



New
Philanthropy
Capital

Media Release

Research into Autism is severely under-funded

Embargoed until 00.01 hours 18th September 2007

Autism is estimated to affect one in every hundred people in the UK, but research into the condition is severely under-funded, according to a new report from New Philanthropy Capital (NPC).

The report, *A life less ordinary**, shows that only £3.70 per head is spent annually on research for each of the 540,000 people with autism in the UK. By contrast £1,000 per head is spent on research for every cancer patient in the UK – a total of £1 billion a year.

Autism, a developmental condition which affects people's ability to communicate and interact socially, causes huge disruption to the lives of individuals and their families. According to research that will be published later in the year, autism costs the UK just under £28 billion a year⁺ through a combination of extra costs to families, social services, education and loss of employment. Seen in this light, the report says the levels of funding for research are totally inadequate.

Martin Brookes, Director of Research at NPC, said:

"The low level of funding into research for autism is shocking when compared with the scale of the problem and its impact on people. NPC strongly recommends supporting charities spearheading research in this area. While medical research is vital in understanding the factors that cause autism, better research into ways to improve the quality of life for people with the condition is equally important."

NPC recommends a number of charities working in a variety of ways to improve the quality of life for people with Autism. Two of the charities it recommends, Autism Speaks and Research Autism, are playing a significant role in developing and promoting autism research in the UK. Autism Speaks, the only UK charity raising funds for medical research into the causes of autism, expects to raise £300,000 in the next year.

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Research Autism focuses on research into interventions to improve the lives of people with autism. It funds and promotes research that addresses many of the major issues that face people with autism: education, employment, diet and sleep disruption. It also runs a website (www.researchautism.net) that provides parents with up-to-date and accurate information on the scientific evidence in favour of different approaches. Both charities ensure that research results are accessible to those that most need them.

NPC recommends six other charities, including an education charity, the TreeHouse Trust. TreeHouse runs a school for children with autism in North London and uses the expertise it has developed to champion autism education across the UK. It provides advice and support to other mainstream and specialist schools and lobbies government. It also helps parents' groups to influence their local authorities for better education services.

* *A life less ordinary*, along with some examples of recommended charities, can be downloaded free of charge from www.philanthropycapital.org.

+ The economic cost data is derived from research by health economist Professor Martin Knapp to be published shortly.

- Ends -

For further information about NPC, its research reports and charity recommendations, or to arrange an interview please contact:

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Notes to Editors

1. New Philanthropy Capital advises all types of donors on how to give more effectively. It identifies examples of charities with highly effective approaches to tackling problems in the sector. By recommending these charities to potential donors, NPC aims to increase the quantity and quality of resources available to the charitable sector.
2. NPC focuses on human welfare, including problems in communities and families, education, and health and disability in the UK. NPC has published research on sectors ranging from cancer to older people, and domestic violence to special educational needs.
3. NPC develops a detailed understanding of social problems by talking to policy-makers, practitioners, academics and other experts. Its charity recommendations are arrived at after visiting and analysing charities across the sector. Assessments are made of the achievements, the need for additional funding, the financial structure and fundraising potential, as well as the risks.
4. NPC uses its research and experience to help donors ensure they have high impact and a rewarding experience. This can involve developing a tailored giving strategy to meet specific goals, selecting which charities to support and reporting on impact. Donors can also access NPC's research and some of its recommendations at no cost on NPC's website.