

Aukids™

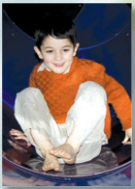
Issue 3
Spring 2009
Manchester/Cheshire
Free

Positive parenting for children with ASD

INSIDE:



Rest Easy
Expert advice
on sleep issues



Clowning Around
Our roving reporters
put fun zone to
the test

PLUS



Find 'Norris' and
WIN this **FANTASTIC**
fidget bin from The
Novelty Warehouse!

Letter from the Editors



Helping children with ASD to understand expressions

The Space Place DVD pack is available to buy online at www.spaceplace.tv and will also be available at the TASCAs Autism Awareness open day at Dukinfield Town Hall on April 2nd.

DVD PACK INCLUDES TWELVE FUN-PACKED EPISODES, INTERACTIVE GAMES AND PLAYING CARDS.



Tori Houghton
Co-Editor,
AuKids



Debby Elley
Co-Editor,
AuKids

Welcome back to AuKids!

Lovely to be with you again, and you'll be pleased to hear that Tori is back and busy digging out expert advice again for this issue. The result is a fantastic Ask The Panel for anyone who's reading this through bleary, sleep deprived eyes. Let's hope you find the ideas you've been looking for if your little one seems to think they're nocturnal.

In fact our spring issue is so jam-packed that we're pretty surprised it didn't burst on us. Getting it all into 12 pages was quite a challenge, but one we both love. We particularly wanted to help you to start making plans for the summer, so there's plenty inside about help that you can access to support you through those tricky weeks. AuKids is still a not-for-profit endeavour reliant on advertising and generosity. We'd like to extend our thanks to all who have helped us with this issue and in particular to Brigitte Schwarting for her donation and to the congregation of Menorah Synagogue in Sharston who have given us some of the funds raised from its annual charitable appeal. We'd like to take this opportunity to wish our Jewish readers a very happy Passover!

If you're reading this at the end of March, get your diary out smartish! To mark WORLD AUTISM AWARENESS DAY on Thursday April 2nd, T.A.S.C.A. (Tameside Action for Social Communication and Autism Support Group – you can see why they needed the acronym...) is holding a special event at Dukinfield Town Hall in the Jubilee Hall.

It runs all day from 10am-4pm and is a great opportunity for networking, meeting support groups and gathering useful information from professionals. Among those present will be T.A.S.C.A., C.L.A.S.S. (here we go, another acronym...) which stands for Communication, Language and Autism Spectrum Support...the NAS or National Autistic Society (we give up...), Parent Partnership, Portage, Social Services and the Direct Payments team and many more. So if you've never been to Dukinfield, now's the time for a visit.

Competition time!



Fidget box

Since it's Easter, we've gone to town and really pulled the rabbit out of the hat for our special spring competition. You can win a fabulous fidget box from our friends at The Novelty Warehouse, the online store where you can buy fun sensory toys.

To win this box of sensory fidget delights for ages 5+ (worth £21.99) simply have a close look at the magazine and see if you can find where The Novelty Warehouse's logo, Norris, is hiding.



Bunny out of hat

Send your answer to aunkidsmag@googlemail.com by the end of May. The first correct answer picked out of the hat will receive a lovely goody box packed with novelty toys that are perfect for kids with ASD. Only one entry per person. The editor's decision is final. Don't imagine that you won't have a chance of winning – have a go!



Find Norris

Happy reading, see you next time.

Tori and Debby

**Awaken their senses...
...expand their minds**



Multi-Sensory Resources, toys & novelties ...at amazing prices

The Novelty Warehouse

www.thenoveltywarehouse.com

COVER GIRL: Lula - see Celebrity Spotlight Page 12.

Photograph by Jennie Fielden, who also took the fab shots of Mr Clown's Fun Zone - a massive thank-you to her from AuKids.
EDITORS: Tori Houghton and Debby Elley • GRAPHIC DESIGN: Jo Miller, Catalyst Video Ltd • PRINTING: Standard Life Plc

The opinions expressed in AuKids magazine are those of the contributor.

Please seek medical advice before embarking on any therapy or behaviour intervention. All articles are copyright AuKids.

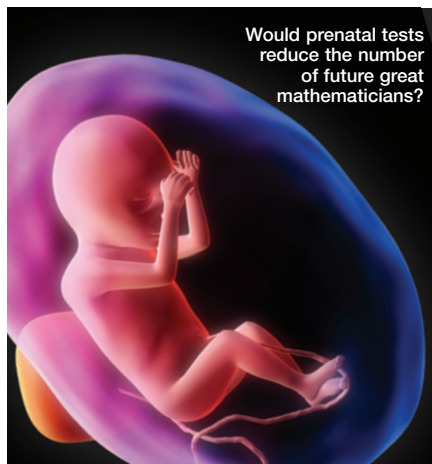
Autism Expert Urges Caution Over Prenatal Tests

Professor Simon Baron-Cohen, director of the Autism Research Centre at Cambridge University, has recently raised the controversial subject of autism screening. Although he admits that tests may be at least two years away, he asserts that it would be wise to consider ethical issues in advance. Baron-Cohen's views about prenatal testing were expressed in *Scrubbing Up*, a weekly health column featured on the BBC news website.



In *Scrubbing Up*, he says: "Such a test will need to prove itself clinically in terms of whether it is highly specific (in detecting just autism)."

He goes on to voice concerns about whether a test would be desirable if it were



to be developed. "If it was used to 'prevent' autism, with doctors advising mothers to consider termination of the pregnancy if their baby tested 'positive', what else would be lost in reducing the number of children born with autism? Would we also reduce the number of future great mathematicians, for example?"

"Caution is needed before scientists embrace prenatal testing so that we do not inadvertently repeat the history of eugenics or inadvertently 'cure' not just autism but the associated talents that are not in need of treatment."

Baron-Cohen also discussed his views on Radio 4's Today programme. When asked why he brought up the subject now, when screening is not yet possible, he responded: "I think it's right to be thinking ahead. The ethical issues are very complex. Research is steaming ahead in genetics and in prenatal biomedical research into autism. We don't want to be suddenly confronted with the existence of a test without having thought through what it would mean for individuals and for society."

Joy Delhanty, professor of genetics at University College London, responded to his concerns by arguing that general screening would not be the norm should an autism test be developed, but that it would be done on a case by case basis where families specifically asked for it because of particular circumstances.

Baron-Cohen said: "We could easily separate the issue about national screening versus individual-based screening but the issue still remains - would the test be specific to autism? What kind of autism would it pick out? It is a very wide spectrum, that is part of the ethical complexities."

- View the full **Scrubbing Up** column at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/7736196.stm>
- View public responses to this **Scrubbing Up** column at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/talking_point/7814952.stm
- See AuKids' review of Michael Fitzgerald's book *Genius Genes*, about ASD traits apparent in famous scientists, on Page 10.

Kids Build Social Skills with Lego®

The Times has recently reported that therapies using Lego® can help children with ASD to develop better social skills.



In a Lego® club exercise conducted at Cambridge University's Autism Research Centre, 16 children with an IQ of more than 70 gathered for an hour a week to play

Lego®. Lego® was chosen because it is a highly structured toy that appeals to an interest in systems, common amongst children and adults with ASD.

The purpose behind the exercise was to encourage high-functioning children with

ASD to communicate and to problem solve in small groups. The six-month project produced promising results. Afterwards, children who had taken part generally showed fewer signs of autistic behaviour and were more confident in the playground than those with Asperger's who had not joined in the research.

The research, which was published in the *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders* in November 2008, has been welcomed by The National Autistic Society (NAS) and LEGO® UK. The NAS is Lego® UK's charity partner for 2008-2010.



Picturehouse cinemas have begun a series of autism-friendly screenings at their sites around the country. During the film, low lights are left on inside the auditorium and the volume of the soundtrack is reduced. Cinemagoers are free to move around, make a noise or take a break. The nearest Picturehouse for AuKids readers is at FACT, on Wood Street, Liverpool, on 0151 707 4450. AuKids asked Odeon when they were going to follow Picturehouse's lead. The operations manager at Odeon Trafford Centre is meeting with the AuKids team to discuss the possibility, so watch this space.

• CINEMA CARD – See Page 12.

Take a Break Get Back on Track



Head to Lancashire College in Chorley between May 12th-14th for a carer's course with a difference.

The course includes stress management, confidence building, complementary therapies, arts and crafts and gardening. E-mail: donna.galway@ed.lancscc.gov.uk or visit www.lancashirecollege.com/carers.html to find out more.

Summer Fun

Now's the time to be planning in advance for the summer so that you get a break as well as the little ones. Leisure for Autism is a Greater Manchester charity that supports school age children (and their families) with an Autistic Spectrum Disorder by providing structured play schemes during the school holidays.

Activities vary from location to location, but last year included swimming, pony rides, trampolining, country walks, ball parks, trips to McDonald's, the cinema and soft play with light sensory stimulation. Play schemes are run at Grange School in Rusholme, Inscape House in Cheadle, Stockport, Inscape House at Worsley, Salford, Pictor School in Timperley and Landgate School in Ashton-in-Makerfield.

Booking for 2009's schemes will start just after Easter. To register or to find out further information, e-mail leisureforautism@lycos.co.uk

Ask the Panel



“ My child's sleep is constantly disturbed - she wakes far too early and never seems to keep normal hours. We are all shattered as a result. What can I do? ”

THE DEBATE:

Bleary-eyed, exhausted parents are desperately seeking answers as to why their child with autism has such difficulties with bedtime and sleep. How can we help them? We asked a panel of experts...



Dr Paul Holland PhD
C.Psychol. AFBPsS

Paul is a Chartered Psychologist based at the Department of Psychology, City University, London.

He is also a columnist for SEN magazine - the Journal for Special Needs.

“I was afraid to sleep, always had been. I would sleep with my eyes open and I did this for years.”

Donna Williams,
an adult with autism.

Sleep disturbances are common in children and even more common in children with special needs. It has also been suggested that all people with autism will experience some form of sleep problem during their life. This does not immediately address your issue. However, it is important to realise that you are not alone.

Like anything that we do, sleeping and waking are behaviours. What is important to determine is what role the family plays in maintaining the disturbed sleep pattern. Perhaps your child receives attention when she wakes? If so this attention needs to be removed. This may sound easier said than done but in order for the behaviour to change we need to modify our behaviour too. If your daughter wakes and cries, avoid attending to her immediately. Rather, wait 2-3 minutes and then go to her. The next time she wakes and cries wait, 4-5 minutes. Keep increasing the time gradually. This way your daughter will realise that waking early and being disruptive will not lead to attention or indeed any other type of reinforcement.

Ideally, you will want your daughter to sleep for longer, but don't expect her to sleep for an extra hour or so immediately. Try and extend the sleep (or indeed the time that your daughter remains quiet in her bedroom) gradually and provide her with attention, praise and other rewards for doing so. You may even want to set an alarm for a specific time so that when it sounds you go immediately to her room and attend to her. Start easy with very little expectation so that your daughter will be assured to succeed. Increase the time gradually – it needs to be achievable. This is preferable to extending the time that you do *not* attend to your crying daughter, as modifying behaviour via positive reinforcement is much

more child-friendly and easier for you and your family to implement.

There are several tips that I can suggest. I am sure you have come across most of them, but coupled with the removal of the attention and the delivery of reinforcement just suggested, these strategies have been known to be effective:

- Have a consistent bedtime routine and stick to it.
- Put your daughter to bed later.
- Encourage physical activity in the late afternoon. Don't do this too late, though. People find it difficult to sleep when aroused from physical activity.
- Install dark blinds.
- Set an alarm clock and instantly attend to your child when it sounds.
- Provide your daughter with safe toys/activities in her room in case she wakes early.
- Write a social story for sleeping for your daughter. Include in the story details about bed time, waking time, alarms etc. Try to avoid specific waking times as this is what you want to extend. Say something like: 'When the alarm sounds it is time to get up. When the alarm sounds Mum will come and see me. It is good to wait for the alarm to sound before leaving my room.'
- Avoid napping during the day.

Be sure to praise your daughter for staying in her room without disturbing others. We often forget this. Because our sleep is affected, when our children start to sleep better or remain in their rooms without behaving inappropriately, we are so grateful for the extra time in bed that we forget to let our children know, via reinforcement, that they are behaving well. We always need to encourage appropriate behaviours.



Chris Hoyle

Chris is a Sleep Clinic Co-Ordinator at Inscape House, Schools Hill, Cheadle, Stockport.

Contact her at choyle@togethertrust.org

Children with an Autistic Spectrum Condition often have disturbed sleep patterns, but there are lots of different things that you can do. Sleep programmes must be individually designed, but some general advice would be:

Look at the child's bedroom.

- Think about how you show the child that the function of the room has changed at bedtime.
- We would always recommend black out blinds.
- Is the child warm enough or too warm? Does the bedding slide off at night?

Look at the child's bedtime routine.

- Is there a clear bedtime routine?
- Use clear visual cues to support the routine.
- Once your child has gone upstairs to prepare for bed, don't let them come downstairs again.
- Be consistent with your child; once you decide on an approach stick to it.



Sleep problems put to bed at Inscape

Staff at Inscape offer an Autism Specific sleep Counselling service and are currently looking to expand the services across to all families in the North West. If you are interested in attending a workshop about sleep difficulties and autism, please contact Chris at choyle@togethertrust.org



Jeremy Turk MD, BSc(HONS), FRCPsych, FRCPCH, DCH.

Jeremy is a Professor of Developmental Psychiatry and a specialist in Academic Child & Adolescent Mental Health.

Contact him at the Division of Clinical Developmental Sciences, St. George's, University of London, Cranmer Terrace, London SW17 0RE.

The good news is that sleep problems, although extremely common, are usually eminently treatable. However, having an Autism Spectrum Disorder, whether in association with intellectual disability or not, will make things a bit more difficult and the process rather longer. There are three main approaches, worth trying in order, which I would label as sleep hygiene, behavioural approaches and medication.

Sleep hygiene measures consist of a number of largely common-sense actions such as limiting stimulating drinks (e.g. tea, coffee, Cola) and foods (e.g. chocolate) towards the end of the day, and trying to build up a sequence of increasingly calming and restful activities culminating in the bedtime and settling routine. This could for example involve a warm bath, a bedtime story and a warm milky drink. Routine is everything, and if your child can slowly begin to associate a chain of activities and happenings with increasing restfulness and drifting off, then it is likely this will persist well.

Some children are very sensitive to light, or sounds, so attention to these as possible causes of insomnia is important. Similarly, given the extreme and unusual sensitivities of many children with autism to smells, touch and taste, all these aspects as possible causes of poor sleep and restlessness should also be explored. Individual sleep requirements vary enormously so it may be that the goal is to encourage your daughter to be able to occupy herself reasonably calmly even if awake in the night, rather than going for prolonged deep sleep as the goal.

The second level, behavioural approaches, are usually enormously successful and are described very clearly in two excellent paperbacks, *Helping Your Handicapped Child* by Janet Carr, and *My Child Won't Sleep* by Jo Douglas and Naomi Richman.

*Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

Mum Kelly has found that spraying some lavender in the room before bedtime helps her son Tom calm down beforehand and this makes falling asleep easier...

"At night-time the shadows frightened me, and all the noises seemed so very loud."

Wendy Lawson, an adult with Asperger Syndrome.



FURTHER INFORMATION

The National Autistic Society Helpline can provide more information on this topic. Call 0845 070 4004 or look up www.nas.org.uk for details.

"I have had enormous problems both getting to and staying asleep ever since the day I was born. It is a real pain, I can tell you. You just cannot imagine what it feels like to lie there bored senseless, awaiting daylight and the time when it is deemed OK to get up... I didn't used to like the dark, either. My room and my things are familiar - my security. The dark creeps in and steals that familiarity and security away."

Luke Jackson, a young adult with Asperger Syndrome.

With these approaches you are trying to discern what aspects of things going on around your daughter (who she is with, what time it is, where she is, what is going on, etc.) seem to be associated with wakefulness or sleepiness and then trying to systematically adapt the situation to encourage the desired behaviours at the desired times.

In this respect it overlaps quite a lot with the sleep hygiene measures – but not necessarily. You also need to explore what will encourage your child, be a big enough incentive as it were, for them to stay in their room, relatively quietly and hopefully sleepily. This will take a while given that actions speak louder than words in this situation, but those actions need to be repeated many many times for the message to get through as to what behaviours she needs to show in order to later on get the rewards for her endeavours.

There are some children who nonetheless may require the judicious use of modern, recently-researched and safe medications in addition to the above. Melatonin supplementation can be a revelation in inducing sleep, although it is less beneficial in maintaining sleep and preventing early morning waking. Another medication, clonidine, which can also help features of ADHD*, can have a beneficially calming effect when given at night-time and may well be better, in our clinical experience, in maintaining sleep while minimising night-time waking. Obviously highly skilled professional assistance is needed if you're thinking of pursuing these options.



Do you have a question for Ask the Panel? E-mail us at aukidsmag@googlemail.com



Where to Go... Where to Go...

Facts

Opening times:
Tues-Sun 10-6pm.

Parties available
- different packages
ranging from £5.50
per child (see website
for options).

Children aged
1-3 years - £3.50
4-11 years - £5.50
All major cards
accepted - minimum
card payment £20.

Toddlers:
6 months to
1 year - £1.00,
free for children
under 6 months.

Schools
and groups
can book the two
sensory rooms by
contacting the
centre.

Big
Top Café
selling a range
of hot and cold
snacks and
drinks.

The main
facilities include
slides, tunnels,
climbing net, disco
room, sports area
and brand new
sensory rooms.

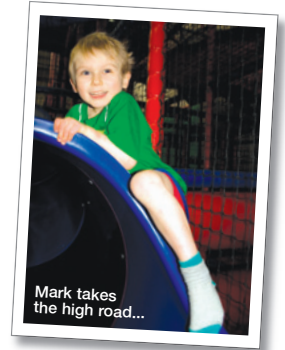
Check out their
website for more details at
www.mrclownsfunzone.com
or phone them on:
01457 865650.

Fun Zone Has Plenty of Room For Clowning About



If your child likes climbing, running, jumping, sliding and throwing – jump in your car and head to the outskirts of Glossop (near Hadfield) about half an hour's drive from Stockport, where you'll find **Mr Clown's Fun Zone**. With its spacious hall, high ceilings, big slides, dance area, soft play and brand new sensory rooms – it all looks and sounds pretty impressive. But what would our children think? Bob, the very kind owner of Mr Clown's, invited a group of mini AuKids reporters to check it out...

By Tori Houghton



Mark takes the high road...



Tori and Alec race each other - Tori's having fun - Alec just wants to WIN.

Double Trouble

On arrival, Alec (age 5) was immediately drawn to the big slide. He was the first of our boys to negotiate the cargo nets, big steps and bars and make it to the top. And then whizz down... with me struggling to keep up with him!

Taking the Tube

Once Andres (age 6) settled in this new environment, his favourite activity was climbing up the spiral tunnel, hiding inside and then just when you thought he wasn't going to come out, he'd come whizzing down grinning! The good thing about the climbing area is that even though it's enclosed and safe, it's all visible from the seated areas which gives parents a chance to relax, whilst keeping an eye on their children.



...Andres takes the low road.

Sensory Rooms



Optical Illusions

What do you mean, I can't eat this spaghetti?

Our children were invited into these two new sensory rooms – a light one and a dark one. Both contain the latest in sensory equipment – giant bubble tubes, fibre optics, mirror balls, colour wheel lights and water projectors. The atmosphere is calming, the lights are fascinating and the children were all engrossed.

Although there is a limited amount of research on the benefits of sensory rooms for children

with autism, personal accounts and observations show that this kind of experience can reduce anxiety, have a calming effect and regulate the senses. As well as all that, it's an opportunity for communication and a pleasurable experience for you and your child to enjoy together.



Lovely Bubbly

Bobby wonders if this machine is run by his own wind-power

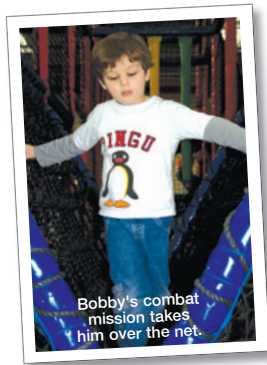
You can rent the sensory room at Mr Clowns in a group by the hour at £40 per session. There is also a pre-bookable drop-in mother and toddler session for a reduced price that takes place on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday mornings. For more details on offers and prices, contact Mr Clown's.

Address: Unit 16c Etherow Industrial Estate, Woolley Bridge, Hadfield, Glossop, SK13 2NS. **Phone:** 01457 865650

How to Find Us: APPROACHING FROM THE EAST - Follow the A628 signed to Manchester, through Tintwistle and into Hollingworth. At the traffic lights take the A57 onto Woolley Lane. At the mini-roundabout take the left turn onto Woolley Bridge Road, signed Hadfield & Padfield and Mr Clown's Fun Zone is 200 yards on the left. APPROACHING FROM THE NORTH AND WEST - Take Junction 24 from the M60 onto the M67 signed Hyde and Sheffield. At the end of M67 take the second turning off the roundabout onto the A57 signed Barnsley & Sheffield. Continue forward at the traffic lights and turn right at the next traffic lights taking the A57 signed Glossop. At the mini-roundabout turn left onto Woolley Bridge Road signed Hadfield & Padfield and Mr Clown's Fun Zone is 200 yards on the left.

Underground, Overground

At Mr Clown's there's lots of space and even though everyone is running around noisily, it feels surprisingly calm. Mark (age 5) enjoyed this space and he and his younger brother, Jake, spent most of the time chasing each other and their dad, Rick. This gave all three of them a good workout and they all looked shattered at the end of the morning!



Trapeze Artist

As well as climbing, sliding and tunnels there is also a disco room where Bobby (age 5) joined in with some other children dancing and throwing balls and two new sensory rooms with orange bubbles which looked 'like Cornflakes' according to Bobby.

Lots to do

As well as all the activities, there is The Big Top Caf  with reasonably priced food and drinks plus plenty of chairs and tables for parents to sit and relax. Mr Clown's also offers birthday party experiences – check out the website for details on the different packages at www.mrclownsfunzone.com



Ready for Launch



What makes Mr Clown's an enjoyable experience for the family is that it has a very inclusive feel to it. It felt very much as if other parents were used to children with special needs being there – from the hapless father who spent ages trying to fix a toy that Alec thrust upon him, to the unsuspecting parents who didn't blink an eyelid when Mark swiped their drinks! Parents want four things from a play experience for their children – that it's safe, enjoyable, accepting and fun. Mr Clown's ticked all those boxes.

Not bad for a morning's work eh, roving reporters?



Alec



Bobby



Mark



Andres



Leisure Link Sharecare Project

The Leisure Link Sharecare Project provides free support to enable kids with disabilities (aged five plus) to access out of school opportunities, both mainstream and for special needs, with trained staff. This means that you could get a massively welcome break during holiday periods, whilst your little one enjoys some fun at a local play scheme.

The Sharecare team, based at the Overdale Centre in Romiley, also runs Valley Stay to Play after school club at Valley School, for which there is a small charge.

The team can even provide extra help so that your child can access extra-curricular activities that would normally be tricky to do with just one parent. So don't struggle on your own wishing the world would let you in – call Sharecare!

Call: **0161 494 5771** or email: overdale@stockportcp.co.uk
To find out more look up: www.stockportcp.co.uk

HOP OFF TO THE PINES



The Easter Holiday Club runs at The Pines, a play group for children with special needs, on April 6 from 1.30pm-3.30pm and April 17th from 1.30pm-3pm. The Pines is at 67 Chester Road, Hazel Grove.

Booking is essential. Contact Karen or Jacqui 0161 456 6502/482 2535 or e-mail jgreen@independentoptions.org.uk

Autism Team **Springs** into the North West



When we discovered Springside Services, a branch of Cygnet Health Care, Tori and I had never heard of the company before. We'd never even had a vague inkling it existed.

With our lack of knowledge came suspicion. What was this company up to, setting up private autism services? Was it genuine? Could anyone afford its services? Even if they could pay, would parents risk 'upsetting the apple cart' by clashing with existing support? Did it have an agenda - a dodgy untested therapy?

We never ask our readers to use a service we don't know about. So, true to the ethos of AuKids, Tori and I visited Springside Services at its offices, based at the 18th Century Tabley House in Knutsford. Autism services inside a stately home? Were we dreaming? Apparently not.

By Debby Elley

I remember the day that my social worker came to see me and confirmed that I was eligible for support for my twins. "So, what shall we put you down for?" She asked. There it was, the Local Authority purse had finally opened and all that sparkling cash was available for help. I looked at her, resembling a small rabbit stuck in headlights. I had no idea who would offer the sort of service I needed. If only Springside Services had been about.

The Cheshire-based company falls under the banner of parent company Cygnet Health Care, which is one of the UK's largest independent providers of psychiatric treatment to the NHS. Springside started up in the North West last year. Parent company Cygnet recognised that there was a need for autism and Asperger Syndrome-specific services and headhunted Peter Lawson (Services Manager), Diane Dawson (Residential Manager), Alison Booth (Outreach Manager) and Amy Stanion (Services Coordinator), all of whom had extensive experience of managing top-flight autism services in the area - with six out of six Outstanding Ofsted reports for their former ASD programmes as a team.

Says Peter: "We know that there are certain young people who don't particularly develop in generic disability services - sometimes they do - but sometimes generic disability services just don't meet the very specific needs of young people with autism. We felt that having a very specific service would hopefully meet the needs of these young people when generic services don't."

Existing disability provision, even when excellent, is often under-resourced. It's regrettable that for some the current system cannot provide sufficient support. Springside offers to work alongside the service sector in order to plug these gaps.



SPRINGSIDE SERVICES: From left to right Peter Lawson (Services Manager), Alison Booth (Outreach Manager), Diane Dawson (Residential Manager), Amy Stanion (Services Coordinator), Collette Cameron (Support Worker).

In this respect, this private company forms an important part of the overall provision for autism in this area.

With carte blanche from parent company Cygnet to develop services in the North West, the new Springside team set about developing outreach and residential support for both children and young adults with ASD, with a particular emphasis on transition support.

Peter says: "Our vision is to provide something that's holistic, that's ongoing. We view our service as transitional in nature from the moment we meet the child. It's about encouraging the parents and guardians to be saying 'he's seven now, where's he going to be when he's 15? Where at 25? What do we need to put in place?'"

"The absolute ethos of this service is to make a thorough assessment of each individual and then look at whatever potential they have and try and optimise it by working towards defined goals. It's about asking what's going to give that person the best outcome. This service has to be outcome driven."

The company works according to a standard social care model and does not promote its own therapies, so there's no clash of interests. Nor does it work in isolation, but in partnership with existing carers and services.

Peter explains: "When we assess children, we meet up with parents, education providers, psychologists, social workers... anyone that's involved with that person. We ask the parents what they want, and



we work out how we can work together to achieve it. We don't perform miracles, though. Some parents want change overnight. That's not realistic, and it would be counter-productive. We have to make sure that the young person is enjoying the experience and is going to benefit from it."

So how exactly does the Springside system work? For outreach work, an extensive and thorough person-centred assessment is firstly carried out free of charge. The team then decides whether or not they are able to deliver care. After the initial assessment, parents are presented with a plan. Having identified appropriate staff and drawn up risk assessments, Springside managers meet everyone involved with the young person and plan a positive way forward.

This might mean a few hours a week or more, depending on need. Key workers are very gradually introduced to the young person and a variety of strategies are deployed to help with their development. Sometimes this means engaging in activities that the person really enjoys, broken down into components that form learning opportunities. Sometimes the outreach work involves building up confidence and ability in tiny increments, so that the young person will be able to cope with different daily challenges.

Many of Springside's clients are referred to them through social services, and it's wise for parents to involve them in the process right from the initial meeting if it's possible that the support will be funded via the Local Authority.

“ Sometimes generic disability services don't meet the very specific needs of young people with autism. ”

Sometimes parents pay for the support through Direct Payments - cash paid directly to carers for a specific purpose, such as respite care or further support.

There is always the option of footing the bill privately, and at £26.50 per hour for one to one support, this specialist help is less costly than some personal fitness trainers.

Springside is also developing residential support for children and young adults aged between five and nineteen. Under its short break service, children can stay for an agreed number of nights per month, with a minimum of two. Its Shared Cared service is designed to meet the needs of those who require intensive and bespoke packages of care and who still spend some quality time living at home. This is usually three to five nights a week.

If you're curious to know more about the company, Springside Services hold free monthly support meetings that anyone can attend, whether or not they are receiving the company's services. The meetings are for those affected by ASD, be it carers or individuals themselves.



For further information on Springside services or to arrange an assessment, call Peter Lawson on 01565 650 888 or e-mail peterlawson@cygnethealth.co.uk

For details on the support groups, look up: http://www.cygnethealth.co.uk/autism/springside/parents_support.html



Cygnet Health Care

Springside Autism and Asperger Syndrome Services

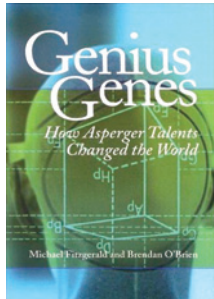
Innovative, specialised services exclusively designed to meet the needs of young people with autism and Asperger Syndrome.

SPRINGSIDE SPECIALIST AUTISM/ASPERGER SYNDROME SERVICES AVAILABLE:

- **Outreach Support** for people aged 5 upwards with autism/Asperger Syndrome.
- **Residential Short Break and Shared Care Services** for young people with autism/Asperger Syndrome aged 5-19 years old.

For more information about any of these services, please contact Amy Stanion, Services Coordinator, Tabley House, Tabley Lane, Knutsford, WA16 0HB. Telephone: 01565 650888 Email: amystanion@cygnethealth.co.uk

Reviews



BOOK

Genius Genes – How Asperger Talents Changed the World

by Michael Fitzgerald and Brendan O'Brien

Published by AAPC
£19.50 from Amazon
ISBN 9781931282444

Great subject, shame about the book

I was looking forward to reading *Genius Genes*. Ah lovely, I thought, a nice positive book about the autism spectrum. Here's a book that's going to tell me why history proves that my son's condition can be a great thing.

Of course, it can't be proved for certain that Einstein, Newton and the other geniuses studied in this book had Asperger Syndrome, because the condition wasn't known at the time. As it's not possible to be ultra-scientific, I thought that this book would be a celebration of triumph over adversity - perhaps even a little humorous -

definitely not too browbeating in its approach.

It isn't, though. After trawling through an unnecessarily heavy-going introduction, in which the authors, absolutely po-faced, talk about the nature of genius and creativity in a manner that you really wouldn't guess could be this dull, they list scientific and artistic geniuses chapter by chapter seeking to prove that they had Asperger Syndrome. It's only patchily convincing: if you seek to prove anything hard enough, you will undoubtedly find evidence to support it.

I would have enjoyed reading a detailed chapter on each genius's life and personality before hearing the authors draw on their extensive experience to give personal observations on telltale ASD traits. Instead, I had to stomach a rather dry and stilted read, comprising sub-headings followed by evidence on mostly negative qualities. This is clumsy and not nearly as uplifting as the subject suggests.

Right down to the overly scientific and yawn-worthy cover (wouldn't a picture of Einstein have been better than a load of maths symbols?) this has lost impact through poor presentation.

Debby Elley



BOOK

Autistic Planet

by Jennifer Elder

Illustrated by Marc Thomas and Jennifer Elder
Published by Jessica Kingsley Publishers
£11.99 from Amazon
ISBN 9781843108429

Another Girl, Another Planet

Written by a mother of a child with autism, this delightful children's storybook addresses some of the issues and differences in autism through the eyes of a little autistic girl who describes the planet where she is from. Written in rhyme with beautiful illustrations, she tells her friend about this magical place where all offices have rocking chairs, trains run on time and people only eat popcorn and potato chips!

Although aimed at describing the more highly functioning child with autism - one who is good at chess and spelling - it does explain some sensory issues with food and clothing that may apply to the broader spectrum.

This book is ideal to help young children to see differences caused by conditions like autism in a positive way. It may particularly appeal to children with autism, their siblings as well as nursery and reception aged children. This planet sounds like such a great place to be, that readers, may question if it's real and want to go there!

Tori Houghton



CD

Cool Bananas

Performed by Genevieve Jereb

Price: Aus \$33 – approx. £14.75
2004

Cool Bananas Make Chilled Kids

The first time that you listen to the Cool Bananas CD you will probably hate it!

Some of the best known children's songs are being played at a much slower pace. Even for someone like me with all the musical ability of a slab of granite, this was frustrating. However the CD is not designed for adults but children on the autistic spectrum. Mark absolutely adored it from the first time we played it and that is what is important.

The CDs are produced by an Australian occupational therapist, Genevieve Jereb, and all of the songs are produced at between 50 and 70 beats per minute. These strong, regulated rhythms support a state of calm, organization and regulation in the nervous systems. We have found it does have a profound calming effect. This

is particularly useful as part of a bed-time routine or for those occasions when Mark gets over-excited. It was also invaluable when sitting in a traffic jam trying to get over Barton Bridge!

The effect of the music can be this dramatic: one moment he's racing round the house, the next he's standing in front of the CD player swaying gently from side to side with a very contented, slightly dreamy smile on his face.

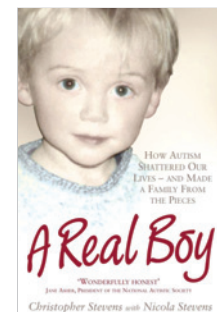
We were recommended the CD as it had helped to calm and focus other children with ASD. It's available from www.sensorytools.net - an Australian website. Delivery only took about a week.

Genevieve Jereb has produced a further series of CDs which are also available from this site. Each has a slightly different focus. If they are as good as Cool Bananas, they will be worth the investment.

Rick Schofield

Parent of a child with autism

We are delighted to announce that Genevieve Jereb will be running a workshop in July - 'Getting Kids in Sync'. See page 12 for more details....



BOOK

A Real Boy

by Christopher Stevens with Nicola Stevens

2008
Published by Michael O'Mara Books Ltd
£6.99
ISBN 9781843172666

Father tells his son's story

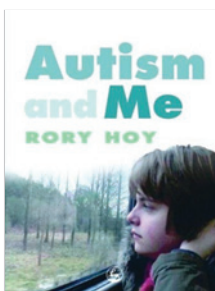
A Real Boy is a lucid account of bringing up a child with severe autism. In it, David Stevens' father Christopher charts his son's early years, from toddlerhood to the time that the book was completed, when David was 11.

The daily battle with ignorance that David's parents are forced to fight on many fronts must have been a major factor underpinning his father's decision to write this frank and sometimes upsetting account of his son's autism. The public's ignorance of autism and its associated difficulties - despite the prevalence of the condition - are recounted through numerous incidents in which David's behaviour has caused everything from mild amusement via confusion and concern through to downright anger.

Whilst this book doesn't seek to educate through giving detailed medical or neurological explanations of autism, it certainly leaves the layman crystal clear about the patience and fortitude it takes to rise from every challenge still smiling.

This couple's resourcefulness, fortitude and love are enough to inspire anyone whose child's behaviour can be stressful.

Debby Elley



DVD Autism and Me Directed by Rory Hoy

£18.79 from Amazon ISBN 9781843105466

First person perspective

Rory is a charming young adult with autism and has made this short film to describe his condition to other people - professionals, families and friends. It gives a snapshot of what it's like to be autistic from his point of view. Those new to the condition will benefit from his honest and literal descriptions and this DVD and accompanying booklet is a great introduction to the difficulties that may be experienced by people with autism. Although this may not add anything new to those of you who have a certain amount of knowledge already, you will certainly benefit from a reminder of the implications and difficulties as described in the first person by an individual with autism.

Tori Houghton



Send in your reviews of a book or DVD to auidsmag@googlemail.com You can also review items from your child's point of view - older children may like to write their own reviews. No more than 150 words, please.

The Last Word



Turn Sunday into a Fun Day

By Debby Elley, journalist and mum of twins with autism.

I can't be the only mother who experiences that inward sigh of inadequacy every time I open the family section of the Sunday papers to find a zillion and one things to do with your 'perfect' children. The plan is, after spending Sunday afternoon giving them a crash course in origami, you bake ginger-bread men with heart-shaped buttons before whipping up a bedroom mobile made out of pipe-cleaners and pom-poms.

Most of the parents I know are barely able to prize the Nintendo from their offspring long enough for a trip to the swings, let alone embark on something more productive.

Can you actually be this creative, this energetic, when your kids are on the autism spectrum?

dad has finished reading it.

There's no point in feeling guilty. There may be things that your kids won't do, but there's plenty they will. The trick, I've found, is to use their interests to your own advantage. That way, you



may actually get something useful done at the weekend. I know, I didn't think this was possible either, but experience has proved me wrong.

“The trick, I've found, is to use their interests to your own advantage.”

Er...nope. For one thing, you're still recovering from the 46th draft of the latest Statement of Special Educational Needs. Plus, if your child is anything like mine, pipe-cleaners get twiddled, marbles get chewed ('hmm, interesting texture') and origami, whilst not unfamiliar territory, is usually practised on the aforementioned Sunday paper and not always before

Alec loves the feel of sand through his fingers, and has turned out to be a whiz at making crumble, so dedicated is he at the rubbing-in method. True, the flour is divided in equal measures between the bowl, the floor and Alec's face (see picture), but nevertheless we make a passable pudding.

Alec also helps me to hose the plants. True, a lot of water ends up on us, whilst the flowers flap their leaves and gasp, but eventually the job gets done. The twins also help to wash the car. Once I'd taught Bobby that the abrasive brush was designed for the wheels and not for the bonnet, it was a triumph (well no, it's a Golf, but you know what I mean...)

Kids can help you to keep fit, too. A couple of flashing tambourines in the study, some loud music (Keane is Bobby's favourite) and a bit of a boogie - voila, your weekend workout!



Faith in Flight

By Tori Houghton, specialist speech and language therapist in autism.

I was recently touched when a parent of a child I had been seeing regularly gave me a parting gift. We had come to the end of our therapy sessions and she presented me with a beautiful ornament of Dumbo the Elephant. I didn't initially understand the significance of this gift, but as I thanked her for the lovely present she explained what she had learnt from our therapy together.

"You helped me to see all the positives in my son," she said. "What I used to see as challenges to be corrected, I now see as strengths and abilities. It's my job to help nurture these abilities into something positive and useful for his future, whatever that may be.

"In the story of Dumbo, everyone just saw him as an elephant with really big ears - but it was his big ears that gave him the ability to fly and to really become something really special."

Children with autism see, feel and experience the world differently to the rest of us. They learn and absorb information in different ways. What may initially present as an unusual behaviour may be your child working something out differently.



That's not to say that all children with autism have exceptional talents, but that they are all unique and special in their own way. If you feel confident just to go with whatever their fascination is, perhaps in some way you are helping them to learn about the world and their place in it.

As Dumbo was told, 'Have faith in flight!'

Time
Babysitting Agency for Children with Autism

Providing specialist babysitters for children with autism

Tel: 07942815845
Web: www.timebabysitting.com

Celebrity Spotlight



Lula (left) - age 4½

Diagnosis: Asperger Syndrome.

My family: I live in Heald Green with my Mummy, Daddy and big sister Scarlett (age 9 - pictured).

School: Bolshaw Primary School.

I love: Dressing up, especially as my favourite story character Snow White. Lip gloss and anything sparkly! Dancing and singing to Madonna, Spice Girls, Rihanna and High School Musical. Sonic the Hedgehog. I love playing school/house with my gorgeous sister and on our trampoline. I love my Nannie, Poppa, Auntie Holl and my cousin Poppie. I love doing *Dancing on Ice* with Daddy. I love love love chocolate and snuggles with my Mummy.

I hate: Trying new foods, change, unpredictable loud noises and 'being fed up'!

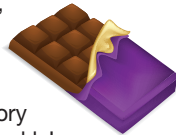
Song that most describes me: *Fabulous* by Sharpay (High School Musical).

If I were Prime Minister: I would make it compulsory to dress up for school and eat chocolate on the hour!

Personality in four words: Funny, loving, bossy and inquisitive.

Ambition: I can't wait to go to Disneyland one day and meet Tinkerbell so that I can fly to Pixie Hollow.

My favourite films: *The Fox and the Child* and *Tinkerbell The Movie*.



Aran - age 5

Diagnosis: Autism.

My family: I live in Cheadle Hulme with my mum, dad and big brother Dilan who is 14.

School: Valley School, in the autism class - it's absolutely first class! I am very happy here.

I love: Swimming, playing my big brother's keyboard, dancing to music, watching *Something Special* DVDs, going to the park to feed the ducks and trampolining.

I hate: Waiting in queues, and some hairdryers (because of the noise).

Personality in four words: Happy, lively, affectionate, tough.

My favourite food: Plain pasta and I'm quite partial to a Victoria sponge.

My favourite songs: *Twinkle Twinkle, You Are My Sunshine, Dream*.

My favourite destination: Woolacombe Bay - the beach!

Want your little star to appear on our *Celebrity Spotlight* page? Send your own answers with a jpeg picture of your child in action to: aukidsmag@googlemail.com



Hints and Tips

Whacky Websites

Some of our parents have kids who are computer whizzes, and want to know the best websites for them to play on. Thanks to AUTISMPARENTS.NET we have the answer: They listed a top 10 of fun websites that appeal to kids with ASD:

Starfall • PBS Kids • Poisson Rouge Literacy Center (bear in mind this is a USA site) • The Wiggles Playground Playhouse Disney • Sensory World Game Goo • My Little Pony • Caillou

Free Cinema Ticket

The CEA Companion's Concessionary Card is accepted by all major cinema chains and gives your child's companion free entry. To apply you need to be in receipt of Disability Living Allowance or attendance allowance. Call 0845 123 1292 or visit www.ceacard.co.uk for details.

Buckets of Fun

Does your child enjoy sensory play? You don't need to wait for dry weather to play with sand. Moonsand, for indoor play, is made by Spin Master Ltd™ and is available at most toy stores, including the Early Learning Centre. It's a soft medium that trickles like normal sand, but moulds like dough. There are lots of play themes available and it comes in different colours, too. Great fun! Prices range from about £7.

Date for the Diary: 'Getting Kids in Sync'

A sensory processing approach to challenges associated with Autism, ADHD and learning and behavioural disorders, presented by Australian occupational therapist, Genevieve Jereb. Friday 10th July 2009 8.45am - 4.30 pm at the The Moor Suite on Heaton Moor Road in Stockport. Parents receive a discounted rate of £50. Contact Glenis Hall (course administrator) 0161 249 4425 Mon - Thurs 10am - 2pm for more details.

Family Info Link

Do you live in Stockport? Want information on mainstream and special needs holiday clubs? Want to find out about child minders or nurseries in your area? Call Family Info Link on freephone 0800 800 0606. Lines are open daily during the week, on Saturday mornings until noon and on Wednesday evenings from 6.30pm until 8pm. We have found them very friendly.