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Sunday, 12 May, 2002, 10:57 GMT 11:57 UK

### Autism numbers 'rising' in Scotland



The charity says cases of autism have risen  
There are more autistic children in Scotland's schools than has previously been recognised, a charity says.

A National Autistic Society (NAS) report has found that one in 121 children have "autism spectrum disorders".

This contrasts with estimates of one in 166 made by the Public Health Institute of Scotland last year.

The charity is calling on the Scottish Executive and local authorities to act on the findings.

However, it is not making any link with the MMR combined measles, mumps and rubella jab, which children are supposed to be administered at primary school.

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" *Autism is a significant problem for schools and numbers appear to be rising* "

**Robert McKay**

**NAS co-ordinator**

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The condition, known medically as autistic spectrum disorder (ASD), affects about 30,000 people in Scotland.

The figures for Scotland, published as part of Autism Awareness Week, were lower than those in England and Wales, where one in 86 children are said to have the condition.

The report also revealed that 89% of schools surveyed were not satisfied with the extent of their teachers' autism training.

Robert McKay, the NAS Scottish national co-ordinator, said support for autistic children was paramount.

"Autism is a significant problem for schools and numbers appear to be rising," he said.

### **'Increase awareness'**

"However, there is an issue over diagnosis and assessment as it would seem we are not picking up the numbers of children we should be.

"Nonetheless, with autism numbers at such a high level we need the Scottish Executive and local authorities to recognise this and take appropriate action to ensure that all children with an autism spectrum disorder are given full support to reach their educational potential."

Last month, the executive said it was "committed to further research and to increasing awareness of this condition, as well as improving the services for those with this disorder and their families".

It was responding to calls made by the Action Against Autism group, that argued poor provision was hampering the development of autistic children.

Autism Awareness Week runs from Monday, 13 May to Sunday, 20 May.

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