

Parent's view: how a long cane changed our lives

Jamie Aspland's mother tells *Insight* how working with Daniel Kish helped Jamie, four, find his confidence.



“Put him in a bright coloured t-shirt”. That was the advice I was given by the office providing mobility training when I asked for a cane for Jamie, my four year old blind son. We were having problems outside the home as other people couldn't see Jamie was blind and he didn't want a buggy. I had researched long cane training and seen that in the USA and Australia, canes were given to very young children with positive results. However, here, we were told he was too young and would swing it around and hurt someone.

Jamie has retinopathy of prematurity with no light perception. In addition, Jamie has a twin sister with global development delay and also an older sibling (aged five) who has hydrocephalus and ASD. As a result, I have always found that the best advice comes from other parents, the people who live it, and not the people who do it for a living. All the parents who had children using long canes early were very positive about the difference it had made to their lives.

We were experiencing real behaviour problems with Jamie outside the house as he wanted

some independence. He knew his siblings were running ahead and he wanted to do the same but we couldn't for his own safety. He also did not want to hold my hand so we contacted Daniel Kish and were lucky to get the chance to work with him.

It was very hard emotionally as Daniel immediately asked me to let go of Jamie's hand and let him walk independently with his cane along the pavement. I was amazed however, to see that Jamie took to it like a duck to water. He was so happy. Within a few days, he was asking for his cane before we left the house. Jamie now uses his cane outside the home every day. Walking anywhere is now fun and not stressful and amusingly, Jamie now has no issue with holding my hand when he needs to.

We have encountered some negative comments from some of the professionals involved with Jamie. For example, one rang me after seeing him with his cane and insisted that we did not use it again until a “proper” mobility officer had taught him. This was due to him holding the cane differently to the way we are taught in the UK. Here, we ask people to point their index finger down the cane and use it as an extension of the finger. This method was first introduced after WWII to veterans who had lost their sight. However, a child born without sight doesn't point as they have no reason to.

Having a cane has made the world of difference to our lives. Jamie is more confident outside the home, much happier and a lot of the tantrums have now gone. I would strongly advise any parent considering this to go for it, you will be amazed at the difference it makes.

● **Debs Aspland** ■

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Insight



**Welcome to Issue 29 of Insight, the leading magazine
about children and young people with sight problems.**

In this issue

Life beyond school can be a frightening prospect. Here we look at some of the options for young people with sight problems in further education and the world of work. An exciting new programme run by RNIB helps people find a career, not just a job, page 19. And at Henshaws College they use an impressive array of ICT gadgets to support the whole curriculum, page 22.

Accessible technology without the price tag: get some great tips on using the internet, page 29. And there's more on early years mobility on pages 8 and 39.

In our free photocopiable resource, Curriculum Bitesize, we look at English and drama. I hope you enjoy this issue and welcome your feedback. Email me at insightmagazine@rnib.org.uk



**Deborah Webber,
Editor**

In the next issue

Our main features will focus on the theme of the November conference: Visual Impairment and Autism. For conference details email children@rnib.org.uk

Cover image: Lee in his workplace (page 10)

Photos on pages 5, 18, 21 and 45 are posed by models