



EDUCATION EXECUTIVE

**CONSULTATION – ‘TOWARDS A DRAFT AUTISM STRATEGY FOR SCOTLAND’ –
RESPONSE BY WEST LOTHIAN COUNCIL EDUCATION SERVICE**

REPORT BY HEAD OF EDUCATION (QUALITY ASSURANCE)

A. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To advise Elected Members of a suitable response to the Scottish Government consultation paper ‘Towards an Autism Strategy for Scotland’.

B. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Education Executive approve the terms of the proposed response to the Scottish Government consultation in terms of the response attached at Appendix 1 to this report.

C. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

I Council Values	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Focusing on our customers’ needs• Being honest, open and accountable• Providing equality of opportunities• Developing employees• Making the best use of our resources• Working in Partnership
II Policy and Legal (including Strategic Environmental Assessment, Equality Issues, Health or Risk Assessment)	The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004
III Resources - (Financial, Staffing and Property)	None (at present stage – until content of the Autism Strategy proposed is agreed)

IV Consultations

Between Education Service Officers and members of the West Lothian Autism Strategy Group.

Education PDSP

Social Policy are currently preparing a report for Council on the 'Towards an Autism Strategy for Scotland'. There has been liaison between the Services on the general approach of the responses to the consultation. The Report by Head of Education focuses on the Strategy in Relation to Children and Young People and the Report by Head of Social Policy will focus on the Strategy in relation to adults.

D. TERMS OF REPORT

1. Background

The Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Reference Group was reconvened by the Minister for Public Health and Sport in February 2010. The Group have drafted a document 'Towards an Autism Strategy for Scotland' and the Government have requested written responses to this draft by 9th December, 2010.

The covering letter from the Government clarifies that this is a separate Scottish Government Consultation from that which was undertaken as part of the parliamentary process for the Autism Scotland Bill introduced by Hugh O'Donnell.

The Government has now responded to the Autism Scotland Bill consultation indicating that the same outcomes can be achieved without legislation, because the Autism Strategy for Scotland is at such an advanced stage. West Lothian Education Executive were of the same view and were "unconvinced that an Act is required" in their response to the previous consultation on the Autism Bill (Education Executive 31st August 2010). They agreed in principle with the drafting of a National Autism Strategy.

The attached Appendix 1 contains comments on the document 'Towards an Autism Strategy for Scotland', for the approval of elected members.

2. Towards an Autism Strategy for Scotland

The Strategy sets out a vision that all people on the autism spectrum 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." It provides a review of current best practice and suggests ways to build on these foundations. This is summarised in 26 recommendations. There are five themes in the Strategy:

- Diagnosis, Assessment and Interventions
- Matching Resources to Need
- Standards and Scrutiny
- Staff Education and Training
- Research

3. Services for Children and Young People in West Lothian

Provision of Services for children and young people with autistic spectrum conditions in West Lothian has been reviewed and developed on an ongoing basis. It has been noted that the number of children diagnosed has risen considerably in recent years. Additional provision and services have been developed to support pupils with a diagnosis of autistic spectrum disorder. In line with Government Guidelines ('Education of Pupils with Autism Spectrum Disorders' HMle 2007) the Education Service also offers additional support to meet the needs of pupils who are not formally diagnosed, but have been identified as requiring education based on 'autistic friendly' principles.

A multi-agency Autism Strategy Group (including representatives from Education, Health, Social Policy and the Scottish Autistic Society) meet on a regular basis and has produced a West Lothian Strategy for Autism and an Action Plan for Implementation. The group has also produced practical guidance on teaching pupils with autistic spectrum disorders 'Promoting Excellence'. The Autism Toolkit commissioned by the Scottish Government has been circulated to all schools and this provides schools with an autism resource to aid learning and teaching. Psychological Service and the Autism Outreach Teaching Service offer additional guidance and support to schools. There are strong links with colleagues in the Social Policy Child Disability Team.

The Council aims to meet the needs of pupils within their local mainstream school. A range of specialist provision has also been developed within West Lothian to meet the needs of pupils who would find it difficult to cope within the mainstream school environment.

E. CONCLUSION

The submission from West Lothian Council Education Service to the Scottish Parliament's call for written evidence on the document 'Towards an Autism Strategy for Scotland' is contained in Appendix 1 and confirms support for the preparation of a Strategy for people who have autistic spectrum conditions. The submission also contains some general points for consideration. Appendix 1 relates to the Strategy in relation to children and young people.

In particular, the need to take account of existing strategic planning which is geared to specific demographic and local situations, the need to ensure strategies that involve the education of autistic pupils are coherent with other legislation and guidance for pupils with additional support needs. Finally, that consideration is given to carrying out a government review of financial resources required to meet the needs of the increasing numbers of people diagnosed with autistic spectrum conditions.

A Scottish Autism Strategy in conjunction with strategic planning, specialist resources and experience of staff within West Lothian will ensure that we continue to provide high quality input to meet the needs of our pupils.

The commitment from West Lothian Council to meeting the needs of all of its pupils, to encourage them to achieve their potential and to raise educational standards has impacted directly on the educational progress and development of young people with autistic spectrum conditions.

F. BACKGROUND REFERENCES

Call for written evidence on the paper 'Towards an Autism Strategy for Scotland'

'Towards and Autism Strategy for Scotland', Scottish Government 2010.
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/consultations>

'Education for Pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorders' - HMle 2007

The Autism Toolbox 'An Autism Resource for Scottish Schools' – Scottish Government 2009

Appendices/Attachments: 1

Contact Person: Liz Gajjar, Principal Educational Psychologist

liz.gajjar@westlothian.gov.uk

Mary Rankine, Head of Education (Quality Assurance), Education Services, West Lothian Civic Centre, Howden South Road, LIVINGSTON EH54 6FF

Date: 23 November 2010