

Health, Social Care and Sport Committee
Tuesday, 28 October 2025
28th Meeting, 2025 (Session 6)

ADHD and autism pathways and support – Note by the Clerk

Background

1. At today's meeting, the Committee will conclude oral evidence as part of [the ADHD and autism pathways and support inquiry](#) which the Committee agreed to undertake in April 2025.
2. The agreed scope of the inquiry is to consider key issues including:
 - Why waiting times for assessment, diagnosis and support for ADHD and autism are reportedly long, including the drivers of increasing demand;
 - How these conditions are currently diagnosed and managed;
 - The impact of high demand and delays on individuals and healthcare staff;
 - Exploring solutions to improve the capacity of services, referral pathways and support.
3. The inquiry will consider the following in relation to neurodevelopmental pathways for ADHD and autism:
 - referral pathways
 - assessment, criteria and treatment thresholds
 - waiting times
 - "waiting well" and support pre-diagnosis
 - transitions between services
 - funding
 - workforce
 - the impact on individuals of receiving a diagnosis or waiting for a diagnosis.
4. In March 2025, the Committee wrote to each of the fourteen NHS territorial boards requesting information on neurodevelopmental pathways and waiting times. All boards responded and SPICe has produced a briefing on

[Neurodevelopmental Pathways and Waiting Times in Scotland](#). SPICe has also produced a related [blog](#) that considers use of terminology in relation to Neurodiversity, Neurodivergence and Neurodevelopmental Conditions.

5. At its meeting on 18 June 2025, the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee agreed to refer the following petition to the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee for further consideration as part of the current inquiry: [Improve access to ADHD diagnosis and treatment across Scotland - Petitions](#)
6. In preparation for the inquiry, the Committee [wrote to the Minister for Social Care and Mental Wellbeing on 23 June 2025](#) to request a general update on policy in this area. [A response was received from the Minister on 26 August 2025](#).
7. The Committee ran two calls for views on Citizen Space (aimed at organisations) and Your Priorities (aimed at individuals) from 23 June to 18 August 2025. The call for views on Citizen Space received 86 [published responses](#). SPICe has produced a [summary analysis of these responses](#). Your Priorities received 1158 [unique submissions](#) and SPICe have also produced a [summary analysis](#) of these submissions.
8. At its meeting on 23 September, prior to commencing taking oral evidence as part of the inquiry, the Committee received a private background briefing from the National Autism Implementation Team (NAIT). NAIT provided a [written submission](#) in advance of the private briefing. They have also provided the Committee with a [Neuro-affirming Language Guidance](#) document on terminology.
9. At its meeting on 30 September, the Committee took oral evidence from two panels of witnesses representing third sector organisations that support autistic people and/or people with ADHD.
10. At its meeting on 7 October, the Committee continued taking oral evidence, hearing from two panels of witnesses representing health professions that support people with autism and/or ADHD and representatives of NHS Boards and service managers.

Other recent work in this area

11. The Minister for Social Care and Mental Wellbeing made a statement to Parliament on 26 June 2025 entitled [Ensuring the Right Support for Young People's Neurodivergence, Mental Health and Wellbeing](#). This included a commitment to set up a cross-sector Taskforce to address the provision of neurodevelopmental services for children and young people in Scotland, supported by £500,000 of additional funding to deliver improvements in these services.

12. This statement accompanied the publication of a [review of the implementation of the National Neurodevelopmental Specification](#). Among the review's findings were that:

- there was a mixture of views as to whether the Specification met the needs of children, young people and families;
- while some praised the increased focus on a neurodevelopmental and multidisciplinary approach, the majority of people surveyed felt that the Specification had had limited impact;
- there were major challenges to implementation, including increasing demand, limited funding and poor communication between partners in the Specification's delivery;
- the intended move to a needs-based model had not reduced the demand for diagnostic services; and
- there was a lack of clarity over who was responsible for different aspects of implementation, including diagnosis and assessment.

13. A report was published in June 2025 entitled [Experiences of Autism Assessment and Diagnosis in Scotland](#). This report was co-produced by Autism Rights Group Highland, Autistic Mutual Aid Society Edinburgh, Scottish Ethnic Minority Autistics and Scottish Autism.

Today's meeting

14. At today's meeting, Members will conclude oral evidence as part of the inquiry with a session with the Minister for Social Care and Mental Wellbeing and accompanying officials.

Clerks to the Committee
October 2025