Introduction
Welcome to this newsletter.

I thought it would be good to send out a newsletter near the beginning of the new academic year, in an attempt to keep visual impairment and autism in people’s minds. In addition, there are a few items I want to bring to your attention.

Visual Impairment & Autism on the web

Much of the material that has been on the RNIB visual impairment and autism webpages is now out of date. The intention is that this will be removed shortly – in fact, it may already have been removed by the time you read this. One page should be retained to provide details of the Resource Pack. The address for the RNIB webpage is www.rnib.org.uk/autism.

To ensure there is still material on the web about the Visual Impairment and Autism Project, I have written a short article describing this and the Resource Pack. I have posted this and an up-dated reference list on my own website at http://ianpbell.wordpress.com/visual-impairment-autism/.

Purchasing the Resource Pack
If you have not yet purchased the Resource Pack developed by the Visual Impairment and Autism Project team, you can still do so. However, it has sold well, and not many copies remain. If you do want to purchase the pack, it may be necessary to do so soon, before it sells out. The Resource Pack costs only £10 and is available from the RNIB on line shop at http://www.rnib.org.uk/shop/Pages/ProductDetails.aspx?productID=pr1233301
Evaluation of the Resource Pack
Following the formal evaluation of the Resource Pack, discussions have been held with key RNIB staff to agree the way forward. We have taken account of the feedback received in the evaluation and will be revising and – we hope – improving the pack as a result. More information will be provided in due course.

Attention speech and language therapists: new Specific Interest Group (SIG) in multisensory impairment and visual impairment
A new national SIG is being formed which will focus on multisensory and visual impairment. There is to be a meeting in Birmingham on 23rd October. The topics to be addressed in the presentations will include “Differences and similarities between autism and deafblindness” and “Visual impairment and social communication.”

Speech and language therapists interested in attending can download the flyer (which provides more information and a booking form) from my website at http://ianpbell.wordpress.com/.

Alternatively, you can email me at vi-autism.medina@tiscali.co.uk or Heather Trott at heather.trott@sense.org.uk

Sounds of Intent seminar
As music is so important to many children and young people who have both visual impairment and autism, I want to bring this seminar on Sounds of Intent to your attention. Sounds of Intent is a completely new way of assessing the musical development of children and young people with complex needs including sensory impairment, autism and learning difficulties. The material is freely available online.

This seminar will take place at RNIB Pears Centre for Specialist Learning, Coventry, on 11th October 2012. For more information and a booking form, go to http://www.rnib.org.uk/livingwithsightloss/livinglearning/pearscentrehome/events/Pages/sounds_of_intent.aspx?dm_i=4V4,Y0BJ,67CJ9G,2U2OM,1
VITAL Convention 2012: Making all the difference – supporting children with degenerative conditions

This one-day Convention will bring together professionals working in education, health and social care who support children experiencing degenerative conditions. It addresses the challenges faced by children losing sight and hearing and also children with conditions that affect a broader range of skills and abilities. This event is organised by the VITAL network for professionals with an interest in complex needs and visual impairment. It takes place on 12th November 2012 in London. For more information and a booking form, go to

http://www.rnib.org.uk/professionals/education/support/networks/vital/Pages/vital_convention.aspx

Introduction to visual impairment in children with complex needs

This course 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 seminar will take place at RNIB Pears Centre for Specialist Learning, Coventry, on 20\textsuperscript{th} November 2012. For more information and a booking form, go to

http://www.rnib.org.uk/livingwithsightloss/livinglearning/pearscentrehome/events/Pages/introduction_visual_impairment_course.aspx?dm_i=4V4,Y0BJ,67CJ9G.2U2OM.1

Online resources

A few months ago, I received an email about a new online resource. It read:

“Jibba Jabba is an online company providing resources to support children’s speech and language development. You can print off activity packs and pictures to give to parents and education staff or work through directly with a child. Our activity packs target both speech and language, e.g. using sounds at the beginning/end of words, vocabulary of nouns, verbs and concepts.”
“Jibba Jabba uses photographs of real objects rather than drawings to maintain children’s interest and cater for children at a range of developmental stages. A qualified Speech and Language Therapist has designed all our activity packs.

“Sign up now for just £12.50 for a whole year. This will give you unlimited access to our resources and new resources will be added on a regular basis.”

The Jibba Jabba website is at www.jibbajabba.org. I have made a brief visit to the site, but have not signed up. Therefore I have not seen the resources available on the site and cannot comment as to whether they are likely to be useful in supporting children and young people who have both visual impairment and autism.

**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:

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, 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: