



H.A.R.C. Hertfordshire Autistic Resource Centre

Breaks Manor, Link Drive, Hatfield, AL10 8TP

Helpline: 01707 259700

Tel/Fax: 01707 259701

e-mail: support@harc-online.org.uk

www.harc-online.org.uk

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The Next Parents Support Group Meeting

Date: Tuesday 28th March, 7.30pm for 8pm

Venue: Southfield School, Hatfield (see back of diary page for directions)

Topic: Exclusions and Bullying.

An open meeting for members to raise and discuss issues about bullying and exclusions.

It is helpful to have an idea of numbers. Please let us know if you wish to attend.

Parents Support Group Meeting

There has been no Parents Support Group Meeting since our last newsletter. However in November a number of teenagers took part in a specially organized personal safety session - more details are below. Information about our next Parents Support Group is above. We look forward to seeing you there.

You might also wish to make a note in your diary of the fun evening being planned for members' children and siblings of all ages at Activity World in Hatfield on the evening of Saturday 17th June. Places will be limited and pre-bookable. The cost will probably be about £2.50-£3 each. Parents, who will have to stay, will have the opportunity to socialize with one another.

Personal Safety Session

In November a group of 10 teenagers with ASD, aged 12-16 took part in a Personal Safety session organized by HARC on the initiative of one of our members, Jackie Goodhall. The session was led by Hertfordshire Youth Action Officer, Sandra Bracher. During the evening Sandra covered safety inside and outside the home, during the day and at night and on public transport. She explained how to stay safe and how to respond to certain situations emphasizing to the boys how to call for help when needed rather than trying to deal with the situation themselves. The boys particularly enjoyed the role play and the opportunity to meet other boys like themselves in a relatively informal but organized evening.

They were also impressed that Sandra carried out her role on the streets of Hertfordshire without any weapon for protection! Sandra provided notes for the parents so they could follow up the session at home and remind their sons what they had learnt.

Many thanks to Jackie for this good idea and for all her help in setting it up.

Fitz's Sports Club - Next Session Sunday 5th March - St Albans

Why not take your child along to this monthly sports club, organized specially by one of our HARC members? The first 90 minutes includes trampolining and a bouncy castle. The following 90 minutes is football for the 7-18s. Children can attend both parts or just one part. Cost £6. Phone Peter Fitzgerald on 01707 273220. See Dates for Diary Page for venue.

Message from Angela Dyer

Angela Dyer, who formerly headed up the team of specialist autistic advisory teachers for Children Schools and Families at Hertfordshire County Council has sent us the following message. "I want to thank the members of HARC for their kind wishes on my retirement. It has been a privilege working with you and your children over the last 9 years. With your support, Hertfordshire has built up a range of provision and services for children and young people with ASD and their families and I am sure you will go

on supporting the work of the autism advisory service to provide even better services.

A lot has happened in the 40 years that I have been involved in autism. From being a little known condition described by Kanner in 1943, knowledge has developed enormously in terms of the wider definition of ASD and in terms of what can be done to help. Attitudes have also changed in that time - many children with autism were considered "ineducable" until the 1970s and then only in special schools. Now there is a range of educational provision with an increasing understanding that people with ASD can, and should be included in society. There is still a lot to be done, and I intend to remain involved in the field in one way or another for some time to come.

This term I am doing some consultancy work for the Specialist Advisory Service and so will be in touch with the autism team.

I send you and your children my best wishes for the future."

Christmas Car Park

Thank you to Laurence and Ann Griffin and everyone else who braved the cold just before Christmas to man the charity car park in Welwyn Garden City. This has helped raise funds for HARC.

Adults with High Functioning Autism or Asperger Syndrome - Proposed Parent Carers Support Group

Are you the parent/carer of an adult with High Functioning Autism or Asperger Syndrome? Do you feel that you would benefit from meeting regularly with others in the same situation? HARC and Carers In Herts are hoping to work together to set up a support group, if there is demand for it. The group would meet regularly so that members could exchange experiences, ideas and information.

If you would be interested in coming to the group then please leave your name, telephone number and interest on our office phone number

or email us at support@harc-online.org.uk. Alternatively you can phone Jo Willis at Carers in Herts on 01992 586969 or email her at Jo.Willis@carersinherts.org.uk. We look forward to hearing from you.

National Bullying Survey 2006

The charity, Bullying Online, has launched a major survey to find out the extent of bullying in UK schools. The survey includes a question about special needs and autism as the charity receives many emails from parents of children with autism or Asperger Syndrome. The NAS website has a link to the survey. If you wish to participate contact <http://www.nas.org.uk/nas/jsp/polopoly.jsp?d=253&a=8728>

Benefits for Children With A Disability

The Money Advice Unit at Hertfordshire County Council have a useful factsheet on the range of benefits available for children with a disability. In the past we have found that many parents/carers of autistic children, particularly those in mainstream school or without a statement, are unaware that their child might be eligible for some form of benefit eg disability living allowance. This factsheet is well worth a look. Advisors from the Money Advice Unit can also make home visits to advise on how best to complete the application forms. This is especially useful when claiming Disability Living Allowance where it is important to explain in some detail the ways in which your child requires help and assistance greater than an average child of the same age. We would strongly recommend that parents/carers make use of this service.

Tel: 01438 737555

Source: Money Advice Unit

School Action/School Action Plus

Network 81 has produced a useful summary explaining the definitions and features of these first two levels of special educational needs (SEN) support at school. Copies available from the office -just e-mail or phone us and leave a message.

Source: Network 81

Inclusion – Baroness Warnock

NAS figures show that the exclusion rate among autistic children with high ability is as high as 29% compared to the average of 2.1%.

Baroness Warnock recently prepared a message for the National Autistic Society's AGM setting out her views on the failure of the mainstream sector to meet the needs of many disabled children, including those on the autistic spectrum. She says "that special schools should not only be for the most profoundly disabled but, there should be a number of small, alternative schools, not only for autistic children, but for those many children, often with moderate learning difficulties who simply do not flourish in the mainstream." A copy of her full message is available on request.

Source: NAS

Transition

A Parent's Guide To The Transition Protocol/Information about Transition

Children in Year 9 who have a statement of special educational need because of a disability undergo a Transition Review. The aim is to consider the services the young person might need when they leave school and to help them prepare for this. The above publications provide information about this process. They are available from HCC's Children, Schools and Families on Tel: 01438 737500 or

www.hertsdirect.org/csf

Source: Jigsaw

Progress In Transition - This is a new twice yearly magazine for those involved in planning the transition from child to adult services. It aims to help young disabled people plan their futures. It covers education, advocacy, employment, money, housing, holidays, social life, legal help and mobility. To order contact Care Choices Ltd on Tel: 01223 207770

www.progress@carechoices.co.uk

Source: Carers In Herts

Transition: Contact a Family Guide -

See entry under publications section.

Bridging the Gap: Disabled Student Allowances (DSAs) in Higher Education

Student Finance Direct produce the above brochure. It is aimed at current and prospective full-time and part-time students in higher education including distance-learning students, postgraduate students, and Open University students. It tells students what allowances they might be entitled to, the eligibility criteria and how to go about applying for the allowances. The booklet is for 2005/2006 so presumably a new version will issue for the next year. In addition to helping current students it is well worth a look if your child is considering applying for higher education as it will help you plan ahead and not miss out.

To obtain a copy contact DFES on Tel: 0800 731 9133, or www.studentfinancedirect.co.uk. The guide is also available on www.dfes.gov.uk/studentssupport/formsandguides/

Source: DFES

Staying Back a Year at School

We have had an enquiry from a parent thinking about asking for her child to be held back a year in school. She is interested in speaking to any parents who have considered or gone through this experience themselves. If you can help please let us have your name and phone number via e-mail or on the office phone so we can pass on your details.

Source: Parent

Medicines in Schools

The 1996 DfEE/DH guidance on supporting pupils with medical needs in schools has been updated. The new document is called "Managing Medicines in Schools and Early Years Settings". It provides guidance on developing local policies on managing and administering children's medicines and putting in place safe and effective management systems to support individual children with medical needs. For further details visit:

www.teachernet.gov.uk/publications and then search using ref:1448.

Source: Jigsaw

Yellow Card Scheme

For many years health professional have been able to report any adverse drug reactions amongst their patients. Now patients, parents and carers can report unwanted or harmful reactions to prescription medicines, herbal remedies or over-the-counter medicines by using the Yellow Card Scheme.

We have seen the report forms in a local pharmacy. They are also available from the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Authority on Tel: 0207 084 2000. The form can also be completed online at www.yellowcard.gov.uk.

Source; Carewaves

The ICE Campaign

The East Anglian Ambulance Service is promoting a scheme aimed at finding it easier to locate next of kin in an emergency. It is hoped that the idea will go nationwide.

ICE stands for In Case of Emergency. Participants store the word ICE in their mobile phone address book and against it enter the number of the person they would want contacted in an emergency. Rescue and hospital staff finding ICE on the person's mobile can then simply ring the number immediately. It costs nothing to participate and only seconds to programme the mobile.

Source: DISH

MorEPA

We have received details of this highly concentrated Omega3 fish oil supplement from Earthworks. They say that only one capsule of MorEPA is required to compared with the more frequent dose of 3-5 capsules a day from other suppliers. If you wish to know more contact: www.earthcolours.co.uk. Alternatively we can send out a copy of their information sheet. Just leave your name and address on our office number.

Source; Earthcolours.co.uk

Autism Direct Assessment Service

Autism Direct has a team of specialists who are able to carry out assessments of a child's

individual needs. They can provide advice on areas such as how to manage your child's routine, supporting your child's schooling, helping your child understand language better, helping your child cope with change. Assessments are carried out in the home. This is followed up by a written summary of the assessment(s) and advice offered. Referrals can also be made to an educational psychologist if required. For more information contact Tel: 07754 902686 or info@autismdirect.co.uk

Source: Autism Direct

Herts Afasic Group

This group is the local group of a UK charity which supports children and young people with speech, language and communication difficulties. They hold regular meetings for parents and carers at the St Alban's Children's Centre. For more information contact: Christine Shinn on Tel; 01727 850429 or email

christineshinn@hotmail.com

or Julie Coombs at june@grc.waitrose.com

Source: Parent Partnership

Children in Dacorum

This support group meets the second Thursday of every month (term-time only) for parents of children with special needs under 9 years old. The meetings are held at the Buryhill Family Centre, Hemel Hempstead. A crèche is provided. For more information contact Linda Frances, Health Visitor, Grovehill Clinic on Tel: 01442 255882

Source; Parent Partnership

esSENTial Support

This support group for the parents/carers of children with special needs meets monthly in Kings Langley. They have regular speakers. For more information contact Alison McLauchlin on Tel: 01923 400944

Source: esSENTial Support

Parent Carers Count

Carers in Hertfordshire now run monthly information workshops for people caring for a child who is ill or disabled. For more information on the nearest meeting contact Carers In Hertfordshire on 01992 586969

Source: Carers In Herts

Carers Telephone Link Line

This service provides regular contact for those carers who feel isolated, or who are unable to join groups and events. Carers receive a monthly telephone call from Carers in Hertfordshire to give them the opportunity to talk with someone about their caring role and to find out about services and information that may be able to help.

If you would like to receive regular contact from Carers In Hertfordshire contact Chris or Alice on Tel: 01462 456660
Source: Carers In Herts

Lobbying Your MP or Local Councillor

If you have access to the internet and wish to contact your MP or local councillor about a particular issue you can now do it much more easily via the website, www.writetothem.com. To send a message first type in your postcode. This identifies your local councillors and MP and provides a direct link from you to them. The website also contains useful tips on effective campaigning.

Source: Carers In Herts

Conference: Autistic Spectrum Disorders: Supporting Parents – 7 March 2006

Fielder Center, University of Hertfordshire, Hatfield.

Sure to be popular, this conference organized by Woolgrove School, attracts a range of speakers from Wendy Lawson who has autism to a number of professionals who are involved in the provision of local social and educational services for autistic children. Well worth considering. Cost: £30 for parents and £60 for professionals. Reservation forms available from HARC – just leave a message on the office answer phone.

Source: Woolgrove School

Hertfordshire Disability Awareness Week: 6th – 10th March 5 Venues in 5 days: 2pm–8pm

Hertfordshire County Council Adult Care Services and Children, Schools and Families have linked up with a number of voluntary

organizations for a Disability Information Service Project. As part of the project they will be holding a number of information days throughout the county during the above week. The aim is to provide awareness about key disability information providers and services in the county for adults and children with disabilities and their parents/carers. It will provide an opportunity to get information and meet professionals as well as share ideas and meet others. The venues throughout the week will be:

Monday 6th March: Stevenage, North Hertfordshire Community College

Tuesday 7th March: Watford, Stanborough Centre

Wednesday 8th March: Elstree, Allum Lane Community Centre

Thursday 9th March: Cottered, Cottered Village Hall

Friday 10th March: Harpenden, Harpenden Public Halls.

Further information on

<http://www.hertsdirect.org/disability/aboutus/dip/>.

Other Forthcoming Events, Courses and Conferences

SENDIST Training Day – SEN and Disability Discrimination Appeals: 2 March 2006 – Birmingham. Day will include presentations, mock Tribunal session with real-life Tribunal Chair and lay-members. Aimed at professionals, voluntary sector and parents. Cost: £90–£120. Contact Pat Chick on Tel: 01772 720572 or 07973 313639, or

Email: chickpat@hotmail.com

Source: SENDIST

Thoughtful House Center for Children Conference: 7 March 2006 – Cambridge.

Presentations from clinicians and researchers about their findings and methods of treatment and care. For more information contact: Tel: 07981 924893 or

Email: thoughtfulhouse@mmrthequestions.com

Source: Thoughtful House in Action

ASPECT CONFERENCES – March–July 2006

- 1) Introduction to Autism Spectrum Disorders
- 2) Behaviour Management Strategies
- 3) Asperger's and High-functioning Autism in the Mainstream Classroom

4) Mindfulness Life Skills: a Therapeutic Approach to ASD and anxiety, phobias and Anger Management

Venues: London and Birmingham. Cost £88.13 (parents), £176.25 (professionals). For more information contact:

Tel: 07981 323 015 or 07775 734 083 or

Email: aspectcounsel@aol.com, or write to:

PO Box 27566, London, SE4 2XJ.

Source: ASPECT

What Happens When Your Child With Autism Grows Up? RDI Parent Training Seminar 14-17 March 2006 at Royal Chace Hotel, Enfield.

To learn how the RDI programme might help.

For more information contact Jill Galinato in the US on 011-713-838-1362 ext 108. Website:

SteveGutstein@rdiconnect.com.

Source; Steve Gutstein

Network 81 Befriender Training Course:

18/19 March 2006 at the Ramada Hotel, Hatfield. To train people to act as a Network 81 befriender helping others through the complexities of special educational procedures.

Residential or day attendance available.

Cost £40 to cover administrative costs. For

more details contact:

Val Rosier on Tel: 0870 770 3262 or

Email: val.network81@btconnect.com

Source; Network 81

The Codicote 10K Run: 7 May 2006. To raise funds for the Chrysalis School for Autism.

Registration £5 in advance or £10 on the day.

Under 16s free. If you would like to take part or volunteer as a marshal contact

Tel: 01438 820544 or

Email: codicote10k@currie01.screaming.net

Source: Chrysalis School for Autism

Mozart and The Whale

This film is about someone with AS and is due to come out soon.

<http://www.mozartabdthewhale.com>

Source; Tracey Behrakis

Research Volunteers Wanted

Memory Functioning Study - City University, London and the University of Sussex are looking for adults with a diagnosis of Asperger Syndrome or Autism to take part. The aim of this study is to help in the design of more effective interventions. Participants will be paid £7 an hour and travel costs.

<http://www.nas.org.uk/nas/jsp/polopoly.jsp?d=714&a=8210>

.Source: NAS

Articles

The following articles are available on request from the HARC office. Just leave your name, address and article you are interested in on the office answer phone.

Respite - An informative article about how to obtain respite care, the different types available and the sort of questions to ask before placing your child in respite care.

Source; Jigsaw - Winter 2005

Childcare for Children with Disabilities - How to find the right childcare.

Source; Jigsaw - Autumn 2005

Carers Allowance and the State Second

Pension - Useful article explaining the implications for the state pensions of claiming Carer's allowance.

Source: DISH - Autumn 2005

Publications and Videos

The following booklet is available from the NAS Helpline on Tel: 0845 070 4004

Going to the shops: A Guide for Parents of Children with Autistic Spectrum Disorders.

Includes useful tips and coping strategies. Price £1.

The following books are available from the NAS Distributor, Central Books Ltd, Tel; 0845 458 9911 or www.autism.org.uk/pubs

1001 Great Ideas for Teaching and Raising Children With Autistic Spectrum Disorders by Ellen Notbohm and Veronica Zysk. Includes try-it-now solutions that have worked for many children with sensory, communication, social, behaviour, self-care issues.

The Fantastic 19+ Exercise Book by Christine Fiedorczuk. A practical, fun guide to getting fit and supple, written by staff and clients at Cambridge House and Talbot 19+ service for adults with learning disabilities.

Source: NAS

The following books are available from Jessica Kingsley Publishers on Tel: 0207 833 2307 or

Email: post@jkgp.com

Theory of Mind and the Triad of Perspectives on Autism and Asperger Syndrome by Olga Bogdashina

Survival Strategies for People on the Autistic Spectrum by Marc Fleisher. Self-help guide for autistic teenagers and adults to help improve their life skills and overcome everyday challenges.

Nurturing Genius in Attention Different Children by George T Lynn and Joanne Barrie Lynn. Designed to help parents of attention different children, such as AS, ADHD, Bipolar and Tourette's.

Coming Out Asperger - Diagnosis, Disclosure and Self-Confidence by Dinah Murray. Explores the drawbacks and benefits of disclosing a diagnosis of a "hidden disability" in the family, in the workplace, etc and how this impinges on self-esteem. A wide range of contributors eg Tony Attwood, Wendy Lawson,

The Adventures of the Little Tin Tortoise - A Self-Esteem Story with Activities for Teachers, Parents and Carers by Deborah Plummer. Covers worries, bullying, making decisions and friendship. Includes activity sheets and expansion topics. Aimed at 7-9 year olds.

The Jumbles Jigsaw by Donna Williams. Examines ASDs as a range of underlying conditions such as mood, anxiety, obsessive compulsive and tic disorders, etc. Encourages families to look at what they can do to change their child's environment to address anxiety, overload and other issues.

Different Croaks for Different Folks: All about Children with Special Learning Needs by Midori Ochiai. Aimed at children with autism and related spectrum disorders. Picks up on social and physical difficulties and the kind of behaviours that can get young frogs into trouble. Each lesson gives practical advice on issues such as hard-to-break habits- to physical co-ordination difficulties.

Source: Jessica Kingsley Publishers

The following publications are available from **Contact a Family** on Tel: 0808 808 355 or www.cafamily.org.uk

- 1) Relationships and caring for a disabled child
- 2) Specific disorders and your child's behaviour
- 3) Siblings
- 4) Fathers
- 5) Grandparents
- 6) Special Educational Needs - England
- 7) Transition in England and Wales
- 8) Benefits, Tax Credits and other Financial Assistance

9) A Guide to Assessments and Services in England and Wales

10) Holidays, Play and Leisure

Source: Contact A Family

A Video/DVD Introduction to Challenging Behaviour - Available free to parents from The Challenging Behaviour Foundation Tel: 01634 838739 or Email: info@thecbf.org.uk or www.thecbf.org.uk

Connections: A double CD of songs, music and stories and games with accompanying book by Jessica Curry. Designed for use by teachers, parents and carers. Cost £39.95 reduced to £30 for HARC members. Website contains information, reviews and samples of the songs. Tel: 02392 838198 or Email: Jessica@connectionsmusic.co.uk

Websites

www.hertsdirect.org/specialneeds -

Information on home, leisure, health, learning and CSF for parents, carers, children, young people and professionals.

www.aspergerfoundation.org.uk - The Asperger's Syndrome Foundation has launched a website. It gives information sheets, book lists and links to other sites.

<http://www.cam.ac.uk/cambuniv/disability/about/pdf/aspergerbriefing.pdf>

A good site for prospective students of further and higher education.

www.spdsupport.org.uk/index.html - A site for parents of children with speech and language difficulties.

www.autism-unravalled.org - A useful site with up-to date developments in the autistic spectrum disorder field.

<http://assupportgrouponline.co.uk> - Running a campaign to raise awareness of Asperger Syndrome.

<http://www.mousetrial.com> - A website about Autism and software for autistic children.

www.AutismMedical.com - This site was set up by the charity Allergy Induced Autism. This group is now merging with Visceral, a charity which concentrates on gastrointestinal disorders. This website is being rebuilt and the forum will in future be a closed access, moderated self help group with a small fee payable to Visceral via the site itself.

www.autistic-spectrum-disorder.com

The views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily the views of the HARC committee

