

THE ASC GOOD PRACTICE GUIDE

St. Nicholas Academy for Autism Trust
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WENDY LAWSON: A TESTIMONIAL FOR THE ASC GOOD PRACTICE GUIDE

Wendy Lawson was diagnosed with an ASC when an adult. Married, separated and divorced, Wendy's younger son also has Asperger Syndrome. Classified as having significant intellectual impairment when she was a child, Wendy has nevertheless gone on to earn no less than five University qualifications. Wendy is a qualified Social Worker, Adult Educator and also a Psychologist. She is also a highly-accomplished poet and author of a number of ASC-related books. Wendy runs ASC training programmes to students, staff, and support groups throughout the UK and Australia, as well as lecturing on ASC. For further information on Wendy, her forthcoming UK tour dates and how to contact her to ask if she can run a training programme or give a talk for your own organization, please refer to the "Conferences" section of this Guide. On *The ASC Good Practice Guide*, Wendy writes:

"What a terrific thing to be doing! One of the 'gaps' in good autism practice has been that lack of co-ordination of 'what's out there.' This 'guide' fills that gap. It also offers support through the journey and personal perspective found in readers' articles and other information."

Apart from being very proud of Wendy's praise, *The ASC Good Practice Guide* feels that it highlights a very important point: that the Guide is written not just ABOUT people with an ASC, and not just for parents or professionals, but also FOR people with an ASC. Wendy has also very kindly agreed to write some information for forthcoming Editions of the Guide, which is greatly appreciated.

STOP PRESS: GOOD PRACTICE GUIDE NEWS!!!

The ASC Good Practice Guide is delighted to announce that the Asperger Syndrome Foundation has contacted us, and very kindly offered to post copies of the Guide on the AS Foundation website! The AS Foundation values the quality of information in *The ASC Good Practice Guide* and considers it to be a worthwhile publication for their website audience. *The ASC Good Practice Guide* would like to acknowledge the generosity of the Asperger Syndrome Foundation and extend its gratitude to all our new friends at the Charity.

The Asperger Syndrome Foundation is a small London-based Registered Charity. Prior to its establishment in 2002, the Charity's Founder and Chair, Beatrice Buissenet, successfully undertook the tremendous task of raising the funds necessary to sponsor the first accredited Post-Graduate Course in Asperger Syndrome in the UK.

The Asperger Syndrome Foundation sponsors and subsidises high-quality Training and Support Days aimed at professionals in Education and Mental Health, as well being aimed at parents. These Days are subsidized by the Asperger Syndrome Foundation in order to make them affordable to all. All speakers at the Training and Support Days are specialists in the field of Asperger Syndrome.

For more information on the Asperger Syndrome Foundation, contact:

info@aspergerfoundation.org.uk or visit <http://www.aspergerfoundation.org.uk>

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WELCOME TO THE ASC GOOD PRACTICE GUIDE

Welcome to the sixth issue of the ASC Best 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 for a DfES-funded organisation called Aimhigher, where her duties include Project Management of Aimhigher London North's activities for learners with special educational needs, including autistic spectrum conditions.

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 contact him at 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 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!

RECOMMENDED ASC READING AND RESOURCES

AUTISM DATA, AUTISM UPDATE AND TITLES IN AUTISM- NATIONAL AUTISTIC SOCIETY

Autism Data, the National Autistic Society's database of 17,000+ journal articles, papers, books and multimedia on autism, is now freely available to search on the NAS website at www.autism.org.uk/autismdata

The contents include bibliographic records of everything in the NAS Information Centre Library, together with the details of research articles on autism published in journals which are not part of our holdings. All records are searchable by author, title, keyword or free text. Copies of articles in our library may be ordered, subject to copyright law restrictions.

Two bimonthly current awareness services, *Autism Update* and *Titles in Autism*, are available for £15.00 p.a. each. Subscribers access these via a login on the website. *Autism Update* lists recently added publications on practical approaches and accounts of autistic spectrum disorders, and *Titles in Autism* lists new peer-reviewed articles.

For further details and the NAS Information Centre enquiry service, please contact info@nas.org.uk or telephone 0845 070 4004.

The ASC Good Practice Guide warmly thanks Stephanie Taylor, Information Officer at the National Autistic Society, for sharing this information with our readership.

AUTISM HUB

In 2006, ASC parent Kevin Leitch launched Autism Hub. The Hub's stated purpose is to: take "the best in autism-related blogging (discussion) and pull it all together in one easy-to-access interface."

About autistic spectrum conditions, the Hub states: "We seek no fundamental alteration to this state of being but we do seek to intervene sometimes should the situation require it."

According to the Hub, its bloggers are "disseminating truth, respect, positivity, objectivity and tolerance."

For further information on the Hub, please contact admin@autism-hub.co.uk or visit <http://www.autism-hub.co.uk>

The ASC Good Practice Guide warmly thanks Kevin Leitch for creating the Hub.

ELIZABETH STOKES, MIDDLESEX UNIVERSITY: INDIVIDUALISED TAILOR-MADE THERAPETIC/EDUCATIONAL SOFTWARE

Elizabeth Stokes is a mother of three. Elizabeth's youngest child, Katie, is 17 and has been diagnosed with both Epilepsy and ASC. Elizabeth is also a Snr (Multimedia) Lecturer at Middlesex

University, a SENCO for the School of Computing Science and is nearing the completion of PhD relating to software and its use for children on the autistic spectrum's verbal language. If anyone has an interest in this area of research and would like to contact Elizabeth, please email Elizabeth1@mdx.ac.uk

Elizabeth is the originator, module leader and lecturer of an undergraduate module entitled "Introduction to Multimedia". This usually consists of several hundred first year undergraduate students, carrying out an in-depth word processed research and evaluation reports, to order to develop individualistic tailor made therapeutic and/or educational multimedia games, based on completed case studies (profiles), by each pupil, on the Autistic Spectrum Condition's (ASC) teacher. The module has run in Dubai and Hong Kong using case studies (profiles) of pupils on the ASC from the UK. Due to the success of the module, Elizabeth is now extending the focus from autism to other disabilities for the next cohort of students.

Therefore, if you would like FREE individualised tailor-made therapeutic/educational software developed for any child, at any age, with any disabilities, please email Elizabeth for more details.

Elizabeth also organises and develops projects for the computing science project module. This enables final year undergraduate computing science Higher Education (HE) university students, to carry out in depth research in order to develop projects, for helping academic staff in the local Further Education (FE) College (Southgate) with their students with disabilities. Due to the success of this, Elizabeth is now looking for further projects for her next cohort of students.

Therefore, if there are any institute or companies, needing FREE computing projects developed for them or to aid their disabilities community, please email Elizabeth1@mdx.ac.uk for more details. *The ASC Good Practice Guide* warmly thanks Elizabeth for this information.

"YOURWORLD" (3-D COMPUTERS) PROJECT- OXFORD UNIVERSITY AND BIRMINGHAM UNIVERSITY

Psychologists from the Universities of Oxford and Birmingham are currently exploring how virtual environment technology could be used to teach new social and adaptive skills to individuals with autistic spectrum conditions. The "YourWorld" project was launched in Durham by the new Minister for Social Exclusion, Hilary Armstrong.

The virtual reality technology creates real-time interactive surround vision without the need for goggles or headsets. All four surfaces of the room are screens, which have images projected onto them. Software has been developed to stitch the content of the screens together, so individuals inside the room feel totally immersed. The system also has synchronised surround sound, which gives the viewer a sense of being transported to exciting new worlds. New virtual environments will be built over the summer based on the design recommendations of individuals with ASC, as well as their relatives and teachers, and it is hoped that interested parties will be invited to experience these worlds in the autumn.

During the autumn and winter researchers from Oxford and Birmingham Universities will invite children with ASC to visit YourWorld in Durham and they will be asked to fill out questionnaires designed to establish what their virtual experience was like and what new skills they learnt. Dr Simon Wallace, from the Department of Psychiatry, University of Oxford said:

'this form of technology should be an effective way of teaching children with autism spectrum disorder, as the environments create a strong sense of realism and discovery for the child.'

It is hoped that ultimately a permanent YourWorld facility can be financed to meet the specific needs of individuals with ASC.

The ASC Good Practice Guide warmly thanks Dr. Simon Wallace from Oxford University for this information. For further details about the YourWorld Project, please contact Dr. Wallace on (01865)223-783 or simon.wallace@psych.ox.ac.uk Alternatively, visit the following link: <http://www.psychiatry.ox.ac.uk/research/researchunits/autism/>

CHILDREN'S AND YOUTH SERVICES

DATABASE OF CHILDREN WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER LIVING IN THE NORTH EAST (NORTHUMBERLAND, TYNE AND WEAR)



Dasl^{ne} was launched in October 2003 and is about to complete the first 3 years of its development. The aim is to register all children and young people with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) living in Northumberland, Tyne & Wear. The unique feature of the database is that it has been set up as a partnership between parents and professionals from health, education and social services.

The primary aims of Dasl^{ne} are to identify all children with ASD and hence to

- assist local authorities, health services and voluntary bodies in planning services for children with ASD and their families by making available reports on numbers and needs of children
- be a vehicle for allowing families to be more involved in service planning
- allow epidemiological analysis of data to investigate, for example, trends over time or geographical variations
-
- be a representative sampling frame for research studies

The essential features of Dasl^{ne} are:

- It is an ongoing prospective database, an investment for the future to help with planning for children and young people, especially at times of transition. All the procedures and planning are designed to be ongoing (to 18 years of age), and to capture information on children who receive a diagnosis in the future.
- Families have been fully involved from the outset. Parents have shared in development of all aspects of strategy, procedures (including consent procedures and confidentiality), drafting of questionnaires, advising on research priorities and planning of events and publicity.
- Parents and professionals have the same access to accurate anonymised reports on data about numbers and needs of children across Northumberland, Tyne & Wear.
- The development phase has required a cross-sectional survey to identify all children with ASD up to the age of 12 years. The responsibility for identifying children in each district lies with a local co-ordinating group (drawn from paediatrician, educational psychologist, speech and language therapist, social worker, specialist teacher, and parent support group coordinator). In the past, each organisation had separate lists, not permitted to be shared across sectors.
- The development phase of Dasl^{ne} was enabled by a three year starting up grant from the Northern Rock Foundation, and supported by Directors of Education, Social Services and Health, Newcastle University, The Children's Foundation and Contact a Family. The statutory agencies have agreed to finance the future administration costs.

Progress

As at June 2006, 470 children with ASD are represented on Dasl^{ne}. Presentations about Dasl^{ne} have been made at local and national conferences, and covered by local television and press, and 3 newsletters have been sent to parents and professionals. A celebration conference in March 2006 helped to raise awareness in the Region. Reports on the data have been provided to local authorities, voluntary organisations and students, and three research projects have been approved to use Dasl^{ne} as a sampling frame. The effort to combine information for planning has influenced service organisation, for example, development of a Multi-agency Assessment Pathway in one authority. For further information consult the Dasl^{ne} website www.ncl.ac.uk/daslne.

The ASC Good Practice Guide warmly thanks Professor Helen McConachie, Director of Dasl^{ne}, for this information.

HM TREASURY/DFES REVIEW OF SERVICES FOR DISABLED CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES

In order for the Government to develop its public spending plans for three years from 2008, HM Treasury and the Department for Education and Skills have announced a review of services for disabled children and families. Over the summer, MPs will be collecting evidence at the request of Ministers. In the autumn, practical recommendations will be made on the basis of this evidence.

The website of Contact a Family contains useful information on this review process. According to the website, three hearings were scheduled to take place in July. These hearings included politicians from all political parties as well as parents, and young disabled people. The Panel of MPs heard about the most difficult challenges currently facing families and what needs to be done to overcome these challenges. The aim of the Hearings was to find new ways to develop health, education and social services in order to improve outcomes for disabled children.

Crucially, in addition to the three hearings, both parents and professionals are invited to provide written evidence, up to the deadline of Friday 18th August. Contact a Family has on its website a form for Parents and also a form for Professionals to complete, for this purpose- both can be downloaded in Rich Text Format, and completed directly. To find these forms, please visit:

<http://www.cafamily.org.uk/hearings.html>

Alternatively, call the Contact a Family helpline (10am-4pm, Mon-Fri) on (0808)808-3555 (freephone for parents and families).

Also useful is information contained on the HM Treasury website:

http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/newsroom_and_speeches/press/2006/press_50_06.cfm

The ASC Good Practice Guide warmly thanks Lucia Winters, Development Officer, Council for Disabled Children, for providing this information on the Review/the information on the Review available on the Contact a Family and the HM Treasury websites. For further information on the Council for Disabled Children, please visit www.ncb.org.uk/cdc

REGISTER SERVICES AND THE "I COUNT" CARD (LONDON BOROUGHES OF CROYDON, KINGSTON, LAMBETH, AND SUTTON)

Register Services are part of Sutton and Merton Primary Care Trust. Register Services run Children Act Registers for children with disabilities for the London Boroughs of Croydon, Kingston, Lambeth and Sutton. For further information on this service, please visit

www.registerservices.nhs.uk

Additionally, Register Services issue an "I Count" Card to all children on its Children Act Registers. This Card helps prove the child has a disability when waiting in queues, applying for free carer admission to attractions, etc.

Register Services has kindly provided some user feedback on the "I Count" Card, as follows:

- *"We have used it at the pictures a few times now. The best use we have had has been at Thorpe Park and Alton Towers. Standing in a queue with a hyperactive child has never been a particularly enjoyable experience!!! We have season tickets for the Tussauds Group and often go to Thorpe Park and Chessington so going straight to the front of the queue makes a good day out absolutely brilliant. My husband has taken our daughters up to Alton Towers this weekend and they are having the time of their life. I just wanted to say thank you."*
- *"When my Dad went to buy a season ticket for me and him at Crystal Palace Football Club he got both for £145. He got his free as a carer and I got a discount rate. They also moved us to a part of the stand nearer the refreshments."*
- *"When my autistic son had a tantrum at Sainsburys I waved his "I Count" Card and was immediately given help and taken to the front of the queue."*

The list of organisations who will accept the "I Count" Card as proof of a disability includes the following: Alton Towers; Brocketts Farm Park; Chessington World of Adventures; Dean City Farm; Drusilla's Park, Alfriston, East Sussex; Hampton Court Palace; Kew Gardens; London Aquarium; London Eye; Longleat; Madame Tussauds London; Springboard Project, Horsham; Thorpe Park; Crystal Palace Football Club; Fulham Football Club; Cranfield Golf Academy; Sainsburys; Royal Borough of Kingston Leisure Centres; UCI Cinema in Sutton; VUE Cinema in Croydon; The Crafty Café, Surbiton.

For further information on the "I Count" Card, please visit www.i.count.org
If you are registered but do not receive a card or if you think you are eligible for registration, please call Register Services on (0208)770-8160, or email: register.services@smpct.nhs.uk

The ASC Good Practice Guide warmly thanks Julia Elliott, Business Manager of Register Services, for contributing this information.

"SNAAP" CLUB- FINCHLEY CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL/ST. NICHOLAS ACADEMY FOR AUTISM TRUST (BARNET, N. LONDON)

"SNAAP" featured and was very favorably reviewed in the July 2006 Edition of the TES Extra on Special Needs! "SNAAP" is an after-school club for families affected by an autistic spectrum condition. Funded by Barnet Council, the Club offers members the opportunity to socialise, develop computer and now also art skills, in a friendly environment where the entire family is welcome.

Every Wednesday term-time from 3:30pm-6pm, "SNAAP" meets at Finchley Catholic High School, Woodside Lane, Finchley, N12. There is parking available in the school car park. The Club is free of charge and run by Finchley Catholic High School with the **St. Nicholas Academy for Autism Trust**, and is open to **ANYONE** in Barnet with an autistic spectrum condition, all abilities and ages welcome.

Parents/siblings/carers and friends are also welcome, and snacks are provided (but anyone with special dietary requirements is invited to bring their own refreshments). The Club has a number of trained, established helpers for its members- students and staff from Finchley Catholic High School. Members can receive guidance on how to use the computer and the internet; they can also play games, do homework, create Personal Passports and more. Art Workshops are offered at the Club, at no cost, in an adjacent studio! On 1st July, SNAAP members enjoyed an all-expenses paid outing to Chessington World of Adventures. **During summer holidays, SNAAP will continue to run, on Friday mornings, 10am-2pm.**

For more details/reserve a place, contact the Club's Project Officer, Christine, on (0798)404-9077.

SOCIAL GROUPS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE SOUTHWEST OF ENGLAND

The ASC Good Practice Guide warmly thanks Helen Hydes, NAS Development Coordinator- Out of Schools Clubs in the South West, for this information:

The NAS are running weekly clubs in the South West of England for children and young people with Asperger Syndrome. The groups provide a structured youth club provision in this region.

There is a club in Bristol (Lockleaze) for 8-13 year olds. The South Gloucester group is for young people aged 12-16 and meets in Little Stoke on Thursdays, whilst the North Somerset group meets in Nailsea on Mondays.

There are two clubs based in Bath. The younger group is for 8-13 year olds and meets on Mondays, whilst the older group is for 14-19 year olds and meets on Wednesdays. These groups alternate between a youth group setting and activities within the community. Activities are led by choices made by the children and young people, and have included arts, crafts, computing, sport, and cookery. For further information, please contact Helen Hydes on Helen.Hydes@nas.org.uk

SPECIALIST SCHOOLS, FOR PUPILS AGED 4-11+

CHRYSALIS SCHOOL FOR AUTISM (HERTFORDSHIRE)

Chrysalis School opened in December 2005. Its mission is:

- To provide a full-time, ABA teaching-based school for children with autism. Initially for pupils aged between 4 and 11 years but extending into the secondary sector from 2007.
- To provide both special education and life skills training in a supportive and nurturing environment where children, staff and parents work together, respecting and helping each other in order to evaluate accurately and address, on an on-going basis, children's individual needs so that each child can achieve their fullest possible potential.
- To be willing to grow and develop as an organization, embracing new ideas and reviewing procedures as new research and guidelines become available, always with the benefit of the children and the school as the central focus.
- To be actively engaged and involved with the local community in disseminating information about autism and seeking opportunities for our pupils to take part in "hands-on" learning.
- To help others, in the broadest sense, to recognize and meet the needs of all children with autism.

This small, fun school ensures that each child's curriculum is tailor-made to his or her exact level and learning needs. Pupils have 1:1 adult support, working alone and in groups. The learning programmes are highly individualized and based upon up-to-the-minute scientific research. Sensory and communication needs, as well as the national curriculum, are addressed at a level that allows each child to succeed.

Chrysalis enables its pupils to gradually become more independent, to make choices, develop skills and overcome the fears that everyday life presents.

Chrysalis School for Autism is a charity no. 1101424 and Company limited by guarantee no. 4969443. It relies heavily upon donations and is actively seeking corporate sponsorship.

For further information on Chrysalis School, please write the School at St. Giles Parish Centre, Codicote, Hertfordshire, SG4 8XX, telephone on (01727)760677, email Head teacher Sue King on sue.chrysalisschool@ntlworld.com or visit the Chrysalis School website on www.chrysalisschool.org

The ASC Good Practice Guide warmly thanks Head teacher Sue King for this information.

SPECIALIST FURTHER EDUCATION

THE ASSOCIATION OF NATIONAL SPECIALIST COLLEGES- NATSPEC (LOUGHBOROUGH, LEICESTERSHIRE)

The Association of National Specialist Colleges, NATSPEC, supports specialist independent colleges providing further education and training, to meet the inclusive learning needs of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. A number of the colleges cater for or specialise in students who have ASC.

NATSPEC acts as a national voice for specialist colleges and other providers on matters of policy and practice. It ensures the strategic roles of these institutions are fully deployed and developed within the learning and skills sector.

NATSPEC's website includes a directory of and information on specialist colleges.

For more information on NATSPEC, contact:

Kevin O'Brien
Chief Executive, NATSPEC
39 Sanders Road
Quorn

Loughborough
Leicestershire, LE12 8JN
(01509)554-357
kevin.obrien43@ntlworld.com
Or, visit NATSPEC's website, www.natspec.org.uk

Each Edition of the Guide will provide information on a different NATSPEC college/centre which caters for students with autism/Asperger Syndrome. This Edition features ESPA Colleges, in Tyne and Wear.

ESPA COLLEGES (TYNE AND WEAR)

ESPA stands for "European Services for People with Autism, Ltd". ESPA Colleges provide autism-specific education placements, both on a day and a residential (24-hour curriculum) basis. Most placements are on a 3-year, 42-week basis, but a fourth year is sometimes possible. The age range of students is generally between 16-25 years old.

Students follow the functional, age-appropriate ESPA Core Curriculum on an individually-tailored basis. All learners also have access, as appropriate, to a Consultant Psychiatrist, a Psychologist, an Educational Consultant, and Speech and Language Therapists. Many ESPA students furthermore access a range of external courses held at local colleges.

ESPA furthermore enjoys the benefit of a Vocational Skills Unit, which runs as an independent service, delivering a range of vocational-based work experience and training.

A long-term residential element is central to ESPA's philosophy and ESPA does possess "Lifelong Residential Services." However, please be advised that vacancies on these services are **very** limited.

ESPA advises potential students to apply 18 months prior to their desired start date. ESPA recommends that the process begins with an informal visit, following which a written referral (from Connexions/LEA) to ESPA's Placements and Admissions Department can be made. ESPA will then send the applicant, parents, and relevant professionals pre-assessment Questionnaires, and will gather relevant information on the applicant.

ESPA's Admissions Panel will decide whether the applicant is suitable for an overnight assessment visit. If the applicant is considered suitable, the visit is arranged. After this visit, ESPA forwards its assessment documents to Connexions/LEA, and the Learning and Skills Council holds a placement meeting. Once all funding is confirmed, including a 4-week "top-up" from Social Services for applicants applying for residential places, a formal written offer of a placement is made.

For further information on ESPA, please contact their registered office at:

ESPA
2a Hylton Park
Hylton Park Road
Sunderland
Tyne and Wear SR5 3HD
(0191)516-5080
www.espa.org.uk/espa/colleges.htm

LEARNING, EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL SUPPORT FOR ADULTS

THE AUTISM RESOURCE CENTRE (SCOTLAND)

The Autism Resource Centre (ARC) is a partnership between NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde Health Board, Glasgow City Council, The National Autistic Society, The Scottish Society for Autism and the Strathclyde Autistic Society. It was set up with initial funding from the Scottish Executive, opening its doors to the public in November 2004 to offer diagnosis and post-diagnostic support to adults and advice, information and training to parents, partners, carers and professional staff involved in the care and support of adults who are on the autism spectrum. While the ARC was the

first centre of its kind in Scotland, there is a similar resource in Edinburgh named No. 6 and run by Autism Initiatives.

As a specialist adult service, the ARC only provides diagnosis and post-diagnostic support for adults aged 16 and over who have left school, however we do provide information for parents of younger children, who also have access to our information resources which include a small library containing books, journals, policy documents and a wide variety of literature from different service providers. They also have access to our four public access computers which have Internet access and are also loaded with a range of software, including the Mindreading program and programs that we use to deliver some of the groups that we run as part of the post-diagnostic support for adults. All of the aforementioned resources are also available to service users, parents of adults and professional staff.

Each group has the core aim of facilitating social development, as well as providing an opportunity to learn new skills in a familiar and supportive environment. Groups that we have run thus far include art, drama, digital photography, Photoshop imaging, web design and social development. Our longest standing group is our relationship counselling group CLASP (Couples Living with Aspergers), in which two of our clinical staff facilitate discussion between adults who have Asperger Syndrome and their partners who are not on the autism spectrum. The aim is to combine self-help and clinical counselling to resolve relationship difficulties caused by communication difficulties. To the best of our knowledge, this is the only group of its type in Scotland.

The inter-agency partnership which runs ARC is not merely an 'on paper' arrangement: all of the staff team at the ARC are drawn from each of the partner organisations, so there is a mix of viewpoints and practices helping to shape service delivery, aided by the support of a proactive Working Group whose membership includes senior representatives of relevant statutory agencies.

The ARC exemplifies good practice across the range of its services and how these are delivered, most notably:

- The one-stop shop concept, which makes it easier for adults not yet already involved in statutory services to seek diagnosis and support to access information and services from a central source. Given that the ARC was set up to increase the availability of diagnosis and support for adults, this has been very important.
- As well as delivering direct services to service users, the ARC acts as an enabling organising, delivering a five-tier training programme to educate the general public about autism and to build skills and capacity among service providers who support adults in the statutory, voluntary and private sectors. Our training is free to recipients, with local health boards funding places on the top tier of training (diagnostic training for clinical staff).

We work in partnership wherever possible - for the benefit of service users and service providers - and part of our post-diagnostic support to service users includes liaising with external organisations on their behalf in order to facilitate their access to the services that they require. This support is not one-off signposting, but ongoing support to help sustain an individual's engagement with services. Support is both formal (through our appointment system) and informal (through the drop-in nature of the ARC). This means that there are always staff available to respond to service users' needs at any point during the working day. Service users don't need to have a reason to visit and know that they can come to use our rooms to obtain some peace and quiet and stress relief.

The drop-in has also been successful in facilitating and strengthening social contact between service users, as have our links with other providers of social opportunities for adults and also the creation of a private intranet for adults who have Asperger's. This has not been formally launched yet - it was only built a couple of months ago - but is already being used by people to keep in touch, give each other advice, share experiences, arrange social activities and collaborate on projects. The fact that it is a private site, accessible only by application through ARC, was at the

request of the users and is designed to protect them and the information that they share. The website is the first of what we hope will be a wide range of projects undertaken by our Asperger Co-operative (composed of our own service users and those of partner organisations). We also involve service users, wherever possible, in giving presentations to different audiences, including psychology and psychiatry staff and students.

We regularly host fact-finding visits from councils, local authorities and others who are interested in setting up a similar resource in their area and are always happy to arrange such visits or give advice over the telephone.

For further information on the ARC, please contact them. Details are as follows:

The Autism Resource Centre

The Quadrangle

59 Ruchill Street

Maryhill

Glasgow G20 9PX

(0141)201-6247

The ARC's website can be found at www.ixseed.org/arc but the site is in the process of being changed. *The ASC Good Practice Guide* hopes to advise readers of this change as it happens.

The Guide also warmly thanks The ARC's Information and Education Officer, Elizabeth Finnen, for contributing this information.

ASPECT ACTION DAY

The ASC Good Practice Guide warmly thanks Genevieve Edmonds, author of The Asperger Love Guide, for this information:

CALLING ALL ADULTS WITH ASPERGER SYNDROME...WE NEED YOUR HELP!

A small group of volunteers with an interest in pushing forward supportive services for adults with Asperger Syndrome (AS) organised an event entitled ASPECT Action Day (Asperger Syndrome People Each Contributing for Themselves) which was held in Manchester on 27 April, 2006.

One of the main objectives of the event was to highlight the issues faced by Asperger adults across the UK in getting appropriate, timely and helpful support.

At the event a questionnaire was introduced which was prepared in order to collate responses from adults (rather than professionals or carers speaking on their behalf) across the UK with AS (diagnosed or not).

The responses from the questionnaire are required in order to put together a free report outlining in truly representative fashion what the needs of (adult) individuals with AS are. The report will be prepared by Luke Beardon, Senior Lecturer in Autism, Sheffield Hallam University and Genevieve Edmonds of 'Asperger Strategies & Solutions'.

The report will consist of responses to the questionnaire by adults with AS. Thus, it aims to be truly representative of what adults with AS actually require, as opposed to what other people think or assume. Every response will be included in the report, so this really is a genuine chance for all adults with AS to make their voices heard, should they wish to do so.

Once the report has been written it will be available on the internet for anyone to download. It is hoped that it will be used by individuals and organisations to drive forward the support needs agenda at all levels from local authority to government. The report will also be used to feed into the Working Party on Autism and Neurodiversity at the Disability Rights Commission (DRC).

Would you like to have your say in improving supportive services for Asperger adults?

READ ON! The more people who fill in the questionnaire, the better

We would like as large a number of respondents as possible, to get the best possible representative picture. Please pass on details to as many adults with AS as you can. We hope for this to be the world's biggest ever consultation process for Asperger Adults. Once completed, we hope that the report will be a beneficial

tool for activating appropriate change.

Where can I complete the questionnaire?

It can be completed online at www.aspectaction.org.uk, from where you can also download a hard copy if you prefer to do it by hand. Alternatively, if you do not have internet access, you can request a copy by writing to: ASPECT, Suite 2 York House, Vicarage Lane, Bowden, Altrincham WA14 3BA. Please return hard copies to the above address, or fax to 0870 479 6469. (national rate from BT line. Other networks may vary)

Deadline for submitting completed questionnaires - 31st August 2006

REGISTER SERVICES AND THE "I COUNT" CARD (LONDON BOROUGHS OF LAMBETH, MERTON AND SUTTON)

Register Services are part of Sutton and Merton Primary Care Trust. Register Services run Adult Learning Disability Registers for the London Boroughs of Lambeth, Merton, and Sutton. For further information on this service, please visit www.registerservices.nhs.uk Additionally, Register Services issue an "I Count" Card to all adults on its Learning Disability Registers. This Card helps prove the holder has a disability when waiting in queues, applying for free carer admission to attractions, etc.

Register Services has kindly provided some feedback on the "I Count" Card, as follows:

- *"...I use it (the "I Count" Card) all the time and would be lost without it- it has made such a difference at places such as the cinema and swimming baths."*
- *"When I lost my wallet at Kew Gardens, it was handed in to the Constabulary Office who sent it back to the Freepost address on the back of my "I Count" Card. The Manager of the Lambeth Registers was able to look up my name and address from the number on the card and return the wallet and its contents to me."*

The list of organisations who will accept the "I Count" Card as proof of a disability includes the following: Alton Towers; Brocketts Farm Park; Chessington World of Adventures; Dean City Farm; Drusilla's Park, Alfriston, East Sussex; Hampton Court Palace; Kew Gardens; London Aquarium; London Eye; Longleat; Madame Tussauds London; Springboard Project, Horsham; Thorpe Park; Crystal Palace Football Club; Fulham Football Club; Cranfield Golf Academy; Sainsburys; Royal Borough of Kingston Leisure Centres; UCI Cinema in Sutton; VUE Cinema in Croydon; The Crafty Café, Surbiton.

For further information on the "I Count" Card, please visit www.i.count.org

If you are registered but do not receive a card or if you think you are eligible for registration, please call Register Services on (0208)770-8160, or email: register.services@smpct.nhs.uk

The ASC Good Practice Guide warmly thanks Julia Elliott, Business Manager of Register Services, for contributing this information.

SUNDERLAND ADULT SOCIAL GROUP (TYNE AND WEAR)

The NAS has started a social group for adults with AS and high functioning autism who live in the Tyne and Wear area. The group meets once a month, for two hours, in Sunderland.

NAS social groups have been running all over the country since September 2004, thanks to funding from Vodafone and the Department of Health. They are open to people with Asperger Syndrome or those actively seeking a diagnosis who are over the age of 16 and would like to socialise and meet other people with the disability.

For further details, please contact Linda Kennedy, Social Programmes Manager (North), on (0191) 2263610. Meetings for the rest of this year are as follows:-

Aug 23rd, Sept 27th, Oct 25th, Nov 29th and Dec 21st, on which day the Group is going for a Christmas meal. *The ASC Good Practice Guide warmly thanks Linda Kennedy for this information.*

NEW!!! READER FEATURE!!!NEW!!!

London-based subscriber Ian Mordant has written the following feature to share with all Guide readers. *The ASC Good Practice Guide* warmly thanks Ian for this feature, and welcomes features/articles from any of our subscribers.

“PEOPLE WITH AS CAN GET GREAT JOY FROM www.worldcommunitygrid.org”

“I am not at all talking sexually when I say that many Asperger people know the pain of feeling impotent; I mean the pain of feeling that one’s all-round potency as a human being is unwanted. Well, www.worldcommunitygrid.org is a wonderful antidote to this feeling.

What it’s about is this: to be effective, the chemicals of any new drugs have to have a certain geometrical shape. Now one could build each chemical, and then examine its shape. But as there are literally trillions of different possible chemicals, this would take millions of years.

One can electronically predict the shape of a molecule of the chemical from its formula, but for this you need lots of computing power. This is where the internet comes in. What is now possible is to break up a particular shape into say a million of pieces, like pieces in a jigsaw puzzle. Each piece is then sent over the internet to one personal computer, say mine, which then might spend say 12 hours examining its structure. When each personal computer has found the shape of its little piece of the jigsaw, it sends the answer back to one central place. Here, the myriad individual pieces are reassembled and bingo, there we can see the whole molecule’s shape.

That is what the [www.worldcommunitygrid](http://www.worldcommunitygrid.org) does. The grid is run by IBM, from its headquarters in the town of Armonk, in New York State. All I had to do was go to the site, and download some **free** software. I then leave my computer running 24/7. From Armonk a piece of one of the chemical jigsaws is sent over the internet to my computer. My computer works on the piece, every moment when it is on and I am not using the computer, like when I am asleep, or having a meal, or at the shops, or reading, or whatever.

I should stress that there is no danger to my computer, and less chance of getting a virus, than by email. As a famous company, IBM has a reputation to protect; if they sent out a virus with their work, the fact would be reported in the newspapers, and they’d be seriously embarrassed.

Now how do I know what contribution I am making? Well every 6 hours, at 0606, 1206, 1806 and 0006, the world grid sends me statistics of my total contribution. Thus, as of this morning, 7th August 2006, I am at place 15, 346 in the world; that is 15,345 people around the world, have given more computer time to the world grid than I have. But when I joined in November 2005, I was at about position 100,000! Over the past 8 months I have moved up about 85,000 positions.

That’s part of the pleasure from it, seeing where I am in the world, in terms of my contribution. But that’s not all: the world grid is currently working three projects. The first is called Help Defeat Cancer, the second is called FightAIDS At Home, the third a Human Proteome Project. If you give your computer time, you can choose which of the three projects you want to help. Personally I let the system send me any work that’s waiting to be done; that is the most efficient use of computer power. But someone else might only want to work on only one or two of the projects.

What a lovely feeling I have each day to get out of bed in the morning, and click on the icon which has the shape of a V for victory sign. By doing this I can see my latest score, see what I’ve done to combat some of the world’s most terrible problems. According to IBM, there are now some 630 million personal computers in the world, of which some 350,000 world wide have worked for the world grid. Try it; it’s wonderful to feel how your potency, your freely donated computer time, is making a difference every day. Do yourself a favour and join your computer to [www.worldcommunitygrid](http://www.worldcommunitygrid.org)” –Ian Mordant

CONFERENCES, LECTURES, SEMINARS AND SESSIONS

WENDY LAWSON: UK TOUR DATES AND AVAILABILITY

Wendy Lawson can offer a range of services to students, professionals, parents, and other individuals with ASC. She is experienced in speaking at Conferences and lectures, and can provide staff development training and workshops. Wendy even has designed and runs the highly-respected "Hope for the Future" Course, comprised of interactive workshops involving various practical activities designed to facilitate understanding of ASC.

The Surrey Branch of the National Autistic Society has a highly informative website, <http://www.mugsy.org> and this site hosts for Wendy's web page, which can be found at <http://www.mugsy.org/wendy/index.htm>. Wendy's web page contains information on Wendy, as well as some of the talks, interviews and further material she has given or written over the past few years. The web page also contains information on Wendy's tour dates. Wendy will be in the UK from the end of July through to Autumn 2006, and welcomes invitations from organizations interested in engaging her services. To do so, contact Bryan Craig at autism.centre@virgin.net Already during this period, Wendy will be speaking and running workshops in a variety of locations across the country, including Nottingham, Birmingham, Weston-Super-Mare, Burnham on Sea, Chepstow, Norwich, and Uckfield. Further details on Wendy's schedule and fees are available on her webpage.

NADO CONFERENCE: ASPERGER'S SYNDROME AND HIGH-FUNCTIONING AUTISM AFFECTING TEENAGERS AND ADULTS

NADO Ltd. Is the National Association of Disability Officers, the professional organisation for disability and support staff in further and higher education.

In association with NADO, the Adults with Autistic Spectrum Disorder Assessment and Diagnosis Service for Swindon (AASDADSS), present a one-day conference on Asperger's Syndrome and High-Functioning Autism Affecting Teenagers and Adults. The Conference will include professional, parent/carer and service user speakers.

DATE: Tuesday 21st September 2006

WHERE: University of Bath in Swindon

COSTS: (including lunch and refreshments) £60 for parents/carers/service users; £85 for professionals

For further information, please contact:

Beverley Fraser

NATO Ltd.

Moulton Park Business Centre

Redhouse Road

Moulton Park

Northampton, NN3 6AQ

(01604)497933

admin@nado.org.uk

TECHNOLOGY FOR CHILDREN WITH ASD- A ONE DAY CONFERENCE (COVENTRY)

The ASC Good Practice Guide warmly thanks Andree Woodcock, organizer of the conference, for this information.

"Technology for Children with ASD" is a one-day conference on engaging children with autism through technology and multimedia. This AHRC supported event is hoped to bring together researchers working on digital or multimedia technology for children and others with ASD. The target audience is those who work with children as well as fellow researchers. The papers will be published (at least) on a DVD.

WHERE: Coventry University Technocentre

WHEN: 6th October 2006

COST: Free of charge

For further information, please contact:

Andre Woodcock

Senior Research Fellow

The Design Institute
Coventry School of Art and Design
Tel: (02476)887832

ASC RESEARCH PROJECTS

VISUAL FUNCTION AND EYE CARE RESEARCH PROJECT: CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS (BIRMINGHAM)

My name is Amy Whiskens and I am a postgraduate researcher in the School of Life and Health Sciences at Aston University in Birmingham. I am currently working on a research project looking at visual function and eye care for Autistic Spectrum Conditions.

I am looking for volunteers who do not have ASC- children over 10 and adults- to take part in the project.

If you may be interested in participating, please contact me directly:

Telephone: (0121)204-4135

Email: hooksah@aston.ac.uk

FINALLY: A READER QUESTION: DO YOU HAVE PRACTICAL INFORMATION FOR THIS READER?

One of our readers has emailed *The ASC Good Practice Guide* the following question:

Q: "...what legal recognitions are there for Aspergers; e.g. I have a very great sensitivity to noise, and wonder if I have any leverage whatever in dealing with any unusually noisy neighbours?"

Although we've researched the question, *The ASC Good Practice Guide* has been thus far unable to find a "complete" answer.

On the first part to the question, namely what legal recognitions there are, persons with ASC **are** legally protected by the Disability Discrimination Act.

According to the Disability Discrimination Act, a person is "disabled" if they have:

- A physical or mental impairment
- Which has an adverse effect on the person's ability to carry out day-to-day activities (areas which would be affected must include at least one of the following: memory or ability to concentrate, learn or understand; speech, hearing or eyesight; physical co-ordination; mobility; manual dexterity; understanding of the risk of physical danger; continence; ability to lift, carry, or move everyday objects). The DDA clarifies that any treatment should not be taken into account- what needs to be considered is the effect of the person's disability without such treatment (with the exception of glasses/contact lenses).
- The adverse effect is substantial and long-term (lasted or likely to last at least 12 months)

Further useful information on the Disability Discrimination Act can be found on the very useful website of the Disability Rights Commission (DRC): <http://www.drc-gb.org>

The second part of the reader's question, namely the leverage a person diagnosed with an ASC has in dealing with noisy neighbours, is proving more difficult for *The ASC Good Practice Guide* to provide a simple answer to.

Adviceguide is a public information website produced by Citizens Advice. By pressing the Housing (in England) tab, located on the Home Page of the website, information on neighbour disputes can be found. This includes information on how to deal with noisy neighbours.

Adviceguide recommends that the first action a person affected by noisy neighbours should take is

to talk to the neighbours in question and ask them to reduce the noise levels. The noise levels should be monitored by keeping a diary of disturbances, and the Environmental Health Officer of the person's Local Authority can be called in to investigate and deal with noise nuisances. The information provided takes **no** account of the person affected having any disability. Adviceguide can be emailed questions to the following address: www.citizensadvice.org.uk/contact_us.htm

The ASC Good Practice Guide could not find practical information for persons with disabilities suffering from noise disturbances. Most of the information found on persons with disabilities and noise disturbances focused on the individuals themselves being (unfairly) subject to Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs). The Guide and of course the reader who posed this question would therefore appreciate any practical information on this subject that other readers might be able to provide. All information would be greatly appreciated. With respondents' permission, this information will be immediately forwarded to the reader who asked the question and will also be published in the September Edition of *The ASC Good Practice Guide*.

Further questions on any subject are always welcomed by *The ASC Good Practice Guide*.

August 2006
End of Sixth Edition