

“Developing Independence for children and young people With Autism Spectrum Disorder”

OASIS (Oxfordshire Autistic Society for Information and Support) ran a very successful conference on Developing Independence in November 2006. Over 100 people attended, both parents and professionals. Attendees were able to listen to our main speakers, attend their own choice of syndicate session – and do some early Christmas shopping at the stands offering, books, toys, and food advice specifically for the needs of our families.

Thank you to the Committee (and their partners!) for helping to prepare the conference packs, set out the main hall, syndicate rooms, OASIS stand, organising specially printed OASIS pens - and for making many cups of tea/coffee!

Our Keynote speaker **Ian Attfield** from Autism Support in Birmingham gave us lots of ideas for ways of enabling children to make choices and communicate. Here are a few of his ideas, supplemented by a few of our own!

Using Visual/Story Approaches to Support Your Child



- Produce a fact sheet about the child, with his photo and the things which he likes/the support that works best on it - this can then be shown to all new teachers and is the child's property.
 - Let the child make a video – ‘A week in the Life of’... to be shown to new teachers prior to moving school/class.
 - Use the camera – Big Brother Style - to enable the young person to offload how he/she feels.
 - Provide a visual timetable - with pictures so that the child can anticipate what is happening during the day. Always draw attention to changes in routine - never take the child by surprise!
 - Use traffic light symbols - green for the child to show when things are OK, red to show when there are things he is finding difficult. Send green card list of successes home at the end of the day.
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- Use photos to show to friends what the child has done at the weekend/on holiday - sending in some photos gives a focus for the support staff to be able to talk with the child and gets round the difficulties posed by his lack of short term memory.
 - Use Comic strip conversations to draw out what has happened and explore what the child thought.
 - Use Social Stories to explain behaviours, which the child finds it hard to understand. (Carol Gray in Australia pioneered this approaches - contact OASIS to know more!).
 - Use a simple sound barometer - from high to low to indicate the volume of sound expected from the child. (He will find it very hard to know what level of sound is required for different activities.
 - Use choice cards - to enable the child to indicate preferences - e.g. water or juice - with a picture for each.

Voirrey Carr
OASIS Chair

We have books in the OASIS library giving examples, of social stories, comic strip ideas and more. To borrow books – come along to one of our monthly meetings and browse. If you have a suggestion for a book, which could be added to the library, please let us know.

Christine Rinaldo and Gill Green ran one of the syndicate sessions ...

Supporting Children with ASD to Develop Independence in the Early Years - Led by: Christine Rinaldo and Gill Green

This workshop looked at Early Years (0-5). Christine and Gill are both Pre-School Counsellors and they explained their role was to be involved with any child under 5 years who had a learning delay. Most children they see do not have a diagnosis. They focussed on two areas – Independence and Communication.

We all used Post-It notes to highlight the areas that we as parents/support staff/befrienders would like to develop with our ASD children. The key themes were toilet skills, getting dressed, safety awareness, eating, sleeping, listening, play with others and outbursts.

Improving the communication from the child became the focus from Christine and Gill. We looked at how PEC'S (Picture Exchange Communication) –a visual communication system) is taught and how it works for a child with few communication skills.

Visual timetables were also shown as examples in different formats. We also were shown a video on a parent using her son's timetable and she discussed how it had improved their family life. They had lots of other visual material and discussed how useful social stories were as well.

The workshop was a good basis to 'get going' and have a go at using timetables and schedules in the home, there were lots of handouts and it had been well prepared. As always we ran out of time!!

**Rachel Dennett
OASIS Treasurer**

Rachel Pike ran the syndicate entitled ...

WORKING TOWARDS INDEPENDENCE FOR YEARS 6-8

Useful Pointers

- Know your rights - If you don't know find out.
- Don't assume things will happen automatically.
- Draw up checklists that your child will need to work on or will need help with.
- Remember whatever age your son or daughter is - it's never too early to start working towards some of the skills they will need in later life.
- Get as much support from professionals as possible.
- Never be too proud to shout for help.
- Educate people to your child's needs.
- Give children autism alert cards (depending on the child)
- Think about keeping safe, personal hygiene and how it affects your child in the future.
- Make charts where necessary, i.e. toilet, bath, pyjamas, story, bed.
- Think – can my child go out alone.

Some useful resources: -

Mary Wrobel, Taking Care of Myself: A Hygiene Puberty and Personal Curriculum for Young People with Autism.

Brown, M & Miller, A (2003) aspects of Aspergers, Success in the Teens and Twenties, Bristol Kucky Duck Publishing Limited.

**Josey Wilkins
OASIS Playdays**



***The OASIS Conference also saw the launch of our new stand
for members to collect literature and join OASIS.***