Show your support for autism by wearing blue

Posted on Tuesday 26th March 2013

More than one in 100 children are on the autism spectrum. This World Autism Awareness Day (Tuesday 2 April), you can help us give every child the best possible start in life with support for our groundbreaking research and wearing blue.

Children with autism often feel sad, lonely and ostracised and can be seen as difficult, challenging and naughty by their teachers and peers. The University of Birmingham's **Autism Centre for Education and Research (ACER) (http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/research/activity/education/acer/index.aspx)** is at the forefront of enhancing understanding of autism amongst practitioners, providing support and training resources to teachers and pioneering technology-enhanced learning to ensure children with autism feel safe and included in the classroom.

70% of children with autism are in mainstream education. This can be very effective at including these children when teachers are well trained and knowledgeable about autism. Well-supported pupils with autism go on to achieve success in adult life, with many entering further and higher education and employment.

Director of ACER, **Dr Karen Guldberg (/staff/profiles/education/guldberg-karen.aspx)** (MEd Education, 2001; PGCert, 2003; PhD Education, 2008), explains: 'In ACER, we work collaboratively to develop strategies and intervention techniques for educators to transform their ability to teach children with autism. Our groundbreaking e-learning programme aims to help staff feel comfortable and confident engaging with all children in their classrooms and we are pioneering technology-enhanced learning and taking robot buddies into schools.

'Children with autism find robots safe, motivating and engaging, and don't have to worry about feeling awkward or misunderstood like they might with other people. Our techniques are proven to improve a child's ability to interact socially. We firmly believe in making a difference to children's lives as well as their families and teachers.'

Watch **this video (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Px3egwyFY4&feature=youtu.be)** to find out more about ACER.

To show our support, the University's iconic 110 metre high clock tower will be one of a number of landmark buildings across the world lighting it up blue for autism, including the Empire State Building and Big Ben as part of a national awareness campaign for autism awareness. Built in 1900, the clock tower is one of the tallest buildings in Birmingham and nicknamed 'Old Joe' after Joseph Chamberlain, the University's first Chancellor.

Old Joe will be blue from Thursday 28 March to Friday 5 April and staff members at the University are being encouraged to give £1 to the University's autism research supported by ***Circles of influence (http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/circlesofinfluence)*** and wear blue to work on Thursday 28 March.

Please join us and wear blue to make a huge difference to a child's life. This World Autism Awareness Day, you could change lives. Each gift, from £2 to millions, enables us to progress our research more rapidly. Join us in helping all children feel like they belong. Please tweet us a photo of you wearing blue to **@birminghamalum (http://www.twitter.com/birminghamalum)** using the hash tag #LIUB.

Dr Karen Guldberg and the ACER team will be taking part in a live from the lab chat on Friday 5 April, where they will be answering questions on their autism research. Join the discussion on Twitter **@birminghamalum (http://www.twitter.com/birminghamalum)** at 12.30-1.30pm. Questions can be sent in advance to **alumnicommunications@contacts.bham.ac.uk (mailto:alumnicommunications@contacts.bham.ac.uk)**, or join the conversation using the hash tag #AskTheExpert.

To give, you can:

Set up a direct debit: email **annualfund@contacts.bham.ac.uk (mailto:annualfund@contacts.bham.ac.uk)** to request a donation form.

Text to give: text AUTM22 Followed by the amount you wish to donate to 70070 (e.g. AUTM22 £5 will donate £5 to this research).

You can fundraise for our research in many different ways; why not host a bake sale, run a marathon or even abseil for our autism research? **Find out more (/alumni/getinvolved/FundraisingforBirmingham.aspx)** about how you can make a difference.

Notes to Editors

Launched in 2009, the ***Circles of Influence*** **(http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/alumni/giving/index.aspx)** campaign set an ambitious target to raise £60m to support the research into critical issues that affect us all, to open the University to talented students regardless of their financial circumstances, and to develop the University's beautiful campus to provide world-class facilities for our students, staff, and the people of Birmingham. Thanks to the generosity of alumni and friends, the campaign is now in its second phase, working towards a combined total of £160m.

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