

THE ASC GOOD PRACTICE GUIDE

St. Nicholas Academy for Autism Trust
Charity Registration Number 1104306
Edition No. 15
May 2007

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WELCOME TO THE ASC GOOD PRACTICE GUIDE

Welcome to the March 2007 Edition 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. She is very honoured to have this year been formally appointed a Trustee of the Asperger Syndrome Foundation.

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, or contact him at ChrisMitchell@mitchell17.wanadoo.co.uk

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.

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.

How can you subscribe to the Guide? To receive the free monthly Guide, simply email 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 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!

FEATURE ARTICLE:

"IS AUTISM A DISORDER?" BY LUKE BEARDON, SENIOR LECTURER IN AUTISM, THE AUTISM CENTRE, SHEFFIELD HALLAM UNIVERSITY

The ASC Good Practice Guide warmly thanks Luke Beardon for the following article:

Is Autism a Disorder?

In 1978 Lorna Wing and Judy Gould undertook the Camberwell study; following this, their paper published a year later the so called 'Triad of Impairments' was introduced, and has since been the 'backbone' of diagnostic criteria for autism. Their work at the time was cutting edge and seminal, influencing the way in which professionals understood the world of autism. Here we are, 28 years later, and I for one still come across the term 'Triad of Impairments' on almost a daily basis. However, nearly thirty years is a long time, and while Wing and Gould will forever be positively associated with research in the field of autism (and rightly so) surely it is time to reconsider our use of terminology that could potentially damage the very population we are supposedly trying to support?

Firstly, is autism really a disorder? For all of the arguments to say that it is, I would strongly suggest that there are counter arguments against. We are told that people with autism lack a Theory of Mind, Executive Functioning, have poor central coherence, have developmental delays in communication and social understanding. In my experience I would not contest that this causes difficulties for the individual and family. But, having said that, what about the counter-side to this: the honesty, the straight talking, the saying what they think as opposed to making things up, the very genuine nature found in so many individuals with autism? What about all of the extraordinary qualities rife within the population, the attention to detail, perfectionism, drive, and focus? I would say that the only reason we use the term disorder is because there are more NT (neurotypical) people than there are people with autism. What we should be talking about is difference, not disorder; we should be recognising that just because a person with autism develops differently it is not automatically a negative state (i.e. 'disorder') but a difference that needs acknowledgement. I would not suggest for one minute that people with autism and their families and friends do not have daily struggles; what I would suggest is rather than those struggles being placed firmly at the door of the person with autism, we should be looking elsewhere - at the rest of the NT population who, with the right guidance, attitude, willingness, and acceptance can change *their* way of thinking and behaving better to suit those with autism.

Secondly, are we right to say that people with autism are impaired? I would argue not. Where do the vast majority of problems for people with autism come from? Other people, usually NTs. Our lack of understanding autism directly causes huge amounts of anxiety, confusion, stress and distress to people with autism. Perhaps we should be saying that NTs are impaired in their understanding of autism, rather than people with autism are inherently impaired - that, certainly to my mind, would be far more accurate a reflection on reality. For example, to say that an individual with autism is impaired in their communication would suggest that the problem lies with that individual, as if something is wrong with them that requires fixing. Now consider the child who complies with what he is told (to the letter) and is subsequently admonished for doing just that. One might say that is a result of literal interpretation of language - part of the so called 'impairment in communication'. But where is the celebration of honesty for that individual? Where are the cries of anguish over the NTs illogical and highly disturbing propensity to say things that are not accurate, precise, or even true? Surely we should be decrying the NT population as a bunch of liars who can not use verbal language accurately, rather than placing the blame firmly on the head of the person with autism. Rather than insinuating that the problems lie with the individual, look at the problems *created* by the NT population. If I can not communicate effectively with a non verbal child, who am I to say that the impairment is with the child? Surely I am equally impaired! It is my impairment just as much as any problems associated with autism that causes those every day problems for the individual and their families.

I am utterly convinced that one of the best ways of supporting an individual with autism is to change behaviour - not of the person with autism but the behaviour of those around them. If the world was more organised, better structured, if people actually said what they meant, then surely this would better suit the individual with autism? If we actually listened to people with autism and responded accordingly we could go a long way towards meeting need. Perhaps most importantly, if we developed a better understanding - by refusing to see things always through an NT perspective, by broadening our minds to see things from the perspective of the individual - then we will realise that it is changes in ourselves and society in general that would be most beneficial to those with autism, rather than always placing an onerous expectation on the individual with autism to change.

People with autism are not disordered (the irony with the term being that so many people with autism are highly ordered in their thinking), nor should we automatically dismiss developmental differences as impairments. Certainly the neurological complexities can be baffling to the NT - as, equally, the NT world is baffling to the individual with autism. This does not make either or both populations disordered - simply, different. In order to support individuals with autism we must accept that differences do occur, but at the same time recognise and accept that difference is not synonymous with disorder.

One day, with luck (and a lot of help from those with autism) we will see beyond our own, very narrow, view, and celebrate autism, rather than separating the population by negative terms such as disorder and impairment. Until then we should be taking a long hard look at ourselves, society, and our values.

(2007) By Luke Beardon, Senior Lecturer in Autism, The Autism Centre, Sheffield Hallam University, www.shu.ac.uk/theautismcentre

CHILDREN'S SERVICES **CAMHS- AN INTRODUCTION**

In response to numerous queries from subscribers regarding what CAMHS is and how it operates, *The ASC Good Practice Guide* this month has provided the following brief "Introduction to CAMHS". We hope that readers find it useful, and welcome any information from CAMHS practitioners regarding good ASC practice taking place in their local area.

CAMHS stands for **C**hild and **A**dolescent **M**ental **H**ealth **S**ervices. CAMHS provides a range of multi-disciplinary health services, including assessment, treatment, and support, for children and adolescents affected by mental health problems and disorders. Because the relevant services are provided by so many agencies, CAMHS is commissioned on a multi-agency basis.

Services are delivered in line with a 4-tier system. It is important to note that many children will only require services placed in the first two tiers of this system. However, certain children with the most "severe and complex" requirements will require and can receive services from all tiers, simultaneously.

As a *general* guide, CAMHS' "Tier System" operates as follows:

Tier 1: on this tier, CAMHS services are provided by “universal” practitioners rather than mental health specialists. “Universal” practitioners can include Health Visitors, GPs, teachers and social workers.

Tier 2: (based upon a referral from a “Universal Practitioner”) on this tier, the child or adolescent can be offered further support, from CAMHS specialists working in primary and community care settings. Consultation, outreach and assessment may be offered, depending upon individual needs. Tier 2 practitioners may include mental health workers, counsellors and psychologists working in GP practices.

Tier 3: Children or adolescents accessing this Tier typically have more “complex and severe” conditions, requiring access to a multi-disciplinary team or service. Tier 3 practitioners may include specialist psychiatrists, psychologists, and social workers.

Tier 4: consists of essential services such as day units and in-patient units, for those children and adolescents with the most serious level of immediate need.

For further general information on CAMHS, an excellent source of information is the “Every Child Matters” website, found by visiting www.everychildmatters.gov.uk

SOCIAL GROUP FOR GIRLS (NO AGE RESTRICTIONS) WITH AS/HFA

The Asperger Syndrome Foundation is delighted to be affiliated with the following group:

Parent Lesley Zorlakki has initiated the formation of a social group, specifically for girls (no age restrictions) who have Asperger Syndrome or High-Functioning Autism.

The reason for establishing the group is to allow girls with AS/HFA the opportunity to meet up, and engage in specialist social activities that revolve around their own interests. Often, because there are far fewer girls than boys diagnosed with AS/HFA, activities offered to children with AS/HFA are in effect much more geared to male than female interests.

This group would focus on meeting girls’ needs, and also will provide a fantastic opportunity for parents/carers of girls with AS/HFA to themselves meet up.

The group is *as yet* unnamed, because the girls themselves will be able to choose a name for the group, at its first meeting.

Lesley Zorlakki has very kindly written this information, for any persons potentially interested in becoming involved with the group or referring families to the group:

“Attending a seminar organised by the Asperger Syndrome Foundation placed me into an environment where I could find out if there were parents like me who wanted to introduce their Aspie/high functioning girls to each other.

A couple of years ago I tried to set up a Hertfordshire group - with little response - I thought of the name **MERMAIDS** because that is how I have always described my daughter, Luisa - *sometimes she wants to walk among the people and socialise, other times she wants to be in her own world.*

The new group would give us all the opportunity to meet up centrally (London) at a park/picnic, recommended cafe/restaurant, art/craft centre, someone’s garden or The Thames Valley Adventure Playground in Taplow, Maidenhead, Berks (see www.tvap.net).

After the first get-together, I think the future of the group should be led by what our girls want eg, meet on their own (with parent/carers), organised day out to seaside/cinema etc, aft/craft workshops, email/msn group, small group friendships etc

A proposed venue for the first social is ART4FUN based in West Hampstead, West End Lane, NW6 (see www.art4fun.com). Here we have an environment where the girls can create something or just chill out and have some refreshments. I am currently talking with the Proprietor re reduction of costs etc and would like to organise our first event on an August weekday. If there are enough of us we can take over the place for a morning or afternoon (*NB it is best that the girls do not choose a ceramic to paint as the item has to be collected 5 days later – there are lots of other exciting items to chose and take away the same day!*).

If you are interested in helping me make this group come alive, please do not hesitate to contact me.”

Any parents of girls with AS/HFA or professionals working with families who have daughters with AS/HFA are asked to contact **Lesley Zorlakki directly on 0771 448 3485 or zorlakki@onetel.net** for further information. Queries are welcome from parents and professionals regardless of which county they reside in, but please be aware that the group will be almost certainly meeting up in the Hertfordshire/London/Home Counties area.

ADULT SERVICES **ASPERGER TECHNICAL (EMPLOYMENT)**

The ASC Good Practice Guide warmly thanks Riaz Sobrany MEng, for contributing the following information:

“A few months ago I co-founded an organisation called Asperger Technical to help highly skilled people such as scientists, engineers, and software developers, with Asperger syndrome and high functioning autism find suitable careers either in industry or government departments.”

Further information on Asperger Technical and a Discussion Forum can be found by visiting: <http://www.aspergertechnical.org.uk> According to this information, another service Asperger Technical offer is information and advice about Asperger Syndrome to employers and interviewers, in order to promote awareness and understanding of the condition in the workplace.

Asperger Technical are currently seeking partner organisations, either in the high technology industry or the public sector, which offer careers in science, engineering or computing/IT, that are interested in employing people with Asperger Syndrome and high functioning autism. To contact Asperger Technical, please email info@aspergertechnical.org.uk

THE AUTUNIVERSITY LIST (EDUCATION- FOR STUDENTS AT OR CONTEMPLATING STUDY AT A UNIVERSITY)

The ASC Good Practice Guide warmly thanks Larry Arnold, who has very kindly written the following information about the new list:

“The Autuniversity list, is a new support list for students either at, or contemplating study at a University, to share experiences and strategies for successfully coping with the academic and social demands of studying at a higher level who have been diagnosed with or strongly suspect they have an autistic spectrum condition

The list is not exclusively for current students; ex students, would be students and anyone who has a sufficient contribution to make which will be useful to students on the autistic spectrum is welcome to join.

The main website for the list is <http://www.neurodiversity.eu> and the link to join the list is <http://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/cgi-bin/webadmin?SUBED1=autuniversity&A=1>, but don't worry the link can be reached from the main page.

To ensure that the list is a safe a non-abusive space, all new applicants will receive a request for them to briefly explain why they wish to be on the list before membership is confirmed.

The list is owned by Larry Arnold, and co moderated by Phil Schwarz.”

HFA/AS STEERING GROUP- BUCKINGHAMSHIRE AND OXFORDSHIRE

The ASC Good Practice Guide warmly thank Kathy and Anne for proving us this information, via the Asperger Syndrome Foundation:

We are Kathy and Anne, mothers of sons with high functioning autism and Asperger Syndrome. We have been invited, as carers, to be a part of a steering group which is trying to identify the needs of teens and adults with HFA/AS in Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire. Once those needs have been identified, the aim is to try to develop appropriate services.

Last September, a conference was hosted by Julie Waldron, Chief Executive of Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust, to raise awareness amongst professionals about the unmet needs of people with HFA/AS. Following this, the steering group we are on was formed and a user/carer reference group has been set up. The purpose of the user/carer reference group, which has met twice so far, is to feed information about the services needed into the steering group. The steering group has members who are able to make decisions about how money is spent and what services should be provided.

We need more people for the user/reference group so that the information we give to the steering group is representative of what is needed. We are particularly keen for people with HFA/AS to give their ideas and opinions. You would be warmly welcomed at our meetings, but we recognise that many of you might prefer to take part by email, so we would like to set up an email reference group. We would really like you to take part as we believe that your experiences and needs should help shape the development of services.

The email group will receive information and feedback about how the steering group work is progressing, and in turn will keep the steering group on track. Questions may be sent out from time to time to get your views on various ideas.

Things are not going to change overnight, but we need to make a start and at last we have an opportunity now to say what is needed.

If you would like to be a part of this exciting initiative, or have any questions, please email:

Kathy on kathyerangey@madasafish (Oxfordshire) or
Anne on anne_henderson@ntlworld.com (Buckinghamshire)

NATIONAL AUTISTIC SOCIETY SOCIAL GROUPS (NORTH)

The National Autistic Society has active Social Groups running in Sunderland, Scarborough and East Lancashire, with outings scheduled on almost every month. For information on joining any of these Social Groups, please contact Linda Kenny, Social Programmes Manager (North), National Autistic Society, on (0191)226-3610.

The ASC Good Practice Guide warmly thanks Linda Kennedy for this information.

SOCIAL GROUPS FOR ADULTS (WALES)

The ASC Good Practice Guide warmly thanks Steve Smith, NAS Social Programme Manager Wales, for contributing the following information:

“I’m the NAS Social Programmes Manager for Wales, and we have 5 Social Groups for Adults with Asperger Syndrome, which meet monthly in:
Wrexham, Bangor, Cardiff, Swansea, and Caerleon/ Newport.
We welcome new members who are over the age of 16. Please contact me for more information;

Steve Smith, Social Programmes Manager Wales
steve.smith@nas.org.uk Tel.01792 325298 Mobile 07748 703254"

CONFERENCES, LECTURES, SEMINARS AND SESSIONS

"ALMOST AN ADULT" CONFERENCE

21st June 2007, Sheffield Marriott Hotel, Sheffield

This conference focuses on Sex and Relationship Education for Young People on the Autistic Spectrum. Speakers include Luke Beardon and Jean Gawlinski. The conference also includes exhibitions and practical workshops demonstrating resources. The cost per person is £141, including VAT. For further details or on-line booking, please visit: <http://www.me-and-us.co.uk/almostanadult>

The ASC Good Practice Guide warmly thanks Hilary Dixon from Me-and-Us Ltd, for contributing this information.

THE ASPERGER SYNDROME FOUNDATION SEMINAR SERIES PRESENTS PRACTICAL STRATEGIES FOR DIFFICULT MOMENTS: "RELATIONSHIPS AND ASPERGER SYNDROME"

Presented by Sarah Hendrickx and Keith Newton

Sarah Hendrickx and Keith Newton are co-authors of *Aspergers Syndrome: A Love Story* (Jessica Kingsley Publishers, June 2007). Keith has Asperger's Syndrome (self-diagnosed). Sarah is his partner and also a Training Consultant in AS (www.asperger-training.com)

AIMED AT: Individuals and couples involved in a relationship where either partner has AS and professionals working in adult support and counselling.

DATE: Monday 29th October 2007, 10am-3:30pm, registration from 9:30am

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

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 OR download a booking form from the Asperger Syndrome Foundation website 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
4th 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.

AUTSCAPE: CALL FOR PROPOSALS

Many thanks to Autscape's organiser Yo Dunn for contributing the information on this fantastic and very successful annual event.

Autscape 2007: Accessing Our Worlds
Tues-Fri, 7-10 August 2007

Proposal submissions now being accepted. Please see this webpage for more information:
<http://www.autscape.org/proposals/>

If you have any problems or questions, e-mail: autscape@paradox.freemove.co.uk, and your email will be replied to by Yo Dunn, organiser of Autscape.

What we are looking for:

We are now accepting proposals for seminars and workshops to be presented at Autscape 2007. Proposals for poster presentations, leisure group leaders, videos, leaders for structured or semi-structured evening discussions, and other ideas will be sought in the near future. Only major workshops are eligible for the presenters' subsidy; a small rebate of £10 will be offered to other types of presentations.

Theme: The theme for this year's Autscape is Accessing Our Worlds. Presentations which conform to the theme will be given priority. In general, we are looking for positive ways of living with autism and navigating an alien world.

Audience: Although we welcome non-autistic professionals and family members, the aim of this event is primarily for autistic people, not about us! Workshops geared towards parents and professionals may be accepted, but must be positive in their support for autistic people and their right to be different.

Examples: For some examples of what has been presented at Autscape in the past, see last year's programme. We are also likely to enjoy similar workshops to those that have been presented at Autreat, in the USA, which has a much longer history.

Non-Verbal Workshops

Although many of the autistic people who are attracted to an event such as Autscape are highly verbal, others may have difficulty with an event so centred around language. However, we want to welcome and fully include all kinds of autistic people, including less 'wordy' ones.

We are also seeking workshops which are not primarily focused on the spoken word. (Presenters may still use speech, it is just not the main content of this type of workshop.) Some examples would be: dance, relaxation, music or art. These should have an autistic focus and conform to the theme, if possible, as with any other workshop. We expect much more of a non-verbal workshop than a leisure session (which does not qualify for free attendance). Some of the differences are: structure, preparation (from the presenter), relevance to autism and the event's theme, and duration.

A few notes of caution:

Cures: Workshops about curing or preventing autism are likely not to go over well at all and are best avoided altogether, unless it is from an advocacy standpoint.

Problems: The problems of non-autistics coping with autistic people could inadvertently reinforce negative attitudes.

Personal Experience: We all have personal experience of autism. If your presentation is primarily based on your personal experience, think carefully about its relevance here; the story needs to be one which can help attendees to find new understanding of their own situation. Please let us know what you're hoping those present will gain from your presentation.

Suitability: Every workshop, no matter who it is targeted towards, should be suitable for autistic people to attend without feeling objectified or put down.

What do we expect from you?

Attendance: If you submit a proposal, we do expect you to be there! Please be prepared to attend Autescape and give your presentation on the day and time scheduled. You will be joining our retreat on an equal basis. If you cannot attend for the whole 3 days we will do our best to fit the schedule around your needs. Travel is the responsibility of each individual presenter. We cannot subsidise travel or off-site expenses for anyone. If your proposal is accepted, we will send you a formal letter of invitation if this will help you to secure your own funding.

Discussion groups: Presenters may be expected to run an evening discussion group on their topic, for those who would like to explore the issue further. Volunteer leaders may be available for presenters who need assistance with this.

An article: Please send copies of any handouts or other material and an article for inclusion in the programme. These will be required well in advance of the Autescape event.

Recording: Please allow us to video or otherwise record your presentation. These records may be made available to others by Autescape.

If you submit a proposal we will assume you are happy with these expectations. If you have any questions or objections, please let us know so we can discuss it.

What can you expect from us?

Free attendance: Presenters will have free full-board accommodation for the duration of Autescape. Only one place can be subsidised for each presentation. We cannot subsidise any other attendees, including carers or assistants for presenters.

Attendance: Whenever you are not presenting you can enjoy the event, including other workshops and the setting, just as any other participant.

Involvement: One thing you can expect by joining us is the opportunity to shape an emerging self-advocacy event and autistic community. There will be opportunities at the event to get involved in the future of Autescape.

NATIONAL AUTISTIC SOCIETY ADULT SURVEY

The National Autistic Society is carrying out a survey on the experiences of adults on the autistic spectrum, as part of its research for an adult campaign. The National Autistic Society hopes to make this the biggest adult survey to date, in order to help to campaign to improve services.

The survey can be filled in at www.autism.org.uk/questionnaire

An easy-read version and a glossary of terms is also available from the same website address.

Hard copies of the survey are also available, please email policy@nas.org.uk or call 020 7903 3558 if you would like a copy.

The ASC Good Practice Guide warmly thanks the National Autistic Society's Lisa Pitkeathly 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.

Autumn

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

RESEARCH REQUESTS

DIPEX LIVING WITH AUTISM PROJECT- UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

The DIPEX Living with Autism project is funded by The Wellcome Trust and is based at DIPEX, a research unit within the Department of Primary Health Care, University of Oxford.

www.dipex.org is a website that presents people's experiences of health and illness in a text, audio and video form. The aim is for the website to be a resource for people experiencing particular health issues, health and education professionals who may work with them, and a teaching resource for health/education professionals.

The Living with Autism project will involve interviews with:

people with autism or Asperger syndrome over the age of 16 parents or carers of people (including children under the age of 16) with autism or Asperger syndrome.

Clips from the interviews will be presented on the website to provide a comprehensive picture of people's experiences of living with autism or Asperger syndrome.

If you would like further details of the project, please contact Sara Ryan on 01865 289374, email sara.ryan@dphpc.ox.ac.uk

INFANT SIBLINGS STUDY, THE BABYLAB AT BIRKBECK, UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

The Babylab at Birkbeck, University of London, has launched the first study in the UK looking at infant siblings of children with autism. Using newly developed techniques for studying brain and behaviour in infants, the team is investigating whether there are any differences in development between infants who have brothers or sisters with autism and those who do not. It is hoped that this will help identify the early signs of the disorder, allowing for earlier and more effective intervention aimed at improving the quality of life of children with autism.

If you have a baby aged 0-12 months who has an older sibling diagnosed with autism and wish to take part in the "Baby Sibs Project", please contact us for more information.

Dr. Mayada Elsabbagh or Ms. Holly Garwood
The Babylab, Centre for Brain and Cognitive Development
FREEPOST RRGX-ARGH-SESR
Henry Wellcome Building, Birkbeck College
Malet Street
London WC1E 7HX
Tel: 020 7079 0754
Email: asd@bbk.ac.uk or visit: www.cbcd.bbk.ac.uk

The ASC Good Practice Guide warmly thanks The Babylab for contributing this information.

29th May 2007
End of May Edition