

Autism and Girls Forum

The **Autism and Girls Forum** grew out of a Girls and ASC round table meeting, which was instigated by the nasen (National Association for Special Educational Needs) and held in London on 13th April 2015. This became the Autism and Girls Forum, which, since March 2016 has been hosted on NAHT's website under the umbrella of the **National Forum for Neuroscience and Special Education**

Chair **Professor Barry Carpenter CBE**

Purpose

At the first meeting in April 2015, the purposes of the forum were agreed as:

1. Recognising and appreciating the unique identity of girls and women with autism and the positive contribution they make to society.
2. Changing perceptions and attitudes about girls and women with autism.
3. Promoting equal consideration of girls and women who have, or may not yet have,
a diagnosis of autism

Strategic Planning Group

Prof Barry Carpenter	International lecturer and writer
Julie Collick (servicing officer to Forum)	NAHT Content Adviser Professional Development
Sarah-Jane Critchley	Autism Education Trust (AET)
Jo Egerton	Educational Researcher
Ruth Fidler,	Independent Consultant
Jane Friswell	Independent Consultant
Caroline Gordon	Incisive Health
Carrie Grant	Parent of children and young people with autism
Prof Francesca Happe	Cognitive Neuroscientist
Sharonne Horlock	SENCO
Kim Johnson	President, NAHT
Dr Liz Pellicano,	Cognitive Scientist
Carol Povey	National Autistic Society (NAS)
Kate Quigley	NAHT, Head of Professional Development
Felicity Sedgewick	PhD student (Autism in girls)
Dr Rona Tutt OBE	NAHT
Sophie Walker	Parent and journalist
Alison Wilcox,	nasen
Sarah Wild	Headteacher (school for girls with ASD)
Sarah Winstone	Incisive Health (Founding Partner)

Background

On 13th April 2015, nasen invited a group of interested parties to a Girls and ASC round table meeting in London, to discuss the need for a focus on girls with autism, because of growing concerns about their possible under-diagnosis and being a group that is overlooked. The group agreed to meet regularly to take forward this agenda and that it would become a Forum.

From its subsequent meeting, 2 major projects arose:

- ❖ Producing a booklet to raise awareness and provide information for schools, as well as giving a wider perspective from the family perspective
- ❖ Planning a conference which would give an update of the work in this area so far; give the perspective of girls and women who are on the autism spectrum; share effective practice; and result in a 'Call for Action'.

Outcomes

Although the Autism and Girls Forum has only been in existence for a short time, it has already completed one of its major projects and is well on the way to finalising the 2nd one as well:-

Girls and Autism: Flying Under the Radar

The booklet, *Girls and Autism: Flying Under the Radar*, has been published as part of nasen's mini-guide series and is available from their SEND Gateway. This has already become very popular, both here and abroad.

www.sendgateway.org.uk/.

Girls on the Autism Spectrum; the Big Shout!

The second project was to plan a conference in London for Friday 27th January 2017. Called ***Girls on the Autism Spectrum; the Big Shout!*** The aim is to give a further push to this agenda. Places can be booked via

<http://www.naht.org.uk/welcome/naht-events/conferences/>. As well as raising awareness, it is hoped that a positive outcome of the conference will be to agree a 'Call for Action' to highlight what needs to be done next.