



Newsletter 14 January 2010

A very happy new year to you all.

I hope that you all have a good Christmas and New Year and it was not too stressful.

With all the snow we are currently having I thought it would be wise to touch on this.

With schools closed, icy roads and so many services stopping it can be very hard for a family with an Autistic member to cope. You don't get the normal respite of school, the supermarkets are not getting food in and that one and only brand of chicken nuggets your child will eat are out of stock!

Siblings are bouncing off the walls with the joys of no school but then they are getting bored and just adding to your stress.

The change in routine is effecting your childs mood. They are confused, anxious.

Remember your not alone. Come to the forum, the chat room and talk to people as I am sure a lot feel just like you. Support each other and keep each other going.

The NAS offices are open again and will offer support where they can.

Don't forget your GP. Even if you ring and just ask from a call back and explain the stress your under, at least it will be in your notes.

Out of hours services too will listen and advise if they can. And there is always NHS direct.

The snow will go, just hold out for a bit longer.

Next we have a excellent story and advise written by one of our members. Thank you so much for taking the time to write it, it is very interesting and I am sure a lot of members will find it of use.

I think one must accept that as in all industries some are better at their jobs than others. However, in education, it affects our children, which of course makes it personal. I for one would never judge anyone, acknowledging and embracing difference, and recognising that my life is richer because of it. But that doesn't mean that I always find it easy, especially when I am having a particularly low day, and there have been plenty of those. I also know that my experience of this site has made me feel that I am not alone and that there are many people whose journeys, while not the same as mine, are just as problematic. At times it is hard to be positive, hard to believe that in spite of all our efforts, we are still fighting for the right to an education for our children, despite government buzz words such as 'inclusion' and 'every child matters' etc. etc...

What I find so difficult and what I resent so much, is that if your child should be a square peg (as one of mine is) then you must fight for what they are supposedly automatically entitled to. It is a game of strategy and unfortunately some are better at it than others, or better informed at least.

But hey, please don't be put off by this blatant obstruction to what is in effect; a contravention of the United Nations Convention for the Rights of the Child, as education is not the only 'right' that is subject to such games or one that is denied to so many. A 'right' to health care is another that is subject to a game of lottery, but don't get me started on that one!

Local authorities have dug themselves into a hole because they did not plan (or were totally misguided by the Government - Labour, Conservative...they are all the same!) for those children who were indeed square pegs and who could not be forced into round holes. And the Government foolishly thought that by the mere housing of all these children together under one roof would somehow be comparable to waving a magic wand, that their SEN would simply vanish or be swallowed up by the vast numbers of non-SEN children. How on earth did they think that inclusion wouldn't cause problems? The introduction of a new buzz word ('spin' is one that springs to mind here) does not mean that the problems suddenly disappear. They are simply buried until the next Government comes into power and introduces their latest 'buzz' word. No sooner have schools stop reeling from the latest guidelines to be issued, they are hit by another wave. It takes time for these guidelines to filter down and be interpreted, and even longer before they can be judged a success or failure, and constant change is unhelpful.

Let's face it, while schools may have been given more funding to apparently provide the expertise that SEN demands, such a paltry sum does not allow for the training or acquisition of experts in all fields of SEN. State schools are still under funded and under staffed, and therefore always subject to cut corners and compromise. But it is our children who are being compromised! Funding has been given to schools disguised to parents as power. Schools now have the 'power' to use funding in ways they consider most appropriate. But by giving schools more power and more say in how to spend their budget, they are also being held responsible for when things go wrong - what you might call the traditional scapegoat. And while teaching assistants do a truly fantastic job (paid the least for the most demanding of roles) they are now being used more and more to supervise lessons in staff absence.

Our tribunal is looming and for the most part, it fills me with fear. BUT, at the same time I am relishing the opportunity to confront those who believe they are more powerful and those educators who dare to bring into question my parenting skills and me as a parent who 'thinks' her son is autistic (despite a diagnosis in 2000), and who are clinging in desperation to the 'changes in routine' which my son has experienced (which of course, would explain why staff are unable to educate him and is of course, solely responsible for his behaviour) due to our two house moves in two years.

And if someone could please let me know where the 'succession of partners' that are apparently knocking my door down and who are responsible for our moving house are, as I would hate to miss out on that very very scarce quality 'me' time!

Please feel free, anyone to submit any stories or information and advise you have. Its really excellent to have you all involved.

Best wishes

The editor