Visual Impairment and Autism

Newsletter 9, January 2013

Introduction

Happy New Year and welcome to this newsletter.

I had thought of writing and distributing a newsletter in December, but, as so often happens, events overtook me. In fact, there isn’t a great deal to tell you, but there are a few items I wish to bring to your attention.

Visual Impairment & Autism on the web

The RNIB visual impairment and autism webpages were up-dated just after the last newsletter went out. In fact, the content has been reduced to one page. Because of what is reported in the next item, the page has just been revised again – or will be revised soon. The address for the RNIB webpage is www.rnib.org.uk/autism.

I have recently added to the material on visual impairment and autism on my own website. See the item on my website on page 3.

The Visual Impairment and Autism Resource Pack

There is news about the Resource Pack that is both good and bad: it has sold out: all 500 copies have gone. That’s good, in that it shows the pack goes at least some way to meeting the need for guidance. It’s bad, in that it means those who have not yet purchased the pack cannot now do so.

As reported in the last newsletter, the feedback received in the formal evaluation of the Resource Pack is being used to inform a revision of the material. Consideration is now being given regarding how best to make the guidance available in the long term. More information will be provided in due course.

If you have ordered the pack and have been informed it is no longer available, please email me: vi-autism.medina@tiscali.co.uk.
1 day course: Introduction to visual impairment in children with complex needs

This course ran very successfully last November and is therefore being repeated in March. It will help delegates to understand how the visual system works and what happens when something goes wrong with it. There will be practical opportunities for discovering some of the challenges that face children and young people with complex needs who have little or no sight.

This course will take place at RNIB Pears Centre for Specialist Learning, Coventry, on Tuesday 5th March. For more information and a booking form, go to


VIEW Conference

VIEW (vision impairment: education and welfare) is a group that is open to professionals, parents and others with an interest in the field of visual impairment. Its annual conference for 2013 takes place at the Great Barr Hotel, Birmingham on Thursday and Friday 14th and 15th March.

An item on the programme for Thursday 14th promises to be of great interest: Peter Hobson, Tavistock Professor of Developmental Psychopathology, University College London is presenting; his title is Visual impairment and autism: Does social engagement hold the key? Peter gave an excellent presentation at the conference put on by the Visual Impairment and Autism Project team in November 2010 and has undertaken some key research in the field.

For full details of the VIEW conference, and to book a place, go to

www.viewweb.org.uk/conference.
Hanna Pasterny: communication between the blind and people with autism and Asperger's syndrome

I recently received an email from Hanna in Poland. She wrote:

I make research about communication between the blind and people with autism and Asperger's syndrome. The questionnaire in doc file is here:


… … One questionnaire is for the blind, partially sighted, people with autism and Asperger's syndrome. The second for the blind and visually impaired who have autism or Asperger's syndrome.

Could you fill it, forward to your friends, put the information on discussion lists to which you are subscribed, to the newsletters of your organizations or on your websites?

If you click on the link above, you can download the questionnaire, which provides details of how to return it to Hanna. If you can help in any way, I’m sure Hanna will be very grateful.

My website

As noted above, I have recently added to the material on visual impairment and autism on my own website: I have now posted articles on the Low Arousal Approach and the Minimal Speech Approach. Go to http://ianpbell.wordpress.com/visual-impairment-autism/.

Elsewhere on the site, I have posted my approach to profiling the communication of people who have visual impairment and additional disabilities. I believe this approach is of value to those working with people who have visual impairment and autism. Go to http://ianpbell.wordpress.com/profiling-the-communication-of-people-who-have-visual-impairment-and-additional-disabilities/.

I am keen to post more material on visual impairment and autism on my website. If you feel you can contribute in some way, please email me: vi-autism.medina@tiscali.co.uk.
New Specific Interest Group (SIG) in multisensory impairment and visual impairment

I announced in the last newsletter that a new national SIG is being formed which will focus on multisensory and visual impairment. There was a very successful meeting in Birmingham last October. The delegates were very enthusiastic about going ahead with the SIG. There is to be another meeting at which we will take this forward. We also hope to have a presentation on a new approach to on-body signing: TaSSeLs – Tactile Signing for Sensory Learners – which has just been published. Details of TaSSeLs are available from the publisher’s website at http://www.pavpub.com/p-566-tassels-children-and-young-people-edition-tactile-signing-for-sensory-learners-resource-pack.aspx.

The SIG meeting will take place at RNIB Pears Centre for Specialist Learning on Wednesday 24th April. I intend to post further details when they are available on my website at http://ianpbell.wordpress.com/.

It is important that the SIG is recognised by the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists. This will support therapists when they apply to their employers for leave to attend meetings. In order to gain recognition, membership of the SIG has to be restricted to speech and language therapists. I’m rather uncomfortable with this, given the need for practitioners to work together across professional boundaries. However, meetings will be open to non-members.

To record your interest in the group and to receive information about the April meeting, email Julie Marchant, the secretary of the new group: julie.marchant@stgeorges.nhs.uk.

Please pass on this Newsletter

If you know of anyone who does not receive this newsletter, but who is interested in visual impairment and autism, please do pass the newsletter on. Obviously, the easiest and greenest way is to share it by email. But, if you feel it’s appropriate, please do print it and pass it on, or display it somewhere to attract attention.
Newcomers to visual impairment and autism

If this newsletter is your introduction to visual impairment and autism, welcome. If you wish to be added to our database, or if you have any comments or queries, please do contact us – contact details follow.

Contact details

The visual impairment and autism email address is still
vi-autism.medina@tiscali.co.uk

The postal address is:
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Retaining your details for emailing

If you do not wish me to retain your name and email address, please email (address above) and ask to have your details removed. But, please note: if I do not have your details, I will be unable to send any further newsletters or other up-dates.

This newsletter was written and distributed by Ian Bell, Specialist Independent Speech and Language Therapist; Formerly Project Leader, Visual Impairment and Autism Project (September 2008 to March 2011)

Email: vi-autism.medina@tiscali.co.uk

Website: http://ianpbell.wordpress.com/

Visual impairment and autism page: