Welcome to this newsletter. It continues those circulated by the Visual Impairment and Autism Project which ran from September 2008 to March 2011. The newsletter has been compiled by Ian Bell, who was the Project Leader and an independent specialist speech and language therapist.

I have decided to display the logos again, despite the fact that the Visual Impairment and Autism Project finished at the end of March. The logos serve as a reminder for now that the Project was a partnership between these four organisations.

Unfortunately, it is still not clear just how the Project’s work will be developed. Judy Bell (formerly National Development Officer; Multiple Disability, RNIB Children's Services, now an Independent Consultant) co-ordinated the Project for RNIB and is still involved with me in keeping alive the topic of visual impairment and autism. We remain a point of contact for those interested in visual impairment and autism, and will maintain both the postal and email addresses (see below).

In the last newsletter, we stated that it was likely that a new email address would be provided. This is still possible, so there could be a period during which visual impairment and autism is out of email contact. If we do set up a new email address, we will obviously do our best to let everyone know.

RNIB will retain the visual impairment and autism pages on their website, at least for the foreseeable future. The pages should be up-dated very soon, so please do keep a check on them. In the medium term, we hope that visual impairment and autism will have an additional presence on the web. Material on any other website will complement that on the pages on the RNIB website. We will let you know more about this in a future newsletter.
Forthcoming events

1. **MISE Conference, Wednesday 5th October**

Ian Bell is presenting on the Resource Pack at this conference in Coventry. MISE stands for Mobility and Independence Specialists in Education. Apologies for the lack of notice for this. However, if you would like further details, please email Ian by return at the address below.

2. **NAS Seminar: An Introduction to Visual Impairments and Autism Spectrum Conditions, Thursday 3rd November**

Ian is presenting at this evening seminar organised by the Central Regional team of the NAS. Please see the separate flier sent with this newsletter.

3. **PsyVIC meeting, Friday 11th November**

PsyVIC is short for Psychologists for Visually Impaired Children in the UK. The focus of this meeting is visual impairment and autism.

In the morning, Jenny Ravenhill, formerly Principal Psychologist, National Autistic Society, and a member of the Project team is presenting on the Project.

In the afternoon there is a presentation entitled ‘An investigation into the purpose of repetitive questioning for a pupil with a Visual Impairment and ASD’. This will be given by Timothy Kehoe, Specialist Teacher at Brookfields School, another of the Project’s partner organisations.

The meeting is at RNIB in Judd Street, near Kings Cross and St Pancras stations in London. At present, it’s not clear whether this meeting is open to non-members. If you are interested in attending, please email Ian (address below).

4. **Mary Kitzinger Trust workshop, Saturday 12th November**

Finally, Judy and Ian are presenting at this event which takes place at the Institute of Child Health in London. For details, please go to:

http://www.marykitzingertrust.org/workshops/workshops-2011/

We made a presentation at one of the Trust’s workshops before the Project was formally under way, and those present were very supportive. We will provide an up-date now that the Project has ended and demonstrate the Resource Pack.
Resource Pack

Now that the Autumn Term is well under way, it seems to be a good time to remind you (and inform newcomers) that the major outcome of the Project – its Resource Pack – was published in May.

If you have not already purchased a copy, please do consider doing so.

The Resource Pack costs only £10.

The product code is PR12333.

As the Resource Pack is published by RNIB, we have no way of taking your order. For most people, the easiest way to buy it is probably from the RNIB on-line shop; go to:

http://www.rnib.org.uk/shop/Pages/ProductDetails.aspx?productID=pr1233301

For those of you who are new to these newsletters, here is a description of The Resource Pack, which provides guidance for practitioners concerning the support for children and young people who have both visual impairment and an autism spectrum disorder.

The pack consists of an interactive CD supported by an introductory booklet. The CD contents are:

- 13 case studies based on the children who were surveyed; each case study outlines the strategies that are used to support the child
- Strategies; the strategies outlined in the case studies are described in greater detail
- Glossary; this explains terms used in the case studies and strategy descriptions
- Resources, giving information about equipment and sources of further information, including websites, books, papers and on-line articles
- Documents in PDF format (for creating print copies)
- The contents of the booklet in a format accessible to those who have sight loss.
The strategies are grouped into the following areas:

• Underlying principles
• Promoting learning
• Managing the environment
• Promoting effective communication
• Supporting sensory needs
• Promoting wellbeing
• Promoting mobility and independence
• Supporting musical skills and using musical interests.

We view the Resource Pack as a first attempt to provide information for those supporting children who have visual impairment and autism. We hope it will be possible to further develop this guidance. In order to do so, it would be very helpful to receive feedback from users of the pack, both practitioners and family members. It would also be most useful to receive feedback from those supporting adults who have visual impairment and autism. We would like to know:

• how successful the strategies have been; it would be useful to have feedback from those who have adopted strategies
• of additional strategies that are being used
• about additional equipment
• about further sources of information.

Please email your feedback; the address is given below.

We hope to have a flier for the Resource Pack produced professionally in the near future. In the meantime, I’m sending with this newsletter the flier we’re currently using. Please do pass this on to anyone you expect to be interested. Obviously, the easiest and greenest way is to pass it on by email. But, if you feel it’s appropriate, please do print it and pass it on, or display it somewhere to attract attention.
Evaluation of the Resource Pack

The intention is to evaluate the Resource Pack and discussions will shortly be under way to explore how to pursue this. These will involve Sue Keil (Research Officer, RNIB), Teresa Whitehurst (formerly Research and Development Officer, Sunfield now an Independent Consultant) and Judy and Ian Bell.

As noted in the last section, we really do want to have your feedback on the Resource Pack. We hope the feedback we receive will make an important contribution to the evaluation. So, please do send us your feedback.

If you wish to be involved in any other way in the evaluation, please do get in touch with us: the email and postal addresses are given at the end of the newsletter.

The National Autistic Society website

The NAS has a comprehensive website which includes articles about conditions related to autism. However, visual impairment is not covered. Ian Bell was invited to write an article about visual impairment and autism to be added to this section of the NAS website and has submitted a draft article. You may like to keep an eye on the relevant part of the NAS website: http://www.autism.org.uk/about-autism/related-conditions.aspx

Please pass on this Newsletter

If you know of anyone who is not yet aware of the Project’s work, but who is interested in visual impairment and autism, please do pass this 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.

Also, please do visit our web-pages at: www.rnib.org.uk/autism
Project contact details
For now, 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

Phone: it is no longer possible to make contact by phone. Because the Project has ended, the Project phone is now inoperative.

Please do **NOT** call the number previously given.

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