

# THE ASC GOOD PRACTICE GUIDE

St. Nicholas Academy for Autism Trust  
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## WELCOME TO THE ASC GOOD PRACTICE GUIDE

Welcome to the tenth issue of *The ASC Good Practice Guide*, a free monthly resource for individuals with an autistic spectrum condition, professionals, and parents.

### Which organisation does this Guide come from?

The Guide is written under the banner of the St. Nicholas Academy for Autism Trust, a non-denominational North-London based ASC and special needs charity.

### Who writes and edits the Guide?

The Guide is written by Christine Haugh, and edited by Chris Mitchell.

*Christine Haugh's* two sons are diagnosed with autistic spectrum conditions. She works at Middlesex University as Disability Development Officer for Aimhigher London North Partnership, a DfES-funded organisation. Her duties include Project Management of the Partnership's activities for learners with special educational needs, including autistic spectrum conditions. Christine is currently completing her MEd Autism (Distance-Learning) at University of Birmingham.

*Chris Mitchell* was diagnosed with Asperger Syndrome at University, at the age of twenty. For the first twenty years of his life, Chris felt that he was someone who didn't exist, trying to fit into a social environment he couldn't understand. However, once diagnosed, he found a reason for who he was and his self-confidence returned. Since his diagnosis, Chris has completed his MA (Hons) in Information and Library Management at the University of Northumbria. He has also become an advocate for Asperger Syndrome. Most recently, he has published the autobiography *Glass Half-Empty, Glass Half-Full*. Currently, he works as a clerical assistant with Durham County Council's Special Educational Needs Department. He also speaks about his experiences of Asperger Syndrome at various events and conferences throughout the UK, including the 2005 Aimhigher "Transition to University" Summerschool for students with autistic spectrum conditions, where Chris and Christine met, and at an annual lecture at the University of Northumbria. Additionally, Chris coordinates training workshops for professionals who work with ASC.

To enquire if Chris is available to become involved as a trainer or a speaker at your event, please visit his new website, at [www.chrismitchell.org.uk](http://www.chrismitchell.org.uk), or contact him at [ChrisMitchell@mitchell17.wanadoo.co.uk](mailto:ChrisMitchell@mitchell17.wanadoo.co.uk)

To ensure accuracy and relevance, prior to its publication, the Guide was read and feedback was contributed by a range of individuals including relevant education and health professionals from a number of different Boroughs, individuals with autistic spectrum conditions, and parents. Each issue of the Guide will continue to be "proof-read" in this way.

***What is the purpose of the Guide?*** The purpose of this Guide is to provide practical support in the form of a one-stop-shop of information on existing good practice in the field of Autistic Spectrum Conditions, in relation especially to Transitions. "Transitions" is a broad term, encompassing phase transfer to nursery, primary, or secondary schools, as well as to further and higher education and even adult learning opportunities. "Transitions" also covers the area of transition between types of placement, for instance from specialist to mainstream, or from home education to school-based provision. Information provided in this guide will come from a range of reputable, identifiable sources, such as the DfES. Whenever possible, links to relevant websites will be included alongside the information provided. Always, the intention is to empower the audience by keeping them informed of existing good practice.

***How can you subscribe to the Guide?*** To receive the free monthly Guide, simply email [ahaughc@aol.com](mailto:ahaughc@aol.com) with the words "Subscribe to Guide" as the subject! If you would like the Guide posted rather than sent via email, simply include name and postal address in your email.

***How can you help this Guide?*** Any reader, whether a professional, an individual diagnosed with an autistic spectrum condition or a parent, who is aware of any existing best practice relating to autistic spectrum conditions and who would like to share this information with others, is welcomed to contribute an article to this Guide! Please email Christine on [ahaughc@aol.com](mailto:ahaughc@aol.com) if you would like to contribute an article. Also feel free to email if you wish to get involved with the Guide in another way, such as helping to reformat or distribute it! All help is greatly appreciated!

**HAPPY HOLIDAYS FROM  
THE ASC GOOD PRACTICE  
GUIDE! WE WISH EVERYONE  
A VERY HEALTHY AND  
HAPPY NEW YEAR!**

## **NEWS**

### **CALL FOR INFORMATION ON LOCAL SUPPORT GROUPS: ASPERGER SYNDROME FOUNDATION**

In response to an ever-growing number of queries from persons wanting to access accurate and up to date information on local support groups throughout the UK, the Asperger Syndrome Foundation are kindly requesting that any persons who are aware of any local support groups might kindly forward details of these organisations to the Asperger Syndrome Foundation. These details can then be included on the Foundation's database and possibly even made available on the Foundation's website, so that details can be passed on to interested parents/carers/professionals/persons with AS.

Details can be forwarded either via email to [info@aspergerfoundation.org.uk](mailto:info@aspergerfoundation.org.uk), or via post to:

**Asperger Syndrome Foundation  
The Kensington Charity Centre  
4<sup>th</sup> Floor, Charles House  
375 Kensington High Street  
London W14 8QH**

*The ASC Good Practice Guide* warmly thanks Asperger Syndrome Foundation's Founder, Beatrice Buisseret, for undertaking this extremely important task.

### **THOUGHTS ON PARADIGM'S "NO REASON TO LEAVE US OUT" POLICY CONFERENCE, BY CHRIS MITCHELL**

Paradigm's excellent "NO REASON TO LEAVE US OUT" Policy Conference was held in London on 21<sup>st</sup> November. More information on the issues raised in the Conference will be included in the January 2007 Edition of the Guide, but for the moment, Chris Mitchell writes some of his thoughts on the event:

"Charlie Daniels once sung, 'All we need is a little less talk and a little more action'. This and other positive messages were broadcast at the Paradigm conference on including people with autism.

As a person diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome myself, I share the views expressed by Paradigm's speakers, in particular Genevieve Edmonds, that people on the autistic spectrum need to be included more by failing services. Personally, what I feel is of particular importance so that people on the autistic spectrum, from the very severe to the more able, is that services are not only person-centred, but also offer flexibility in terms of choice of lifestyle. It is a grim reality that many adults with autism in the UK still have little choice over where they can study, work and indeed live. It is a credit to Genevieve, through her work, that she is determined not to let this continue.

There were some eye-opening examples of good practice on display, which will have shown conference attendees the positive capabilities that many people on the autistic spectrum have, including being able to find a job, become valuable employees, manage a flat, cook, and generally lead independent and dignified lives without interference. Lucy Skuce's wonderfully heart-warming presentation in particular showed what can be achieved with a little support.

However, the conference also highlighted that autism, in particular Asperger's Syndrome, is still poorly understood within many front-line services. In many cases, local authorities are still unable to provide support to people with Asperger's Syndrome as the condition remains unheard of where it matters. Though there are some examples of good practice in existence in some parts of the country, it shouldn't be dependent on postcode lotteries or the limitations of tick-box procedures in terms of who has access to it.

What many people on the autistic spectrum generally want, including myself, is not a nanny state, but a little informal support to help us move forward. Hopefully, the work of Paradigm and other awareness raising of autism elsewhere can enable this.

*The ASC Good Practice Guide* would like to thank Genevieve Edmonds and Judith North for inviting us (Chris Mitchell and Christine Haugh) to attend Paradigm. And Genevieve, if I had any influence, I would nominate you for a Nobel Prize!"

### **FINANCIAL SUPPORT (ALPHABETIC LISTING OF SUPPORT AVAILABLE)**

*The ASC Good Practice Guide* offers this short alphabetic listing of the primary types of financial/related support we are aware of, as a Holiday present to our readers. If even one reader is helped by this information, providing it will have been worthwhile!

Please note three things:

1. This list is not exhaustive- it merely reflects the financial support that *The ASC Good Practice Guide* is aware of. We welcome information from readers on any other types of support not included in this listing.
2. This list has been carefully checked against [www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk) to confirm accuracy. However, *The ASC Good Practice Guide* must advise that whilst every effort to confirm accuracy has been made prior to publication of this month's Guide, nevertheless details are subject to change and the Guide can take no responsibility for this. With each type of support listed there is a number to call, website to check, or agency such as Jobcentre Plus to contact for further information, where details can be confirmed.
3. We hope this list brightens up readers' holidays!

### **ACCESS TO WORK**

Access to Work can provide assistance if you have a disability and are either about to start work (including self-employment) or already have started work.

Access to Work can assist in a number of ways, including paying for a support worker, if you need support either getting to work or whilst you are at work. Whatever your employment status is, Access to Work can pay for up to 100% of the approved costs.

For further information on Access to Work, please contact the Disability Employment Adviser (DEA) of your local Jobcentre Plus office, or visit <http://www.direct.gov.uk>

### **ATTENDANCE ALLOWANCE**

Attendance Allowance (AA) is a tax-free benefit for people aged 65 or over, who need help with personal care because they are physically or mentally disabled.

AA is not usually affected by any savings or income you may have. Normally paid directly into your bank/building society account, there are two rates of AA:

High Rate: £62.25/week

Low Rate: £41.65/week

If you begin to receive AA, it might increase the amount of credits or other benefits you are entitled to. You may receive an extra amount for severe disability with Pension Credit, Housing Benefit, or Council Tax Benefit. AA is normally ignored as income for working out these income-related benefits and credit.

AA can either be claimed online, or by calling the Benefit Enquiry Line on (0800)882-200. The Line is open 8:30am-6:30pm Monday to Friday and 9am-1pm on Saturdays. The Line can also offer advice.

For further information or to claim online, please visit:

<http://www.direct.gov.uk/DisabledPeople/FinancialSupport>

### **THE BLUE BADGE PARKING SCHEME**

This UK-wide scheme provides an array of parking benefits for disabled people who travel either as drivers or as passengers. The Badges can be used in the UK, throughout the European Union, and in some other European countries.

For further information on Blue Badges, contact the local Council's Social Services Department- local authorities are responsible for issuing Blue Badge permits.

### **CARER'S ALLOWANCE**

You are eligible for Carer's Allowance if you are aged 16 and over and care for someone who receives the Middle or High Rate Personal Care Component of the Disabled Living Allowance (DLA). However, this only applies if you are not in full-time education (with 21 hours or more supervision/week) and, for anyone who also works, if you do not earn more than £84/week after certain deductions (such as Income Tax) have been made.

The weekly rate of Carer's Allowance is currently £46.95, typically paid into your bank account on a monthly basis. This figure is reduced by the amount of certain other benefits you might be in receipt of.

Claiming may affect other benefits, allowances, pensions and entitlements that you, or the person you care for, receive. You can only claim Carer's Allowance for one person, regardless of whether you care for more than one person.

The claim for Carer's Allowance can be made over the telephone, by contacting the Carer's Allowance Unit or your local benefits office, or by downloading the application form available on [www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk)

The contact details for the Carer's Allowance Unit are as follows:

Carer's Allowance Unit, Palatine House, Lancaster Road, Preston, PR1 1HB  
(01253)856-123, 9am to 5pm Monday-Thursday, 9am to 4pm Friday  
Email: [cau.customer-services@dwp.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:cau.customer-services@dwp.gsi.gov.uk)

### **COMMUNITY CARE GRANTS**

If you care for a disabled person, you receive Income Support, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance or Pension Credit, and you require financial help to "ease exceptional pressure on your family", then you may be eligible for a Community Care Grant.

The amount of this Grant varies according to individual circumstances, and it may be reduced if the applicant has £500 savings or above. Typically paid directly a bank account, it does not count as "income" and will not affect any other benefits you are receiving.

There are a number of restrictions on what type of expenses the Grant can help with- for instance, it cannot be used to pay for things such as education, training, or work-related expenses.

For further information, please contact the local Jobcentre Plus or Social Security office. They can advise on possible eligibility for the Grant and also send an application form. Alternatively, download an application form from the website of the Department of Work and Pensions:

[http://www.dwp.gov.uk/advisers/claimforms/sf300\\_print.pdf](http://www.dwp.gov.uk/advisers/claimforms/sf300_print.pdf)

### **COUNCIL TAX BENEFIT- DISABLED BAND REDUCTION SCHEME**

Apart from the Council Tax Benefit generally available to persons who need financial help to pay their Council Tax bill, there is also a "Disabled Band Reduction Scheme". The purpose of this Scheme is to safeguard that disabled people do not pay more Council Tax because they have to live in a larger property than they would have required if they did not have a disability. Disabled persons do not automatically receive a reduction in Council Tax, however.

The disabled person in question can be either an adult or a child and does not have to be the person responsible for paying the Council Tax bill. Eligible applicants will be entitled to have their Council Tax reduced by one Band.

For further information or to apply for the Reduction, contact your local council.

### **DIRECT PAYMENTS**

Direct Payments are local council payments available for anyone who has been assessed as needing help from social services. Direct Payments can be used to purchase services from an organisation or employ someone to provide assistance.

As a carer, for instance, you can then use a direct payment to purchase the services you are assessed as needing to support you in your caring role. They are normally available if you are a carer aged 16.

From April 2003, every local council must offer people who need help to stay in their own home money to meet their own social care requirements, as an alternative to social services provision. These direct payments enable disabled persons/carers to choose how they organise the help required.

For persons already in receipt of social services provision, the local council is obliged to offer the option of direct payments, except in some limited circumstances.

To receive direct payments, the local council must first have assessed your needs. The amount of payment you are eligible to receive varies according to individual circumstances.

To receive further information about Direct Payments, contact your local Social Services Department and also read the Department of Health's "*A guide to receiving direct payments from your local council- A route to independent living*", which is available on the Department of Health website, on <http://www.dh.gov.uk/assetRoot/04/09/73/99/04097399.pdf>

### **DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT ADVISERS (DEAs)**

If, because of your disability, you require additional employment support, your local Jobcentre Plus office can provide you with the contact details of one of their Disability Employment Advisers (DEAs). The DEA can provide you with help and support, even if you are long-term unemployed or have little or no work experience.

### **DISABLED FACILITIES GRANTS**

Disabled Facilities Grants are local council grants to assist with the cost of adapting your home to enable you to continue to live in it. For the Council to agree to a grant, the council must agree that the changes are necessary to meet your needs and that the work is reasonable and practical. Any essential adaptations need to be recommended by an Occupational Therapist (who reviews the property on behalf of the council).

You do not have to be the owner of the property to claim- you can also be the tenant, and landlords can also apply on behalf of disabled tenants. You will need to certify that you/the

person you are applying on behalf of intend to occupy the property as your sole/main residence throughout the grant period- currently 5 years.

The amount paid is usually based on a financial assessment of your income in relation to your outgoings, however, this "means testing" does not apply for families of disabled children under 19. The maximum grant available is £25,000- less any assessed contribution from you. Disabled Facilities Grants will not affect any other benefits you may receive. Payments can be made directly to the building contractor.

To apply, you must complete the council's own application form, which can be obtained by contacting the council's housing or environmental offices. The application will be declined if work begins prior to application approval.

Within 6 months of applying, the council must inform you in writing of the result of your application.

### **DISABILITY LIVING ALLOWANCE (DLA)**

Disability Living Allowance (DLA) is a benefit which is tax-free. It is specifically for children or adults (even adults who work) who require support with personal care and/or getting around because they have a disability. DLA is not usually affected by personal savings or income.

There are two components to the DLA:

1. Personal Care Component- if you need help looking after yourself or supervision to keep you safe. This can be paid at Low (£16.50/week), Middle (£41.65/week), or High (£62.25/week) rate.
2. Mobility Component- if you need help getting around. This can be paid at either Low (£16.50/week) or High (£43.45/week) rate only.

The amount of other benefits or credits you are entitled to can increase if you receive DLA. To receive further information, please contact the Benefit Enquiry Line on (0800)882-200, from 8:30am-6:30pm Monday-Friday, and 9am-1pm Saturday. Alternatively, contact your local Jobcentre Plus or Social Security office, or the application form can be downloaded from [www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk)

### **THE DISABLED PERSON'S RAILCARD**

Purchase of this annual card allows the holder to purchase rail tickets at a discount of up to a third. If another adult is travelling with you, they can also travel at the same reduced fare.

Although children aged between 5-15 only need to pay the usual children's fares, if they have a Disabled Person's Railcard then the adult who travels with them can travel at the reduced fare. For further information, call the Disabled Person's Railcard Helpline on (0845)605-0525 or visit <http://www.disabledpersons-railcard.co.uk>

### **DISABLED STUDENTS ALLOWANCES (DSA)**

Disabled Student Allowances (DSAs) provide extra financial support for University students who have a disability. They are paid in addition to the standard student finance package and they do not have to be repaid.

DSAs are grants to help disabled students meet the extra costs of studying they face as a direct result of their disability. DSAs have three primary components: specialist equipment (such as software); non-medical helper (such as a note-taker or other support worker); general costs (such as cartridges, coloured papers, etc.) There are maximum levels of award but the amount and specifics of each DSA awarded will differ according to the individual requirements of the person it has been awarded to.

For more information on the DSA, contact your local authority and also please refer to "*Bridging the Gap- a Guide to the Disabled Student's Allowances (DSAs) in Higher Education*", which is available from [www.dfes.gov.uk/studentssupport](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/studentssupport)

### **THE FAMILY FUND**

The Family Fund is a registered charity covering the entire UK, funded by the national governments of England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. Open to families with seriously ill or disabled children aged 15 and under, the Family Fund can provide families advice, support and even grants. Grant applicants will be considered from families whose gross earned incomes is under £23,000 (£25,000 in Wales) and with savings below £18,000. For further information on everything the Fund does, please contact:

The Family Fund, Unit 4, Alpha Court, Monks Cross Drive, Huntington, York, YO32 9WN  
(0845)130-4542

<http://www.familyfund.org.uk>

Requests for Grant application forms can be emailed directly to  
[applications@familyfund.org.uk](mailto:applications@familyfund.org.uk)

### **HOUSING BENEFIT**

Housing Benefit may be available if you pay rent and your income and capital (savings and investments) are below a certain level. The maximum level of Housing Benefit awarded is 100% rent costs. Housing Benefit will not affect any other benefits you receive. Eligibility for Housing Benefit can be discussed with your local council.

### **INCAPACITY BENEFIT**

This is a weekly payment for persons under State Pension age who cannot work due to either illness or disability. There are three rates at which persons can be paid, currently varying between £59.20 and £78.50 per week.

A Personal Capacity Assessment- which may include a medical examination- is typically a pre-requisite for receipt of Incapacity Benefit. For further details or to claim, please contact the local Jobcentre Plus office.

### **INCOME SUPPORT**

If you are aged 16-60 and on a low income, not working or working under 16 hours per week, you may be eligible to claim Income Support. Disabled students and adults can apply.

If you are also entitled to Carer's Allowance, you may also receive a "Carer Premium" (an extra amount added to your Income Support). The amount of IS each person can receive varies according to individual circumstances, and can be paid directly into a bank account. Persons entitled to IS automatically qualify for free dental care, free prescriptions, free school meals, Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit.

To enquire if you are eligible, contact either your local benefits office, Jobcentre Plus office, or Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB).

### **INDEPENDENT LIVING FUND (ILF)**

The purpose of the Independent Living Fund (ILF) is to help enable disabled persons to live independently at home rather than in residential care. Payments from the ILF can be used to employ a care agency or personal assistant(s) to provide personal and domestic care at home.

Persons are eligible for the ILF if they:

\*are over 16 and under 66

\*are already in receipt of social services support to the value of at least £200/week (this includes any direct payments and cost of any services such as day-centre placements provided by your local authority)

\*receive or are entitled to receive the High Rate Personal Care Component of the Disabled Living Allowance

\*live either alone or with people who are not able to fully meet their care needs

\*want to live independently but are either at risk of or already have had to move into residential care

\*are capable of living in the community for at least 6 months

\*have savings below £18,500

The maximum ILF payment is £455/week. The amount each person receives varies according to the cost of care they require, on a weekly or hourly basis. The amount of ILF a person receives is also affected by the person's savings (capital), income, and certain other benefits and expenses. The ILF financial assessment takes into account half of the person's Disabled Living Allowance and all of any Severe Disability Premium. However, ILF payments will not affect other benefits.

ILF application forms can be posted upon request from the Social Services Department of your local authority, or from the ILF website: <http://www.ilf.org.uk>

### **JOB INTRODUCTION SCHEME- GRANTS FOR EMPLOYERS**

The Job Introduction Scheme (JIS) is available through Jobcentre Plus. It can help if you are looking for work or about to start a job and have a disability which may affect the kind of work you do. To qualify for JIS support, your job can be either full or part timer but needs to be expected to last for at least 6 months. There are further restrictions on the scheme- for instance, it cannot be used for jobs in government agencies or departments, or for WORKSTEP or New Deal jobs where the employer already receives funding from Jobcentre Plus.

For the first 6 weeks of your employment, the JIS will pay a weekly grant to your employer, to help towards either your wages or towards other costs, such as training.

To obtain more information on the JIS, please contact the Disability Employment Adviser (DEA) at your local Jobcentre Plus.

### **LONDON CONGESTION CHARGE EXEMPTION**

Blue Badge holders who register for exemption from the London Congestion Charge qualify for a 100% exemption. Registration is through Transport for London (TfL), who can be contacted on (0845)900-1234.

### **THE MOTABILITY SCHEME**

Motability is a not-for-profit, independent organisation, which allows disabled people to lease or own a car at an affordable price. If you/the person you care for receives the High Rate of the Getting Around Component of the Disabled Living Allowance (DLA), you/that person is eligible for the Motability scheme, so long as the person you care for is aged at least 3 years old. For further information on the scheme, please visit the Motability website:

<http://www.motability.co.uk> or call Motability on (0845)456-4566.

### **NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR BIKERS WITH A DISABILITY (NABD)**

NABD provides learner machines and grants and also helps obtain discounted insurance for disabled persons who want to learn how to ride motorcycles. For further information, please contact NABD on (0870)759-0603, email [nabd@nabd.org.uk](mailto:nabd@nabd.org.uk) or visit the NABD website:

<http://www.nabd.org.uk>

### **NEW DEAL FOR DISABLED PEOPLE (NDDP)**

The New Deal for Disabled People (NDDP) is a voluntary scheme providing advice and practical support to help disabled people make the transition from benefits into paid employment.

“Job Brokers” deliver the programme. If you join the programme, you will be registered with one Job Broker. They will discuss your situation and employment aspirations, and help you determine the best route into employment to match your aspirations. They can assist with searching for jobs, writing CVs, applying for jobs, preparing for interviews, identifying training needs, supporting you in your first six months in the new workplace and arranging any extra support you might require in the workplace. Individuals can only register with one Job Broker at a time.

For further information, please contact the NDDP Helpline on (0800)137-177 9am-5:30pm Monday to Friday, or visit [www.newdeal.gov.uk/nddp](http://www.newdeal.gov.uk/nddp) or [www.jobbrokersearch.co.uk](http://www.jobbrokersearch.co.uk)

### **QUEEN ELIZABETH'S FOUNDATION MOBILITY CENTRE**

QEFMC provides a helpline, training, assessment and tuition for disabled people who want to learn how to drive motorbikes. For further information, contact QEFMC on (01372)841-100, email on [webmaster@qefd.org](mailto:webmaster@qefd.org) or visit their website, <http://www.qefd.org>

### **RESIDENTIAL TRAINING FOR DISABLED ADULTS**

This programme assists disabled persons aged 18-63, who have been unemployed on a long-term basis to find and maintain jobs or self-employment.

This training is provided when there is no suitable local alternative training provision. Training takes place in a residential setting, with individually-tailored programmes and staff expert in disability issues. Over 50 courses are available, many leading to NVQs. The training can take place in any one of 11 specialist course providers located throughout England.

The duration of courses varies according to individual needs but never exceeds 52 weeks.

Persons receive an allowance during the training, with expenses of the residential paid for by

the Residential Training Unit. For further information or to apply, please contact the Disability Employment Adviser at your local Jobcentre Plus office. Alternatively, contact the Residential Training Unit, on (0191)202-3579 or [rtu@gone.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:rtu@gone.gsi.gov.uk)

### **VEHICLE EXCISE DUTY (CAR TAX) EXEMPTION**

Disabled people who are in receipt of the Highest Rate Care Component of the Disability Living Allowance (DLA) do not have to pay vehicle excise duty (car tax) for a tax disc. If you care for a disabled person who does not drive, they can nominate you to drive the car for them instead and then you will not have to pay car tax on the car you drive the person in. To receive this exemption, an exemption certificate is required. This can be obtained by contacting the DLA Helpline Monday-Friday, 7:30am-6:30pm on (0845)712-3456. This exemption certificate is then used to apply for a free tax disc, either directly from the car dealership, if you are purchasing a new vehicle, or from the Post Office, if you are seeking exemption from a vehicle you already possess a registration certificate for. Claiming this exemption will not affect any other benefits you are receiving. For further information, please see <http://www.direct.gov.uk>

### **VAT RELIEF ON PRODUCTS AND SERVICES FOR DISABLED PERSONS**

Disabled persons do not have to pay VAT (the UK standard rate is 17.5%) when they purchase equipment that has been designed specifically for disabled persons, such as specialist disability computer software or hardware. VAT also does not have to be paid by disabled persons for certain services provided, such as the servicing, maintenance and installation of disability equipment.

Before you pay for any "disability" product or service, check if it qualifies for zero-rating (meaning you will not have to pay VAT), and that the supplier is registered for VAT. When you buy the product or service, it may be necessary for you to complete a form (the supplier should be able to provide you with one) declaring that you have a disability and specifying the nature of the disability. You can then buy the product or service without having to pay VAT. To find out more about VAT exemption, please contact HM Revenue and Customs. The website is <http://customs.hmrc.gov.uk> and the National Advice Service number is (0845)010-9000.

### **WORKSTEP**

WORKSTEP can help persons who find it hard to find or maintain paid employment due to their disability. WORKSTEP provides support to disabled persons facing complex barriers to employment and also offers practical support to employers. For those persons starting a new job, WORKSTEP will introduce you to staff, maintain contact as you settle in to work, assist with teething problems and ensure that you receive any necessary training and support. Please contact your local Jobcentre Plus office to find out more information on WORKSTEP.

### **CONFERENCES, LECTURES, SEMINARS AND SESSIONS**

#### **ACTION FOR ASD- SOCIAL STORIES WORKSHOP**

Action for ASD has arranged a workshop produced by Carol Gray's Social Stories Team and presented by Team member Eileen Arnold.

An all-day event, the Workshop consists of lectures, discussions, and practice in writing social stories.

**WHERE: NorthBridge House, Elm Street Business Park, Burnley, Lancashire, BB10 1PD**

**WHEN: Wednesday 31<sup>st</sup> January 2007, 9:30am-4:30pm (tbc, registration from 9am)**

**COST: Parent Members-£40/Parent Non-Members-£50/Professional Members-£90/Professional Non-Members-£100/Members with ASD-£40/Non-Members with ASD-£50**

Payment is by invoice, BACS, or cheque made payable to "Action for A.S.D." (please send cheques to the NorthBridge House address listed above)

For further information, please contact Action for ASD by calling (01282)714-218, emailing [info@actionasd.org.uk](mailto:info@actionasd.org.uk) or visiting the website [www.actionasd.org.uk](http://www.actionasd.org.uk)

*The ASC Good Practice Guide* warmly thanks Action for ASD's Gemma Sampford and Hanna Ingleby for contributing this information.

**THE ASPERGER SYNDROME FOUNDATION SEMINAR SERIES PRESENTS  
PRACTICAL STRATEGIES FOR DIFFICULT MOMENTS: "STRATEGIES IN THE  
CLASSROOM FOR CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS WITH ASPERGER'S SYNDROME"**

**Dr Lindsay Peer CBE and Michael Gordon**  
**"Strategies in the Classroom for Children and Adolescents with Asperger's Syndrome"**

Dr Lindsay Peer who specialises in special needs education will offer practical strategies that work with children and adolescents with Asperger's Syndrome at school. Michael Gordon is a former solicitor who is well versed in the UK legal framework, particularly in the field of disability rights. He will share information on the protection offered to young people according to the updated Disability Discrimination Act.

**AIMED AT:** Professionals in Education, Parents and Carers

**DATE:** Monday 29<sup>th</sup> January 2007, 10am-3:30pm, registration from 9:30am

**VENUE:** RIBA LONDON, 66 Portland Place, London W1B 1AD

**SPEAKERS:** Lindsay Peer CBE, Chartered Psychologist. She is a Fellow of both the International Academy of Research in Learning Disabilities and the Royal Society of Arts.

Michael Gordon, formerly a solicitor in private practice with over 30 years' experience who is well versed in the UK legal framework, particularly in the field of disability rights. He has a keen interest in the rights of people with disabilities, coupled with an understanding of the challenges businesses and service providers face in today's world of inclusion.

**COST: £25 professionals, £15 parent/carers, free for individuals with Asperger Syndrome** (please make cheques payable to the "Asperger Syndrome Foundation")  
Sandwich lunches and refreshments are included in the cost.

Please email [seminars@aspergerfoundation.org.uk](mailto:seminars@aspergerfoundation.org.uk) OR download a booking form from the Asperger Syndrome Foundation website [www.aspergerfoundation.org.uk](http://www.aspergerfoundation.org.uk) . This form needs to be returned to the Asperger Syndrome Foundation along with cheque payment, to reserve a place at the Seminar. The Foundation's address is:

Asperger Syndrome Foundation  
The Kensington Charity Centre  
4<sup>th</sup> Floor, Charles House  
375 Kensington High Street  
London W14 8QH

*The ASC Good Practice Guide* warmly thanks Asperger Syndrome Foundation's Founder, Beatrice Buisseret, for contributing this information.

**WENDY LAWSON- UK BOOKINGS IN 2007**

*The ASC Good Practice Guide* warmly thanks Wendy Lawson for sharing her 2007 tour dates with our readers. Wendy's range of presentations and audiences- from a talk with parents to training for County Council staff- is amazing! The list below does not include Wendy's Singapore, Australian, or other international tour dates, although details are available upon request.

## UK Spring

- Feb 26 (Redcar-Cleveland) [Elizabeth.Foster@redcar-cleveland.gov.uk](mailto:Elizabeth.Foster@redcar-cleveland.gov.uk) 2 talks (repeated sessions) 1-3pm & 4.30-6.30pm.
- February 28th, (Birmingham) All day School Staff training, Contact: [steve.tuft@pines.bham.sch.uk](mailto:steve.tuft@pines.bham.sch.uk)
- March 5 (Ramsgate) Evening talk to parents' support group, SPOT: Supporting People On The Spectrum. Contact: [b.decomarmond@onetel.net](mailto:b.decomarmond@onetel.net)
- March 6th (Gravesend Kent) Evening talk for schools. Contact: [elee@ifield.kent.sch.uk](mailto:elee@ifield.kent.sch.uk)
- March 21st (North Tyneside). Conference. Contact: Patricia Ramshaw [trishramshaw@hotmail.com](mailto:trishramshaw@hotmail.com) A Keynote address & 1 workshop Newcastle united football stadium
- March 23-25 (Birmingham) University of Birmingham Residential weekend
- April 17 (Shillingstone, Dorset) All day training & 18<sup>th</sup>. (2hr. public morning session) [Gay.Waters@cambiagroup.com](mailto:Gay.Waters@cambiagroup.com) Forum school.
- April 18 (Portsmouth) Autism Support Group talk, in the evening. Contact: [jenn4@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:jenn4@yahoo.co.uk)
- April 19-21 (Wales) Two half day seminars on 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> April

19<sup>th</sup> April (Cardiff) – subject 'Understanding and working with ASD – take a walk in our shoes' (11am – 2pm)

20<sup>th</sup> April (Wrexham) – subject 'Life and Learning with Autism and Aspergers' (11am – 2pm) Contact: [jennie@autismcymru.org](mailto:jennie@autismcymru.org)

- April 23rd (Nottingham) Training for Notts County Council staff. Contact: Susie Holt [sen.training@education.nottscc.gov.uk](mailto:sen.training@education.nottscc.gov.uk)
- April 24th (Cheadle) Workshop at the Together Trust Centre. Contact: Joanne Halliwell [inca@togethertrust.org](mailto:inca@togethertrust.org)
- April 25 leave UK for Singapore
- April 27-28 Singapore talks

## Autumn

- October 15th (Cornwall) Contact: Judy Shoten [jshorten@cornwall.gov.uk](mailto:jshorten@cornwall.gov.uk)
- October 19 (Middlesbrough) Anna Wood [themainproject@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:themainproject@hotmail.co.uk)

## **READER FEATURE: POETRY BY TARA KIMBERELY TORME**

Tara Kimberley Torme was diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome in 2001 when 23 years old. Based in Vancouver, Canada, Tara majored in English Literature at the University of British Columbia, and has written over 100 poems to date, including this one about Asperger's Syndrome that she would like to offer readers of the ASC Guide as a Christmas present. Often feeling she has nowhere to turn to as a person with Asperger's Syndrome, she sees poetry as a great way to express her thoughts. As well as writing poetry, Tara speaks publicly about her experiences of Asperger's Syndrome and runs a social and support group in Vancouver for people diagnosed with the condition. Her personal website can be visited at <http://www.tarakimberleytorme.com>

### **Asperger Poem**

**By: Tara Kimberley Torme**

(written Thursday February 24<sup>th</sup> 2002)

It seems that other people don't care  
That Aspergers is everywhere

People who just don't seem to fit in  
And are told they belong in a trash bin

My brain works differently from yours  
We both take different-separate doors

Sounds are much louder for me-  
Mere baby crying is not ecstasy!

Textures & tastes wreck havoc with my system  
What you tolerate-is torture in addition

Making friends is a pure mystery for me  
It's like figuring out the birds & the bees

Aspergers takes over my life-  
I've been cut into two with a knife

Sometimes I'm good and know how to behave  
And then my other half takes over-with a wave

Sometimes I'm quite and calm as a squire  
Other times I'll rage out like and out of control fire

Insignificant actions, gestures and words  
Will make me angrier than a flock of wild birds

Aspergers-I sometimes wonder-why me?  
Yes this is the best way to be.

**December 2006**  
**End of Tenth Edition**