

PET(4)-05-12 p19a

P-04-358 Re-instate Home Support for children with ASD and their families in the Caerphilly County Borough

Petition wording:

We call upon the National Assembly to urge the Welsh Government to reinstate funding to enable the continuation of Caerphilly Autistic Spectrum Service Home support, accessible by parents for children with Autistic Spectrum Disorders. If this service is not reinstated it will have a fundamental effect on vulnerable children with Autism throughout their formative and teenage years. Please prevent ASD families facing crisis.

Petition raised by: Parents Campaign for CASS

Date petition first considered by Committee: 10 January 2012

Number of signatures: approximately 375 on-line and paper signatures

Supporting Information:

CASS was a pilot, funded by the WAG to combine outreach teacher/teaching assistant support services with home and communication support for children, young people and their families. Since its start in 2008 the CASS service has provided, with great success, support for children with ASD and their families not only in school environments but also in the home.

Following the end of the WAG grant, a decision was taken earlier this year to continue to fund the CASS service from Education. This resulted in the reduction of the CASS budget, a depletion of staff in the CASS team and therefore a restructuring of the service provided. Much to the disappointment of ASD families in the Caerphilly Borough, home support is now only provided if there is a significant impact on the education of the individual with ASD. Whilst we understand that education is now the priority as this is where the funding for CASS comes from, the withdrawal of home support has left ASD children and their families without valuable support at home for their children.

The home support provided by CASS has helped children with ASD and their families (who often feel alienated and confused) with short and long term strategies to develop and support their children with life's basic skills, such as eating, sleeping and dressing to much more complex behavioural issues, disciplining, helping with stressful situations, aggression and the many anxieties that both families and children with ASD face in their everyday life. The withdrawal of this service has left ASD children and their families

without support at home for their children and no alternative service provision. There is a risk that many of the families will be facing crisis without this valuable support. The CASS team are experts and their experience of working with ASD children has been noted as a best practice example in Wales. Due to parental concerns in the Caerphilly Borough a campaign entitled 'Parents Campaign for CASS' has been set up to highlight the reasons why this funding must be re-considered. The campaign now requests that the Welsh Assembly Government Health and Social Services budget be considered to re-instate this much needed 'Home Support ' as well as consider the longer term financial support for the service.

We believe that the WAG has supported the ASD agenda through its world first ASD Strategy for Wales along with the additional funding to support ASD services that was announced in February this year. Despite this, the very frontline services that families with ASD children are so dependent upon are being withdrawn in Caerphilly and best practice examples that have developed through the strategy such as CASS are being abandoned.

As desperate parents we are appealing to the Welsh Assembly Government to consider our request to secure a future for CASS and our home support service and we look forward to your response.