

The Rainbow Connection

JAMES MUDIE SETS OUT HOW THE RAINBOW CENTRE HELPS CHILDREN WITH THE HELP OF SOUTHERN DRIVING INSTRUCTORS



CEREBRAL PALSY, strokes, Parkinson's, Multiple Sclerosis and head injuries, are all devastating health issues affecting the central nervous system.

For adults it can have a massive negative effect on their lives and that of their families, removing motor skills and independence, self-esteem and hope for the future. When a child is diagnosed with cerebral palsy, parents often feel overwhelmed and isolated, not sure who to turn to or how best to meet their child's complex needs. In each of these situations, the Rainbow Centre can help but although we have the skills, the funding to do what we do is another matter and it is thanks to organisations like SDIA that we can continue to deliver our service.

The partnership between SDIA and the Rainbow Centre originated via one of the instructors whose son has Cerebral Palsy and regularly attends the centre. Many of the instructors felt an affinity with the charity due to the wide reach of the issues we tackle in particular head injuries and the link with road traffic incidents.

Founded 24 years ago with the objective of helping children with neurological disorders to overcome their physical disabilities, the Rainbow Centre has helped transform the lives of over 600 children in that time.

We gave them the ability to be independent and confident to approach the challenges of everyday life and to break down the barriers that would prevent them entering into mainstream education and employment.

SDIA: Why Rainbow

The Southern Instructor Association (SDIA) has been running for a number of years and has always supported a charity. We have recently partnered up with The Rainbow Centre as we had heard via the local press that they were struggling financially. One of our members were known to benefit from them for their son so we as a committee agreed we should support a local charity. We feel it is important to get involved with charities like this as none of us know when we may have to rely upon support like this. We contacted the establishment and they very kindly came along and gave a presentation at one of our meetings explaining the work that they do. It is quite remarkable that the motto for them is "The path to greater independence", when this what we provide everyday teaching people to drive safely.

James Mudie from The Rainbow Centre has provided the following article explaining the importance of any financial support and why.

For further information about the centre and how to donate: www.rainbowcentre.org



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To achieve these results we use a holistic, integrated programme of learning called Conductive Education (CE), which enables people with damage to the central nervous system to either overcome or manage the challenges they face. CE develops new neural pathways using undamaged parts of the brain to learn or re-learn muscular control and fine motor skills.

Conductive Education was first established in the 1940's by Andras Peto who founded the world famous Peto Institute in Hungary. He chose methods of facilitation that not only made movements and actions possible but also developed the whole personality; the wish, desire and ability to be active.

After damage or impairment to the central nervous system, there remains a residual capacity within the brain which can be activated to take over functions from the damaged areas. This is known as neuroplasticity. However, this residual

capacity does not take over spontaneously – it must be activated. Much as we first learn to use our muscles and walk as a baby, so these new neural pathways leading to muscular control must also be learnt and established. Peto argued that in order to ensure learning, people with neurological conditions should be 'taught' rather than 'treated' and they must take an active role in their own development. The development of the personality and the desire to be engaged is as important as the actions themselves.

Through a structured teaching environment, led by a conductor/teacher, the brain can access this residual capacity in order to learn or re-learn impaired functionality. This system of education also benefits children from the autistic spectrum and those with Angelman Syndrome, Dyspraxia and chromosomal disorders.

The Rainbow Centre are incredibly grateful to the SDIA for supporting us not

just with donations but also in helping to raise awareness in the local area of the services we provide. The Rainbow Centre's motto is "The path to greater independence" but the irony is that, without the support of people like the instructors at the SDIA, we would not be able to carry on our work. From everyone at Rainbow to all at the SDIA, we want to say a huge THANK YOU for helping us.