

## PE1704/C

Aberdeenshire Health and Social Care Partnership submission of 29 October 2018

- **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.**

The stipulation that this is a social work assessment seems restrictive and contrary to the interests of an autistic adult. During the diagnostic process the team involved will gain good insight into an individual's strengths, and areas where the person may require support. There should be a holistic, multi-disciplinary approach to assessment and the team requires flexibility about which professional should lead on this.

The right to a social work assessment is already a statutory requirement, however there is an element of screening in this process to ensure that Social Work Services have an approach that promotes the independence of an individual and makes best use of resources. If on screening, it is established that an individual would benefit from support other than that provided by statutory services, it would seem counterintuitive to proceed with a social work assessment. Individuals, whose initial screening indicate that they require a full assessment, would already be offered this and in a much tighter timescale than twelve months. There would also be an additional demand on staffing resources, which would be detrimental to people who are more at risk, in terms of increasing timescales for their assessment process.

In our view, the focus should be on providing diagnostic and post diagnostic support to adults, based on level of risk and need, rather than condition specific.

- **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.**

Health and Social Care Partnerships do not have responsibility for education and children services.

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

We would need more clarity on what is meant by specialist support to provide a fuller response to this point. As previously outlined, we feel that any support provision should be based on risk, need and the outcomes of an individual, particularly as the abilities and support needs of autistic individuals vary to great extent. There is a need to develop a wide variety of services that acknowledges the different level of abilities of autistic adults. While some of this may be exclusive to the specific requirements of autistic individuals, some adults may benefit from more generic services. Aberdeenshire have focused on providing autism awareness training to ensure that all services, including third sector have the opportunity to upskill their staff in working with autistic people. Furthermore, we feel that setting an age

restriction would create issues with access for autistic people over the age of 25, who may continue to require support beyond this age limit.

- **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.**

We would not support an Autism Act. There is already relevant legislation that is suitable for protecting the rights of any adults that have a condition that may make them more vulnerable than others and ensuring that they receive the assessment and services that they require. Creating condition specific legislation would risk groups with other conditions advocating for their own legislation and potentially create a complex and confusing array of legislation. The rights of autistic individuals are important, however to create an Autism Act implies that this condition has statutory rights that individuals with other specific conditions do not have, which seems inherently unjust.