OASIS AGM 2010
Chair's Report

This has been another very successful year for OASIS in which we have gained new members, had extremely well attended playdays, developed coffee mornings /evenings for members, entertained some fascinating new speakers and welcomed some new faces to the Committee. It will also be the first time in my 14 years of membership of the Committee that we have had to abandon the AGM due to inclement weather, though we have come close to having to do so on one or two previous occasions. It would not be right to ask people to come out in the aftermath of the worst snow for many years when side roads are still very difficult to negotiate but I do feel sad that we shall not be able to have a formal handover to our excellent new committee. We are conducting the AGM via the internet-which may mean that we get more involvement than previously - I hope so - but I shall look forward to the traditional committee night out when the weather improves. (Hostelries in Oxon beware - we parents enjoy ourselves when we get a chance to go out!)

I first joined OASIS when my son (now 20) was diagnosed at around the age of five and was elected Vice Chair in 1996 and Chair in 1997. January 2010 will mark 14 years as an officer of OASIS. I'd like to thank everyone who has been a committee member during my time as Chair - everything that we have achieved has been a team effort. The first OASIS Minutes speak of an opening balance of £50 in September 1992 and a membership of 34 and OASIS has gone from strength to strength since then whilst staying true to the original principle of offering information and support to parents/professionals. I think there need to be some major celebrations for the 20th anniversary in September 2012!

I can still remember my first phone call to OASIS – I found out about it via the NAS - and I wasn't at all sure if I wanted to be in a support group – nor was I sure that my child had 'the right sort of autism' to be in a group. The person I spoke to on the phone (a committee member at the time) was so kind that I began to feel it would be good to get involved with other people. I guess I have stayed involved with OASIS because I feel very strongly that parents with a new diagnosis need to have the support that I had when I joined. It can be very lonely at home with a child with ASD. I also wanted to learn more about the condition - and I certainly have done that - I've been privileged to hear so many experienced and informative speakers on autism in my time attending all those monthly meetings. I got out and about with our son to all the playdays and we did all sorts of new things which he might never have tried were it not for OASIS.

There have been difficult times. Often the phone would ring just at the most inconvenient time - usually when a meal had been put on the table - and the rest of the family would take second place whilst I fielded a long call from a potential new member. The introduction of the mobile phone for dedicated OASIS calls has been a great improvement. On another occasion I remember rushing out to an OASIS meeting one night and being stopped in my tracks by our son (then aged about 8) saying 'Do you

think I might be autistic?' as he'd seen something about it on TV, and having to fob him off at that point as there wasn't time to talk it through before our meeting!

There have been great conferences, fun evenings in the pub with the committee, opportunities to meet with professionals and advise on the shaping of needs in Oxfordshire (and, as I have said before, so many laughs) autism is NEVER boring

It has been enormous fun and I've enjoyed it all. I think it is important, though, to know when to leave and the committee is in good shape at the moment with great enthusiasm to move forwards. Earlier this year we appointed Rachel Dennett as Vice Chair and she has already made a huge contribution in that role. I am delighted to be nominating her (unopposed) for election as Chair and am sure that OASIS will go from strength to strength with its new committee under her leadership.

I shall certainly remain a strong supporter and trustee of OASIS and will continue to champion the rights of ALL children with disabilities and their families through my work (in SEN/Inclusion in Oxfordshire County Council). However, my heart will always be in making sure that we do all that we can to improve provision and outcomes for those with ASD. There has been a growth in public awareness of autism since OASIS began in 1992 – and a lot more information is now available on the internet – but the human contact, the chance to talk things through, to share experiences, is what OASIS can provide and does so well and I know it will continue to develop in the years to come. I look forward to helping with the celebration 20th birthday party in 2012!!!

With very best wishes and many thanks to you all for your friendship and for making OASIS such a fantastic organisation!

Voirrey Carr

Chair 1997-2010
voirreyc@aol.com