

Press Release

Thursday 11th June 2009, London, UK



Autism Mother, Polly Tommey meets Gordon Brown in Downing Street

Polly Tommey, a mother from London with a son with autism, met with Prime Minister Gordon Brown in Downing Street earlier today. The meeting was also attended by Mr Brown's wife Sarah Brown, Minister for Care Services Phil Hope, Senior Health Advisor Greg Beales and Oliver Jones, Chairman of The Autism Trust.



The key actions arising from the meeting centred on delivering training about autism to the public sector; creating an Autism Coalition across government and the many autism charities in the UK; and making sure that more options and more choices are available to support people with autism.

Polly's focus on trying to address discrimination faced by people with autism through better training of professionals across all parts of the public sector was understood by Mr Brown. He told Polly that he would now be taking action to address this need and asked her to work with Minister Phil Hope and the Department of Health's Specialist Autism Advisor Elaine Hill to make this happen. He also acknowledged Polly's statement about the international nature of the autism problem and wants to see more exchange of ideas and knowledge.

Sarah Brown's involvement was welcomed by Polly as Sarah is informed and highly motivated by the autism cause. Mr Brown asked that Sarah should work with Polly to establish an Autism Coalition to try and align the many and often divergent interests in the sector and achieve a single voice – something both have previously worked for. This will commence in the autumn.

Finally the plans of The Autism Trust for a new Centre of Excellence support model were shown to Mr Brown. He welcomed and supported the initiative and emphasised the importance of creating more capacity, more options and more choice for those with autism who need this vital support.

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In addition to these important commitments Polly has been invited to join the External Reference Group of leading autism representatives who advise government. Polly summarised this and the many other significant initiatives covered in the meeting: "My campaign to gain Gordon Brown's attention has been completely worthwhile. Mr Brown has told me that he is committed to supporting children like my son Billy into the future and my involvement in helping his team means that at last parents of children with autism will have a very clear and loud voice speaking up on their behalf."

Oliver Jones commented, "The meeting represented a major step forward for autism recognition in the UK as **autism is now definitely and very clearly on the political agenda**. As Chairman of The Autism Trust, I am delighted that we are so closely involved in these important developments."

For further information and to arrange interviews:

<i>Oliver Jones</i>	<i>Chairman, The Autism Trust</i>	<i>07802 985053</i>
<i>Polly Tommey</i>	<i>Founder, The Autism Trust</i>	<i>07921 949500</i>

Notes for Editors

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***

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.

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 says: "Unless the problems of autism are understood; unless services become more available; and unless support is more widespread, we will see many more disaffected and desperate autism households emerge."

The UK government has taken a major step forward in responding to the challenge ...