.

It would not be appropriate to compel someone to have a social work assessment, and a diagnosis of autism is not a guarantee of eligibility for support. This approach would not be in keeping with GIRFEC and Single Shared Assessment processes, which are already in legislation, and assessments of need are carried out by the most appropriate professional, who may not necessarily be a social worker.

Finally this takes us back to a medical approach to people with disabilities instead of continuing to develop our social model. By medicalising autism through diagnosis, are we then taking responsibility for wider social change away from policy makers and society as a whole? This must be a consideration within any proposed change to legislation.

- *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.*

Support for children with autism should be delivered on a needs basis in line with support allocation for children with other types of needs. Support for children with autism is not necessarily always best met by the addition of an ASL assistant and access to a qualified teacher should be the priority here. There is a need for training for

all staff in education to support children with autism and a number of other conditions such as foetal alcohol disorder syndrome. This should be addressed in initial teacher training courses but also should be widely available across the country and at various levels according to the training needs of staff.

We would need further resource to be able to deliver this in Shetland as there is a limited workforce and limited access to training. Funding would be needed to ensure this was deliverable.

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

This is an appropriate aspiration for all children and young people with an additional support need and young people with a learning disability not just those with an ASD.

The phrase 'specialist support' needs to be better defined. Support requires to be proportionate, person centred and tailored around the individual's assessment. Not all autistic young people would 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 current legislative duties and eligibility criteria and would also place further pressure on existing resources. It would be important to clarify the qualifying criteria for support and ensure that any extension of service provision is adequately funded.

The principle of response being proportionate to assessed need should be retained.

- *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 appropriate that any person with a support need, including ASD has the protection and support they need through the legal system.

The timescale indicated is for Scottish Government to determine. However, any legislation introduced would need to align to the current legislative duties of local authorities and HSC Partnerships. Funding would be required to implement any new legislative duties.