



## Welcome to the August / September issue of Surrey News

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*Please note: Some of the articles in the front of the newsletter include information for young people and adults, so please do check for details.*

Although people are starting to go out and about again, we are not yet able to meet in groups indoors, so we are still not able to hold any branch meetings or other events apart from those we are running online. We will be reviewing the situation in September and will decide then whether we can start holding branch events from October.

Whilst the continued restrictions mean that we do not have many events to announce in this newsletter, there are two very important pieces of news inside:

One is about a **consultation for Surrey's new all-age Autism Strategy**. It is very important that everyone contributes to the consultation, as your views will influence what services are available for autistic children and adults in Surrey from next year. See page 3 for details.

The other important news is about **the future of the branch** itself. I will be retiring from my role as Chair at the end of the year, and none of the current committee are able to take over from me, so we need to find someone else to take over. If we don't find a new Chair then the branch will have to close down, so we are asking everyone reading this to think about whether they could volunteer to be the Chair, or if they can suggest someone else. To find out what is involved, with no obligation, please email me at [nas@mugsy.org](mailto:nas@mugsy.org)

Sara Truman,  
Chair (volunteer)

**NAS Surrey Branch**

**General email:** [NASSurreyBranch@nas.org.uk](mailto:NASSurreyBranch@nas.org.uk)

**Website:** [www.NASSurreyBranch.org](http://www.NASSurreyBranch.org)

**Twitter:** @NASSurreyBranch

**Facebook:** @NASSurreyBranch

**Donations:** [www.justgiving.com/nassurreybranch](http://www.justgiving.com/nassurreybranch)

## NAS Surrey Branch Contacts

### **Chair:**

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[nas@mugsy.org](mailto:nas@mugsy.org)

### **Treasurer:**

Haywood Drake  
[bobdrake357@btinternet.com](mailto:bobdrake357@btinternet.com)

### **Branch Membership:**

Nancy Rowell  
[membership@mugsy.org](mailto:membership@mugsy.org)

### **Deputy Chair / Website & Newsletter:**

Emma Whitfield  
[emma@mugsy.org](mailto:emma@mugsy.org)

### **Events, Activities & Fundraising:**

Please email [events@nassurreybranch.org](mailto:events@nassurreybranch.org)  
with the name of the event in the subject line

Sarah Mead  
Emma Searle  
Jill Goulding  
Jo Dilworth  
Emma Ellis  
Lisa Mangum

### **Parents of Girls' Group**

Rachel Pearson  
[racheldpearson@gmail.com](mailto:racheldpearson@gmail.com)

### **Parents of Adults' Group**

Hilary Dyce  
[hilarydyce@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:hilarydyce@yahoo.co.uk)

### **Weighted Blanket Loan**

E Surrey – Penny Sims  
[po.sims@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:po.sims@yahoo.co.uk)

W Surrey – Emma Whitfield  
[emma@mugsy.org](mailto:emma@mugsy.org) Blankets are suitable  
for a child from 25kg (about 8 yrs)

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### **POSTAL ADDRESS**

NAS Surrey Branch  
c/o Walton Charities,  
2 Quintet, Churchfield Road,  
Walton on Thames KT12 2TZ

*Please note, no NAS staff or  
volunteers work at this address*

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## Other Useful Contacts

*Unless clearly stated, organisations are not  
endorsed by NAS Surrey Branch or the NAS.*

**NAS web site:** [www.autism.org.uk](http://www.autism.org.uk)

**NAS Helpline:** Tel: 0808 800 4104 (10am –  
4pm), or email [autismhelpline@nas.org.uk](mailto:autismhelpline@nas.org.uk)

**NAS Parent-to-Parent line** 0808 800 4106

**NAS national membership:** 020 7903 3563  
Email [membership@nas.org.uk](mailto:membership@nas.org.uk)

### **Education Support**

**NAS Education Rights:** 0808 800 4102

**SEND Advice Surrey:** 01737 737300

[www.sendadvice.surrey.org.uk](http://www.sendadvice.surrey.org.uk)

**SOS!SEN** charity to support EHCPs etc, Tel:  
020 8538 3731, Web: [www.sossen.org.uk](http://www.sossen.org.uk)

### **Family Support & Representation**

**One Stop** CAMHS / BEN Pathway family  
support 0300 222 5755

**Portage** – support for children with SEND  
under 3.5 years 0300 200 1004

**Family Voice Surrey** parent representation  
[www.familyvoicesurrey.org](http://www.familyvoicesurrey.org)

**Action for Carers** tel: 0303 040 1234

[CarerSupport@actionforcarers.org.uk](mailto:CarerSupport@actionforcarers.org.uk)

### **Parent Programmes**

**PAT-P** for parents of under 5s.

**Cygnets** for parents of children aged 5 –  
19. [courses@sendteachingschool.co.uk](mailto:courses@sendteachingschool.co.uk)  
Tel: 020 8330 3009 ex 237

**Redhill CAMHS** group 01737-287002

### **Activities for children and young people**

**NAS Resource Centre, Godalming:** 01483

521 744 [SEResourceCentres@nas.org.uk](mailto:SEResourceCentres@nas.org.uk)

**interAKTive**, Epsom-based charity for  
children with ASCs and other difficulties  
07876 762178 [www.interaktive.org.uk](http://www.interaktive.org.uk)

### **Adult Services**

**Surrey Adult Social Svcs:** 0300 200 1005

**NAS Surrey Service** Tel: 01483 861600,  
email: [surrey.service@nas.org.uk](mailto:surrey.service@nas.org.uk)

### **Employment Support**

**Employability** for people with disabilities  
including ASCs Tel: 01483 806806, email:  
[employability@surreychoices.com](mailto:employability@surreychoices.com)

### **Benefits advice**

**NAS Tips page** – via [www.autism.org.uk](http://www.autism.org.uk)

**Cerebra DLA guide:**

<http://w3.cerebra.org.uk/> 0800 328 1159

## Surrey Autism Strategy – Adults and Children

Education, Social Care and Health services in Surrey are carrying out a public consultation so that you can tell them the best way to support autistic people of all ages, and their families.

Your feedback will decide what goes into the new all age autism strategy for Surrey. The strategy will help to determine what services are offered to meet the needs of autistic people and change the ways the local community welcomes and includes those with autism.

It is really important that everyone contributes to this survey – autistic people, parents/carers, other family members, professionals. Everyone's voice matters. You can do it in stages if you wish – saving what you have done and coming back to complete it later. People with autism and parents have contributed to the design of the survey, and whilst it is impossible to make something like this perfect, we have done our best to ensure that it covers all the issues without being impossibly long.

The link you need is here: <https://www.surreysays.co.uk/csf/autismstrategy/> it **closes on 21<sup>st</sup> September**. Please share the link with anyone in Surrey who might be interested.

## Face Covering Exemptions

Since face coverings were made compulsory in shops in July, there has been a lot of confusion about who can be exempted. Government information about exemptions is here <https://bit.ly/3jTs6eu>. Exemptions listed are:

- young children under the age of 11
- not being able to put on, wear or remove a face covering because of a physical or mental illness or impairment, or disability
- if putting on, wearing or removing a face covering will cause you severe distress
- if you are travelling with or providing assistance to someone who relies on lip reading to communicate
- to avoid harm or injury, or the risk of harm or injury, to yourself or others
- to avoid injury, or to escape a risk of harm, and you do not have a face covering with you
- to eat or drink, but only if you need to
- to take medication
- if a police officer or other official requests you remove your face covering.

The page also has information on how to make your own face coverings.

NAS information about guidance and restrictions is here: <https://bit.ly/2BOGQKy>

To date, there are no official exemption cards, but some organisations offer them to save you having to explain why you can't wear one, for example:

- Hidden Disabilities: <https://hiddendisabilitiesstore.com/hidden-disabilities-face-covering.html>
- Advance (housing): [https://www.advanceuk.org/uploaded\\_files/1730/images/Mask-Exemption-Cards.pdf](https://www.advanceuk.org/uploaded_files/1730/images/Mask-Exemption-Cards.pdf)

## Branch Webinar on Education Health and Care Plans

We are hosting a live webinar on EHCPs delivered by Tanya Williams, founder of [www.senadvice.com](http://www.senadvice.com). Tanya is a SEN advocate and SOS!SEN volunteer, who worked for over 20 years as a litigation lawyer, and is also a mum to two young people with neurodiverse conditions.

The webinar will provide an overview of the EHCP assessment process and EHCP contents including timescales, what an EHCP should contain, what assessments you need and other evidence to consider.

Please note that Tanya can't provide detailed advice on individual EHCPs. However, there may be an opportunity for a one-to-one online consultation with Tanya later. More information about this will be given at the webinar.

The online session is on **Weds 23rd September from 7.00 – 9.00 p.m.** We hope to make a recording available for one week for those who cannot attend on the night.

The suggested donation is £5 per person. Please book via Eventbrite: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/autism-and-ehcps-education-health-and-care-plans-registration-114830053782>

## NAS Surrey Branch Online Meetings

Whilst face to face meetings aren't possible, we are holding regular online parent support groups via Zoom. The next groups are:

- For parents of children/teens - Tues 18th Aug, 8.00 p.m.
- For parents of adults - Weds 12th Aug, 7.30 p.m.

For details of both meetings contact Sara Truman [nas@mugsy.org](mailto:nas@mugsy.org)

## Two Online Workshops by Mark Brown

NAS Lambeth Branch is hosting two workshops by Dr. Mark Brown from Special Help for Special Needs on **Friday 28th August**. The morning session is from 10am - 12pm and covers Transition for all ages. The afternoon talk is from 1.00 – 3.00pm on Puberty and Relationships for SEN and autistic children and young people.

To register, please email volunteer Vanessa Bobb at [lambeth@nas.org.uk](mailto:lambeth@nas.org.uk) so they can send you the link.

## NAS Livestreamed Seminars

'Spectrum Live' is a series of free live-streamed seminars on the NAS Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/NationalAutisticSociety/>. Upcoming topics are:

- Looking for Employment - 11.00am Tues 4th August
- Autism And The Workplace - 12.00noon Thursday 6th August

You can access recordings of previous editions of Spectrum Live here: <https://www.autism.org.uk/about/spectrum-live/past-episodes.aspx> on topics including fathers, women & girls, Coronavirus, diagnosis and the challenges some autistic people face getting out and about.

## **Zoom Talks Hosted by Action for Carers Surrey**

Action for Carers Surrey are running a number of free Zoom events that may be of interest.

You need to register as a carer with Action for Carers to attend these events:  
<https://www.actionforcarers.org.uk/register-with-us/>

### **Introduction to PDA 13th August, 7.00 – 8.00pm**

Clare Truman will provide an overview of Pathological Demand Avoidance and discuss strategies to manage behaviours on a daily basis. For more information and to book, go to: <https://www.actionforcarers.org.uk/event/introduction-to-pda-2/>

### **Autism: Sleep Workshop 2nd September, 10.30am – 12.00pm**

Mark Brown will look at issues around sleep and give practical tips to improve sleeping patterns.

Call 0303 040 1234 (option 1) or email [CSAdmin@actionforcarers.org.uk](mailto:CSAdmin@actionforcarers.org.uk) to register.

### **Autism: Puberty and Relationships 17th September, 3.30 – 5.00pm**

Mark Brown will look at issues around puberty and relationships for individuals with ASD and give practical tips for managing this difficult issue.

Call 0303 040 1234 (option 1) or email [CSAdmin@actionforcarers.org.uk](mailto:CSAdmin@actionforcarers.org.uk) to register.

These sessions are not autism-specific, but may be of interest:

### **Sibs Workshop: for Adult Siblings 5th August, 10.30 – 11.30am**

Led by Sibs, the UK charity for brothers and sisters caring for a child or adult with a disability. Call 0303 040 1234 (option 1) or email [CSAdmin@actionforcarers.org.uk](mailto:CSAdmin@actionforcarers.org.uk)

### **Makaton and PECS 10th August, 10am – 11.30am**

Led by Jacqui MacLean and Sarah Trice, ACS to increase confidence and knowledge. Call 0303 040 1234 (option 1) or email [CSAdmin@actionforcarers.org.uk](mailto:CSAdmin@actionforcarers.org.uk)

### **Education Health Care Plans 11th August, 10.30am – 12pm**

Led by Paul Baker, Transition Service Development Manager, learn about EHCPs, what to include and the process of development.

Call 0303 040 1234 (option 1) or email [CSAdmin@actionforcarers.org.uk](mailto:CSAdmin@actionforcarers.org.uk) to register.

Carers of people with a co-existing mental health condition may also be interested in this talk:

### **Mental Health: Crisis and Contingency plans 25th August, 10- 11.30am**

Rachel Brennan will discuss crisis and contingency plans in the mental health service and how carers can be involved.

Call 0303 040 1234 (option 1) or email [CSAdmin@actionforcarers.org.uk](mailto:CSAdmin@actionforcarers.org.uk) to register.

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## **Virtual Coffee Meet-ups**

Family Voice Surrey is continuing to host its regular online coffee meetups for parents of children with special needs or a disability. To find out more, go to their Facebook page @FamilyVoiceSurrey.

## **Dramatherapy Sessions for 12 – 18 Yr Olds Excluded From School**

'With my Eyes' is a free-to-access course of dramatherapy sessions for children aged 12-18 who have a history of mental health and social difficulties, have been excluded from school, or who are close to exclusion. It is run by Guildford Shakespeare Company's Education Dept.

The purpose of the programme is to break the cycle of mental health issues and provide an opportunity for emotions and feelings to be expressed and explored through drama and creative arts.

It is not specifically for autistic young people, but the organisers say they can accommodate them and have successfully done so in the past.

Sessions are on Monday evenings, 7.00-8.30pm from 28 September – 7 December (no session on 26 October) in Guildford. You can enquire direct about referral by contacting Ant Stones at [education@guildford-shakespeare-company.co.uk](mailto:education@guildford-shakespeare-company.co.uk) tel: 07956 000759. Or go to <https://www.guildford-shakespeare-company.co.uk/bravenewworldcommunity/>

## **'Autism and Nature' Resources on Facebook**

Many members will already know the Alex and Rosie books for children with autism by author David Blakesley and illustrator Tharada Blakesley. In addition to their books for parents/carers, teachers and children with autism and related conditions, they have also founded 'Autism and Nature', an organisation dedicated to engaging children on the autistic spectrum with the countryside and nature.

Autism and Nature has a new Facebook page where they regularly share resources to help parents, carers and teachers to engage children with autism and special educational needs with the natural world: [www.facebook.com/Autism-and-Nature-106358864491530/](https://www.facebook.com/Autism-and-Nature-106358864491530/)

The page will be updated regularly with material that you can download for children, including stories about Alex and Rosie's adventures in the countryside; colouring sheets for children of all ages; quizzes; activities and facts about wildlife that children might see in their gardens, in local parks or the countryside.

## **Raise Money for the NAS with New Website**

Savoo is a money-saving, fundraising website which allows you to donate to the NAS without it costing you anything. On their website you'll find deals and voucher codes for brands like Argos, the LEGO Shop, Domino's, John Lewis, Samsung and many more.

Every time you shop through Savoo and use one of their deals to save on your online shopping, they'll donate half of their commission straight to the NAS on your behalf to help them continue their vital work.

<https://www.savoo.co.uk/charities/national-autistic-society>

They also have a free [Search, Save and Raise](#) search engine. Every time you use this search engine to find out the latest news, check the weather or look up a new recipe, Savoo will donate a penny to the NAS.

## RESEARCH PARTICIPATION REQUESTS

### **Mental Health and Education in Autism during Covid-19**

A team at Kings College London led by Dr Ann Ozsvadjian is conducting research into the relationship between Mental Health and Education in Autism during and after COVID-19 lockdown as part of PhD research by Victoria Milner.

They are looking for parents of autistic and non-autistic young people aged 11 – 18 to share their experiences of school and their mental health during the pandemic and on their return to school.

The research aims to establish whether there are links between educational experiences and mental health in children with and without autism, with a view to developing recommendations for practices within education.

If you choose to take part, you will be asked to complete a consent form and an online survey about your child during the COVID-19 lockdown, just before schools open and after your child has attended school for at least 6 weeks. The survey will ask questions about you, your child, your child's school placement and your child's mental and emotional wellbeing. There are also surveys for your child to complete, but you can still take part even if your child chooses not to or isn't able to.

For details contact Victoria Milner [Victoria.1.milner@kcl.ac.uk](mailto:Victoria.1.milner@kcl.ac.uk) or Dr Ann Ozsvadjian [ann.2.ozsvadjian@kcl.ac.uk](mailto:ann.2.ozsvadjian@kcl.ac.uk)

### **Survey of Parents/Carers of Children in Special Schools & Colleges**

ASK Research has been commissioned by the Department for Education to look at how special schools, colleges and the families they support have been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic.

They want to hear from as many families as possible to let policymakers and the Education Select Committee know what has happened, and to try and improve education support for children in the future.

The survey shouldn't take long to fill out, and at the end you will be asked if you would be happy to talk to them in more detail, but this is completely optional. No-one will know who has taken part in the study and it is in complete confidence. You can access the survey here <https://bit.ly/39KoSVX>

### **Financial needs & living standards of families with autistic children**

A researcher at Loughborough University's Centre for Research in Social Policy, Chloe Blackwell, is looking for volunteers to take part in a focus group to find out about the spending requirements, living standards and needs of families raising autistic children. Financial needs may be linked directly to impairments associated with autism but may also result from societal barriers faced by children with autism and their families.

The focus group will take place online and all participants will receive a high street voucher of £25 to thank them for their time. For more information, go to: <https://bit.ly/30h3fJU>

## INFORMATION FOR ADULTS AND YOUNG PEOPLE

### Virtual Safe Havens for Mental Health Crises during coronavirus

Many autistic people suffer from mental health problems, particularly during times of high stress. If this is relevant to you, you may like to know that adults who are facing a mental health crisis can now attend one of the five Safe Havens across Surrey and North East Hampshire virtually, following the launch of a new service.

Safe Havens are staffed by mental health nurses and mental health practitioners. They provide adults in crisis with expert advice and support in the evenings and at weekends. They are continuing to see people in person seven days a week from 6pm-11pm, and are also now offering a virtual service during the same hours.

This means those who are self-isolating due to the Coronavirus, who are in a vulnerable group or shielding, or who are anxious about travelling can now access a local Safe Haven without leaving home.

To access these services, go to [www.sabp.nhs.uk/safehaven](http://www.sabp.nhs.uk/safehaven) and scroll down to 'Virtual Safe Havens' links that take you to the nearest virtual Safe Haven: Epsom, Guildford, Redhill, Woking and Aldershot. You will then be taken into a virtual waiting room before being 'seen' by one of the members of a local Safe Haven team.

There are also Virtual Safe Havens for young people aged 10 – 18 from 4.00 - 8.30pm on weekdays and 12.00 – 6.00pm at weekends for young people to talk and access support. Please note, the number is only answered at these times: 07773008435.

### Workplace Wellbeing Survey

Christine Jones is conducting a study into workplace wellbeing in autistic people for her Masters dissertation in conjunction with the Centre for Autism at the University of Reading, supervised by Dr Fiona Knott, Associate Professor in Clinical Psychology.

While some autistic people thrive in their jobs, others experience challenges at work which can affect their health and wellbeing. The team wants to understand more about the experiences of autistic people at work, the relationship certain autistic traits have with wellbeing and what helps or hinders workplace wellbeing. They hope the data collected from the study will provide insights into the key factors influencing wellbeing and what employees and employers can do to maximise satisfaction and wellbeing at work for autistic individuals.

They are seeking autistic adults who are working more than 10 hours per week in a paid or voluntary capacity, or who have recently been furloughed, to take part. Participation will take less than 25 minutes and is online. You can access the survey here: <https://reading.onlinesurveys.ac.uk/work-wellbeing-survey>

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**The NAS Surrey Branch is part of the National Autistic Society - Registered charity, number 269425. Company limited by guarantee number 1205298.**

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