

Letters

In a special Insight long letter feature, children’s mobility specialists give their reactions to US mobility trainer Daniel Kish’s article in the last issue about teaching very young children to use a cane. See page 39 for part two.

Having read Daniel Kish’s article regarding young children using a long cane, I felt I would like to let others in the UK know about our experiences in Hertfordshire with very young cane users.

For the past four years the Hertfordshire Specialist Advisory Service Visual Impairment Team have been assessing children’s readiness to use a long cane from the toddler years and actively promoting its use where we found it to be appropriate.

For us it became apparent that many of our toddlers were late in walking, almost fearful of their environment and while they would walk holding a hand or pushing a toy, independent walking and exploring was somewhat delayed.

“These pupils are using canes effectively to explore unfamiliar areas”

Working with Hertfordshire parents within the home, pre-school setting and our DOVES pre-school groups has enabled us to demonstrate physical activities and the importance of developing balance and co-ordination. Parents have also been able to see how much more a young child can learn about their environment by using a long cane and how its use enhances good posture, gait and independence.

To date we have about 10 young pupils using long canes all actively involved in movement programmes along with developing their cane techniques. Many of our early cane users are now at school. Evidence would suggest that these pupils are using their cane effectively to

explore unfamiliar areas independently, detect obstacles and environmental features, and develop their problem solving skills and move safely amongst their peers.

A lot of our time is spent supporting and training families, staff and peers so they have an understanding of the purpose of the cane and how it can increase independence. Like Daniel we promote the basic cane grip working through various techniques as and when the pupil is ready. Our assessments are ongoing and emphasise planning a mobility programme for all parties to be involved in.

Initially we had to import canes from Canada, but they can now be purchased from RNIB as small as 60cm in length. We are currently using the large jumbo tips at the end of a cane as they appear to glide well, and don’t snag on rough surfaces. It can be off-putting to a child if they are startled or hurt when a cane snags, and we want to give them a positive experience. Having read Daniel’s article we will look again at the lighter tip he suggests.

Tracey Hunter and Jo Marshall, Paediatric Mobility Specialists VI, Hertfordshire

If you would like to get in touch with Tracey and Jo, or wish to share your experience of early years mobility with Insight readers, email insightmagazine@rnib.org.uk

Children’s canes are available from RNIB rnib.org.uk/shop 0303 123 9999 ■

Insight is published by RNIB.

www.rnib.org.uk/insightmagazine

Reg. charity number 226227

Insight is available in print, audio CD, braille and email.

Contributions for Jan/Feb **Insight** by 1 October.

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For rates and bookings contact Ten Alps Publishing

Tel: 020 7878 2367

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Price

Single issue:

£6.50 (UK)

£12.00 (Overseas)

Annual subscription:

£25.50 (UK)

£21.00 (Parents and students)

£72.00 (Overseas)

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ISSN 1749-8902

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