

Press release

25 February 2015

Stirling man up for Lifetime Achievement Award for services to autism

A Stirling man has been shortlisted for a national award in recognition of his pioneering work in the field of autism and the impact he's had on people affected by autism in the UK and internationally.

Jim Taylor, who is a renowned autism consultant, is one of **three individuals** selected as a finalist in the **Lifetime Achievement** category in The National Autistic Society's (NAS) Autism Professionals Awards 2015, sponsored by Axcis Education Recruitment. The annual event, which first took place in 2013, recognises and rewards services and professionals that lead the way in innovative autism practice and make a real difference to the lives of people with the condition in the UK.

Before becoming a consultant, Jim spent 30 years educating children with autism, as a teacher, Principal, and finally Director of Education at New Struan School in Alloa, Clackmannanshire. He also led the design and creation of the school which is recognised internationally as best practice in autism education design and delivery.

Jim was one of the very first teachers in the UK to work exclusively with children with autism and was closely involved in early pioneering work, in the 1970s and 80s, in adapting educational thinking and teaching methods to the specific needs of students with autism.

Jim also does a significant amount of wider work to improve understanding of autism and promote best practice by professionals working with people affected by autism, chairing both the Autism Accreditation Board and the Coalition of Senior Professionals working in Autism (CoSPPA). But Jim's impact is also felt much closer to home, in Stirlingshire and Scotland as a whole by the children he's taught and the local families and ex-pupils he still supports.

Jim was nominated by Richard Ibbotson of Autism Initiatives who has worked within the autism profession in Scotland for many years. He said: "Many individuals and families that Jim has supported over the years would count him as the one professional who has had the most profound impact on their lives.

"Struan School longevity is largely due to Jim's determination to share knowledge and expertise, thereby empowering and inspiring others to develop excellent services for people with autism. Parents and professionals quickly trusted his honest and positive advice and encouragement."

Jim, whose latest venture is 'Jim Taylor Knows Autism', said: "I'm incredibly honoured to be nominated for this award alongside such close colleagues and friends as Dr Jacqui Ashton Smith and Dr Luke Beardon. I have the utmost respect for them both.

"I'm delighted to receive this nomination at this point in my life and would just like to point out that, for me, it is a joy and delight to work with people who have autism."

Jim was shortlisted by a panel of 11 autism experts who judged him on the innovation, creativity, impact and sustainability of his work.

Carol Povey, Director of the National Autistic Society's Centre for Autism, said: "The autism community gets together once a year to recognise individuals and services, like Jim Taylor, doing ground-breaking work in the field of autism and improving the lives of people with the disability.

"The calibre, variety and sheer number of nominations we received is astounding and **Jim** has done remarkably well to stand out. We hope his achievement will inspire other teachers to improve their own practices and go that extra mile to improve the lives of people with autism across the UK."

Jim Taylor is joined by two other nominees in the Lifetime Achievement Award category: Dr Jacqui Ashton-Smith, Executive Director of Education at the National Autistic Society and Dr Luke Beardon from Sheffield University, both of whom have over 20 years working in the autism field.

The winner will be revealed at the NAS' Professional Conference on 3 March 2015 at the Harrogate International Centre, Harrogate.

There are 13 awards in total, including four celebrating individual professional achievement and nine recognising good practice by teams or organisations.

The 13 categories are:

Awards for an individual professional

1. The Axcis Award for Achievement by an Individual Education Professional
2. Lifetime Achievement Award
3. Award for Outstanding Achievement by an Individual on the Autism Spectrum
4. Award for Most Inspirational Volunteer

Awards for a team of professionals

5. Award for Inspirational Education Provision – Primary Schools
6. Award for Inspirational Education Provision – Secondary Schools & Over 16
7. Award for Inspirational Education Provision – Other Education Provider
8. Award for Outstanding Adult Services

9. Award for Clinical Excellence
10. Award for Innovative Family Support
11. Award for Best New Technological Innovation sponsored by Network Autism
12. Award for Most Creative Community Project
13. Autism Accreditation Excellence Award

To find out more information about the Awards please visit www.autismprofessionalsawards.org.uk.

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For more information, please contact Piers Wright at piers.wright@nas.org.uk or on [insert number].

Notes to editors:

The Autism Professionals Awards

- The independent judging panel consists of 11 leading experts in the field of autism from a variety of professional backgrounds across the UK. Full biographical details of all judges are available on the website: www.autismprofessionalsawards.org.uk

Lifetime Achievement Award

- This very special category highlights the work undertaken over a lifetime in the field of autism by an individual professional who has demonstrated a commitment, passion and selflessness to delivering quality care for people with autism.
- Judges will be looking for evidence of outstanding contribution to lives of people with autism and/or to the cause of autism in general.
- Entries are welcomed for nominees from all types of professional background, whether health, social care, education or other.

Autism Professionals Awards sponsors

AXCIS Education Recruitment

- Axcis Education Recruitment is the foremost specialist supplier of quality special educational needs (SEN) staffing solutions in the UK.
- Their commitment to working with government and professional partners plus its duty of care, ensures that, despite wide-ranging changes in education, they can have a positive effect on the lives of the young people with SEND they ultimately support.
- They appreciate these young people are some of the most vulnerable in the education system and require inclusive nurture to allow them to achieve to the very best of their ability. www.axcis.co.uk

Switalskis Solicitors

- Three times winner of the Yorkshire Law Firm of the Year award, Switalskis Solicitors offers a wide range of expert legal advice and representation for individuals and businesses.
- Switalskis legal services are available from nine locations across the Yorkshire region: York, Leeds, Wakefield, Bradford, Huddersfield, Halifax, Dewsbury, Pontefract and Goldthorpe (in association with W. Brook & Co).

Autism Accreditation

- Established by The National Autistic Society (NAS) and its affiliated local societies, with support from the Department of Health, Autism Accreditation has been the foundation upon which much of the successful expansion of quality services for people with autism has been built.

- Autism Accreditation works to improve the quality of provision for people with autism by:
 - providing a unified standard of excellence in both policy and practice
 - presenting a systematic framework for continuous self-examination and development
 - giving guidance and support to the services who use our programme so that they can meet the established criteria required for accredited status.
- Autism Accreditation provides an autism-specific quality assurance programme for over 300 organisations throughout the UK and across the globe. Clients include local authorities, NHS trusts, education authorities, local autism societies and private companies.

Network Autism

- Network Autism, established by the National Autistic Society (NAS) is a place where professionals can come together, open up new channels of information and share good practice.
- Network autism allows professionals to:
 - connect with professionals in similar situations
 - collaborate in finding new solutions
 - share expertise and knowledge
 - support colleagues in achieving better outcomes.
- www.network.autism.org.uk/

The National Autistic Society

- Autism is a lifelong developmental disability that affects how a person communicates with, and relates to, other people. It also affects how they make sense of the world around them. It is a spectrum condition, which means that, while all people with autism share certain difficulties, their condition will affect them in different ways. Some people with autism are able to live relatively independent lives but others may have accompanying learning disabilities and need a lifetime of specialist support. People with autism may also experience over- or under-sensitivity to sounds, touch, tastes, smells, light or colours.
- Asperger syndrome is a form of autism. People with Asperger syndrome are often of average or above average intelligence. They have fewer problems with speech but may still have difficulties with understanding and processing language.
- The National Autistic Society is the UK's leading charity for people with autism and their families. Founded in 1962, it continues to spearhead national and international initiatives and provide a strong voice for all people with autism. The NAS provides a wide range of services to help people with autism and Asperger syndrome live their lives with as much independence as possible.
- For more information about autism and the NAS, visit www.autism.org.uk
- Follow the NAS on Twitter (@Autism) or on Facebook (www.facebook.com/NationalAutisticSociety).