



Visual Impairment and Autism:
identifying and sharing practice
September 2008 - 2010

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(RNIB))*

Funding has been secured from two trust funds, with the remainder coming from RNIB's own resources. The project is now under way and will run from September 2008 to August 2010.

The Project's partners are Brookfields School ¹, the National Autistic Society (NAS) ², the Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) ³ and Sunfield ⁴. There is a Steering Group composed of staff from each of these partners.

The intention is to develop resources to provide practitioners with information about approaches and strategies that have been used successfully with children who have both visual impairment and autism. A framework will also be designed to support decision making when planning for individual pupils.

In the near future the Project will have a dedicated webpage on the RNIB site. We hope it will be possible to provide links to the Partner organisations' websites. It would also be useful for the Partners to provide a link to the Project's webpage.

We have begun to run a pilot survey at Brookfields School, looking at the strategies employed there with children in this group. The experience gained will be used to fine-tune our approach prior to surveying pupils in a number of other schools.

Many practitioners contacted us at an earlier stage to make us aware that they were working with pupils who have both visual impairment and autism. We will follow up some of these contacts in order to include those children in the survey. This is likely to involve visits to a variety of schools; we wish to include children who are educated in specialist schools for visually impaired children (in which most pupils are resident),

local authority day special schools and mainstream schools. The aim is to obtain a cross-section of children who have both visual impairment and autism.

Several parents contacted us too. Our primary concern is the strategies employed in schools. However, we will also approach the parents / carers of the children selected for inclusion in the survey to seek information about any strategies they employ at home.

The bulk of the survey work will be carried out by Ian Bell, who is the Project Leader. Other members of the Project's Steering Group will undertake additional survey work.

For more information about the Project, click the link below to go to its own webpages on the RNIB site:

http://www.rnib.org.uk/professionals/education/viautismproject/Pages/visual_impairment_autism.aspx

The Project can be contacted

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Notes

1. Brookfields School, is a West Berkshire day school for pupils with learning difficulties including needs associated with autism and sensory impairment. <http://www.westberks.org/grouphomepage.asp?groupID=2558>
2. NAS: <http://www.nas.org.uk>
3. RNIB: <http://www.rnib.org.uk>
4. Sunfield, a UK charity, provides residential care, education and outreach support for children with severe and complex learning needs, many of whom have autism. <http://www.sunfield.org.uk>

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