

# Autism Jersey

Annual report – 2008/2009



Championing a full and inclusive life for people with Autism, Aspergers Syndrome and other associated complex developmental disorders, by raising awareness and working in partnership with all agencies to help and support them, their families and carers.



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## Chairman's Report – 2008 / 2009

Our second year in the premises at Cheapside have seen us go from strength to strength, what started as a group of parents getting together to support each other in their struggles has grown into a caring and professional business where families and individuals can seek support and advice. It has however also brought significant challenges due in main to the changing economic climate.

Some of the services we are now providing include:

Befriending – we currently have 36 befrienders matched and we will be hearing more about the benefits of this service a little later tonight.

The adult social club has proven very successful it is however difficult to measure that success by number of attendees as it would be inappropriate to try and welcome too many attendees at any given time. The club meets on Friday evenings. Originally the venue was always AJ's but now a broader range of venues and activities are enjoyed from cookery at JET, water front walks and in August a trip to the Oddsocks production held at Jersey Zoo. We have a number of adults that will be introduced to the club shortly and also a couple of new facilitators. This will allow us in time to extend the provision and activities even further.

In the last twelve months our social committee has organised events ranging from evenings at the amazing maze to private parties with food and drinks. In the last twelve months over two hundred children have attended the events organised by Karen Dyson and Catherine Tubb, whom I would like to thank personally for all their hard work and commitment in providing the much welcomed treats for the children, not forgetting the dinners they organised for us adults!

The fund raising committee have also worked especially hard this year and a special thanks goes to Caroline Leonard and Sally Gallichan who have come up with some amazing ideas which not only provided us with much needed extra income but lots of fun. Invitation to Dinner which was launched in June has so far raised £1260. The FAB (Fill A Bag) Day events - have made a huge difference to the income we receive from the shop. I would urge anyone who thinks their employers would be interested in holding a FAB day in Aid of Autism Jersey to contact Sally Gallichan who will provide all the necessary information.

The shop it's self is now opening until 4pm most week days and from 10 am to 4 pm on Saturdays. Thank you to all those who volunteer on a regular basis helping us to also complete vital support tasks. In many cases volunteers who

## **Chairman's Report – 2008 / 2009 cont**

are on the spectrum have developed their ability to work independently and attend additional sessions. We have also provided work experience placements for the probation service, Work Wise and JET.

And of course there is our very own Philip Le Claire who once again has given 100 %. Philip has in himself been a major support to many families and individuals and I would like to thank not only him but also his family for their understanding and support.

As the charity has grown so have our requirements to fulfil certain criteria and to this end Emma Thompson has kindly offered to undertake an independent review of our Corporate Governance. This review will focus on accepted best practice standards and ensure that we are best positioned to bid for future funding and meet the necessary corporate governance requirements as set by funding bodies.

### **Resigning Trustees**

This year we see some of our founding members step down from the board of Trustees, in particular Helen Miles (Past Chair and Vice Chair) and Richard Miles (past Vice Chair) and I would like to express the Trustee board's heartfelt thanks for their contributions over the years, we will miss them sorely. Also retiring are

Susan Barette, (who was responsible for setting up our website), Sally Gallichan, (past Chair and Vice Chair), Chris Dunne, Hannah Clarke and Katherine Maher, thank you all for your contributions and support.

Before I finish I would like to add that we as a charity need all the support we can get, in particular with fund raising without which we will struggle to operate. Volunteers are always appreciated and are most welcome in different areas of operation, if anyone would be interested in volunteering then please contact us.

Going forward we need to recognise that we have limited capacity in terms of financial and human resources and strive to offer as much as we can but with an eye on quality and sustainability. We are initially looking to consolidate our position and maintain current services with a focus on securing additional funding and volunteers.

### **Jacquelyn K Marsh**

Chairman of the Board of Trustees

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## Executive Directors Report – 2008 / 2009

Another year passes us by and leaves behind a mixed bag of happiness and sadness, elation, disappointment and frustration.

Starting on a bright note, the Strategy for Vocational Day services and Employment for people on the autistic spectrum and with Learning Disabilities has been formally accepted by the States of Jersey and the funding has been allocated to Social Security. The first tranche of the monies has been released to fund the Transition Service and the team have now been employed under the Jersey Employment Trust banner. Mencap and Autism Jersey are currently working on a joint bid that will release more than £375,000 of the money that has been set aside for this service to us so that we can design a bespoke service that will look at things such as;

For example:

- Personal appearance and hygiene
- Health
- Independent transport training
- Budgeting
- Basic cooking skills – cooking on a budget
- Communication Skills
- Advocacy
- Confidence building
- Goal planning
- Basic Skills – numeracy / literacy in natural environments
- ICT skills

It is our initial aim to support up to 75 people with an ASD and / or a Learning Disability to have direct access to Social and life skills training and access to voluntary work and therapeutic opportunities. A further 60 people will have access to vocation training courses.

On a much sadder note, the commitment from Mike Pollard at Health & Social Services that was to see not only an increase in Psychological Therapeutic Services, but also, for the first time ever, locally available and accessible psychology services for adults with Autistic Spectrum Disorders was reneged on at the eleventh hour, due to financial pressures from elsewhere in the

## Executive Directors Report – cont

service. However, the “Williamson Implementation Plan” does now contain all of the elements of the original bid and this is currently at Scrutiny. At this time of financial debate, one has to remember the power of lobbying and we would ask that all that feel able make themselves heard to their Deputy, Connétable or even their fiendly Senator.

The Anti-Bullying work that we all worked so hard on does now seem to be moving forward, and thanks to our own Hannah Clarke (who sadly leaves the Board today and will be sadly missed!), the Community Relations Trust have taken up the reigns on this and appointed Helen Gould (an associate Psychologist) to put together some hard evidenced research. There has also been a great deal of work done through Education on this with head teachers and Educational Psychology and we are starting to hear some anecdotal evidence that things are improving! Fingers crossed!!!

We have seen continued generosity from many institutions and also individuals. We have been blessed with donations and grants from many, many organisations and individuals, too numerous to list in these pages. However, some of the more moving were things like the Miles’ and the Le Corre’s asking for donations to us instead of Golden Wedding gifts. This generated much generosity from people who knew and loved them. Another was the wonderfully moving story of little Kristina Sokic who celebrated turning nine on 25<sup>th</sup> April with a party at Jersey Bowl. However, she told her guests that instead of presents, she wanted them to make donations to Autism Jersey. She raised a magnificent £140. Another star has been a wonderful lady called Janet Lawlor, who in spite of having many, many challenges in her life has found time (from God alone knows where!!) to make and sell Jewellery for us. So far this year she has raised money at the Seaside Festival, the “Flower Power” day, at private functions and even through AJ’s shop, raising a significant amount of money along the way. These are just some of the many wonderful people that have helped us and there are many, many more! For example, Music in Action had another concert for us on 15<sup>th</sup> November 2008 when Elizabeth Watts - Singer of the World Song Recital – performed live at the Jersey Arts Centre, sponsored by our wonderful friends at Dandara. Janet and Angus Taylor walked halfway across the West Highland way and Ben Nevis and raised over £2,000 for Autism Jersey last year and this year they are headed to Everest Base Camp on a 13 day trek from Kathmandu, hoping to raise a similar amount (Sponsorship forms are available on the website!!).

Sally Gallichan came up with our wonderful FAB days and Caroline Leonard came up with innovative and exciting “Invitation to Dinner”, both of which have been fantastically successful! HSBC laid on a glittering night of music, art and entertainment at Chateau Vermont where we were treated to a private violin recital by Nicola Benedetti and an auction of fine art for our cause,

including a painting by our own Marty Miles (the next Stephen Witshire??). Barclays wealth laid on a Corporate Golf day, as did Rotary de la Manche which brought in a huge boost. Our own Vikki Richardson did a very successful raffle and schools have done everything from a cake sale to a sponsored silence to support us. I could use another 10 pages listing all the wonderful things and I would still forget to mention somebody. If I have missed you out, I am truly sorry, it was not done on purpose and perhaps you could let me know so that I could mention it next time! If you would like to donate, you can now do so on [www.justgiving.com/autismjersey](http://www.justgiving.com/autismjersey)

The use of the premises behind AJ's shop have continued to grow and are now starting to be used far more to their potential. As well as the wonderful "autism friendly" work experiences that we have been able to establish in full partnership with JET and highlands College, we now have an adult Social Club that meets almost every Friday evening, providing a safe and secure opportunity to share time with friends, go on outings and even go to the theatre. What started as a couple of us getting together for a cuppa, a chat and a go on the Wii has developed into outings and other social opportunities and I would like to formally thank Sally and Vikki Richardson for taking this project over and for ensuring its sustainability. We have also seen the creation of a monthly drop in session for parents and carers, much like the old NAS branch meetings and a huge thank you has to go to Karen Dyson and Catherine Tubb for organising these and all of the wonderful social events that they put together this year.

As always we offer our sincere gratitude to all those whose support is so necessary in helping us not only to maintain, but to grow;

The Jersey Employment Trust, the Department of Health and Social Services, including the Special Needs Service for both Adults and Children and the Adult & Children's Social Work Team, Jersey Mencap, the States of Jersey Housing Department, The Chief Ministers Department, the Jersey Homes Trust, the Department of Social Security, the Joint Secretariat for Adults with Special Needs and their Families, the Lion's Club, Rotary de la Manche, Jersey Round Table, La Moye Golf Club, The Parish Authorities, HSBC, Barclays, Workwise, Les Amis, the Learning Disabilities Partnership Board, the Variety Club, the Women's Institute and all of the many others who have been involved with Autism Jersey. Any omission is regretted and not intended as a deliberate slight.

I also need to acknowledge and thank the last two of our founding members who leave the Board of Trustees this evening, Helen Miles and Richard Miles who have both decided that they have reached the end of their road as Board Members, but thankfully not as supporters and helpers. Sadly, they are leaving with Sally Gallichan, Hannah Clarke, Katherine Mahrer, Chris Dunne and Susan Barette. Following the sad news that we had to make our Shop Manager Claire Fernandes redundant (credit crunch!), we are delighted that

Sally has agreed to stay on with us in the voluntary position of shop manager and as the coordinator for the adult Social Club and that Susan has agreed to stay on as the webmaster of our simply astounding website ([www.autismjersey.org](http://www.autismjersey.org)) and to give me sideways hugs when I need them (explanation later).

Another big thank you has to go to our Befriending Team of Suzanne, Stephen and Heather. Making a real difference to a lot of lives! Our AGM this year features a chance to hear from Suzanne and some of the people that benefit not only from receiving a service from the scheme, but also those that benefit from volunteering for the scheme! I challenge you all not to cry! It is with great pleasure that I can tonight announce the promotion of our Befriending Coordinator Suzanne Rentsch to the position of Volunteering Manager. Suzanne has been simply amazing and has come to be a part of the furniture and simply indispensable. Thank you Suzanne for all that you do.

Membership of Autism Jersey has increased again from just 36 members in 2006 up to 289 members in 2008, and now to an amazing 340 as of 1/9/09! At the moment, and in light of the current financial climate, we have decided to stay with free private membership and a corporate membership where Employers with less than 50 staff will pay £20 per annum whilst those with more than 50 staff will pay the still very reasonable sum of £50. The one good thing to come out of the

This coming year brings more new challenges and we hope new opportunities and adventures. We have big plans for developing services further and we are keen to look at things like housing, adult and child respite and sibling support, all areas that are highly emotive and sensitive, and all needing urgent review.

In closing I would like to thank the Board of Trustees for their support and backing, most especially Helen Miles my line manager who has had that awful job from the very beginning (who on earth would want to manage me!!) and Susan Barette, who - with Steph de la Cour - has often offered me a friendly "sideways" hug and a translation on all of those many occasions when I was being too autistic for my own good, and simply didn't get it! Thanks too to Sally for all her support and for her and Caroline's help in raising much needed funds and for Jackie, for keeping me straight and focused.

Philip Le Claire

Executive Director

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