

autism london

Bi-Monthly Bulletin

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Contributors

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We would welcome any feedback related to information printed in this publication.

The views and opinions expressed in Autism London's bulletin are not necessarily those of the organisation.

Farewell from this Service Development Officer

I have been working for Autism London for just over four years, in two different roles, firstly as part-time Support Officer, and latterly as Service Development Officer; now at the end of this week I shall be moving on to take up a position as part-time Information Officer with another disability organisation. I am moving to a role which will take up a little less of my time, and allow more for my own family. Also, four years is so far about the longest I have stayed in any job, not including periods of maternity leave when I was having babies. I haven't had any babies since I came to Autism London, although last summer I did "give birth" to my appendix(!).

During my time here I have seen many changes: both of staff, and also organisational changes. Autism London has moved from being a small independent autism charity to becoming the autism branch, and technically a subsidiary of the much larger MCCH. A couple of months ago I had to talk to you about changes to our services arising from the need to change the way we are funded. With all this change going on, I am happy to say that our support services team has remained stable for over a year now, and so has had the chance to "gel", so that we now have a competent and very supportive team which I shall be truly sorry to leave behind.

Change can seem difficult, mainly because it is always a venture into the unknown to some extent. Once the unknown becomes known, like it or not, at least you know what you are dealing with! And so, I am looking forward to having **finished** my first week in my new job- just as much, I should think, as the new Autism London SDO, when recruited, will be!

Please note, the team will keep you posted about any new staff recruits at Autism London. The recruitment process inevitably takes some time, but MCCH are providing some interim management support via one of their Senior Managers, Vince Brown.

I know I have learnt a lot during my time at Autism London, and would just like to say that I have thoroughly enjoyed my contact with our Supporters, through the Autism London events and support groups, in particular at ALAG, where I have met so many interesting and knowledgeable people.

I do hope that Autism London Support Services can fulfil its current aim of securing some longer term funding arrangements to enable it to continue to provide support to people affected by Autistic spectrum disorder. If the determination amongst the staff is any indication, then they should be successful!

It only remains for me to wish Autism London, its staff, volunteers and Supporters a wonderful summer, and very best wishes for the future, whatever it may hold.

Gill Lea-Wilson
Service Development Officer

Support Services Update

Challenging OCD

We have recently been looking at the topic of Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, which is the name for a condition in which a person experiences repetitive thoughts and behaviours. OCD has two main features: obsessions and compulsions and it is common for people to carry out a compulsion in order to reduce the anxiety they feel from an obsession. Common compulsions include excessive washing and cleaning; checking; touching; counting; arranging and ordering and many more.

OCD is much more common than was previously thought. The cause of OCD differs from individual to individual but is likely to be the result of a combination of factors. For most people with OCD, professional help will be needed at some time. Without any form of treatment, an individual with OCD is likely to spend their lives under a great deal of stress. We have recently met with Megan Karnes from OCD Action, an organisation run by volunteers for over fourteen years. They promote awareness, understanding and recovery of OCD and provide information, advice and support for people affected by the condition. Megan Karnes will be giving a talk about OCD Action at our Family Support meeting on 14th September at Floral Place, 1.30-3.00pm.

I hope you all have a pleasant holiday and for those of you who are going away – have a great time wherever you go!

Ethney Anderson
Support Officer

Islington Information Day

Hello Supporters, once again it's that time again when we at Autism London take the opportunity to share information that we hope will be useful to you. Recently myself and my colleague attended an information day in Islington entitled "A New Way of Working For Special Needs Children". I found one of the workshops particularly interesting regarding future planning for young people who are disabled. I will try to briefly outline some of the core points that were made.

First of all services for young people with a disability need to reflect that they are promoting the individual's inclusion within society. This can be done through offering the young person choices, respecting their differences, and recognising their strengths. Services need to work together in removing transition barriers, and to have a good knowledge of the appropriate resources available to assist and support a young person with a disability. Person Centred Plans combined with relevant information on jobs, future education, benefits and the opportunities to experience various activities. The process for this type of planning can begin at the young persons 14 plus transition review. Friends and family can make valid contributions to these plans.

To close here are a few websites that may prove useful:

www.myfuturechoices.co.uk, www.ndt.org.uk

Dee King
Support Officer

Fun in the Garden

I thought I would let my son write a few lines about the project group he has been attending the past few months, which is held at the memory gardens in Islington.

“My name is Sidney. I am 8 years old and I have HFA. I have been going to the memory gardens to build, paint and have fun with a lady called Ruth. The garden is very peaceful. There are squirrels that come into the garden for us to feed. I have made structures and have made a sign for Ruth’s garden. Some other children come. They are autistic like me. We have fun. It’s fun to go to the memory gardens, why don’t you come.” *Sidney Camilleri*. As mentioned in the previous bulletin Ruth Solomon has been hold group sessions for children every other Sunday for the past 6 weeks. If you are interested in coming along, please look at the back pages under notices & conferences for further information. Well it just leaves me to say, have a lovely summer and I’ll catch up with you in September!

Tanya Camilleri, Helpline Officer

Parent/Carers Support Groups

Date and Time	Venue Details	Speaker	Topic
14 th September 1.30pm – 3.00pm	Autism London 1 Floral Place Northampton Grove London N1 2FS	Megan Karnes from OCD (Obsessive Compulsive Disorder) Action	Speaking about the service and how the service supports users.
28 th September 1.30pm – 3.00pm	The Kulubi Centre 2c Falkland Road Kentish Town London NW5 2PT	Support Officers from Autism London: Ethney Anderson & Dee King	Open meeting for parents to come along and talk.
12 th October 10.30pm – 12.00pm	The Limes William Morris Hall 6 Somers Road Walthamstow E17 6RX	Support Officers from Autism London: Ethney Anderson & Dee King	Open meeting for parents to come along and talk.
19 th October 10.30pm – 12.00pm	Autism London 1 Floral Place Northampton Grove London N1 2FS	Support Officers from Autism London: Ethney Anderson & Dee King	Open meeting for parents to come along and talk.
To help us cater for demand, if you would like to attend any of these groups/talks please let us know you will be coming by calling 020 7704 0501 and leaving a message specifying the date of the meeting you will be attending.			

autism london Women’s Asperger’s Group

Dates for meetings from July - November 2005 are: -

Thursday 28th July

No meeting in August

Thursday 29th September

Thursday 27th October

Thursday 24th November

Come along and give it a try; if you are coming, please try to arrive by 2pm.

Light refreshments, i.e. teas and coffees etc will be available.

Contact Dee/Ethney for further information on: 020 7704 0501

Or email us at: dee@autismlondon.org.uk or ethney@autismlondon.org.uk

autism london Asperger's Group

This is a support group for adults with Asperger's syndrome living in London. It is a chance to meet others, to talk about common issues, and to support and help each other.

Please note that due to large numbers attending the group, we will not be taking any more new members after July 05 until further notice.

If you are interested please still get in touch so that we can take your details and contact you when we are able to open it up to new members again.

The group meets at the Autism London offices in Islington, on the first Tuesday of the month, in the evening from 6.30pm to 8.30 pm.

Dates for meetings from September to December 2005 are: -

**Date
Topic**

No Meeting in August

Tuesday 6th September
Holidays- experiences and issues

Tuesday 4th October
Obsessive Compulsive Disorder

Tuesday 1st November
Relationships

Tuesday 6th December
Positive aspects of AS/Individual strengths

If you are coming, please try to arrive between 6.30pm and 7pm. There will be light refreshments/ snacks available.

Contact Dee/Ethney for further information on: 020 7704 0501
Or email: dee@autismlondon.org.uk or ethney@autismlondon.org.uk

Residential Service Update: Moving on with our new vehicle

We the staff at the residential home for autism are proud to announce that we have acquired a new people's carrier that would definitely make mobility very good.

The thought of the company to purchase a family vehicle is excellent. I can assure you that the service users and staff are proud of being in possession of a brand new Hyundai car as against our old green 14 seater bus that made us so conspicuous where ever we went.

We can now travel long distances in comfort, without fear of breaking down.

Our manager, Richard Tucker, has been on this since he took up office as the home manager over a year ago. We want to say thank you to him for the effort he put in convincing senior management in procuring the vehicle. The service users are really proud of their new vehicle.

Our thanks and appreciation also goes to our project manager Bryan Thorne for the support and understanding he has always shown when it comes to supporting issues within the residential home.

We would also like to thank the Chief Executive Gordon Boxall, and the Director for London, Janice Campbell, for their support for the service users and staff team. The company as a whole has shown the type of support that is required to help our service users become more independent.

Aboo Auchybar - Senior Support Worker

ASPITALK

By Desmond Meldrum, an adult who has recently been diagnosed with Asperger's syndrome

Desmond Meldrum is available to give talks on his personal experiences as well as general advice in coping with Asperger's Syndrome to organisations and support groups for a negotiated price on application.

Desmond has over three years experience in communicating to groups and organisations on this subject and has also written a book published through Autism London which shares his observations and experiences of the condition.

Excerpt from book

'I started developing strange habits such as standing in the playground with my head cocked sideways and my mouth wide open staring into space, thus attracting even more attention. I also used to jump about in a peculiar manner while indulging in a fantasy world of my own'
(Desmond Meldrum 1994)

Since 1993, Desmond also has been an active volunteer in the field, providing much valued support to the work of Autism London and in 2001 became a member of Autism London's Management Committee.

***For more information please contact Desmond
Meldrum at
Autism London on 0207 704 0501***

Notices & Conferences

Digit

Details: Two days of music and digital art for young people aged 13+living in Essex

Venue: Theatre Resource
Chipping, Ongar

Date: Thursday 4th August and Friday 5th August 2005

Time: 10.30am - 4.30pm

For more information telephone: Theatre Resource on: 01277 365 003

Fun day out for families

Details: The National Autistic Society (NAS) is planning a 'fun day out for families' in central London (probably Leicester Square) on 25 September 2005.

The proposed Day for Autism will feature events from autistic artists and craftsmen, as well as stalls from the NAS and other autism-specific organizations. One of the themes for the day will be encouraging people to view the world through the eyes of someone with autism - and demonstrating the condition through art, photography, handicrafts, dance and music.

Date: 25th September 2005

For more information telephone: NAS on: 020 7903 3526

Asperger's Syndrome Foundation Sponsored Walk

Details: The Asperger's Syndrome Foundation is a small Registered Charity based in London, England. Founded and currently chaired by Beatrice Buisseret, it was established in 2002 with the support of parents whose sons/daughters have Asperger's Syndrome.

Their main fund-raising event for 2005 will be a sponsored walk in September. Anyone interested in sponsoring Beatrice Buisseret in walking 250 km over 7 days in aid of the Asperger's Syndrome Foundation.

Contact: For more information please go to the Fundraising Information page located at: <http://www.aspergerfoundation.org.uk/futureevents.htm>, or contact Beatrice Buisseret at 020 7313 9851 or email: info@aspergerfoundation.org.uk.

Somerford Grove Adventure Playground

Details: Fabulous and joy-filled Saturday morning adventure playground sessions open free to all families with a child on the autistic spectrum. Sand, water, fantastic climbing structures, go-karting style bikes, computers, running streams, trampolining...Parent/carers must stay but there are six play workers on site to give parents a chance to get at the papers and the coffee.

Venue: Somerford Grove Adventure Playground, Park Lane close, off Park Lane, Tottenham, N17.

Date: July 30th, and all Saturdays in August. (Fortnightly from September).

Time: 10am to noon. (Open access sessions from noon onwards)

For more information telephone: Julia Wilkins 020 8889 8422

Memory Gardens

Details: For children between the ages of 8-14 on the autistic spectrum; build outdoor sculptures, care for plants and feed wildlife. Places are limited.

Day: Start date Sunday 10th July then every other Sunday 11am – 1pm

Contact: For further information please contact Ruth Solomon Tel: 020 8806 1129

Volunteer wanted

I am looking for volunteers to help me to do "floor time" play with my 3 year old autistic son. If you have any spare time, enjoy playing with children and would like to help please contact me.

For more information telephone: Vilma - (Sutton) 020 8661 0346

New Parent Support Group - Lambeth

Details: Do you live in Lambeth and have a child on the autistic spectrum? There is a new parent support group for you. The recently formed Lambeth Autism Group, affiliated to the National Autistic Society. It offers parents/carers a chance to meet others, discuss common issues, to support and help each other

Venue: Glenbrook Primary School, Clarence Avenue, SW4 (off Kings Avenue)

Date: Wednesday 28th Sept - A solicitor specialising in Special Educational Provision discussing your child's right to special educational provision. And also Thursday 24th November - details to be confirmed

Time: All meetings start at 7pm

For more information telephone: Call Anthony Simms 07958 685 629 or Annette Broomfield 07880 964 358 (evenings only) and/or send an email to:

lambethautismgroup@yahoo.co.uk

The Shires - Stretton

Details: A new independent residential special school opening late summer. The school is for secondary aged students who have severe autism and challenging behaviour.

For more information telephone: Gail Pilling 01780 411 102

Short Breaks for Children with ASD

Details: Radlett Lodge School offer short breaks for children with ASD in their recently refurbished lodge situated outside St Albans

For more information telephone: Frances Power on 01923 854 922 or email:

francespower@nas.org.uk

New Outreach Project – Centre 404

Details: In partnership with Islington South Surestart and EC1 New Deal a new outreach project is available to parents of children with SEN/disabilities aged 0-19 living in the EC1 area.

For more information telephone: Anna Lundy on: 020 7374 8684

Influence Online

Details: Scope has set up a virtual parents group for parents of disabled children. The group will feed parents views and experiences into government departments. It is hoped that this will help parents to influence future government policy.

For more information telephone: Scope on: 01432 370 860 or email:

earlyyears@scope.org.uk

Trinity London Care

Details: New Day Centre recently opened in Leyton. The service provides social education and training programmes for adults with ASD and learning difficulties.

For more information telephone: Harry Valassis on: 020 8558 4828

Planning for the future events

Details: MENCAP is holding five 'Planning for the future events' in July. The sessions are to aid and advise those wishing to secure future needs – in taking steps now to ensure that your relative is looked after as well as setting up a trust/will for their future.

Days: 25th, 26th, 27th, 28th and 29th July

Contact: For venue details, booking forms and further information, please contact Gina Collins Tel: 020 7696 6925

Treating Autism Talk

Michael Lang, father of two recovered children and founder of Brainchild Nutritionals, will be discussing biomedical aspects of detoxification in autism. Talk organised by Treating Autism.

Venue: The Old Hall, Claremont, 24-27 White Lion Street, London N1 9PD (Angel tube).

Date & Time: Wednesday 10th August, 5.00-7.00pm

Entrance: £5.00.

Autism Treatment Centre

2005 UK/Ireland Autism Lecture Tour

Autism Treatment Specialist, Raun K. Kaufman, will return to the UK and Ireland in September 2005, completing his fifth year presenting a series of free, interactive lectures entitled “**Breakthrough Strategies for Autism Spectrum Disorders.**” Mr. Kaufman is an international lecturer, writer and teacher for **The Son-Rise Program**[®] of the Autism Treatment Center of America[™] in Sheffield, Massachusetts.

In his work with families, children, and professionals around the world, Mr. Kaufman brings a distinctive qualification to the realm of autism treatment – *his own personal history as a person fully recovered from autism.* His lectures are designed to provide parents and professionals with techniques they can immediately implement with their children with special needs to maximize speech and language development, generate eye contact, and control tantrums and repetitive behaviours.

Lecture sites are: London, Bristol, Birmingham, Manchester, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Belfast, and Dublin. Details and registration capability will be available by July 15 on the website: www.autismtreatmentcenter.org. N.B. the London date will be September 28th, at Queen Mary College Great Hall.

Meditation group for the Neuro Untypical

This new meditation group has just started up. It is a non-religious class which is run as a special environment for the Autistic- a 'safe space'. Only Neurotypicals sympathetic to us can come. There is no speaking allowed until after the tea break, and a £3 charge on the second visit onwards.

Venue: North London Buddhist Centre, 72 Holloway Road

Nearest tube is Highbury and Islington, or Holloway Road. Buses 42 and 271.

Day: Friday Time: 7.45pm to 9pm.

Supporter's Forum

ASD and Alcoholism: My experiences

By Matt Tinsley

I am 44 years old, and am currently approaching the end of a 12 month period of rehabilitation for chronic alcohol addiction. Alcohol had played an increasingly large part in my life for the last 20 years. I had obtained a degree in modern languages in 1984, and had had a successful career working in various specialist bookshops, dealing with subjects such as theatre, modern art, languages and genealogy. However, the battle against depression and the ever-present intense anxiety led to a breakdown, of every kind imaginable. I lost my job, my marriage broke down, I moved back with my family and life had no meaning beyond the next drink.

It's ironic that just when I was in my worst shape physically (I was hospitalised twice, with acute liver failure and alcoholic poisoning) I first became aware of Asperger's Syndrome, through a television programme.

As I watched it, I was mentally ticking more and more boxes of symptoms. I have always had a phenomenal memory, especially for dates, going back to my early childhood. I have had various intense special interests, can watch the same film, listen to the same album, read the same book many times in row. I hate being held by anyone, am constantly anxious, and have absolutely no common sense when it comes to the most basic practical task. I have also been aware of an emotional detachment which none of my peers seemed to share, having checked with them.

I went into a rehab 100 miles from my home town, aware that old surroundings were a powerful trigger to drink. This was very difficult for me, being a creature of engrained habit. However, the treatment was wonderful. Cognitive behavioural therapy, linking thoughts, feelings and actions, was the basis for the rehab. I found it perfect for the way my mind works. Every process is thoroughly explained, no steps are omitted or assumed, and the steps which need to be made are explained thoroughly. I also took it upon myself to investigate my belief that I had an ASD. Luckily, there is a specialist team in my area, and after much effort I have been given a diagnosis of PDD-NOS. I am being offered much support and am going to do an MA in information studies in the autumn. Being in rehab with an ASD is very tricky, as you do not want to use it as an excuse for your addiction, but you are intensely aware that it informs every action that you make. Until I received an official diagnosis, moreover, I could not talk openly about it with anyone but my counsellor, for fear of misunderstanding and ridicule.

I am volunteering with my local autistic society, and when I hopefully get my MA, I would like to work helping those with ASDs, in whatever capacity I can be useful. It took me over 40 years to find an explanation for the sense of "otherness" I have always had about myself. I am ambitious to help those who are on the autistic spectrum, and who may have also been through similar experiences to myself. The important thing to remember is that change can be made within the autistic spectrum, if the right help is at hand, and there are those willing to give you their support.