

Ten Minute Rule Bill on early autism assessment and mandatory teacher training

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Autistic children are missing out on support

There are over 180,000 autistic pupils in England, most of whom attend mainstream schools. With the right support, autistic young people can and do achieve well at school. But they are currently being left behind by a system that does not work well enough:

- Autistic children are twice as likely to be excluded from school as their peers.
- Less than half say they are happy in school.
- Only 20% achieve grade 5 or above in English and Maths GCSEs, compared to 52% of all pupils.

Poor educational outcomes lead to reduced employment opportunities. Just 29% of autistic people are in full or part time employment. Autistic people in work are on average paid a third less than their peers.

Delayed autism assessment and diagnosis

A lack of early assessment means that many autistic children and young people are not getting the diagnosis – and therefore support, they need early enough:

- 92% of children wait longer than the NHS 13-week deadline for an autism diagnosis.
- 46% wait 18 months or longer.

That's nearly half of all autistic children waiting a year and a half for support.

Lack of teacher training

Autistic pupils identified training in autism for teachers as the single biggest change that would improve their experience of school:

- 73% of autistic young people said their teachers did not understand their needs.
- Just 39% of teachers have more than half a days training in autism, and for secondary school, this drops to 14%.

What needs to change?

Reduce autism assessment and diagnosis waiting times

We need to recognise the immense value of timely autism assessment and diagnosis, for individuals and to the public purse, and put the resources in place to reduce waiting times. Improvement is particularly needed in waiting times for marginalised groups, so that autistic children receive a timely diagnosis regardless of their race, gender or other characteristics.

Make autism training mandatory for education staff

If all education staff had autism training, children needing support would be identified sooner, and intervention could be put in place without delay. Mandatory training in autism is vital to ensure autistic children and young people succeed at school. Now is the time to act:

- Recent Ofsted research found that 'teaching students with SEND' was top of teachers' wish-list for additional training.

- Autism training is now mandatory for all staff in health and care settings. Paula McGowan OBE, founder of the Oliver McGowan training on learning disability and autism has launched a petition calling for it to be mandatory in schools too.

Early autism assessment and diagnosis, and mandatory training on autism, will lead to better education outcomes for autistic young people, and better transitions to work. This will benefit autistic people, their families, society, employers and the UK economy. That's why Duncan Baker MP is presenting his Ten Minute Rule Bill this autumn.

The rationale for early intervention

Early intervention is known to improve a child's long-term outcomes and reduce lifetime costs to the individual, family and society. Meanwhile, a delay in diagnosis is associated with many negative consequences in later life, including poor physical and mental well-being, poor quality of life, and poor educational and employment outcomes.

Recent research by National Association of Independent Schools and Non-Maintained Special Schools has shown that:

- effectively meeting the needs of a young person with SEND provides a lifetime return of £380k per learner to individuals, their families and wider society,
- the best outcomes were achieved when young people were supported in meaningful relationships, had access to therapies and high-quality mental health support.

When the correct provision is not in place, children end up requiring more intensive and expensive education provision, creating a cost spiral.



What is being proposed?

Duncan Baker MP is proposing a Ten Minute Rule Bill called the 'Early autism assessment and mandatory teacher training Bill' which will:

- **deliver support to reduce autism assessment and diagnosis waiting times,**
- **introduce mandatory autism training for all education staff, and**
- **create a duty to publish a SEND workforce strategy.**

These changes will help autistic students get the inclusive education they are entitled to.

What do we need from you?

Many in the sector, including Ambitious about Autism, FullSpektrum, Keystone Consulting have been working with Duncan to ensure the Bill will help those it needs to – autistic children and young people. Can we count on your support too?

For more information on Duncan Baker's Ten Minute Rule Bill, please contact Fiona Cuthbertson at fiona.cuthbertson@keystone-consulting.co.uk

Please also sign and share Ambitious about Autism's 'Written Off' campaign petition which calls for increased autism training for school staff and better early intervention:

ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk/written-off