

PE1704/I

Dundee City Council submission of 31 October 2018

We support the need for timely assessment for children and young people who may have Autism. The Principles of Good Transitions 3 sets out seven principles and the duties of professionals in education, social work, health and the third sector in supporting young people with additional support needs between the ages of 14 and 25. However, the process of assessment should be one which is a multiagency community assessment involving staff from both the local authority as well as Health, and the focus of any social work involvement should be proportionate to needs and risks identified within the wider multiagency team.

1. Additional support for children and young people with Autism in mainstream schools is provided through adaptations to the learning environment, which may include support assistants. However, a sole focus on this form of support is limiting, and does not take into account the wider evidence base relating to the impact of learning/teaching assistants (REF here). Rather, the mandatory requirement should be for all mainstream schools to provide an Autism-friendly learning environment which addresses the curriculum (including sensory curriculum) and pedagogy for children and young people with ASN. Staff training and development should be provided by local authorities for all staff who work with Autism. DCC provides an e-learning module on Autism for all employees, which is the first stage of its staff development framework for Autism.

Education Scotland have developed an online module to support school staff in their understanding of inclusive practice, including Autism, along with the Autism Toolbox which staff in schools are sign-posted to.

We are in support of professional recognition and registration for all support staff working with children, young people and adults who have additional support needs and/or disabilities.

Dundee CC has a long-standing partnership agreement with D&A College which requires all 'support assistant' students on the PDA Programme for ASN to undertake the Autism module within their training. All current employees have been audited in relation to their skills and qualifications profile and the majority have undertaken the Autism module within their training.

2. We would suggest: Adults with Autism will have a continuing right to appropriate and proportionate support from the local authority in adult life.
3. The Autism Strategy for Scotland has provided a strong basis for addressing the rights of autistic people over the last 10 years. The Additional Support for Learning (Scotland) Act, 2004, revised 2009, 2018 makes provision for all children and young people with ASN and is inclusive of those with Autism. It is questionable whether an act which is specific to Autism would add any value to current legislation; and could arguably disadvantage and be discriminatory against children and young people with other assessed needs and alternative diagnoses. Implementation of the ASL Act addresses all needs in an equitable way, regardless of diagnosis or label.