

A Deeply Humbling Gift

Every participant in the 2019 Brain Base will receive a **free weekly visual planner** donated by Neal and Heather Hayward-Shott of OurBoards (www.ourboards.co.uk). Neal will be leading a session on the importance of visual planning and we will have a chance to work with the young people to help them develop this new skill.

In addition, OurBoards is offering a 20% discount on any purchases received from NOFAS-UK via their website - enter the code NOFAS2019 at checkout.

A HUGE THANK YOU TO OURBOARDS FOR THIS GENEROUS AND EXTREMELY USEFUL DONATION!



The Our Boards Story

Why OurBoards

Please let me introduce myself. My name is Neale Hayward-Shott; I'm married to Heather and have three children, the eldest of whom, Felicity, has learning disabilities. Fliss, I never actually call her Felicity, had her 30th birthday last year, is happy and content with her life and has achieved far more than the prognosis that we were given following fits shortly after her birth.

Our experience of family life with a child with special needs has been unusual in that it has been quite normal, whatever that is. When Fliss was two we were presented with a Statement of Special Educational Needs, as it was then, with no explanation of what it meant. Contrary to most parent's experience, for us the transitions from nursery to primary to secondary to college to adult care have been no more complex for Fliss than for our other daughters, possibly easier. In some ways this has been due to our ignorance as decisions have been presented to us at each transition and those decisions have been good for Fliss. I've been able to follow a career as an IT professional and Heather loved working in our local primary school as a Teaching Assistant, once the girls were all in full time education.

It would be obvious that OurBoards was born out of us, as parents, making resources for Fliss, as happens for so many wonderful businesses in the SEND world. As parents are all constantly looking for new resources to help their children learn and cope with the world. But that wasn't the case. As part of my IT work I was involved in a project that involved dry wipe boards with a design of a mobile phone outline printed on the surface. Heather took one look at the board and took it to school for use in her phonics and numeracy catch up lessons where she supported children in school that struggled to keep up with classwork. She found that the children engaged with the board at a completely different level than they

would with paper or even plain whiteboards. We then looked on Amazon, as there would obviously be a whole range of pre-printed dry wipe boards for support teaching – but there wasn't.

So, the first OurBoards products were printed with designs for phonics and numeracy and they were really well received by the children and contributed hugely to those catch up lessons.

At this point Fliss comes into the picture. Fliss attends the Newbridge Day Centre, run by the Together Trust, a wonderful multi service organisation based in South Manchester. Having had the idea that printed dry wipe visuals might be helpful for some people, I visited Newbridge and discussed ideas with the centre manager, who allowed me to develop some sample ideas for a wall mounted visual timetable, menu board and a general purpose communications board. The visual timetable was well received and engaged the young adults at the centre leading me to research and design a "next generation" visual timetable for Fliss.

This weekly timetable was based on the following principles:

- Fliss should be able to use it herself, she would "own" the board
- It should have photographs that she could recognise and relate to
- Each piece of information on the board should be isolated so that it's easy to understand
- There should be space for what's going to happen as well as space for Fliss to write a few words at the end of each day as to the highlight at that day
- The design should engage her interest such that she would want to use it

We were surprised and delighted by the impact. At the start of the week Fliss cleans the board and sets up for the week ahead. She chooses the pictures from her "library", places them in the unique OurBoards Gecko self-cling pockets and then mounts them on the board. If there are changes to the routine, then we explain the change to Fliss and she will update her visual timetable. The action of her making the change seems to reduce the stress associated with that change. During the week she writes on the board what she has done today and we have a conversation; "Talk me through your board Fliss". Within two weeks Fliss had progressed from being able to recall a couple of unrelated activities to being able to recall each day's activities and highlights, even without the board. The ability to recall her week enabled Fliss to have conversations with friends at church, which in turn increased her self-confidence.

That sparked the revelation, in my mind, about the power of visuals and how the brain works to process and recall visual information more easily than auditory. I now work to design visuals, under the OurBoards brand, that follow a process in order to encourage auditory, kinaesthetic and visual learning.

There is a quote from Confucius "Tell me and I will forget, show me and I may remember; involve me and I will understand."

And what of the future? I'm looking for partners or investment to enable me to pursue my vision to set up a workshop making OurBoards products and employ people who are autistic or have other barriers to employment.

#Autism · #ADHD · #FASD · #LearningDisabilities · #SEND · #Dementia · #Home · #School · #Office

Company

<https://OurBoards.co.uk>

<https://twitter.com/OurBoardsUK>

Personal

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/neale-hayward-shott/>

<https://twitter.com/haywardshott>

Biography:

Neale Hayward-Shott

Founder of OurBoards Limited

Founder of Harvest Consulting Limited

As the father of a young adult with learning disabilities I have designed a number of simple, affordable visual communication tools that support learning and self-management. I now want to share those products to help others.

Short term that means working as an IT contractor whilst building my business, OurBoards.

The longer-term vision is to set up an OurBoards factory in Stockport, offering employment and work experience to people on the autistic spectrum or with some form of learning disability.

Having qualified with a B.Eng. from Nottingham University, I have worked in the UK IT industry in several customer support and sales roles over 30 years. I am now looking to put my varied experience to work, making a difference to the lives of others.

