

Parent Support and Pre-schooler Group

December 2007 project update

The Lambeth Capital Community Foundation has funded the *Lambeth Autism Group* to run a local parent and pre-schooler group until March 2008 at Little Starz Children's Centre in West Norwood. Originally intended to be a parent support group for Lambeth parents and carers of pre-school children (up to 5 years) with suspected or diagnosed social communication disorders, the need for the group to be extended to parents of school-age children quickly became apparent. Therefore our group membership is broader than we first thought. The group meets weekly, in term-time, and offers:

- A chance for parents and carers to **share experiences**
- **Fun, educational toys and activities** - including a sensory room
- Access to a **specialist lending library**
- **Information and expert advice**
- **Crèche facility for preschoolers**
- Free refreshments.

Since the first session on 28 September this year, the group has been growing steadily. Up to 12 parents are attending (not including the two parent coordinators). LAG has been working hard to publicise the group amongst local professionals and organisations and have been supported by Little Starz, and local health and education professionals. At present 3 pre-schoolers are attending the group, which is far less than the acknowledged need. There could be many reasons for this, however it is clear we would have had better outreach if all parents in contact with the Mary Sheridan Centre had been sent a leaflet about the group. We are still waiting for this to be done by the Mary Sheridan Centre.

The small amount of pre-schoolers attending has meant that the fantastic play resources we have bought to equip the age group and Little Starz' sensory room are not being used as much as we had anticipated. The Lending Library we have created is proving very popular; all 12 families attending the group are registered and regularly borrowing items that include reference books, biographies, advice manuals, children's books and DVDs. The use of the lending library will only grow as more parents are made aware of the branch having this fantastic facility, and more families are introduced to the group.

The group has had a range of visits from professionals including Community Nutritionist Patroklos Sesis, a number of Community Health Visitors including Paul Boggust, Early Years Alliance Educational Psychologist Sharon Synmoie and Parents for Inclusion project manager Angie Northwood. Parents have benefited from talking with these professionals in an informal setting. We are looking forward to more such visits in the New Year.

NAS Lambeth Branch

LAMBETH AUTISM GROUP

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In the New Year, we will continue to reach out to families who have children with SCDs and will aim to increase the amount of families accessing the group who have children of a pre-schooler age by getting back in touch with the Mary Sheridan Centre to ensure leaflets are sent to all parents on the waiting list for a diagnosis, and those families receiving a diagnosis. Alongside that we are planning to start a specific Toy Lending Library to increase the accessibility of the resources that we have, as well as the membership of the group. We will also be updating the Lending Library.