

Issue 4
Summer 2009
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Aukids™

Positive parenting for children with Autism Spectrum Conditions

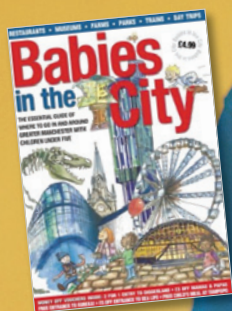
INSIDE:



Sunshine Days
Our Top Tips for a
Fantastic Summer



Cut and Dried
Our expert panel is in
the hairdresser's hot seat



PLUS

WIN a parent's guide
to taking kids out in
the North West

DON'T MISS
OUR AUTUMN
ISSUE - OUT
OCTOBER 5th

Happy 1st Birthday
Aukids!



Aukids

Letter from the Editors

Mr Clown's Fun Zone



Sensory Suite, Children's Play and Activity Centre

- Sessions for special needs kids every Tuesday morning 10am-12.30pm and first and third Tuesday of each month 4.30pm-7.30pm
- Play zone and sensory suite open during these times.
- Advance bookings only - £6.

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ASK ABOUT OUR SPECIAL
NEEDS BIRTHDAY PARTIES!



www.mrclownsfunzone.com
Unit 16c Etherow Industrial Estate,
Woolley Bridge Road, Hadfield, SK13 2NS.



THE AUKIDS TEAM: (From left to right) Photographer Jennie Fielden, Co-Editor Debby Elley, Co-Editor Tori Houghton and Graphic Designer Jo Miller.

Welcome back to our very special first birthday edition of Aukids!

When we first put our heads together and came up with the idea of a magazine for parents of children with autism spectrum conditions, we couldn't really imagine beyond the first issue. Twelve months later, we're still here and Aukids is growing bigger and better with each issue.

Thanks to Standard Life we continue to print a thousand copies and are beginning to gain a great reputation further afield in the UK among parents and professionals, as well as getting hits on our website from across Europe and the USA! We'd also like to thank Cygnet Health Care for their help this issue in meeting our graphic design costs. We can't stress enough how important our sponsors and our advertisers are to us - without you we wouldn't have a magazine - thanks!

For details about how you sign up for a subscription and receive a copy of Aukids delivered to your door see page 12.

We continue to represent the needs of parents of kids with ASC in this area. After really productive discussions with the Trafford Centre Odeon, Manchester, we're now expecting to see autism friendly cinema screenings in the very near future - details are being finalised as we speak.

Our gorgeous cover boy this issue is Joshua - find out more about him on page 12 as well as how he has inspired mum Lesley to set up a charity in his name on page 5.

Aukids is all about supporting parents and your feedback continues to be very important to us - please take time to fill in our questionnaire on page 12 - you can win a £25 voucher to spend online at The Novelty Warehouse!

With the summer holidays approaching, we've come up with some great ideas to help you through those six long weeks - see page 8.

Congratulations to competition winner Lisa Cullender from Norfolk who spotted Norris hiding on Alec's T-shirt in our spring issue - see quote below.

Birds of a Feather

For all you twitter fans out there - You can now follow Aukids on twitter. Send us a tweet at twitter.com/aukids.

Finally, if you use any of the services advertised, please help us by saying that you heard about them in Aukids. Thanks!

Tori and Debby

“ I just wanted to say thank you for the fidget box prize which I received today. My son, Jacob, who is 6 and is on the autistic spectrum and also has chromosome disorder *Idic 15* and a sensory processing disorder, absolutely loved rummaging through the box when he got home from school and he carried it around with him until he went up to bed tonight! He has given each toy a name and I know he can't wait to see them in the morning. ”
Thanks again, Mrs. Lisa Cullender.

What's in a name?

Orchids are beautiful plants which, much like kids with autism, require very specific conditions to grow. If they get them, they thrive. That's why we called this magazine Aukids. AU is also the chemical symbol for gold.



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



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

www.thenoveltywarehouse.com

Our front cover star is Joshua Short - see Celebrity Spotlight Page 12. Photos of Joshua taken by Howard Barlow FRPS, www.howardbarlow.com Many thanks to national photographer Howard for voluntarily giving up his time.
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.

Gene Research Moves Forward



A new study published in the journal Nature has found a robust link between autism and common DNA variants. The findings could pave the way for better diagnosis and understanding of the condition. It's long been known that autism has a strong inherited component, but previous research has failed to reveal any common DNA variants that were involved. The six DNA variants discovered, which affect genes involved in early brain development, are involved in up to fifteen per cent of autism cases.

The results are especially significant because the variants lie between two genes, CDH9 and CDH10, which play an important role in forming nerve connections in the brain.

Triumph for Autism Bill

As a result of the Autism Bill brought before Parliament by Cheryl Gillan MP, the Government has announced a set of initiatives to improve the lives of people with autism in England. The measures include a legal duty to ensure local authorities and other local agencies include children with autism in their plans for children's services. This will be part of a new law to be introduced over the coming year.

Springside Opens New Residential Site

The Springside Short Break and Shared Care Residential Services for young people with autism and Asperger's Syndrome, based in Heaton Moor, Stockport, is now open. These services are exclusively designed to support ages five to nineteen years. Twelve beds are available, but because of the shared care and short break aspects of the service, there are places for many more.

Springside residential support staff are trained in supporting individuals with ASC, severe learning disabilities and challenging behaviours. Both the residential short break and shared care services are currently accepting referrals. A minimum of 1:1 staffing support is provided for a minimum of 14 hours per day, with dedicated waking night support. The large state-of-the-art property is tailored exclusively for young people with ASC.

TV Doc Launches TASCA Event

Doctor Chris Steele MBE from ITV's This Morning was on hand to open a major event in Manchester to mark Autism World Awareness Day on April 2nd.

The event, an information day organised by T.A.S.C.A. (Tameside Action for Social Communication & Autism), was held at Dukinfield Town Hall. Stands represented many services including social care, Portage (play therapy), alternative educational approaches and sports involvement.

Valerie and Neil Bayley, parents and founders of TASCA, made the day a huge success by giving more than 300 people - both working and living with autism - the opportunity to meet and share ideas.

Eagle-eyed visitors may have spotted our own co-editor **Tori Houghton** manning our AuKids stand.

For more information on the service and support that TASCA provides to families in the Tameside area, go to www.tasca.org.uk



IT'S A STEELE: AuKids co-editor Tori Houghton meets This Morning's Doctor Chris Steele at the TASCA event.



NAS Opens New Centre

Also on Autism Awareness Day, a large number of families and carers attended the evening launch of the National Autistic Society's Resource Centre in Manchester. Based at the NAS headquarters at Anglo House, Chapel Road, Northenden, the centre aims to provide new and much needed services to people with autism and their families. Currently there is a lending library, internet access and a printing facility as well as training and workshop opportunities. For details, call 0161 945 6830 or email: manchesterresourcecentre@nas.org.uk

Hands Up for Hands On



The University of Manchester and Stockport PCT invite you to attend the sixth Hands on Approach

Annual Autism Conference on 11th November 2009 at the Pinewood Medical Education Centre, Stepping Hill, Stockport. Speakers include both parents and professionals sharing the latest in autism research as well as practical solutions. The conference fee is £35 for parents. For details call Tanya Farley on 07966 399 709.



Are you a fish out of water?

All minnows this way...



Going to a 'normal' toddler group for a special needs parent is a bit like being asked to swim with sharks. Start with the effort of trying to dive into the impenetrable clique of

mums. Add a shoal of small blank stares because your child is flapping their hands and humming. Combine it with a crashing wave of isolation when the banter switches to speech and imaginative play. Not great. Looking for safer shores? Swim this way...

By Debby Elley

It's supposed to be your chance to get out of the house and socialise. Feeling this appalling was never the idea. Yet there you are, sensing failure just because an

insensitive mother is gabbling on about her son's speech, when your little one hasn't got any at all. Suddenly you feel as if you're in the Natwest advert. Surely, you think, there must be another way?



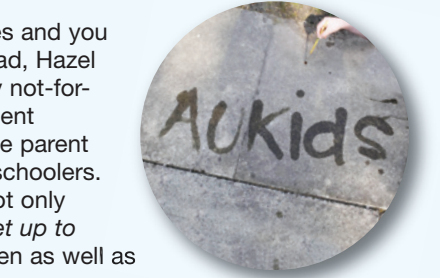
There is. It's called The Pines and you can find it at 67 Chester Road, Hazel Grove. The Pines, owned by not-for-profit organisation Independent Options, runs seven inclusive parent and toddler groups for pre-schoolers. Inclusive means that they not only expect, but are especially *set up to include* special needs children as well as those without special needs.

Expect extra help, a huge dose of tolerance, and no pressure to conform. Referrals to the groups can be made by anyone, including family members.

Each group has 15 places, three of which are always reserved for a child with a disability, with volunteers on hand to help out. Two of the groups are classed as Opportunity Groups, which means a facilitator is also available to offer support.

Regular singing and signing sessions form part of the fun.

The Pines also runs holiday groups offering activities for all under tens and their siblings, as well as special days exclusively for siblings.



The Pines is at 67 Chester Road, Hazel Grove, near to the railway bridge, and has its own car park.

Independent Options Children and Family Centre, which runs the toddler groups at The Pines, is funded solely by donations.

For further information on the play groups or inclusion matters, call Karen or Jacqui on 0161 482 2535 or email jgreen@independentoptions.org.uk

The inclusion facilitators' job is to promote inclusion for all children and young people with disabilities, offering support and information to parents so that their children are able to access mainstream activities in the community.

The centre has just been awarded five year Lottery funding to improve facilities. Inclusion facilitators Karen and Jacqui are funded by BBC Children in Need.

To Cut A Long Story Short...

By Tori Houghton



For indoor play, there's plenty of pre-school toys. You'll find trucks, cars and train tracks. Craft play activities are run on certain days, there's a sand and water play area and even a computer room, which is especially popular with kids who have autism!

Outdoors, there's a large, safe, enclosed garden, complete with adventure trail, giant slide, climbing frame and easy-access (walk-on) roundabout. There's also plenty of toy cars to ride in. Refreshments are also available for parents and children.



Want the best news? It's free.

So don't swim with the sharks, fish for something different.



Thank you once again to Jennie Fielden for being our snapper for the day!

The National Postage Association also runs free inclusive playgroups for pre-school children with special needs in the Stockport area. To find out more, call Postage on 0161 406 6506.

All inclusive groups are free, but you always need to book in advance.

For more information on Independent Options and its wider work within the community, visit their website at www.independentoptions.org.uk

Lesley Short's story began six years ago when her son Joshua was not developing in the same way as his peers. By the time he was finally given a diagnosis of autism, she had been given a whole new set of experiences.

Not knowing who to turn to, what to read or what to do, Lesley felt lost. She eventually found comfort in talking to other parents, who helped her realise that she was not alone. The beginning of Lesley's story may sound familiar to parents of children with autism. Three years after her son's diagnosis, however, Lesley's story took a different path.

Reflecting on what she had needed in the early days of worry, guilt and lack of information, Lesley decided to channel her energies into setting up a charity named after her son. Launched in 2006, The Joshua Short Foundation offers support to families in the Stockport area going through the same experience and helps them to access the right sort of information at this crucial time.

Supported by Lesley's husband Adrian and his local golf club in Bramhall (Bramhall Golf Club on Ladythorn Road), The Joshua Short Foundation - part of the Community Foundation Trust - has to date raised more than

£18,000 for families of children with autism in Stockport.

Focusing on early support, some of this money has been used to fund courses run by a range of educational and healthcare professionals for families who are coping with a recent diagnosis. Money has also been spent on projects for individuals as well as of course being crucial to the launch of Aukids last July, when the funding was used to cover our initial print run. You wouldn't have a glossy magazine in your hands today were it not for The Joshua Short Foundation's crucial support. That's why Joshua himself is the front cover star for this very special birthday issue. He's also one of our Celebrity Spotlight stars.

Lesley admits that she still has good days and bad days, but that setting up the charity has really helped her to accept Joshua's diagnosis. Now, nearly six years after she first entered the world of autism, Lesley is a mum who's immensely proud of her son, open and honest about his autism, and offers invaluable support to other parents.

Should you have any ideas about how the charity can continue to help local families or if you want to make a donation to the foundation, Lesley would love to hear from you. Please e-mail her at lesleyannshort@hotmail.com

SHORT AND SWEET: Lesley Short with her son Joshua.



Ask the Experts



“ My son’s hair is growing out of control but he gets very upset when anyone tries to cut it. Why is this so difficult for him and is there anything I can do which might make this easier for him? ”

Snippets



Use unscented shampoo and conditioner if your child is sensitive to smells or odours.



For a child that is sensitive to the buzzing noise of the clippers or the repeated snap of a scissor, try using soft, flexible ear plugs.



Develop a routine for haircuts. Try to schedule them for the same day of the week and time of day whenever possible. Be consistent.



*The advice below is taken from the NAS advice sheet **Hairdressers: Preparing for a Visit**. For the full sheet, refer to the information at the bottom of this article.*

For a child with an autistic spectrum condition, sensory difficulties are frequently overlooked as a possible cause of behaviour at the hairdresser.

If a child is sensitive to noise, then this needs to be considered. Most hairdressers tend to have powerful lighting and the bright lights may reflect from the mirrors causing discomfort. Some individuals may also find the strong smell of hair products very unpleasant.

Rather than surprising the child with a haircut, it may be useful to use a haircut symbol on a calendar. It may also help to choose an appointment near to the beginning or end of the day when it is likely to be quieter.

By using a timer, you could visually show when the haircut starts and finishes – be sure to over-estimate the time it takes, rather than under-estimate.

If the sound or feel of the clippers causes too much distress, then it would be advisable to use scissors instead.

Some parents find that providing the child with earphones and their favourite music helps to keep them calm. If this is used, then visual prompts must be clear to indicate when the hairdresser is going to touch the child.

It may be beneficial to bring favourite books or stress toys from home as well as your own shampoo or an unscented one if they are sensitive to strong smells.

If they dislike the sensation of pressure with washing, ask for a dry cut, or just dampening the hair with a water spray.

Many parents find it easier for a hairdresser to come to their own home to cut their child's hair.

*To read the NAS Helpline's full information sheet **Hairdressers: Preparing for a Visit** – extracts of which appear in this article - go to www.nas.org.uk and type 'hairdressers' in the search box. A leaflet with illustrations is available to buy online from the site for £1, or you can download an advice sheet free of charge.*



**Julia Dyer MCSP
BSc(Hons)**

Julia is an independent physiotherapist and advanced sensory integration practitioner based in Clitheroe, Lancashire.

For details look up www.juliadyer.com or call 07752 365 487

"Do you hear noise in your head? It pounds and screeches. Like a train rumbling through your ears."

Powell, J.

Children who are over responsive to tactile sensory input often have problems with hair cutting and other self-care activities such as tooth brushing, hair washing and nail cutting. These children register tactile sensations too intensely which can lead to them becoming anxious, overwhelmed and over stimulated by the sensations. Children who are over responsive to auditory (noise) sensory input also may have problems with hair cutting due to the sound of the clippers or scissors.

Before hair cutting, sensory activities that are calming to the central nervous system can be used to help prepare the child by inhibiting the over responsive reaction. For each child these activities will vary, but activities that involve deep touch pressure, proprioception (heavy muscle work) or movement all can have a calming effect on the nervous system. Try activities that focus on the whole body rather than just the head. Sensory strategies can also be used during the hair cutting such as deep touch pressure or using a weighted shoulder or lap belt.

It is important to do lots of preparatory work before attempting to cut the child's hair and a multi-faceted approach is normally required. For example: using a social story; allowing the child to play with various hair products; getting the child used to the noise of scissors, clippers, hair dryer; dressing up with hats and wigs; visits to a hair salon.

Cut your child's hair when they are ready, do not force them as this will only increase anxieties, look on this as a longer term project rather than expecting instant results.



**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.

"Every time I am touched it hurts; it feels like fire running through my body."

Gillingham, G.

A lot of children with (and without) autism have difficulty with getting their hair cut. There are many potential reasons for this. Some explanations for these behaviours could be:

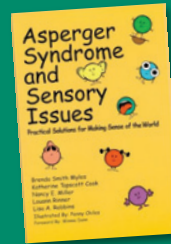
- He does not like the sensation - he may be hypersensitive
- He does not like the sound of the scissors or clippers
- He can feel something happening but cannot see what is going on
- He does not understand what is happening

There are several interventions that I would introduce so as to make it easier for your son to have his hair cut. First create a Social Story – see My Social Story Book, by Carol Gray.

After you have used the Social Story for a week or so, introduce a step-by-step procedure such as the one below:

- 1 Gradually introduce your son to scissors. Make sure that these are safe for children. Have your son cut many different items and maybe even a doll's hair. Provide a lot of encouragement, praise and give him other types of treats for this.
- 2 Play with your son's hair as if you were going to cut it. Do this for a very short duration, even seconds, and then reinforce him with a highly desired item.
- 3 Gradually increase the amount of time that you play with his hair, remembering to reinforce him.
- 4 When he is allowing you to play with his hair, pretend to cut a very small piece with your fingers.

Further Reading



Smith Myles, B. et al. (2000) **Asperger Syndrome and Sensory Issues: Practical Solutions for Making Sense of the World.**

Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
£13.95 ISBN: 978-0967251486

Wilkes, K. (2005) **The Sensory World of the Autistic Spectrum: A Greater Understanding.**
The National Autistic Society.
£1.50 ISBN: 978-1899280582



Gray, C. and White, A. L. (2002) **My Social Stories Book*.**

Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
£12.95 ISBN: 978-1853029509

*The words 'Social Story' and 'Social Stories' are trademarks originated and owned by Carol Gray. All rights reserved.

Again, provide a lot of reinforcement.

- 5 Gradually increase the amount of time that you do this, reinforcing him highly when you stop.
- 6 Hold a pair of scissors while playing with his hair, whilst providing reinforcement.
- 7 When he is OK with this, cut a very small piece, very carefully. Praise and reinforce your son very highly when he allows you to do this.
- 8 Increase the amounts very slowly. Do not rush him.

The beauty of this procedure is the gradual nature combined with the high levels of reinforcement.

Other tips:

- Wet the hair before cutting it. This will prevent the 'itchy' feeling of dry hair falling on the neck and face.
- Place a mirror behind your son as well as in front so that he can see what is happening more clearly and fully.
- Use scissors that do not make a noise.
- Use very sharp scissors to avoid them 'tugging' at the hair.
- Cut small amounts over an extended period of time, allowing your son to have rest breaks with some favourite toys or activities.
- Make it enjoyable by reinforcing constantly.

Similar techniques have been successful with other children. The key is the gradual steps, the building of trust, and the high levels of reinforcement. Take your time.



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



Here Comes The Sun!

☺ *summertime...and the living is easy.* Not necessarily, actually, not if you've got a child with autism. Six weeks of unscheduled time to fill can seem a little daunting, so we've put together our very own AuKids **Top 20 hints** and tips to make for holiday harmony.

1

The National Autistic Society publishes a leaflet titled **Holidays: Preparation and Practicalities**, with tips on preparing your child for a holiday. It includes a guide on how to explain your child's condition in all major European languages. Call the NAS on 0845 070 4004 or look up www.nas.org.uk

2

Manchester Airport has launched a new leaflet to help people with ASC to negotiate air travel. Download the leaflet at www.manchesterairport.co.uk The free guide, called **Airport Awareness**, explains in pictures what to expect on your journey through Manchester Airport, starting from arriving and checking-in to going through security and returning home.

3

For holiday peace of mind with little escape artists, get a child locator. The child can press a panic tag if they lose sight of you, or you can activate it and it will locate them. Look up www.loc8tor.co.uk for more details. The Loc8tor Plus costs £99.99 and includes a panic alarm that your child can activate if they find themselves lost in a supermarket or on the beach.

4

A slightly cheaper alternative is a child ID band. Pop your contact details onto the wristband and put it on your child when you're in a crowded place. You can also get tags for shoelaces. Look up www.travellingwithchildren.co.uk to get some cool Velcro bands for £3.99. One mum keeps track of her non-verbal child the cheap way - she writes her mobile number on the back of his hand before a day trip!

5

Make it easier to communicate about days out - use a camcorder or camera phone and scrapbook to record special moments that you can look at together at the end of the day. Your child can use their scrapbook to tell other people about their favourite days out.

6

Make sure you schedule in 'me' time. Have at least half a day a week off - book a babysitter, book your child into a crèche/playscheme, play date, or family - give yourself that time to re-charge.

7

Visual timelines are really important during the holidays, as every day is different. Get them their own calendar for the holiday and use photographs of who is visiting and where you are going. Try and stick to some kind of routine e.g. visits out are always in the afternoon, or a soft play centre is always on the same week day.

8

Remember, there's a Manchester babysitting agency especially for kids with autism. **Time** is run by our own co-editor **Tori Houghton** alongside parent **Rick Schofield**. You can give yourself a complete break or just book a babysitter to help support you - daytime or evening. Look up www.timebabysitting.com or call 07942 815 845.

9

Even the most resourceful parent can run out of inspiration. The deceptively titled **Babies in the City**, a 100-page book by Jo Maxwell and Louise Taylor, costs £4.99 and is full of fabulous ideas on places to take all children (not just babies) in and around the North West area. Available from www.babiesinthecity.co.uk and from local outlets including the Rumpus toy store in Didsbury, Manchester. ISBN 978-0-9561215-0-9.





Get on board!

For fans of Thomas the Tank Engine, head to Thomas Land at Drayton Manor Park.

Twelve themed rides all feature favourite characters, plus there's a themed indoor play area. Look up www.thomaslanduk.co.uk. Go to Guest Services once at the park with documentation to prove your child has autism eg. Disability Living Allowance letter, and you can get exit passes that will allow you to skip the queues.



For a cheap afternoon out, Brookside Mini Railway in Poynton is enormous fun.

Find it at Brookside Garden Centre, Macclesfield Road.

Call 01625 872919 or look up www.brooksidegardencentre.com for details.



Take a trip on a REAL train and jump on the East Lancashire Railway.

You can travel from Bury to Ramsbottom or Heywood to Raafstall. Go to Bolton Street Station, Bolton Street, Bury. Call 0161 764 7790 or look up www.east-lancs-rly.co.uk



We kid you not – North Staffs Special Adventure Playground is designed especially for kids with special needs. It includes a safe, purpose built playground and a three-storey indoor soft play area. There's also a nature walk and plenty of outdoor activities. Family sessions are run during the school holidays, with volunteers on hand to help out. Find it at Stanier Street, Newcastle-Under-Lyme, Staffs ST5 2SU. Tel: 01782 717612. Look up www.specialadventureplayground.co.uk for details.



13

Lots of physical exercise wards off boredom and frustration as well as stimulating the brain. A garden trampoline is a great investment, creating opportunities for you to reinforce requesting and simple language as well as making eye contact and having fun together. Soft play centres such as Mr Clown's Fun Zone in Hadfield are also terrific – the kids let off steam whilst you relax knowing that they're safe.



The Trentham Estate, situated off Junction 15 of the M6, is a great place for all families. It includes Trentham Gardens with its adventure playground, a monkey forest which is home to 140 Barbary macaques and you can even take a mini train ride close to the lake on the Trentham Fern Railway. Look up www.trenthamleisure.co.uk for details. It's worth bringing proof of disability along, as carers get in free.



The EST donkey sanctuary at Green Fold, Abbey Hey, Manchester, offers free rides for children with special needs throughout July and August. Book in advance by calling 0161 301 4051 or look up www.elizabethsvendentrust.org.uk for details. Don't forget EST's summer fair on August 15th from 10am-3pm! Entrance and parking free.



17

For just £2, you can buy a pack of 50 business-sized Information Cards on autism from the National Autistic Society. They give a brief explanation of autism – keep them in your wallet and shove under the nose of anyone who needs educating. Buy them from the website at www.nas.org.uk or call 020 7833 2299.

18

Use the extra time during the holidays to work on self-help skills – no more rushing in the mornings means that you can concentrate on letting your child do more for themselves. Don't make impossible goals but try to work on one or two things.

19

Keep a handbag full of brand new fidget toys for those times when you're going somewhere new or waiting in a queue. Look up our trusty friends at www.thenoveltywarehouse.com for umpteen special needs ideas.

20

Don't forget to join your local library where you can get extra books and DVDs during the summer. In Stockport, children with ASC are eligible to borrow DVDs and videos free of charge and overdue charges are also waived. When you join, just ask the librarian to change your child's ticket status to a children or teenage special ticket. No proof of ASC is stated as necessary but it may be a good idea to bring your Disability Living Allowance letter just in case.

WIN

Babies in the City



AUKIDS has five copies of Babies in the City to give away.

This is a great guide for all parents of young children seeking inspiration for what to do at the weekends and holidays. Simply answer this question.

In which theme park is Thomas Land located?

Send your answers to aukidsmag@googlemail.com or on a postcard to 8 Pymgate Drive Heald Green Cheshire SK8 3TR not later than August 5th. The first five correct answers drawn out of the hat will receive a book.

Only one entry per person. Editor's decision is final.

If you discover any great places during the holidays, let us know and we can tell our readers all about them. Write to aukidsmag@googlemail.com

Reviews



BOOK

A Book About What Autism Can Be Like

Written and Illustrated by Sue Adams

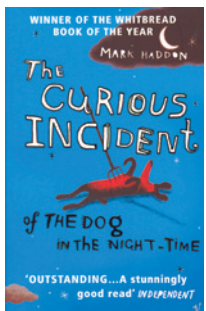
2008

Published by Jessica Kingsley Publishers
£6.99

ISBN 978-1843109402

This straight-talking non-fiction publication is aimed at siblings and classmates of children with autism. It explains how a child with autism may think, feel and experience things in a different way, portrayed positively with an emphasis on difference rather than autism being a problem. It gives lots of examples of the good aspects of the condition as well as helping classmates to find out how they can help a friend with autism and why some of the behaviours they find unusual may occur. It's simple, but a great introduction to autism for young people, helping to answer some of their questions and encouraging them to appreciate differences.

Angie Johnson



BOOK

The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time

By Mark Haddon

2004

Published by Vintage
£7.99

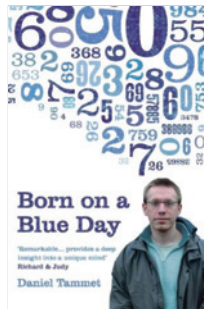
ISBN 978-0099450252

This excellent prize-winning novel will appeal to readers on a variety of levels. As a professional and having worked in the field of autism for the past nine years, I found it honest, refreshing and clear. The main character of the story, which is written in the first person, is Christopher Boone, a 15 year-old with Asperger Syndrome. Christopher loves prime numbers, hates yellow and brown and doesn't understand facial expressions. When the furniture is moved around the house, it makes him feel sick and dizzy.

The tale begins when he finds his neighbour's dog, Wellington, dead in his back garden and embarks on an investigation to find out who committed the crime. What starts off as a detective story, though, becomes a journey of self-discovery. His frank observations on other people's behaviour leave the reader questioning aspects of so-called 'normal' social conduct.

The author is to be congratulated on his deep insight in describing the protagonist's behaviour and thoughts. This is entertaining and refreshing, with moments of comedy weaved into an excellent insight into autistic thinking.

Tori Houghton



BOOK

Born on a Blue Day

By Daniel Tammet

2008

Published by Hodder and Stoughton

£8.99

ISBN 978-0340899755

Daniel Tammet's biography Born on a Blue Day is a rare treat. Daniel, who has Asperger Syndrome, is also what's known as a savant, someone with jaw-dropping numerical abilities. Unusually, Daniel does not have the learning disabilities that are often associated with savants, so his book is a rare insight into an alternative existence, one where numbers are experienced alongside

emotions and colours, and he mentally delights in vast numerical landscapes in the same way as his readers might discover a new city.

This is fascinating in itself, but what is particularly striking is the author's ability to give an emotional and detailed account of his childhood. Not only does he describe his behaviours in exacting detail, but also the thoughts that governed them. Although family life was happy, Daniel struggled with isolation at school, only mingling with fellow outsiders and often alone, but saved by the refuge of an exceptional imagination, which conjured up vivid and complex imaginary friends. Daniel's intelligence, his bravery and his insight, together with the understanding parenting he experienced, means that he has been able to negotiate his way through a frustrating maze of social expectations to become a happy and fulfilled adult. A thoroughly uplifting read.

Lauren Crofton



BOOK

Ten Things Every Child with Autism Wishes You Knew

By Ellen Notbohm

2007

Published by Future Horizons Incorporated

£14.95

ISBN 978-1932565300

When I first came across this book, I just couldn't wait to prize it open and find out exactly what it was all about. Would it provide that much needed insight into the feelings and thoughts of autistic children? With such an expectation to live up to, the book didn't disappoint. Notbohm, a mother of a young boy with autism, provides a summary of the ten things at the beginning of the book – great for fellow skim readers

who just want the answers quickly. She goes on to explain each aspect in more detail with plenty of anecdotes drawn from personal experience as well as from research and theory. The book reads as if it were written by a child with autism. This provides a more personal, meaningful way of helping the reader to experience a glimpse of some of the difficulties associated with autism and empathise with the child.

This positive, child-focused book works like an advocate for all children with autism. It can be their voice in demystifying behaviours and explaining misunderstandings associated with autism.

I would recommend this book to anyone. If everyone working in autism were to read it, so many of the problems in explaining and understanding the condition may finally be solved and things that are often considered to be difficult behaviour would be accepted as part of the condition rather than the fault of the child.

Tori Houghton



DVD

Inside I'm Dancing

Directed by Damien O'Donnell

2004

Story by Christian O'Reilly

Screenplay by Jeffrey Caine

Stars Steven Robertson and James McAvoy

£15.99

Bagpuss is the daily TV diet of residents at Dublin's Carrigmore Home for the Disabled, where Michael Connolly (Steven Robertson), a young man with cerebral palsy, spends his days in resigned desperation. When punk joker Rory O'Shea (James McAvoy) whizzes through the front door in a motorised

wheelchair, imprudently asking whether 'it's normally this much fun or is today someone's birthday?' there's a sense that nothing will be the same again. And it isn't. O'Shea understands Connolly despite his speech impairments and befriends him, leading him astray in the best sense possible and forcing him to question his subservience to the system. O'Shea embarks on a mission to show his friend a more independent lifestyle, where nightclubs, parties and girls are all possibilities. It's a lesson in confident, positive thinking - a story that doesn't ask patiently for tolerance but demands inclusion and equality, and does it with warmth and humour. Compulsory viewing.

Favourite quote:

Michael: *Have you ever had a girlfriend?*

Rory: *'Well, I've had more girlfriends than you've had speech therapy sessions.'*

Debby Elley

Send in your reviews of a book or DVD to aukidsmag@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



ch..ch..ch..changes (turn and face the strain) ...

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



Bobby's got a new obsession. It's the Change4Life cartoon. You know, the Government campaign for a healthier lifestyle. Well, it's a good cartoon, I thought so myself, that is until I saw it 40 times. The Bobster, as I like to call him, has got into the slightly unnerving habit of pointing a finger at you as he says the slogan 'Eat Well, Move More, Live Longer.' Yes, Bobby. Sorry, Bobby. I have been slovenly in my ways. I will improve. I will move more, eat healthier... hold on, who exactly is the kid here?

No one escapes the Change4Life diatribe. He's like a mini political party activist. He



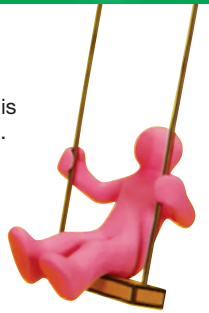
stops the headteacher in the corridor and tells him (I'm assuming the pointy finger comes out) 'Eat less *healthy* chips'. He hasn't quite got the hang of the word 'unhealthy'. No Bobby, I said on the way back from school one day. Biscuits are *unhealthy*, crisps are *unhealthy*, chocolate is *unhealthy* (although Lord knows I'm not exactly guiltless in that department) and chips are *unhealthy*. Apples are healthy, bananas are healthy, vegetables are healthy.

He pauses. 'Yes, eat less HEALTHY chips.' I give up.

Now I've got a problem here. One problem is that – deeply ironically – Bobby is in fact moving a lot less since he discovered Change4Life, as he is glued to the website watching the advert. The other problem is that Bobby thinks Change4Life is not merely an advert campaign but a great new animation series. He probably spotted that Aardman Animations, those clever guys behind Wallace and Grommit, were responsible for the plasticine models. So, of course, for those of you who have been listening carefully and know a bit about Bobby, he now wants the ma-ga-zine.



There is no magazine. There is no 'DVDVD' as he calls them. This is a bit of a tragedy. Then an idea hits me. He likes plasticine figures and he likes Aardman Animations – why don't we bring back Morph? You know, the late Tony Hart's sidekick, the one who got up to no good with the Anglepoise in Take Hart in 1970-something? Alas, there is a further problem. Every '70s kids' TV programme seems to have made it to DVDVD bar Morph, who is still on VHS. That would be ok, were it not for the fact that we no longer have a video player (Appendix A: Household items that Alec has destroyed). There's You Tube though, that's got everything - so we tried that.



"Hahahaha," I chuckle to myself (Bobby is in bed and I haven't shown him Morph yet, I am merely indulging in it for my own nostalgic amusement). Morph is really funny, I'd forgotten how much I liked him.

The next day, I try Morph out on Bobby. He doesn't seem to think it's weird that Morph says 'Bayohh!' He laughs at Morph's friend Chaz. We are sorted. We have moved the obsession from one plasticine animation to another. It's a sort of triumph, and frankly he can watch Morph as much as he likes. But please please please, dear BBC, bring it out on DVDVD. There's an entire generation of parents who would thank you for it. And one little autistic chap who would be your Friend4Life.



Cygnet Health Care

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

SPRINGSIDE SPECIALIST AUTISM/ASPERGER SYNDROME SERVICES AVAILABLE:

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- *Residential Short Break and Shared Care Services* for young people with autism/Asperger Syndrome aged 5-17 years old.

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For more information about any of these services, please contact Amy Stanion, Services Coordinator, Springside House, 1 Brownsville Road, Heaton Moor, Stockport SK4 4PE. Telephone: 0161 443 4060 Email: amystanion@cygnethealth.co.uk

Readers' Page

Celebrity Spotlight



Joshua - age 8



Delta - age 7

Diagnosis: Diagnosis of autism was given in September 2003



My family: Mum Lesley, dad Adrian, sister Jessica, hamster Fiona and many sea monkeys!! (For those not in the know these are computer pets).

School: Lisburne and I am in Neptune Class, been there from reception, prior to that was at Valley Nursery.

I love: Spongebob, Ben 10, singing, playing my piano, and reciting movie scenes. I have a real obsession with adverts for cleaning products and I am always telling mummy at the supermarket what products to buy and how they work.



I hate: Change in routine, Monday mornings and busy places.

Song that most describes me: *I'm So Excited*

If I were Prime Minister: Spongebob would be king.

Personality in four words:

Happy, musical, energetic and chilled.



My Ambition: To live in Bikini Bottom and I don't want a job, I don't want to work when I grow up. Basically, I don't want to grow up...

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

Diagnosis: Aged 6, autism.

My family: I live with my mum, dad and cat.

Best habit: Reading maps and giving directions (I'm better than an in-car navigation system!)

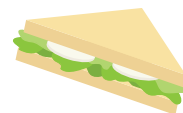


Worst habit: Repeating people's conversations.

Hangs out: Bookshops - Waterstone's in Manchester is my favourite, as they sell the most maps!

Personality in four words: Funny, strong-willed, loveable, chatterbox.

I love: Maps, writing lists of maps I need, emergency services, egg and cress sandwiches, dressing up, pylons and lamp posts.



I hate: Flies, spiders, too much noise, having a bath, needles, haircuts and the dark.

If I were Prime Minister:

I would make everyone read maps, wear high heels and eat egg and cress sandwiches every day!



CUT ALONG DOTTED LINE

Questionnaire



It's AuKids first birthday, and we're celebrating by evaluating the service we provide to our readers. To help us constantly improve and bring you a top quality magazine each quarter, please take 5 minutes to answer the following questions. You can email your replies (you do not have to repeat the questions, simply list the numbers and your responses) to aukidsmag@googlemail.com, or rip off the completed questionnaire and send it to 8 Pymgate Drive, Heald Green, SK8 3TR no later than September 30th. A lucky winner will be drawn at random from the replies to receive a **£25 voucher** to spend online at The Novelty Warehouse - our favourite sensory toy store.



1) Where do you live?

.....

2) How do you receive AuKids - by post or do you collect it? If collection, please state where from.

.....

3) How old is your child?

4) What is their diagnosis?

5) Which articles or features have you found most useful in AuKids?

.....

6) Which articles have you found least useful and why?

.....

7) Are there any articles or ideas you'd like to see us include in AuKids in future? Please state.

.....

8) Have you used any services or companies mentioned in AuKids magazine? If so please state which ones.

.....

9) Finally is there anything else you would like to say about AuKids?

.....

SIGN UP FOR AUKIDS: AuKids is a not for profit magazine. For it to become a long-term, sustainable venture, it needs to create its own income. We've had wonderful feedback from our readers suggesting that the introduction of a low annual subscription cost would be successful. So from 2010, AuKids magazine will become **subscription only**. This means that you can get our quarterly magazine delivered to your door for just £10 a year, or £2.50 per issue. Until then you will be able to pick up a free copy of AuKids from your usual collection point.

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