

### **Autism Presentation**

#### **Summary**

Councillor McCabe recently met the Joint Chair of the Scottish Parliament's Cross Party Group on Autism and extended an invitation to the two organisations who provide secretariat to the CPG to present to the Board.

Rob Holland from the National Autistic Society Scotland and Joe Long from Scottish Autism have been invited to do a 10 minute presentation followed by around 15 minutes for a Question and Answer session. They have produced a PowerPoint presentation which outlines the areas they will cover.

This paper provides some background on Autism and shares the PowerPoint:

**John Urquhart**  
**Policy Officer - Children and Young People**  
[johnu@cosla.gov.uk](mailto:johnu@cosla.gov.uk)  
**0131 474 9273**

**November 2021**

## Autism Presentation

### **Purpose**

1. The purpose of this report is introduce Rob Holland from the National Autistic Society Scotland and Joe Long from Scottish Autism, to share their PowerPoint presentation and provide some background on Autism.

### **Background**

2. The National Autistic Society Scotland and Scottish Autism provide secretariat for the Cross Party Group on Autism and have done so since it was established in November 2017. Both these large third sector organisations provide services to Autistic children and adults, these services are funded through charitable activities, through funding from Scottish Government and funding from local authorities.

### Cross Party Group – The Accountability Gap Report and its recommendations

3. The Accountability Gap Report published Autumn 2020, the report sought the views of service users and family members on the impact of the Scottish Strategy for Autism. The report made 10 recommendations, highlighting the first two as the most important:
  - Build on the legacy of the Scottish Strategy for Autism with a new fully funded strategy from 2021, co-created by the Scottish Government, COSLA and other partners, autistic people, families, professionals and autism charities.
  - Seek to solve the accountability gap by establishing a new autism commissioner role, who would uphold autistic people's rights and ensure that effective policy and laws are implemented appropriately at a local level.
4. The Report argued that a lack of accountability at local level, is leaving autistic people and families fighting, often with little success, to get the support they need, that to achieve these aims there needs to be a Commissioner to hold Local Authorities to account. COSLA Officers met with the CPG Secretariat ahead of publication and provided feedback on the initial report, subsequently the published report highlights the need for adequate funding.
5. On the establishment of a Commissioner we argued that Local Authorities were subject to scrutiny from multiple organisations, however the Scottish Government has a Manifesto Commitment to: "Establish a Learning Disability, Autism and Neurodiversity Commissioner through new legislation".

### The Scottish Strategy for Autism

6. COSLA and the Scottish Government are co signatories to the 10 year Scottish Strategy for Autism 2011 – 2021 which at COSLA is primarily on the agenda of our Health and Social Care Board.

7. The strategy says Scotland would strive to be a place where autistic people are 'respected, accepted and valued by their communities and have confidence in services to treat them fairly so that they are able to have meaningful and satisfying lives.' There are four strands to the strategy:
- A Healthy Life
  - Choice and Control
  - Independence
  - Active Citizenship
8. A two year joint Learning Disability and Autism "Towards Transformation Plan" was signed off by the H&SC Board in March 2021. The Plan highlights the impact of Covid-19 on both groups, how services to support people have adapted in light of restrictions to movement and opportunity and highlights actions which local government and Scottish Government will take individually and jointly with partners to mitigate these restrictions. The plan articulates actions to improve things for people with lived experience and fully involves them in the leadership and scrutiny of the plan. The two groups who provide secretariat to the CPG have been actively involved in the development of the plan.

### Autism Training for Teachers

9. Following the Not Included, Not Engaged, Not Involved Report the Cabinet Secretary for Education convened a group to look at initial teacher education and CLPD for existing teachers. Resources have been developed for initial teacher training and these have been signed off by the GTCS and Deans of Education. These resources are entitled "[We were expecting you](#)" and aim to prepare all student teachers so that they know to expect to teach pupils with autism and teaching strategies for doing so. These resources are now being delivered in initial teacher training institutions. Education Scotland led on developing resources for existing teachers by updating and actively managing resources in the [Autism Toolbox](#). COSLA, the National Autistic Society Scotland and Scottish Autism contributed to the toolbox design and content and the resources for initial teacher education. The development of both these resources is something which has happened recently, both actions are designed to better equip teachers to better support pupils with autism.

### Restraint and Seclusion

10. A working Group was already established to develop guidance on restraint and seclusion when the Children and Young People Commissioner published the "No Safe Place" Report in 2018. This group has been reconfigured with CYPC membership. The physical intervention working group is currently considering the implications of the UNCRC on the development of the new national non-statutory guidance. The group is aiming to complete the drafting of the guidance in the near future, to be followed by a public consultation on the drafted guidance. Work is also underway to develop a standard dataset for recording and monitoring incidents of restraint and seclusion across local authorities.

### **Next Steps**

11. The Board are asked to engage with the presenters and provide their perspective on the issues the presenters raise.

**November 2021**