

## SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES

### **Dr Prithvi Perepa (Birmingham University) - Autism & Ethnicity**

Prithvi is a Lecturer in Autism Studies within the Department of Disability, Inclusion and Special Needs (DISN) and a member of the [Autism Centre for Education Research \(ACER\)](#). He is the programme leader for the on-campus Masters in Autism programme.

Prithvi started his career as a special needs teacher and worked with children on the autism spectrum across the age range (from early years to further education) in India and UK. He was an advisory teacher for children with autism within mainstream schools where he mainly supported children and staff in early years and primary school settings. Later he worked as a disability advisor at the London South Bank University. In addition to educational settings, he has experience of working in adult care, both in supported living and independent living settings. He has worked with various national and regional charities where he developed parent support groups, established family support teams, and managed play schemes.

Previously he has worked as a lecturer at the University of East London and the University of Northampton.

His research has focused mainly in the field of autism and family experiences. Recently he has lead a project which developed a national strategy for autism in the Sultanate of Oman. He particularly interested in culture and autism. In addition to teaching and researching at the university, Prithvi has delivered training to a range of professionals and parents across a wide range of topics related to autism.

### **Dr Melanie Peters – Parent perspectives of Autism**

Since qualifying as a special needs teacher, Melanie has maintained involvement in special education ever since and is widely known for her innovative developmental approaches using the arts, especially drama. A former Advisory Teacher, she has expertise also in movement and dance, and was the educational consultant for CBBC's BAFTA-winning show, *Boogie Beebies!*

Melanie has authored curriculum policy materials at home (for the Primary National Strategy and on-line interactive training resources for special needs) and abroad (National Curriculum for Eire). She is a regular contributor at conferences and training events nationally and internationally, and increasingly on partnership working with families.

#### **Research interests**

- Special education needs and disability (SEND) - creative pedagogy, especially drama, movement and dance
- Severe, profound and complex learning needs - specialist whole school CPD
- Inclusive and specialist teacher training for SEND - initial and continuing professional development

Through an innovative body of work that has evolved through several action research cycles, Melanie's research interests necessarily fuse inclusion and creativity. She has aimed to arrive at a substantive rationale for the effectiveness of interactive approaches to teaching children with special educational needs using the arts and drama as an intervention, driven by democratic Social Constructivist and Humanistic principles. This culminated in her PhD thesis (by publication) on drama as pedagogy for socially challenged children. Latterly, a second (related) quest has been to formulate development models and frameworks for training the inclusive interactive teacher, through research with trainees in special school contexts that exemplify the challenge.

## **Dean Beadle - Autism Speaker and Journalist - Autism, Anxiety & Me**

Dean Beadle has toured the UK for ten years sharing his experiences of life on the autism spectrum. In recent years he has also spoken in Denmark, Belgium, Guernsey and Ireland as well as undertaking four annual seminar tours of Australia and New Zealand. Through his humorous and insightful speeches Dean outlines his positive outlook on his diagnosis. In 2011 Dean's speaking was brought to a wider audience, as a clip of one of his speeches was viewed across the world on Youtube.

He is also an experienced journalist, having been published in local, regional, national and international publications. Between 2008 and 2011 he worked freelance for Greenwich Time Newspaper, a local newspaper in London. As part of this he did everything from fitness columns and celebrity interviews through to concert reviews and news reports. Between October 2012 and December 2013 Dean edited the Network Autism 'Autism in Practice' newsletter which was sent to subscribers in over 90 countries. He has also written for The Guardian, London paper and NAS Communication magazine.

Between 2012 and 2014 Dean sat on the judging panel for the NAS Professionals Awards. An interview with Dean is featured as a key resource in the Autism Education Trust training programme which has just celebrated training 100,000 schools staff. Dean is also a singer and in 2018 will be performing at charity balls and various events across the country.

Dean is honorary president of APCymru- an autistic led parent charity in Cardiff, Wales and patron of SPACE, a parent led charity in Hertfordshire and ONE to ONE Enfield, a charity providing meaningful activities.