

Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee

Inquiry into Neurodivergence in Scotland

Submission from Ross Pantony, 12 February 2026

Through our experience of the Enhanced Provision consultation process in Falkirk, a number of systemic issues have become clear. While this was a local proposal, the challenges it exposed are national in nature.

Based on lived experience, we believe the following changes are urgently needed for autistic children in Scotland:

1. Inclusion Must Be Properly Resourced

The presumption of mainstreaming cannot operate as a cost-saving mechanism. Inclusion only works when class sizes, staffing ratios, training and sensory environments are appropriate. Without that infrastructure, inclusion becomes displacement.

2. Early Diagnosis and Education Must Be Joined Up

Delays in diagnosis increase distress in school settings. Education is often left to manage unmet clinical need. A national strategy must connect health pathways and educational planning, rather than allowing schools to absorb systemic failure.

3. National Oversight to End the Postcode Lottery

Support for autistic children should not depend on the local authority in which they live. At present, access to enhanced provision, specialist staff, post-diagnostic support and transition planning varies significantly across councils. There must be clearer national standards, stronger governmental oversight, and accountability mechanisms to ensure consistency of provision across Scotland. Equality of opportunity should not be council dependent.

4. Protective Provision Should Not Be Removed Without Evidence

Where specialist or enhanced provision exists, its removal should require clear evidence that outcomes will improve, not simply that budgets require reconfiguration. Stability is critical for autistic pupils, particularly at transition points.

5. Equality Impact Assessments Must Be Meaningful

Families must have confidence that cumulative impacts, including diagnosis delays, benefit barriers and educational restructuring are properly assessed. Equality duties should be demonstrably rigorous, not procedural.

6. Co-production Must Be Genuine

Parents should not learn of major changes through media reports or last-minute updates. Engagement must be early, transparent and collaborative.

7. Workforce Planning Must Reflect Reality

Specialist expertise cannot be redistributed by policy alone. If enhanced models are altered, there must be a clear plan for retaining and embedding that expertise within mainstream settings.

Our experience has shown that autistic children are too often expected to adapt to systems that are not designed for them. Reform must start with the principle that the system adapts to the child and not the other way around.

We would welcome continued dialogue on how national policy can ensure that inclusion is not just an aspiration, but a consistent and enforceable reality across Scotland.

Yours sincerely

Ross Pantony