



## A place for answers, ideas and inspiration

Key talks, workshops and advice sessions at this year's Autism Show in London, Birmingham and Manchester



## Brighter thinking in the workplace

Organisations with a neurodiverse work environment can enjoy a competitive advantage, says an employment expert

Official  
media partner  
of The Autism Show

# Autism|eye

For parents and professionals

Issue  
**50**  
Summer  
2023

Advice for getting  
into work

How craft lessons  
boost self-esteem

What food  
cravings mean

Training courses  
to put you in  
control

How your home  
can make your  
child sick

Internet safety:  
beware of illegal  
photo sharing

# Abandoned

Demands for better  
mental health care



# the autism show

in association with  National Autistic Society

in partnership with  braininhand

**London**  
9-10 June 2023 | ExCeL

**Birmingham**  
23-24 June 2023 | NEC

**Manchester**  
7-8 July 2023 | Manchester Central



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**Welcome**

## Involved in this issue



**Baroness Andrews**  
Former chair,  
House of Lords  
Adult Social  
Care Committee



**Dr Ben Marlow**  
Paediatric  
consultant,  
clinical director



**Stella Chadwick**  
Nutritional  
therapist



**Tim Nicholls**  
Head of  
research,  
National Autistic  
Society



**Catriona Guyler-Kone**  
College  
principal



**Andrea Hattrell Caney**  
Specialist  
occupational  
therapist



**Danae Leaman-Hill**  
Director of  
External Affairs  
& Development



**Will Osborne**  
Community  
engagement &  
business  
development  
manager



**Rachel Kelly**  
Assistant  
professor



**Richmal Maybank**  
Employer  
engagement &  
programme  
lead, National  
Autistic Society



**Ed Thompson**  
Employment  
expert



**Emma Collins**  
Assistant  
principal



**Dr Aviva Cohen**  
App developer



**Petrit Krasniqi**  
Community  
sports manager

## The ongoing fight against apathy



Gillian Loughran

We parents have a lot to be thankful for, given the number of professionals and entrepreneurs investing time and money in a way that helps improve life for our children. Many have personal experience of living with autism and commit themselves to providing better education, more awareness of associated health issues and treatments, better technology and excellent leisure and artistic experiences to improve their well-being.

Against this positiveness, in the background lurks a degree of apathy when it comes to treating the chronic anxiety and mental and physical health issues that plague the lives of many autistic people.

The shocking experiences of autistic people, sidelined by medics when they attempt to gain access to urgent mental health support, is detailed on page 18.

Fighting for change to this appalling set of circumstances will only gain real traction when families bring it to the attention of the courts.

Meanwhile, gone are the days when autistic people are expected to accept that the world of work is not for them. On page 28 you can read about the many professionals, with the law behind them, who have been helping autistic people find employment.

We know that unusual food cravings have long been a feature in the lives of our loved ones. Interestingly, parents have long reported an obsessive demand for salt. On page 22, Dr Ben Marlow and specialist occupational therapist Andrea Hattrell Caney explore possible medical and sensory explanations for this.

The dangers of mould in homes has hit the headlines recently. Not only can mould be life threatening, it can also lead to health conditions we associate with autistic people. Sudden onset of OCD, anxiety and other neuropsychiatric symptoms have been linked to exposure to mould in the home, as explained by nutritionist Stella Chadwick on page 48.

If you haven't done so already, do keep an eye on our website [www.autismeye.com](http://www.autismeye.com), with its updates of news, products and services, and join the thousands who follow us across social media for valuable information on how to improve the lives of our children. Until the next time...

**Gillian Loughran FRSA,  
Editor**



**Autism|eye**

ISSN 2046-424X

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Autism|eye Issue 50 2023 5



# Thinking Autism 2023 international conference

## Discover ways to better health care at our London conference on Differential Diagnosis: Actionable Pathways to Improved Well-being

**"I would've travelled to the moon** to help my child. In the end I only had to go as far as central London to find a room full of people with great ideas to steer me in the right direction and explore otherwise unknown options."

This parent, a 2019 TA conference delegate, sums up why on October 7 and 8, 2023 the charity will be holding another international conference, Differential Diagnosis: Actionable Pathways to Improved Well-being – two days of learning for parents, professionals and adults with autism, once again held in South Kensington.

A recent large-scale Swedish study found that more than 50% of people with an ASD diagnosis suffered from four or more comorbidities, all conditions that limit quality of life and often even length of life. People with ASD deserve better health than this.

Did you know that not very long ago, most, if not all, autism experts believed the myth that people with autism had normal life expectancies? This is far from the truth and a revealing example of how assumptions have been made, much to the detriment of people with autism. Research has revealed that for people with ASD average life expectancy is shortened significantly, especially for those people more profoundly impacted. It does not have to be like this.

Thinking Autism has advocated for almost 20 years that medical practitioners need to investigate and treat symptoms much more thoroughly. The vast majority of families our charity supports have repeatedly come up against diagnostic overshadowing when pursuing medical help. That is,



**“The power of experience, community, and enquiry, all merge at Thinking Autism conferences to provide understanding and inspiration”**

**R's mum, a Thinking Autism Conference delegate**

symptoms are dismissed rather than investigated, often with claims that 'it's just autism'. Once again, it does not have to be like this.

Differential diagnosis – determining the likely cause of symptoms rather than attributing them all to autism – is fundamental to providing good health care, and at the foundation of the upcoming Thinking Autism conference.

**At the centre of our focus: individuals on the autism spectrum deserve their health to be taken seriously**

International and local speakers will cover topics such as PANS/PANDAS, genomic sequencing to help inform treatment options, the microbiome, and seizures. Case studies will provide insights about successful investigations and treatments that improve health and well-being, and quality of life for the whole family.

We want to provide you with knowledge and tools for advocacy. Joining us in London means greater knowledge, and knowledge is power when it comes to health and well-being.

Joining us also means a chance to meet people on the same journey, a unique opportunity to offer support and be supported. You will have time for discussions and to find people who share your specific concerns. Our conferences are high quality with low ticket costs.

There is a wealth of information online. Our charity provides that, too, but in-person conferences offer unique and important benefits, including the chance to create bonds with people who understand the challenges you're facing. Take these two days to help build your support network.

For more information about the conference, including speakers, schedules, and how to buy tickets, or to send us a question or look at our many resources, please visit our site at: [www.thinkingautism.org.uk](http://www.thinkingautism.org.uk)



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PHOTOGRAPH: COTTONBRO STUDIO/PEXELS

## Study is 'first step' in personalised approaches

**Three separate autism subgroups** have distinct metabolic patterns, new research shows. The groups were divided into the best-behaved children, the most challenging, and others with problem behaviours and co-occurring conditions that showed the highest IQs.

Assistant Professor Rachel Kelly, of Brigham and Women's Hospital and Harvard Medical School, was one of the researchers on the project. In an email, she said the findings "represent a critical first step towards more personalised management approaches" for autistic children.

The Boston-based researchers studied records of 2001 people. Their ages were from four to 17. The records came from the Simons Simplex Collection. This is a data collection from 2,700 families for use in autism research.

The researchers wanted to find subgroups with common challenges and then investigate whether they also had similar metabolic profiles. Among other characteristics, they found that the best-behaved children had global decreases in lipid metabolites, which are involved in storing fats for energy and building cell membranes.

The most challenging children showed dysfunctioning membrane lipids and increases in lipid



**Rachel Kelly: the research heralds a new approach to autism**

oxidation. Membrane lipids protect cells from being penetrated or breached. Lipid oxidation, meanwhile, is when unsaturated fatty acids react with oxygen.

The children with problem behaviours and co-occurring conditions that had the highest IQs saw increases in sphingolipid metabolites and fatty acid byproducts. Sphingolipid metabolites are molecules involved in cell division, differentiation and cell death.

The findings may have "important clinical applications" for "personalised medicine" and "managing ASD (autism spectrum disorder) symptoms", the researchers said.

## Researchers probe links to heart disease

**Researchers are to probe connections between** heart disease in children and neurodevelopmental disorders. The researchers say the results could provide evidence to back early intervention for autism in children with heart disease.

Congenital heart disease (CHD) starts in the womb with abnormal development of the heart or large blood vessels.

Chinese researchers based at the West China Second University Hospital, in Chengdu, are to review existing work on the topic. They think children with CHD show more obvious neurodevelopmental disorders. They also think the children may have a higher risk of social interaction and communication-linked conditions such as autism.

Studies have shown that mutations or deletions of some genes not only lead to CHD, but are also related to neurodevelopmental disorders.

Biomedical charity Treating Autism said the research relates to two other studies. These have "found a positive association between congenital heart defects in infants and the risk of developing autism symptoms later in life". But a spokesperson for the charity added there is also a "much higher risk of autism in many other congenital disorders".

Treating Autism lists other conditions that have shown links to autism. These include muscular dystrophy, tumour-causing conditions such as tuberous sclerosis and neurofibromatosis type 1, joint disorder Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome, and cerebral palsy.

In 2019, a group of US researchers in Atlanta found children with CHD "have increased odds" of developing autism. Children with a hole in the heart between the upper or lower chambers were found to be at greater risk of being autistic.

Overall, children with heart problems were 32 per cent more likely to be on the autism spectrum.

## Carers 'have little hope of more support'

**Carers are being left with** little hope of more support for their work at home or in the workplace. That's the view of Baroness Andrews (inset), former chair of the House of Lords Adult Social Care Committee. Last December the committee's report, *A Gloriously Ordinary Life*, made wide-ranging recommendations on social care. They included providing "long-term funding" and remedying low pay.

Now, Baroness Andrews has labelled the Government's response to the report

"inadequate and deeply disappointing". She accuses the Government of rejecting key recommendations relating to funding, workforce planning and support for unpaid carers.

Baroness Andrews said: "In our report, we asked for change and 'If not now, when?' Unfortunately, this poor response does not provide the answer."

The committee argued that families should no longer be expected to provide unpaid care for loved ones. It said the assumption that families will

"step up" to provide unpaid care is "unfair".

Charity Carers UK supported the committee's report. Chief executive Helen Walker said the main benefit for carers, Carer's Allowance, "does not reflect the value of unpaid carers' role". Carer's Allowance stands at £76.75 a week and carers can earn up to £139 before they lose the benefit. Walker said it was "especially concerning" that the earnings threshold for



Carer's Allowance was not keeping pace with rises to the national living wage during the cost-of-living crisis.

The Government increased the national living wage on 1 April by 9.7 per cent to £10.42 for everyone aged 23 and over. It argued this "should have a significant impact on pay" in social care. It also said the amount carers can earn while claiming Carer's Allowance has risen by more than a third since 2010. >>



## Empowering through diagnosis, play-based interventions and meeting underlying health needs

Re:Cognition Health is a pioneering brain & mind clinic providing autism and ADHD diagnostics, developmental programmes and a bespoke multidisciplinary service to clinically evaluate and manage underlying medical difficulties.

The team are leading providers in evidence-based and play-based interventions for children with autism. Programmes include:

**Paediatric Autism Communication Therapy (PACT)** for children aged 2-10 years which comprises parent/carer-led video feedback

**Early Start Denver Model (ESDM)** for babies and toddlers showing early autism signs, which consists of play-based parent coaching

The team are also motivated to help better understand unmet health needs in neurodevelopmental conditions that can impact on development including sleep, learning and quality of life. They have expertise in helping manage a variety of conditions commonly affecting individuals on the autistic spectrum such as constipation/ bowel dysmotility, gastroesophageal reflux, migraine, immune and metabolic differences.

**Re:Cognition Health: supporting individuals through a 'whole system' approach to mental and physical health.**

### Re:Cognition Health

77 Wimpole Street  
London W1G 9RU

### Take action today

020 3355 3536  
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@ReCogHealth

### Mum champions medical cannabis

**The mother of a teenager with epilepsy who says medical cannabis saved his life is fighting to ensure other children also benefit.** Charlotte Caldwell says medical cannabis has transformed the life of her 17-year-old son, Billy (she is pictured with him below).

Before the treatment began, Billy's epilepsy caused up to 100 seizures a day. But thanks to the treatment, Caldwell says Billy has had just two 30-second seizures in more than two years.

Caldwell, 51, from County Tyrone, Northern Ireland, fought a high-profile campaign to win a lifetime NHS prescription for Billy.

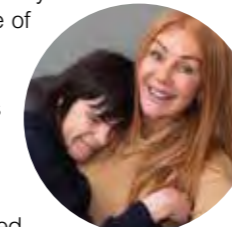
It followed her experience of a more positive attitude towards medical cannabis abroad. In 2016, US doctors treated Billy with medical cannabis. Later, medics in Canada did the same.

But when Caldwell returned to the UK, officials seized Billy's cannabis oil. Five days later he suffered back-to-back seizures. Caldwell went public before medics gave her son the treatment in the UK.

In 2018, Caldwell's campaigning pushed the UK government to introduce legislation allowing cannabis prescriptions. But lawmakers framed the legislation in a way that made doctors reluctant to put their names on prescriptions.

She said: "Doctors are clearly asking for more data to be gathered on the safety and the efficacy of the medicine." More trials need to take place to make the drug widely available, she said.

Caldwell wants families paying for a private cannabis prescription to contact her I Am Billy foundation, which may be able to get the medication free of charge.



### New treatment targets repetitive behaviours

**A new brain treatment that uses electrical currents can help with repetitive behaviours in autism and improve social skills, research claims.** Hong Kong-based researchers led by occupational therapist Dr Yvonne Han trialled prefrontal transcranial direct current stimulation (tDCS) treatment on autistic teens and young adults. The therapy sees electrodes placed on the head and the current delivered while the patient is awake.

Medics say the treatment is very different from controversial electroconvulsive therapy, or shock treatment, because the current is around 1,000 times smaller.

Experts insist the treatment is not painful. Reported side effects include a tingling sensation, fatigue, light itching, headaches and, to a much lesser extent, vomiting and sleeplessness.

Research has indicated the treatment can help with depression, brain injury, pain, dementia, fibromyalgia, migraines and strokes. In the UK, scientists at Oxford University have trialled the technique on stroke patients to aid rehabilitation.

Han's team looked at 105 autistic teens and young adults after 10 days of tDCS. The researchers also worked on the brain training technique of



**'Not painful': an Oxford University patient trials the tDCS treatment**

cognitive remediation therapy. In these sessions, the youngsters played 10 computer games designed to help with focus, mental flexibility, processing speed and memory. The researchers found the combination of the two approaches, tDCS and cognitive remediation, is a "safe and effective treatment for improving social functioning".

Research charity Thinking Autism said: "There have been numerous small-scale studies and case reports on the efficacy of tDCS for improving functioning and behaviours in individuals with autism." A spokesperson for the charity said it is "one of the most promising areas for novel autism treatments under development".

### Guide published to treat severe behaviour problems

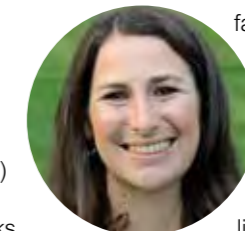
**A US autism charity has produced a guide for treating severe problems with behaviour.** Charity Autism Speaks says a team of experts developed the guide to improve care. *The Clinician Guide: Program Development and Best Practices for Treating Severe Behaviors in Autism* offers "unique programs" for those with "intense levels of need", says the charity.

The guide covers five areas. These include an overview of challenging behaviours, screening and assessment, evidence-based practice, training and a severe behaviour tool kit. Self-injury, including head banging, hitting, kicking and biting, pica (eating non-food items), destroying property, running away and

disruptive behaviours are all touched on. But the guide highlights how challenging behaviour can take different forms in each person.

Jacqueline Perlmet (inset) is the manager of clinical programmes for Autism Speaks. She said when people struggle with severely challenging behaviours it can "lead to substantial physical and emotional harm to themselves and others".

Autism Speaks developed the guide after arranging a summit on challenging behaviours in December 2020. The event included leaders in care and research, people on the autism spectrum and



family members. Perlmet said: "This is a highly underserved segment of our community, who often cannot access the behavioural and mental health services they need, leading to worse outcomes and a higher likelihood of crisis situations."

Dr Amy Lutz is the mother of a severely autistic son, Jonah, 24. She is also the vice president of the US National Council on Severe Autism. Lutz said the most extreme behaviours are often caused by other health problems. She includes affective disorders (such as depression and bipolar disorder) or catatonia, that will "only respond to medical treatment".

## App interprets emotions of non-verbal people

### Researchers have launched

an app designed to interpret the emotions of non-verbal people.

Irish digital health firm seamlessCARE said the Empathic app uses artificial intelligence (AI) to interpret their emotions, helping to improve the quality of life of non-verbal people and reduce behaviours that challenge.

The app can interpret up to 10 emotions. Carers record the sounds made by the non-verbal person and the AI interprets how they are feeling.

It says that in most families and care settings, one person understands the sounds made by a non-verbal person better than anyone else. Therefore, the



developers designed the app so users can train it for each non-verbal person. The users can accept, reject or edit each interpretation that the AI generates.

The Empathic app supports people who have fewer than 20 functional words.

It is also suitable for those who cannot type or use other assistive technology. The aim is for the app to be useful for those with brain injuries, learning disabilities, stroke injuries, autism, dementia and other conditions.

Dr Aviva Cohen (inset), co-founder of seamlessCARE, said the inspiration for the app came from 14 years of caring for her late husband, Steve, who became non-verbal after a stroke.

## Charity halts heavy cuts in Devon

Plans for heavy cuts to services for disabled adults in Devon have been put on hold after a charity threatened legal action.

Devon County Council wanted to shut down most of its disability day and respite services and close three drop-in centres. It was part of an effort to cut £30m from its adult care budget.

But after Exeter and District Mencap Society threatened a judicial review, the council halted a consultation on the cuts to give itself more time to "listen and evaluate" concerns raised by Mencap, staff, unions and carers.

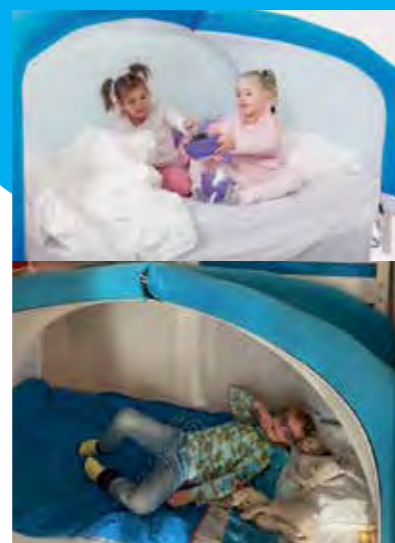
Bob Gaiger (pictured inset with daughter Laura) is a trustee of Exeter and District Mencap Society. With wife Eileen, 69, he relies on respite for Laura, 39, who has a learning disability, mild cerebral palsy and is partially deaf and partially sighted. Gaiger said he hoped the council would now "cancel their distressing proposals for adult, day and respite services".



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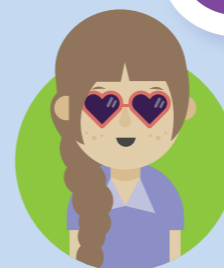
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Homefield College is a registered charity (no. 1114995) providing education, training, care and support in Leicestershire and Warwickshire.

## What's new

### Widgit – a powerful language

Widgit symbols is a powerful visual language that helps autistic adults and children to communicate, read and learn more effectively.



With Widgit, each symbol represents a word or concept that can be put together to create a visual sentence, a timetable or a social story. The symbols improve independence and self-confidence, as a child or adult can easily understand their routine for the day, express their emotions or needs, grasp trickier learning tasks and manage social interactions more easily.

■ To find out more, visit us on stand: B2 - London, C4 - Birmingham, E5 - Manchester or visit [www.widgit.com](http://www.widgit.com)

### Online Sessions with Equals – Curriculum & Assessment

The Equals charity has developed and published curriculum and assessment materials since 1994.



In recent years work has progressed in relation to newer schemes of work for Pre-formal PMLD, Informal/Complex, Semi-formal and formal.

Schools can arrange zoom sessions with the Equals strategic development manager, Paul Buskin. During these sessions Paul can share his screen, so schools can view previews and ask questions. Equals can then recommend which materials would be appropriate.

■ Please contact Paul using [paul@equalsoffice.co.uk](mailto:paul@equalsoffice.co.uk) to benefit from a FREE Zoom session.

### Go Beyond adds an extra Spanish summer holiday

Fancy a supported holiday in Spain? Go Beyond Holidays has added an extra Spanish Adventure holiday to its programme this summer after the first one, from 25 July to 1 August, sold out.

The new dates are from 18 to 25 August. To find out more and to book, visit [www.gobeyondholidays.com](http://www.gobeyondholidays.com)

■ Holiday organiser Ian Callen (pictured) wrote about one of Go Beyond's Spanish holidays in *Autism Eye* here: [www.autismeye.com/announcement/go-beyond-holidays-spain-santiago-de-compostela](http://www.autismeye.com/announcement/go-beyond-holidays-spain-santiago-de-compostela)



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- Lived experiences
- Stigma & Taboos
- Case Studies

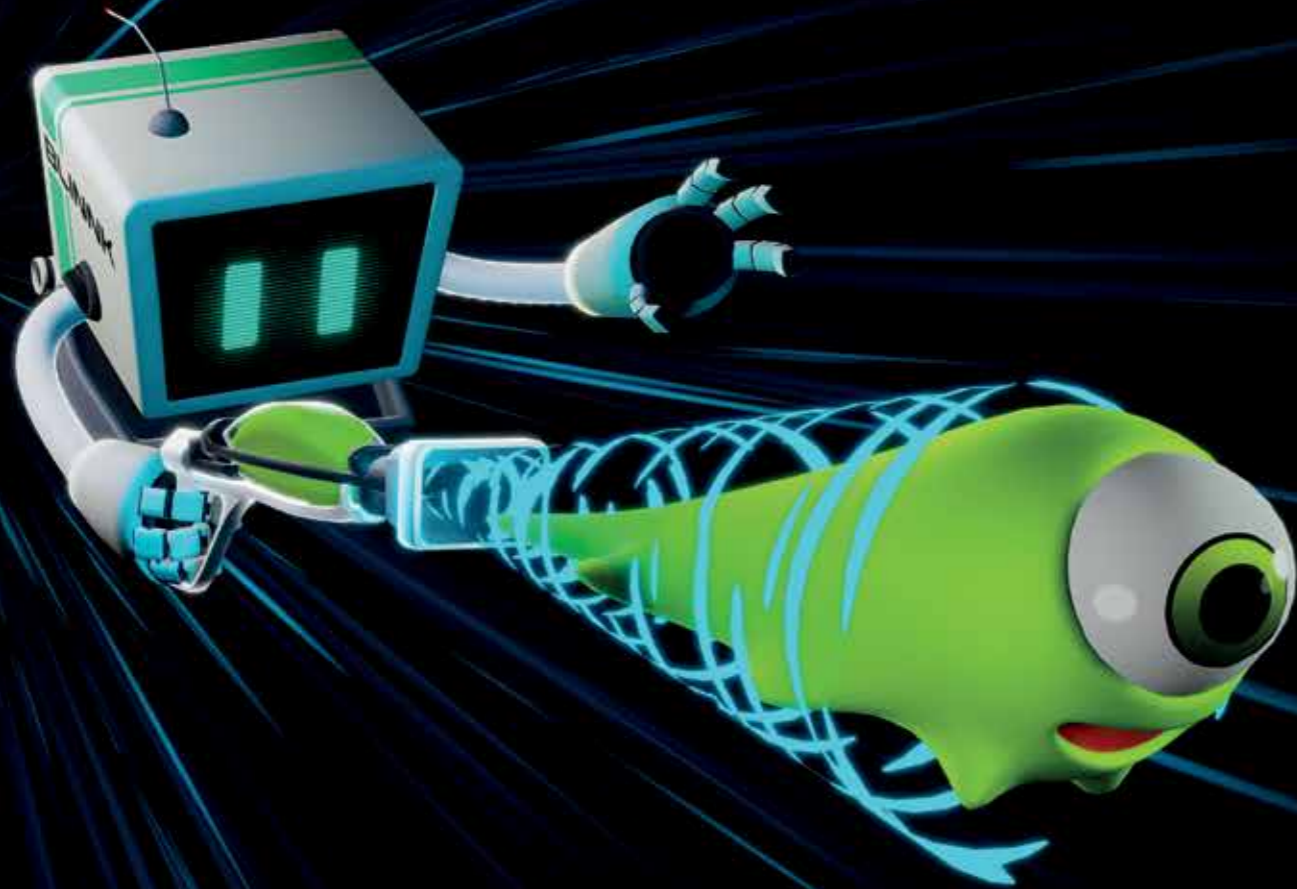


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 **changingday**

The Autism Show

# Welcome to the show

A session in full swing in Hub Theatre 1

**It's established as the highlight of the year for the autism community. With The Autism Show ready to roll in London, Birmingham and Manchester, we look at what's on offer**

#### Parents and professionals

heading to The Autism Show usually have a problem or issue they need to resolve. Top of the list may be supporting an autistic person with their anxiety, help with communication or leisure time, dealing with school refusal, recognising autism in girls and women, and supporting autistic people who find the world a challenging place to navigate on a daily basis.

Appearing at the show this year is Geoff Evans, autism trainer and consultant, who will give a talk on recognising distress, meltdowns and shutdown, and what you can do to help. For people looking for

ways to make school easier, Aymeline Bel, head of Queensmill School in London, will be discussing practical classroom adaptations for autistic students. Behavioural support is also on the show's agenda and Sally Russell, chair of the Pathological Demand Avoidance (PDA) Society and co-founder of Netmums, will be examining strategies for supporting a PDA child or young person at home and in school.

Elsewhere, Arron Hutchinson, education training director and therapeutic practitioner at the ADHD Foundation, will give a talk on the relationship between autism and ADHD; and Dr Felicity Sedgewick, lecturer in Psychology of Education at the University of Bristol, will look at masking and camouflaging. She will discuss why autistic girls mask at school and what impact it has on their mental health and wellbeing.

The Hub Theatre 2 offers a large selection of talks on practical interventions that can make a real difference. A few of the presentations here include Positive Behaviour Support, improving quality of life, health and wellbeing, advice on dyscalculia, treating emotionally based school

avoidance, and achieving sensory regulation through sensory circuits.

Returning this year is the BAFTA award-winning broadcaster Dr Carrie Grant, who will share her experiences of growing and shapeshifting to create an incredibly diverse family in the Autism Matters Theatre on Friday. Afterwards, she will sign copies of her new book on the SEN Books stand (A4). Opening the Autism Matters Theatre this year is Dr Louise Morpeth, who will be asking the question: Is the autistic community benefitting from the potential of technology?

#### SEN system navigation

Many SEN parents still need to battle to get their children the right education and support. Advice on navigating the SEN system is again available at this year's Autism Show. Finding out what your child is entitled to, getting them the provision they need and how to handle SEN appeals at tribunals will all be at hand. There will be advice about Education, Health and Care Plans and what can be achieved when a good Plan is put in place.

Next door, you'll find the Hub Theatre 1, in partnership with Brain in Hand, which provides a platform for autistic adults to talk about their lived experiences. This year, topics covered include transitioning from an autistic teen to an autistic adult, making the most of neurodivergent talent in the workplace, how to survive as an autistic teenager, »



Ready to share experiences:  
Dr Carrie Grant

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Autism|eye Issue 50 2023 15

## The Autism Show



**Something for everyone: show visitors can watch fascinating talks, meet colleagues and visit the many exhibitor stands**

suppliers of learning tools, visual aids, sensory equipment, furniture, advice and support services, residential care and specialist communication support.

Many families and professionals visiting the show will be in search of products and equipment to help autistic people communicate their needs and wants. Widdit, exhibiting at all three shows (stand B2 in London, C4 in Birmingham and E5 in Manchester), will show how its symbols act as a visual language to help autistic adults and children to communicate, read and learn more effectively. Each symbol represents a word or concept that can be put together to create a visual sentence, a timetable or a social story. The symbols are said to improve independence and self-confidence, as a child or adult can more easily understand their routine for the day, express their emotions or needs, grasp trickier learning tasks and manage social interactions.

Meanwhile, a treat is in store for showgoers in Birmingham. They will be able to experience a virtual reality space adventure designed with autistic players in mind. Called BLINNK and the Vacuum of Space, it enables players to fine-tune a wide range of sensory inputs, from colour to volume to haptic feedback, enabling an individualised experience according to their own sensitivities.

the benefits of late diagnosis, and the issues of self-awareness and self-acceptance.

If you're looking for personalised advice, you can book a free 30-minute private consultation with a specialist advisor. Subjects include managing distressed behaviour, SEN and community care legal advice, education rights, mentoring and employment support; and how to use wills and trusts to secure your child's long-term financial future.

Not to be missed is Brain in Hand's new Sensory Experience (stand F2), which offers an opportunity to learn about ways we receive and interpret stimuli in our eight sensory systems, and what it means to regulate hyper- and hypo-sensitivities. It's a unique chance to explore your individual sensory needs. Learn self-regulatory strategies through a hands-on experience with sensory equipment and understand your sensory preferences. This is suitable and accessible for all ages and all neurotypes.

New this year are Lego-based Therapy Workshops (stand D1), in partnership with Bea Inclusive, where you can learn the principles and practice of this highly flexible

therapy, which is especially beneficial to children with SEN. Research shows it can be a useful tool for developing children's social, communication and language skills, cognitive skills, fine motor skills, and their emotional and behavioural responses. Workshops will be running at 11am, 12pm, 1pm, 2pm and 3pm.

### Sensory immersion

There's the opportunity to Immerse yourself in an Autism Reality Experience (stand A20), in partnership with Training2Care, to gain a new perspective on sensory processing difficulties. The Good Schools Guide (stand D0) is available if you need help to find a suitable school for your child. A team of SEN education consultants will be happy to advise.

If you are autistic and would like to connect with other autistic adults in a safe and understanding environment, or would like to ask questions of the autistic speakers from the Hub Theatre 2, then pop over to Autism Meets (stand D10), where you will be welcomed by the team at Brain in Hand.

Among all this content, make sure you spend time at the exhibition to find the UK's leading

### Show dates

- London: 9-10 June, ExCeL
- Birmingham: 23-24 June, NEC
- Manchester: 7-8 July, Manchester Central
- For more details and to book tickets, visit: <https://autismshow.co.uk/>

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# In search of **mental health** support

**Ruby, a mum of two, faced depression, attempted suicide and ignorance by medical professionals. As Darren Devine reports, her story illustrates just how difficult it can be for those on the autism spectrum who do not have a learning disability to gain access to the mental health support they need**

In her early twenties, Ruby, who is autistic and has attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), attempted suicide. Mum-of-two Ruby, 44, was not diagnosed until 2019 and believes that being unaware of her autism left her battling the depression that almost claimed her life.

But, like many diagnosed later in life, she was able to make sense of the challenges that dogged her childhood and continued to haunt her into adulthood.

She says: "When I didn't know who I was, it was very much low self-esteem, eating disorders. Eating disorders – not to do with

the food, but to do with using food as a way to gain control, because as a child I didn't have control of my environment."

She also struggled with the persistent idea that she was not a "valid member of society", but a "broken human being".

**“This chap looked me up and down ... and just said, ‘I don’t think you’re autistic’”**

**Looks can deceive: Ruby says that because she appears ‘able’, it was hard to get a diagnosis and mental health support**

Ruby, from Derbyshire, who asked for her name to be changed, says because she “appears able” medics find it very hard to accept that she is having problems with her mental health.

When she first approached her doctor around 17 years ago and spoke of how she believed she was on the autism spectrum, she was referred to the local mental health service.

“This chap looked me up and down, didn’t ask me any questions and just said, ‘I don’t think you’re autistic’,” she recalls.

“And the reason for that was because I didn’t, apparently, appear to be autistic –

**“She struggled with the idea that she was not a ‘valid member of society’, but a ‘broken human being’”**

whatever that looks like, because autism is a neurological difference, not a physiological difference.”

Whereas around one in four (25 per cent) of the general population have problems with their mental health at some point, in autistic people this proportion is much higher at eight in ten (80 per cent), says the research charity Autistica.

In 2019, Canadian researchers led by Dr Stephanie Ameis, associate professor in the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Toronto, suggested that up to eight mental health conditions occur unusually often in autistic people.

The team also found that around 28 per cent also had ADHD and 20 per cent struggled with anxiety.

## **Vulnerable to suicide**

A further 11 per cent had depression, 13 per cent sleep disorders, 12 per cent impulse control and conduct issues, 9 per cent OCD and related conditions, 5 per cent bipolar disorder and 4 per cent schizophrenia and psychosis.

And researchers believe autistic people without a learning disability are acutely vulnerable to suicide because they are more aware of their difference.

In 2014, Cambridge University's Autism Research Centre found that up to two out of three (66 per cent) of adults with what used to be termed Asperger's syndrome, the form of autism without a learning disability, have suicidal thoughts compared to 17 per cent of the general population.

Ruby, who has a five-year-old son with ADHD and a nine-year-old boy on the autism spectrum, says two years ago she was referred to an NHS doctor at a mental health service in Birmingham.

She says she made it clear that she should be treated in a way that >>

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"Unacceptable": Tim Nicholls, the NAS's head of research, says the number of autistic people without a learning disability in mental health hospitals has increased since 2015

considered both her ADHD and autism. But Ruby says she was "ignored" and, after she was given the ADHD drug Elvanse, she ended up with psychosis that was "like hell on earth". She eventually overcame her psychosis when she stopped taking the medication.

Tim Nicholls, head of research at the National Autistic Society, says there are "significant health inequalities for autistic people", including a lack of mental health support for those without a learning disability.

### More held in hospitals

At the end of March 2023 there were 840 autistic people without a learning disability being held in mental health hospitals, according to NHS figures.

That is almost double the 445 autistic people without a learning disability who were being held in mental health hospitals in March

2015, the year when the UK Government set new targets for reducing the numbers held.

Nicholls adds: "For example, while the number of people with a learning disability in mental health hospitals has fallen since reduction targets were introduced in 2015, there are now more autistic people without a learning disability in mental health hospitals. This is unacceptable.

"It's vital that health and care professionals recognise and understand the different support

autistic people require depending on their needs, as opposed to taking a one-size-fits-all approach."

Nicholls also calls on the Government to provide "urgent and significant funding" for community mental health services to prevent people ending up in crisis.

A spokesperson for the Department of Health and Social Care says it is investing an additional £2.3bn per year in mental health by 2023/24, so an extra two million people can get the support they need.

The spokesperson adds: "NHS England also recently published a national framework to help NHS and local authorities improve autism assessment services and better the experience for adults and children who are going through an autism assessment – setting out what support should be available before and after a recent diagnosis of autism."

**“Researchers suggested that up to eight mental health conditions occur unusually often in autistic people”**

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# Pass the salt

**Parents have long reported unusual food cravings in their autistic children. One that keeps popping up is an obsessive demand for salt, says Dr Ben Marlow. Together with colleague Andrea Hattrell Caney, a specialist occupational therapist, he explores the possible sensory and medical causes**

**My son Freddie (aged 9), who** has a diagnosis of Profound Autism, seems to be addicted to salt. He wants salt with crackers, salt on pitta bread, salt on curry and, if given the chance, would devour salt on its own.

Freddie's sensory differences are profound, yet this increasing 'salt-seeking behaviour' really stands out from everything else.

The 'salt addiction' is something I also see in my clinic: children with profound autism not only request strong, unusual combinations of food flavours, but salty ones too.

To try and understand why, I investigated the research with my colleague Andrea Hattrell Caney, a specialist occupational therapist.

There seems to be different schools of thought on the subject, which I'll run through in turn.

## **Dysregulated taste perception**

Atypical gustatory (taste) perception and eating behaviours are often seen in autistic children<sup>1</sup>. This can include seeking and/or avoiding certain tastes in food and non-food items. For some children, these strong preferences or

**“Freddie's sensory differences are profound, yet this increasing 'salt-seeking behaviour' really stands out from everything else”**

aversions are long-term. For others, they may be transient, perhaps a short-term favourite, or a specific taste that is intensely sought every few weeks or months.

Taste perception is a complex matter that is still only partially understood by scientists. It is generally accepted that there are five categories in human taste perception: sweet, salt, bitter, sour and umami (savoury).

There are specialised receptors on our tongue that sense taste, and specialised areas in the gustatory cortex that further process the taste sensations.

These sensations are thought to be further processed by the nervous system and brain within the context of our previous experiences, to create our own individual experience of taste<sup>2, 3</sup>.

If we consider salt, the mechanism for tasting it begins with compounds passing through ion channels in the tongue that are specialised to detect salt tastes. However, not only is the taste 'category' important, but the concentration is, too. Scientists have found that typical concentrations of salt, such as those found in table salt, are likely to be perceived as 'salty'.

However, if the concentration is much higher, it is likely to be interpreted as bitter. And if the concentration is very low, it may be perceived as sweet<sup>2, 4</sup>.

These differences in taste perception are thought to be

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Matter of taste: while many people enjoy salty foods, for some autistic children the salt becomes like an addiction



Dr Ben Marlow (pictured with his son, Freddie) is a paediatric consultant (neurodisability) at Colchester General Hospital, Essex, and clinical director of the hospital's Synapse Centre for Neurodevelopment, <https://www.synapsecentre.co.uk>

governed by the specific neurons that are activated following the detection of ions by the taste buds.

If we consider that sensory information is often processed in more varied patterns by autistic children (for example, often as more, or less, intense, or with varying levels of perception)<sup>5</sup>, it is very likely that the perception of taste can be experienced in a broader manner also<sup>6,7</sup>.

In addition to this, in the context of how regulated a child is, the threshold for registering or being overwhelmed by a sensation can also vary greatly<sup>8</sup>.

These differences can then, in turn, have a further bearing on the perception of sensation, including taste, and this can further influence how a taste is experienced.

## Low serum (blood) sodium levels

Sodium deficiency in the blood can trigger the activation of hormonal systems and neural circuits. These engage motivational processes that elicit a craving for salty

**“I have watched Fred bend down to drink rock pools in Felixstowe and he would ingest salt straight from the salt shaker if allowed”**

substances and a state of reward when salty foods are consumed. (Hurley et al, 2015)<sup>9</sup>

Children who experience low sodium levels can demonstrate impaired cognition, fatigue and low mood. Hurley et al postulate that, under certain situations, low sodium levels can lead to a psychological drive to promote salt intake, or ‘salt gluttony’.

Hurley goes on to describe a case of a child who was unable to synthesise the hormone aldosterone and continually excreted sodium in the urine. This led to dramatic salt-ingesting

behaviours, where “he had a desire to drink ocean and river water.

His ongoing salt appetite caused him to only eat foods that contained high concentrations of salt and even led to him ingesting salt directly from the salt shaker. His motivation to obtain salt was so dominant that one of the first words he learned to speak was salt.”<sup>9</sup>

This dramatic ‘need-induced’ salt intake we have seen in Fred; I have watched him bend down to drink rock pools in Felixstowe(!) and he would ingest salt straight from the salt shaker if allowed – yet we have measured his plasma sodium and other related hormones and they are within normal limits.

## Dysautonomia: salt seeking is an intuitive reaction to calm and balance the regulation of heart rate and brain perfusion

The autonomic nervous system (ANS) is responsible for the

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functioning of the heart, bladder, pupils and several other bodily functions. Therefore, when the ANS functions abnormally, individuals can experience several physical symptoms, including dizziness, abnormal sweating and digestive difficulties<sup>10</sup>.

Autistic children may exhibit chronic autonomic nervous system (ANS) hyperarousal (such as a higher heart rate) compared to their typically developing peers, reflecting a 'chronic biological threat response'.<sup>11</sup>

Intermittent forms with no obvious damage to autonomic nerves (a transient dysregulation) show as a response to a stimulus such as standing upright (seen in postural tachycardia syndrome) or temperature change.

Symptoms individuals can be left with include increased sweating (hyperhidrosis), blurred vision, feeling faint and being very unsettled. In a child who can't communicate these challenges, they become increasingly difficult to manage.

Salt supplementation is a common non-pharmacological approach to the management of recurrent orthostatic syncope (fainting after standing up) or postural orthostatic tachycardia syndrome (PoTS, a condition that

causes an abnormal increase in the heart rate after sitting up or standing up).

However, there is limited consensus on the optimal dosage, formulation and duration of treatment<sup>12</sup>. Salt intake can induce extracellular fluid volume expansion and improves orthostatic tolerance, improving control of cerebral blood flow<sup>12</sup>.

Has Fred therefore learnt that by ingesting a diet with increased salt, it naturally calms and enables him to better regulate and make sense of his body processes? Anecdotal, salt does seem to calm him down, but more research into this area is required.

### Summary

I would really like to believe the salt addiction is Freddie knowing intuitively what will balance him.

**“Rather than labelling ‘salt craving’ as another ‘just part of autism’ comment, it would be worth some basic investigations”**

Salt does appear to calm, and it makes sense that a child with a high heart rate and profound challenges in regulating internal physiological function would seek things that they know make the world a more tolerable place.

I am not suggesting everyone rush out to buy salt supplements or load their child's diet with salty food (there are many health risks), but like many behaviours and rituals seen in children on the autism spectrum, they are worth having a deeper think about.

Rather than labelling 'salt craving' as another 'just part of autism' comment, it would be worth some basic investigations (serum sodium levels and, potentially, hormone levels) to rule out an underlying issue with salt homeostasis (balancing of body systems) in the individual.

It would also be useful if a trial could be designed in autistic children diagnosed with dysautonomia (a disorder of ANS functioning) that considered salt supplementation as an intervention.

I think, on balance, from reading the literature available that the 'salt seeking' I see in children attending clinic is related to differences in taste perception, but it is still important to rule out other underlying medical causes out.



Andrea Hattrell Caney is a clinical academic research practitioner working for the Synapse Centre at ESNEFT (East Suffolk and North Essex NHS Foundation Trust). Andrea is an HCPC registered occupational therapist with extensive experience in paediatrics and learning disabilities. She is an Advanced Sensory Integration practitioner and has additional training in sensory attachment.

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**By law employers must make reasonable adjustments to assist people on the autism spectrum to succeed in their work place. Fiona McNeill looks at how this can be done in practice and finds great success stories and supportive professionals along the way**

Engaging in work that you enjoy – and that hopefully pays the rent – is an important part of a well-rounded and meaningful life. Yet for many people on the autism spectrum, this remains out of reach. According to figures from the Office of National Statistics,

only 22 per cent of autistic adults are in any kind of employment. Although public awareness of neurodiversity is growing, there are clearly still obstacles preventing autistic people from getting and keeping a job. Richmal Maybank, employer engagement and

programme lead with the National Autistic Society (NAS), says fear is the main reason employers are reluctant to take on someone on the autism spectrum. “People aren’t ‘bad’ and they want to help, but they worry about getting it wrong,” she explains. “They know that employers have to make adjustments, but there is often an assumption that these might be difficult or expensive. “One of our surveys showed that 64 per cent of employers questioned didn’t know where to go for support in hiring autistic candidates.” Another common misconception, she says, is that someone on the autism spectrum is more likely to be good at IT or

**The goal: employment successes are helping to change a situation where too few autistic people are in paid work**

maths, when the reality is they can be interested in all kinds of occupations, from the arts to medicine to customer service. From an autistic person’s viewpoint, Maybank adds, they are generally looking for understanding and acceptance in the workplace. They may only need simple changes, she says – reduced eye contact, perhaps, or allowing more processing time. “It’s often the unspoken, social rules in the working environment that worry autistic people,” she continues. “I worked with one woman who was a therapist – highly intelligent and qualified – but she hadn’t had a cup of tea in any of her workplaces for over ten

**Case study – employer**

**‘I was slightly nervous about taking them on, but it’s been a great success’**



Petrit Krasniqi (left) is the community sports manager for leisure centres in the borough of Barnet, North London. He recently took on two young adults with special needs for work experience.

Kamron Lynch, 24, from Finchley, is on the autism spectrum and has been shadowing staff at Finchley Lido. Steven Rogers, also 24, from Edgware, has learning difficulties and has been helping at Burnt Oak Leisure Centre. Both young men are supported by key workers from the charity MENCAP.

“I was slightly nervous about taking them on at first,” Krasniqi admits, “but it’s been a great success. The managers at both centres have been extremely complimentary about the boys – they say they’ve worked hard and engaged well with customers. We’re looking to extend their work experience for another six weeks and might offer them more training or casual work in future.”

**Case study – employee**

**‘I wanted something intellectually stimulating that I could sink my teeth into’**

Isabelle Mangan, 24, approached Ambitious about Autism (AAA) two years ago after graduating with a degree in philosophy and Japanese and getting a diagnosis of ASD. “I wasn’t sure what I wanted to do and the jobs I was applying for had loads of stages and online tests that didn’t seem relevant to the roles,” she explains. “It was daunting.”

AAA helped her prepare a CV and covering letter and identify any adjustments she would need at interview. She asked to see the questions in advance, plus a biography of each interviewer, and to be allowed to give a presentation on a subject of her choice. This enabled her to secure a six-month internship at a bank in London. The role was extended to eight months and then made permanent. After a year-and-a-half, Isabelle was recommended for a role in a different department. “I’m now working in the legal team and training to be a solicitor,” she says. “I’m really enjoying it. I wanted something intellectually stimulating that I could sink my teeth into.”

**“People aren’t ‘bad’ and they want to help, but worry about getting it wrong”**

years. There was too much uncertainty. Was there a kitty? Did people bring their own mugs? Should she offer her colleagues a drink? It was a small thing, but it made her anxious.”

Because of all the variables, it can be reassuring for the autistic candidate and the prospective employer alike to have someone as a go-between. For youngsters at school or college, there will usually

be a member of staff to help with applications or liaise with work placements. Those who are older or who have moved on from education can still access support from a number of charities or their local Job Centre (see the ‘Help with finding employment’ page 30). Families can help this process by encouraging the autistic person to identify the needs that they should disclose to a potential employer, Maybank suggests. “This can be tricky, but the clues are there. If they like the curtains drawn at home, maybe they struggle with light. If they don’t like loud noises, will they need ear defenders in the workplace? You can also educate them about



## “We get brilliant feedback from the employers”

different roles,” she says. “They might only have thought about working in familiar places – a classroom or an office in a school, for example – but you can talk to them about other occupations. Watch YouTube videos or try work experience days with friends who have different jobs. You want the person to feel inspired.”

Charity Ambitious about Autism (AAA) offers employment schemes for young people on the autism spectrum, and ‘Employ Autism’ training for employers and careers professionals. The organisation’s ethos is that rather than an autistic person learning to ‘mask’ and adapt to workplace requirements,

the neurotypical world should learn to accept and respect autistic people as they are.

AAA also facilitates paid internships for people aged 18 - 25 with employers who have undergone its autism training. “The scheme has been running for eight years,” says Danae Leaman-Hill, director of External Affairs and Development. “We’ve organised hundreds of placements and in 83 per cent of those the employer has

either extended the contract or made it permanent.

“We get brilliant feedback from the employers,” she continues, “not only about the performance of the interns, but that the whole process was much easier than they expected. We also hear that having an autistic intern creates a sense of safety in the workplace. Other employees then feel comfortable about disclosing their own needs or disabilities.”

## Help with finding employment

- **Ambitious about Autism offers autism training, plus internships and careers advice for young people on the autism spectrum:** [www.ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk](http://www.ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk)
- **MENCAP offers employment advice and support for people a learning disability or autism, as well as employers:** <https://www.mencap.org.uk/advice-and-support/employment>
- **The National Autistic Society offers advice for candidates and employers:** <https://www.autism.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/topics/employment>
- **The UK Government’s ‘Access to Work’ scheme offers financial and practical assistance for job-seekers with a disability or mental health challenge:** <https://www.gov.uk/access-to-work>

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# Moving on with less stress



**Transitioning from education to independent living or employment is stressful for anyone, but when you're autistic it's vital to have good support staff and welcoming employers to make it all work, says Fiona McNeill**

Change can be difficult for everyone, but if you're autistic it can be especially daunting. Nevertheless, the time will come when many young autistic people will have to move on from education to supported living or employment. Fortunately, many organisations have devised ways to make these transitions positive rather than daunting.

The Park College in Kennington, South London, provides specialist training for young people aged 19 – 25 who are diagnosed with autism or mild learning disabilities. Although the college has been open for only four years, it has already established an innovative, three-year timetable whereby

students acquire a broad range of skills that can be applied in the workplace or everyday life.

Along with social skills and functional skills training in English, maths and ICT, the college offers on-site experience in the laundry, café and garden, as well as the chance to be involved in the maintenance of the building and administration. There is also a costume department where students learn to repair and maintain outfits used by local drama groups. Once a term the college's function room is let out and students plan events, organise catering and serve refreshments.

"From the beginning, we ask them to try all the work experiences

on offer," says principal Catriona Guyler-Kone. "They might not know what they like until they try them. Getting students used to change in this way helps them to be more comfortable with change in other areas of life. We also make all aspects of the programme enjoyable – even the washing up!"

## Varied internships

The young people are also helped into external internships. Placements have included a bike repair shop, restaurant, sports centre, a food bank and the National Maritime Museum.

"The timetable is very much based around a student's interests

**“The timetable is very much based around a student's interests and their aspirations”**



and their aspirations, and we liaise with families to find out what's possible," Guyler-Kone continues. "For example, one student wants night-work because of his sleeping pattern. Other students who are anxious prefer to work at home, so we work alongside Autism Voice, a local organisation that can show them how to be self-employed or set up their own website."

Likewise, staff at Beechwood College in Cardiff – a post-16

provision for young people on the autism spectrum – work hard to prepare their students for adult life. The curriculum provides a broad range of educational and recreational activities, from English and maths to dance, drama and horse-riding. On top of this, students learn domestic skills, managing finance and how to get about on public transport.

Young people also gain on-site work experience in the college's



**Enjoying life in the community: Kerry and Kirsty, residents with Lifeways supported living, above. Above left: Carter, a former hospitality and food student at Derwen College, now has a paid job and lives in a shared house**

café and animal care facility. They create arts and crafts for Beechwood's online Etsy shop, too, then market the items and post them to customers. There are plans for car-washing and mending bikes and go-carts.

Sadly, despite these efforts, post-Covid it has become more difficult to find destinations to which the students can transition. It's a situation that leaves everyone disheartened, says Emma Collins, assistant principal. "There's a lack of funding and local authorities can be reluctant to pay for placements," she explains. "There are also fewer day centres where

## Plan ahead for supported living

Lifeways provides residential care and supported living to more than 5,000 people UK-wide, many of whom have complex needs. Clients include people with learning disabilities and autism.

Will Osborne (pictured), community engagement and business development manager for the organisation's eastern region, points out that for a young autistic adult, moving from the parental home to independent living is a huge step and can be extremely challenging.

He advises families to start planning well in advance. "You need time to explore what's out there and the different avenues of funding that are out there," he cautions, "and it's important to remember that transition is as much about

the family as it is the child. Letting go is really difficult for parents, but it's also really important to listen to what the child wants."

Because the process of finding and applying for supported living can appear overwhelmingly complicated, Lifeways provides a specialist team to guide families through the process – which, he says, is almost like a 'handover' of the young person. "A transition is



different for every person," he says. "Some people need a long, structured transition, perhaps three to six months, starting very, very slowly. Our support team might meet the individual, spending a couple of hours just observing or talking to parents.

"Then they might visit us and meet some of the people who live at the service. Gradually, over time, they will build their relationships and

their confidence. Perhaps it will culminate in some overnight stays before finally moving in."

However, other people, Osborne points out, might find a long transition anxiety-provoking. In this case, the Lifeways team would tailor the process to meet the individual's needs.

Transition isn't just about providing bricks and mortar, Osborne says – it's about helping someone on the autism spectrum to be as independent as possible. Once the young person has taken up residence, support workers help them with cooking, cleaning and budgeting. They also help the residents to get about in their local community and explore employment opportunities and leisure activities.

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## Transitions



A BeyondAutism student gains work experience

they can do activities like music or arts and crafts."

It has also become more difficult to find work experience for students, Collins adds, speculating that this is probably because there is not enough general awareness about autism. To combat this, the college offers free autism training for prospective employers.

Charity BeyondAutism runs early years services, schools and post-19 provision for autistic youngsters, plus outreach and training for families, local authorities and employers. As part of its strategy to help students transition to adult life, the organisation has produced an employability 'tool kit', which is free to access via its website. It was developed by Emily Ross, a vocational adviser with the charity.

"There are other kits out there, but nothing for our cohort of learners," she explains. "Our students can't attend mainstream

education and generally need high levels of support. Not all of them will be able to lead completely independent lives."

The kit is used within BeyondAutism to allow staff and students to work together to identify the young person's strengths and preferences and create a 'vocational profile'. Families can also use it in this way. Unusually, it can also be used in the workplace to help firms support an autistic employee.

"The profile will also detail a person's support needs," Ross says. "For example, it might say that they will forget if tasks aren't written down, or that they need to be shown what to do. A manager can sit down with the employee and identify any training needs or take a task out of a person's job description. If, say, they work in a coffee shop but can't use the till, that could be removed."

>>

“

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“

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Mum of Beattie, who moved to Lifeways from her family home.

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## Transitions



Tom on a work experience placement

### 'He started 2023 with the offer of his first paid job'

At Derwen College, a Shropshire-based provision for young people with special educational needs aged 16 – 25, staff are always looking towards the students' next steps, even several years in advance. Everyone involved in the students' care – from teachers and therapists to local authorities and families – work together to ensure that a secure plan is in place for whatever the post-16 goals may be.

The young people are central to this process, says Eluned Watson, publicity manager with the organisation: "Important questions include 'What are you good at?' and 'What employment options are available to you after college?'"

Derwen's curriculum fosters independence to aid the young people as they transition to adult life, with careers guidance and travel-training, as well as on-site work experience in the college's garden centre, gift shop, café and training hotel. Yes, it really does have a training hotel: named Hotel 751, it is modelled on a Premier Inn, has three en suite bedrooms and is available for the public to book during term time.

Retail and enterprise student Tom graduated in 2021. In his final year, there were meetings involving him, his parents and his local authority. The process identified that an administration-based, supported internship in his home area would help him progress towards paid work. Derwen supported him to gain a place on a programme at West Middlesex Hospital.

"The internship was a great next step for Tom to build on his skills with a view to finding appropriate employment in future," his parents say. "As a result, he started 2023 with the offer of his first paid job at the hospital!"

For other students, transitions aren't so straightforward. Hospitality and food student Carter excelled at his studies and was offered paid work at a Premier Inn. Sadly, because of Covid, he was unable to take up the position for a year. Nevertheless, staff at Derwen continued to support him in learning the updated regulations until, finally, he was given the green light to start his new position. He now lives in a shared house and has a paid job, so has made a successful transition with housing as well as employment.

## CONTACTS

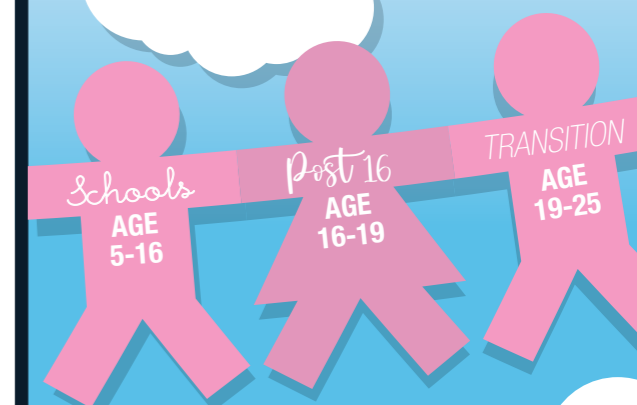
- Autism Voice UK: [www.autismvoice.org.uk](http://www.autismvoice.org.uk)
- Beechwood College: [www.iriscaregroup.co.uk/sen-education/overview/](http://www.iriscaregroup.co.uk/sen-education/overview/)
- BeyondAutism: [www.beyondautism.org.uk/](http://www.beyondautism.org.uk/)
- BeyondAutism toolkit: [www.beyondautism.org.uk/professionals/resources/employability/toolkit](http://www.beyondautism.org.uk/professionals/resources/employability/toolkit)
- Derwen College: [www.derwen.ac.uk/](http://www.derwen.ac.uk/)
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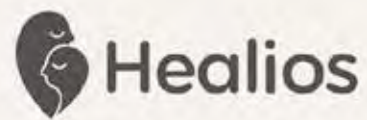
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As a digital healthcare company, we know how transformative technology can be.

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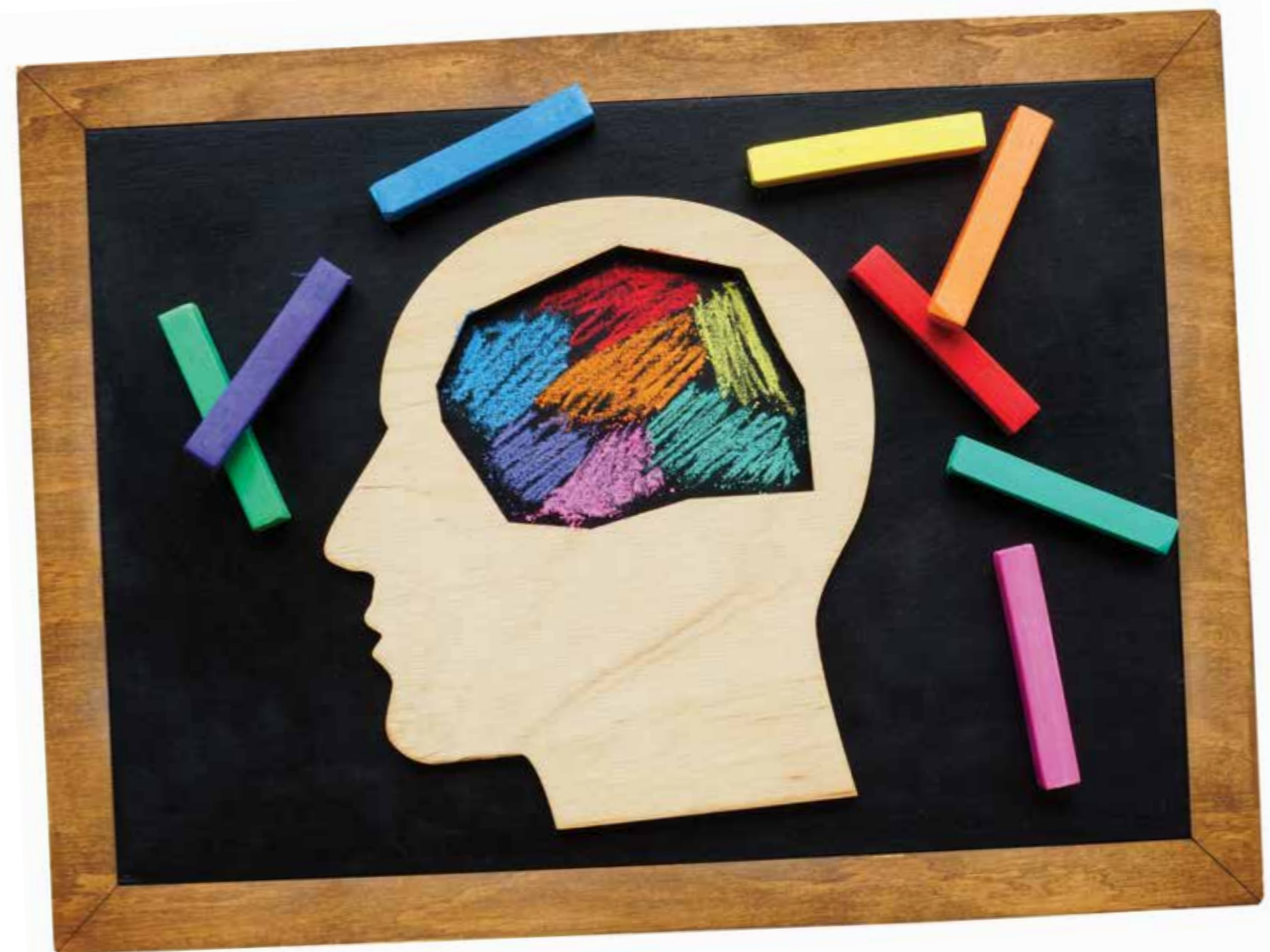
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## Employment



# Strength in diversity

**Workplaces are experiencing a neuroinclusion revolution, says author Ed Thompson, who coaches companies to embrace neurodiversity at work. He argues that organisations that achieve more diverse work environments enjoy a competitive advantage**

**A decade ago, barely any** organizations had a "neurodiversity programme". Indeed, the word neurodiversity itself – first coined only in the late 1990s – had limited currency in the world of business, or in society.

Today, global organizations including Salesforce, IBM and Accenture are all taking active steps to boost what has come to be known as 'neuroinclusion' – active efforts to include people who think differently at work.

### Training and resources

Such initiatives generally rest on the provision of training and resources for staff on the topic. They help to educate colleagues, managers, recruiters and HR professionals on how and where they can practice neuroinclusive principles to help colleagues thrive and job applicants show their best



Ed Thompson is the founder and chief executive of neurodiversity training firm Uptimize, <https://uptimize.com>

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# Employment

in the hiring process. The organizations involved are all on their own journey, with – typically, in their own words, more to do and accomplish – yet the very fact of these efforts is not lost on their staff. “I could never work anywhere again that is not taking active steps towards greater neuroinclusion”, said one Salesforce employee.

Organizational neurodiversity initiatives began with small-scale “disability hiring programmes” in the mid-2010s, as (particularly, technology) companies looked to fill empty job vacancies with autistic programmers.

The existence of such programmes – and their apparent message of valuing neurodiversity and neurodivergent talent – encouraged existing employees of such firms to disclose as neurodivergent, more confident this would lead to a positive outcome.

**My dyslexia has shaped Virgin right from the very beginning”**

**Richard Branson**

ten neurodivergent employees typically choose this route because of concerns about how disclosure will be received.

Neuroinclusion also matters to organizations for reasons of wider business performance. More diverse teams produce stronger results, and it is no great leap to see the value in driving ‘diversity of thought’ of people who see the world differently. Indeed, the creative skills of neurodivergent people have been highlighted by academics, writers and neurodivergent celebrities. “My dyslexia has shaped Virgin right from the very beginning”, says Sir Richard Branson, “and imagination has been the key to many of our successes.” Organizations that have taken steps to embrace neurodiversity at work have seen a rapid impact on innovative capacity, whether in the words of one manager “sharpening up the thinking” of their teams, individual neurodivergent employees filing for patents, or deliberately highly neurodiverse teams being constructed to (successfully) meet the demands of urgent business challenges.

**Rise of networks**

Notable, as a result, over the past few years has been the rise of neurodiversity-specific networks and resource groups in companies; neurodivergent professionals and allies have been coming together to provide mutual support and to advocate for constructive change towards greater neuroinclusion. This has broadened – necessarily – employers’ initiatives to focus on culture, process and environmental change, not just on hiring.

Neuroinclusion matters to organizations more than many are aware. There is no one ‘normal’ brain: as a result, teams and organizations are, by definition, ‘neurodiverse’ (as are humans, of course, more generally). This means that every interaction at work, from a conversation between colleagues to a meeting, sales presentation or job interview, takes place between people who

experience the world differently as a result of how their brain is wired. In a large organization, thousands of such interactions are happening simultaneously... yet, as most people have never been taught about neurodiversity in the education system, most participants in such interactions do not typically consider neurodiversity, or neuroinclusion.

This reality can serve to disadvantage neurodivergent professionals, whose own preferences may not suit the norms that emerge when neurodiversity is not considered. A norm, for example, would be a noisy, open-plan office; another would be a huge reliance on interviews – and, consequently, social skills – in application processes.

Cultures where neurodiversity is poorly understood can also be highly uncomfortable for neurodivergent team members, leaving them at the risk of ignorant stereotypes, and preferring to ‘mask’ their neurodivergence rather than being their true selves. Such masking comes with a potential impact on mental health and productivity, yet one study in 2021 suggested that as many as nine in

**Company evolution**

But, in the words of consulting giant Deloitte, “diversity doesn’t stick without inclusion”. Corporate neurodiversity programmes, then, have necessarily evolved into true neuroinclusion initiatives to ensure that organizations are able to support all their existing, neurodiverse employees. It is through this recognition – that neuroinclusion matters everywhere, all the time – that more and more organizations are now ensuring that staff receive neurodiversity training, and that the topic is championed and considered across their businesses.

Those that do so, of course, in an age where employee experiences are rapidly shared online, will continue to attract and recruit diverse talent, and leverage their varied skills. Those that lag will be left behind in the ongoing war for talent, and may find themselves out-innovated and out-performed by their more neuroinclusive competitors.

**Further reading**

As well as founding neurodiversity training firm Uptimize, Ed Thompson is the author of **A Hidden Force: Unlocking the Potential of Neurodiversity at Work**. The book is published by Fast Company Press and is currently available online for £15.98 in paperback.

**www.autismeye.com**

# Getting **crafty**

**For a young person on the autism spectrum, a purposeful focus can be life changing. Darren Devine talks to groups using craft and design to help autistic youngsters learn new skills and develop their self-esteem**

**“Absolutely transformational.”**

That’s the phrase that Kiran Hingorani, head of Swalcliffe Park School, uses to describe the impact of its Green Power project on his students.

The project sees young people build an electric racing car from a kit supplied by charity the Greenpower Education Trust.

Hingorani says he has seen his autistic students at the Oxfordshire college get so absorbed in the project they give up their evenings

and weekends to work on it. “It provides them with a really healthy interest,” he says. “It provides them with a peer group with which they can develop their social skills and share their interests.”

Swalcliffe Park caters for boys aged 10 to 19 who are on the autism spectrum but who do not have a learning disability.

Some go on to motor mechanics courses at colleges and use the passion they developed at Swalcliffe to build a career. They

also take part in national racing events around the country.

Hingorani adds: “It gives them an opportunity to have experiences they would never ever have. They go off in the bus and spend a night in a hotel. They go to a national race circuit. They go to places they would never go to otherwise.

“They meet people they would never meet otherwise. They get a level of confidence in what they’re doing that is fabulous for their well-being and self-esteem.”

Whether you see autism in a positive or negative light, there can be no doubt that a laser-like focus on a hobby or special interest can be a route to better social connections, job prospects and an improved quality of life. In September last year, a study published in the *American Journal of Occupational Therapy* found therapies using the creative arts “enhance occupation-based outcomes” for autistic children.

Researchers at the University of Texas looked at the impact of drawing, painting, colouring, music

and theatre. They found the activities benefited children with social interaction, processing skills and body functions, but “significant improvements required multiple sessions”.

## **Weaving as a journey**

At Mount Camphill Community College, in Wadhurst, East Sussex, Aiko Fujishita teaches weaving. She says the college focuses not only on teaching work and life skills, but “building up the whole human being”.

She adds: “Within the therapeutic environment of the workshop, each student is supported individually on their personal learning journey. Within this safe space they get to experience such challenges as how to cope with making a mistake and how to fix it. To take turns, to take responsibility for their loom and tools, the list goes on.”

In addition to weaving, the college has its own social enterprise focused on bakery, pottery, seasonal crafts and candle and >>

**“They get to experience such challenges as how to cope with making a mistake and how to fix it”**



**Striking:** an image of the West Pier at Brighton by Lewis, a student at the resort’s St John’s College, made into a postcard and on sale on the Inklusion website, <https://inklusionprint.co.uk/>

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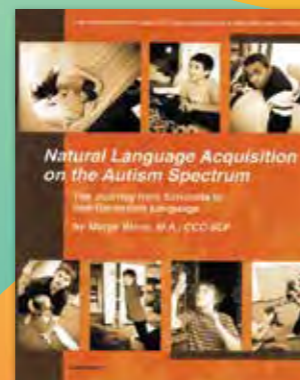
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## Crafts in teaching



**'Therapeutic environment': weaving at Mount Camphill Community College, above. Above right: all smiles at charity Create, which uses many kinds of art form to work with vulnerable and isolated children and adults**

soap making. Fujishita says: "The real joy is getting to be part of their journey to greater independence and witness their pride in the products they have made."

Charity Henshaws has an all-age arts and crafts centre in Knaresborough, Yorkshire. People up to the age of 70 are involved in a range of workshops focusing on such areas as jewellery, paper, woodwork, printing, mosaics, pottery, horticulture, drama and music. All the workshops are led by artists who use a guided approach that allows people to work with help or independently.

The centre has its own shop stocked with items that have been made by its students, including cards, ceramics, bags, jewellery and bird boxes.

Among the clients who visit the centre is Jenna, 38, who has epilepsy, acquired brain injury, dyspraxia, a moderate learning disability and speech-and-language difficulties. She is one of its most productive art makers.

Jenna, from Huby, near Leeds, enjoys paper, pottery, print, mosaic and drama workshops and volunteering. She communicates through Makaton signs and, over the past 12 years, while she has been visiting the centre, she has become more independent, confident and artistic.

A half-day morning or afternoon session at the centre costs £36. Arts and crafts are seen as a



vital non-verbal expressive outlet for autistic people who may struggle to communicate. Also, given that autistic people can be visual thinkers, expressing themselves through art and in other creative ways can provide relief and a sense of achievement.

St John's College, in Brighton, supports young people aged 19 to 25 with building their independence through lessons in creativity, maths, science, English,

who specialise in their field and students are encouraged to learn by getting involved. The subjects are pitched at the right level for each student to ensure they are accessible and bring independence and success. And those who can cope are encouraged to further develop their skill at mainstream colleges.

### Dedicated enterprise

The college has its own dedicated social enterprise, Inklusion, making canvas prints, tote bags, clothing, mugs, wrapping paper, cards and postcards. Designs are created by students in their art sessions, where they learn to operate industry-standard printing equipment. They design, produce, package and deliver products for sale via the Inklusion website.

Charity Create works alongside the most vulnerable and isolated children and adults, using more than 15 art forms. The organisation works with groups including disabled children and adults, young and adult carers, schoolchildren from deprived backgrounds and older people.

The award-winning charity also focuses its efforts on young and adult prisoners, and people in vulnerable groups such as asylum seekers, refugees, homeless adults and LGBTQ+ young people.

Among its current projects, *environment:tales* is a multi-artform programme that involves autistic >>

**“The real joy is getting to be part of their journey to greater independence and witness their pride in the products they have made”**

technology, and social and physical development.

The college also caters for those with special interests in areas such as photography, including digital imagery and video, the creative and performing arts, music, catering, computing, sport and gardening. The aim is to provide purposeful activities that stimulate future hopes, ambitions and hobbies and develop skills that help with work placements and jobs.

Subjects are taught by teachers

children in Leeds, London and Manchester. The children are encouraged to create artwork exploring the environment and our impact on it.

**‘You tend not to dwell’**

Cindy, 61, cares for two sons aged 20 and 15 who are both on the autism spectrum. Last September and October, Cindy, from Harrow, took part in six weekly ceramics workshops run by Create with professional artist Amy Leung.

Cindy, whose 20-year-old son also has type one diabetes, has to stay up at night because he injects six or seven times per day. She says: “As each week has gone on, we’ve all progressed and got more confidence. You’re so engrossed in what you’re making, you tend not to dwell on the negative aspects of your life as a carer.”

Beechwood College, in Cardiff, blends art, music, drama, horticulture and work skills for its



**‘Fabulous’ for well-being and self-esteem: Green Power lead Alan Mayor with student Alex, working on Swalcliffe Park’s electric racing car**

autistic students, who attend as residential or day students.

Students are encouraged to enjoy active social lives, including meals out, trips to theme parks and days out at the local beach.

Art is one of the options from which students can choose at the college, as is horticulture. Vegetables grown in the college’s polytunnel are used in meal

preparation by the students, in the college kitchen or sold to raise money for charity.

Woodwork is another option at the college that many of its students are said to enjoy, as well as working for Beechwood’s business by making seasonal products that the college sells to the local community.

**LINKS**

- **Beechwood College:** [www.iriscaregroup.co.uk/sen-education/overview](http://www.iriscaregroup.co.uk/sen-education/overview)
- **Create:** <https://createarts.org.uk>
- **Greenpower Education Trust:** [www.greenpower.co.uk](http://www.greenpower.co.uk)
- **Henshaws:** [www.henshaws.org.uk](http://www.henshaws.org.uk)
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- **St John’s:** [www.st-johns.co.uk](http://www.st-johns.co.uk)
- **Swalcliffe Park School:** [www.swalcliffepark.co.uk](http://www.swalcliffepark.co.uk)
- **The Mount Camphill Community:** [www.mountcamphill.org](http://www.mountcamphill.org)

# Independence at the heart of a ‘Quality of Life’ approach

**At Swalcliffe Park School, we take a ‘Quality of Life’ (QoL) approach to hearing what our students and families want to tell us about what is important to them**



**We believe that the starting point** for helping our students gain confidence and achieve what they want is getting a sense of who they are and who they want to be.

This involves finding out about their personal strengths and difficulties, as well as their hopes and aspirations, so we are best placed to help prepare them do what they want to do now and after they leave school. We do this in a variety of ways, including separate weekly ‘keyworking’ sessions for students and families and termly QoL surveys. We believe this is essential information and we use it to plan our support in four key areas:

- **Communication**
- **Self-management**
- **Achievement**
- **Independence**

**“By working together we are making the most progress possible”**

The development and generalisation of **Independence** skills is a key aspect of our school curriculum and involves working closely with families to make sure we have an up-to-date understanding of what each student can do, can’t do yet and would really like to be able to do.

We also must balance this with an element of risk taking, as we all did when we were growing up! This means making sure there is a

**Students and staff work together to foster skills for independence**



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**Principal: Robert Piner**  
**CEO: Kiran Hingorani MEd**

safety net in place should things go wrong .... as of course they do from time to time!

With all this in mind, we have developed an ‘Independence’ curriculum, which has not only been written by our multi-disciplinary staff team but is also delivered by them. The inclusion of Speech and Language Therapists, Occupational Therapists and Clinical Psychologists in this team, as well as education and residential staff, ensures that our practical approach covers many aspects of **Communication** and **Self-Management** when putting independence skills into practice, for example on a visit to town or travelling on public transport.

**Opportunities**

Listening to issues that are important to families also means we can focus on what we can do together to improve family quality of life, so we look for opportunities where skills and experiences can be built into evenings, weekends and holidays so everyone can benefit.

Our **QoL** approach provides us with feedback from students and families about whether the activities and strategies we put in place are working, so that by working together we are making the most progress possible.



**For more information about our Independence curriculum and Quality of Life approach you can contact Kiran on [khingorani@swalcliffepark.co.uk](mailto:khingorani@swalcliffepark.co.uk) or visit our website [www.swalcliffepark.co.uk](http://www.swalcliffepark.co.uk) and our ‘YouTube’ channel, [www.youtube.com/channel/UC7DD8faNTgg3qmf6zJ4qr0Q](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC7DD8faNTgg3qmf6zJ4qr0Q)**

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# When home becomes harmful

**The dangers of mould made news headlines after a youngster died from exposure to it at home. Not only can mould wreak havoc on our loved ones' health, but it could even be involved in the development of autism, reports Stella Chadwick**

**Mould is a common type of fungus** that grows in damp environments, and it can be found in many homes, schools and other buildings. The National House Building Council (NHBC) Foundation has estimated that as many as one in three UK homes may be affected by mould.

It's generally well known that mould can cause respiratory problems and allergic reactions, but recent research suggests that mould exposure may also have a significant impact on brain health and the nervous system, leading to a range of health issues.

## Impacts on the body

Evidence suggests that exposure to mould can cause inflammation in the body, disrupting the balance of neurotransmitters in the brain. This, in turn, can lead to symptoms such as fatigue, anxiety, depression, chronic constipation or diarrhoea, nerve and joint pain, balance problems, overactive bladder, tics, obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), unexplained seizures, colds and flus, and mood swings.

Mould exposure can also cause oxidative stress, which can damage the nervous system and lead to inflammation. We know from many years of research that a subset of autistic children suffer from high levels of oxidative stress and disrupted neurotransmitters, as do children with PANDAS (short for Paediatric Autoimmune Neuropsychiatric Disorders Associated with Streptococcal Infections) and PANS (short for Paediatric Acute-onset Neuropsychiatric Syndrome).

Studies have also found a potential link between mould

exposure and autism. Children who were exposed to mould during infancy were found to be almost three times more likely to become autistic than those who were not exposed. Exposure in pregnancy to mycotoxins, which are toxic compounds produced by certain types of mould, was also found to be associated with an increased risk of autism in offspring.

PANDAS and PANS are autoimmune disorders that affect the nervous system. They are characterized by sudden onset symptoms of OCD, tics, anxiety, and other neuropsychiatric symptoms. Studies have found that children with PANDAS/PANS were more likely to have been exposed

**“Mould exposure can have a range of impacts on the nervous system”**

to mould in their homes than children without the disorder. The likely reason for this is that exposure to mould toxins can trigger autoimmune responses in the body and this in turn leads to PANDAS/PANS.

While more research is needed to fully understand the relationship between mould exposure and the nervous system, these studies suggest that mould exposure may be a risk factor for the development of autism, PANDAS and PANS in some children.

It's important to identify and address any mould problems in homes and other buildings to minimize the risk of health issues associated with mould exposure.

## What you can do

If you suspect that your child may have been exposed to mould and is experiencing symptoms related to the nervous system or autoimmune disorders, you need to remove the child from the mouldy environment to get better. Moving out of the mouldy building or remediating the mould are the only real long-term options. I would recommend you work with a mould-literate professional to advise you through your health journey. They can advise you on the right tests and create a health plan that is specific to your needs.

Testing your home for mould needs to be carried out by a professional, so seek advice and thoroughly vet any remediators. Make sure they don't use chemicals that may add to your toxic burden and that they don't simply patch over the problem.

## Steps to take

In the meantime, there are steps you can take to reduce your child's exposure to mould:

- Keep your home dry and well-ventilated. This can help to prevent mould growth.
- Fix any leaks or water damage promptly. If you do have water damage, make sure the affected area is properly dried and cleaned to prevent mould growth.
- Reduce exposure: isolate the area that you suspect is the epicentre of the mould problem and seal it off with plastic sheets and masking tape! Adding a few drops of essential oils to a cotton ball and placing them in the problem area can help. The essential oils that have been shown to help are rosemary, tea tree, thyme, frankincense, and any citrus >>

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## Diet & nutrition



Stella Chadwick is the founder of Brainstorm Health® and an experienced nutritional and biomedical consultant who specialises in working with adults and young children on the autism spectrum. [www.brainstormhealth.co.uk](http://www.brainstormhealth.co.uk)

### Foods to avoid

Refined carbohydrates
Dried fruit
Yeast
Mushrooms
Fermented foods and drinks
Aged foods such as aged cheese and cured meats
Nuts and most seeds
All high-oxalate foods

drink plenty of fluids to avoid constipation. Take binders at least two hours away from medication, main meals and other supplements.

- Use gentle nasal support with products such as Xlear and Natura Nectar Nasal Guardian, especially if you have allergies. Use simple gut support products such as aloe vera and slippery elm, and probiotics such as Megaspore.
- Use natural antifungals such as caprylic acid, which is derived from coconuts.

### Conclusion

Mould exposure can have a range of impacts on the nervous system and other health implications, particularly in autistic children and those with PANDAS or PANS.

While more research is needed to fully understand the relationship between mould exposure and these conditions, evidence suggests that reducing mould exposure may help children's health. If you're concerned about your child's exposure to mould, talk to your healthcare provider about testing and treatment options.

Please note: you must always discuss any supplements or changes to diet with your medical doctor or practitioner. This article is for education purposes only.

## Mould toxins travel on dust particles, so clean and vacuum your home regularly to reduce dust and allergens

- Avoid foods that promote mould production. See the 'Foods to avoid' table above.
- Increase foods that are rich in antioxidants, but low in oxalates to combat the increased toxic burden on the body. See the 'Low-oxalate antioxidant foods' table, left.
- Often, consuming a strong toxin binder such as activated charcoal while living with mould can worsen things. It pushes your body into detox mode, which can be too much for many who are living with mould. Use natural food-based binders that are also low in oxalates. These include psyllium husk, flaxseeds and oat bran. It can helpful to have a half-tablespoon to one tablespoon of the binder a day. Make sure you

**Suffering: respiratory problems are one of the health hazards that can be caused by mould in the home**

or pine-based ones. If you have any pets, please check with your vet before using essential oils in your home, as some oils can be toxic to animals.

- Use a HyperHepa filter that can clear out mould, spores, mould fragments and mycotoxins. Some brands to consider are IQAir, Intellipure, and OKTOair.
- Mould toxins travel on dust particles, so clean and vacuum your home regularly to reduce dust and allergens.

### Low-oxalate antioxidant foods

Romaine, butter and iceberg lettuces, bok choy, chives, red bell pepper, brussels sprouts, cabbage, capers, cauliflower.

Celeriac root, coriander, courgettes, cucumber, purple kale, mushrooms, onions, garlic, radish, turnips, boiled green peas, pumpkin, winter squash, watercress, water chestnuts.

Gala apple, ripe Hass avocado, cranberries, cherries, coconut, seedless grapes, kumquat, peaches, banana, mango, papaya, fresh plum, watermelon, honeydew, lemon and lime juice, blueberries, strawberries.

Olive oil

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## The Circle

Venue: Orange Tree Theatre  
Date: 7 June at 7.30pm



## A Midsummer Night's Dream

Venue: Shakespeare's Globe  
Date: 10 June at 2pm



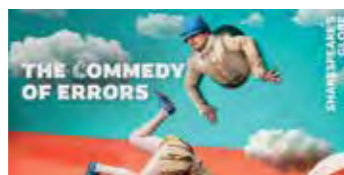
## Heathers The Musical

Venue: The Other Palace  
Age: 14+  
Date: 14 June at 7.30pm



## Transpose BURN: Pit Party

Venue: Barbican Theatre  
Age: 14+  
Dates: 15 & 17 June



## The Comedy Of Errors

Venue: Shakespeare's Globe  
Dates: 17 June at 2.30pm



## The Everywhere Bear

Venue: Polka Theatre  
Age: 3+  
Dates: 18 June at 1.30pm



## Matilda The Musical

Venue: Cambridge Theatre  
Age: 6+  
Dates: 18 June at 3pm



## Hairy

Venue: Polka Theatre  
Age: 6+  
Dates: 9 July at 2pm



## The Tempest

Venue: Unicorn Theatre  
Age: 6+  
Dates: 16 July at 2.30pm



## The Swell

Venue: Orange Tree Theatre  
Dates: 19 July at 7.30pm



## Dear England

Venue: National Theatre  
Dates: 26 July at 2pm



## Bleak Expectations

Venue: Criterion Theatre  
Age: 10+  
Dates: 6 August at 3pm

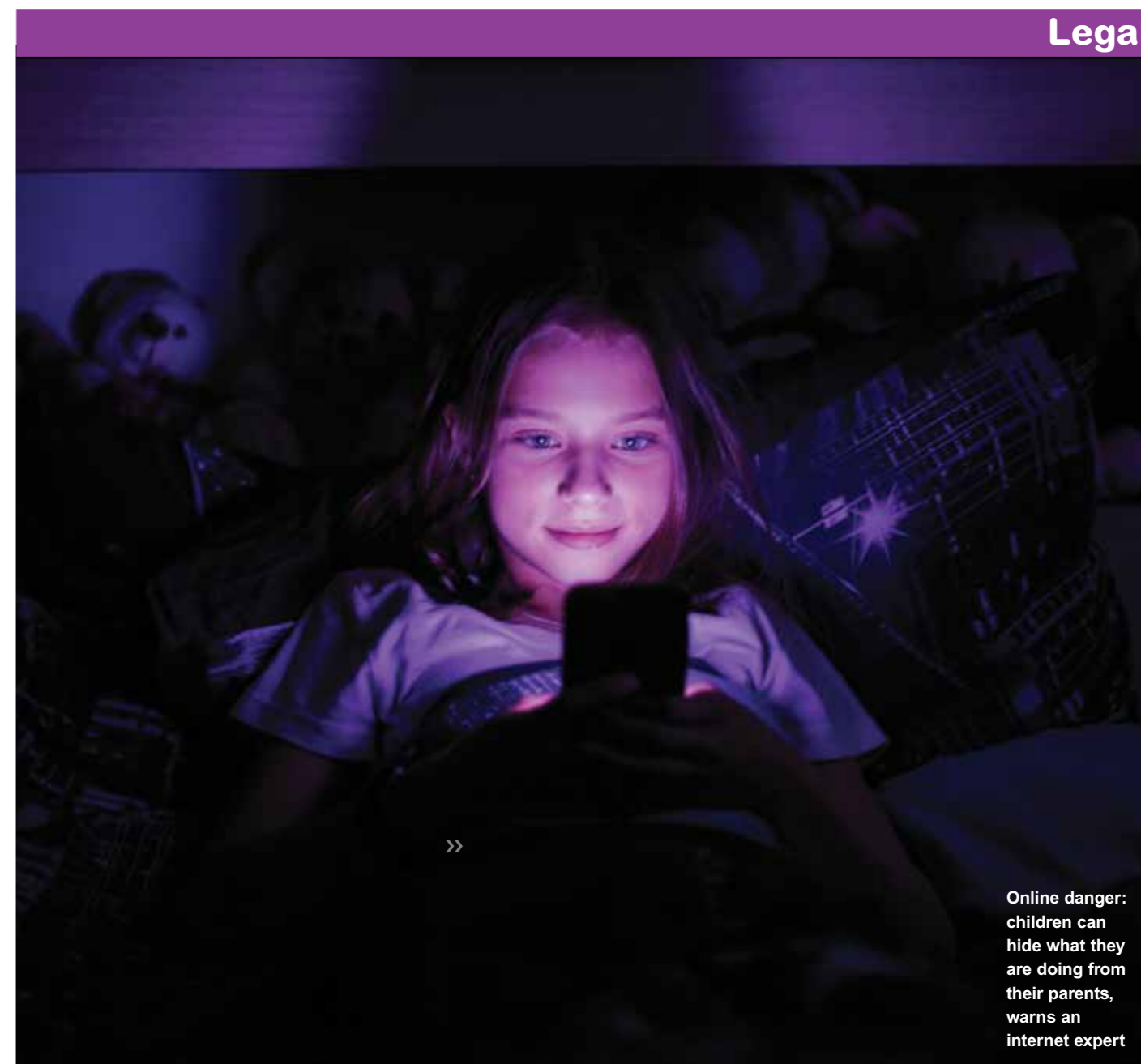


## Macbeth

Venue: Shakespeare's Globe  
Dates: 21 August at 7.30pm



For more information on the above plus other accessible performances visit [OfficialLondonTheatre.com/Access](https://www.officiallondontheatre.com/Access)



Online danger:  
children can  
hide what they  
are doing from  
their parents,  
warns an  
internet expert

# When images pose risks

**In our last issue, solicitor Ruth Peters warned of the rise of internet offending by autistic people. With a record number of cyber offences taking place against children last year, parents are also urged to watch for their offspring being asked to distribute illegal images. Report by Lorna Strong**

**Summer is around the corner,** and offenders will know when kids are off for the holidays and have more access to screen time. Parents need to take extra precautions to protect their children online at a time when there are record-high offences.

The past year has seen a surge of cyber offences against children in the UK, with 30,000 reports recorded by police. This is a 66 per cent increase from figures just five years ago.

## 10,000 cases

In 2021-22 alone, there were almost 10,000 cases where social media sites such as Snapchat, Facebook and Instagram were used to distribute illegal images.

Shockingly, the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) says there are >>



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likely to be more than 3,500 online crimes taking place against children every month.

Technology companies are failing to stop their sites being used by criminals. One aspect of this is that an increasing number of young people are being manipulated into sharing images.

### Steps to safety

Improving privacy settings and teaching kids how to be safe online are just some steps parents can take to protect their children.

Photography expert Matt Dahan, founder of internet printing company Parrot Print, says: "Although most social networking sites only allow users aged 13 and over, children get their phones earlier nowadays and can easily hide what they

**“Children get their phones earlier nowadays and can easily hide what they are doing from their parents”**

are doing from their parents.

### Open to manipulation

"Unfortunately, all of us are open to be contacted and manipulated by people we don't know online – and it's important that, as parents, we alert our children to the potential dangers.

"Parents should also be mindful of what they post online of their

children because they could unknowingly put their kids at risk. Innocent family photos of children in everyday life posted to social media can be used by criminals, which is why privacy settings are so important."

### Freedom versus privacy

Dahan adds: "There is a fine line between a parent's freedom to post on social media and a child's right to privacy, so parents should be just as cautious of what they are posting of their kids online."

See the panel below for ways that he suggests parents can reduce the risks to their children. 🗣️

#### LINK:

● **National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children:**  
[www.nspcc.org.uk](http://www.nspcc.org.uk)

## Seven things parents should do to reduce threats to children online

By Matt Dahan

### 1 Privacy is paramount

Any social media account has information readily accessible to anyone who wants to see it, so children and parents should have secure privacy settings. Privacy settings should be changed so only friends can view photos and posts. This change will also stop unsolicited messages from users who are not on a friend's list.

### 2 Never post personal information

Often, children can be reached through their parents' social media accounts. Adults should consider everything they post online about themselves and their kids and make sure no personal information is included on their profiles. It is also important to tell children not to share private information online, such as where they live, play, go to school or their age.



### 3 Think long and hard before posting a photo

Pictures can reveal a lot about someone's identity – such as their family status, age and where they live. No matter how innocent the image, criminals can use social media to steal such photos of children and even track down where they live. The perfect protection is to post nothing of children until they are old enough to consent.

### 4 Teach children the signs of an online predator

Most kids know about 'stranger danger' in real life, but parents should explain that this concept also translates online. Let children know there are bad

people online who can harm them. Talking to our kids about online safety will help them navigate and report any inappropriate content or conversations. Discussing online red flags, such as a 'friend' who asks them to keep the relationship secret, is essential.

### 5 Limit screen time

With so many apps and devices available, kids rely on screens for entertainment. However, children need to have fulfilled lives away from computers, so ensuring they socialise and enjoy real-life activities and hobbies will ultimately ensure they spend less time on the internet. Explain to children how always being in front of a

**“The past year has seen a surge of cyber offences against children”**

screen can be harmful, and set clear boundaries that the whole family follows.

### 6 Monitor kids online

Parents must keep tabs on their children's social media accounts if they use them unsupervised. Check their friend lists and the type of content they are posting, and let them know you will monitor them. This way, if any inappropriate online behaviour, or information which should not be shared, is spotted, parents can speak to their children about the dangers and educate them.

### 7 Use parental controls

Parental controls allow parents to stay one step ahead of social media predators by providing features that can block specific sites and apps, enable parents to monitor history and have an on-demand view of children's screens. This will offer peace of mind to parents and make children think carefully about what they are doing online.

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## Courses



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**Who for:** Parents and carers of autistic children and young people.  
**Aim:** The webinar series will feature experts, advocates, and a range of contributors with a professional interest and lived experience of autism.  
**When:** A new webinar is released on the last Tuesday of every month. They are available on demand, so you can watch when it suits you.  
**Where:** Talking Tuesdays is held on Talk about Autism.  
**Cost:** Free  
**Where to sign up:** <https://www.ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk/information-about-autism/early-years/parent-carer-online-community>  
**Extra information:** Talk about Autism is the online community for parents and carers of autistic children and

young people. When you sign up you can connect with others, share your experiences and knowledge, access information and peer support, and learn from experts.

### **Autism Early Support**

**Course:** The Parent's Portal  
**Who for:** Parents and carers of autistic children and those who recognise differences in their children  
**Aim:** The Parent's Portal is an interactive membership platform of resources and support for parents who have an autistic child or children, or recognise differences in their child and they are exploring neurodivergence.  
**When:** 24/7 online access via a membership  
**Where:** Online  
**Cost:** £10 a month membership  
**Where to sign up:** <https://autismearlysupport.org.uk/>

parents-portal/  
**Extra information:** The resources will help parents who have children aged 3-16 by offering clear, consistent information and guidance to help you support your child's journey through their school, home and social life.

### **Autism Independent UK**

**Course:** Introduction & Application to the SCERTS Model  
**Who for:** Educators, therapists, administrators, professionals and families  
**Aim:** Using the SCERTS curriculum and practice principles to design programming for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder  
**When:** 29-30 June 2023; January 2024 (dates tba)  
**Where:** Wicksteed Park, Kettering, Northamptonshire  
**Cost:** £293

**Where to sign up:** <https://autismuk.com/>  
**Extra information:** CPD accredited, refreshments and light lunch provided.

**Course:** TEACCH Autism Programme 3 Day Training  
**Who for:** Educators, therapists, administrators, professionals and families  
**Aim:** The primary aim of the TEACCH programme is to prevent unnecessary institutionalisation by helping to prepare autistic people to live or work more effectively at home, at school and in the community.  
**When:** 26-28 June 2023; January 2024 (dates tbc)  
**Where:** Wicksteed Park, Kettering, Northamptonshire  
**Cost:** £435  
**Where to sign up:** <https://autismuk.com/>  
**Extra information:** CPD accredited, refreshments and light lunch provided.

### **Autism Oxford**

**Course:** Outdoor learning sessions with Autism Oxford UK and Hoglet & Twig  
**Who for:** Autistic children or on CAMHS waiting list – ages four to eight  
**Aim:** An accessible forest school for young people to play and explore in a safe and welcoming environment.  
**When:** Sessions are Wednesday 14th June 3.30-5pm; Wednesday 12th July 1pm-2.30pm; Wednesday 16th August 10-11.30am. You are welcome to book as many as you wish. For safety reasons, numbers are restricted and booking is essential.  
**Where:** Based in secure woodland outside Wantage (OX12) on the Ridgeway. This is in beautiful, private woodland, fenced and away from main roads and public.  
**Cost:** £29.95 per session  
**Where to sign up:** <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/o/autism-oxford-uk-32230677417>  
**Extra information:** If you would like more information, >>



Bursaries available from Sounds of Intent Charity

Available in person and online (streamed and recorded) – can be accessed any time



## Services For Education

# Sounds of Intent

Now in its 11th successful year

Free access to a wide range of fully inclusive musical resources

Postgraduate certificate course for those working with children and young people with special musical needs or abilities, including those on the autism spectrum

An internationally acclaimed one-year, part-time, masters-level course for specialist musicians and music teachers working in schools and colleges, and for special needs staff wishing to engage with their pupils and students through music

University of Roehampton in partnership with Sounds of Intent Charity and Services for Education, Birmingham

For more information please contact Professor Adam Ockelford  
[a.ockelford@roehampton.ac.uk](mailto:a.ockelford@roehampton.ac.uk)

<https://www.roehampton.ac.uk/postgraduate-courses/music-and-children-with-special-needs-sounds-of-intent/>



please email [therapies@autismoxford.org.uk](mailto:therapies@autismoxford.org.uk)

### Autism Unlimited

**Course:** Understanding Autism  
**Who for:** Everyone who wants to learn more about autism.

**Aim:** Increase your knowledge of autism in a fun, interactive way that has been co-created with autistic people.

**When:** We can arrange a date exclusively for your workforce, or look at our training calendar: <https://www.autism-unlimited.org/support/training-calendar/>

**Where:** Complete a two-hour e-learning, or book to attend a face-to-face course.

**Cost:** £30 for e-learning or £60 per person for a full day face-to-face session.

**Where to sign up:** <https://www.autism-unlimited.org/support/training/>

**Extra information:** An autistic perspective of communication, sensory needs, social understanding, behaviour, making a difference.

**Course:** Autism Acceptance  
**Who for:** Those who support an autistic person or would like to become a better ally.

**Aim:** Learn how to implement key strategies to support autistic people autism in a fun, interactive way co-created with the autistic community.

**When:** We can arrange a date exclusively for your workforce, or look at our training calendar: <https://www.autism-unlimited.org/support/training-calendar/>

**Where:** Book to attend one of our face-to-face courses.

**Cost:** £60 per person for a full-day, face-to-face session.

**Where to sign up:** <https://www.autism-unlimited.org/support/training/>

**Extra information:** Learn to adapt environments or situations for each autistic individual, the meaning of behaviours, and techniques to support.

**Course:** Signalong Essential Vocabulary

**Who for:** People who want to learn a different

communication style.

**Aim:** Signalong is a way of communicating using hand gestures. It's easy to learn, promotes language development and it's fun!

**When:** We can arrange a date exclusively for your workforce, or look at our training calendar: <https://www.autism-unlimited.org/support/training-calendar/>

**Cost:** £60 per person for a full-day session.

**Where to sign up:** <https://www.autism-unlimited.org/support/training/>

**Extra information:** Understand the purpose of Signalong, learn to sign over 100 'words', classroom signing practice, activities to put vocabulary into context.

**Course:** Signalong Foundation  
**Who for:** People who want to learn a different communication style.

**Aim:** Signalong is a way of communicating using hand gestures. It's easy to learn, promotes language development and it's fun!

**When:** We can arrange a date exclusively for your workforce, or look at our training calendar: <https://www.autism-unlimited.org/support/training-calendar/>

**Cost:** £160 per person for three days' learning.

**Where to sign up:** <https://www.autism-unlimited.org/support/training/>

**Extra information:** Understand the purpose of Signalong, learn to sign over 360 'words', classroom signing practice, activities to put vocabulary into context.

**Course:** Signalong Essential Vocabulary

**Who for:** People who want to learn a different

based on the award-winning Employability Toolkit. Learn at your own pace. 100% positive feedback.

**Course:** Introduction to autism – a course for professionals

**Who for:** Professionals supporting autistic children and adults

**Aim:** Covers content from Tier 1 and 2 capabilities from DHSC framework for supporting autistic people

**When:** Ongoing

**Where:** Online

**Cost:** £50

**Where to sign up:** <https://www.beyondautism.org.uk/courses/an-introduction-to-autism/>

**Extra information:** CPD-certified. Learn at your own pace. 100% positive feedback.

**Course:** Supporting autistic people for allied health professionals

**Who for:** Newly qualified Allied Health Professionals

**Aim:** Providing AHPs with a foundation knowledge in autism to inform their work with service users and their families.

**When:** Ongoing

**Where:** Online

**Cost:** £25

**Where to sign up:** <https://www.beyondautism.org.uk/courses/allied-health-professionals/>

**Extra information:** Written by speech-and-language therapists, occupational therapists and behaviour analysts. Learn at your own pace. 100% positive feedback.

**Course:** Introduction to autism – a course for parents, families and carers

**Who for:** Parents, families and carers

**Aim:** Comprehensive introduction to autism, including diagnosis and support with communication, sensory difficulties, health, wellbeing and behaviours that might challenge.

**When:** Ongoing

**Where:** Online

**Cost:** Free

**Where to sign up:** <https://www.beyondautism.org.uk/>

courses/an-introduction-to-autism-a-course-for-parents-families-and-carers/

**Extra information:** Includes signposting and additional resources. Learn at your own pace. 100% positive feedback.

**Course:** Introduction to behaviour analysis

**Who for:** Professionals working with children and young adults (school staff, social workers, nurses, family support workers), and families

**Aim:** Comprehensive introduction to behaviour analysis, and its application when managing behaviours that challenge.

**When:** Ongoing

**Where:** Online

**Cost:** £75

**Where to sign up:** <https://www.beyondautism.org.uk/courses/introduction-to-behaviour-analysis/>

**Extra information:** CPD-certified; written by service leads, BCBA and UKBA(Cert) professionals. Learn at your own pace. 100% positive feedback.

**NW Autism and SEND**

**Course:** Online Block Therapy Practitioner Training

**Who for:** Staff who work with children with neurodiverse-related conditions and parents of these children.

**Aim:** It gives you the key knowledge, skills, structure and resources to effectively run Block-based therapy sessions with young people.

**When:** Open/public sessions are generally planned once a month. Group bookings, for example in a school, can be arranged for dates to fit in with your venue. We also offer the option of splitting the day into two twilight sessions.

**Where:** Online via Zoom

**Cost:** The total cost is £215 + VAT per individual delegate!

**Where to sign up:** <https://www.nwautismandsend.co.uk/training-courses/lego-therapy>

**Extra information:** This training was written by Emma Griffiths – an autism consultant >>

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## Block-based therapy training is online via Zoom.



It teaches skills to run effective Block-based Therapy sessions with young people with neurodiverse conditions. FREE Block Therapy Kit This is popular with staff and parents.



**CONTACT@NWAUTISMANDSEND.CO.UK**  
<https://www.nwautismandsend.co.uk/>



## AUTISM TRAINING FOR YOUR WORKFORCE

At Autism Unlimited we believe in creating a world of unlimited possibilities for those we support. This includes increasing both awareness and acceptance of autism in the workplace.

Our accredited training gives your team the education and support they need to fully understand autism and give your organisation:

- Increased inclusion and diversity amongst your team
- Improved staff morale and retention
- The ability to expand your recruitment talent pool
- A greater understanding and acceptance of autism
- The opportunity to promote your accreditation



**FIND OUT MORE ABOUT AUTISM TRAINING FOR YOUR WORKFORCE:**

email [autism.training@autism-unlimited.org](mailto:autism.training@autism-unlimited.org) or call 01202 483360 opt 2

Autism Unlimited is a leading charity and educational support centre for autistic children, adults, and their families. Autism Unlimited is registered in England & Wales under charity number 1000792 at Charity Hub, Portfield School, Portley Lane, Christchurch, BH23 4BB. A company limited by guarantee and registered in England and Wales 02506982

and director of NW Autism & SEND, a CPD provider using highly specialised and experienced teachers. Block therapy starter kits valued at £100 + VAT each!

**Course:** Sensory Needs Practitioner Training

**Who for:** Designed to upskill staff in schools

**Aim:** This full-day online training is accredited and aims to improve school staff's skills in delivering interventions for children with sensory processing difficulties.

**When:** Prearranged courses open to individuals & small groups. Open/public sessions usually planned once a month.

**Where:** Online via Zoom

**Cost:** The total cost is £215 + VAT per individual delegate!

**Where to sign up:** <https://www.nwautismandsend.co.uk/>

training-courses/sensory-needs-training

**Extra information:** Access to Making Sense website. Certified by NW Autism & SEND, a CPD provider using highly specialised and experienced teachers. Wealth of online resources to edit according to your setting's needs.

**Course:** Child Mental Health Training

**Who for:** This is a full-day, six-hour training designed to equip school staff with the appropriate awareness of child mental health.

**Aim:** For staff who already have experience of working with children who are particularly at risk of developing poor mental health

**When:** Arranged training

**Where:** Online via Zoom

**Cost:** Quote on enquiry.

**Where to sign up:** <https://www.nwautismandsend.co.uk/training-courses/children-mental-health>

**Extra information:** You will receive a resource pack prior to the training, to be used alongside training and within your real-world environment.

**Course:** Autism & Anxiety Awareness Training

**Who for:** Teachers, teaching assistants, pastoral staff and community organisations supporting children on the autism spectrum.

**Aim:** This session will be useful for all staff (mental health leads, primary, secondary and FE professionals) working with children who have autism or anxiety-related problems.

**When:** Arranged training

**Where:** Online via Zoom

**Cost:** Quote on enquiry.

**Extra information:** <https://www.nwautismandsend.co.uk/training-courses/autism-anxiety>

**Course:** Social Stories Training  
**Who for:** Teachers, teaching assistants, pastoral staff and community organisations supporting children on the autism spectrum.

**Aim:** This is a practical training course that equips delegates not only with knowledge to write a social story, but also opportunities to write your own social story using the support and guidance of the trainer.

**When:** Prearranged courses for individuals & small groups

**Where:** Online via Zoom

**Cost:** The total cost is £150 + VAT per individual delegate.

**Where to sign up:** <https://www.nwautismandsend.co.uk/training-courses/social->

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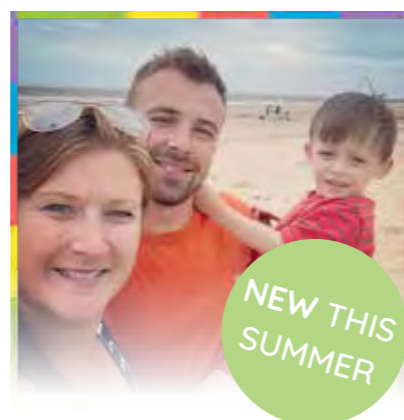


The Parent's Portal by Autism Early Support is a new, interactive platform of resources, guidance and peer support.

The creators are an experienced team of specialist therapists and teachers who have worked with autistic children and listened to the needs of their parents for over 25 years.

The Portal has been designed to offer:

- Clear, consistent information and guidance to help you support your child's journey through their school, home and social life
- Trusted support from practitioners with lived experience
- Practical tools, strategies and accommodations for home and in school
- Help to understand your child's differences, their strengths and their needs
- A peer network of parents to exchange ideas, feel listened to and affirmed
- Signposting to current UK-wide support, advice and guidance.



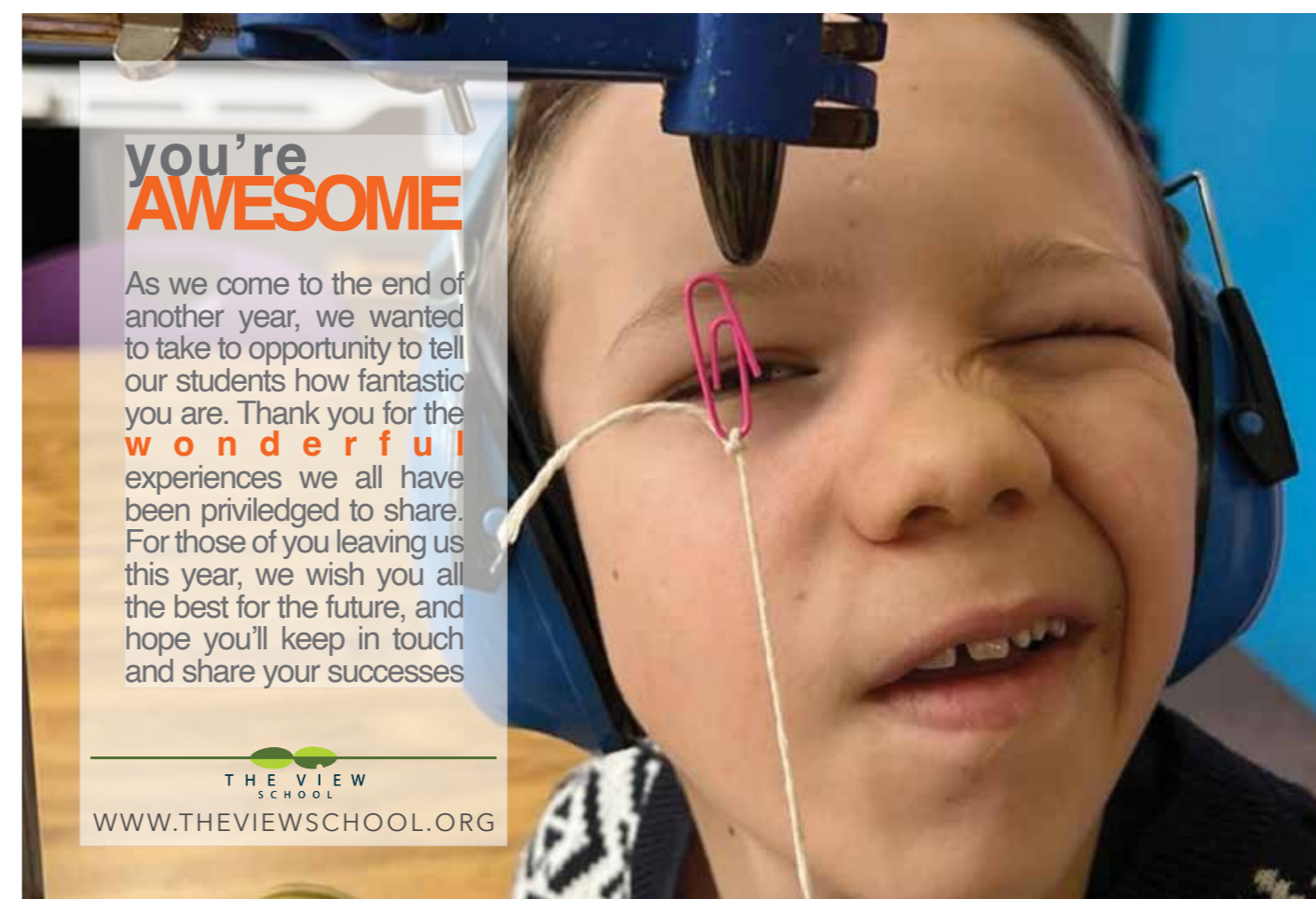
For £10 a month you will gain unlimited access to:

- A programme of live, interactive workshops by experienced practitioners and autistic advocates
- A dynamic library of webinars, videos and leaflets
- Live discussion forums with other parents
- Parent support groups.



Scan to read more

W: [autismearlysupport.org.uk](http://autismearlysupport.org.uk)  
T: 07422 574160  
E: [portal@autismearlysupport.org.uk](mailto:portal@autismearlysupport.org.uk)





Professor Mary E Van Bourgondien



Glenna Osborne

# TEACCH® Autism programme 3 DAY TRAINING COURSE

June **3 DAY** 26-28. 2023 £435.00\*\*

January **3 DAY** TBA. 2024 £TBA\*\*

Venue: Wicksteed Park Kettering

Course Led by **Mary E Van Bourgondien**,  
Professor, UNC Department of Psychiatry,  
Clinical Psychologist, Chapel Hill  
TEACCH Center



**These trainings are most appropriate for: educators,  
therapists, administrators, professionals, & families**

AM/PM refreshments & light lunch



Office: 199-203 Blandford Ave, Kettering, Northants NN16 9AT.  
Tel./Fax: 01536 523274 autism@autismuk.com

**Book online: [www.autismuk.com](http://www.autismuk.com)**

**\*\*(Covid-19):** The training courses above will take place subject to the safety concerns of delegates, ours & venue staff, including restrictions that may be imposed by the UK or US governments.\*\*

## Courses

stories#/cart

### Extra information:

Opportunities to write your own version of social stories to use in your setting.

**Course:** PDA Advocate Accredited Course for Professionals

**Who for:** Mental health leads, teachers/teaching assistants, social workers, personal assistants, foster carers, health workers, and anyone working in a mental health-related occupation.

**Aim:** Accredited one-day course on Pathological Demand Avoidance (PDA) for professionals to gain a deeper understanding of PDA diagnosis and how schools and settings can best support children and young people.

**When:** 20 September 2023, 20 November 2023

**Where:** This course is delivered on a regular basis online via Zoom with a specialist teacher and can also be arranged to be delivered to you and your colleagues in person or online, by contacting NW Autism and SEND directly.

**Cost:** For September it will be £150 + VAT (special intro offer), and the usual £215 + VAT for the November course. Capped at 20 spaces.

**Where to sign up:** <https://www.nwautismandsend.co.uk/>

**Extra information:** This course comes with a Resource Booklet that can be adapted to support a pupil with PDA or suspected PDA, covering their journey through school, college, and beyond. You can use this pack every time you work with a child with PDA or suspected PDA.

### Reachout ASC

**Course:** Supporting Autistic Learners in the Secondary Classroom

**Who for:** Secondary teaching staff, teaching assistants, SENCOs

**Aim:** To understand autistic students and develop strategies to help them thrive in your subject and in school.

**When:** At any time

**Where:** Online

**Cost:** £24

**Where to sign up:** <https://www.theabilitybridge.com/courses/supporting-autistic-learners-in-the-secondary-classroom>

**Extra information:** A CPD accredited course to do in your own time or as a department.

**Course:** Supporting Autistic Learners in the Primary

Classroom

**Who for:** Primary teaching staff, teaching assistants, SENCOs

**Aim:** To understand autism and learn practical strategies for supporting children to thrive in KS1 and KS2.

**When:** At any time

**Where:** Online

**Cost:** £24

**Where to sign up:** <https://www.theabilitybridge.com/courses/supporting-autistic-learners-primary>

**Extra information:** A CPD-accredited course to do in your own time or as a staff team.

**Course:** Autism in the Early Years

**Who for:** Early years and nursery practitioners, SENCOs and parents

**Aim:** To understand early autism development and learning, with practical advice >>

## Reachout Autism Support Consultants & The Ability Bridge provide:

- In-school Specialist Teacher Support in the Lancashire/ Greater Manchester area. Practical, curriculum and classroom support, SENCO, teacher, EHCP and EBSA advice and resources.
- Specialist in-person training for schools and services covering all things autism, ADHD and PDA.
- Online training platform with CPD-accredited courses for you to learn in your own time and pace.



[www.reachoutasc.com/](http://www.reachoutasc.com/)

[www.theabilitybridge.com/collections](http://www.theabilitybridge.com/collections)





## Introduction & Application to the SCERTS Model 2 DAY TRAINING COURSE

June **2 Day** 29-30. 2023 £293\*\*  
January **2 Day** TBA. 2024 £TBA\*\*  
Venue: Wicksteed Park Kettering

Using the SCERTS curriculum & practice principles to design programming for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder

Course Led by  
**Emily Rubin**, MS, CCC-SLP Director.

**This training is appropriate for: educators, therapists, administrators, professionals and families**

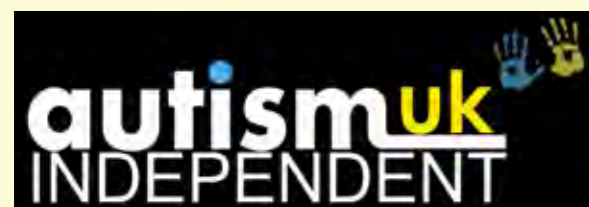
AM/PM refreshments, light lunch.



Office: 199-203 Blandford Ave, Kettering, Northants NN16 9AT. Tel/Fax: 01536 523274  
autism@autismuk.com

Book online: [www.autismuk.com](http://www.autismuk.com)

\*\*(Covid-19): The training courses above will take place subject to the safety concerns of delegates, ours & venue staff, including restrictions that may be imposed by the UK or US governments.\*\*



## Courses

from teachers and a SaLT.

**When:** At any time

**Where:** Online

**Cost:** £24

**Where to sign up:** <https://www.theabilitybridge.com/courses/autism-in-the-early-years>

**Extra information:** A CPD-accredited course to do in your own time or as a staff team.

**Course:** What they don't tell you about ADHD

**Who for:** Parents, teachers, teaching assistants, care staff and SENCOs.

**Aim:** To explore the latest research and understanding of ADHD as a brain type, dispelling some of the myths.

**When:** At any time

**Where:** Online

**Cost:** £24

**Where to sign up:** <https://www.theabilitybridge.com/courses/what-they-don-t-tell-you-about-adhd>

you-about-adhd

**Extra information:** A recording of a live discussion from two ADHD adults / teachers with practical advice.

**Course:** How to support autistic young people in relationships and sex education – RSE.

**Who for:** SENCOs, PSHE subject leaders, care staff, parents and teachers.

**Aim:** To understand the needs of autistic children in RSE, with a structured approach and resource links.

**When:** Any time

**Where:** Online

**Cost:** £24

**Where to sign up:** <https://www.theabilitybridge.com/courses/how-to-support-autistic-young-people-in-relationships-and-sex-education-RSE>

**Extra information:** A CPD-

accredited course you can do in your own time or as a team.

**Course:** Autism and Anxiety  
**Who for:** Parents, SENCOs, teaching staff, care staff

**Aim:** To understand anxiety in autistic children and young people and ways to support and avoid stress, with practical advice and resources.

**When:** Any time

**Where:** Online

**Cost:** £24

**Where to sign up:** <https://www.theabilitybridge.com/courses/autism-anxiety>

**Extra information:** CPD Accredited. More information on Reachout ASC courses: <https://www.theabilitybridge.com/collections>

**University of Roehampton**

**Course:** PGCert in Special Musical Abilities and Needs

('Sounds of Intent')

**Who for:** School teachers working in the field of SEN, music teachers, teaching assistants, educational psychologists

**Aim:** To learn the impact of autism & other neuro-developmental conditions on children's musical development, and strategies to promote wider learning and well-being.

**When:** From September 2023 to August 2024

**Where:** Online or in person (Birmingham)

**Cost:** c.£2,500

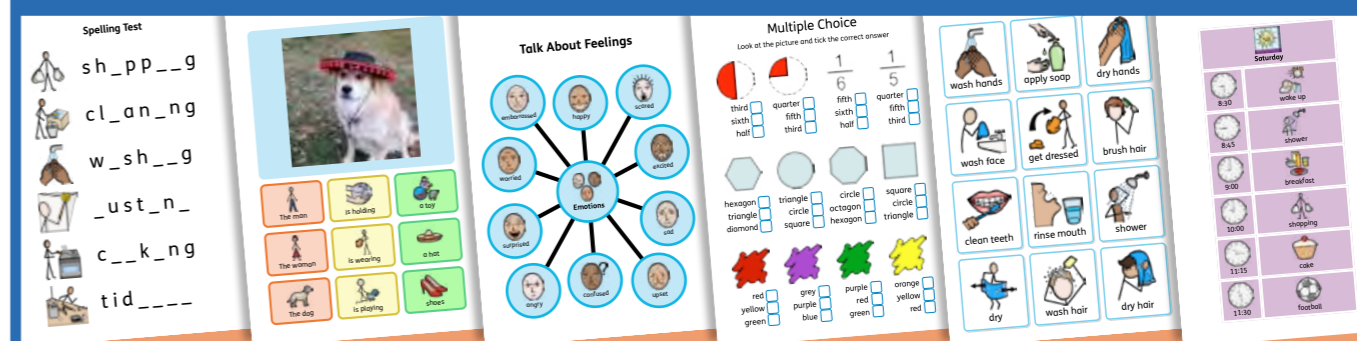
**Where to sign up:** <https://www.roehampton.ac.uk/postgraduate-courses/music-and-children-with-special-needs-sounds-of-intent/#:~:text=The%20Sounds%20of%20Intent%20resource,face%2Dto%2Dface%20teaching.>



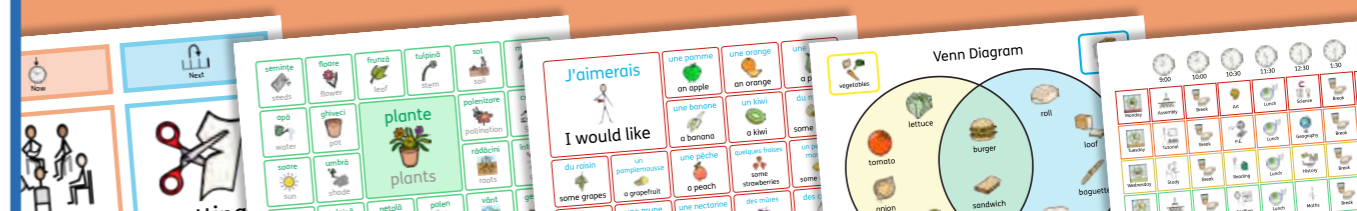
# Widgit Online

For more information, visit  
[www.widgitonline.com](http://www.widgitonline.com)

Create, translate, print and share symbol materials online



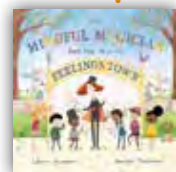
Create visual, communication and learning resources in your web browser using over 20,000 Widgit Symbols. Translate into more than 80 languages to create EAL and MFL resources with easy to use templates.



Come and see us at Autism Shows: London B2, Birmingham C4, Manchester E5



### The Mindful Magician and the Trip to Feelings Town



This beautifully illustrated picture book takes children aged five and over to Feelings Town, where there are children who need help because they are having overwhelming feelings – they're angry, sad, worried, startled by loud noises or are very hungry without realising it. In helping the children, readers learn ways to zap those feelings away and thereby help to regulate their own emotions and senses, as well as how to understand interoceptive senses (the perception of sensations from inside the body). There's some guidance for adults at the end of the story.

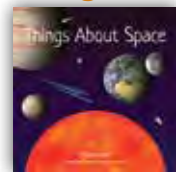
The author, Lauren Brukner, is an occupational therapist and an expert in sensory integration and self-regulation.

● Jessica Kingsley, £12.99/\$18.95 hardback

We have five free copies of *The Mindful Magician for Autism Eye* readers. To win, send an email marked *Mindful Magician* to Mark Hayes at [mark.hayes@autismeye.com](mailto:mark.hayes@autismeye.com). We will pick five winners at random.

Autism Eye readers can also get 25% off JKP Kids books on autism for a limited time by using the code: KIDSAE25. <https://uk.jkp.com/pages/childrens>

### Things About Space



Remarkably, the author of this picture book, Aston Smith, is only 10 years old. And it's already into its second edition, since he published the first one when he was eight.

With this new edition Aston has added QR codes, which readers can scan to listen to him narrating each page. This interactive element is intended to help young children who may struggle with some of the more complex words.

Aston is autistic and has Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).

According to his website, he is now planning to write about his struggles living with the two conditions and how they affect his life.

● £15.95 plus £3.35 postage, via Aston's website, [www.astonsmith.me.uk](http://www.astonsmith.me.uk)

### BEAR: A Story of Autism and Difference



This book is intended to help children on the autism spectrum to look on the condition in a

positive way. It tells the story of a gentle bear who has a special interest in dinosaurs, as well as sensory sensitivities and a preference for routines. He also misunderstands social situations and, at times, is overwhelmed by feelings and anxiety. It emphasises that each individual on the autism spectrum experiences their neurodiversity in a way that is special to them.

● £8.99 via the Bear Autism website, <https://bearautism.com/home>

### Your Child is Not Broken



Part manual, part memoir, this no-holds-barred account of Heidi Mavir's discovery of her child's neurodivergence and her own fight to be heard, seen and supported, is heartbreaking, funny and brutally honest. There is special advice for parents whose children have Pathological Demand Avoidance or school refusal, as well as for parents who are making great personal sacrifices and neglecting their own life's interests just to hold it all together for their child.

● Bluebird, £10.99

### The Autistic Guide to Adventure



Outdoor adventuring can be life-changing: it makes you physically and mentally stronger, takes you to new places and introduces you to new friends, as well as being an exhilarating challenge. But it can also be stressful when there are unexpected social and sensory challenges involved.

Allie Mason, an autistic adventurer, offers lots of advice, ranging from archery to stargazing, sailing to fossil hunting, snorkelling to nature-writing. Each easily digestible factsheet comes

with a short introduction, a summary of the sensory experiences involved, suggestions on approaching activities for when you're just getting started, as well as a handy budgeting system.

● Jessica Kingsley, £14.99/\$19.95

### Success With Sensory Supports



Thankfully, sensory needs are now recognised as a vital part of learning, development and engagement for autistic students. With sensory issues in mind, more

sensory supports are being used more often to make education accessible and more enjoyable for pupils. This book can be used as a helpful guide on how to use sensory strategies successfully with school children, giving real-life situations that autistic people find challenging.

● Jessica Kingsley, £14.99/\$21.95

### A Quick Guide to Behaviour Management



Even the most patient parent and experienced teacher can struggle with understanding behaviours that may challenge in the classroom. If your child is playing up in class, this book could well prove a good resource before you embark on those stressful parent/teacher meetings. It is packed with practical advice, identifies a host of behaviours that schools complain about and presents advice on how to deal with them. It includes tips from experienced teachers on approaches they found useful.

● Sage Publications, £24.99

### Cheeky Worries



Cheeky worries are those sneaky thoughts that pop up when you're least expecting it. You might be getting ready for bed, playing with friends at the park or having fun on the bus when suddenly a scary thought pops into your head. Through the characters of Finn and a wise owl, this book sets out to equip children and adults with a common language to discuss their emotional worlds and worries. It gently introduces psychological principles and evidence-based techniques that help children aged from four to eight develop resilience and deal with anxiety.

● Jessica Kingsley, £10.99/\$15.95



## Sensation & Emotion Cards

Hamish & Milo Sensation & Emotion Cards help children to recognise, communicate and express their feelings by developing their emotional awareness and vocabulary.

Children with autism spectrum conditions (ASC) who have difficulties recognising and responding to emotional and mental states in others' facial expressions, children who need help with understanding feelings and faces and children who have difficulties with empathy can benefit from activities with these sensation and emotion cards.

Helping children recognise and notice sensations is the first stage in building emotional awareness and these sensation and emotion cards are invaluable in enabling children to begin to put language to their feelings, to help regulate their emotional world, increase self-confidence, enable aspiration and achievement and contribute to healthier social relationships.

All children need multiple, repeated experiences of empathic adults noticing, labelling and validating their emotions in a safe, relational way and these experiences reinforce and acknowledge to the child that all feelings are acceptable and safe to have.

These cards support children's emotional development by helping them to:

- ✓ **Recognise** that there are a huge range of emotions
- ✓ **Notice** what different emotions may look and feel like
- ✓ **Develop** vocabulary for sensations as well as emotions
- ✓ **Talk** about emotions, even those that are uncomfortable, giving them permission to express their whole range of feelings and talk about their experiences
- ✓ **Think** about the emotions that they often feel, or seldom feel
- ✓ **Develop** empathy and recognise the feelings of others
- ✓ **Understand** how there are a range of feelings and intensities within a core emotion e.g. anger, irritated, frustrated, rage and furious



### Huge range of emotions, guidance and activities

- ✓ **60 Sensation & Emotion cards** - A6 size double-sided durable cards.
- ✓ **6 blank cards for self-expression** - A6 size, double-sided wipe clean cards with a boy and girl outline for using with wipe clean pens.
- ✓ **A guidance booklet** - covering the rationale, emotion coaching and 20 therapeutic activities.

Just £30 to Autism Eye readers!  
Code AE30

Hamish & Milo is an organisation dedicated to improving children's mental health, emotional development and wellbeing through a range of wellbeing resources and training for schools and settings across the UK.

Scan the QR code or visit [www.hamishandmilo.org/cards](http://www.hamishandmilo.org/cards) and use code AE30 at checkout for the discount and free delivery



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Autism Eye discount of £30 inclusive of P&P expires 31st July 2023.

# Ambitious about Autism is the national charity standing with autistic children and young people.

Come and visit us at the Autism Show in London

Stand C5

We champion rights, campaign for change and create opportunities.



## Education services

Our specialist education services support autistic children and young people to be themselves and realise their ambitions.



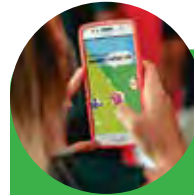
## Support for families

Speak with like-minded people about your parenting journey through our online parent community.



## Employment opportunities

Supporting autistic people to gain skills and prove themselves in the workplace.



## Connecting autistic young people

Our online youth network for autistic young people aged 16-25 years.

## Work for us

We are looking for teaching support staff to join our education settings this September. If you want a fulfilling role that will make an impact get in touch.

[jobs.ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk/jobs](https://jobs.ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk/jobs)

 [ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk](https://ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk)

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