

PE1837/K

Anonymous submission of 20 January 2021

I fully support the petitioner's views on the subject of autism support.

When the original Scottish Strategy for Autism was published the autistic community were promised a roll-out based on best practice. No money was made available for this. It was simply assumed that local authorities would fund the one-stop shops.

Autism Initiatives and Scottish Autism then surveyed their existing users, and carried on as normal. No provision was made to survey people like me, so Scottish Autism can now claim that their service users are satisfied. I believe this is grossly misleading.

Their recent publication on the Accountability Gap is concerned only with holding local authorities accountable, while dodging any criticism of their own failures.

When I approached the one-stop shop in Fife I was turned away, in effect because I do not have an intellectual disability. When, in desperation, I turned to the one in Edinburgh, I was also turned away because I do not have £1800 a year, the cost to buy in, to throw around.

I understand that Number 6 in Edinburgh provide the exemplary service that might be considered best practice, the best practice we were promised ten years ago. Promises the Scottish Government, the big charities and the local authorities proceeded to renege upon.

I would like to note that I consider the big charities to be part of the problem. Scottish Autism appears to be only interested in autistic people if they have intellectual disabilities and have families to advocate for them. The National Autistic Society Scotland holds an annual Autism Hour which only serves to reminds us that we are expected to do all our annual shopping on one day a year, at someone else's convenience, and otherwise stay out of the way of real people. I find the annual Autism Hour extremely hurtful. I understand that these are the people behind a campaign for an autism commissioner whose role will continue to conflate autism with intellectual disability.

I dislike these organisations, just as much as I believe they hate me, and do not consider them fit to run autism services for people like me.

The petitioner correctly notes the savings involved in providing proper support to autistic people. The actual cost of rolling out best practice is a fraction of this. The figure I was given was £150,000 per local authority, per year, a pittance in government terms. I was told to my face (noting the guidelines for this type of submission I will refrain from naming this person) that the Scottish Government considers this too expensive.

Autistic people are disproportionately unemployed. I feel your society

(neurotypicals) threw me away shortly after I left university. Many of us are desperately isolated. Autistic people are disproportionately homeless, and yet when I approached the one-stop shop in Kirkcaldy they told me they did not provide any relevant services, and referred me to Shelter, who know nothing about autism. Autistic people have much shorter life expectancies than do real humans. I am approaching my life expectancy, my early fifties, with growing bitterness.

This is an outrage, and Scottish society appears utterly indifferent.

According to the Scottish Government our lives are not collectively worth £150,000 a year.

The post-diagnostic support pilot might have been of great value to me ten years ago when I first learned I am autistic. It is useless now.

To be clear, there are no meaningful services in Fife and almost certainly in many other areas of Scotland, and I am extremely upset that the response from the Scottish Government to this petition looks like an attempt to cover this up. The local authorities clearly won't act unless they are forced to – my emails to Fife Council went unanswered, as did those from my MSP. It feels they hold the likes of me in nothing but contempt. Fife Council have a strategy, which the Scottish Government, it is true, paid for. It has not been proofread, never mind implemented.

The Scottish Government failure to implement the Scottish strategy has utterly failed the majority of autistic people in Scotland.

The Scottish Government are spending substantial sums of money on social care, but it's clear autistic people only count if they have intellectual disabilities and have families to advocate on their behalf.

I hope the Scottish Government and the local authorities will choose to prove me wrong and keep the promises they made ten years ago.

If you do not, I would like to understand why.