



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

News Release

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New Edinburgh centre to focus on learning difficulties

Children and young people with learning difficulties are set to benefit from a new £5 million research and support centre at the University of Edinburgh in association with the charity Mindroom.

The Salvesen Mindroom Centre to ‘Understand and Resolve Learning Difficulties’ will be the first of its kind in the UK.

Funding for the virtual centre has been generously donated to the University by businessman and philanthropist Mr Alastair Salvesen, Chairman of Dawnfresh Seafoods Ltd, and his wife, Elizabeth.

The Salvesen Mindroom Centre is a unique collaboration between the University, Mindroom – a Scottish charity helping children and young people with learning difficulties – and the NHS.

Staff at the new Centre will work closely with key partners in the NHS, Education and Children and Families services.

They will seek to advance research, diagnosis, assessment and treatment. They will also progress intervention and community outreach for children and young people with learning difficulties.

The Centre will support public understanding of these conditions thereby complementing Mindroom’s existing training and education programmes.

Researchers and clinicians will also work with and draw on expertise from existing University of Edinburgh centres. These include the Patrick Wild Centre for Research into Autism, Fragile X Syndrome and Intellectual Disabilities, the Anne Rowling Regenerative Neurology Clinic and the Euan MacDonald Centre for Motor Neurone Disease Research.

At least five children in every school class in the UK have some form of learning difficulty. A wide range of conditions can impact on learning for children and young people including dyslexia, dyspraxia, specific speech and language impairments, developmental coordination disorder, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and autism spectrum disorder.

Ranked among the top universities in the world

Mindroom was established in 2000 by Sophie Dow, whose daughter, Annie, has learning difficulties. After spending several years researching the complexities of these issues, Sophie Dow set up Mindroom to support families, offer practical help and advice for individuals and organisations who work with people with learning difficulties. Mindroom has also sought to advance research through its programme of international conferences.

Mr Alastair Salvesen said: “Elizabeth and I are delighted to make this gift. We consider that the majority of children who have learning difficulties suffer from dyslexia, dyspraxia and ADHD. They can be reached and helped quickly through Mindroom, the NHS and Education departments throughout Scotland. The University of Edinburgh will now coordinate this effort, which will involve its existing neuroscientific research centres. By gathering meaningful statistics and undertaking research those with learning difficulties of all types should benefit greatly in the long term.”

Professor Jonathan Seckl, Vice Principal of Planning, Resources and Research Policy, added: “We are enormously grateful to Alastair and Elizabeth Salvesen for their generosity and vision. This donation will enable us to advance this vital area of medical research into improved practice. The close relationship between the Centre’s partners will maximise the necessary knowledge and expertise to inform policy both in the NHS, education and voluntary sectors.”

Sophie Dow, Founder of Mindroom, said: “This new approach encourages essential collaboration between relevant organisations which will ultimately save valuable time in obtaining help for children and their families. We are absolutely delighted to be part of this exciting and groundbreaking new Centre.”

Professor Anne O’Hare, director designate of the new Centre and consultant paediatrician, said: “I am highly delighted to be able to lead research and drive the centre towards transforming the care of children and young people with developmental learning disorders. Through the Salvesens’ gift we will be able to deliver a better approach to supporting children with the wide range of conditions that impact on their learning.”

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