



Science in the Service of Autism

Autistica Highlights 2011

Thank you to our supporters who have made 2011 such a successful year for Autistica.

As well as continuing our funding of ground-breaking research, we widened our focus to consider how families could be better informed about autism research. Much of the research we support engages directly with families and so this is a natural progression of our work. We were delighted to make new friends and meet many of our supporters at the first ever national Autism Show, held at London's ExCel last June, with over 3,000 visitors attending. It was an opportunity for Autistica to show -case valuable research and we invited the [Brain Bank for Autism](#), the [British Autism Study of Infant Siblings \(BASIS\)](#) and the [Autism Spectrum Database \(ASD-UK\)](#) to join us. We really appreciated the opportunity to meet so many parents and individuals with autism.

Following on from this, we began our journey to engage with families - we have made a start by meeting small groups of parents and we will continue this work in 2012. We will keep you informed of developments through our regular eNewsletter and look forward to meeting our supporters again at this year's Autism Show.

Autistica distributed over £450,000 last year to some of the most prestigious autism research projects currently taking place in the UK. We continued our financial support and commitment to BASIS, the [Welsh Autism Research Centre](#), AIMS (Autism Imaging Multicentre Study) and ASD-UK. We also awarded over £125,000 to BASIS, an exciting study led by [Professor Jonathan Green](#) at Manchester University, testing the benefits of early intervention for babies 'at risk' of developing autism (because they have an older sibling with autism). A further project concerned with toddlers received Autistica funding in 2010; based at the University of Birmingham, the study examines brain function and development in toddlers with an older sibling already diagnosed with autism. The project examines how the toddlers' brains respond to speech versus non-speech.

This time last year, we talked about our opportunity to reach out to India, by organising placements for young Indian researchers to work with Mentors at universities in the UK and so further the global development of autism research. We received numerous applications from both students and mentors and hope to see this programme reach fruition later on this year.

Autistica began fundraising towards our Walter Muir Fellowship Fund, based at the University Edinburgh. This came about following the sudden and sad death of our Trustee and key autism researcher, Walter Muir. Autistica will fund a fellowship for a young researcher to contribute and gain experience in one of the most dynamic environments for developmental research in the UK today; studying the influence of genes and genetic mutation in autism and learning disability.

The support of our donors, fundraisers and funders has enabled us to contribute to research which we hope you will agree is vital to our understanding of autism and which will lead to practical help for individuals and families affected.

Thank you to our supporters who contributed to the Big Give Christmas Challenge and helped us raise £40,000 (including Gift Aid). Autistica Vice President, Sir Christopher Ball donated £10,000 and Candis magazine both made initial pledges of £10,000 and our supporters matched these online during the first week of December.

We would like to thank each and every one of you who made a donation, fundraised, ran or came to one of our organised events. One highlight of 2011 was our annual lunch at Cliveden House Hotel where our Founder, Dame Stephanie Shirley spoke about her life and the circumstances that led her to found Autistica. Our thanks go to John Lewis for sponsoring and organising such a fabulous fashion show. Thanks also to NBC Universal, who sponsored our charity Clay Shoot and to rugby legends Will Carling, Ieuan Evans, David Sole and Dean Richards who took part - it was so much fun, we are doing it all again in 2012!

To find out more about events in 2011, contact lynn.hart@autistica.org.uk. You can also follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).