

Evidence from David Malins

Is the Bill necessary?

- Mr Malins is in favour of a Bill and believes it is a beginning and a step in the right direction.
- The Bill is fairly well worded apart from the lack of the word 'statutory' in relation to the strategy. The Bill needs this word to give the Bill strength.
- The Autism (Wales) Bill needs to be a Bill which focuses solely on Autism and not have other neurodevelopmental conditions added to it.
- The Autism strategy has been in place for almost two decades with very little progress made.
- Cwm Taf University Health Board put a lot of emphasis and focus on children and families but not on post-16 individuals with Autism.
- In general, there is limited access and support to post-16 individuals with Autism.
- Denied a care and treatment plan as individuals with Autism don't 'fit into a box'.
- Funding is being spent on children and families, not adults.
- Adults with Autism don't feel as if they're being listened to.
- Autism Spectrum Connections Cymru are unable to provide the same level of support since their funding has been reduced.

Experience of IAS

- Denying access to those with learning difficulties and additional learning needs.
- Unable to offer support as they don't understand him.
- Submitted an FOI request regarding funding for IAS.
- Offer small scale support, mainly signposting.
- IAS staff are employed by Health Boards and are paid to signpost.
- Staff are administrative types not professionals.
- They are not taking post-16 individuals with Autism seriously.

Higher Education

- Lack of support in University.
- No flexibility to aid students.
- Lack of knowledge amongst professionals towards those with Autism.

Housing

- Absence of support to access housing.
- Support available through four or five different housing agencies, through the Supporting Fund People, which is limited.
- Parents provided assistance through a private let in Barry.
- Cost of living in Cardiff is too expensive, therefore Mr Malins had to look for alternative accommodation in the South Wales valleys.
- Gofal – their funding is based on the Supporting People fund which is very inflexible and therefore unhelpful.

Employment

Section 2 – Contents of the autism strategy (f) ‘make provision to ensure that persons are not denied access to services on the grounds of IQ or receipt of services for other medical conditions;’

- Societal problem regarding employment.
- Employment figures for those with Autism is between 4–7%.
- Traditional employment isn’t appropriate for Mr Malins and others with Autism otherwise employment statistics would be higher.
- Declined the offer of a full-time job at home in Herefordshire due to parental peer pressure.

Advocacy

Section 2 – Contents of the autism strategy (g) (ix) ‘access to advocacy services;’

- Advocacy support is heavily restricted.
- If you do not have a social worker or learning disability, funding and support stop.

- ‘Once the funding stops, the support stops, which means I’m left without any support.’

Charities

- Autism directory will provide support as long as you participate in fundraising activities on their behalf.
- Unable to go to one place that can take care of all needs.
- It is unacceptable that you have to show loyalty to a charity in order to receive the help and support required.
- Crisis team can help if you’re autistic, but if you have any additional needs such as mental health issues or anxiety disorders, they don’t know what to do.

Education and training for professionals

- Surprised by the evidence from professionals who are saying all the people who have an interest in autism are already working in the field.
- Training is non-compulsory.
- A single point of contact for services (e.g. GP appointments) would be helpful instead of having to wait in telephone queues which can be stressful.

Closing statement

- Mr Malins has lived in Wales for 10 years and believes that very little has changed, and that there has been very little progress in the support available to people with Autism.
- Mr Malins had aspirations and dreams but they’ve fallen by the wayside because of the lack of support and understanding available to him.
- Without this Bill we are on a collision course to losing our liberty to the services everyone else has access to.