

# Advancing Autism

## Working Together for Improved Outcomes

*Edited by Amy Wevill and Edward Wild*



## Contents

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<b><i>Preface</i></b>	5
Lord Clement-Jones	
<b><i>Introduction</i></b>	6
<b><i>Starting a National Dialogue</i></b>	8
Tracie Linehan, Chief Executive, BeyondAutism	
<b><i>The Autism Centre of Excellence (ACE): Creating a World Where Autistic People Are Respected, Valued and Empowered</i></b>	12
Professor Simon Baron-Cohen, Director of the Autism Research Centre, University of Cambridge	
<b><i>Mainstream to SEND - The Great Divide?</i></b>	15
Audrey Pantelis, Director, Elevation Coaching and Consulting	
<b>Sustained Efficiency and Suitability of the SEN System Can Only Be Achieved When Looking at the Whole Picture: What I've Learned Since 2014</b>	18
Andrew Swartfigure, Director, Integrated Behavioural Consultancy	
<b>Children with ASD in Mainstream Education – A Head's Perspective</b>	22
Toby Mullins, Chair, The United Westminster and Grey Coat Foundation	
<b>Looking Back and Looking Forward</b>	26
Professor Toby Salt, Education Adviser	
<b>'It Takes a Village To Raise a Child'</b>	28
Laura Pease, Principal, Whitefield Academy Trust	
<b><i>The Employment Landscape for People With Autism and What Can Be Changed To Help Them Into Full Time Work</i></b>	32
David Anthony, Head of Research and Learning, BeyondAutism	
About the Authors	38
About Wild Search	43
About Wild Research	44
About BeyondAutism	45
A Selection of Wild Research Publications	46

## Preface

### *Lord Clement-Jones*

As a longstanding champion of organisations which support and campaign for those with autism, both as a former Chair of Ambitious About Autism and as its President, I am delighted to contribute to this report which highlights a number of critical issues and welcome developments within the autism community. It is wonderful to read how research and services are being brought closer together, how families are being supported alongside those with autism, how fulfilling careers are developed within SEND education and how employment chances for those with autism might be improved.



It is encouraging that understanding of autism among policymakers and parliamentarians is better than it used to be. However, this has not necessarily translated into resources, so opportunities to continue to improve understanding and importance are always welcome. There are some areas, in particular, where understanding among parliamentarians could be greater. Employment opportunities for those with autism and what can be done to support them is probably less well understood than education provision. Obstacles were significant and aspirations often low for those with autism before the current pandemic. The coming years will be a challenge for all in terms of securing appropriately paid and fulfilling jobs, and especially those with autism.

There is positive and cross-party interest in issues related to autism, which presents a good opportunity for this community to build on the current support if they continue to build and advance their case. There is also an active APPG founded in 2000 and chaired by the Rt Hon Cheryl Gillan MP, who introduced the 2009 Autism Act.

This is an important and timely report that brings together a range of perspectives from those seeking the best outcomes for and with those with autism.

I am sure it will inspire careers in SEND education, raise awareness of the possibilities of employment for those with autism and highlight some key areas of thought and progress in this important, and sometimes overlooked, community today and in the future.



## Introduction

This publication assembles a range of voices seeking the best outcomes for and with those with autism from across educational and support settings. It celebrates developing approaches that have the potential to transform lives and considers areas in which the community can work together despite differences in methodology.

As part of the planning and preparation for the report Wild Search organised a series of virtual roundtables to identify the appetite and to consider key issues. As a result we were pleased to find great enthusiasm and a number of topics that participants felt deserved greater attention.

We are delighted to have brought together contributions to this report from those who have run schools, both SEN and mainstream, those running charities and those dedicated to research. An autism community that works together and embraces mutual respect will ultimately have a greater ability to influence, whether at a local or national level and to secure the resources to deliver better outcomes.

In the next chapter, Tracie Linehan, Chief Executive of BeyondAutism explains how methodological approaches can come to segment approaches to working with those with autism and how this can be unhelpful to individuals, families, schools and local authorities. She calls for a national dialogue that focuses on shared goals within the autism community. The following chapters are in many ways an answer to this call.

Professor Simon Baron-Cohen sets out the ambitions of an exciting new charity, the Autism Centre of Excellence in which research and practice will be more closely linked than ever before. With her experience in both mainstream and SEN, Audrey Pantelis then discusses the routes into SEN and the strategies that are shared or different in each. Andy Swartfigure considers how teacher training is key to supporting the current legislation and rights for children with autism.

Toby Mullins looks at inclusion of those on the autism spectrum in mainstream schools, and the benefits that this can have for those with autism, as well as staff and other students and the importance of deeper understanding. Professor Toby Salt considers developments in understanding since his early career, as well as how far things have come since he produced his Review of Teacher Supply for Pupils with Severe, Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties 10 years ago.

Laura Pease discusses the approach to working with families of those with autism at Whitefield School, where she is Principal. Employment opportunities and how

to raise aspirations for those with autism is a topic that came up frequently in our preparation for this report and is addressed by David Anthony in the final chapter.

We hope that this report will be of wide interest – to those with limited knowledge of ASD as well as to experts in their respective fields. Improved understanding is important to those working in education, employers and the wider communities with which they engage.





# Starting a National Dialogue

*Tracie Linehan, Chief Executive, BeyondAutism*

I lead an organisation that is proud to challenge, and, in that spirit, I am seeking to start a national dialogue about how we adopt different methodological approaches within the world of special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). This dialogue should be an exchange that enables people to learn together and

*What families and their children want, and need, is professionals that work together, driving positive and progressive outcomes.*

we should be able to shift the rhetoric that surrounds methodological approaches for children and young adults with SEND. Too often people seek to debate a methodology, to highlight the pros and cons and in essence assume a win-lose outcome. Methodological arrogance makes navigating help and support adversarial, confusing and time consuming for families. Working and being

committed to any one methodology in itself can become a barrier. What families and their children want, and need, is professionals that work together, driving positive and progressive outcomes.

## The national picture

Since 2019 there has been a 34% increase in the number of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs)<sup>1</sup> and with this a shift in expectations for children and young adults up to the age of 25. EHCPs are a tool that should be used to support a child to be successful within their local school or educational setting. What has been exposed is an educational system that struggles to meet the needs of a diverse range of pupils, increasing the pressure on specialist settings and increasing the budgetary pressure on Local Authorities. 42 children are permanently excluded from school every day<sup>2</sup>. children with autism and/or additional learning needs are 5 times more likely to be excluded, often because of behaviours that are challenging.

Destinations from school for children and young adults with an EHCP have become a bottleneck, where suitable educational provision is not readily available and the steps to employment are few: only 16% of adults with autism are in full time employment<sup>3</sup>. This bottleneck leads to a cliff edge at the age of 25 – the EHCP no

<sup>1</sup> DfE National Statistics. Education, health and care plans: England 2020. Published 7 May 2020 [www.gov.uk/statistics](http://www.gov.uk/statistics) [www.gov.uk/government/statistics/education-health-and-care-plans-england-2020](http://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/education-health-and-care-plans-england-2020)

<sup>2</sup> DfE. Permanent and fixed period exclusions in England: 2017 to 2018. Published 25 July 2019. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/permanent-and-fixed-period-exclusions-in-england-2017-to-2018>

<sup>3</sup> The National Autistic Society (2016) The Autism Employment Gap: Too much information in the workplace. [https://network.autism.org.uk/sites/default/files/ckfinder/files/NAS%20TMI%20Employment%20Report%2024pp%20WEB%20\(002\).pdf](https://network.autism.org.uk/sites/default/files/ckfinder/files/NAS%20TMI%20Employment%20Report%2024pp%20WEB%20(002).pdf)

longer exists and adult services have a social care driver that appears to struggle to meet the expectation that everyone should be an active citizen with choice and control of their lives.

Against this backdrop, organisations are working hard to effect significant societal change and to positively influence outcomes for future generations, seeking to change the national picture currently presented. However, effort is often exerted in a variety of directions on the premise of any one methodological approach, resulting in isolated pockets of good practice and slow progress towards an improved national picture.

## Why do methodological approaches matter?

For the purposes of this discussion methodological approaches are defined as “a body of practices, procedures, and rules used by those who work in a discipline or engage in an inquiry; a set of working methods” for example within the SEND sector there is Bobath Physiotherapy, Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA), Conductive Education, TEACCH, THRIVE and SCERTS to name a few. All of these approaches each provide a framework that is mapped against the developmental steps of a child and enables practitioners to deliver progressive programmes of learning or therapy, aiming for positive outcomes.

*Organisations are working hard to effect significant societal change and to positively influence outcomes for future generations*

In a digital, technological age, where information can be accessed immediately, parents will turn to the internet on the receipt of a diagnosis or if they have concerns about their child’s development; they are looking for answers, for advice and for clear direction. The ability to describe an approach that will provide that direction, advice and some of the answers gives credibility and for many parents, the light at the end of the tunnel.

## Who decides which methodological approach is best?

Each approach can refer to its own evidence-based research and can equally find research to dismiss the claims of another. There are organisations that are committed to one particular approach, choosing to skill their staff in a way of working that evidence suggests “works” for the children and young adults that they work with.



When considering the notion that the approaches generally adopted within the field of SEND all emanate from the same starting point i.e child development, the differences articulated depend on the lens through which the child is being viewed. Many physiotherapists use Bobath in the rehabilitation of patients with neurological conditions to promote the sensory and motor pathways and facilitate normal movement and motor control<sup>4</sup>. This appears to be comparable with Conductive Education, an approach taken with children and adults who have neurological conditions based on a 'simple' concept of human potential; meaning that everyone has the capability to learn and develop irrespective of their starting point<sup>5</sup>. However, over the years, Conductive Education has not been viewed favourably, nor been directly signposted. Maybe in this example it is a health/medical model (Bobath), in comparison to a pedagogical approach (Conductive Education), the lens is different and with that comes a different perspective. So, if you are a parent with a baby born with cerebral palsy where would you turn, which would you choose?

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.physio.co.uk/treatments/neurological-rehabilitation/bobath.php>

<sup>5</sup> <https://conductive-education.org.uk/about-us/what-is-conductive-education/>

Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA), when underpinning the practice within an educational setting usually for children with autism, is an approach that generates controversy and polarised views. The approach is scientific, based on learning and behaviour and is evidence based, using reflective teaching and tracking progress to celebrate every achievement through fun and motivating learning<sup>6</sup>. Local Authorities have taken strategic decisions to not provide access to ABA; when asked why, the perception is that it is expensive and derived from training dogs. In reality the schools that adopt this methodological approach today are all judged as good or outstanding by Ofsted and ensure that the wellbeing of the child is central. On the other hand, the SCERTs approach is wholesale being adopted across some local authority provision as a research-based educational approach and multidisciplinary framework that directly addresses the core challenges faced by children and persons with ASD and related disabilities<sup>7</sup>. It makes claim on its website to incorporate other practices (including ABA) whilst defining why it is different from ABA. Again, this example highlights a different lens and therefore different perspectives. If you are a parent of a child with autism where would you turn, which would you choose?

### Is it time to use one lens?

In 2009, the UK agreed to follow the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and this, combined with The Human Rights Act 1998, has underpinned the Children and Families Act, 2014. For children and young adults with SEND this act aims, amongst other things, to get education, health care and social care working together, to make sure families know what help they can get with more say about that help, and to make sure that different organisations work together. The lens is surely the rights of the child; not differing, often misunderstood, perceptions of any particular methodological approach?

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.beyondautism.org.uk/about-autism/aba/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://scerts.com/>



## The Autism Centre of Excellence (ACE): Creating a World Where Autistic People are Respected, Valued and Empowered

*Professor Simon Baron-Cohen, Director of the Autism Research Centre, University of Cambridge*

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In 1948, the newly created United Nations adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, listing 30 fundamental human rights. In 2006, when it was realised that human rights were still not reaching people with disabilities, the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was adopted. Sadly, today, many autistic people still do not have their basic human rights met – such as the right to health, education, dignity, and work.

The Autism Centre of Excellence (ACE) is a new charity which will harness the strengths of the University of Cambridge to turn world-class research into much-needed world-class support services. ACE is being co-designed with autistic people and their families, so they are fully involved in shaping their futures.

### **The ACE Vision**

ACE will be based in Cambridge and will serve as a model for autism clinical and research excellence. Research and services will work together to ensure the most effective outcomes for autistic people of all ages – from timely diagnosis, individually tailored therapy or life skills, to education and employment support. ACE is divided into three areas:

**Autism Research:** ACE will build on 25 years of world-class research from the Autism Research Centre (ARC) at the University of Cambridge. This research aims to deepen our understanding of autism, to improve the lives of autistic people and their families and to ensure support services for autistic people are evidence-based. It is led by experts in genetics, neuroscience, molecular biology, endocrinology, psychology, as well as clinical research and policy research.

**Health and Wellbeing:** It is essential that the wide array of health issues associated with autism, both mental and physical, are addressed urgently. Often waiting lists for an autism diagnosis is a year or longer, leaving the person struggling without help; and one in three autistic people experience poor mental health due to lack of support. The multidisciplinary teams of specialists at ACE will support autistic people with their diagnosis and throughout their lives, providing tailored

support, from pre-school age to senior citizens. Specialists include psychologists, psychiatrists, speech therapists, occupational therapists, music and art therapists, family therapists, mentors and life-coaches, social workers, and counsellors.

**Education, life skills and employment:** Currently, 1 in 5 autistic children are excluded from school. Of the remaining 80% who have stayed in mainstream school, half report having been bullied, leading to long-term fear and insecurity. Similarly, autistic people are being let down on the right to work and employment. Only 16% of autistic adults are in full-time paid employment.

Wide-reaching support at ACE will provide learning opportunities and educational support to ensure autistic people of all ages and abilities get the best possible start in life. ACE will also support autistic young people and adults into further education and/or employment if this is what they want, including advising employers and colleges how to create autism-friendly environments where autistic people can thrive.

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### **Designed with and for autistic people and their families**

ACE listens to the autism community via its Advisory Board, made up of a Steering Group and an Advisory Panel. Both include autistic adults and parents/carers of autistic children.

### **ACE interventions and values**

ACE will offer evidence-based interventions that target aspects of disability for which the autistic person and/or their parents are seeking support. Autism can entail a mix of disability, disorder, disease, and difference. ACE will provide interventions for the first three of these, where an individual is seeking this and where these are causing distress. However, ACE does not aim to treat the areas of difference, because these are intrinsic to who the person is, should be respected as such, often lead to strengths, and should be nurtured to blossom. Nor does ACE seek a cure for autism, but accepts autism is part of who the person is. Instead, ACE offers support and treatment for specific symptoms the person finds uncomfortable or in skills they wish to grow.



*By working together, and respecting the human rights of autistic people, we will see progress in equality and opportunity for autistic people and their families.*

### Working together

We are grateful to the growing network of companies, charities, schools, and public sector agencies who support ACE and who work with us in different ways to achieve our vision. Partners include Auticon, Autistica, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough County Councils, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Foundation Trust (CPFT), the National Autistic Society, Petra's Place,

Transport for London, Geshar School and Universal Music UK. By working together, and respecting the human rights of autistic people, we will see progress in equality and opportunity for autistic people and their families.

For more information please visit [www.autismcentreofexcellence.org](http://www.autismcentreofexcellence.org).



## Mainstream to SEND - The Great Divide?

*Audrey Pantelis, Director, Elevation Coaching and Consulting*

A definition of education:

noun

*the process of receiving or giving systematic instruction, especially at a school or university.*

As a mainstream educator of 17 years – back in 2008 my knowledge of SEND was limited but I was intrigued – mostly because my then partner, now husband, had moved into SEND teaching and really enjoyed it. How are learning difficulties embraced in a classroom setting? How can children and young people make progress? How do you deal with behaviours when you are educating pupils who can't hear or see? Autistic Spectrum Disorder was not on my radar, so this was all to come, along with the understanding of the numerous acronyms: PMLD; SLD; MLD; OT; SALT – the list goes on!

One of my main drivers for leaving the mainstream phase was the apparent lack of vision with regards to looking at the 'whole' child. All schools would state that this is what they did, but increasingly I felt that the drive to 'predict' how a child or young person would perform academically was overshadowing the child

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and their development as a person. I was increasingly interested in how we as educators could look at how we could help learners to learn better and had learned about the work of Professor Guy Claxton and Building Learning Power. This philosophy really spoke to me – but its application in mainstream schools depended on the school or local authority

believing in the concept as part of a whole school/borough wide approach in teaching and learning.

As a classroom teacher in a SEND classroom, my knowledge of pedagogy that I had taken for granted came flooding back to me. Ensuring that the learning that I wanted to take place was clear, engaging and enjoyable and, more importantly relevant became paramount. Differentiation mattered like never before – in ways

that I had not considered. However – the essence of teaching and learning was the golden thread running through all the new considerations that I faced. Multi agency involvement was a revelation to me... the intersection of health needs and education had not fully occurred to me with regards to how that would impact on academic progress – but it tied in with my desire to look at educating the whole child. While the drive for academic progress appeared to be as important as in the mainstream phase, the obvious need for support from other agencies meant that there appeared to be more of a joined-up solution to ensuring the wellbeing a child or young person with learning difficulties and that they had a defined pathway to progress. More importantly, all progress was progress – and this could include anything – from physical targets for someone with physical challenges to social communication targets for someone who has challenges with verbalising their thoughts in front of others. Celebration of success is important, and I quickly discovered that this is a true motivator and spurs all children and young people with learning difficulties to achieve – even when they weren't aware that it was important to them. The environment of success and celebration is infectious and desirable.

*The obvious need for support from other agencies meant that there appeared to be more of a joined-up solution to ensuring the wellbeing a child or young person with learning difficulties had a defined pathway to progress.*

Pedagogy was important and ensuring that teaching and support staff were knowledgeable in the relevant areas became a priority. Without knowing the best ways to support and where required, to challenge would potentially mean that we would hinder progress. Confidence in us would mean confidence in the children and young people we support – and also for the families of the children and young people. Parental engagement has always been important – and this is evident in the Education Endowment Fund report of 2018 that shows practical ways that schools can help parents become more engaged in their child's education, However – it's more than that – children and young people with learning disabilities NEED the involvement of their parents and carers and parents require the expertise and support of professionals. Parents and carers see progress over time and are the experts on their children and young people.

One of my main reasons in remaining in and advocating for children and young people with SEND is the firm belief in equality and equity for all. As a school leader I have been able to put my desires for equality and equity in action in the free

special school that I founded and led. During my time as Head of School, I was able to look at Building Learning Power. Not all of the concepts therein are relevant to the SEND learner, but the following are:

- How and when we learn best
- The new 'four Rs' – Resilience, Resourcefulness, Reflectiveness and Reciprocity

We worked on them as a whole school and began to address how we could be better learners – through practical projects and experiments for both pupils and staff – and we had a great time discovering!

### Summary

The title of my piece 'Mainstream to SEND – the great divide?' was a provocative one. It was deliberately titled so that the reader would expect to read how very different the two phases were and are. However – what has been interesting to note is that during the past twelve years, mainstream is slowly utilising more strategies that SEND schools use and the 'whole' child is now the lens that education values just as much as academic progress. Once labelled as 'soft skills', values are now key. Kindness, compassion, authenticity and respect drive the curriculum – opportunities for these to be demonstrated are key factors in a school's self-assessment. SEND schools provide the environment for all that attend to thrive. I am glad of my time working in the mainstream phase, but the satisfaction that I get and have gained working in SEND means that I will never look back!

## Sustained Efficiency and Suitability of the SEN System Can Only Be Achieved When Looking at the Whole Picture: What I've Learned Since 2014.

*Andrew Swartfigure, Director, Integrated Behavioural Consultancy*

Since 2014 and the advent of the Children and Families act, every child has the right to a mainstream school education. This of course applies to children with Special Educational Needs (SEN).

A purported sea change in the 2014 act was the adoption of the Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP) that superseded the Statement of Special Educational Needs. Crucially the EHCP spans the ages of 0-25 (vs. the limited to statutory school age coverage of the Statement of SEN).

The EHCP was designed to pull together a multi-disciplinary network around each child, ensuring their needs were met across the spectrum of support as overseen by the Central Commissioning Group (CCG) in the local area. Further support to this was the creation of the Local Offer. On this; the Local Authority is required to name any institution, school or provision that has been named on an EHCP or could be named on the EHCP in the future. More simply a Local Offer gives children and young people with special educational needs or disabilities, and their families, information about what support services the local authority think will be available in their local area<sup>1</sup>.

The legislation is solid in principle; however, the environment in which it exists does not support this ambitious change in education law. If the colloquialism can be excused: it's not a level playing field.

Total school spending per pupil in England has fallen by 8% in real terms between 2009–10 and 2019–20. The bulk of these funding cuts were driven by a 57% reduction in spending per pupil on services provided by local authorities and a more than 20% cut in sixth-form funding per pupil<sup>2</sup>. The 2014 Act magnified the right to mainstream education (as per legislation). However, the cuts to school funding, and then realising: the first £6,000 of costs must be met by schools, even though they receive no extra cash to do so; exacerbates a problem in the system that cannot support itself. One could argue that the system effectively penalises schools for a) taking pupils under Section 41 of the 2014 Act and b) if finding the solutions and deemed “good at” meeting outcomes within EHCPs; receive more

<sup>1</sup> <https://councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.ifs.org.uk/publications/14369#:~:text=Total%20school%20spending%20per%20pupil,sixth%2Dform%20funding%20per%20pupil.>

pupils with SEN, effectively ensuring that budgets are under further pressure if not returning a deficit.

Education of course is not the only dynamic of the EHCP, or at least it shouldn't be. However, education budgets at local authority level and therefore within schools are under increased pressure to meet needs. AHP provision is generally paid for by education whilst the child is of statutory school age; albeit provided by Health providers either NHS or private firms both via tender process and bought back by local authorities via the education budget. The same process applies to Educational Psychology. Crucially, and in general, all of this is at the cost to school budgets allocated from a diminishing pot of funding.

The impact is clear. The office of National Statistics' current report on exclusion, represents a worrying picture in England (2017/18- 2018-19: Published August 2020). Although it shows a stable rate of permanent exclusion (0.10) and a decrease of 11 permanent exclusions, the rate of fixed term exclusions increasing; translating to a number of approximately 20,000, presents an increase that ought to be viewed in light of funding cuts and a system that does not approach the education and meeting the needs of the

*Education budgets at local authority level and therefore within schools are under increased pressure to meet needs.*

whole child across the EHCP<sup>3</sup>. In mainstream schools the rise in exclusion rates as a direct result of poorer provision and capacity of a school to meet needs, must be brought into question. A child with SEN's right to mainstream education seems only aspirational in a system that consistently does not have the tools for every child. Like many working in the education system, I am not looking forward to the July 2021 update.

The fact remains that the legislation has changed and rightly so. The answer is not in changing the legislation again, at least not so soon. There have been some positive changes to strategic implementation at Local Authority level. I have seen a change toward a more optimistic allocation of funding to Early intervention in schools although it is a far cry from a universal offer. However, one must be careful how this money is spent. We know that teachers receive almost no training in SEN. We know that statutory assessment of SEN in EYFS and KS1 takes a long time. There is a tendency to spend money on fads in schools. The answer is not more fads. That is to say; interventions or approaches that lack any empirical research as to their efficacy or impact. The answer lies in training teachers from the ground up on meeting the needs of children with SEN. This training must be based on

<sup>3</sup> <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/permanent-and-fixed-period-exclusions-in-england>



scientifically proven approaches for SEN children and that these approaches are based on solid empirically proven principles of behaviour and learning. Crucially, with little funding available, it must be spent astutely, with direction and clarity.

In addition to smart allocation of strategy and spending; universities in the example of training, and schools in the example of support for provision, partnerships should be formed with those that are proven to effectively support. Perhaps a semantic division now exists with the advent and the strengthening to every child's right to mainstream placement. The special education sector, whether that be local authority, non-maintained special sector or the independent sector, have many outstanding schools. In some cases, these schools have dedicated outreach components. Particularly those in the non-maintained or independent sector. These centres of excellence should be the resource that mainstream schools rely upon to increase effective intervention and provision. Universities should work in partnership with the experts and make it part of the qualification to teach children with additional needs. If we pose the question would it make teaching all children easier and more effective if all teachers had this training? I think the answer would unwaveringly be yes.

*A child with SEN's right to mainstream education seems only aspirational in a system that consistently does not have the tools for every child.*





## Children with ASD in Mainstream Education – A Head’s Perspective

*Toby Mullins, Chair, The United Westminster and Grey Coat Foundation*

As a Head of a school with a high proportion of SEN pupils, although one is never a specialist in the area, one learns a great deal about the issues that come with a high degree of inclusion. Over the last few years, it has been increasingly common to have pupils with autism (ASD) being educated in mainstream schools. Some autistic youngsters manage to adapt to the rigours of mainstream schooling and achieve excellent results, many do not. It is also interesting, but maybe not surprising, that the underperforming ASD students often do relatively less well than pupils with other disabilities.

Inclusion should provide benefits for all the pupils at the school. The ASD pupils should gain the benefits of experiencing a broader social environment and the opportunity to develop the social skills that will assist them in later life. For their peers, there is the chance to promote the diversity agenda and to become more aware of the problems faced by others of their own age. This is certainly the case where pupils have a physical disability. A child with cerebral palsy, who is wheelchair bound and severely limited, will often receive a lot of support from

*Inclusion should provide benefits for all the pupils at the school.*

their peers and have a circle of friends that will rarely, if ever, be available to the child with ASD. The eccentricity of their behaviour makes acceptance so much more difficult to achieve.

Teachers too ought to be able to benefit from the inclusion of ASD pupils in their lessons. There are, indeed, many members of staff who view the involvement of ASD pupils in their lessons as an opportunity to become better and more skilled professionals. In my first headship, our Learning Support Centre led the teaching and learning initiatives at the school. All teaching staff were briefed on the exact nature of each child’s difficulties, and strategies for success were provided in an attempt to ensure their smooth progress.

A teacher’s knowledge and understanding of autism has a profound effect on ASD pupil success in their classroom. Some believe passionately that the behavioural issues that ASD pupils bring take up too much of their time and prevent progress for the other pupils in their classes. In a special school, such as that at the Children’s Trust where students are profoundly disabled, the teachers completely

understand the limitations of their learners. They find ways to communicate with their students, which are often impossible for the casual observer to understand, and they create a curriculum that is bespoke to the learner and allows them to show their progress. Such a bespoke package is often missing from a mainstream school where the teachers neither fully understand the behaviour of ASD pupils nor the accommodations needed in their teaching to produce successful outcomes.

Preconceptions about ‘autistic’ behaviour, and unawareness of ASD characteristics, can result in misunderstandings and unrealistic expectations. Actions by pupils can often be misconstrued and result in a sharp escalation of classroom problems. ASD pupils can experience high levels of stress and anxiety triggered by environmental factors such as noise, over-crowding, limited mobility, curriculum demands and changes in routine. Teachers need to understand these factors, be responsive to these increased stress levels and flexible enough to make the necessary adjustments. For these ASD pupils, making it through each day at school without a crisis might be more important in the short run than academic progress.

*Preconceptions about ‘autistic’ behaviour, and unawareness of ASD characteristics, can result in misunderstandings and unrealistic expectations.*

The behaviour of students with ASD is regularly viewed by some teachers as inappropriate in the context of a mainstream school, and disruptive in the classroom. However, subtle changes to the school routines and the curriculum, for particular ASD pupils, can make a huge difference. The ability to move to a ‘quiet space’ where they can recover their equilibrium is one strategy used with great effect in a number of schools. It may be that a pupil cannot cope with the ‘hurly-burly’ of break times and needs to be encouraged to find a quiet spot in the library during those peak times. Even the most conscientious of peers will be willing to assist ASD students, and support them in class, but this is much less evident during breaktimes. PE lessons are often purgatory for ASD pupils; they are often loud, not as structured and can involve physical contact, all of which are frequently difficult for the ASD child.

Parents with ASD children are usually very keen to have them in a mainstream school. They realise the social benefits to the child of being with other children and learning the skills to survive in later life. They ask for a collaborative approach to the education process, with both teachers and parents understanding the issues and working towards agreed goals. On occasion, where this collaboration doesn’t occur, parents become frustrated with the lack of focus on social outcomes at the school. They complain about the poor understanding of autism, the lack of training for teachers and the negative impact of uninformed teacher behaviour on their children; in many cases, they are correct. If a school takes on these youngsters,

knowing of their problems, it is duty bound to inform its staff and make the necessary adjustments to ensure a successful outcome.

In some cases, parents have chosen not to tell the school of their child's diagnosis for fear of them being treated differently by both the teachers and their peers. Pupils with ASD commonly behave differently from their peers and their inability to respond to social cues routinely results in them experiencing isolation, teasing and bullying. Ironically, the emotional volatility of ASD pupils allied with severe tantrums and physical aggression towards other pupils often lead to they themselves being labelled as bullies. A Head can often find themselves in the middle of both sets of parents, each accusing the other's child of unacceptable bullying.

*We can preach tolerance and understanding, but these are exceedingly difficult concepts to grasp when you are young, full of hormones and have only limited life experience.*

What should we expect from our pupils when interacting with their ASD peers? Can they be expected to make allowances for extreme behaviour all the time? We can preach tolerance and understanding, but these are exceedingly difficult concepts to grasp when you are young, full of hormones and have only limited life experience. Any school with ASD children in its ranks will need to make allowances and accept that children will, on occasion, get these relationships badly wrong.

Classroom teachers frequently find it difficult to explain to peers why pupils with autism are being treated differently. The situation in the classroom is often not improved by the responsibility for managing the behaviour of the ASD child being frequently given to Teaching Assistants and a perceived lack of clarity in schools' behaviour management procedures.

Teachers who experience problems with behaviour in the classroom, often expect the school to 'throw the book' at the offending youngsters. A colleague of mine had an expression that she used to describe the situation where behavioural sanctions take on a life of their own and spiral out of control; she called it "black shoes to exclusion". An appropriate, early and well-planned response to a minor infraction can usually ensure a swift and acceptable resolution. Understanding of the underlying issues, knowledge of the condition and well-practised and proportionate remedial actions are the keys to success.

The effective inclusion of ASD pupils into mainstream schools will not be achieved while the majority of teachers continue to express concerns about their limited knowledge of autism and relevant teaching strategies. Classroom teachers believe,

quite rightly, that students with ASD require more support than other students with disabilities, and the support required is often unique to each child. The availability of resources and support personnel, therefore, remains the most significant factor in relation to the capacity of mainstream schools to meet inclusion needs.





## Looking Back and Looking Forward

### *Professor Toby Salt, Education Adviser*

Our understanding of how to support young people with autism in educational settings and then their transition into later life, is still developing. In this article I recollect times where this learning took place in my career and also consider the report I produced in 2010 for the then Secretary of State, Rt Hon Ed Balls, ‘The Salt review’<sup>1</sup> an independent review of Teacher Supply for pupils with complex needs.

Ok so I now feel old! I started my career in a comprehensive school (now an academy that I am chair of governors for) in the early 1980s. Looking back, there were several pupils who we would now recognise as having Autism but did not then, as we knew very little about it. David flapped his hands at 14, found social interaction and eye contact agonising and was fussy about routines (he needed the same desk or hell would freeze over). Impeccably polite, he had to have a certain place in any queue. Lunch was a challenge and I now understand that the noise, smelly food and strange lukewarm meals were a trigger. I ‘got’ David and he felt safe with me and in my lessons. He would hang around my tutor room at all opportunities as he struggled elsewhere. I now cringe that I ( and other teachers) didn’t know more and I always had David in my mind when I went on to learn more as I embarked on a Masters and set out to learn more about Autism and other SENDs. Ella was another pupil at a different school. I was more senior then but again I quickly noticed the girl that was called the ‘seagull’. She was known to screech and flap her ‘wings’ around the fringes of the hard play area every break. Most left her alone. I was interested and sad. She seemed isolated and sounded distressed. Again, I now recognise that this was her release and echolalia. I worked hard to learn more about her and other special educational needs.

I later went on to have a large part of my career leading special schools and set up one of the first specialist units for pupils with ‘autistic spectrum disorders’. The ASD provision quickly grew and was recognised as outstanding thanks to gifted and well educated specialist staff. The school now is consistently designated as outstanding and has even more youngsters with ASD. Like many others it is now working on extending its provision for them as they transition to adult life. In another school we quickly recognised that Tom was an able lad with behavioural problems that were exacerbated by his high functioning Autism. He found noisy and disruptive classes intolerable and acted out to ensure he was asked to leave the classroom. This was over 20 years ago when few schools had a myriad of computers and broadband. We managed to get a connection through ‘JANET ‘ (the ini-

<sup>1</sup> Salt Review Independent Review of Teacher Supply for Pupils with Severe, Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties (SLD and PMLD).

tial HE internet link) and found a way of teaching Tom in a special virtual learning environment ( of course bread and butter now but then being taught by a specialist teacher the other side of the country down a telephone line to a computer was radical).He took GCES in Maths and Science two years early and was transformed. Later he went on to Oxford to study Bio Chemistry. We had recognised his exceptional talents and his specialist needs and found a way to allow him access to learning.

In 2010 I was Deputy CEO of the National College for School Leadership, but I never forgot my roots, and my interest in pupils that were different. Ed Balls was the Secretary of State at the time and he was increasingly concerned about SEN as an issue. He commissioned me to write an independent review . Since then many of the recommendations have materialised but of course there was a change of government shortly after the report’s publication

The new Prime Minister understood the issue of a growing pupil population with increasingly complex needs as medical science happily allowed more children to survive, foetal alcohol syndrome grew as an issue and more importantly education became more aware of SEN, and in particular Autism. David Cameron had a very personal interest of course and I visited his son’s school as part of my review. Looking back we still have much to do and more to learn. Our specialist teacher training is still not the easiest pathway and we still don’t sufficiently recognise the exceptional additional knowledge and skills that staff working in the sector require. They are some of the best as they have to strip concepts down to make them accessible and interesting to the most extraordinary students. New clusters of specialism and CPD have emerged and there is renewed recognition of the value of a great education for children with Autism. The demographics for teacher retention remain a concern with a huge amount of experience and knowledge leaving with an increasingly older teaching profile in specialist settings.

*We still don’t sufficiently recognise the exceptional additional knowledge and skills that staff working in the sector require*

My attention also turns to what happened to Tom, Ella and David after their school years. David would be 48 yrs old now. What career options and training did he have? Whilst we have improved the education for students with Autism exponentially, their transition to being active, integrated citizens with meaningful employment is less assured. That’s the next challenge and it’s great to see organisations like BeyondAutism rising to it.

## 'It Takes a Village to Raise a Child'

*Laura Pease, Principal, Whitefield Academy Trust*

Parenting a child with autism can be complex and demanding as well as rewarding and for this reason good support is an essential part of the education offer. It is equally accepted that when that support is not available the consequences for parents and their children can be devastating and this has been illustrated most recently by the report from Carers UK on the experience of carers during 'lockdown'.

This article highlights some key aspects of an offer for parental support. Although written from the perspective of a special school where the majority of pupils with autism have additional or complex needs it identifies elements common to all and asks whether specialist provisions might work together to identify the key features of parental support and to advocate for this as an entitlement within a national strategy for autism.

### What support do parents need?

A couple of years ago Kent County Council surveyed parents for their views on the support from local services. The summary of what parents wanted stated:

*"in the main parents want to work with services to ensure that they are better able to meet the needs of children and young people with SEND. It is important that parents and children are able to discuss concerns, feel listened to and see a clear plan and direction of travel for support."*

Clearly we should be offering parents the opportunity to work in partnership with those commissioning or delivering services to reach a common view about their child's needs and to identify the way to meet those needs on different levels, whether identifying the right placement, teaching strategies, short breaks or activities at home. On a day to day level they need practical advice linked to the realities of life which may include how to intervene when their children show behaviours of concern or ways to build independence. Equally important is the need for emotional support – someone whom they know can empathise with their feelings of anger or despair without judging and help them to build resilience.

Parents may benefit from an ongoing conversation helping them to articulate their child's needs and the impact on educational outcomes, relationships and behaviour. They need clear information about their child's life at school and (the point most strongly emphasised by our school's Family Support Team) opportunities to share

in celebrating achievement and planning for the next steps. Many parents need advice around the complexities of benefits and housing and the other systems for getting the right resources for their child. They need to be clear about what the local offer means and what the local barriers may be, and as their children approach adulthood they need a system within which they can work with professionals to identify and then realise their, and their child's, ambitions for the future.

### What are the barriers?

My former Headteacher, well known in school as an avid viewer of Fawlty Towers, might well have read the paragraphs above and quoted Basil Fawlty's comment on Sybil – 'specialist subject, stating the bleeding obvious'. These basic services may well be seen as obvious but it remains a fact that many parents don't yet have access to them. The Kent survey used the quote that 'it takes a village to raise a child' to illustrate parents' entirely reasonable wish for input from a range of professionals, managed in a coherent way, yet survey after report after anecdote show that parents do not receive the support they need or the opportunity to work in partnership to produce EHCPs and monitor their implementation and that this leads to them feeling disempowered, particularly at key points such as secondary transition and transition into adulthood.

One barrier may be an (hopefully) unconscious bias on the part of professionals. The very term 'parent support' may in itself be an example of such bias, encapsulating a view of educators as a one way source of advice and guidance rather than partners and facilitators in coming to a common map for the future and identifying present needs. Do too many professionals in schools and local authorities still see the 'difficult parent' when their advice is questioned or when there is incredulity that services such as short breaks or therapy support are in short supply? Do senior leaders ensure that training and supervision embeds a model of partnership working even at those points where advice and guidance is a priority?

From a wider perspective, another barrier is the lack of clarity around responsibility for various aspects of support.

Specialist provisions have the advantage of being able to offer consistent support over time. Family support teams (by many names) will build relationships with

*Parents need clear information about their child's life at school and opportunities to share in celebrating achievement and planning for the next steps.*



parents and knowledge of their children as they move through the school. Our family support team holds to the principle that it is the simple conversations and small pieces of work one year which gives them the credibility to hold the really difficult conversations in the next. Equally, schools are best placed to co-design teaching and behaviour strategies with parents and to ensure that parents are fully informed about the aims and strategies used day by day. Where schools buy in support such as therapies, or work with services commissioned by the local authority, it is more straightforward to link these services with the school provision to make a consistent offer and to embed their advice into the classroom programme and into home life.

But schools should not be the only avenue for support. Local authority officers will have the 'big picture' of the local offer and can guide parents to appropriate placements and services. Where local authorities maintain or commission support services then economy of scale and the pooling of expertise will lead to a stronger offer for children and families, particularly where there is a clear point of contact for families so that SEND officers are able to build relationships over time. Local authorities may also be able to commission some of the excellent programmes for parents, such as Early Bird and the Barnardos Cygnet programme, and facilitate

sessions where parents of children from different schools learn about autism and establish a support network above and beyond individual schools.

Where each of the elements noted above could be provided by a school, a local authority or a third party organisation it is essential that services work together and that schools are active in signposting parents to the best support for them. It is also essential that the 'local offer' is clearly set out, up to date and readily accessible to parents.

Finally, with another nod to Sybil Fawley, good quality, ongoing support is expensive and as schools are stretched it becomes more difficult to fund a teacher or a team and the background support for them such as supervision and training. Many

*It is essential that services work together and that schools are active in signposting parents to the best support for them.*

schools will use pupil premium to fund some or all of this key work, others will have difficult choices around what can be provided. Local authorities, equally, face challenges in commissioning services. There is an argument for an explicit element for partnership working and support within Education, Health and Care Plans or for a specific funded

provision within local authorities and schools which might incorporate some of the role of SENDIASS but would go beyond that in signposting or providing guidance. The cost of not providing adequate support is a high one.



# The Employment Landscape for People With Autism and What Can Be Changed To Help Them Into Full Time Work

David Anthony, Head of Research and Learning, BeyondAutism

Having spent most of my career working with teenagers and adults with autism, I have witnessed the ongoing challenges faced by them and their families. At each transition, whether it be from primary school to secondary, or what happens when they turn 16, a huge level of uncertainty exists. This year, 2020, has magnified this uncertainty further. One thing that has been clear, is you are more likely to be unemployed if you have autism.

## The employment landscape for people with autism

Employment figures at the start of 2020 stated that around 16% of adults with autism were in full time paid employment, with only 36% in any form of employment<sup>1</sup>. The full impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on employment is yet to be fully realised, particularly for those with learning disabilities. What is emerging is that those aged 16-24 years, entering the work force for the first time are being impacted the greatest. Unemployment is at its highest for three years, with a total of 1.5 million people being registered as unemployed between June and August 2020. During the same period, 227,000 people were made redundant. Disproportionately, around 300,000 of those unemployed are aged 16-24 years old<sup>2</sup>.

The Care Act 2014 is clear that commissioners have a responsibility to support those people with a disability in gaining employment<sup>3</sup>. The Oxford English Dictionary states that employment is 'the fact of having a paid job'. However, the benefits go beyond just financial rewards. In 2006, The Department for Work and Pensions commissioned an independent review to explore the health effects of

*Employment figures at the start of 2020 stated that around 16% of adults with autism were in full time paid employment, with only 36% in any form of employment.*

<sup>1</sup> The National Autistic Society (2016) The Autism Employment Gap: Too much information in the work-place. [https://network.autism.org.uk/sites/default/files/ckfinder/files/NAS%20TMI%20Employment%20Report%2024pp%20WEB%20\(002\).pdf](https://network.autism.org.uk/sites/default/files/ckfinder/files/NAS%20TMI%20Employment%20Report%2024pp%20WEB%20(002).pdf) viewed 23rd October 2020

<sup>2</sup> Office for National Statistics (2020) Labour market overview, UK: October. 2020 <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/bulletins/uklabourmarket/october2020> viewed 23rd October 2020

work and unemployment<sup>4</sup>. Conducted by Gordon Waddell and A Kim Burton, they identified 'a strong evidence base showing that work is generally good for physical and mental health and well-being'. They identified eight potential benefits for disabled people being in work or re-entering work after a long-term absence. These included:

- That work can be therapeutic
- Engaging in work will help to promote recovery and rehabilitation
- Work leads to better long-term health outcomes
- Minimises the harmful physical, mental, and social effects of long-term sickness absence
- Reduces the risk of long-term incapacity
- Promotes full participation in society, independence, and human rights
- Reduces poverty
- Improves quality of life and well-being.

The review highlighted that for these to be attainable, 'account must be taken of the nature and quality of the work and its social context'. Jobs should be safe and accommodating. Aligning work with the individual's aspirations, career goals and strengths will improve their potential success in their role and associated responsibilities.

## Making the workplace more accessible for people with autism

We know some employers have concerns regarding employing people with autism. 60% of people surveyed by the National Autistic Society<sup>5</sup> were worried about getting support for an employee with autism wrong, and 60% also stated they would not know where to seek support from. The SEN Code of Practice, reviewed in 2014 states those who are supporting learners, particularly from their secondary school years, Sixth Form and into post-19 education have a responsibility to ensure learners are prepared for adulthood. This includes 'high aspirations about employment' and what 'should be developed through the curriculum and extra-curricular provision'. The National Development Team for Inclusion, through their

<sup>4</sup> Waddell, G. and Burton, A.K. (2006) Is Work Good for Your Health and Well-Being? TSO, London.

<sup>5</sup> The National Autistic Society (2016) The Autism Employment Gap: Too much information in the work-place. [https://network.autism.org.uk/sites/default/files/ckfinder/files/NAS%20TMI%20Employment%20Report%2024pp%20WEB%20\(002\).pdf](https://network.autism.org.uk/sites/default/files/ckfinder/files/NAS%20TMI%20Employment%20Report%2024pp%20WEB%20(002).pdf) viewed 23rd October 2020

research and projects have identified two specific causes for disabled people being unemployed:

- Local authorities and the NHS spending money on the wrong types of employment support
- Low aspirations around whether disabled people can work, and so poor outcomes become acceptable.

There is a large body of evidence that indicates those with autism are more likely to be unemployed, suffer mental health conditions and have lower aspirations around employment.

National schemes, both Government and corporation-led, are beginning to emerge. In September, the Government announced it would follow the lead of other tech firms such as Microsoft in actively seeking to employ a diverse workforce which is inclusive of people with autism. Microsoft's approach of an 'interview academy', including parts of a traditional interview with opportunities to demonstrate skills in a workshop, is a move in the right direction for creating accessible recruitment processes. However, to what extent these programmes enable those with the most substantial barriers to employment to succeed is still unknown. The government scheme is open to those with a degree or in the process of completing one. Microsoft currently employ over 150,000 people. The programme has recruited 11 employees with autism in the first year and is expanding to the UK<sup>6</sup>.

*Jobs should be safe and accommodating. Aligning work with the individual's aspirations, career goals and strengths will improve their potential success in their role and associated responsibilities.*

### Improving employment chances for people with autism

Through our work at BeyondAutism and learning from our colleagues in the education and the business sector, the following key aspects would enable those with autism to have a chance of fulfilling their ambitions to be employed:

Recognise and Value: Employers must recognise and value the contributions of people with autism in the workplace, including the diversity of skills they can

<sup>6</sup> Barnett, N. (2017) Join us: Working together to help people with autism enter the workforce. <https://blogs.microsoft.com/on-the-issues/2017/04/03/join-us-working-together-help-people-autism-enter-workforce/> viewed 23 October 2020

contribute. They should be paid fairly and in line with other employees.

Pathways: In education, employment and a pathway to employment must be given equal priority alongside the core curriculum. Pathways must be created using a person-centred approach. There must be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time bound targets in place for employment outcomes to be achieved. Transition to employment must be part of the natural cycle of

*There is a large body of evidence that indicates those with autism are more likely to be unemployed, suffer mental health conditions and have lower aspirations around employment.*

leaving education, just as learners are supported in moving from one key stage to another. In employment, pathways must be accessible for all, whether they be internships, apprenticeships or supported employment schemes.

The Right Advice: In addition to pathways being in place, specialist and expert advice must be available to those in education from at least Year 9 onwards (or before). The specialist support should

be knowledgeable of not just employment, but also autism and what good support looks like for people with additional needs in the workplace. It is not appropriate for the support to be delegated to those who are not specifically trained in careers guidance and autism. Input must inform the Education, Health and Care Plan for those who have one, and ensure vocational outcomes feature in the plan.

Tailored Support: Employers must understand the advantages of implementing reasonable adjustments and their duties to respond to the employee's needs, including those who have autism. Employers must be knowledgeable in implementing tailored support at each stage of a person's journey to employment, including recruitment (advert, application, and interview), through to induction, training and sustained employed.

### What help is available

BeyondAutism received funding in 2020 from the City Bridge Trust to recruit a Specialist Vocational Advisor to design a toolkit of resources for people with autism, those who support them (family and professionals) as well as employers. The focus of the tool kit is based around three key elements:

- Signposting people with autism, employers, and those who support people with autism to the right guidance, legislation and policy to support and protect the employment of people with autism.



- Resources which facilitate the employment of people with autism. The 'tool kit' will have specific resources such as vocational assessments, profiles, templates (such as visuals for timetables and communication), as well as checklists and aids for employers. For schools, colleges and those supporting people with autism in education, resources on developing a vocational pathway to employment outcomes.
- Training and continuing development are vital in building the knowledge and expertise of employers. The tool kit will recommend training and guide employers in how to develop the skills required to recruit people with autism and sustain their employment.

The BeyondAutism Vocational Toolkit will be available in the summer of 2021. To find out more about the project and BeyondAutism's work around employment, please visit [www.beyondautism.org.uk](http://www.beyondautism.org.uk).



## About the Authors



**David Anthony** is Head of Research and Learning at BeyondAutism, a charity with a vision that everyone with autism accesses an education which empowers a life full of choice, independence and opportunity. David's experience includes Headship of an independent specialist college and secondary provision for people with autism. He has also worked as a SENDCo in specialist primary and secondary settings as well as mainstream provisions. David started his career as a teacher of English and Media, working with pupils who had a diagnosis of autism, ADHD and dyslexia. In his current role, he oversees several projects and services including: Outreach and Training for parents and professionals, development of research projects within the field of autism, Applied Behaviour Analysis and overseeing the Employment Project across BeyondAutism's services. David believes that with the right support, understanding, and collaborative working all students can reach their individual aspirations and outcomes, including being an active part of society and their communities.



**Professor Simon Baron-Cohen, FBA, FMedSci.** is Director of the Autism Research Centre at the University of Cambridge. He is also Professor of Developmental Psychopathology at the University of Cambridge and Fellow at Trinity College, Cambridge; Vice-President, National Autistic Society; Past President, International Society for Autism Research; and Trustee and Director, the Autism Centre of Excellence (ACE).

He holds degrees in Human Sciences from New College, Oxford, a PhD in Psychology from UCL, and an M.Phil in Clinical Psychology at the Institute of Psychiatry. He held lectureships in both of these departments in London before moving to Cambridge in 1994. He was also Director of CLASS (Cambridge Lifespan Asperger Syndrome Service), a clinic for adults with suspected autism.



**Lord Clement-Jones** was made CBE for political services in 1988 and life peer in 1998. He is the House of Lords Liberal Democrat spokesperson for Digital and a former spokesperson on the Creative Industries (2015-17). He is the former Chair of the House of Lords Select Committee on Artificial Intelligence (2017-18) and Co-Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Artificial Intelligence. He is a Consultant of global law firm, DLA Piper. He is Chair of Ombudsman Services Limited, the not for profit, independent ombudsman service providing dispute resolution for the communications, energy, property and copyright licensing industries; Chair of Council of Queen Mary University of London and Chair of the Advisory Council of the Institute for Ethical AI in Education, led by Sir Anthony Seldon. He is President of Ambitious About Autism, an autism education charity and school.



**Tracie Linehan** is Chief Executive of BeyondAutism. She has a wealth of leadership and management experience within the field of special educational needs and disability; having experience of both charity and education, she worked for Scope for over 20 years, where she held two headships and ultimately rose to the position of Regional Director. Tracie was the Executive Head of the Autism Schools Trust where she led on setting up and developing a Free School and is currently CEO of BeyondAutism, with two outstanding independent special schools. She has extensive experience of developing early year's provision, establishing outreach, and training services, providing strategic leadership to schools, and developing Post 19 and adult services.



**Toby Mullins** has been a Head for over 22 years in a wide variety of educational settings. His first Headship was at Seaford College where he remained for nearly 16 years. A three-year spell in the midlands as Executive Principal running two large secondary academies, in deprived areas, was followed by two short spells setting up two schools in the 'for profit' sector.



He has an MBA from London Business School, where he specialised in leadership, new venture development, managing change and project management. He is also a qualified Executive Coach and works with clients from both the business and the educational sectors.

Toby has been both the Chairman of the Society of Heads and also of the ISC. He is an experienced board member, is the Chair of the United Westminster and Grey Coat Foundation, and is a trustee at The Children's Trust, a major charity for children with acquired brain injury.



qualification for teachers of visual impairment and a master's degree in deafblind education. She is also an Ofsted inspector.

**Professor Toby Salt** was a headteacher of schools and then deputy CEO at the National College of School Leadership and is the former CEO of Ormiston Academies Trust and the largest exam board AQA. He now is Advisory director at AQA; Senior Advisor at Zen Educate and to Thomas's Schools and provides support to several CEOs in the education sector.



**Andy Swartfigure** has been working in the field of Autism Education and Behaviour Analysis for 20 years. Primarily offering an analysis of human behaviour within complex matrices including bigger picture thinking in regard to larger environments that surround education systems and building relationships therein.

At a strategic level he specialises in operational analysis regarding behaviours that challenge the efficient running of settings, including behaviour management systems and formative and summative assessment of pupil attainment and progress. He is also skilled in creating and running bespoke training workshops for staff and/ or training specifically for cases that challenge in the classroom. Further work includes creating and running training for senior leaders in regard to behaviour management and expectations of staff.

For the last three years he has been focussing on behaviour analytical work across services in Local Authority provisions, the NHS and the independent sector. He has also made contributions to research groups as well as working internationally and building networks across all areas as a strategic partner to develop models of education delivery and management capacity in education and organisations that rely on human behaviour to be effective.

**Audrey Pantelis** is the Founder and Director of Elevation Coaching and Consulting Ltd. which enables transformational school improvement by means of the following programmes: strategy planning, inclusive leadership including coaching (1:1 and group), training - diversity and inclusion with specific reference to race and special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).



Audrey was the founding Head of School of a new free special school, based in north west London, that opened in 2015. The school, under Audrey's leadership, went on to gain a 'Good with outstanding features' judgement for the school's first Section 5 Ofsted inspection (January 2018). Audrey has thirty years' experience in the education sector as a teacher, middle leader, senior leader and school leader in both mainstream and SEND. As a mainstream practitioner she was a Music and Drama specialist and a performing arts leader. She gained the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) in 2007. Audrey also works with New Schools Network as a Specialist SEND Advisor.

**Laura Pease** is Principal of Whitefield School, part of the Whitefield Academy Trust. She has been in special education since 1982. During that time she has been Head of the Rebecca Goodman Centre for deafblind children and Head of Whitefield's specialist provision for children with sensory impairment and learning difficulties before becoming Vice Principal and then Principal of Whitefield School. She holds the mandatory





**Amy Wevill** manages executive and non-executive searches, leads on roundtables and events and heads Wild Research, the publishing and advisory division. Amy has a background in international research and programming high-level events, most recently at Chatham House (The Royal Institute of International Affairs). Amy has a Public Policy MA from King's College London and a History of Art BA from University College London. Amy has served as trustee of The Mill and supports young people with reading and writing through The Literacy Pirates.



**Edward Wild** established Wild Search in 2010 following his earlier career in executive search with two established businesses. He has advised a wide range of education organisations and charities since 2004 on appointments and strategic planning. Prior to that he was the Development Director of Hampton School and author of its history.

His early career was pursued in education as a teacher within day schools and national and international charities as both a volunteer and a fundraising specialist. A trustee of a range of educational charities since 2003, he is a trustee of the Royal School of Church Music.

## About Wild Search

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Wild Search is an established, well-connected and innovative executive search and advisory company, specialising in education. Our team provides extensive sector knowledge and brings a formidable and constantly evolving network of contacts to every search.

Celebrating our tenth anniversary this year, our market knowledge, network and the Wild Search community are constantly evolving through a combination of searches, reports and events. Our work has encompassed advising on the appointment of executive and non-executive appointments for a range of organisations, primarily in the education and charity sectors.

We have also worked with boards to develop new roles and secured shortlists for them.

We are firmly committed to providing strong methodology, a rigorous approach, thorough research, imaginative thinking, in addition to clear and candid advice. We combine transparency with a sharp focus on the key requirements for each client for every position.





## About Wild Research

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Wild Research was formed in 2011 and has since published 29 reports. The majority of the reports focus on education, but others relate to charities, housing and development and the rural economy. In order to further our understanding of our clients' needs and outlook, we seek to evolve and improve our knowledge of the issues they face and challenges that lie ahead.

By contacting and interviewing experts and practitioners in each field, we aim to improve our insight, share best practice and provide new perspectives.

Wild Research welcomes ideas for reports and commissions from clients to highlight new developments and challenges within a business or sector.

## About BeyondAutism

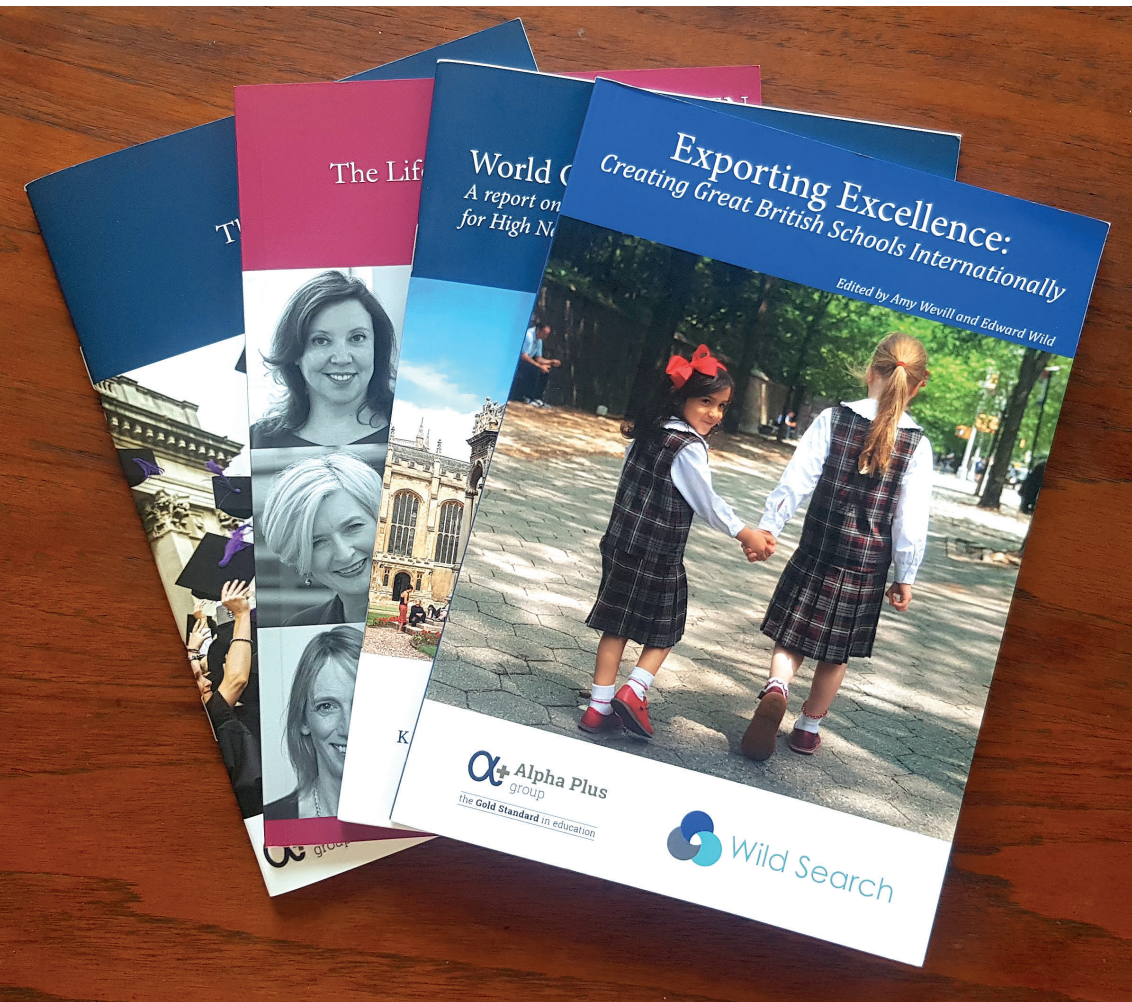
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BeyondAutism is a charity with a vision that everyone with autism accesses an education which empowers a life full of choice, independence and opportunity.

This is being achieved through BeyondAutism schools, Independent Special Schools, offering specialist education for children and young adults with autism aged 4-19. An Early Years' Service providing support for families and children aged 15 months – 5 years, and the Post-19 provision offering opportunities to young adults with autism, from the age of 19 up to 25 – preparing them for adulthood with a skillset that enables them to have choice.

In addition, the Research and Learning hub is a conduit for sharing great practice, for problem solving through research and for inspiring learning across the globe. This includes Outreach and Training for parents, carers, professionals and other schools – delivering life-changing outcomes in education settings and at home. We are experts in educating children and young adults with autism, applying the principles of Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) and Verbal Behaviour (VB) to develop the life skills needed to live as independent a life as possible.

[www.beyondautism.org.uk](http://www.beyondautism.org.uk)



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ISBN: 978-1-8382757-0-9

2020