World Autism Awareness Day 2nd April – We Need to Tackle Bullying & Mental Health Issues

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Leading autism campaigner, Kevin Healey, is calling on the Government to do more for people who have autism and who suffer from Bullying and Mental Health issues.

Mental Health

Many families who care for a loved one with autism endure in today's society, but instead is a series of failures that exist throughout the system – namely that of flawed commissioning. This means that there are not enough specialist beds or local services to meet the needs for those on the Autistic Spectrum. The result is restricted access to treatment for children and young adults in crisis, who as a result are being sent hundreds of miles away from their families. There are thousands of people with learning disabilities and/or autism – including 165 children – who are currently stuck in inpatient beds, rather than living in their home communities. (Learning Disability Census 2015: almost half of inpatients with learning disabilities common to each census since 2013)

Kevin Healey said:

> “The current system is not fit for standard. Many parents contact me, saying that their child or young adult is in a unit that is not geared up to meet their needs. There needs to be more autism specific centres out there to support people on the spectrum when a crisis occurs. For example, I helped one parent who lived in South Wales whose daughter had been sent to a unit in Brighton for many months. Thankfully she is now back home, but there are more cases studies out there, where families have been ripped apart, with some having to travel hundreds of miles to be able to see their children. The system needs to change, and it needs to change now”.

Bullying

Kevin is also calling on the Government and police to do more about the issue of bullying in relation to autism. He is calling on the Government to improve Hate Crime reporting systems. Kevin set up a national Autism Anti Bullying Campaign a few years ago; that was backed by celebrities such as Ricky Gervais and Katie Price. Lord Sugar also supported a National Billboard Campaign throughout the UK.

Kevin said:

> “Having been a victim of bullying all my life, it seems to never go away. For the last 5 years I've been cyberbullied and trolled on social media resulting in having to involve the police on numerous occasions due to online abuse. None of my trolls have ever been caught. I've been the victim of Disability Hate Speech, trolling, impersonation and have even had my social media account cloned. I don't think enough is being done in the UK to protect people like myself and others living with autism. Research has shown that people with autism are nine times more likely to commit suicide because of being bullied. The law has to change in order to protect those vulnerable individuals who use social media. Improved reporting systems and Disability Hate Crime systems need to be put in place. It just seems that offenders get away with it, leaving victims to suffer in silence. So much more needs to be done”.

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