

Here's What You Told Us...

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My name is Catherine Jones and I am the Director of the Wales Autism Research Centre at Cardiff University.

A personal highlight for both me and my colleague Sue Leekham from working with the National Autism Team this year has been our work with them on the Birthday Party.

The Birthday Party is a film that we developed with the National Autism Team to help front line professionals better understand the signs of autism, and very importantly this film is underpinned by research evidence.

The film uses the occasion of a child's birthday party in which three autistic children attend to help professionals better understand what autism signs to look for, but also to help them understand the varied way in which the signs can show in different children.

This film was developed in Wales for people in Wales but what has been so surprising is the reach of the film, we have now actually had about 150 requests to use the film from all over the world from 15 different countries and we have translated the film into 4 different European languages so it's really gone beyond our expectations in how important this film has been to people and that achievement was recognised by Cardiff University who gave an impact award to both those of us at the Wales Autism Research Centre and also the National Autism Team and we are really proud of that award.

I was also asked to comment on how the work with the National Autism Team has help make a change to the lives of people that we may work with and I thought the best way to illustrate that was to use a quote or some feedback from a parent in Wales who has seen our video. They say "I would just like to say that I have found your video wonderful, this is the first time in two and a half years that I have come across something which is finally current and open about possible behaviours and most importantly comes away from the stereotypical.

My son ticks a lot of those shown in your video yet I've been met many times by different therapists and psychologists that have said oh he looked at me and made eye contact, he's fine I can take him off the waiting list if you'd like or he doesn't like sharing it's behavioural issues because he does interact with me. I sincerely hope that your brilliant video is sent to all professionals that has anything to do with dealing with children that could be or are on the spectrum a simple well thought out and respectful film like yours can be emailed easily with no cost to councils or government but could well help a child who deserves to get the help that they need as early as possible".

I would like to finish by thanking the National Autism Team for the work that we have done together – they've helped us get our research out to the people who need it and we are very pleased that we have this important collaboration, so thank you very much.