

PE1704/Y

Western Isles Council submission of the 4 July 2019

In respect of our local system, a diagnosis of autism is typically made by our social and communications team, which is a multi-disciplinary team composed of clinical psychology, educational psychology, occupational therapy and speech and language therapy. This is governed by our local autism pathway, which connects a range of additional health and care professionals into the process of diagnosis, care and support.

In terms of the petitioner's aspirations, we would currently aim to achieve diagnosis within one year; however, we are noticing an increase in the volume and pattern of referrals, which will make this target more difficult to achieve into the future. Moreover, while not every diagnosis will require social work input, where appropriate social work will carry out an assessment of children with autism under Section 23 of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995. We anticipate additional resources will be required into the future in order to meet the aspirations of the petitioner.

In respect of the assessment for classroom support, our view is that a specific obligation to have support delivered by an ASL assistant with an autism qualification is too constraining, especially in a small system like the Western Isles. We would want to see ASL assistants have more generic qualifications which would allow them to work with a wider range of children with support needs.

We agree that it makes sense to extend 'childhood' through to the age of 25 where appropriate (in line with the current continuing care agenda) but the delivery of specialist support can be difficult to procure, to staff and to fund within the context of a remote and rural operating environment like the Western Isles.

In respect of the final point, we are of the view that existing statutory measures are sufficient in order to provide support to people with autism.