



---

## **NEWS FROM AUTISM CYMRU AND AUTISM SPEAKS** **Autism Research Centre in Wales "a world-class initiative"**

**9 November 2007**

In a ground-breaking move that underpins the nation's already innovative approach to autism service development, plans are today announced for the creation of an Autism Research Centre in Wales. The centrepiece of the proposal is a new Chair in Autism Spectrum Disorders based in Cardiff University's School of Psychology which Lord Kinnock, President of the University, describes as "[demonstrating] a research and operational model for other countries to follow".

The Centre will be a key component in the development of a Welsh national strategy for helping those with autism. Wales is the first European nation to commit to a 'whole-nation' model for delivering high-quality services and research into the brain disorder which is now thought to affect up to one in 100 people.

The establishment of the new Professorship was initiated by the Welsh national charity Autism Cymru, in partnership with the leading UK research charity Autism Speaks, and has been endorsed by the Welsh Government and Cardiff University which are both giving it financial backing.

Autism Cymru and Autism Speaks are now seeking further financial support with the aim of announcing the first holder of the Chair in 2008.

News of the proposed new Centre and Chair was given at the first ever conference dedicated to research into the causes of autism to take place in Wales.

In a message to delegates, Lord Kinnock also said that the new Chair would "further emphasise the pioneering comprehensive approach to autism taken within Wales by Government".

Ms Jane Hutt, the Welsh Government Minister for Children, welcoming the creation of the new Chair, said, "This project is a world-class initiative which will help place Wales firmly on the world autism map."

Hugh Morgan, Chief Executive of Autism Cymru, said: "So far we have made good progress towards achieving the £750k needed to make the first appointment to the new Chair in time for the new academic year in 2008. This is an enormously exciting and high-profile development for Wales and we would be pleased to talk to any organisations or individuals wishing to contribute and become a key part of a major Welsh initiative having international significance."

Professor Dylan Jones, Head of Cardiff's School of Psychology, welcomed the development as part of the strategy of sustaining the School's leading research position in the UK: "We are very excited by the prospect of the appointment of a Chair in an area of research that complements our interests in human development and that can draw upon our world-leading facilities for brain research. It is very much a partnership of equals with Autism Cymru and Autism Speaks; we are all passionately interested in seeking a breakthrough in autism research."

Notes to Editor

- (1) Press enquiries on **9 November** to Liz Roberts, Autism Speaks, 07745 80 20 30 or [media@autismspeaks.org.uk](mailto:media@autismspeaks.org.uk).
- (2) Thereafter to Liz Roberts or Hugh Morgan, Autism Cymru. Hugh may be contacted on [hugh@autismcymru.org](mailto:hugh@autismcymru.org) or 01970 62 52 56.
- (3) Both Autism Cymru and Autism Speaks will endeavour to locate life stories of those affected by autism to complement the news of this new academic appointment should Editors require.