Introduction
Welcome to this very brief newsletter concerning visual impairment and autism, especially if you this is the first one you have received directly.

Apologies for the timing of this newsletter; I know many practitioners (in Scotland, for example) are already on their summer breaks. And for many others it will come at a very busy time of year, in the run up to the end of term. However, there is some important news to bring to you, so I thought it was worth producing this newsletter now rather than waiting until September.

If you have any news or other items you would like to share via a future newsletter, please do email me at vi-autism.medina@tiscali.co.uk.

Visual impairment and autism guidance material
Most of you will know of this material. It was developed by the Visual Impairment and Autism Project, which ran from September 2008 to March 2011. The guidance material was first made available in the Resource Pack which was published as a CD-ROM by RNIB in May 2011. This sold out at the end of 2012. It was then posted on the RNIB website, where it was freely available. However, earlier this year, it was removed from the website. The reason for this is that the RNIB website is under-going a major revision. Some parts of the website went live several months ago, and it now looks very different. But work remains to be completed on other parts of the site. One of these is the guidance material for practitioners working with children and young people who have visual impairment and autism.

The intention is to make the material available again in the autumn of this year. I am involved in the project to return the material to the RNIB website and am taking the opportunity to make some corrections and revisions and to add some new material. So, when it does return, it will be more up-to-date and more comprehensive. Please accept my apologies for the absence of the material. I hope to announce its return in the next newsletter.

1 For details of the Project, visit http://ianpbell.com/visual-impairment-autism/
Training opportunities in Visual Impairment and Autism

The Scottish Sensory Centre, Edinburgh, is to re-run the 1-day course I delivered there last autumn. The course is entitled “Introduction to visual impairment and autism in children and young people” and will take place on Tuesday, 7th October, 2014. For further details about the course and to make a booking, visit http://www.ssc.education.ed.ac.uk/courses/VI&multi/voct14.html.

I will also deliver this course in the North of England early in 2015. This will be at Henshaws, Harrogate, on Tuesday 10th February. To express an interest in this course, or to ask for details when they become available, please email Katie Piggford at Henshaws: Katie.Piggford@henshaws.org.uk.

I would like to deliver this course in the South of England, and have been contacted by several people interested in attending. However, I have not identified a venue. If you can offer a venue in the South of England, or you are interested in attending a 1-day course in visual impairment and autism in the South of England, please email me at vi-autism.medina@tiscali.co.uk.

Research

In the last newsletter, I included a request which I am repeating here: if you are involved in research in the field of visual impairment and autism, or know of any such research, please do let me know. The purpose of this newsletter is to keep readers informed and up-to-date. Unfortunately, practitioners are often not aware of potentially valuable research. Conversely, researchers do not always know of the concerns of practitioners.

In addition, there's a risk that practitioners and researchers do not look beyond the borders of their own country. With current technologies, it is easy to share information and ideas across the world, so wherever you are, please do contact me if you have anything to share.

I would like information about ongoing and recently completed research and would also like to hear from practitioners who have a question which research could help to answer. Please email me at: vi-autism.medina@tiscali.co.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 me – contact details follow.

Contact details
The visual impairment and autism email address is vi-autism.medina@tiscali.co.uk
The postal address is: c/o Medina House, Mill Lane
Codsall, Wolverhampton, WV8 1QH, UK

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,
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