

Nations
working together
for autism

At The Long Gallery
Parliament Buildings
Stormont
Belfast

On Tuesday 19th
June 2007

Northern Ireland Launch of the Celtic Nations Autism Partnership

- 11.30am Tour of the Northern Ireland Assembly for guests from Wales, Scotland, South of Ireland and Sweden
- 12.00pm Buffet Lunch
- 12.30pm Welcome - Rev Robert Coulter, MLA and Dominic Bradley, MLA
(On behalf of the NI Assembly Autism Ambassadors)
- 12.40pm Michael McGimpsey MLA, Minister for Health, Social Services and Public Safety
- 12.50pm Caitriona Ruane MLA, Minister for Education
- 1.00pm Arlene Cassidy, Chief Executive Autism NI (PAPA)
- 1.10pm Hugh Morgan, Chief Executive Autism Cymru
- 1.20pm John McDonald, Chief Executive The Scottish Society for Autism
- 1.30pm Pat Matthews, Executive Director The Irish Society for Autism
- 1.40pm Eva Nordin-Olson, President The National Society of Autism in Sweden
- 1.55pm "The time is now – a parent's view"
Liz Aiken, Chairperson Autism NI (PAPA)
- 2.00pm Opportunities for brief additional statements from elected representatives
- 2.15pm Concluding statement: Eileen Bell and The Lord Maginnis of Drumglass, Vice-Presidents, Autism NI (PAPA)
- 2.25pm Media clip: Senator Hillary Clinton
- Speaking at a press conference on Capitol Hill (March 2007) to unveil a new legislative initiative to expand access to treatment, interventions and support services for people with Autism.
- 2.35pm Tea/coffee and traybakes



The Irish Society for Autism



Rt Hon Peter Hain MP
Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and Wales

May I take this opportunity to wish you every success.

In the changing political landscape across these islands and in recognition of the universality of the increasing prevalence of autism, it is encouraging and heartening to note that the Irish Society for Autism is the latest partner to join this positive and unifying partnership.

I fully recognise the strengths and opportunities that will emerge from the Celtic Nations Autism Partnership, through the cross-cultural exchange of knowledge and the sharing of expertise, materials, information, joint-lobbying and project work. I'm confident that this partnership will have big implications for pushing forward the cause of autism; heightening the support and information to families, and the training of practitioners in the field. It will also provide a genuine opportunity for a united voice from these nations campaigning at UK and European government levels.

I was delighted to hear about the establishment of this pioneering partnership between the lead autism charities in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. The value of the initial Autism Cymru and Autism Northern Ireland partnership was obvious to me when I was pleased to host its launch in the Wales Office last year. I welcome the news that the Scottish Society for Autism has now joined this partnership.



RT HON PETER HAIN MP
Secretary of State for Northern
Ireland and Wales



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31 May 2007

THE SCOTTISH SOCIETY FOR AUTISM

THE CELTIC CHALLENGE

(Presiding Officer and Member of the Scottish Parliament until May 2007, and former Member of the House of Commons and Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.)



In 1976, I had a meeting with a mother desperately seeking educational provision for her son with Autism. I encouraged her and others to set up Struan House School in Alloa, in my constituency of Clackmannanshire. From little acorns, great oak trees grow. From the original three students, the Scottish Society for Autism today runs the new £5.2m Struan House School and Centre for Education and Training in Autism – both in Alloa – 14 community houses, support workers throughout Scotland, a respite centre, a gardening centre, a stained glass workshop and an employment service. We all had to learn as we went along. How helpful it would have been in the early years for the Scottish Society for Autism to have had sister societies with whom to test ideas and share experiences.

I therefore welcome the formation of the Celtic Nations Autism Partnership with our cousins in Autism Cymru and Autism Northern Ireland. The purpose of devolution is, after all, to promote diversity – to develop and share best practice and knowledge. The Partnership now includes the Irish Society for Autism. The Celtic spirit, like Autism itself, certainly knows no borders. Like Celtic art it has no defined beginning and end. Such partnership will lead to knowledge transfer, more thinking out of the box and over the horizon, better engagement with our governments, more strategic policy development and action and the encouragement of joint training and projects. Why? For one simple reason: “All human beings,” says the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, “are born equal in dignity and rights.”

That is the Celtic challenge. So long as any individual with Autism is denied early diagnosis and intervention, sustained access to education, supported living and employment and respite opportunities, the battle for equal human rights is not won. My very best wishes to you all – in the Republic of Ireland, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales – in taking forward this joint venture.

The Rt Hon George Reid, MSP

THE IRISH SOCIETY FOR AUTISM

The Irish Society for Autism was founded in 1963 by a concerned group of parents and friends who soon realised that there was almost total ignorance about Autism among professionals in the public.



The Irish Society for Autism

The long campaign began a campaign to create an awareness of their devastating condition and the need for early diagnosis and appropriate educational services.

To this end the Irish Society for Autism:

- Over the years made many proposals and submissions to the Department of Health and the Department of Education.
- Were founder members of Autism Europe.
- Created the European Charter of Rights for persons with Autism.
- Were instrumental in having Autism recognised as a separate category by the Department of Education.
- Were members of the Task Force on education.
- Created services for Adults with Autism in Dublin, Kildare, Meath, Westmeath and Wexford.
- Conducted and published in partnership with Professor Michael Fitzgerald research on the Prevalence of Autism in Ireland.
- Were the overall winners in the AIB Better Ireland Millennium Awards for the provision of services of excellence at Dunfirth Farm.

We see the Celtic Nations Autism Partnership as a new and exciting way to harness the goodwill that exists in the minds of ordinary people. It is a vehicle which will deliver the appropriate legislation necessary for the future of all people with Autism and it will give politicians of all parties and persuasions a forum for informed debate. Our hope is that Dail Eireann will welcome and support this initiative. This initiative of Autism Northern Ireland, Autism Cymru, The Scottish Society for Autism and now The Irish Society for Autism – the shared wisdom and knowledge of the partnership should be used by all politicians to improve the lives of people with Autism in the Celtic Nations.

Pat Matthews
Executive Director

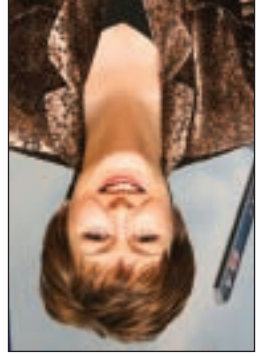




As Patron of Autism NI (PAPA), I want to commend the vision and generosity of our partners in Autism Cymru, the Scottish Society for Autism and the Irish Society for Autism in taking the first steps in what I know will become a wider movement for action for Autism.

numbers of children and adults being diagnosed.

our society today when waiting lists for access to support and services grow longer in the face of the rising commitment that government must follow in addressing the inequalities that exist in The Celtic Nations Autism Partnership sets the example of the shared ethos and secure an improving future for individuals with Autism and their families. The answer lies in coming together, to combine resources and knowledge to progress can be achieved by children and adults living with this most socially isolating We know that with access to appropriate individually tailored interventions, significant must remember the wider family and community impact. prevalence rates. So when we hear figures of 1 in every 100 children having Autism we Autism NI information booklet best illustrates the real significance of the alarming rise in "Autism isolates not only the child with Autism, but the entire family." This quote from an



DONNA TRAYNOR
PATRON, AUTISM NI (PAPA)

Nations Autism Partnership - hopefully working with our new Assembly to bring about change towards a more enlightened and vigorous policy in this field.

why we are meeting today to celebrate the Northern Ireland Launch of the Celtic experience and focus necessary to spearhead the necessary policy change. That is is not accidental but rather because I see Autism NI with the vision, confidence, funding and creating a national strategy for Autism. My association with Autism NI compassion. It is time to work together - providing a better future; securing new we get action NOW. Shame at failure to do so will be a poor substitute for between Despair and Hope. Families falling into this gap are set to increase unless Autism and those who deal with ASD on a day-by-day basis has created a gulf by successive administrations to adequately enable children and young people with The importance of the work we are engaged in cannot be under-estimated. Failure



LORD MAGINNIS OF DRUMGLASS
VICE-PRESIDENT, AUTISM NI (PAPA)

Autism NI has altruistically pioneered partnership-working for Autism in Northern Ireland over the past 17 years and today's Launch symbolises so much of what I have come to expect from this dynamic organisation.

legislation and the exchange of best practice across the nations.

Celtic Nations Autism Partnership, combining the voices, knowledge and expertise of the Autism Societies of Wales, Northern Ireland, Scotland and the South of Ireland is another milestone on the journey to Autism term as Speaker, in January 2007 was a historic milestone – and the Launch of the support for legislation at the Autism debate in the Transitional Assembly, during my profile of Autism to the highest levels of government. To achieve active cross-party I am proud to be involved with Autism NI and its commendable work in raising the



EILBEN BELL
VICE-PRESIDENT, AUTISM NI (PAPA)

I have been associated with Autism NI (PAPA) since 2001 when, as MLA for North Down, I co-hosted (with Mary Nellis, former MLA) the first Autism Awareness event held at Parliament Buildings, Stormont. My interest in Autism stemmed from an earlier meeting with a parent in my former constituency when the unequal provision and lack of understanding regarding Autism across Northern Ireland was witnessed by me first hand. It was then that I became involved with Autism NI (PAPA).