Link

AUGUST 1991 NO 135
Price 30 pence

The magazine for people with
Spina Bifida and/or Hydrocephalus

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BREAKTHROUGH IN SPINA BIFIDA PREVENTION

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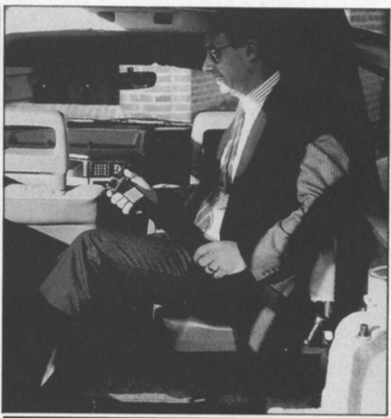
ASSOCIATION FOR SPINA BIFIDA AND
HYDROCEPHALUS
25 YEARS 1966
1991



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AUGUST 1991
ISSUE NO 135

ASSOCIATION FOR SPINA BIFIDA AND HYDROCEPHALUS

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The magazine for people with spina bifida and/or hydrocephalus
Editor: Gill Winfield

Published by **ASBAH**,
ASBAH House,
42 Park Road,
Peterborough PE1 2UQ
Telephone: 0733 555988.

LINK SUBSCRIPTION 6 EDITIONS - 12 MONTHS

UK	£3.30
Europe and Overseas Surface Mail	£4.80
Air Mail	£10.80

All payments should be made in Sterling.

Registered charity no. 249338.

WE welcome the results of the Medical Research Council's Vitamin Study which prove that the addition of folic acid to the diet can drastically reduce the numbers of babies being born with spina bifida and related defects of the spine - providing folic acid, a vitamin in the B group, is taken before conception and until the pregnancy is well established.

A deficiency in diet has long been suspected as being one of the main causes of spina bifida. The Vitamin Study, details of which appear on page 11, at last pinpoints the missing vitamin, and suggests there are no ill-effects in taking a single, 4mg dose every day until the 12th week of pregnancy.

ASBAH will shortly be discussing with its medical advisers whether folic acid should be made freely available to all women who ask for it and whether we should join the researchers in urging fortification of basic foodstuffs.

A drastic reduction in births of babies with spina bifida will not, however, reduce the enormous task facing this Association. There will still be babies born without the benefit of folic acid supplementation, some women are unable to absorb enough folic acid and there is no proof that folic acid-deficiency is the only cause of spina bifida.

We know 18,000 people and their families who need advice and practical support. Hydrocephalus occurs independently in premature babies, after traumatic head injuries and later in life and we are seeing an increasing number of clients with hydrocephalus alone.

We must continue to remind statutory authorities of their obligations to provide properly for the people with spina bifida and/or hydrocephalus. There are pockets of good medical and educational practice, but they are few and far between.

The reality of life for most people with spina bifida and/or hydrocephalus is of being hemmed in by the limitations of restricted mobility, failures to recognise their special needs in the classroom, inadequate training, difficulties with continence supplies, and uncertainty about exactly who to turn to. For their parents, caring can seem a heavy burden with no prospect of improvement, placing strain on health, family relationships and household budgets.

Giving people with spina bifida and/or hydrocephalus access to services, training and the correct equipment transforms this picture to one of hope, progress and a large measure of independence. Despite the major breakthrough in prevention announced last month, these are daily realities which will continue to confront this Association for many years to come.

COVER – Watching you, watching me. The Duchess of Gloucester taking a look through the other side of the camera, at our 25 year celebrations, see page 12.

ASSOCIATION FOR SPINA BIFIDA AND HYDROCEPHALUS

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Mr Derek Knightbridge, FCCA

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Miss Pat Corns, SRN

Regional Development Co-ordinator:
Mr Phillip Watson, BA (Hons), RGN

Five Oaks Centre Manager:
Miss Joan Pheasant, NNC

Appeals Manager:
Mr Roy Johnston

WEARING ASBAH'S COLOURS

Running for ASBAH in the London Marathon earlier this year was Miss P Radley from Leicester. Her time was just over four and a half hours. Miss Radley sent in this victory photo along with a cheque for £316.20, collected from her marathon sponsors.

And if you'd like an ASBAH T-shirt, as modelled by Miss Radley, you can order one from Penny Hebblewhite at National Office. They come in sizes S,M, L or XL and are a snip at just £5.70.

Recession takes its toll

During the last six months ASBAH's income has been hit hard by the recession as company giving has decreased, at the same time there has been a reduction in anticipated legacy income.

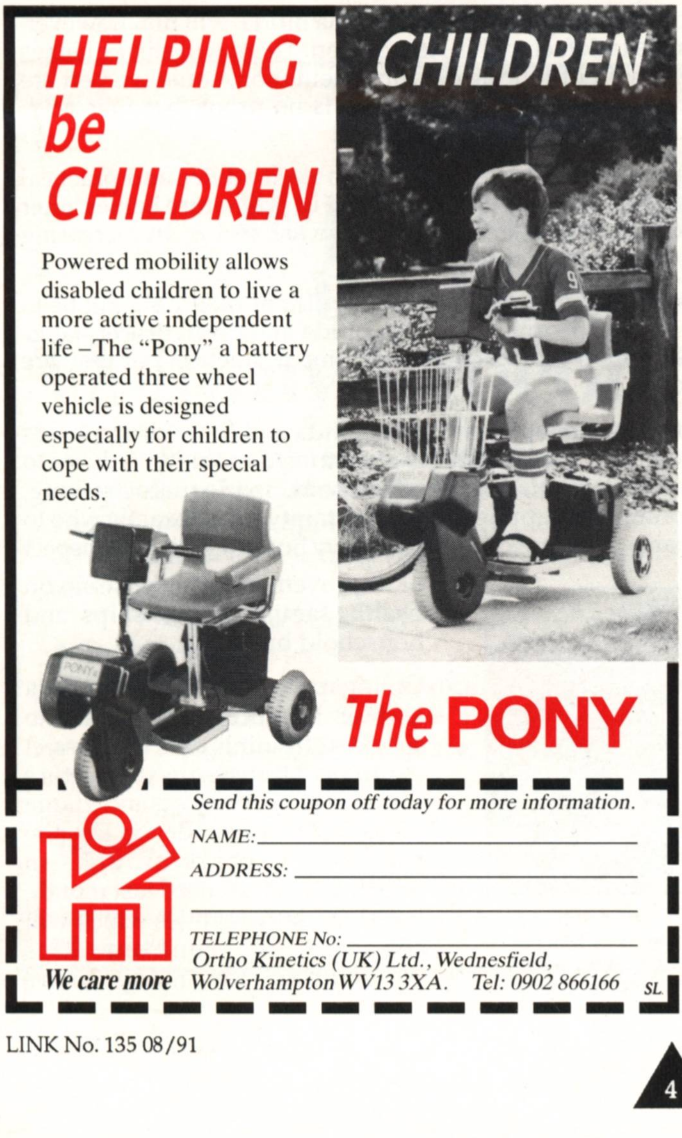
For these reasons we have had to plan for a budget deficit this year of £140,000 but this must be kept lower if possible and economies are therefore being made on travel, staff training and through salary restraint. Salaries are ASBAH's main commitment and the most significant savings can be made by not replacing staff who retire or leave, other than in exceptional circumstances.

As our executive director Andrew Russell points out "we are keenly aware that all these temporary measures have their effect on those we are here to help but ASBAH will survive and prosper again before long, provided we take prudent and sometimes painful steps now".

The main thrust for increasing income will be from our Telesales team and through the Fund-a-Fieldworker campaign.

Leading the Campaign

Spearheading the drive to find companies to sponsor our Fund-a-Fieldworker scheme will be Mr Paul Wootton who joined ASBAH on 8 July. As Business Liaison Manager, based in our Appeals department at National Office, he will manage the campaign team. His is seen as a key appointment in order to reverse the decline in company giving since the recession. Mr Wooton joined ASBAH from Forward Trust - the finance arm of Midland Bank.



Marathon Man

Also running in the London Marathon was Ken Miller who raised £1,200 in order to buy an Ortho Kinetics Pony Trike for nine-year-old Carol-Anne Paton. Ken had hoped to raise the full £1,360 needed to purchase the trike but Ortho-Kinetics stepped into the breach and made up the difference.

"The Pony Trike should make an incredible difference to all aspects of Carol-Anne's life, said Ken, she can now become part of the community. She specifically wanted a Pony Trike as she can drive it outdoors and indoors and will be able to take it with her wherever she goes as it is easily dismantled."

ASBAH fieldworker Sue Patten photographed Carol-Anne with her new trike and said "Carol-Anne was thrilled, her face was a picture. Ken cannot be thanked enough for his hard work".

Keeping abreast of developments

While many of us were enjoying ASBAH's silver jubilee garden party, on a perfect summer's day in July, several members of the Disabled Living Services team were deep in discussion at the Annual Meeting of the Society for Research into Hydrocephalus and Spina Bifida, at Liverpool Medical Institute.

At this international meeting, which included representatives from Holland, Denmark, Germany, USA, Ireland and England, papers were presented and discussed on subjects ranging from shunts to bowel management.

Members from ASBAH staff were able to attend the three-day meeting partly as a result of the generosity of local associations and DLS manager Rachel Stanworth feels their donations were well spent. "The meeting not only keeps us in touch with new trends and developments on the management of spina bifida and hydrocephalus but provides a valuable source of contacts and we very much appreciated being able to attend".

Readers of LINK will be able in share in the information exchanged during the conference as we will be including articles in future issues, on some of the topics discussed.

Former executive director honoured

Miss Moyna Gilbertson, ASBAH's executive director for 14 years until her retirement in April this year, became an Officer of the Order of the British Empire in the Queen's Birthday Honours. The award was given to Miss Gilbertson in recognition of her work for the Association. Miss Gilbertson, who says she has been overwhelmed with congratulations, feels the honour "recognises ASBAH's work, the stature our Association has attained and the respect in which it is held".

Also honoured was The Lady Jean Mackenzie who received a CBE for her work with the Royal United Kingdom Beneficent Association. Lady Jean has had a long association with ASBAH and was involved with Five Oaks as well as serving on several national committees.

ASBAH Study Days

OVER the next two months four study days are planned, taking place in venues stretching from Southampton to Manchester.

The first, on Research into Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus, will be held in Sussex on 7 September and is open to all those interested. Speakers include a consultant paediatric urologist and a neurologist as well as Maddie Blackburn, who is an ASBAH research fellow. The day is being arranged by Sussex ASBAH and the contact for further details is Margaret White, telephone 0293 871217.

The other three study days are intended for professionals and all are on the subject of continence management. The first of these is on 14 October at Southampton General Hospital, followed by Rotherham on 16 October and Manchester on a date to be fixed. For more information on ASBAH's Continence Study Days contact Jane Williams at National Office on 0733 555988.

Dancing the night away

Gill Beken, chairman of Guildford ASBAH, was treated to a colourful spectacular of Latin American and ballroom dancing before being handed a cheque for over £1500 raised at the Imperial Dance Championships.

The cheque was presented by Mr Hurley, organiser of the championships and Mr Robinson of Chessington Tyres, who sponsored the event. This magnificent sum had been raised from the sale of raffle tickets and programmes during the evening.

Baby Walker Triumph

Kevin Daily whose daughter has spina bifida, has won a long legal battle to stop a French firm copying his special baby walker invention. Mr Daily, whose book about his daughter was reviewed in our last issue, had patented the baby walker which he first made for his daughter Jo. But his backer to market and produce the walker dropped out when a similar French product came out.

In June the court ruled that all unsold French models should be destroyed and Mr Daily should get compensation. The company is appealing against the decision but Mr Daily is pressing ahead again to find a new backer to market his walker.

Service Call

This scheme, sponsored by Esso, alerts shops, petrol stations, banks etc that a disabled customer is outside the premises and wishes to conduct business. Companies in the scheme have a receiver in their window which is activated by a handheld transmitter, carried by the disabled customer.

Individuals can obtain a transmitter and details of the outlets who operate ServiceCall from them at Bakewell, Derbyshire, telephone 0629 812422. Transmitters cost £19.95.

THEY HAVE THE POWER

Five spina bifida powerlifters will be amongst the British team members taking part in the Pre-Paralympic Powerlifting Competition in September. Entries from all over the world have been received for this event including Norway, Russia, USA, Hungary, Northern Ireland the UK and USA making it the largest gathering of disabled powerlifters ever.

The competition will be used by many nations to select their teams to go forward to the Paralympics (parallel to the Olympics) in Barcelona in 1992 and it will give lifters the chance to weigh up the opposition.

One of the sponsors of the competition is Wolverhampton Council and the event takes place in the Molineux Youth & Sports Centre, Waterloo Road, Wolverhampton from 17 - 20 September, from 1pm to 6pm each day. Spectators will be very welcome at the competition so why not go along and lend your support.

Appeal Success for Holiday Charity

AT THE END of July the Calvert Trust Kielder, who specialise in adventure holidays for disabled people, their families and friends, celebrated the success of their £500,000 appeal launched earlier this year. The appeal has enabled the Trust to build three luxury self-catering holiday homes in the grounds of the Calvert Trust Kielder - an activity holiday centre - close to Kielder Water on the edge of Northumbria Park.

The chalets' design incorporates wide access doors, height adjustable cookers, work surfaces and storage cupboards. Bathrooms have hoists, wheel-in showers and there is easy access to gardens and all facilities. The chalets can be hired from £184 per week, low season, to £337 in the high season.

For more details telephone 0434 250232.

Helping others

Steve Robinson, committee member of Lincoln ASBAH, is a seasoned fundraiser both for his local association and other charities. His latest venture, planned for later this month, is a sponsored marathon on a three-wheeled bike. Steve's aim is to raise money for Birchwood Health Centre where he has received help with medical problems in the past. This is the first time Steve, who has spina bifida and hydrocephalus, has attempted such a marathon and we wish him success.

Happily ever after

When Della and David Clift appeared on the cover of LINK back in 1986 it looked as though their's was the fairytale ending - they got married and lived happily every after - but it wasn't quite that simple!

WHEN they first married they had to live apart for a year, Della with her parents in Chiddingfold and David in lodgings in Godalming, until they could get a suitable home together. But their problems were not over as David became very ill and evenutally was diagnosed as having kidney disease. There followed a year of dialysis, three times a week, until David had a kidney transplant when his mother donated one of her kidneys. The operation was successful but the couple were told that it might mean David would not become a father.

But, as you can see from the photograph, the Clifts were destined for a 'happy ending' and Della, who has spina bifida, gave birth to Amy at the end of last year. Now as Della says "Everything is running smoothly, life can be hectic but we are getting into a routine and preparing the house and garden for when Amy gets on the move."

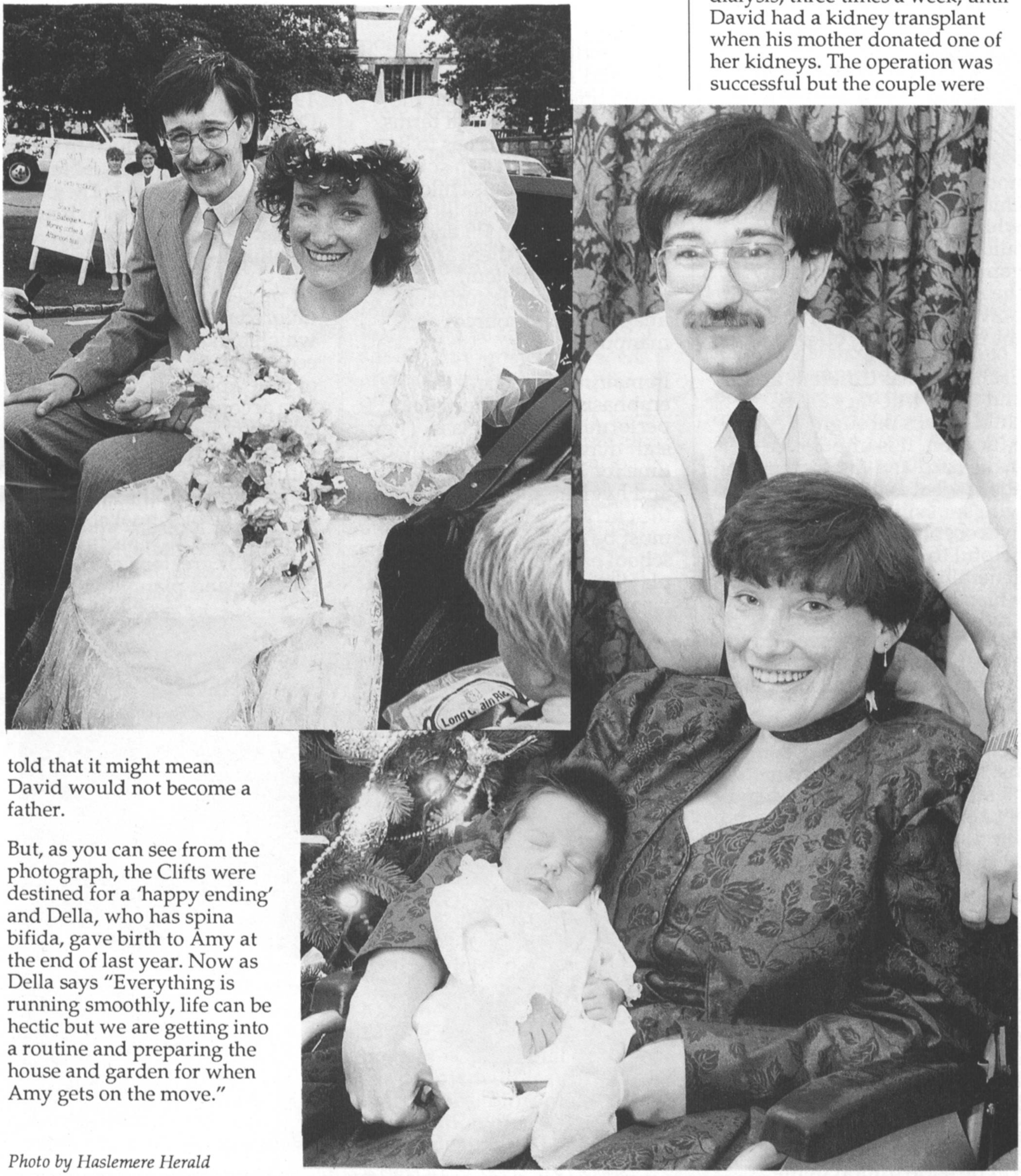


Photo by Haslemere Herald

Mainstream or Special?

Leonie Holgate, Disabled Living Adviser, discusses the factors involved in choosing mainstream or special education for your child, and suggests some useful publications for parents.

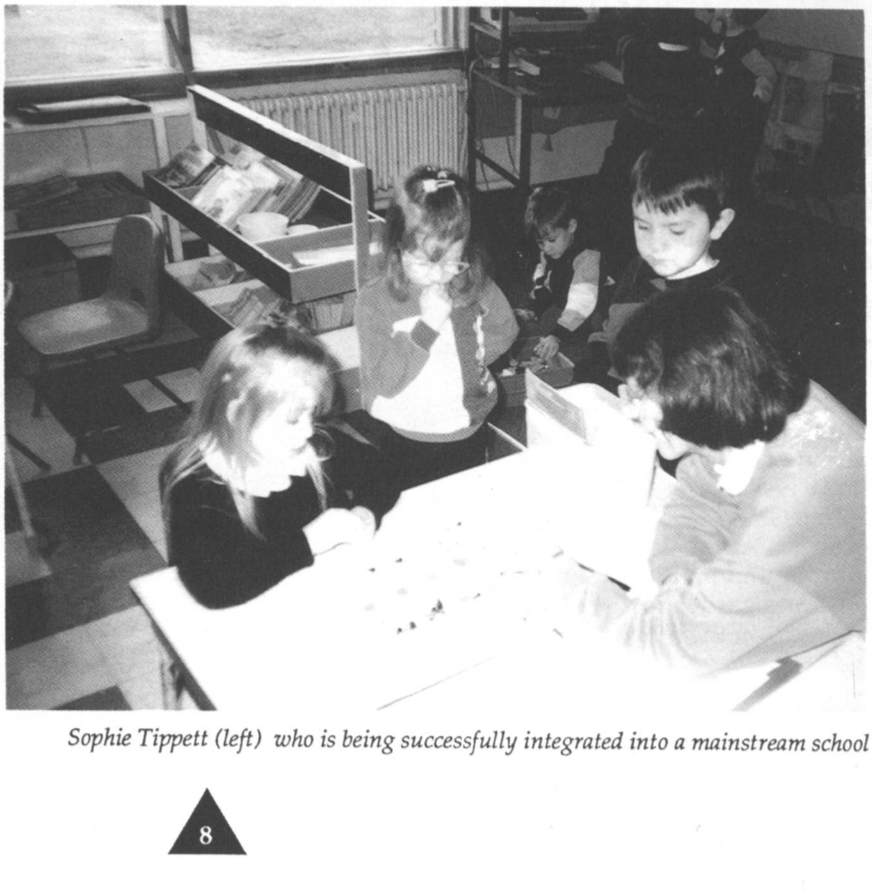
THIS is often a very knotty problem for parents to resolve. It can mean several visits to local, and not so local, schools with their child, in an attempt to decide which school appears most suitable. If you are new to this game it is not easy to know the right questions to ask and how to keep a mental score of the options being offered.*

Each child has different needs and these will vary as the child moves through education. It is impossible to make hard and fast statements about what is best for children with spina bifida and/or hydrocephalus but it can be helpful to look, rather generally, at some aspects which have to be considered.

Perhaps we tend to see mainstream school as being 'normal' and special schools (be they for physical disabilities, mild or severe learning difficulties) as being just that - special - and therefore rather protected and not academic. This is far from the case in many schools, these days, and may almost be the reverse. A child with a physical disability, in mainstream school, may be protected by their peers and staff; as long as the child appears happy not much pressure is put on them on the academic front. Many special schools have active regimes for developing the child in all directions and academic programmes are tailored to the child's abilities. The school will provide tuition in life skills and sport is geared to the child's physical capabilities in order that they may compete on equal terms with class mates. It has to be acknowledged that in some mainstream schools children with a physical disability may be excluded from PE and sport, although there are ways around this problem, providing there is sufficient imagination, resources and manpower.

In mainstream school the emphasis is on learning and performing well in class. The staff may not appreciate that time for learning personal care and hygiene should be part of the curriculum. These issues must be dealt with outside school or learning time, eg playtime, lunch period, at home. The authors of an article which appeared in June 1989 LINK (Meijer and Oosting) made the valid point that this eats into the free time that is really so essential to a child's development. They require time to play, to dream, to watch and thus grow emotionally and socially.

At present the curriculum is tailored to the average child which makes sense, perhaps, economically and in formation of timetables but does not take into account the 'special' child who may be physically disabled or have a learning difficulty. These children constitute a significant percentage of school children - Warnock's 20%. This indicates a need for greater flexibility in thinking and planning in



Sophie Tippett (left) who is being successfully integrated into a mainstream school order to provide a balanced programme suitable for the child in question and suitable for staffing and resources available. Mainstream schools with a special unit attached come close to a solution. Children are able to integrate into the curriculum whenever possible and withdraw for special attention or extra input as and when required. Where this has been carefully thought out, this system works well and, perhaps, offers the child with a disability the best of both worlds.

According to Meijer and Oosting, parents in Holland appear to have greater ease in moving their children from one type of school to another. This certainly takes into account the changing needs of children at various stages of development. In this country the problem has been tackled by offering a Statement of Educational Needs. In theory this should provide access and extra staffing according to the needs of the individual child. It is updated at specified times throughout the education period in an attempt to continue adequate provision for the child and allowing them to remain in the school of their choice. Unfortunately, both in the writing and the adherence to the Statement, there are fluctuations throughout the country depending on financial constraints and the interpretation by the Local Authority. In some cases the time taken to produce the final Statement means that when it finally comes into operation it may be out of date.

Meijer and Oosting made one poignant comment about children in mainstream school feeling isolated because they were not able to join in some activities and were removed from the hurly burly of society. These are two important factors and the aim should be to ensure that the child is at ease in whichever environment they find themselves. This is one of the foundation stones for effective learning. The school's aim should be to match the needs and abilities of their pupils, at all stages.

The child is an individual and their preferences must also be taken into consideration. Trying to squash the child into a mould because it satisfies society and bears a label of 'normality' has to be resisted. There will be some 'normal' children in mainstream school who have a learning disability, who would flourish in a special school but they are denied the benefits of this type of education. At least our families and children, hopefully, have this choice. To quote once more from the Meijer and Oosting article *"..although modern thinking may veer towards integrated education, in reality the issue is far more complex and each child should be assessed so that it can reach its full potential. In this way children can grow up to become active members of society."*

This article may appear to favour the special school but what it is attempting to emphasise is that parents should feel free to make a choice and if special schooling is the most appropriate for their child, then that is the right choice. There should be no feelings of second best or of lowering standards - the child is the person who counts. A pattern that is emerging for quite a few children with spina bifida and/or hydrocephalus is Primary Mainstream School, Secondary schooling in a unit or Special School, rejoining mainstream education at Further Education level. Quite a number have gone on to take degree courses and there is no age limit to the Open University, so the message is 'take your time'.

Useful publications

*CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS, ASSESSMENT, LAW AND PRACTICE - CAUGHT IN THE ACT by Harry Chasty and John Friel, published by Jessica Kingsley Publishers, London 1991, price £9.95. Parents would find this recent publication very useful, it lays out quite clearly how to look at schools and gives examples of questions to ask, as well as dealing with other topics of interest to parents.

A SERIES OF GUIDELINES ABOUT PARENTS' RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES - CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS published by the Rathbone Society,Princess House, Manchester M1 6DD, price £3.75 inc p&p. The Rathbone Society is a national charity for people with learning difficulties. This book is a compilation of fact sheets which deal with the many aspects connected with the Statementing process. It includes parents' rights and duties; rights and duties of local education authorities, the various stages of statementing, sample letters, an abc guide to the professionals involved and useful addresses.

EDUCATION - A report from Holland by Ineke Meijer and Hank Oosting - copies of this article, which apeared in the June 1989 issue of LINK, are available from the library at National Office.

A STATEMENT PLEASE!

BEFORE your child starts school you should start the statementing process. ASBAH education adviser Peter Walker explains what a statement is , why it is so important and how ASBAH can help .

What is a statement?

A Statement is a legal document which lays down the provision needed by an individual child with special educational needs. Statementing arose out of the 1981 Education Act and is intended to precisely describe the needs of an individual child and how the local authority intends to meet those needs.

Why the hurry?

Because of the length of time it can take to get a statement (up to two years) you should start the process before your child goes to school.

Why is a statement necessary?

It is becoming increasingly apparent that all children with spina bifida and/or hydrocephalus should be statemented - the earlier the better. Many parents do not see the necessity, particularly if a local education authority is already providing the facilities necessary to meet the education needs of their child. However, it is important to get these provisions written into the legal document called a Statement of Special Educational Needs otherwise, in times of financial cutbacks or change in policy, what may be provided now could be taken away or severely diminished.

What does statementing involve?

The child has to be assessed medically, socially and educationally. Parents sometimes resist asking for their child to be statemented because it can seem a daunting and lengthy process and they may have difficulty in acquiring information about it.

Who can help ?

ASBAH is committed to helping families with a variety of problems and the right education for your child is one of them. Do not struggle on alone when you can seek help from your fieldworker or National Office. Information is readily available and help with your part in the process, mediation and representation can always be obtained from ASBAH.

If your child already has a statement but...

you are not satisfied with its contents, not getting very far in negotiating with the Local Education Authority or are considering an appeal, please contact the writer.

In order to assist us to give suitable advice please send photocopies of all the documents and letters that you have sent to, and received from, the LEA.

Diary Dates

17 September: Real Jobs for Real Money - RADAR/MENCAP National Conference and Exhibition on Employment at Kensington Town Hall, London. Details: Rachel Scott, Conference Officer, RADAR, 25 Mortimer Street, London W1N 8AB. Tel: 071 637 5400.

20-22 September: Personal Relationships and Sexuality - an introductory course for staff working with and for people who have learning difficulties. Castle Priory College, Wallingford, Oxfordshire. Tel: 0491 37551. Course fee £156 including tuition and accommodation.

24 September: Bereavement: Implications for People with Learning Difficulties - open to all who are interested. Castle Priory College. Fee £36.

26 October: ASBAH AGM - 10.30 for 11.00 am at Royal College of Nursing, 20 Cavendish Square, London.

11 November: The Care of Children with Life-Threatening Conditions and Their Families - second national conference to be held by ACT at the NEC, Birmingham. Programme includes speakers on genetic counselling, care for the carers, coping mechanisms, bereavement. Fee is £45. Details from ACT Office, The Institute of Child Health, Royal Hospital for Sick Children, Bristol BS2 8BJ.

15 November: Choices: Transition to Adult Life for People with Genetic Disorders - this is being organised by the Genetic Interest Group and is open to teenagers and young adults who are at this stage in their lives, as well as parents and professionals. The afternoon session on Issues of Sexuality is being chaired by Dr Martin Bax who is involved in related research for ASBAH. *Venue: Baden Powell House, Queen's Gate, London SW7 5JS, £20 (unwaged £10). Details Mrs Hunt, 0993 881238.*

Major breakthrough in prevention

"Supplementation with the vitamin folic acid before pregnancy prevents neural tube defects"

Supplementation with folic acid (a vitamin of the B group) starting before pregnancy can prevent the birth of babies with spina bifida and other neural tube defects, says a paper published in a recent edition of 'The Lancet'. A prevention trial, involving centres in the UK, Australia, Canada, France, Hungary, Israel and the USSR, found that folic acid taken by women who had already had an affected pregnancy reduced the risk of a recurrence by 72%.

The trial, funded by the Medical Research Council and co-ordinated by the Department of Environmental and Preventive Medicine at St Bartholomew's Hospital Medical College was initially approved and supported throughout by ASBAH.

Previous studies had suggested that taking extra vitamins around the time of conception might reduce the risk but the position remained so uncertain that further evidence was needed to guide practice.

It was not known whether there was a genuine preventive effect, and, if so which vitamin was involved - knowledge which would avoid giving women extra ineffective, and possibly harmful, substances.

By 28 days after conception, the neural tube is formed. The neural tube is the spinal cord's precursor. Defects in its formation may result in spina bifida or the other neural tube defects, anencephaly and encephalocele. All are serious malformations.

The Medical Research Council reports

Women who had previously had pregnancies affected by a neural tube defect were invited to join the trial. The 1817 who agreed to join were allocated to one of four groups; folic acid, vitamins, folic acid plus other vitamins, or none of these. The women were allocated to each of the groups at random and the trial was "double-blind" (neither the doctors nor the patients knew what they were taking) so that knowledge of what was being taken could not influence the woman's diet or other behaviour. This design ensured that like was compared with like, and the conclusion that folic acid supplementation is an effective means of prevention is therefore secure.

Indeed the results were so clear that the trial was stopped before the expected necessary 2000 women had been entered into the trial and had a completed pregnancy. There was no demonstrable effect of the other vitamins investigated in the trial. No toxic effects were found although a much larger study would be needed to investigate possible small or rare adverse effects.

The trial was conducted among high risk women who had previously had a neural tube defect pregnancy but the researchers say that the preventative effect should apply generally to all women.

Since the neural tube forms at a time when a woman may well not be aware that she is pregnant, it is recommended that all women of child bearing age should receive a diet containing adequate folic acid. Folic acid can be found in lettuce, lightly cooked green vegetables, some fruit and nuts and some vegetable spreads.

"The results offer an important opportunity to prevent spina bifida, one of the most serious causes of physical handicap in children. Women planning a pregnancy should receive adequate folic acid and consideration should be given by the Government to the fortification of basic foods with folic acid" said study co-ordinator and principal investigator, Professor Nicholas Wald.

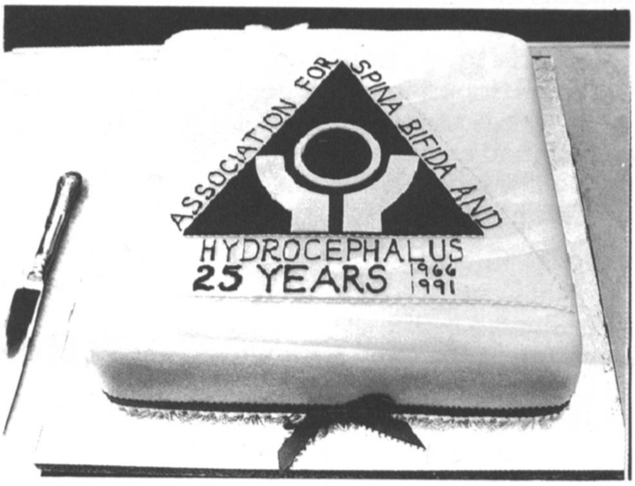
◆◆◆

Members of the Steering Committee were Professor John Burn, Professor Malcolm Ferguson-Smith FRS, Professor Charles Rodeck, Professor Geoffrey Rose (Chairman) and Professor Nicholas Wald (Principal investigator and study co-ordinator).

ASSOCIATION FOR SPINA BIFIDA AND HYDROCEPHALUS

ASBAH

The magnificent setting of Peterborough Cathedral and a beautiful July day provided the perfect finale to our Silver Jubilee celebrations. A service of thanksgiving for ASBAH's first 25 years was held in the City's Norman Cathedral on Saturday 13 July in the presence of our Patron, Her Royal Highness the Duchess of Gloucester. After the service - attended by over 400 ASBAH members, staff, local association representatvies and families and friends - a garden party was held in the Deanery gardens.



Celebrates 25 YEARS

Local association members who had to travel some distance were able to visit ASBAH House in the morning and refresh themselves before the afternoon's event.

At the Cathedral a fanfare greeted Her Royal Highness after she had received a bouquet from 12-year old Chloe Mears of the Greenwich Association and been greeted by our chairman Patrick Daunt, members of the Executive and officials.

During the 30 minute service the Duchess read the lesson and John Naudé, of our Disabled Living Services team, gave a three minute meditation which presented a picture of members and staff of ASBAH supporting individuals and families on their journey through life.

Following the service Her Royal Highness, dressed in a bright emerald green suit and matching boater, met a group of young ASBAH members before joining us for the garden party. The Duchess chatted informally with guests for over an hour and admired the cake, made for the occasion by Mrs Foers, before departing.

Above- (left to right) Nicholas, Vincent, Rachael and Julie of Leicester Association with their mums.

Left- Representatives from Dudley and Wolverhampton Association with young members *(left to right)* Elizabeth, Martin, Paul, Jackie and Daniel in the foreground.

Top Level meeting on Disabled Facilities Grant

In 'The Good, The Bad and the DFG", an article in the October 1990 issue of Link, we looked at the recently introduced home improvement grant aimed specifically at people with disabilities - the Disabled Facilities Grant.

The DFG is a mandatory grant which was designed to give financial assistance to people who need to make adaptations in order to help them gain access into their home and to use the facilities within it, ie the kitchen, bathroom etc.

But, one year on, with concern being expressed by families applying for the grant and by our fieldworkers, ASBAH arranged a meeting with Tim Yeo MP, Parliamentary Undersecretary at the Department of the Environment,to discuss these concerns. At the meeting on 5 June, ASBAH was represented by executive director Andrew Russell and disabled living adviser (housing) Dominique Cull. They were joined by ASBAH's former executive director Moyna Gilbertson and Peter Thurnham MP, of the All Party Disablement Group.

Dominique Cull reports

Means Test

ASBAH's first point to Mr Yeo was that we felt the means test to be unfair. The test looks at the income of a family but does not look at their expenditure. As a mortgage can cost a family a large proportion of their income we felt this should be taken into consideration.

Mr Yeo's response was that this could encourage people to take out higher mortgages than they could afford if they knew they would get the Disabled Facilities Grant. The minister explained that they were trying to target grants to households most in need. We agreed with the principle but felt that the present means test, in ignoring outgoings, prevented many individuals from benefiting.

ASBAH also expressed concern that the income of other adults is looked at. The Minister appeared to agree that with regard to joint tenants it is unfair on the tenant who would not benefit from the adaptations.

Children

ASBAH made the point that children tend to develop their life skills at home where they see and copy what their parents do and where they can experiment with tasks such as washing up, cooking and other household jobs. If a child has a disability and is unable to use the kitchen worktops or bathroom facilities this development might be impeded. We therefore emphasised that certain adaptations might be necessary for a child's development of life skills, towards eventual independence.

Top Ups

ASBAH maintained that there is little consistency between Social Service Authorities in granting top-ups. Some Social Services automatically top-up to 100%, whilst others give top-ups on certain adaptations, such as stairlifts and hoists. The DoE officials seemed to agree that this was the case although they had no evidence to back this up. One official reminded us that under Section 2 of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act, 1970, Social Services have certain duties. However, we felt that there is too much discretion under this piece of legislation so that in reality these duties are not always carried out.

ASBAH's evidence

We were asked to produce evidence by August to support our claims and are attempting to find anonymous case studies via our fieldworkers.

On the whole we felt it had been a constructive meeting. We were well received and encouraged to think that our evidence would be given full consideration in the forthcoming review of the Disabled Facilities Grant.

If you have encountered any problems with this grant system please do let either Dominique or your fieldworker know. The more evidence we receive the more likely it is that we shall be able to change the system.

On the Air

MIRANDA JARRETT, a wheelchair user with spina bifida, works on BBC Radio Kent. Miranda explains how a 'bad back' helped her on the road from typist to radio presenter.

It all started about three years ago. I was stuck in a job that bored me stiff. I was typing all day long - the typical 'disabled job'. One day my back gave in and I spent the following three years resting and trying everything from physiotherapy to alternative medicine, in a bid to find a cure. Finally, a combination of acupuncture and chiropractor did the trick. Then it was time for a career rethink.

As you can imagine, I'd had quite a lot of thinking time during those three years and when my brother pointed out how much I'd enjoyed a television interview I'd done a few years earlier (and that the TVS studios were very close to home) he lit a spark for a new future. It didn't take long for me to become absolutely passionate in my desire to become a television presenter and there followed letter upon letter, sent in every direction, telling prospective employers how much I wanted to be a presenter.

I know I've been a good deal luckier than a lot of 'hopefuls', but on several occasions I was invited to the TVS studios for a chat with the producers and heads of television I had written to. They were all very kind and gave me advice and pointers as to what should be my next move, one of which was to get professional photos taken, another to get some experience in hospital radio. Both of these I duly did.

The photographic studio I went to was nearby and I was delighted with the results. It was also a lot cheaper than if I'd gone to London. I had great fun doing it, but would always advise anyone to ask to see examples of previous work that the photographer has done, before agreeing to anything.

I became a Ward Rep for the local hospital radio which means going round the wards and getting requests for the show then reading them out back in the studio. I still do the hospital radio work which has proved to be great experience. To this day I still can't get behind the 'control desk' mainly I think because certain powers are unwilling to make the necessary adjustments to enable me to do so, but that's another story!

While I was doing all this a producer at TVS got in touch and asked me to do a spot of 'guest presenting' on Telethon '90. To say I was elated is an understatement - I was both thrilled and terrified at the same time. The day came. I was sharing a dressing room with Tessa Sanderson and later I was taken down to make-up for the 'full job'. It was a wonderful night, though for some reason I felt deflated afterwards (adrenalin's a funny thing!). I had been asked if I would come back the next day and take some pledges on the phone - I had no idea how exciting it would all be.

When I arrived I was told that I would be interviewed, instead, about my disability and how pledges from the viewers would help me.

After that first appearance, I was brought back, as they'd had more calls due to my appearance than at any other time that morning. This time I was also given the chance to do a little presenting.

When I finally went home, there was no deflation - I felt on top of the world and I've remained friends with some of the people involved in the show to this day.

One of the many letters I had written was to the Head of BBC Radio Kent. I had written to him on 'the week of the disabled' and was delighted to receive a letter back, asking me to come and have a chat about my ideas, with the proviso that they should be cheap ideas! He was a charming man and obviously keen to have me work there, the only problem now was finance. Fortunately, an equally charming man, who was the head of the company I used to work for, stepped in at this point.

I've ended up working for BBC Radio Kent for a year under the employment training scheme (but I'm determined it'll be a lot longer than that!) I promote organisations in Kent who provide training of any sort. There are a lot of people who never thought I'd work for Radio Kent, let alone make it 'on air' - but I did it.

There's a moral to all this. If you really want to do a different sort of job - push like hell. There are a lot of people who won't help you, but there are a lot who will - and you are worth it!

Relationships and Sexuality

Pauline Wood, North Wales ASBAH, reports on a study day held in Llandudno.

One Saturday in May, 16 young adults, each of whom has spina bifida and/or hydrocephalus, spent a day in Llandudno with two ASBAH counsellors, Pat Edser and Kath Pickin. Approximately 12 parents spent the morning in another part of the building with counsellor Pat Tatton. All had gathered to discuss relationships, sexuality and disability.

How and why had this come about

Back in 1989 when the new counselling service was announced at ASBAH's AGM the North Wales Executive Committee felt this was an initiative they'd like to hear more about. And a meeting was set up at which Pat Edser was invited to tell us more about the service.

Pat handled a very delicate subject area with great skill and sensitivity. The problems she identified are not easy for most parents to take on board and many feel so anxious, exhausted, or just relieved when things are going smoothly, that they do not want to uncover new areas of concern. Nevertheless, enough parents and young people came to make the meeting worthwhile.

As well as hearing Pat's talks and seeing the video, 'No Sex Please, We're Disabled', there was ample time for discussion and quite a lot of people felt comfortable enough to comment or ask questions. Several - across the age range - took the opportunity to speak to her individually, after the meeting. Pat had successfully removed many inhibitions and created the right atmosphere for this to happen. Some of our young adults said it was the best meeting we had ever had and wanted a follow up - so a study day was arranged for May, this year.

At the study day

As the date drew nearer it was hard to predict exactly who would prefer to 'let sleeping dogs lie' and who would have the determination to turn up on the day. We publicised the event and made it clear that the sessions for young people over 18 would be absolutely confidential and that there would be an opportunity for one-to-one conversation. Pat Edser and Kath Pickin would be with the young people for the day. Parents would have a separate morning meeting with Pat Tatton.

Few, if any, of the parents had found themselves in a comparable situation before and most of them had not met each other previously, since North Wales covers such a large area. But they found themselves able to reconsider and express new thoughts about their children's present and future lives. They also found tremendous support and reassurance for one another, arising quite spontaneously within the group. This could not have been achieved without the gentle guidance of Pat Tatton and the parents did not want their discussion to end!

What took place in the young adults' group is known only to them, to Pat and Kath, but conversations with them as they arrived, at lunch, and at the end of the day proved beyond doubt that each of them had benefited from the day. Lethargy had gone and they felt that they had learned more about themselves and their disability. One said" I really only came to support the association but I have learned a lot about my disability and I know who to contact if I have problems in the future". This seemed to sum up what they all felt. All were glad they had come.

What the day achieved

It gave parents time to consider. Living under such pressures, few can take time to think and plan ahead. Attitudes tend to be set. The young people rely on adult help so much that their views and feelings are often ignored even in very loving and supportive homes. What is their future to be when parents become incapacitated or die? They must be taught to understand themselves as well as learning the skills they need for independent living, so that they are able to make some choices in their lives.

The study day gave the young adults greater knowledge of themselves in the supportive setting created by two such experienced, committed and eminently sensible people as Pat Edser and Kath Pickin.

The day also proved to be a means of increasing understanding and actually changing attitudes.

Finally, it demonstrated the importance of leadership from National ASBAH. These are complex problems and local associations, run by parents, cannot address these issues without the expertise and support provided by National. We in North Wales are grateful for this and hope the counselling service will be developed further.

BOOK SHELF

nothing ventured

DISABLED PEOPLE TRAVEL THE WORLD

A Rough Guide Special - Edited by Alison Walsh

Review by Karen Desborough

Described in it own introduction as a celebration of travel for its own sake, this travel book did project this. Its down to earth attitude was refreshing, though perhaps not surprising, as it is written by disabled people, for disabled people.

A good case is made for the true integration of disabled people into travel. Although the book gives a realistic picture of the restrictions that may be experienced by a disabled traveller it is in no way negative and far from putting anyone off travelling it has encouraged me to become a voyager - in the UK as well as abroad.

I hope that eventually the powers that be in the transport business may provide more uniform facilities for disabled passengers, for example, accessible toilets and appropriate seating in aircraft and ships. Perhaps some of the large companies who provide these forms of transport would do well to read this book.

The 'practicalities' section was very informative about all aspects of travelling around the world and as mentioned before, it should not only be the travellers who take note.

The only criticism I have of the book is that I felt a more exciting presentation, maybe with some colour, would have enticed me to read some of the chapters on countries I was not particularly interested in. I would also have liked more information on working abroad, but perhaps that is another book.

The most valuable contributions to the book come from the explorers whose anecdotes give an insight into travel, some humorous but all encouraging. As the book's introduction says, when the pipe dream of truly integrated travel is realised this book will no longer be needed as a source of reference. Until then I would be very happy to refer to 'nothing ventured' for travel ideas and information. The book encourages travel which can be enlightening, fun and exciting, so go where you will.

Karen Desborough (Karen is a fashion designer, who has spina bifida and is a wheelchair user.)

Nothing Ventured is published by Harrap Columbus, price £7.99.

Miranda and Friends

by Tessa Krailing

This book is reviewed by the Isle of Wight ASBAH Secretary DJS Sprake. The author lives on the island and consulted several members of IOW ASBAH when writing the book.

Miranda is just an ordinary junior schoolgirl who lives with her working mum, in a flat above a shop, and has an inquisitive desire for excitement. In her latest adventure, delightfully written by Tessa Krailing, she meets Eric, who has spina bifida, and together they search for treasure in the cellar of Eric's new house next door to where Miranda's grandmother lives. Eric's restrictions due to wheelchair, callipers and sticks are tenderly portrayed, as is his mother's concern for his safety. A visit to the local swimming pool finds Eric in an environment where he is on equal terms with his able-bodied friends and 'treasure' is found, but not as Miranda planned.

Miranda and Friends is published in hardback by Hamish Hamilton at £7.99 and can be obtained through any bookshop. It is the second book in a trilogy about Miranda by this popular children's writer. 'Only Miranda' was published last year, and the third volume will follow soon.

Miranda and Friends is an adventure story which will thrill children and will make an ideal birthday or Christmas present.

LATEST MOTORING HANDBOOK

The fifth edition of RADAR's handbook, Motoring and Mobility for Disabled People 1991, is now available. The book's main focus is on motoring and it covers buying both new and secondhand cars, control conversions and adaptations, insurance, breakdown services and holiday motoring but there is also a chapter on getting about without a car. Written by Ann Darnbrough and Derek Kinrade the book is priced at £4.50 (including post and packing) and can be obtained from RADAR, 25 Mortimer Street, London W1N 8AB.

Getting to grips with handwriting

Frequent requests from teachers for guidance on how to tackle handwriting problems amongst children led Staffordshire support teachers to develop their own resource pack. Below, Margaret Carter, a member of the team, reports on the background to and results of their work.

"It is quite common for teachers to write 'Untidy writing' at the end of a pupil's written work but offer little guidance to help the pupil improve. There is likely to be little improvement unless a critical look at why the writing is difficult to read takes place" - Jean Alston, The Handwriting File.

"The HMI report, Education 5-9 (1982) found that there was a lack of systematic and regular practice in the teaching of handwriting. There has since been a renewed interest in the teaching of this skill" - Charles Cripps (1988)

"Once children can write as much as the letters of their own names, they need to be taught the correct movement of each letter. If this is not done incorrect movements become habits,that are progressively more difficult to alter" - Rosemary Sassoon, Handwriting - The Way We Teach It.

IT WAS a commitment to such ideas and a response to a frequently expressed problem "What can I do, he/she can't write/can't copy/can't hold a pencil correctly/can't use scissors" that led to the notion of Towards Handwriting.

As members of a county-wide support service we were aware that a number of children would be 'working towards' attainment target 5 Level 1 which states: "Pupils should be able to begin to form letters with some control over the size, shape and orientation of letters or lines of writing".

We knew that many good ideas were being used by colleagues all around the county. We decided to attempt to share this good practice by collating the ideas seen and used into a highly practical resource aligned to the National Curriculum and one that would be as non teacher-time consuming as possible.

Thus Towards Handwriting emerged as a resource file to show the skills a child needs to accomplish AT5 Level 1. The file contains a wide collection of suggestions as to how to teach them. In order to assist teachers to discover the skills already acquired and those still needing to be worked on, we produced a list of manipulation and co-ordination skills which we felt led naturally towards AT5 Level 1. We did not feel that the list should be considered hierarchical in any way, but should rather be used as a tool to highlight areas of strength and weakness (a sample of the skills list can be seen below).

How it works

Having identified the area to be developed the teacher than matches the skill number to the skill sheet or pack. There he/she would find a catalogue of activities and strategies to assist in the mastery of this skill. The file includes a breadth of strategies covering gross motor skills and fine motor skills (see top two boxes opposite for examples).

The correct orientation of letters was felt to be of prime importance.

"What a child constructs for himself is learnt thoroughly. For this reason it is important that his first writing movement should be

Name:			**Date:**	
Skill	**Can do**	**Yes**	**No**	**Comment**
1	can open and close hands one at a time			
2	can touch each finger with the thumb of the same hand			
3	can roll each wrist in turn			
4	can thread large beads			
5	can pick up 4cm square bricks and make a tower of ten			
6	can hold a pencil correctly			
7	can draw vertical lines			
8	can draw horizontal lines			
9	can draw diagonal lines			
10	can draw circles			
11	can neatly colour within a shape			
12	can use scissors to cut around a simple shape			
13	can draw a line between parallel lines 1cm apart without touching the sides			
14	can trace steadily over a dotted line			
15	can trace over letter shapes			
16	can copy all letter shapes			

those handwriting movements which we wish him or her to retain for a lifetime" - Christopher Jarman, The Development of Handwriting Skills.

Therefore, the pack of activities to support this skill includes a range of ideas that teachers can develop further. Correct letter formation is an on-going problem and a variety of ways of presenting material designed to help overcome this weakness is necessary (samples of letter formation skills are shown in bottom box).

Each pack of activities follows a developmental progression. This takes into account a child of eight or nine who is still experiencing difficulty with pencil grip and who may need further practice of early manipulative skills; or alternatively a child of six or seven with good fine motor control but who persists in forming letters incorrectly.

skill 4 can thread large beads

If not, try:

threading toilet roll tubes onto a rope or stick;
putting rings or quoits of various sizes onto a peg;
using large lacing cards;
using a lace pole;
hanging clothes on pegs.

skill 11 can neatly colour within a shape

If not, try:

giving the child a good example of how to fill in a shape i.e.

a. talk through the procedure,
b. talk about the outline and how to keep within it,
c. encourage directional movements instead of scribbling;

starting with large simple shapes with a bold outline;

using appropriately sized implement, e.g. crayon, pencil or paint-brush.

Gradually reduce the size of shape, outline or implement as competence increases

As we were compiling the resource pack it became apparent that it could be used with great versatility. Each pack of ideas could be used independently, to help individuals or a group to master a particular skill eg scissor control, or as curriculum support – by selecting from it a range of activities to provide groups of children with the reinforcement necessary to achieve improvement in their handwriting skills.

The file includes samples from commercially published materials along with many ideas developed by practising teachers.

Margaret Carter is one of a group of Staffordshire Support Teachers responsible for developing Towards Handwriting. The pack of loose sheets is available for purchase priced £4.00. Cheques should be made payable to 'Staffs SENSS' and returned to: *Resource Development Co-ordinators, SENSS, c/o Flash Ley Centre, Hawksmoor Road, Stafford ST17 9DR.*

*Readers should note that since this article appeared in the June issue of Special Children, SENSS has had a heavy demand for Towards Handwriting and there may be a delay of up to six weeks in processing orders.

Our thanks to 'Special Children' magazine for permission to use this article.

Banstead gets a birthday present

BANSTEAD Mobility Centre, in Surrey, celebrated its 10th birthday this summer and was presented with a new Escort, by the Ford motor company, to mark the event. The car will be used to demonstrate the operation and advantages of equipment which has been specially designed to assist disabled drivers and passengers.

Banstead Mobility Centre has been used by ASBAH's training centre, Five Oaks, for some years to carry out driving assessments - clients have a full day assessment seeing a medical consultant, orthoptist, educational psychologist, therapist and driving instructor. The assessment allows clients to discover whether they are likely to be able to learn to drive before spending money on lessons.

Ford Fleet Sales Director presents a new Escort to Banstead Mobility Centre.

Other services which Banstead can offer disabled people include; information - such as methods of transporting wheelchairs, availability of aids etc; driving lessons; car adaptation assessments, wheelchair assessments and training.

The centre has recently moved and the new address is: Banstead Mobility Centre, Damson Way, Orchard Hill, Queen Mary's Avenue, Carshalton, Surrey SM5 4NR.

Visitors' Guide

A useful guide for disabled visitors to Peterborough, where National ASBAH is based, is produced by the city council. It includes details of leisure facilities, places to visit, where to eat and suitable accommodation. One of the hotels listed is the Swallow Hotel where Colin Robinson, our disabled living adviser in Northern Ireland, enjoyed a complimentary stay when coming to ASBAH House for training. *The guide is available free from Peterborough Tourist Information Centre, 45 Bridge Street, Peterborough.*

Sport for All Day

Described as "an action packed day of sport and recreation for disabled and able bodied people", Sport For All takes place from 10am-4pm on Saturday 5 October at Guildford Sports Centre and Surrey Police HQ. Activities on offer include Archery, Shooting, Abseiling, Treasure Hunt, Hot Air Balloon, Subaqua Diving and Wheelies. More details and booking forms from: PHAB South East, Remploy House, 415 Edgware Road, Cricklewood, London NW2 6LR, tel 081 452 8020 ext 4407.

Great Expectations – *No Guarantees*

This is the title of a study day to be held by the National Childbirth Trust on Saturday 19 October in Weybridge, Surrey. Sessions will include: 'Antenatal Screening - What does it tell us?'; and a speaker from the Still birth and Neonatal Death Society. The fee is £10.00 including lunch and refreshments. For further details contact Heather Duffin, 2 Bittams Lane, Chertsey, Surrey KT16 9QX. Telephone: 0932 873150.

Jolly Good Show

Liz Clayton and Leonie Holgate, who manned the ASBAH stand, report on the 1991 Mobility Road Show.

Due to the generosity of the Reading Friends, ASBAH was able to have a stand, as usual, at this magnificent international show.

It was hoped that 40,000 people would attend and though the weather may have reduced the numbers it did not dampen the enthusiasm of those who did brave the elements.

The show encompassed transport of every kind as well as services related to transport. The 'transport' varied from a rickshaw type tricycle (where the attendant pedals and the passenger sits in front being propelled into the traffic), to a modified van into which you can ride your electric wheelchair, clip into position and then control the vehicle with one hand and a joy stick! So anything between these two extremes can be accommodated.

For some time it has been possible to operate secondary controls by the voice and it will not be too long before the major controls will also be operated in this way - at a price - but what freedom it offers to the most severely disabled person. This piece of technology came from France.

Great interest was shown in ASBAH's unique Driving Courses and Lifeskills Development Courses (formerly 'Mobility Courses'), both by professionals and by the young people themselves. Many well known faces appeared and it was encouraging to meet so many who were driving already or zooming about in sporty chairs, flying past the pedestrians. Leaving them standing, one could say.

This was the fifth Mobility Road Show and the biggest and it was good to be part of such a fine exhibition, promoting progress towards freedom of movement for everyone.

Access Guide

A leaflet on access regulations and guidelines has been published by the Greater London Association of Disabled People (GLAD). It gives contacts for disability access issues in each London borough and sources of further information on access matters nationwide. For a free copy send an A4 stamped addressed envelope to Vilma Jones, GLAD, 336 Brixton Road, London SW9 7AA.

Nominations for holiday awards

Have you had a really good holiday where you have received excellent service from the holiday company or an individual working in the travel and tourism field? If so you could nominate a company or individual for the 1991 Holiday Care Awards.

The Awards were launched earlier this year by Judith Chalmers and aim to recognise the positive attitude of tourism companies which offer an excellent service to all people irrespective of disability or special need.

There is also a category for the Best Journey Experience - this award is for a holidaymaker's description of a good journey experience involving any methods of transport which formed part of your holiday.

The Awards for 1991 will be featured on TV's Wish You Were Here and the presentations will take place in November.

The awards are to highlight good practice in the travel industry as a whole and organisations which specialise in catering only for disabled people are not within the scope of the awards.

If you would like to enter the Best Journey category, or nominate a company or individual for the awards, contact The Secretary, Holiday Care Awards, Holiday Care Service, 2 Old Bank Chambers, Station Road, Horley, Surrey.

Improved Travel Insurance

A travel policy launched last year by the Holiday Care Service, for travellers with special needs, has been extended and 'cancellation only cover' and 'group rates' are now available. The Holiday Care Service Travel Insurance aims to insure where other travel insurances will not. *For more information about the policy contact HCS, 2 Old Bank Chambers, Station Road, Horley, Surrey RH6 9HW.*

FRENCH CONNECTION

Carine - looking forward to hearing from you.

I am looking for an English pen-friend who is in a similar situation to my daughter Carine. She would like to have a penfriend to exchange letters and possibly see each other. Carine is 13, has spina bifida, and has been learning English for three years. She can walk without aids but can't run or walk a long way. She can swim and ride a bike.

If Carine visits England I would like her to stay with a family who know about spina bifida problems.

J Comte
25220 Vaire Arcier, France

Penpal club goes nationwide

Write-Away, the penfriend club for children with special needs, which we featured in the August 1990 issue of LINK, has now gone national and hopes to help the estimated one million children and young people in Britain, with special needs, make friends through letter writing.

For a membership fee of £1 youngsters from the age of five to 18 will be sent a folder with pen, paper and envelopes and the name of a specially selected penpal. If you would like to join, contact Hilary Wainer or Nicolle Levine, Write Away, PO Box 175, New Ash Green, Dartford DA3 8PQ. Tel: 081 452 3330

Write Away

Job Opportunity

Applications from people with a disability are welcomed for the post of Development Officer with UDET (Understanding Disability Educational Trust) based in Farnham, Surrey. The vacancy with the Trust, which produces and promotes a multi-media disability awareness programme to schools, is initially for two years. For more details contact Mary-Anne Grant, Executive Director, UDET on 0252 733167.

Your viewpoint wanted

I am a disabled undergraduate at Oxford University and I am carrying out a research project as part of my course requirement.

I am interested in looking at an area which relates directly to disabled people's own experience of education and work (both paid and voluntary) and the areas in which, they feel, they are discriminated against. In researching for my project I found that most of the research within the field of disability has been conducted by non-disabled people and tended to give the impression that disabled people have a low self perception and led the researchers to conclude that many disabled people are unable to work for psychological reasons.

After checking the employment figures for disabled people (where they are available) I found that, given the percentage of disabled adults (age 16+) in our society, very few of them are employed or in full time education. My project aims to investigate these findings but from the disabled person's viewpoint. I am also interested in investigating whether disabled people who take up sport almost full-time do so through choice or because of lack of employment or educational opportunities.

Although my project is not large I feel that until disabled people start investigating areas which relate to themselves, unsatisfactory reasons as to why disabled people often end up segregated or unemployed will continue to be given.

I am looking for volunteers to fill in confidential questionnaires on their attitudes towards disability, sport and employment. If you would be willing to take part in this research or would like further details please contact *B Joyce c/o St Catherine's College, Oxford University, Oxford, OX1 3UJ.*

AFRICAN CONTACT

Congratulations on your 25th Anniversary. You have made the world a better place for the disabled. More grease to your elbow!

My name is Funke Ogunrombi and I would like a penpal from any part of the world. I live in Lagos, Nigeria, West Africa. I am 26 years old and have spina bifida. My hobbies are reading novels, listening to music and making friends. I would also like a friend who would be able to visit me in Nigeria.

Funke Ogunrombi
16 Kolawole Shonibare Str, Off Coker Road
Ilupeju Est, Lagos, Nigeria.

ADVERTISING

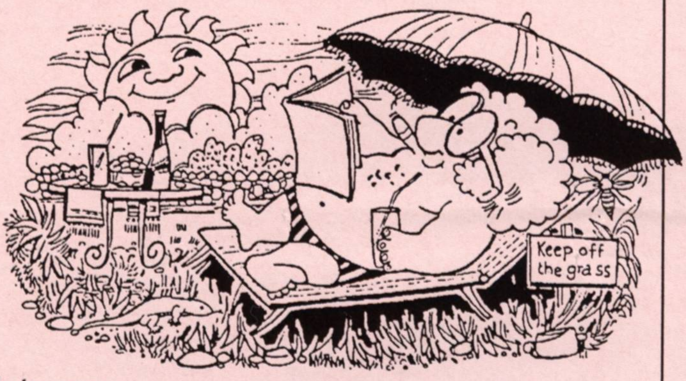
FOR THE USE OF LOCAL ASSOCIATIONS AND OTHER READERS

Rates: £3 for 30 words max; £4.25 for 30-45 words; £5.50 for 45-60 words.
Cheques and postal orders should be made payable to 'ASBAH'.

Small adverts for the next issue of Link (October) should be submitted by Friday, 9 September. Please send them to: The Editor, ASBAH House, 42 Park Road, Peterborough PE1 2UQ.

HOLIDAY ACCOMMODATION

When booking, check to make sure the accommodation suits your particular needs.



BORTH NR ABERYSTWYTH

Six berth caravan. Suitable for large wheelchairs. Licensed site. Five minute walk to sea, shops etc. Details: Mrs J Carter, 1 Meadow Road, Craven Arms, Shropshire SY7 9QY

CLACTON, ESSEX

Six-berth chalet well equipped. Shop, swimming pool and club house on site. Village 10 mins away with supermarket and banks. Details from Joan Bashford on 071 735 5489 or leave a message on the answerphone.

BASHLEY PARK, NEW FOREST, HAMPSHIRE.

New for 1991, caravan specially designed for wheelchairs, sleeps five to six. Accessible site with indoor and outdoor leisure facilities. Details from Joan Searle, tel 0705 376816.

ISLE OF WIGHT ASBAH

Completely refurbished, fully equipped, wheelchair accessible, 2 bedroom holiday chalet, sleeps 6 plus cot. Clubhouse, indoor heated pool, shop, etc. Site overlooks sea. Own transport advisable. Details from Mrs P Burden, 36 Sherbourne Avenue, Brimstead, Ryde PO33 3PX

FOR SALE

ARE YOU finding your present chair too heavy and cumbersome to use? You want a new lightweight chair, but can't afford the prices of new models. Have you ever thought of buying a secondhand or ex demonstration model? GBL SERVICES deal in all models of lightweight wheelchairs both new and used , tel 081 569 8955.

SECONDHAND lightweight wheelchairs for sale. Telephone 081 742 1620.

SECONDHAND Batricar with hood. Wheels need slight attention but vehicle has potential. Telephone Miss W J Smeath on 081 677 1418 for further details.

BATRICAR for disabled or elderly person. Indicators, lights, small boot at rear, use on footpaths. Yellow, looks like new, £600. Telephone Mr Stickings on 0732 840512.

BLUE Batricar for sale. Excellent condition with indicators, lights and horn, one side mirror. Less than 20 miles usage. £600 ono. Phone 08444 5081

BEC - STERLING XL electric scooter. Nearly new, used 4 times. Paid £2,170, will accept £1,750. Contact Mrs Graham on 0202 429166.

DIRECTORY OF LOCAL ASSOCIATIONS

BARNSLEY
Mrs Marlene Haigh,
3a Birk Avenue,
Kendray,
Barnsley, S Yorks S70 3AE

BEDFORD
Mrs Elsie Bennett,
341 Bedford Road,
Kempston, Beds MK42 8PX

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