

Press Release

Thursday 17th September 2009, London, UK



Autism Mother organises her own education conference to try and bridge the gap ...

Polly Tommey, a mother from London who has a son with autism, has stepped forward to try and bridge the gap she believes exists in understanding about autism in schools and across the public sector. She is taking it upon herself to organise a conference on the subject targeted at parents, professionals and public sector employees in particular.

The conference, to be held from 23rd to 25th October at LVS School in Ascot, Berkshire has already captured the attention of central government and now features a wide range of major international speakers on autism. In collaboration with The Autism Trust, a charity founded by Polly in 2007, she has even underwritten the attendance at the event by public sector professionals – including teachers, police officers, fire fighters and social workers by offering to match the cost of up to 150 places to be taken up by these groups.

Polly says the response has been very good, but more professionals from outside the UK – from Australia to Romania to the United States - are now responding than those closer to home and this, she feels, is part of the problem. “How can we start to improve the way we deal with the very difficult problem of the discrimination faced by people with autism in this country unless leaders in *our* classrooms can show the way?” Polly says, “When I learn about the dreadful employment prospects of the majority of children with autism when they leave school; when I get calls from other parents describing the physical violence their children face in their teens and adult years; and when I have to fight for everything for my son Billy ... I know it has to be largely down to ignorance and fear. This has to change if we are to have a society in this country that we are proud to be a part of and if we are to give our young people with autism the chance they deserve.”

Polly’s current campaign to raise awareness of the crisis faced by families living with autism started earlier in the year with Polly featuring in a number of TV and radio interviews explaining the background to her nationwide poster initiative targeted straight at Gordon Brown.



The campaign was successful and culminated in a meeting with the Prime Minister in Downing Street in June. The meeting was also attended by Mr Brown’s wife Sarah Brown and the Minister for Care Services, Phil Hope,

In the meeting Polly set out her case on how to start to remove the discrimination she believes that children and adults with autism face ... through education.

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Polly's decision to get on with the plan alone now is a direct result of her frustration with the speed of response ... "It is clear that we just have to do it for ourselves. We're facing a critical situation where time is of the essence. These are real people with real lives" is Polly's down to earth and pragmatic response.

For further information and to arrange interviews:

Polly Tommey

Founder, The Autism Trust

07921 949500

Oliver Jones

Chairman, The Autism Trust

07802 985053

Notes for Editors

Autism in the UK:

Autism affects over half a million people and is the cause of often overwhelming stress for families of those with autism. This is not a passing matter; **autism numbers have increased dramatically in the last twenty years from 5 in 10,000 in 1989 to more than 1 in a 100 (100 in 10,000) today.**

Polly Tommey



Polly Tommey is a mother dealing with autism. She is also the founder and Editor-in-Chief of The Autism File. Polly has been producing what is now the leading retail magazine on autism in the UK, USA & Canada (with a current issue circulation of over 40,000 copies) from her family's house in Hampton, West London since 1999.

Earlier in the year, Polly led a campaign to highlight the crisis faced by families living with autism by using an extensive billboard campaign to attract the attention of Gordon Brown

The Autism Trust (registered charity Nr 1117657)

www.theautismtrust.org.uk

The Autism Trust's focus is on building inspiring, sustainable and real futures for the many children with autism in the world today: ***A Safe Haven for People with Autism***

Attendance at the October Conference costs £75 per day for general delegates; however teachers and other public sector employees can access the public sector 'match funding' rate of a 50% discount by identifying their background when booking on 020 8979 2525 or by going online to www.autismconference2009.com, subject to place availability.