

Welcome to the February - March 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.

First of all, I know you would all join me in thanking Sara for all the work she has done, and will continue to do for the branch as Deputy Chair (Adults).

I have been a member of the National NAS and Surrey Branch since 2012. My adult son was only finally diagnosed a couple of years ago; prior to that there was one line in a letter suggesting 'Asperger's traits'. I joined the committee in September as I wanted to help out when I'd heard that there was a danger that without a Chair, the Branch would have to fold.

I was previously a one-to-one tutor, after training at the Helen Arkell Dyslexia Centre. My primary focus was with dyslexic learners, but I also worked with pupils with ADHD and ASD.

I have been fortunate to 'meet' some of you on the online parent support groups. It has been interesting to join the committee during these strange times.

We plan to resume coffee mornings, evening meetings and the regular events that the branch run for autistic children as soon as we can.

I don't think any of us expected to be in lockdown still at this point. To end on a more positive note, we now have several different vaccines and hopefully this will mean that by the summer we can all return to something a bit closer to normality. I hope to meet many of you in person in the not-too-distant future.

Carol Teunon

Chair (volunteer)

NAS Surrey Branch

General email: NASSurreyBranch@nas.org.uk

Website: www.NASSurreyBranch.org

Facebook: @NASSurreyBranch

Donations: www.justgiving.com/nassurreybranch

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Sara Truman nas@mugsy.org

POSTAL ADDRESS

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

NB, no NAS staff or volunteers work here.

Other Useful Contacts

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

NAS website: www.autism.org.uk

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

NAS Parent-to-Parent line 0808 800 4106

NAS national membership: 020 7903 3563
Email membership@nas.org.uk

Education Support

NAS Education Rights: 0808 800 4102

SEND Advice Surrey: 01737 737300

www.sendadvice.surrey.org.uk

SOS!SEN charity to support EHCPs etc, Tel: 020 8538 3731, Web: 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

Action for Carers tel: 0303 040 1234
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
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

interAKTive, Epsom-based charity for children with ASCs and other difficulties
07876 762178 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

Employment Support

Employability for people with disabilities including ASCs Tel: 01483 806806, email: employability@surreychoices.com

Benefits advice

NAS Tips page – via www.autism.org.uk

Cerebra DLA guide:

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

Branch Online Parent Support Groups

We will be continuing to offer Zoom meetings for parents to get together online during February and March. As some parents have found it helpful to meet online it is likely that Zoom support groups will also continue, even when face-to-face meetings resume.

The **Parents of Children Group** meets fortnightly, alternating Monday evenings at 8.00 pm and Wednesday mornings at 11.00 am. **Please note the time change for the morning meetings.** The next meetings are:

- Weds 3rd Feb 11.00 am
- Mon 15th Feb 8.00 pm
- Weds 3rd March 11.00 am
- Mon 15th March 8.00 pm
- Weds 31st March 11.00 am
- Monday 12th April 8.00 pm

To go on the mailing list to receive the Zoom links for these meetings, please email Emma Phillpotts at support@nassurreybranch.org

The **Parents of Adults Group** also meets fortnightly alternating Friday afternoons and Wednesday evenings; their next meetings are:

- Friday 12th Feb 2.00 pm
- Weds 24th Feb 7.30 pm
- Friday 12th March 2.00 pm
- Weds 24th March 7.30 pm
- Friday 9th April 2.00 pm
- Wednesday 21st April 7.30 pm

To go on the mailing list to receive the Zoom links for these meetings, please email Hilary Dyce at hilarydyce@yahoo.co.uk

We also have a group for **Parents of housebound autistic people**. This group meets every 4 weeks on Tuesday evenings. The next meetings are:

- Tuesday 9th February 8.00 pm
- Tuesday 9th March 8.00 pm
- Tuesday 6th April 8.00 pm

To go on the mailing list to receive the Zoom links for these meetings, please email Emma Ellis at events@nassurreybranch.org

New Look for NAS Surrey Branch Website

We have updated our website so that information will now hopefully be easier to find. The address is still www.nassurreybranch.org but you may need to re-enter the address if you have it saved as a favourite as the hosting has changed.

We'd be grateful if you would let Emma Whitfield know if you find any errors or problems: emmawhitfieldnassurrey@gmail.com

New Parents Support Group Planned in Leatherhead

We are looking to start a new parent support group in Leatherhead, to meet either mornings or evenings, or alternating between the two. Please contact Carol Teunon at NASSurreyBranch@nas.org.uk saying which days and times you would be available.

Pathological Demand Avoidance Support Group?

We are also thinking of starting a support group specifically for parents of children with Pathological Demand Avoidance (PDA), which would meet over Zoom. If you are interested in being part of this group, please email Sara Truman at nas@mugsy.org

Talk by Dr Louise Connor for World Autism Awareness Week

We are marking World Autism Awareness Week (29 Mar – 4 April) with an online talk by clinical psychologist Dr Louise Connor on **Thursday 1st April from 7.30 – 9.00pm**.

The talk is via Zoom and will be about **Executive Functioning**, those vital skills which many autistic children and adults often struggle with including:

- the ability to think flexibly and cope with changes
- remembering and managing several different steps to complete a task.
- understanding and controlling emotions

Louise will explain the difficulties that poor executive functioning causes, and what strategies can be used to improve them.

The talk will be held over Zoom on Thursday 1st April from 7.30 p.m. – 9.00 p.m. There is no charge, though attendees are welcome to make a donation for World Autism Awareness Week when they book if they would like to. Places must be booked in advance via Eventbrite: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/executive-functioning-in-autism-registration-138042361419>

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World Autism Awareness Week was pioneered by the National Autistic Society, and aims to draw attention to the 700,000 people living with autism in the UK both to educate those unaware of the condition, and to help make the world friendlier to those who are affected by it.

Embracing and promoting work or school-based initiatives, as well as virtual events including the chance to run, swim, cycle or walk 7km during the week to raise money, the NAS is looking for people to step up to the challenge and help them highlight this issue across the UK! Further details can be found here: <https://www.autism.org.uk/get-involved/raise-money/world-autism-awareness-week>

Supporting Autistic Children Course for East Surrey Parents

The adult education charity WEA are running a free 2-part online course for parents of autistic children who live in East Surrey (Tandridge, Reigate & Banstead, Mole Valley and Epsom & Ewell).

It is on Thursday 4th and Thursday 11th February from 7.00 – 9.00 pm. For details and to book, go to: <https://bit.ly/2YnqUXh>

Surrey All Age Autism Strategy

Following the public consultation and workshops held in December 2020, the key workstream areas that will make up the 5-year All Age Autism Strategy have been identified. There is an overarching principle called 'My Voice' – a “*nothing about us without us*” approach. The areas that the Strategy will be broken down into are:

1. Awareness and understanding of autism in the community
2. Information and navigation to live an active life
3. Education and Preparation for Adulthood
4. Health and Social Care Support
5. Housing and Independent Living
6. Employment

There are 4 areas that will sit across all workstreams and these are Quality Assurance; Digital and Data; Pathways and the linking of services; and Finance and funding implications.

Due to current pressures caused by Covid-19, there have been some changes to the delivery timescales. The Surrey County Council Select Committee on Adults and Health approved the proposed strategic themes on 19th January, and the strategy is now being written.

The draft will be available on the SurreySays website between 26th February – 12th March, so that anyone interested has one more opportunity to have their say about the strategy before it is finalised. The Strategy framework will be published in April, and the final plans will be published in July.

There will be ongoing co-design and co-production involving people with autism and family carers to develop the All-Age Autism Strategy and Outcomes Frameworks over the 5-year duration of the strategy.

If anyone would like to see the Surrey County Council Select Committee discussing the proposed strategy, a recording of the 19th January meeting, and the report it was discussing, can be found here:

The Autism Strategy discussion starts 2 hours and 3 minutes into the meeting, and lasts for one hour https://surreycc.public-i.tv/core/portal/webcast_interactive/530266

'Curly Hair Project' Webinars

The Curly Hair Project was set up by Alis Rowe to provide a range of resources including courses for those on the Autism Spectrum and their families. There are a range of different topics during February and March including:

- Autism and Anxiety on Friday 5th February at 8.00 pm
- Autism and Females Friday 12th February at 8.00 pm
- Meltdowns and Shutdowns on Wednesday 17th February at 7.30 pm
- Developing Resilience on Tuesday 2nd March at 8.00 pm
- Autism and Sensory Processing on Thursday 11th March at 8.00 pm.

There is a charge to attend. You can find out more here:
<https://thegirlwiththecurlyhair.co.uk/services/events/>

Huge Thank You to Past Captains of Ashford Manor Golf Club

Our huge thanks go to two of the past Captains of Ashford Manor Golf Club, Kevin Turner and Heather Bailey, and Rob Brown of Ashford Manor Foxes Section for jointly raising over £7,000 for the NAS Surrey Branch from activities and member donations at the Club.

The Turner family in particular have done a huge amount to fundraise for the branch over many years and our thanks go to them and everyone at Ashford Manor Golf Club for their incredible generosity.

We will share information about how this money will be spent to support members in a future issue of the newsletter.

Update on New Autism Schools in Surrey

As many families know, there is a significant shortfall of local specialist school places and 30% of new EHCPs in South East Surrey have autism recorded as the primary need. In response to this, Surrey are developing a number of new autism and specialist schools. The investment is so that children can be educated closer to home.

Fox Grove Leatherhead was first proposed in 2017, but is now under construction, with plans to open in 2021/2022 initially with 64 pupils. The school is being developed by the LIFT Partnership (LIFT = Learning and Inspiration for Tomorrow Partnership) and will be adjacent to West Hill School. The plan is for the school to eventually have 152 pupils. It will be a co-ed special school for 4 – 19 year olds. LIFT already run Linden Bridge School for complex social and communication needs (CSCN) and Fox Grove will follow this model. The consultation on this school closed on 15th January 2021.

Betchwood Vale Academy, Dorking is at an earlier stage of development. This will be a school for pupils with COmmunication and INteraction (COIN) needs and is planned to open in September 2022. COIN schools are designed to cater for those with speech, language and communication needs and autism.

Betchwood Vale Academy will be on the site of the former Chalcraft Nurseries and will be co-educational, for up to 180 pupils. The school will be part of The Howard Partnership Trust. There are plans for the LIFT Partnership and The Howard Partnership Trust to merge, so eventually these two schools will be part of the same group.

Clifton Hill School, Caterham is currently consulting on a proposal to move to a dual designation of complex social communication needs (CSCN) as well as severe learning difficulties. The aim is to meet the increasing need for CSCN secondary places in the East of Surrey.

The school already takes pupils whose primary need is CSCN but this is not well known by case officers or parents, so the dual designation will mean that families can name Clifton Hill as a preference for pupils with CSCN as their primary need. The school capacity of 85 places will not change.

New School in Brookwood, Woking – another new COIN school for 200 children is at the early planning stage. You can support the application by going to the Woking Borough Council website <https://bit.ly/2YnP4AR>

Natural History Museum Resources for Learning at Home

The Natural History Museum has made a number of resources available on its website for families with autistic and neurodiverse children who are learning at home.

Dawnosaurus Online is a set of free online activities aimed at children with neurodiverse conditions including autism and other sensory processing difficulties.

Children can enjoy fun, educational resources, including a special visit to Ranger Stu's zoo.

There are minibeast-themed activities you can do at home, including learning how to make a pitfall trap, colouring in different minibeasts like a bumblebee and Luna moth, and reading a letter from scientist Adrian about the different types of woodlouse you may find.

You can access the resources here <https://www.nhm.ac.uk/events/dawnosaurus.html>

NAS National Autism and Mental Health Conference

The NAS' Autism and Mental Health Conference has moved online for 2021 and is on 11th March. This year it will focus on the crucial issues impacting the mental health of autistic people, and explore strategies for effective support.

The conference will explore the impact of coronavirus on the mental health of autistic people. It will also address crucial issues around depression, anxiety, sleep, and more.

Attendees will hear important updates and accounts from multiple perspectives and will gain from hearing personal insight and practical guidance. There will be an opportunity to put your questions to expert speakers.

The rate for autistic individuals, parents, families or carers: £65. To find out more or book, go to: <https://bit.ly/39phUqL>

Action for Carers Free Online Talks

Action for Carers runs a range of talks relevant to carers, and there are two coming up which may be of specific interest to parent / carers of an autistic child or adult.

Autism and Toilet training - Mark Brown Weds 3rd March 10.30 – 12.00 noon
Toilet training a child with autism can often be more complicated than training a typically developing child. This workshop will cover how to make the toileting process fun and more manageable for both parents and the individual, regardless of age.

Supporting an Adult on the Autistic Spectrum – 4-session course, Weds 24th Feb, 17th March + dates in April & May: 4.30 – 6.00 p.m. Val Goldberg will provide an introduction to supporting a young adult with high-functioning autism.

You need to be registered with them to attend events. To book any of these events, email CSAadmin@actionforcarers.org.uk or call 0303 040 1234 option 1.

Survey on SEND Transport for School Year 20/21

Family Voice Surrey is asking parents whose child has been getting transport to school this school year (2020/21) because of their Special Educational Needs or Disability, or who have applied for SEND transport, to complete this short survey. It should only take you 5 – 10 minutes.

www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/FVStranport?fbclid=IwAR2pas9UiTtIVlceghLFMHGgRubZQdgXVvY5veiQE1_teXVaDRU6dPWsQk

COVID-19 Advice and Resources

Home Schooling: The NAS has useful resources to help with the current challenges of home-schooling for parents, autistic students and teachers: <https://bit.ly/3oyl3ZQ>

Vaccinations: The government has produced easy-read guidance on having vaccinations: <https://bit.ly/3agzDAa>

Free Virtual Conference for Professionals and Parents of Children with Additional Needs

'Getting it Right for Me' is a virtual conference on 9th – 12th February which is free to attend live <https://www.gettingitright.live/?ah=ITpU6DeO>

Topics covered include autism, ADHD, attachment, behaviour, lived experience and different conditions and how to support them. There are specific sections for SENCOs and other professionals and parents. You can view the schedule here: <https://www.gettingitright.live/schedule/>

Free Online Inclusive Dance and Yoga for Children and Adults

A group called Synergy dance Outreach is offering yoga, meditation and dance programmes online, including for people with autism.

Yoga, dance and exercise workouts are led by children's and adult specialists, in easy-to-follow videos for all ages. To view the videos, go to <https://inclusive-dance-yoga.teachable.com/>

Survey on Transitioning from Children's Mental Health Services

Surrey County Council is running a survey to gain an understanding of what it feels like for a young person transitioning out of children's services such as emotional wellbeing and mental health services completely, or into another service.

Information gathered will be fed back to the appropriate services to ensure your voice is heard and hopefully bring about positive change to improve transition for other young people.

Please note: you should only answer the survey about one service at a time. If you have transitioned out of more than one service, you will need to complete the survey multiple times about each service. The survey closes on 30th Sept 2021 <https://www.surreysays.co.uk/csf/our-views-matter-transition/>

Appeer Groups for Girls and Women

Appeer Community Interest Company was set up to benefit girls and women with an Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC) and other neurodiverse conditions and those around them.

They offer talks and social interest-based sessions for girls and young women with an ASC and their parents/carers which are currently online due to the pandemic. Topics include:

- **Social interest-based sessions for girls aged 7-12** on Harry Potter and Magic, Animals and Pets, Valentine's Baking and more. Resources are sent to families' homes before the session. Please go to <http://www.appeer.org.uk> for more details.
- **Skills and interest-based workshops for autistic teenage girls aged 13-17 in Surrey** on a range of topics including Play in a Day, Art through Technology, Video Making, Animals as well as yoga sessions for age 12-17. Girls who attended the first session said they liked it a lot and many enjoyed meeting other autistic and neurodiverse teens and learning something new.
- **Gaming workshops including Minecraft sessions** and girls' gaming session in half term in association with Overworld Studios for girls and teens.

A programme of talks and social support groups for parents/carers on Zoom during the pandemic. Upcoming sessions include the topics of Suicide Prevention and Sleep in February. Details are here www.appeer.org.uk/parents-carers

They are also looking into starting a regular social group for autistic women aged 18 – 35 (see adults' section p16).

Appeer are looking to enhance their programme of support for **parents and carers** of autistic and neurodiverse girls and teens by developing a variety of talks, short courses and groups.

They want to learn what would be useful at each stage of the journey. If you are a parent/carer of an autistic girl or young woman, please take 5 minutes to complete the survey here <https://bit.ly/2YulR6s>. This will help them assess priorities and demonstrate the need to help secure funding.

To find details of forthcoming events go to the Eventbrite page <https://bit.ly/3ratSLd> email jo@appeer.org.uk, or go to Appeer's website <https://www.appeer.org.uk/>

Funders include The Coronavirus Community Support Fund, distributed by The National Lottery Community Fund, and Central Surrey Voluntary Action.

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Inclusive Martial Arts Sessions

Fighting Fitness Judo runs inclusive sessions for children with SEND over Zoom, and when classes resume, in Knaphill and Guildford. There is a video about the club especially aimed at parents/carers and those with SEND here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9WQIKKYF96o&feature=youtu.be>

For details, email info@fightingfitnessjudo.com or call 07736 940 832.

Family Voice Surrey Events

The local participation group for parents of children with special needs and disabilities, Family Voice Surrey, host regular online events and chats for parents and carers. Two upcoming events that may be of particular interest are:

Thursday 4th February, 1pm 'SiBs Talk'

A talk about being the sibling of someone with a disability or special need.
Email nicole.f@familyvoicesurrey.org for more details and the Zoom login.

Wednesday 17th February 7pm Talk by Dean Beadle on Anxiety and ASD.

Dean Beadle is an autistic speaker and comedian.
Email rachael.f@familyvoicesurrey.org for more details.

Go to the FVS website for a list of all their events:

www.familyvoicesurrey.org/single-post/2020/08/28/autumn-dates-for-your-diary

You can also find details here of their regular get-togethers online.

Consultation on Changes In Mental Health Legislation for People with Autism

If you are a member of the NAS at national level, you have probably seen that – following intense lobbying - the Government has published promising new proposals to change mental health law in England and Wales which could result in fewer autistic people being wrongly sent to mental health hospitals.

The NAS and thousands of campaigners have been calling for changes to mental health law for years, so that it respects autistic people's rights. At the moment, the law allows people to be sectioned because they're autistic – even though autism isn't a mental health problem. The proposals will change this in some really important ways in the future.

The proposals are part of the Government's 'White Paper' on the Mental Health Act (white Papers are documents that set out what governments plan to do about certain issues).

The Department of Health and Social Care is consulting on the proposals so you have a chance to have your say:

<https://consultations.dhsc.gov.uk/5fd10ed02513901f29167e1d>

The legislation will take around two years to come into effect.

Autistica Recordings on YouTube

Autistica, the autism research charity, have been running a number of online webinars using Zoom and YouTube. They have a YouTube channel where all the previous videos are stored for you to watch when convenient.

The videos include one on *Managing Children's Sensory issues and related anxieties caused by Coronavirus*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nkBTMKRS9tE>

RESEARCH REQUESTS

Research on the needs of older autistic people – the John and Lorna Wing project

London South Bank University has funding to research the requirements of autistic adults over 44 who have additional impairments. They hope that recommendations will be of practical use to autistic people with additional needs and their carers.

The research aims to find out what is available from the statutory sector, charities and in the community and also find out what is missing - i.e., what older autistic people with additional needs and their families would like that they do not get. In addition to practical questions about social support, participants will be asked about their wellbeing at the start of the project.

Wellbeing will be discussed again at a later stage when the suggestions of participants have been translated into small scale interventions and tried out. The research will look at what would enhance the quality of life for autistic people and their families.

If you or the person you care for is an autistic person aged 45 or older, you can help with the research by completing a questionnaire. For more information, please email Joanna Krupa at krupaj2@lsbu.ac.uk

Research on Voting by People with a Learning Disability

The London School of Economics is conducting research on voting and going to the polling station to find out what could be done to make it easier for people with learning disabilities to vote. Interviews will be by phone and will take around 30 minutes.

If you would like to take part, please contact Ginny Morrucci from the Electoral Behavioural Psychology Research Department at the London School of Economics at V.Moruzzi@lse.ac.uk There is an easy read leaflet which explains about the research.

University of Surrey - Social experiences of autistic women

Mollie Ruane is an undergraduate Psychology student at the University of Surrey. She is conducting research into the experiences of female autistic adults for her dissertation project. The study seeks to build our understanding of how quality of life can be improved for autistic women.

Mollie would like to recruit women aged 18 and above, diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder to be interviewed about social experiences and how you might change your behaviour in different environments.

The interviews will take approximately 30-40 minutes and will take place over Microsoft Teams or Zoom due to social distancing guidelines. If you would like to participate or would like more information, please contact Mollie Ruane at mr00688@surrey.ac.uk

RESEARCH REQUESTS / Cont'd

Research into the Perception of Human Movement

Dr Anna Cook is a Teaching Fellow at the University of Surrey. She would like to invite autistic people to take part in a study to examine the relationship between biological movement and social perception.

Anna would like to recruit individuals (men and women) aged 18 – 55, diagnosed with autism to watch a series of short videos then answer an online questionnaire. This is expected to take approximately 30 minutes to complete.

Your participation would be greatly appreciated and the findings from this research will contribute to deeper understanding of how humans perceive coordinated movement. If this study interests you, please read the information sheets in the link below and email anna.cook@surrey.ac.uk if you have any queries. If you would like to participate, please follow the link below:

https://surreyfahs.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_6Gwh49BzFuzhG2p

All information collected for both studies will be anonymised, so participants will not be identifiable. Both studies have received a favourable ethical opinion from the University of Surrey Ethics Committee.

INFORMATION FOR ADULTS, YOUNG PEOPLE AND THEIR FAMILIES

Employment Works for Autism

People with autism often find it hard to gain the skills they need to find and maintain paid work. Employment Works for Autism is a project for autistic people run by Surrey Choices EmployAbility which develops social skills and work experience in a real workplace, but with job coaching and support on hand when needed.

Applications will be short-listed for suitability, but it is also a condition of the funding that candidates must be registered job seekers on Universal Credit. Applications will not be accepted from candidates already on other JobCentre plus supported work programmes (unless they move onto this programme as an alternative).

The project is open to any job seeker with an autistic spectrum condition, ADHD or other neurodiversity, whatever, age, ability or previous work experience, but priority will be given to those who can demonstrate a commitment to finding work. There are only 25 places on the project, which is expected to be over-subscribed. Candidates will have an initial interview to identify their suitability, skills and aspirations. Autistic people accepted onto Employment Works for Autism will be supported to find work experience, appropriate training and activities to help build confidence for work.

During the project they will be supported to look for sustainable work at job clubs where they will get mentoring, interview practice, CV writing help and support to do job applications.

For more details, email: employability@surreychoices.com, call 01483 806806 or text 07860 020130.

Local Social Prescribing Services Help Professionals Find Services

For many autistic adults and their families, the problem often is with signposting services for those in need of them. While there are lots of organisations providing services, it can be difficult for individuals to find out about them.

The social prescription service is designed to remedy this by helping people find out about opportunities in their local community that could help them to improve their health and wellbeing. Professionals such as GPs, nurses, social care workers, benefit advisors and pharmacists can use the social prescription service to refer people to a range of local, non-clinical services.

The service is free to use, though some of the opportunities or support you are signposted to may carry a charge. The service will discuss this with you and help you find opportunities that are affordable for you. There is a huge range of free services available across Surrey which the social prescription service will help you find and access.

People who could benefit from a social prescription include people who feel low or anxious, who have been bereaved, who feel lonely, who live with long term conditions, who want to improve their physical health, who are struggling with their living arrangements, who are struggling with finances and people who are looking for employment.

A professional will simply fill in a referral form and with your permission, send it to the social prescription service. The social prescription service will then contact you directly to talk about your situation and what you would like to achieve. It aims to address your needs in a holistic way, supporting you to take greater control of your own health and wellbeing.

There are more details here: <https://bit.ly/3c1FyeS>

Learning Disability and Autism Partnership Boards Website Update

Surrey County Council is updating its website for the Learning Disability (LD) and Autism Partnership Boards. The website provides information about services for adults with LDs or autism, and about the Partnership Boards which bring together people with autism or LDs, family members and professionals to develop and improve local knowledge and services.

The Council would like to hear from people with learning disabilities or autism, or their family members, about how the website could be improved. There is a survey currently available on the Surrey Says website.

You can see the Learning Disabilities and Autism Partnership Board's current website here: www.surreypb.org.uk

You can complete the survey about the site here (you may need to copy the link): <https://www.surreysays.co.uk/adult-social-care-and-public-health/surrey-learning-disability-and-autism-partnership/>

There is a useful document about services for Adults compiled by the Autism Partnership Board on the NAS Surrey Branch website: <https://bit.ly/3pekmGn>

Surrey People's Group

The Surrey People's Group is for people with a Learning Disability and/or Autism. It meets once a month, currently online, from 10.00 a.m. – 12.00 noon. The next meeting is on Wednesday 3rd February.

At the meetings people talk about different topics including digital access, the environment, community inclusion and health inequalities.

For more information, please email: ldcommunications@surreycc.gov.uk or visit the website: www.proactivecommunity.org.uk

Free Training for Employers From Ambitious about Autism

Ambitious About Autism is hosting one-hour 'lunch and learn' sessions to help employers gain an understanding of the social, communication and sensory differences a person with autism may present with and how the condition affects everyone differently.

The webinars are delivered monthly, using Zoom on the following dates:

- Thursday 18 February
- Tuesday 16 March
- Monday 19 April
- Tuesday 18 May

The webinars will offer helpful hints and tips on how to support someone with autism in the workplace, with the opportunity to ask questions of an expert trainer.

Book your place here; <https://www.ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk/what-we-do/training-and-consultancy/our-training-courses/webinar-how-support-autism-workplace>

They are also running half hour sessions on **'What is Employ Autism'** to explain how employers can access free training and support to increase employment opportunities for autistic talent through the employability programme, Employ Autism, and the benefits of offering paid work experience to an autistic intern.

The seminars will explain why building a diverse workforce can bring big benefits. Find out more about how to get involved in this pioneering programme and have your questions answered on the following dates.

- 22 February – 12.00pm
- 25 March -12.00pm
- 28 April -12.00pm
- 24 May -12.00pm

To book visit:

<https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tJlvfuutqD4rG9Hq-Wxaf6oveEpaPDgBHXsl>

You can also register to stay updated with the latest opportunities at: <https://bit.ly/39vY90J>

Pegasus Card to Help With Communicating with the Police

The Pegasus scheme is for people who find it hard to communicate with the police – pre-registered information is kept safe and can be accessed quickly if you call the police. You don't need to repeat all your details. It is designed for anyone who has a disability or illness that may make it hard to communicate with the police in an emergency or difficult situation.

Registration is free. If you agree, your Pegasus information can be shared with other participating emergency services (fire, ambulance) and local authorities.

<https://www.surrey.police.uk/contact/af/contact-us/us/contact-us/sspegasus-scheme/pegasus-card-scheme/>

Advocacy in Surrey

Surrey Advocacy services are designed to help people who face difficulties in being involved, having their voice heard and have no other independent person to help them do so.

'Advocacy' is taking action to help people say what they want, secure their rights, represent their interests and obtain services they need. Advocates and advocacy schemes work in partnership with the people they support and take their side. Advocacy promotes social inclusion, equality and social justice.

There are several types of advocacy services available in Surrey.

- Independent Mental Health Advocate
- Discretionary/Preventative Advocate
- Care Act Advocate - Assessment/Support Planning/Annual Review of Social Care/Current Placement
- Care Act Advocate—support through the safeguarding process
- Advocacy in Prison (Care Act or Health)

Advocacy in Surrey is provided by Surrey Disabled People's Partnership (SDPP) and Matrix. You can find more details here: <https://advocacyinsurrey.org.uk/>

'I Feel Different' Animated Stories of Autistic Girls and Women

An animated film explores the untold stories of autistic girls and women in their own words. Based on interviews, writings and original artwork by autistic individuals, it provides an insight into the intensity and sensory reality of experiencing life differently.

Through animated scenes of everyday autistic life, autistic girls and women give voice to their unique sense of being in the world, playing roles, being outsiders, seeking safety, finding community and wanting to be accepted for who they are. You can view it on BBC iPlayer here:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/p08z30ky/animated-thinking-i-feel-different>

Self-help Website for Neurodiverse People

An American website offers lots of videos with strategies that neurodiverse people have found helpful. You can access it here: <https://www.understood.org/>

Proposed Group for Young Autistic Women in Surrey

The not-for-profit company Appeer is seeking funding for a new Peer Support Group for Young Adult Autistic Women in a similar phase of life. It is hoped that the group will be for women living in Surrey and borders.

If you are an autistic woman between 18 and 35, a parent / carer, or a professional working with autistic women, Appeer would love to hear what you would like from such a group to help support their funding application. Please complete the short Google Form here: <https://bit.ly/3ajyLKR>

They are holding a scoping meeting for those interested on **Thursday, 11th February, from 7:00 - 8:30 pm via Zoom**. You can register to attend the session here: <https://bit.ly/3oyYMeu>.

If you have any questions, contact Paige Sinkler at Appeer: paige@appeer.org.uk

About NAS Surrey Branch

NAS Surrey Branch is a volunteer-run, support group for the parents of autistic children and adults and is part of the National Autistic Society. It's FREE to join (although a small donation is appreciated) and we have around 2,000 members in and around Surrey.

We hold regular support group meetings, organise social events and special interest groups (currently online) and represent parents in meetings with health, education and social services.

We host an active online forum and produce this email newsletter every two months. To join, go to www.nassurreybranch.org or email NASSurreyBranch@nas.org.uk to request a membership form.

If you are a member of the National Autistic Society at national level, you can nominate us to receive part of your subscription by emailing supportercare@nas.org.uk.

The National Autistic Society works for autistic people and runs a wide range of services such as schools, clubs and adult centres. It has over 20,000 members and 100 branches and works in partnership with more than 50 local autism societies.

The NAS exists **to transform lives** by being a trusted source of support and practical advice for autistic people and their families at key stages in life and **change attitudes** by working with businesses, policymakers, autism professionals and the public to reduce isolation and open up opportunities in society as a whole.

National Autistic Society, 393 City Rd, London EC1V 1NG www.autism.org.uk. Registered charity, number 269425. Company limited by guarantee number 1205298.

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