

# Press Release



Tuesday 31<sup>st</sup> March 2009, London, UK

## 'G200' Autism Mothers Unite

An ordinary mother from London has created a global reaction in her quest to get the attention of Gordon Brown on behalf of the hundreds of thousands of mothers of children with autism in the UK. What started with a photoshoot by iconic, celebrity photographer Terry O'Neill to show that mothers of children with autism can also be successful, sexy, powerful and determined, has sparked a worldwide response ahead of World Autism Awareness Day on 2<sup>nd</sup> April.

## DELIVERING WHERE GOVERNMENTS HAVE FAILED



## AUTISM MOTHERS

The response has been electric. Mothers from South Africa to Mexico; from Dubai to the USA; and mothers from across the UK have responded by sending their own versions of the image to show solidarity and support for the campaign: the '**G200' Autism Mothers**. See YouTube video\*.

The international photographs of the 'G200' Autism Mothers (as hundreds have now got involved) highlight the human face of those affected by autism worldwide ... **but will Mr Brown show similar leadership on autism in the UK as President Obama has in America?** (See YouTube video 'President Barack Obama on Autism' \*\*).

The force behind this campaign is Polly Tommey, a courageous mother of a 12 year old son with autism. She has dedicated her life to supporting parents who face overwhelming demands, struggling to cope with the condition and the lack of support currently provided.

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Polly says, "Autism has become a taboo subject here in the UK. It affects over half a million people and yet our government and political leaders appear to disregard the often overwhelming stress and demands faced by families of those with autism. This is not a passing matter; **autism numbers have increased dramatically in the last twenty years from 5 in 10,000 in 1988 to 100 in 10,000 today.** Unless the problems of autism are understood; unless services become more available; and unless support is more widespread, we will see an underclass of disaffected and desperate autism households emerge."

To get a response from Mr Brown, Polly has had her name and telephone number plastered across poster sites throughout the country for the last two weeks with £500,000 of advertising space provided to her by major outdoor media organisations.

She has also written to and called Downing Street; she has spoken on numerous radio programmes; and she is appearing on television news and chat shows.



To quote Polly Tommey: *"This campaign is about strength not weakness ... it's about demanding support instead of simply hoping for it ... and it's about how we, the parents and the mothers in particular, are having to deliver where our governments have failed across the world."*

*"Our campaign is about ensuring that children with autism are treated as well as anyone else. This is a serious issue that must be addressed. This is not negotiable - it's fundamental."*

***Polly concludes, "Nearly 10% of the UK population has someone with autism in their family ... that is a lot of votes, Mr Brown."\*\*\****

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## Notes for Editors

\* See YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oJ1YNq4eZoM>

\*\* See YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ND1CSnHKnbE>

\*\* Over 500,000 people in the UK have some form of autism – the extended family of parents, siblings, grandparents, aunts and uncles equates to 10% of the UK's population.

**The Autism Trust (registered charity Nr 1117657)**

[www.theautismtrust.org.uk](http://www.theautismtrust.org.uk)

The Autism Trust's focus is on building inspiring, sustainable and real futures for the many children with autism in the world today: ***A Safe Haven for People with Autism***

The objective of The Autism Trust is simple: to create a future with purpose for children everywhere with autism. We aim to do this by developing a worldwide network of innovative, high-quality environments: Centres of Excellence in Autism.

Our goal as The Autism Trust is to provide this through the development of a network of consistently outstanding and innovative outreach centres for autism worldwide. We consider it essential that each of these Centres of Excellence not only provides help and support to individuals with autism but also to their families and those involved with their care, support, ongoing education and development.

## ***Polly Tommey***

Polly Tommey is a mother dealing with autism. She is also the founder and Editor-in-Chief of The Autism File. Polly has been producing what is now the leading retail magazine on autism in the UK, USA & Canada (with a current issue circulation of over 40,000 copies) from her family's house in Hampton, West London since 1999. Polly is also the Founder of The Autism Trust, a UK registered charity focused on building an inspiring and sustainable future for children with autism in the UK when they leave full time education.

Polly is regarded as one of the leading figures in autism in the UK as a campaigning and influential journalist and is featured regularly as a sector expert in the media. She is currently directing an investigative television documentary on autism to be broadcast in 2009. Polly also presents a regular radio programme: Autism Issues From Around the World on Autism One Radio; she is Secretary of the Autism Human Rights & Discrimination Initiative; and is a regular attendee and presenter at conferences worldwide. She is married to Jonathan Tommey who runs The Autism Clinic and they have three children, one of whom has autism.



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