

AUTISM GM

NEWSLETTER

Greater Manchester Consortium to develop local services for people with autism
www.autismgm.org.uk

SPRING 2004 EDITION

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Autism GM Newsletter is produced by:

The National Autistic Society
Family Services Development Project
Anglo House,
Chapel Road
Northenden
Manchester M22 4JN
Tel: 0161 998 4667
Fax: 0161 945 2703
Email: marisaeki@nas.org.uk

Editor: Mari Saeki
Editorial Assistants: Debbie Waters and
Barbara Whillans

Hello and welcome to the 4th edition of the Autism GM newsletter.

In the Spring 2003 edition I mentioned that the Greater Manchester Family Services Development Project had been around for 10 years. Later this year we would like to celebrate this anniversary and also say “thanks” to everyone who has supported us over the years.

We are currently in the process of planning the event and hope to have as our guest speaker Ros Blackburn. If you haven't heard Ros speak about her experience of living with autism this would be a great opportunity. As soon as details have been confirmed we will post the information on the Consortium Website www.autismgm.org.uk. We will also be sending out letters of invitation to all the Greater Manchester Support Groups.

As you know, we are always keen to hear from our readers and I am happy to say that for this edition two parents volunteered to review books about growing up and puberty which they had found particularly useful.

If anyone else would like to contribute to the newsletter or advertise autism-related training and events in our region please get in touch with us. We would be happy to include them in forthcoming editions of AutismGM News

I hope you enjoy this edition of the newsletter.

Best Wishes
Mari Saeki
Mari Saeki, Editor



**Autism Awareness
Week: 17-24 May 2004.**

The focus will be on 'Planning For Life'. The NAS will be holding a number of exciting events around the UK including a conference, parliamentary reception, corporate fundraising challenge and regional awareness-raising activities. For more details visit their website on www.nas.org.uk

Every Child Matters



Every Child Matters was commissioned following the inquiry into the circumstances that led to Victoria Climbié's death and is therefore informed throughout by the urgent need for more effective child protection. Even so, many of the weaknesses that the paper highlights, and many of the recommendations made are also highly pertinent to children's disability services.

The Green Paper wants to enable all children to:

- ◆ Be healthy
- ◆ Stay Safe
- ◆ Enjoy and achieve
- ◆ Make a positive contribution
- ◆ Experience economic well being

It identifies a number of experiences that mitigate against the likelihood of these positive outcomes. Unfortunately disability is not included on this list, which seems a serious oversight. Children with autistic spectrum disorders face many additional barriers and will need a great deal of specialised support in order to come close to meeting the vision of well being set out in these aims.

The Green Paper does identify some general 'protective' factors that can help children achieve despite experiencing some social disadvantages and these include:

- ◆ Strong relationships with parents, family and other significant adults
- ◆ Parental interest and involvement in education with high expectations
- ◆ Positive role models
- ◆ Active involvement in family, school and community life
- ◆ Recognition, praise and feeling valued

For children with autism more resources for training for parents and more practical support to their families will be needed. There also needs to be a serious commitment to opening community and leisure opportunities to all children on the spectrum and sufficient funding provided to support and enable their full participation.

The Green Paper particularly focuses on the need for better prevention with more investment in early years

interventions and provision, and a stronger focus on parenting and families with more direct support for parents. It identifies weak accountability and poor integration between services as major obstacles and highlights the need for workforce reform in childcare generally, particularly focussing upon the need for more training. Those living with and working with children with autism would certainly welcome all of these improvements.

Children with disabilities are highlighted as a group requiring particular support at various points in the paper despite not being included in the list of those most likely to experience negative quality of life outcomes. What follows is a brief summary of those recommendations that are particularly relevant to children with autistic spectrum disorders and those who support them.

Being Healthy

- ◆ Health visitors to be better integrated with other community services for families & enabled to give more support to those most in need.
- ◆ Extra training for primary care clinicians to recognise when to refer on to more specialist services.
- ◆ Action has been taken to increase the number of speech and language training places, however waiting lists are still too long.
- ◆ Better access to and smoother progression within health services. Child & Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) and services for children with disabilities recognised as needing particular improvement.



Mental health services

- ◆ Aiming to deliver a comprehensive CAMHS service in all areas by 2006.
- ◆ People working in universal services should be able to identify children who may need help. Workers will need to have proper skills and training in order to be able to achieve this.
- ◆ Specialist multi-disciplinary teams should be able to provide assessment and treatment and short and long-term interventions and care.
- ◆ Services may need to be located in a range of settings.
- ◆ The Paper highlights the particular paucity of

Enjoying and achieving

- ◆ Children's Centres in the 20 per cent poorest wards by March 2006 to signpost families to other services.
- ◆ Extending free part time education to all three year olds.
- ◆ Need to improve outcomes for children with special educational needs. Increasing numbers of learning mentors and learning support units.
- ◆ More support staff including personal assistants for teachers, cover supervisors and higher-level assistants
- ◆ Government will ensure that every school has an anti-bullying policy.
- ◆ Highlights problems faced by those children who have been excluded which, unfortunately, is a situation that faces ASD children far too frequently. Paper emphasises that these children must still receive 'effective and appropriate provision of good quality'.
- ◆ Creating a more flexible curriculum from 14– 19yrs
- ◆ Developing and extending the Connexions service for people from 13-19yrs.
- ◆ Proposes the development of 'extended schools' that act as the hub for services for children, families and other members of the community.
- ◆ Encouraging parental involvement in school – family learning programmes & better communication between parents and school.

Supporting parents and carers

- ◆ Targeted and specialist support to parents of children requiring additional support. "In the past, public policy has paid insufficient attention to supporting parents and helping families find solutions for themselves"
- ◆ A National Helpline to offer immediate advice and signpost parents towards local help and support.

Multi-agency issues

- ◆ Childcare, early years education, social care and schools working more closely with parents to strengthen their understanding of how to help their child's development
- ◆ Joint training on development and behaviour
- ◆ Recognise the need for specialist parenting support for specific groups including home-visiting programmes and parent education programmes .
- ◆ Advocates greater use of direct payments. For parents and carers of disabled children.
- ◆ Training for foster carers dealing with children with complex needs
- ◆ Improving information sharing between agencies
- ◆ Establishing a common assessment framework – core information to follow the child to reduce duplication. Also need to look at how children can be an active part of the assessment process and "how assessment can identify strengths and opportunities as well as needs and risks." P 59.
- ◆ Identifying a lead professionals in each case
- ◆ Integrating professionals through multi-disciplinary teams, "different ways of working which integrate education, social care and health services around the needs of children rather than providers." p 60. Advocate centring teams in schools.
- ◆ "Planning services in the round can enable a better response to support the child and better value for money." p 69. Advocates pooled budgets.
- ◆ Government intends to legislate to ensure co-operation between local authorities and other public, private and voluntary organisations to improve outcomes for children. (p 73)



Making a positive contribution

- ◆ 'Children need somewhere safe to go and something to do. This encourages young people's skills, confidence and self-esteem.'

Experiencing economic well-being

- ◆ Helping parents enter work through New Deal.
- ◆ Widening access to childcare.



Accountability

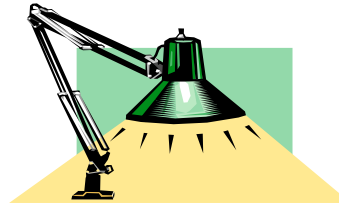
- ◆ Legislate to create a Director of Children's Services as part of Children's Trusts. These will be part of the local authority and will report to local elected members.
- ◆ Setting out clear practice standards expected of each agency in relation to children.
- ◆ Children's Commissioner to act as an independent champion. More advocacy services for children.
- ◆ Standard setting mechanism building upon the standards for health and social care due to be set out in the National Service Framework for Children later this year
- ◆ Integrated inspection framework to assess how well standards are being met. (but will this have sufficient specialist knowledge?)

Workforce reform

- ◆ Common occupational standards across children's practice
- ◆ Common core of training for all who work with children
- ◆ Encourage more people from black and minority ethnic groups, more men and more people with disabilities to work in children's services
- ◆ Address reasons for social work vacancies, particularly in children's services.
- ◆ "..... some children and families need support from a range of professionals. We need to establish new cultures in the workplace so that individual professionals work horizontally across professional boundaries rather than vertically in professional hierarchies." (p 86)
- ◆ Everyone working with children needs to be trained to do their own job well.
- ◆ They also need to know how their role fits with that of others.
- ◆ Ensure that most skilled staff can be rewarded and newly qualified staff are given strong incentives to develop their expertise.
- ◆ Establish common core training and continuing professional development.
- ◆ Commissioning high quality training provision where the market is currently not providing this.

Debbie Waters

If you are interested in reading the full report it can be downloaded from
www.dfes.gov.uk/everychildmatters.



AUTISM GOOD PRACTICE

Autism Inclusion Awards

The National Autistic Society launched its first Autism Inclusion Awards in 2003 to celebrate the many individuals and organisations around the UK who help people with autistic spectrum disorders to take a full part in the life of their communities. People nominated anybody whom they felt had been particularly helpful in promoting inclusion for themselves or their family. The winners covered all abilities on the autistic spectrum, the whole of the UK and age groups from nursery into adulthood.

One of the winners at the ceremony held in November last year was Geraint Hughes, Manager of **Leisure Link**, which is part of Stockport Cerebral Palsy Society.



Jane Asher, Geraint Hughes and Liz Blackman MP

Leisure Link is a service that provides leisure and social opportunities to those over the age of 11yrs who have a learning disability and live, or go to school, in the Stockport area. Leisure Link was singled out and praised for its meticulous preparation and person-centred planning. They are not an autism-specific service but have made sure that staff receive specialist training in order to meet the needs of those with ASD on their playschemes. They have used PECs, digital photographs and also a symbol version of the scheme's evaluation forms and timetable of events to facilitate communication for members. Geraint always asks the service users and their parents and carers what activities they would like to do.

One of the judges, Liz Blackman MP, commented:

"What is striking is the lengths to which Geraint goes to ensure that he knows the needs of each individual. Leisure and social activities are so enjoyable and this scheme ensures this enjoyment is open to all."

Leisure Link has a combination of paid staff and

volunteers and they are all offered training including autism awareness, which is provided by working in partnership with another local organisation. Funding comes from various sources and has included Children-in-Need, Stockport Early Years and Stockport Social Services.

Despite recognition from people who enjoy the scheme, parents and professionals, Geraint is extremely modest about **Leisure Link's** work and refuses to believe that either Leisure Link or himself are doing anything that should not be done as a matter of course for any activity-based provision.

Debbie Waters

Q1 How long have you been working for Leisure Link?

Debbie Waters interviews Geraint about his work.

“Ten years in November in a number of different roles although all based around leisure”.

Q2 How many service users do you have with autistic spectrum disorders?

“It’s difficult to say across all Leisure Link services as a lot of adults live in supported accommodation and their records contain statements like he/she has autistic tendencies which as you know means very little. Unfortunately it seems that there are very few adults with an actual diagnosis, at least those that I come across. In relation to the 11+ scheme this summer we catered for 36 young people and 12 of those had autistic spectrum disorders. Within our Young People’s Services this number is growing each year, this year in particular”.

Q3. What do you see as the biggest challenges posed by integrating people with autistic spectrum disorders?

“Lack of awareness about autism means that people don’t appreciate what is needed in terms of resources and time to ensure that what is offered will meet an individuals needs (individuals are pigeon-holed far too often). Lack of funding often means lack of training for managers, staff and volunteers and as there is limited appropriate leisure provision available people too often end up in services that do not meet their needs”.

Q4. What are the most important factors for

successful inclusion?

- ♦ *Get to know the individual with autism or Asperger’s Syndrome*
- ♦ *Liase with people that are involved with the individual*
- ♦ *Thorough planning and preparation*
- ♦ *Autism awareness training for staff/volunteers*
- ♦ *Listen to the individual and those that know them*

Q5. Have you any plans to extend the service in the future?

“We have just secured some funding through Connexions to run a Duke of Edinburgh Award project that will support individuals with a range of disabilities including those with autistic spectrum disorders. We have run a very small pilot project over the last 2 years and proved that this works and is something that individual’s want. In addition to this we may run a 11+ residential as well as the current format so that individuals have more choice. We are still waiting on all feedback from individuals and their carers on this although it seems to be a goer based on current feedback received”

Q6. Is there anything else you want to say?

“Only to say that Leisure Link has not got it right yet in terms of the support that it offers to people with autistic spectrum disorders but we are striving towards trying to improve rather than becoming complacent with what we have to date. Still it’s nice to get some recognition though”.

**Leisure Link is based at
Houldsworth Business Centre
Houldsworth Street
Reddish
Stockport SK5 6DA
Tel 0161 975 6107**

Details of all The National Autistic Society Inclusion Award winners and nominations can be found on The National Autistic Society website www.nas.org.uk.

Remember that we are always keen to highlight and publicise local examples of good or innovative and autism-friendly practice. If you or a family member have had a particularly good experience of a service or individual professional, then please let us know.’



Carers (Equal Opportunities) Bill

Dr Hywel Francis MP (Aberavon), came second in the Private Members' Ballot and recently introduced the Carers (Equal Opportunities) Bill. It focuses on health, information, employment and life-long learning issues for carers and had its Second Reading on 6 February 2004.

Carers UK have been working closely with Dr Francis on the content of the Bill and believe that, if successful, it will make a real difference to carers' lives. The Bill was launched on Monday 26 January 2004 and copies of the Bill are available from www.parliament.uk.

Why do we need a Bill for carers?

Society depends on the support that carers provide to sick and disabled people. Carers save the state £57 billion every year. However, in order to continue caring and live a more fulfilled life outside caring, the carers' own health and well-being needs to be positively considered.

Research shows that caring can have a negative impact on the physical and mental health of a carer. Many carers also give up work to care and find it hard, once providing substantial amounts of care, to then access learning and training opportunities and combine work with caring responsibilities.

This Bill aims to put some mechanisms in place to give carers more opportunities to achieve these things.

What would the Bill achieve?

Details of how to get involved in the campaign to support this Bill can be found at www.carersonline.org.uk.

The Bill will give carers more choice and opportunities to lead a more fulfilling life by ensuring that carers receive information on their rights, training and work opportunities and it will also ensure that carers' own health is given more consideration. It would achieve three main things:

- ◆ Ensure that carers are systematically given information, including information about their rights, so that they can make informed decisions about their lives.
- ◆ Ensure that carers' health, in its broadest sense, is positively considered by social services.
- ◆ Help to give carers more opportunities in education, training and employment

How would the Bill do this?

The Bill would achieve these aims by placing:

- ◆ a duty on social services to promote equality of opportunity for carers, particularly in relation to their health and well-being. They would have to look at what services they provided (or secured) to ensure that they were sufficiently flexible to allow carers to work, have a break or enter training or life-long learning opportunities whilst caring
- ◆ a duty on local authorities to tell carers about their rights to an assessment
- ◆ a duty on local authorities to develop information strategies to ensure that carers know about their rights
- ◆ a duty on health and social services to promote the health and welfare of carers
- ◆ a duty on other parts of the local authority to ensure that they work with social services, if social services asks for their assistance, to deliver information strategies to help carers.



We often get requests for autism-specific information about puberty and growing up.

These issues are sensitive and difficult enough with any group of children, but become far more complicated when needing to be addressed with people who have communication problems and a lack of awareness or sensitivity to socially appropriate behaviour and norms.

There does seem to be a gap in the market for practical teaching materials to assist professionals and carers in explaining the changes to young people with autistic spectrum disorders. There are some materials for those with learning difficulties but often these are not explicit and literal enough. Fear of, and resistance to, change as well as personal sensory and social difficulties can make puberty a particularly difficult time for the young person with autism and those who support them.

A parent, Laura Blease, was interested in the subject of puberty and offered to review two books for AutismGM.

Another parent, Suzie Franklin, also kindly shared her experience of putting together a programme designed to prepare her 13yr old daughter for the changes that would happen to her body, including starting her periods.

Their accounts demonstrate how much this kind of information is needed but also shows how materials will have to be used, inevitably, in a flexible way in order to meet the needs of each individual at different stages of their development. *“Having responded to the request for people to do ‘book reviews’ for the AutismGM newsletter, I*

We would love to hear from anyone who has details of any other useful resources on the subject of growing up and also from any other readers interested in writing a book review for AutismGM.

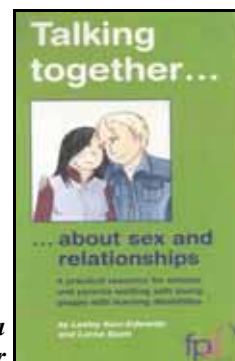
*Please ring Mari on Tel: 0161 998 4667
Or email her on marisaeki@nas.org.uk*

thought it would be of particular interest to do a review on a couple of books that are of particular interest to myself and my son Simon, who is at present 14 years old and going through puberty.

Simon was diagnosed at birth as having Cerebral Palsy and from the age of 6, it helped us tremendously to be told he had ‘autistic tendencies’ along with learning difficulties. This helped us understand so many things and difficulties that Simon had been experiencing, such as the terror of noises, having to have set routines and becoming distressed by things being moved and so on.

TALKING TOGETHER – About sex and relationship

By Lorna Scott & Lesley Kerr-Edwards



This book is a workbook for parents or teachers who are responsible for children with learning difficulties. It is a lovely book which deals with things in a very nice and simple manner. It is particularly aimed at approximately 11-15 year olds, a time when children’s bodies start to change.

Each ‘issue’ is explained so you can actually put your own child’s name or family names in the place of each picture, enabling the child to actually associate with the point being made, making learning both memorable and fun.

At the beginning of each chapter it gives you ideas of what you might need, appropriate words to use, how to work through the section with your child, a small section of ‘what if?’ (any questions your child might ask), then other things you can do - for example, games/activities you can play and discuss, for example using photos and magazines.

What is super is the way that things which normally would appear quite embarrassing to discuss, this book tackles in a ‘step-by-step’ simple way. It explains such things as body parts/ body shapes/ body fluids, public/private, feelings and relationships. It deals with both male and female issues including periods, personal hygiene and shaving.

The section in this book that I have found most

useful, helpful and particularly interesting is the section covering 'public and private'. Simon and I could sit and discuss whether different places or parts of his body were 'public' or 'private' then establish rules of behaviour for different situations.

Although Simon's body is maturing, he is still very young in his mind. First of all we established where is 'private' and where is 'public' using the 'places' pictures. As Simon is now aware of his body's private region we talked about which of these places it would be appropriate to cover up and the right place to undress. We have gone through the rooms in our own home and friends houses and decided where it is appropriate to be naked.

We will obviously have to keep discussing the sections until they have 'sunk in', but having the visual pictures really helps."

'say' such a thing. Also, as he has grows older, things that were once appropriate and socially acceptable for him to do as a child would now appear extremely strange and weird for a 14 year old to be doing.

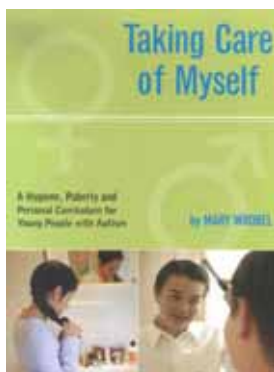
This book teaches 'modesty' in a simple step-by-step manner, and like most of the topics talked about covers the small details for both boys and girls.

Throughout the book there are also worksheets which will be most helpful, which can help a child learn by filling in the 'gaps' by either writing, talking or using pictures.

I would have liked access to these books years ago, but having read them both now, they will still be most useful, especially as we still probably have a few more years a head of us to tackle issues about growing up, puberty, safety issues and hygiene.

TAKING CARE OF MYSELF

by Mary Wrobel



"This book is written for children aged from 5-18 yrs old and its style is particularly helpful for children with autism. It is a fantastic book that once again can be used by both teachers and parents. It is written in such a way that it can also be used for children with other communication and language problems, showing how to use visual supports and communication aids, which will help children, comprehend and express information.

I feel that this is a slightly more complex book than 'Talking Together' as it covers more issues and from a much earlier age – all the way through puberty and into early adulthood. It breaks down sections in a way that I can pick out appropriate pictures and sentences that I feel would be beneficial to Simon.

Reading a book like this simplifies these sensitive subjects and, read often enough, will help Simon learn exactly what is an appropriate way to 'do' or

Having read through both of the above books. I feel that anybody with a child with autism and/or learning difficulties would find them both extremely interesting and helpful and often a good guide or reference for those difficult times when panic sets in and you think, how on earth will I begin to explain that!!

Review by Laura Blease

Another parent, Suzie Franklin, has a daughter with autism, Jennie, who is 13 years old. She told us how helpful the 'Taking Care of Myself' book had been to her in devising a programme to introduce Jennie both to the changes that were happening to her body and the practical details of starting her periods.

Here's what Suzie had to say.

"I have been looking for a long time for appropriate, autism specific information about how to tackle growing up and puberty for my daughter who has classic autism. Most of the information I had managed to find about puberty (which wasn't much) was geared towards boys and the more able end of the spectrum. I was really pleased when I read this book as there was for the first time specific, practical and useful information to help me teach my daughter about growing up and menstruation.

I have been able to use a lot of the ideas from this book to make a programme suited for Jennie and hopefully this will prepare her and take some of the anxiety out of starting periods."

Review by Suzie Franklin

Suzie has created a staged programme, all in picture form, using digital photos and boardmaker symbols. The first task, by using picture, was to show Jennie that all girls grow up into women, that Jennie was going through that process, and what physical changes she could expect. Suzie was particularly concerned about how Jennie might respond to having periods and didn't want this to come as a complete shock as that could be very frightening.

As a result of the programme Jennie now understands that "ladies" have 'special blood' on a cyclical basis. This has been shown to her by colouring the days on a wheel that has numbers for each day of the month - an idea taken from Pavilion's '**Becoming a Woman**' teaching pack. She now understands that this is OK and doesn't hurt. Jennie also knows that when she has "special blood" she needs to use pads and also change them. This will undoubtedly reduce Jennie's potential anxiety about starting her

periods. Jennie's family now feel far more confident about how she will manage such a huge change.

Debbie Waters

References:

Taking Care of Myself

Mary Wrobel
Future Horizons Inc.
approx. £12.99 2003
1885477945

Talking Together – about Sex and Relationships:

A Practical Resource for Schools and Parents Working with Young People with Learning Disabilities
Lesley Kerr-Edwards

Becoming a Woman: A teaching pack on menstruation for people with learning difficulties.
1999

Helix CHILD ALERT

'Living with Autism' Support Group

**FREE
OFFER**

A parent from the Living with Autism Support Group recently wrote to the manufacturers of the Helix Child Alert Alarm to tell them how useful their product had been for her and her son who sometimes runs off. Helix responded with 2 FREE alarms for other parents of children with autism experiencing similar problems. If you would like one please contact either Debbie Waters or Wendy Naylor, Joint Co-ordinators of the group.

Debbie: Tel: 485 4164
Wendy: Tel: 486 1136

ADVOCATING FOR EQUALITY

Many disabled people with physical, sensory, communication and profound and multiple impairments cannot access the support of an independent advocate, according to a report by The Independent Advocacy Campaign, (IAC), established by disability charity Scope.

The Independent Advocacy Campaign is a consortium of organisations set up by Scope to look at the issue of independent advocacy provision for people with sensory, physical, communication and profound and multiple impairments. Members of the Independent Advocacy Campaign include The National Autistic Society, Sense, RNIB, Mencap, Scope, Citizen Advocacy Information and Training, and Advocacy Across London.

Launched at the House of Commons on 21 January 2004, **Advocating for Equality** is a survey of the current levels of advocacy provision for disabled people in England. It found that provision is lacking for many disabled people, due mainly to funding issues and a lack of skills and experience around working with these groups of people. It also found that although there is overwhelming support for local authorities to develop a local advocacy plan, there is very little evidence of any plans at a local level.

Wendy Lewington, Scope's National Lead Adviser on Advocacy, said:

"Lack of provision means that many people with physical, sensory, communication and profound and multiple impairments are less likely to obtain services they are entitled to, and will be less likely to have their voices heard."

Tom Clarke MP added:

*"The report **Advocating for Equality** has highlighted how independent advocacy is a vital tool in maintaining disabled peoples independence. Only through being able to express themselves will disabled people have a chance of achieving equality of opportunity, choice and control over their lives."*

The IAC is using the report to call for more action from local and national government, health bodies, advocacy schemes and service providers to ensure better access to advocacy for all disabled people, but particularly those with communication and profound and multiple impairments, who may be among those most in need of this kind of support.

To obtain a copy of the report, please contact Scope Library and Information Unit on
Tel: 020 7619 7341
or email publications@scope.org.uk.



AUTISM GM WEBSITE

www.autismgm.org.uk

Although the NAS Family Services Development Project doesn't have the resources to mail copies of the Newsletter to individuals we do post it onto the Consortium website soon after it's published.

However, if you are involved in a group/organisation that works with parents of children or adults with ASD and you haven't got access to the Internet we would be happy to include your group/organisation on our regular mailing list.

Tel: 0161 998 4667

Email: marisaeki@nas.org.uk

LAUNCH OF THE ASSOCIATION FOR SUPPORTED LIVING

Seven leading organisations in the field of learning disability have joined forces to found the **Association of Supported Living (ASL)**. Founder organisations include Mencap, Turning Point, Choice Support, Renaissance Housing, Alternative Futures, The Brothers of Charity and Care UK.

The ASL, formed in January 2004, will be formally launched at a conference in Manchester on 18 March 2004.

The conference is sponsored by a further 28 learning disability organisations. The ASL is confident of having 50 member organisations by March 2004 and predicts that the number could exceed 100.

The ASL was born out of a widely perceived need to promote a shared vision of "people with learning disabilities occupying their rightful place in society, as equals alongside others, enjoying the same sort of lifestyle as most other members of our society"; a frustration with the lack of progress toward this vision, and the need to create a new organisation to support its members to drive forward change.

Despite a hospital closure programme commencing more than three decades ago over 700 people with a learning disability remain in long stay hospitals and the government has just confirmed that there will be a two year slippage on its commitment in 2001 to close all long stay hospitals by April 2004.

Additionally, the current legislative, regulatory and administrative frameworks often fails to support people with learning disabilities in achieving equal citizenship.

The objects of the ASL are:

- ♦ to promote the independence, Inclusion, choices and rights of people with learning disabilities by promoting the model of Supported Living
- ♦ by providing a range of support and representation as determined by its members; organisations providing Supported Living to people with learning disabilities

Following the 'Minefields' conference held in May 2003 there was an overwhelming view regarding the need to establish a new body to represent organisations providing Supported Living for people with learning disabilities. A steering group was set up and subsequently the ASL was established; to assist providers to work more effectively with their partners in the national development of policy, practice and strategy for learning disability services.

The imminent emergence of the Commission for Social Care Inspection, the developing role of Partnership Boards and the Governments commitment to the Voluntary and Community Sector, gives a perfect opportunity to review strengths and weaknesses and to plan a brighter future together. We are determined to promote a vision that goes way beyond current service models.

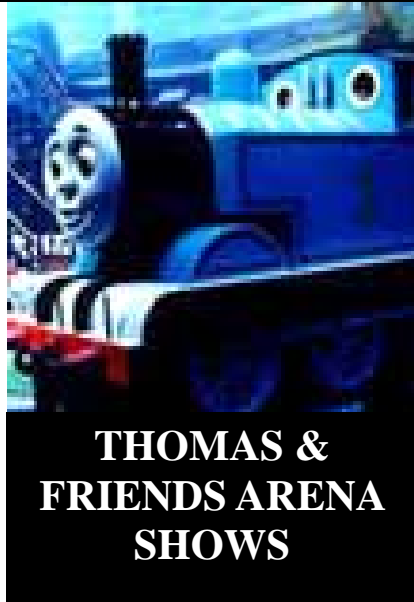
"As well as articulating a NEW vision of the future we are resolved to move positively towards it, ensuring that the gap between the lifestyle experienced by most people with learning disabilities and the lifestyle enjoyed by most others is, once and for all, closed"

"The launch of the ASL is an exciting, welcome and much needed development coming at a critical time. I am confident that it will make a significant contribution towards creating the new ideas and impetuous required to ensure that the 'Valuing People' vision is translated from rhetoric to reality for more and more people with a learning disability".

Lord Victor Adebawale
Chief Executive Turning Point

Association for Supporting Living contact details:
Steven Rose
Association for Supported Living
c/o 27 Barry Road
LONDON
SE22 0HX
Tel: 020 8693 6088
Email: stevenrose@runbox.com

Launch conference details:
Michelle Bulley
Conference/Event Organiser
Pavilion
The Ironworks
Cheapside
Brighton BN1 4GD
Tel: 01273 623222 Ext 235
Fax: 01273 625526
Email: michelleb@pavpub.com



This is to let you know that Thomas the Tank Engine & Friends are steaming back into town with a brand new live stage show. This year, visitors will even have the opportunity to hear two stories for the price of one. Hailed as "A Triumph" by The Daily Mail, the live action show will be coming to the Manchester Evening News Arena on Saturday 24th and Sunday 25th April 2004.

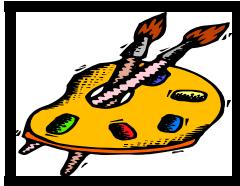
Thomas & Friends—The All Aboard Tour! Is a fantastic, spectacular show which promises a wonderful, quality experience and a real introduction to the world of imagination and theatre. The show features action-packed fun and songs as the audience are invited to help Thomas, the Fact Controller and Friends in their adventures on the Island of Sodor.

With over 500 foot of track, tunnels and stations, full-size engines and this year introducing those favourite characters, Annie & Clarabel, the show promises to be an unforgettable treat.

Ticket prices: £16, £14, £11.50
 Family ticket for 4 people: £60, £50, £40
 Group discounts apply—call the Box Office for details (Tel: 0161 950 5000)

To book tickets and help raise funds for The National Autistic Society telephone the NAS Hotline on

Tel: 0870 272 0011



ASPIRATIONS ART CLUB

Aspirations obtained funding to begin an Art Group following an expression of interest from many of its current members.

Jane Sochovsky and Pete Halliwell co-ordinate the Art Group and Jane has let us have an update on the group's progress so far.

"The group was an immediate success and now meets on a weekly basis. There is a room specifically dedicated to Art and Crafts and this room is available at all times. This enables all members, including the youth clubs and the weekly Drop-In members, to use the facilities.

The art produced is diverse and exciting using different media and approaches. Our talented members are currently designing greeting cards which will be professionally printed in the Spring.

The Autistic Society Greater Manchester Area (ASGMA) of which *Aspirations* are a part, are currently negotiating a move to larger premises when they hope to be able to open up the art facility to ASGMA members and their children"



*To find out more about the Art Club,
 contact: -
 Aspirations
 1114 Chester Road
 Stretford
 Manchester M32 0HL
 Tel: 0161 866 8485
 Contact: Pete Halliwell or
 Samantha Coates*



FORTHCOMING EVENTS IN THE REGION

Autistic Spectrum Disorders: An Insight

Tuesday 23rd March 2004 9.15am—3.30pm

The Inscape Centre

Cost: £60 professionals £40 parents/INCA members

Closing Date: 15th March 2004

For further details please contact Joanne Halliwell

Tel: 0161 283 4761 or 4750 Fax: 0161 283 4844

Email: joannehalliwell.bgws@virgin.net

Better Management of Challenging Behaviours

John Mortlock

24th March 2004. 9am-4.30pm.

Burnley Football Club

This Conference is for people who work or live with adults or children who have learning disabilities, autistic spectrum disorders and other developmental disorders, and whose behaviour is challenging. This workshop is based on the new training workbook by Tom McKernan and John Mortlock. Participants will learn how to use the training approach in any setting. A copy of the workbook will be available to purchase on the day.

Parent Members £30.00, Non Parent Member £40.00

Professional Member £90.00, Professional Non Member £100.00

For more details contact:

ACTION FOR ASD, Unit 2 Dominion Court, Billington Road, Burnley, Lancashire. BB11 5UB. Telephone:

01282 412021

Email: info@actionasd.org

Logically Illogical - Information and insight into Autism

Ros Blackburn

Monday 29th March 2004 6-8pm

Pictor School

Altrincham

Cost: Parents £4 Professionals £6

Contact: Mali Rashidi Tel: (M) 07966 676506 or

Christine Suddons Tel: (M) 078816 870174

Sexuality and Personal Relationships

Wednesday 28th April 2004

Central Manchester, venue to be confirmed

An introductory course aimed at anyone wishing to develop awareness and understanding of sexuality in people who have learning disabilities.

Cost: BILD Members £122.50 + VAT

Non-Members £125.00 + VAT

For more details telephone BILD on

Tel: 01562 723025

Asperger's syndrome: Practical Supports for Children and Adolescents

Dr Tony Attwood

10th May 2004 9.15 - 4.30 p.m.

The Inscape Centre

This seminar will explore a range of practical supports and strategies that enable individuals with Asperger syndrome to successfully navigate childhood and adolescence. These supports and strategies are designed to promote positive functioning and prevent social / emotional meltdown. It will offer a perspective on understanding and addressing the social world, developing friendships, promoting strengths and managing difficulties. In particular, issues around school, adolescence and transition to adulthood will be examined, with implications for home, school and the community.

Suggested participants

Practitioners supporting individuals with Asperger's syndrome at all developmental levels; teachers and other educationalists; clinicians involved in counselling and/or mental health issues' parents, family and carers of individuals with Asperger's syndrome.

For further details about this INCA conference please

contact: Joanne Halliwell, Tel: 0161 283 48444 or

4750, Fax: 0161 283 4751 or email

joannehalliwell.bgws@virgin.net

Communication Across the Spectrum

Luke Beardon

FORTHCOMING EVENTS IN THE REGION continued

9th June 2004 9am—4.30pm
Burnley Football Club

Luke who is a well known speaker at national and international conferences is currently senior lecturer in autism at Sheffield University. He will look at all aspects of the communication difficulties people with an ASD experience and will provide strategies to support the development of verbal and non verbal communication.

Parent Members £30.00,
Non Parent Member £40.00
Professional Member £90.00, Professional
Non Member £100.00

For more details contact:
ACTION FOR ASD, Unit 2 Dominion Court,
Billington Road, Burnley, Lancashire. BB11
5UB. Telephone: 01282 412021
Email: info@actionasd.org

**Understanding Challenging
Behaviour**
Dave Hewett

Tuesday 6th July 2004 9.15—4.30pm
The Inscape Centre

Cost: £100 professionals £70 INCA
Members

A limited number of places are available to
parents at £45. The cost includes
refreshments and lunch.

The course will introduce methods of
management and interventions using
techniques such as calming and defusing in
order to work towards effective outcomes to
difficult situations. It will also discuss long-
term strategies for behaviour management.
The training will include small and large group
work and use of video examples.

For further details contact Joanne Halliwell
Tel: 0161 283 4761 or 4750
Fax: 0161 283 4844
Email: joannehalliwell.bgws@virgin.net



LAUNCH OF NEW AUTISM HELPLINE



AUTISM HELPLINE
0845 070 4004

On Monday 23rd February the NAS Autism Helpline was re-launched with a new Telephone Number. The new number is **0845 070 4004** and will incorporate the Helpline and the Information Centre under one number for all callers. The existing number for the Autism Helpline 0870 600 8585 will remain in operation for at least a year as the number is printed in many publications. Callers will be able to get through on either number. The new number is for all public enquiries for information and advice and is charged at local call rate. The new number is for people with ASD, their families and professionals.

There will be access for callers whose first language is not English as the NAS has subscribed to **Language Line** giving them access to interpreters in over 120 languages.

The Helpline minicom number is **0845 070 4003**

PARENT SUPPORT GROUPS IN GREATER MANCHESTER

BOLTON

Bolton Autism Action Group

Tel: 01204 371768
Contact: Dave Scowcroft

BURY

Bury Autism Parent Society

Bury Autism Parent Society (BAPS) no longer exists
Please contact the NAS Family Services Development
Project for further details.
The website is still available: -
www.baps-online.co.uk

OLDHAM

OSCA

Tel: 0161 688 6156
Contact: Jo Palmer, Secretary
Email: osca@bigfoot.com

Support Group for parents of teenagers with Asperger's syndrome

Contact: Lilian Nelson
Tel: 620 1359

ROCHDALE

RAGS

Tel: 01706 374525
Contact: Margaret

Rochdale Parents of Autism, Asperger's Liaison Society

Tel: 07714488817 (Hazel Crossland) or
Tel: 07752293076 (Deirdre Leavers)

SALFORD

Salford & Greater Manchester ADHD & Related Syndromes Family Support Centre

Tel: 790 1455
Fax: 790 1422
Email: ADD@grtmanchester.freemove.co.uk
Contact: Carol Weston

STOCKPORT

Stockport National Autistic Society Branch

Tel: 431 3525
Contact: Sue Shaw
Email: stockportnas.@msn.com

Living With Autism Support Group

Tel: 486 1136 (Wendy Naylor)

TAMESIDE

TASCA

Tel: 351 0487 Contact: Veronica Lane-Super
Email: ronni_lane@msn.com

Tameside Asperger's syndrome Support Group

Tel: 331 5268
Contact: Julie Scrymgeour

WIGAN

Wigan SCOPE

Tel: 01257 423939
Contact: Caroline Tomlinson.

GREATER MANCHESTER

Asperger's Syndrome Parent Support Group

Tel: 0161 707 6669
Contact: Lesley Roberts

This group is supported by the Autistic Society Greater Manchester Area (ASGMA)
and is open to all parents.