

PE1837/V

Scottish Autism submission of 11 March 2021

About us

Scottish Autism is an organisation dedicated to enabling autistic people to lead happy, healthy and fulfilling lives. Established in 1968, we are now the largest provider of autism specific services in Scotland and advocate for good autism practice everywhere. We exist to support autistic people to lead meaningful and fulfilling lives and to be recognised as valued members of their communities.

Scottish Autism aims to support autistic people across the lifespan, with a wide array of needs. We do this via our diverse range of services, including day and vocational opportunities, residential, supported living, outreach and specialist transition support. We also provide a range of community services for autistic people and their families across Scotland, including our one-stop-shop, autism advice line, Right Click online support programmes, delivery of the national post diagnostic support service and Affinity coaching and counselling service.

PE01837

Scottish Autism welcomes the call by petitioners for more resources to be made available by the Scottish Government to provide services and support for autistic people. It is our organisation's view that there continues to be an absence of consistent and accessible support services for autistic people in Scotland.

We recognise that there is a lack of funding and increased investment is required to support autism service provision at local authority level. We regularly seek funds for new services in response to what the autistic community tell us they need, but our own service provision is necessarily limited by what local authorities or government will commission.

The Accountability Gap report, published in 2020 by the Cross-Party Group on Autism is a review of the Scottish Government's 10-year Autism Strategy. The report sets out a number of findings and lists a number of recommendations that would enable greater consistency and availability of efficient support services for autistic people in Scotland. The primary recommendations identified are the creation of a new fully funded Autism Strategy, and the foundation of a Commission or Commissioner role. It is Scottish Autism's view that such a role would subsequently be in a position to undertake some of the work mentioned above, such as closing an evident accountability gap, investigating and sharing best practice, and working collaboratively between the Scottish Government, local authorities, health and social care partnerships, third sector organisations, and APOs. We do not see this as an alternative to greater funding of local services, rather that a commissioner would be well placed to advocate for necessary investment and service provision.

Scottish Autism acknowledges the Scottish Government's response to this petition, and welcomes recent investment in services such as the national post diagnostic support service, which is delivered in collaboration with autistic-led organisations. However, we recognise that further support is still required for autistic people throughout the lifespan and we agree with petitioners that more resource is required at a local level to support autistic people and their families. Our charity also supports the views of the Cross Party Group on Autism that a new fully funded Autism

Strategy and the establishment of a Commission or Commissioner role are both required to ensure consistency and accountability across every local authority area. Scottish Autism will continue to work towards a more inclusive society for autistic people and their families.