



e-newsletter: August 2008

Welcome to the August edition of the Autism Education Trust e-newsletter.

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Thank you for your continued support and best wishes,

Sarah-Jane Critchley
AET Project Head

Tell a friend...

Is there someone you think would be interested to hear about the AET? Please forward this newsletter to them and ask them to send us their details so we can keep them up to date.

AET roadshows – your feedback is now online

We have analysed all the comments and suggestions made at the series of roadshows, held earlier in the year, and produced an evaluation report which has been published on the AET website (<http://www.autism.org.uk/nas/jsp/polopoly.jsp?d=1499&a=17042>). We hope you find it useful to see others' comments, particularly if you were not able to attend an event. We would welcome further feedback via the online 'Have Your Say' form.

In addition, we will soon be able to share with you the AET workplan for the next 12 months. It is in its final approval stages and as soon as it is available we will post it online.

Keep visiting www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk to keep up to date with plans and progress.

AET research update and IDP autism resources

The University of Birmingham research team, ACER, headed up by Dr Glenys Jones, presented its final report to the AET Steering Group last week at its latest meeting. It has incorporated comments from the Steering Group and from a reading group of professionals, parents and people with autism. We are hoping to be able to publish research information on the AET website by early October so please continue to check the website.

In addition, the University of Birmingham team has been working with the Department for Children Schools and Families (DCSF) to produce two resources to support practitioners working with all children and young people on the autism spectrum. The resources, due to be published in 2009, cover:

1. Early years settings (e.g. childminders, playgroups, nurseries, children's centres)
2. All mainstream primary and secondary schools and students on initial teacher training courses. This resource is designed for Headteachers, SENCOs, leadership teams, Governors, teachers, teaching assistants and all students training to be teachers.

No doubt the resources will also be of interest to parents and carers of children and young people with autism. They will be published as a stand alone DVD and as a web resource on the DCSF website.

The making of this resource is part of a four year Inclusion Development Programme (IDP) by the DCSF to produce materials to support education practitioners in a number of key areas. Last year, resources were created on speech, language and communication needs for early years practitioners and a resource for mainstream schools was created on speech, language and communication needs and dyslexia. These have recently been introduced to all schools and early years' settings. They can be accessed at <http://www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/primary/features/inclusion/sen/idp>

We will update you with further information on the autism resources as the project progresses.

New annual budget announced by DCSF for SENCO training

The Government announced in July that it will provide an extra £10 million a year to enable all new SENCOs to undertake high quality, nationally accredited training. The extra funding will underpin a new requirement, from September 2009, for all new SENCOs to be both qualified teachers and to receive additional training.

It is part of a package of measures set out by Schools Minister Andrew Adonis to improve support for children with special educational needs (SEN) and disabilities, outlined in his speech to the Voice union conference. He said;

“Improving the life chances of children with special educational needs and disabilities is an absolute priority for this Government and equipping teachers with the skills they need is central to this. Overall, funding for SEN provision has risen by more than £1 billion in the last four years. “Teachers who take on a specific role in helping children with special needs and disabilities are an inspirational group, who do an amazing job. It is only right that we meet their commitment by providing them with the professional development they need.”

For the full story visit http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/pns/DisplayPN.cgi?pn_id=2008_0163

The Bercow Report commissioned by the DCSF is now available to view online

In 2007, John Bercow MP, Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Speech and Language Difficulties, was commissioned by the DCSF to lead an independent review of services for children with speech and language difficulties – including those with autism.

The Report list five key statements at the outset:

- Communication is crucial
- Early identification and intervention are essential
- A continuum of services, designed around the family, is needed
- Joint working is crucial
- The current system is characterised by high variability and a lack of equity

The report makes 34 recommendations, including the formation of a communication council and the appointment of a communication champion whose brief would be to check that the regions and individual local authorities were putting the recommendations into practice. Recommendations also including speech, language and communications needs being prioritized by Children's Centres and by DCSF within both the primary and secondary school sectors. Inevitably, work on speech, language and communication should also enhance provision for those with autism.

The full report is available to view online at <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/bercowreview>.

Touch the Sky offers distance learning for people with autism

Touch the Sky, run by Lucienne Sharpe in Worthing, West Sussex, offers teaching and therapy through video conferencing in schools – mainstream, academies and specialist settings – both in the UK and across the world. Touch the Sky works with Gifted and Talented individuals offering a successful alternative to one-to-one teaching. Lucienne says;

“I work with a range of pupils through interactive distance learning technologies including web cam on laptops or video conferencing, and in many cases have found our programme results in more active and engaged individuals than more traditional face-to-face teaching methods. We are currently running several pilots with different types of learning settings and I hope to be able to roll out our technology more widely.”

Lucienne is keen to set up further pilots – personalised programmes can be developed to meet the needs of individual children. She has experience of working with pupils with autism and Downs syndrome as well as those with wider speech and language difficulties. She particularly likes to use music and dance in her teaching. Lucienne also offers counselling for parents who need support.

If you would like to find out more about Touch the Sky visit www.touchthesky.uk.com or contact Lucienne Sharpe on 01903 507744.

New children's book promotes understanding of Asperger syndrome

Understanding Sam is a new book co-authored by speech language pathologist Liezl Venter, and the well-known South African artist Clarabelle Van Niekerk who also illustrated the book. It has been short listed for 2008 book of the year in Australia (Speech Pathology Australia), endorsed by world renowned Dr Tony Attwood, and is now widely available to readers in the UK.

The book tells the story of Sam, a young boy with Asperger syndrome, and explores the day-to-day challenges facing those diagnosed with a specific type of autism and aims to educate children to be more understanding of classmates who are 'different'. The story shows how early intervention with a diagnosis can be beneficial for children like Sam. It also stresses the importance of a team based approach with family, friends and teachers working together with health care professionals. This book presents a powerful message that through teamwork, prejudices and ignorance can be replaced with understanding, awareness, compassion and friendship. The book includes 10 helpful tips to be used in a classroom environment by teachers, or at home by parents.

The book can be purchased at all major bookshops (RRP £11.99) or can be ordered online at http://www.amazon.co.uk/Understanding-Sam-Clarabelle-van-Niekerk/dp/0974721719/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1218534376&sr=8-1

Walk for Autism Research in Swinley Forest, Bracknell, on Sunday 12 October 2008

Autism Speaks, the UK's only charity raising money for research into the causes of autism, is staging a sponsored walk on Sunday 12 October 2008 in Swinley Forest, Bracknell (Berkshire). The day promises to be a fun family event with information stands from local autism organisations. Choose your own walk – one, four or five miles – or hire a bike if you prefer to ride. Refreshments, picnic area and playground facilities are all available. Walkers are encouraged to register beforehand and raise sponsorship. Every walker who raises money will receive a medal. Visit http://www.autismspeaks.org.uk/swinley_walk_2008.html to find out more and register to take part.

Have Your Say

We are always keen to hear your thoughts and suggestions for the AET. Please visit the AET website and fill in the online form to tell us about your experiences of autism education. We want to hear from parents, young people with autism and professionals working in the autism education field.

Visit <http://www.autism.org.uk/nas/jsp/polopoly.jsp?d=1502&a=14706> to fill in a form.

Further information

We hope you would like to continue receiving the AET e-newsletter. However, if you do not wish to receive these updates in future please email info@autismeducationtrust.org.uk with the word 'unsubscribe' in the subject line. If you have received this newsletter via a third party and would like to be added to the regular mailing list please email the above address to subscribe.

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