



Accountability Gap – Are the needs of Autistic children in Scotland being met? Tuesday 8th December 2020

SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES

Charlene Tait **Deputy CEO, Scottish Autism**

Charlene Tait is Deputy Chief Executive of Scottish Autism. She has worked with and on behalf of autistic people for thirty years. In that time she has been engaged in direct practice, strategic development and academia.

Her main areas of interest are in family support and enabling quality lifestyles for autistic people, including access to education, employment and leading a happy, healthy, fulfilling life. She also champions the development of practice based research within Scottish Autism and beyond, the central aim of which is, to build an evidence base related to an individualised, personalised approach to practice.



Nick Ward **Director, National Autistic Society Scotland**

Nick Ward is the Director of the National Autistic Society Scotland. He graduated from Edinburgh University with an MA in History and Classics before studying at Canterbury Christ Church University and gaining a PGCE in English teaching, he also studied at the UCL Institute of Education where he achieved an MA in Leadership. He was previously a secondary school teacher in London and a local authority councillor in Islington before moving into the charity sector. He now lives in Edinburgh with his partner and is a keen runner and podcaster.



Steve Billingham **Grandparent with lived experience**

Steve Billingham is Owner and Director of his own Business and Management Consultancy firm and a non MSP member of and contributor to the Cross Party Group on Autism at Holyrood. He is grandparent to a six year old autistic girl and has direct first hand experience of trying to ensure that his granddaughter gets the support she is entitled to in school. He has worked closely with both



national and local autism charities, and with other charities focused on supporting children and young people with other additional support needs.

David Nicholson

Autism campaigner and Musician

David Nicholson comes from Fife. He was educated at Kirkland High School and Community College and Plockton High School. He went on to study law and politics at Stirling University where he graduated with a 2:1 Honours degree in 2012. He then undertook an internship in the UK Parliament as part of the Speakers Parliamentary Placement Scheme. Since then he has done various autism speeches and currently sits on the Scottish Governments Understanding Autism Steering committee. He is a member of the Scottish Fiddle Orchestra, a fiddle player, a curler with Largo Curling Club and enjoys spending time at the families smallholding.

