

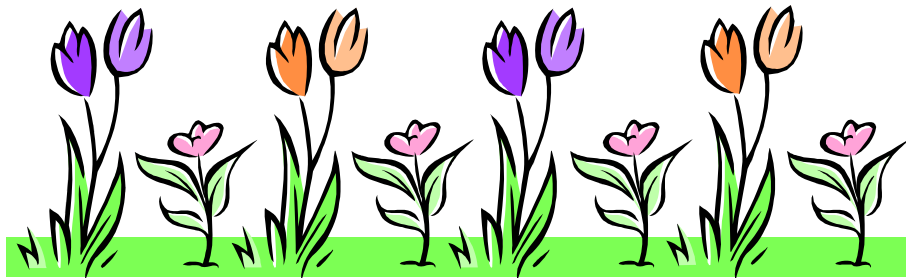


autism London

*providing support for those affected by
autism and Asperger's syndrome*

Bulletin

April-May 2006



autism london

Bi-Monthly Bulletin

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Production: Thanks to Tanya, Nurun, and Desmond for producing the Bulletin

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

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

Dear Reader,

Yes it's that time again, here at Autism London subscriptions are renewed each April and so you will find enclosed a renewal form. If you have joined us for the first time between January and March 2006, then your subscription is valid until March 2007. Otherwise, please just complete the form to ensure we have your correct details to date, and to return it to us with the subscription fee payable to: MCCH Society Ltd.

Tanya Camilleri

Help Line Support Officer

Spring is in the air....well actually it should be but isn't quite yet!

We think of Spring as a time of newness – new growth, spring lambs, spring cleaning and starting afresh. We also start a new financial year in spring – April to be exact.

MCCH is a highly respected provider of services to people with disabilities and mental health problems, in London and the South East. Autism London is equally respected as a specialist organisation that offers support and advice to individuals with Autism and Asperger's as well as providing information to organisations, other professionals and those who have an interest.

In this time of renewal, we each of us look forward and try and predict what the future has in store. Not easy and yet we all try and consider how we can change things to make our lives as individuals better, our environment better or more suitable for our needs as well as how we can make better use of what we already have.

Organisations are no different. Autism London is now looking to see how we can make better use of our limited resources as well as maintaining the standards of service we have become respected for. We enjoy feedback from all of our members and those that use our services – it helps us know what we are doing right and what can be better. Please keep that coming in. Equally we have feedback from others such as the Commission for Social Care Inspection, Commissioners and others on whose behalf we provide services.

Whilst we aim to meet as many needs as possible and provide a high quality service for people, we continue to work with limited resources. We have the continuing support of MCCH for a further period and the services of a fund-raiser, as we strive to get Autism London on a firm financial footing. We will be moving from our current offices in the next few months and investigating how we can make use of other meeting venues. More news about all of this in the next Bulletin.

Thank you for your continuing support. Please do reply to the feedback sheet and if you have any thoughts or suggestions for the future, please let us know.

Gordon Pownall

Senior Manager

East London

Dear All,

Its time to spring in to spring! We have lots to come your way so please continue to provide your support, as we would be lost without it! I have some good news to share with you all, no I haven't won the lottery but I am pregnant and due to become a mother for the first time! So everyone, please pray that all goes well for me. Lately I have been very busy with sending off applications to various grants and funds in the hope that our proposal for a summer trip is accepted and funded by a generous organisation, so fingers crossed, I will keep you posted.

The other thing I have been busy with is sorting out the renewal subscription memberships. So please remember to send of your renewal forms as soon as you receive them, as that helps us to keep on track.

Nurun Ahmed

Administrator

Support Service Update

Hello to all our supporters,

I would like to update you with some important changes regarding Autism London's Asperger's Support Groups.

The first change relates directly to our mixed group – ALAG. Because of its popularity, we are having to introduce a booking system. From now on, if you are interested in attending the group, please call us no later than one week before the meeting date. Our building can only accommodate a certain number of people while remaining a safe place for people attending.

The support group meeting schedule has also changed, with the formal discussion beginning at 6.30pm. and finishing around 8.00pm to allow time for refreshments and socialising. The meeting will finish around 8.30pm.

Until further notice ALWAG will not be a separate group, we would like to encourage any females with ASP who only attend ALWAG to also attend ALAG, so that they can benefit from hearing guest speakers. I look forward to seeing you all at forthcoming groups.

Until then keep warm.

Dee King
Support Officer

Hello to all our members and supporters!

I hope you are all well and like me, eager to leave behind the winter blues and look forward to the joys of Spring! It's so good to see the lovely crocuses popping up all over the park!

As usual, we continue to be very busy here at Autism London, however, alongside a heavy caseload I managed to fit in a long overdue visit to TreeHouse School, now settled in their temporary building on Woodside Avenue, Muswell Hill. Those of you who know TreeHouse are aware that they were set up in 1997 and their vision is to transform the lives of children and their families affected by autism. TreeHouse uniquely provides teaching that is interactive, child centred and positively reinforcing, delivered by staff who are specially trained and skilled in the principles of Applied Behavioural Analysis (ABA).

During my visit I was able to appreciate why TreeHouse is known as a flagship school. It is very well resourced, and they run clinic sessions where parents can come along and observe their children learning and interacting with teachers. You may also be interested to know that TreeHouse provides consultancy to other autism service providers including tools for establishing new schools. We would like to wish TreeHouse the very best for their future plans for expansion and their work promoting excellence in education for those affected by autism.

On a different note, many of you will have heard about *Person Centred Planning* and *The Person Centred Approach*, which recently seems to be high on the agenda in care planning. Joe McDaniel from MCCCH gave us an insightful and stimulating presentation on the importance of PCP. Joe graphically demonstrated how PCP helps us to see the person, their desires, perspectives and needs as the *guiding force* to meeting his or her aspirations. It's an empowering approach, helping people plan their future and organise the support they need, leading to meaningful outcomes in life. This approach will certainly help us to advocate more effectively for our service users, and it serves as a reminder that the purpose of advocacy is taking action to help people say what they want, secure their rights, represent their interests and obtain services they need. *The Person Centred Approach* was high on the agenda again when I attended the *Transition to Adulthood* meeting at Centre 404. This meeting was part of a project set up to identify and look for solutions to the many difficulties experienced by parents and young people with disabilities when moving from children to adult services. Alan Loivette, Project Manager

for Integrated Services for Children with Disabilities, presented a perspective on what the process of transition should be like, with emphasis on the person centred approach. It was a very positive meeting with contributions from parents who attended.

I'll leave you now with just a quick reminder that Rosemarie Mason who represents **HANDLE** will be at our Family Support meeting in Camden on Wednesday 15th March at 1:30pm. Rosemarie's presentation was very well received at our last meeting and we all look forward to hearing from her again about how **HANDLE** which stands for, **Holistic Approach to Neuro Development & Learning Efficiency**. If you want to know more, come along on the 15th and Rosemarie will answer all your questions. We look forward to seeing you there!

Ethney Anderson
Support Officer

News from Autism London's Residential Home at Salisbury Road

Over recent months we have been working in a different way with many of the people who live here. Staff are interacting with people in different ways and the service users are taking a much more active part in the day-to-day running of the house, developing their living skills. We have been working on keeping individual rooms tidy and clean and dealing with laundry. Staff continue to work on their NVQ qualifications with the support of the manager.

In the Support Services update, Ethney talks about person-centred planning. Over the next few months we will be developing this model for people living at Salisbury Road. First step is a facilitators training course for some members of staff including the manager, then we will be looking at how best to introduce this system, so that all future plans are developed in a way that makes it more person centred and geared towards service users with Autistic Spectrum Disorder.

We have a fairly stable staff team here at the residential home which has helped the service users to improve and go about life with more confidence.

Richard Tucker
House Manager

Helpline Service Update

I would like to say thank you to all those who sent in their bulletin feedback survey forms, but ask again for those who didn't to please do so now! I have included again in the bulletin a copy for you to fill in. From the information already received we had comments on new sections to be introduced to the bulletin including a juniors page and a discussion page where people can give their opinions and comments on a wide range of subjects. Drawings, poems, short stories please send them in. If you are an adult with ASP why not send in information that might be interesting to other people with ASP? Also parents, any information you have found particularly helpful and that would make a difference to others, letting them know what's happening and what is available. If you have anything you would like to contribute please forward to me here at Autism London or you can email me on tanya@autismlondon.org.uk.

Tanya Camilleri
Help Line Officer

**Parent/Carers Support Group
Invites you to attend a series of talks.**

Date and Time	Venue Details	Speaker	Topic
15 th March 2006 1.30pm – 3.00pm	The Kulubi Centre 2c Falkland Road Kentish Town London NW5 2PT	Rosemarie Manson	Parent of a child with ASD, and H.A.N.D.L.E Therapist
29 th March 2006 10.30am – 12.00pm	Autism London 1 Floral Place Northampton Grove London N1 2FS	Support Officers from Autism London: Ethney Anderson & Dee King	Open meeting for parents to come along and talk.
19 th April 2006 1.30pm – 3pm	The Limes William Morris Hall 6 Somers Road Walthamstow London E17 3RX	Daniel Horan ABA Therapist	Talking about Autism Partnership and ABA Therapy
26 th April 2006 10.30pm – 1.30pm	Autism London 1 Floral Place Northampton Grove London N1 2FS	Support Officers from Autism London: Ethney Anderson & Dee King	Open meeting for parents to come along and talk.
10 th May 2006 10.30pm – 1.30pm	Autism London 1 Floral Place Northampton Grove London N1 2FS	Support Officers from Autism London: Ethney Anderson & Dee King	Open meeting for parents to come along and talk.

To help us cater for demand, if you would like to attend any of these groups/talks please let us know you will be coming by calling 020 7704 0501 and leaving a message specifying the date of the meeting you will be attending.

**autism london
Asperger's Group**

This is a support group for adults with Asperger's syndrome living in the London area. It is a chance to meet others, to talk about common issues, and to support and help each other. The group is very popular and if you are interested in attending you need to contact us at least one week before the group takes place. There is a charge of £1.00 per member and £3.00 for non-members to cover refreshments.

The group meets at the Autism London offices at: 1 Floral Place London N1 2FS

Dates for meetings for April-May are:

Tuesday 4 th April	Coping with change
Tuesday 2 nd May	Childhood Experiences

**Come along and give it a try; all meetings start promptly at 6.30.
Contact Dee/Ethney for further information on: 020 7704 0501**

ASPITALK

By Desmond Meldrum, an adult who has recently been diagnosed with the condition

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

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

Excerpt from book

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

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

**For more information please contact Desmond Meldrum at
Autism London on: 0207 704 0501 or email desmond@autismlondon.org.uk**

Supporters' Forum

AT THE PARTY

This sketch is a possible example of the difference between an encounter between two neurotypicals and the same encounter as it might be if one person is on the autistic continuum

<u>Neurotypical Conversation</u>	<u>Autistic conversation</u>
Jack: <i>hi there</i>	Jack: <i>hello</i>
Jill: <i>hi</i>	Jill: <i>hi</i>
Jack: <i>enjoying the party!</i>	Jack: <i>I bought a new train set today</i>
Jill: <i>yes, are you?</i>	Jill: <i>oh really!</i>
Jack: <i>would you like to join me in a dance?</i>	Jack: <i>yes, it's the latest model</i>
Jill: <i>certainly</i>	Jill: <i>excuse me, I've just seen a friend over there</i>

Taken from 'An Alternative Personality' by Desmond Meldrum, a volunteer at the Autism London. Copies of the book are £10 each and can be obtained by contacting autism london. For further information contact Desmond on: 0207 704 0501

Supporters' Forum

REASONS TO BE CHEERFUL!

Asperger's Syndrome does cause a lot of problems for people who have it, but it also offers many advantages. This article is a celebration of all the good things about Asperger's:

- We generally have high intelligence. Neurotypicals understand and appreciate high intelligence, so this is a good point to start with.
- We are reliable. If we are expected to be at work at, say, 9am only exceptional circumstances will make us late.
- We are honest.
- We have good memories, especially for facts. If you want to recruit another member for a quiz team, look for someone with Asperger's!
- We can be persistent in fighting a cause till we win, though the converse is that we perhaps sometimes are too persistent when we should back down.
- We are loyal, e.g. a person with Asperger Syndrome will be dedicated to his employer and someone with Asperger's who is married is unlikely to have an affair.
- We are very logical thinkers. Quite a few Asperger's become lawyers as the legal system is very logical.
- We are able to use very precise language. Again this is a very helpful trait for potential lawyers.
- Our special interests can have very positive effects. Often if an Asperger has work connected with their interest they can do that job very well, e.g. someone who is into computers can be a very useful employee. Similarly hobbies can be positively used.
- We are good at giving specialist advice. We can get to know a subject well, especially if it relates to our specialist interests, and be good at helping others with it.
- We are straightforward, not pretentious.
- We have a strong sense of fairness and justice.
- We can sometimes think laterally in situations. I would like to give a personal example of this. I find I can make jokes because I think differently to others. The first time I realised I could do this was when a colleague at work said "There's a load of rubbish in the canteen today". I, of course, realised she meant the menu was no good, but I knew what she said also had a totally different meaning, so I replied; "You'd better ask the porters to take it away then"!
- We have good eye for detail. If you want someone to do some proofreading, an Asperger is a good choice.

Whilst we have to be aware of our problems, Asperger Syndrome is far from all gloom and doom. We need to emphasise our strengths and exploit them as much as we can, e.g. when looking for a job try to find one that uses our unique abilities.

John Harrison

What Spring means to me

Spring is not only when the weather becomes warmer it is also the Jewish Festival of Pass Over to commemorate the exodus from Egypt about three thousand years ago of the Israelites. We are supposed to have two Seder meals on the first two nights of the eight day festival when the story of the exodus is read and it is especially important that young children of the family hear the story. As I live by myself I try to go to a Communal Seder I often go to the Association of Children of Jewish Refugees for my Seder or to a Synagogue and it reminds me of the Seders I had with my parents when I was young.

There is a great deal of preparation to do for that festival we are supposed to spring clean just before Pass Over, to make sure that our homes are completely free of bread crumbs for the festival. We should have Matzo for the whole eight day festival instead of bread, and other leavened foods are also forbidden because when we left Egypt, according to the story we did not have time to bake the bread. Pass Over each year is in March or April depending on the Jewish Calendar and this year 2006 it starts on the evening of 12th April and finishes on the evening of the 20th April.

David Shamash

MY OBSESSION. JEAN [1966 - 1968]

During the school break, I happened to be doing some shopping. The shops were about 5 minutes from where I used to live at the time. One shop, a grocers was owned by a Mr George Ewin. One day, I happened to be doing some shopping for my mother when an attractive girl entered the shop. She was literally out of this world. Lovely brown eyes and long brown hair, I fell for her straight away and would have loved to have had the front to have spoken to her and try to strike up a friendship with her. Instead, I finished off doing my shopping and made my way home. From then on, I was thinking of her all the time. Later, I learnt that the girl I fancied was called Jean.

Being extremely immature at the time, I did some weird things to attract her attention. For example, visiting the shops often to see her. Staring at her until the shop keeper distracted me by gently tapping me on the arm or, waiting outside, giving her a friendly smile as she walked past and perhaps the occasional wolf whistle. Sometimes her 'younger sister,' Joy, accompanied her. Eventually, my sister, Josephine and I, were to nickname her Plaitty. She always had her hair in plaits.

If only then, I had the front to talk to her, would 'have been half the battle won.' I often said to my Mother, 'What do I say next time I see that girl?.' Suggesting, 'Nice day' as an opening line; providing, of course, the weather was nice.

One weekend, while on leave, Jean was chatting to somebody along the high street. On seeing this, I got very upset. Even before they briefly kissed. Afterwards, she passed me. Again, I did not have the front to talk to her. Otherwise, with the right approach, I could well have got her to come to a party that I was having that night.

That night, my party took place. One guest, Christine Davey, attended and while dancing with her, I was literally squeezing her. Poor girl, she must have been really frightened. As if the earlier occurrence wasn't enough, I felt jealous again when Christine and her boyfriend started snogging each other. I just felt that I wasn't good enough.

Shortly after leaving school in 1967, I tried attracting Jean's attention by ringing my bicycle bell. Another occasion, displaying a transparent bag showing a popular band then, the Monkees.

Around the same time, a kid, next door to me, a Stephen Harbut lent a helping hand. It was April time and Sandie Shaw had just won the Eurovision Song Contest with 'Puppet on a string.' With Jean doing her Sunday shopping as usual, I said to Stephen, 'Go up to that girl and say, 'Girl in the black coat, my friend fancies you.' Not realising that I was using him, he cycled up and did just that. I must have been about 20 or so yards behind when Jean turned round, saw me and saw that I had put him up to it. Also, on the scene, was my Father. He suggested mentioning, Sandie Shaw's win as a topic of conversation.

One day, either my family or me, suggested how to address my feelings towards Jean. So I put pen to paper and wrote a letter. At the time, I had a friend, Philip Adams, who went to the same school as me. It was through him that I struck up the courage and gave her the letter. Now, what I should have done, was to follow things through. What did I do? Jean appeared and I said nothing. Then, the second time and off the cuff, I asked about the letter and, if she wanted to come out with me. She replied, 'I'm going out with somebody.' I did the same thing again. This time, in front of one shop assistant saying, 'Would you like to see a couple of horror films?' Jean replied again, 'I'm going out with somebody.' Shortly after the letter incident, I was returning home from my youth club when, someone shouted out, 'You like Jean,' or something to that effect. I just said, 'Who's Jean?'

The next day, one friend of Jean's called me. I crossed over. Not knowing how to address the approach, I said, 'What, what do you want?' Then I walked away. Nevertheless, Jean was to forgive me for the embarrassing moments and gave me a wonderful smile after saying 'hello Jean.' Boy, didn't I feel flattered!

One summer's evening, Jean's family attended a park's concert party. So this gave me the groundwork for a stunt involving Jean's sister, Joy. This, in the hope of winning Jean over. She was about my sister's age and I needed to strike a friendship between the two of them. So, I approached my sister, Josephine. Then, a few weeks later, we struck lucky. Jean's family appeared again. Joy, separating from her family, then appeared by the water fountain. Taking the opportunity, I introduced her to my sister saying, 'This is my sister, Josephine,' Then started joking around. Making the water spurt from the fountain, she just smiled. Unfortunately, the stunt wasn't to materialise. Still, when my Father wouldn't let Josephine try again a week or two later, I got very stroppy towards him. So I had to go to the concert party alone. My intention was, that if Jean's family were there, I was going to come home and smash the place up. The reason being, because it would have then, been a lost opportunity. By this time, I was going off Jean slightly. So, because I was in the park one night, saw someone more attractive and got very upset when she was with someone. Or appeared to be.

One of the last attempts to win Jean over involved me walking towards the bus stop. I was hoping that she would board the same bus as me. Jean, who, unfortunately saw me, craftily got the one behind. On the last approach, prior to the crush ending, I acted more appropriately. By this time, her mother got wind of my badgering and gave me a dirty look. Still, fancying another girl Vivien, I was past caring. That is another chapter entirely.

In conclusion. I'm very thankful that Jean and others tolerated my weird behaviour. If not, then writing this extract would have been extremely painful. Let alone, uncomfortable right now.

Michael Feldman

We are always keen to hear from our supporters with news of what they've been up to so that we can include it in the bulletin. If you have anything to share just send it to: c/o Tanya Camilleri Autism London, 1 Floral Place, London N1 2FS or email me on: Tanya@autismlondon.org.uk

Notices & Conferences

Mencap

Mencap have a new evening freephone helpline service running between the hours of 5.30pm – 7.30pm every Monday.

For further information contact Mencap on: 0808 808 3555

Creating Opportunities, Building Futures: Delivering the Integrated Children's Agenda

Venue: Conference QEII Conference Centre, London SW1

Day: 16th – 17th March 2006

For more information please contact 4Children on : 0207 522 6970

For further information visit the website: www.4children.org.uk/events/show/ref/71

Enfield Community Fair '06

Celebrating the success of the Enfield Strategic Partnership and the voluntary and community sector, the events aims to demonstrate the success and impact of partnership working in the borough and to allow residents, organisations and businesses to find out more about services in Enfield. For more information please write to:

ECEN, Community House, 311 Fore Street, Edmonton, London N9 0PZ

Notices & Conferences

Waltham Forest Parent Partnership

Details: Information morning

Venue: The Epicentre, 41 West Street, Leytonstone E11 4LJ

Day: Wednesday 9.30am – 12.30pm

For more information please contact: 0208 520 6829 or 0800 587 2521

Positive Aspects

Details Positive Aspects is a new monthly email bulletin, which is for anybody who has an interest in any disability or mental health issue who live anywhere in England. It is packed full of stories, poems, useful items, law, events, holidays, benefits, requests what's on, other interesting articles, putting people in touch and much more. To subscribe, please send an email to trudy.1@ntlworld.com with subscribe in the message/text.

Shopping Strategies

Details: The NAS has now written a helpful booklet on useful tips and coping strategies for parents going to the shops with children with ASD.

For more information visit the website: www.nas.org.uk

Memory Gardens Sculpture Club

Details: The garden offers a safe and quiet space for both adults and children.

For more information about the clubs please contact Ruth Solomon on: 0208 806 1129

Tourism For All

Details: Tourism for all is a national registered charity that provides information to people with disabilities and older people in relation to accessible accommodation and other tourism services within the UK.

For more information contact: 0845 124 9974 or visit the website: www.tourismforall.org.uk

Inclusive Play

Inclusive play organization Kids (previously Kidsactive) have a new website, includes details of play initiatives ages 0-19 years.

For information visit the website: www.kids-online.org.uk

Victoria & Albert Museum

Details: Event for learning disability visitors, a talk on Modernism Exhibition. Come and discover what 'Modernism' means in architecture and design.

Day: Saturday 13th May 2.00pm – 3.30pm

For more information contact: 0207 942 2533

Recourses for Autism

Details: Activities for young people with autism and Asperger's Syndrome – youth group for 12-16 years old

Day: Wednesdays at 6.00pm – 8.00pm

For more information contact: 0808 458 3259

Notices & Conferences

Happy Birthday!

2006 is International Asperger's year and the 18th February marked the 100th anniversary of Hans Asperger, the discoverer of ASP. This year also marks the 25th anniversary of Dr Lorna Wing's paper *Asperger's Syndrome: a clinical account*, which helped bring the awareness to the condition around the world.

London Buddhist Group

Paul Wady who has ASP organises a meditation group in North London, for people with autism or Asperger's Syndrome. The class is primarily a silent space with medication and discussion. For further information contact Paul on: 0207 684 7504 or email: Hoxtonpaul@yahoo.co.uk

The Autism Research Centre

The Autism Research Centre, Cambridge is hosting its first Autism Research Conference, and a concert/art exhibition, in September this year. Are looking for musicians and artists to take part in the social event.

For further information contact Sally Cryer on: 01234 328330 or visit the website: <http://www.arc-conference.com>

Participants Required For Memory Research

If you are aged between 17 and 55 years and have a diagnosis of Asperger's Syndrome or Asperger's Disorder, you might be interested in participating in some research into memory functioning in this condition.

You would be asked to come to City University, London for one or more half-day sessions. We will pay your travel costs together with a small fee for participation.

For further information contact Sebastian Gaigg or Jonathan Martin on: 020 7040 8544 or e-mail autism@city.ac.uk

Recourse for Autism

Easter Play Scheme.

There are many activities planned including:

- Thames Valley Adventure Playground
- Bowling

Or just take some time to relax at our centre where you can do arts and crafts, music, group games or just play in the garden.

All activities planned in consultation with the young people.

Applications welcome from young people between 8 and 18. The days will be arranged into age appropriate groups.

The cost for the club will be £20.00 per day.

For further information contact Catherine Ely Resources for Autism, 858 Finchley Road, Temple Fortune, London NW11 6AB. Telephone 0208 458 3259

Many thanks to all those who contributed to this bulletin