

Welcome to the June - July 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.

We hope to resume all support groups face-to-face in September and to host one or two events in July and August, if it is safe to do so.

We'll continue to hold Zoom meetings in future as some members have found these easier to access. There will be an online branch AGM in July followed by **a talk by Ros Blackburn**, an autistic woman who speaks internationally (see p 4).

The National Autistic Society say that wherever possible, branches should deliver activities online, and it's up to each volunteer to decide when they want to resume hosting meetings face-to-face.

It's exciting that there have now been a number of workstream meetings for the All Age Autism Strategy Framework. More detailed plans are due to be published in July. A number of parents have been able to participate to share their experience and we've encouraged as many autistic people as possible to feed into the workstreams directly, or through the Autism Partnership Board Reference Group.

As part of the strategy work, we're running a survey on **autistic people's experiences with their local housing department. This closes on 7 June** – see p14 for details.

In this issue you will find an update on the new **alliance to transform emotional wellbeing and mental health support** for Surrey's children and young people. The NAS 'Stepping up' courses are also up and running and there should now be a range of times available to fit in with work and family commitments. We hope this will start to impact on the mental health challenges experienced by autistic children and young people.

Carol Teunon

Chair (volunteer)

NAS Surrey Branch

General email: NASSurreyBranch@nas.org.uk

Website: <https://NASSurreyBranch.org>

Facebook: @NASSurreyBranch

Donations: www.justgiving.com/nassurreybranch

NAS Surrey Branch Contacts

Chair:

Carol Teunon
Branch Mobile: 07423 435413
NASSurreyBranch@nas.org.uk

Treasurer:

Haywood Drake
Treasurer.NASSurreyBranch@nas.org.uk

Branch Membership:

Nancy Rowell
membership@mugsy.org

Deputy Chair (Adults):

Sara Truman strumansurrey@gmail.com

Deputy Chair (Parents of Children):

Emma Phillpotts
support@nassurreybranch.org

Events & Talks:

Emma Ellis
events@nassurreybranch.org

Website & Newsletter:

Emma Whitfield
emmawhitfieldnassurrey@gmail.com

Other Activities & Fundraising:

Jill Goulding
Jo Dilworth
Lisa Mangum
Sally Roberts

Parents of Girls' Group

Rachel Pearson
racheldpearson@gmail.com

Parents of Adults' Group

Hilary Dyce hilarydyce@yahoo.co.uk

Parents of Housebound People

Emma Ellis events@nassurreybranch.org

Parents of Children with PDA Group

Sara Truman strumansurrey@gmail.com

Spouses and Partners Group

Sara Truman strumansurrey@gmail.com

POSTAL ADDRESS

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

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 let you know about plans for resuming face-to-face meetings in the next newsletter. For the time being support groups will continue online.

The **Parents of Children Group** will meet fortnightly in June, alternating Monday evenings at 8.00 pm and Wednesday morning at 10.00 am. The next meetings are:

Monday 7th June 8.00 pm
Wednesday 23rd June 10.00 am
Monday 5th July 8.00 pm

The group will then take a break during the school summer holidays. 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 4th June 2.30 pm (please note slightly later time)
Wednesday 16th June 7.30 pm
Friday 2nd July 2.30 pm
Wednesday 14th July 7.30 pm
Friday 30th July 2.30 pm (to be confirmed)

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 1st June 8.00 pm
Tuesday 29th June 8.00 pm
Tuesday 27th July 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

We have now had several meetings of the support group for **Pathological Demand Avoidance (PDA)**. This group meets on the final Thursday of the month. The next meetings are on :

Thursday 24th June 8.00 pm
Thursday 29th July 8.00 pm (to be confirmed)

Contact: Sara Truman strumansurrey@gmail.com (Please note new email address)

*NB We are hoping to re-start our face-to-face meetings of the **Spouses and Partners Group** in Guildford at the end of June, but these dates are provisional at this stage, depending on guidance from the government and NAS head office.*

Weds 30th June 8.00 p.m. (TBC)
Weds 28th July 8.00 p.m. (TBC)

Contact: Sara Truman strumansurrey@gmail.com (Please note new email address)

Ros Blackburn Talk & Branch AGM

On Mon 12th July from 8.00 to 9.30 p.m. we are holding our AGM over Zoom, with guest speaker Ros Blackburn. Ros is a 52 year old autistic woman who was diagnosed at 18 months as severely autistic but with average intellectual ability. She now gives talks internationally about her experience of autism.

Ros will talk about her life and how her parents helped her to learn communication skills and how to cope with social situations. She will also talk about how she managed during the Covid-19 lockdown. Booking details below.

The talk will be preceded by the Branch's Annual General Meeting. This will be very brief, and will include the annual election of our Branch Chair and Treasurer. Both Carol Teunon (Chair) and Haywood Drake (Treasurer) are standing again, but if anyone else would like to stand please contact Sara Truman at strumansurrey@gmail.com

Places for the talk and AGM must be booked in advance. To book go to Eventbrite: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/ros-blackburn-nas-surrey-branch-agm-registration-156060191233> There is no charge to attend.

Closure of NAS Autism Helpline

Due to lack of funding as a result of the lockdown, the National Autistic Society has sadly had to make the decision to close its general Helpline. It stopped taking calls on 19th May, and will stop responding to emails from 9th June.

There is a wide range of information and advice on the NAS website here:

<https://www.autism.org.uk/advice-and-guidance>

It also has some specialist advice services for particular issues, and these will continue to operate. They include:

Autism Inpatient Mental Health advice service – for autistic people and families whose loved one is, or is at risk of, being detained in a mental health hospital. Contact via online enquiry form:

<https://www.autism.org.uk/what-we-do/help-and-support/autism-inpatient-mental-health-service>

Transition Support Helpline – for young autistic people or their families for advice and support on the transition from school, further or higher education to adult life. Contact via online form or 0808 800 0027

<https://www.autism.org.uk/what-we-do/help-and-support/transition-support-service>

There are other specialist advice services around education issues and emotional support for parents. For more information about all the NAS advice services go to:

<https://www.autism.org.uk/what-we-do/help-and-support>

The Autism Show: Webinar Week

The Autism Show is running an online learning series from 14th – 19th June. The Autism Show has gone digital again to offer you over 30 hours of new online learning, designed to make a positive difference to the autistic children and adults you care for, support or teach. The cost is £39.99 for one month's access to 6 days of talks. For details go to:

<https://www.autismlearns.co.uk>

Group for Autistic and Neurodiverse Girls – Appeer CIC

Appeer CIC is a Surrey based not for profit organisation set up to support autistic and neurodiverse girls and women and those around them to connect and get support. In the next few months, they are running:

Sessions for younger girls - online sessions including *Fantastic Beasts and Mythical Creatures*, *Whales and Dolphins*, *Wallace & Gromit* and cooking for autistic girls aged 7-12 as well as in person visits to a horse sanctuary, a climbing wall, a planetarium, a board game cafe and more (all run according to COVID-19 government guidelines). We are also restarting our monthly girls' groups (places limited). For details go to: <https://www.appeer.org.uk/7-12-years-old-girls>

Sessions for teens A *Teens Exploring Work* programme for 15-18 year olds, teen yoga and a range of online and face-to-face sessions including *We Create Art* sessions, dogs' and cat lovers' workshops, visits to animal management centres, climbing centres and more. For details go to: <https://www.appeer.org.uk/teens>

There are also online Minecraft and Roblox sessions **for autistic girls aged 7-17** including siblings and **parent/carer sessions** including talks on Selective Mutism and online and in person coffee mornings.

Appeer record all their online talks so if you cannot make the 'live' time, you can book anyway and they will send you the video and resources after the event.

For more details, visit www.appeer.org.uk or email jo@appeer.org.uk

Talk by Dr Luke Beardon in September

On Tuesday 21st September at 7.30pm, the NAS Surrey Branch is hosting a webinar by Dr Luke Beardon, Author and Senior Lecturer in Autism, The Autism Centre, Sheffield Hallam University.

Entitled, "*Anxiety is not part of Autism. So why are so many autistic people anxious?*" Dr Beardon will explain his perspectives on why so many autistic children and adults suffer from anxiety, what 'autistic anxiety' even is and what can be done about it.

Places are free but must be booked in advance. To book go to Eventbrite: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/anxiety-is-not-part-of-autism-so-why-are-so-many-autistic-people-anxious-registration-156057152143>

Learning Disability Week

June 21st – 27th is Learning Disability Week which this year has a theme of art and creativity. Find out more at <https://www.mencap.org.uk/get-involved/learning-disability-week-2021>

10% Discount off Curly Hair Project Resources

Members of Surrey Branch can get 10% off webinars, e-courses and books by The Curly Hair Project, an information service for autistic people, their families and the professionals who work with them. To get your discount, go to <https://thegirlwiththecurlyhair.co.uk/>, select the products you require and use the code NASSURREY when you check out. If you need any help with accessing the discount please email NASSurreyBranch@nas.org.uk

Update - Emotional, Wellbeing & Mental Health Service

April 2021 marked the beginning of a transformation for the emotional wellbeing and mental health service for Surrey's children, young people and families.

The Surrey children's system, working alongside a new alliance of NHS and national and local voluntary sector organisations, is providing a broader range of services for children and families and the NAS Surrey Service, the professional side of the NAS based in Godalming, is part of this service.

There is now quite a lot of information available on the Surrey and Borders Partnership website about this new service, although the website is still under development.
<https://www.sabp.nhs.uk/CYPFwellbeing>

There will be a greater emphasis on providing support earlier, and more opportunity to access a range of services in many different ways and settings.

The transformation will introduce a new approach where children and young people will have a central voice in decisions about their care, and their needs will be met based on their goals. Children and young people will have more choice about their options, and more opportunity to access a range of services in many different ways. The model uses the Thrive Framework which is explained here:
<https://www.sabp.nhs.uk/CYPFwellbeing/about-us/our-new-approach>

The new services are explained, and there is information on access and advice; building resilience; neurodevelopmental services including neurodevelopmental therapists; intensive interventions; crisis admission avoidance; reaching out and a focus on working more closely with schools to identify need. Overall, there will be a greater focus on providing support when emotional wellbeing or mental health needs begin to emerge. Professionals in schools, primary care and the community will receive increased support and training to be able to help earlier and prevent a deterioration in emotional wellbeing and mental health.

<https://www.sabp.nhs.uk/CYPFwellbeing/about-us/our-new-approach>

If the link doesn't work, please paste the link into your browser.

Other Mental Health and Wellbeing Resources

Surrey Local Offer

Surrey Local Offer also has a page that explains the help and support for behaviour and emotional wellbeing that is available.

It is broken down into Universal Services which are available to everyone without a referral, Targeted Services which may require a referral and will often involve some form of assessment to access the service and Specialist Services for those with an EHCP or support plan.

<https://www.surreylocaloffer.org.uk/kb5/surrey/localoffer/advice.page?id=KhuC5Rtlrc>

Family Voice Surrey

Family Voice has a guide that highlights a range of resources to help maintain the wellbeing of children with special needs, including guidance about self-harm.

<https://www.familyvoicesurrey.org/single-post/health-wellbeing-and-emotional-wellbeing-support-for-children-in-surrey>

Family Voice Surrey Talks & Groups

Family Voice Surrey (FVS) is the local parent participation group and represents the needs and rights of SEND families in Surrey with children & young adults up to 25.

They are hosting a **School Anxiety Chat on Wednesday 9th June 11.00am** for parents of children or young people who struggle with attending school or college. On 9th June Laura Kerbey, founder of Positive Autism Support and Training will be joining the group to talk about 'Education Other Than at School' – EOTAS. Email lucy.y@familyvoicesurrey.org for the zoom login details.

There is a support group for **parents of children up to the age of four** with any additional need on **Tuesday 22nd June 10.30am**. Email kim.b@familyvoicesurrey.org for more details and zoom login

Check the website regularly for the most up to date detail of future events
<https://www.familyvoicesurrey.org/fvs-events>

Online Talks by Tony Attwood

The Association for Child and Adolescent Mental Health (ACAMH) is hosting a series of Live streams by Prof. Tony Attwood about different aspects of autism during June and July. All seminars run from 9.00am - 12 noon and recordings will be available for 28 days after each event.

1. Managing Anxiety – Thursday 3 June

The webinar explores why autistic children and adolescents have high levels of anxiety, how they express and accommodate feeling anxious, and strategies for parents and professionals to moderate and manage anxiety.

2. The Cognitive Profile Associated with Autism – Thursday 17 June

The webinar explores the profile of cognitive abilities associated with autism and how the school curriculum and psychological therapies need to be modified to accommodate the profile.

3. Developing the Friendship Abilities of Autistic Children in Primary School – Thurs 1 July

The webinar explores the social reasoning and friendship abilities of autistic children in their primary school years and strategies to 'read' social situations with peers, facilitate social engagement, and make and keep friends.

4. Adolescent Issues for Autistic Teenagers – Thursday 15 July

Autistic teenagers experience greater challenges during adolescence than their typical peers. The webinar explores these challenges and provides strategies to improve coping mechanisms, resilience, and connection with peers.

Costs are:

- Any single seminar £35
- Any two seminars £65
- Any three seminars £97.50
- All four seminars £120

To book go to: <https://membership.acamh.org/Event-Registration/EventId/900>

New School Places in Surrey

Here is a roundup of changes to schools providing places for children with autism and Communication and Interaction Needs (COIN).

Freemantles School

Surrey County Council, together with Freemantles School, is proposing to permanently expand the school to accommodate a total of 270 pupils by providing an additional 72 places in Years 7 to 14. You have until 17th June to respond – details are here:

<https://www.surreysays.co.uk/csf/freemantles-school-stat-notice/>

Specialist Communication and Interaction Needs (COIN) Centres

COIN centres are based in mainstream schools and provide places for children whose needs include speech, language and communication and autism. COIN specialist centres are best suited for children who will benefit from attending mainstream classes and regular interaction with other pupils there, but who require additional specialist support at times in a different classroom setting to achieve their educational goals.

Chandlers Field School East Molesey – High COIN unit

Surrey County Council in liaison with Chandlers Field School, is proposing to open a specialist centre (SEN unit) for primary pupils with an EHCP and who have autism. A bespoke building will be located within the school grounds.

Changes at Sunnydown School in Caterham

There is a proposal to remove residential provision and add 20 more spaces at Sunnydown School, a special school catering for boys and young men in KS3 and KS4 who have an EHCP which identifies COIN as a primary need. Many students have autism. Pupils are academically able, with many obtaining GCSE grades A and B in Maths and Science. Specialised support is in place for those who find English more challenging. <https://www.surreysays.co.uk/csf/removal-of-boarding-provision-at-sunnydown-school/>

Philip Southcote School Addlestone

Surrey County Council has amended its plans to expand Philip Southcote School which will now permanently accommodate a total of 150 pupils on the main site, with an additional 50 places in National Curriculum Years 7 to 11. The main point of intake will be at Year 7. Part of this proposal is to also relocate the current sixth form provision to the former Meads building, adjacent to Chertsey High School. There will be a satellite Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) centre at Chertsey High School.

Satellite SEND Centre in Camberley

There is to be another satellite SEND centre at Kings International College, Camberley, in partnership with the Governing Body of the school.

Manor Mead Primary Virginia Water

Manor Mead Primary school for pupils with learning disabilities is opening a temporary two-year 'satellite' expansion of Manor Mead School, on behalf of Surrey County Council in September 2021. The new school will take up to 40 local primary aged children with autism and/or Communication and Interaction needs, and will expand to 60 children from September 2022. You can read more here: <https://manor-mead.surrey.sch.uk/Virginia-Water/>

School Planning Applications Withdrawn or Rejected

Plans for new Woking COIN school rejected

The plans to build a school in Knaphill have been curtailed due to objections from local residents. Plans for land off Brookwood Farm Drive in Knaphill have attracted 42 objections, with many fearing a school there would lead to long tailbacks from the Bagshot Road and Connaught Road crossroads.

Betchwood Vale Academy – current planning application withdrawn

The project team behind plans for a new SEND state school in Dorking have withdrawn the current planning application and are having further discussions with Mole Valley District Council. This is disappointing and we hope that the plans will be resubmitted in the near future.

Family Voice Surrey Free Online Events

On Thurs 10th June at 12noon, FVS is hosting an event entitled '*What's next when school is finished?*'. The first talk is by the **founder and CEO of Sans Soucie Home Care, Padner Kupakuwana**. Sans Soucie Home Care provide supported living, activities and help young adults leaving school/home to get into a work placement.

The other speaker is **GINNY WILLIS, an Independent Transition Consultant** who helps young people with advocacy and transitions usually from Year 9 onwards and into adulthood.

This event is for parents who would like more information on life after school. Please contact guildford@familyvoicesurrey.org for further details and zoom login details

Family Voice also hosts **weekly chats (currently via Zoom)** and events for parents of children with anxiety around school – for details go to: <https://bit.ly/2QY1C1T>

Action for Carers Online Talk & Group

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

Wills, Trusts and Lasting Power of Attorney

Led by Steve Howells, Rethink - 8th June, 1 pm – 2.30 pm

Email CarerSupport@actionforcarers.org.uk or call 0303 040 1234 for details.

Action for Carers Learning disability and autism support group

This fairly new monthly group is offering support to carers who care for a young person over 17 years old. Join Action for Carers Tessa Emery to exchange ideas with other carers and find out about the support available. The group meets on the fourth Tuesday of the month, so there will be meetings on 22nd June and 27th July.

To book go to: <https://www.actionforcarers.org.uk/event/learning-disability-and-autism-support-group-caring-for-a-young-person-over-17-3/>

New events are being added all the time: <https://www.actionforcarers.org.uk/events/> for details. You do need to register with Action for Carers to attend.

NAS Stepping up for Autism Courses

The Family Support Team at the NAS professional service have scheduled a range of dates for their Stepping up for Autism courses from September. These are 8-session courses for parents and carers who live in Surrey including:

- What is Autism?
- Parent & Child Wellbeing
- Communication
- Visual Supports
- Managing Behaviour
- Understanding Behaviour
- Sensory Differences
- Supporting Social Skills

For details, please email Surrey.familysupport@nas.org.uk or call 01483 521 744 (Mon and Thurs only).

Autism and Nature Facebook page

From the authors of Alex and Rosie's Adventures in Surrey David and Thorada Blakesley.

Autism and Nature is dedicated to enriching the lives of children with autism and related conditions, by producing resources to help parents, carers and teachers engage their children with the natural world and local heritage.

<https://www.facebook.com/Autism-and-Nature-106358864491530>

It was set up during the current pandemic. A wide range of material is being posted, that can be downloaded for children, including: stories about how the fictional characters Alex and Rosie engage with the natural world; new colouring sheets for children of all ages; and a wide range of quizzes, activities and facts about nature.

It will emphasise wildlife that children might see in their gardens or on family walks in local parks or the countryside. Funding from Kent Community Foundation and the Coronavirus Community Support Fund, distributed by The National Lottery Community Fund, has helped them to develop this Facebook page.

<https://bit.ly/3vFyt11>

The All Aboard Club is back!

The All Aboard club trains are back running in Sutton every Saturday! Autistic children and their families can go along to the St Nicholas Community Hall any time between 10am and 12noon.

There's lots of parking in the Gibson Road multi-storey car park opposite the hall, or it's a 10-minute walk from Sutton railway station.

The cost of a session is £12 + a £1.52 booking fee.

On Saturday 3rd July they are planning a visit to a village near London where old tube trains go up *very* steep hills and call at East Hanton station, and the electric-powered steam trains run to Maryloo station.

For details of this and all the All Aboard Club events see their facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/allaboardclubuk> or contact Richard Semmens at info@allaboardclub.com tel 07948 407343.

Free Resources on Executive Function

Aniesa Blore, a local Occupational Therapist, has made some recordings for the Oak National Academy and there are several on aspects of Executive Function.

We recently had a talk on Executive Function by Dr Louise Connor. Executive function skills help you get things done.

They also help you plan and organise, do things based on your experience, multitask and switch focus.

<https://classroom.thenational.academy/specialist/therapies/occupational-therapy/units/executive-functioning-organisation-ef0e>

Aniesa has also recorded sessions on gross and fine motor skills.

<https://classroom.thenational.academy/specialist/therapies/occupational-therapy>

Spectrum Night Walk 21st August

The Spectrum night walk takes place on Saturday 21 August to raise vital funds for the National Autistic Society (not the branch). You'll be joining like-minded people who want to help create a society that works for autistic people.

You can choose to walk 5, 10 or 15k and the NAS welcome participation from both individuals and groups/teams. They are offering a free t-shirt to each participant, so please include t-shirt sizes (for all team members) with your booking.

<https://www.autism.org.uk/get-involved/raise-money/world-autism-awareness-week/spectrum-night-walks>

The **six year-old son of a member and his friend**, who are both autistic, are raising money for the NAS by doing the night walk (along with their mums, of course!).

Here is the link, if you'd like to sponsor them: <https://bit.ly/3vy9HJC>

Information and Advice Strategy for Surrey

This strategy is designed for all key agencies working in health and social care including the voluntary, community and faith sector who provide information or signpost residents to care and support.

While not specific to autism, the hope is that the All Age Autism Strategy can utilise some of this work and it will be easier to find the services that you need.

Through this strategy Surrey County Council are actively trying to improve the consistency and quality of information provision and signposting to residents, carers and families. They want to help residents access information and support online.

One useful website that can help with signposting is Surrey Local Offer:

<https://www.surreylocaloffer.org.uk/kb5/surrey/localoffer/home.page>

<https://www.surreylocaloffer.org.uk/kb5/surrey/localoffer/advice.page?id= AVPAx-5Jj0>

There is also a useful searchable directory of services

<https://www.surreylocaloffer.org.uk/kb5/surrey/localoffer/localoffer.page>

A Big Thank You For Donations

We have recently received two donations which are helping to fund the support we offer to our 2000 members in Surrey.

The Pearce Family asked for donations in memory of Mrs Gladys Pilkington, donating £290.

The Eleanor Creeke foundation donated £300, following a nomination for the Branch by Clare Muir.

RESEARCH REQUESTS

Gender Differences in Restricted and Repetitive Behaviours

Hannah Edwards is a Trainee Educational Psychologist at the University of Southampton conducting a research project exploring gender differences in self-reported restricted and repetitive behaviours and interests of autistic and non-autistic young people. She is looking for participants to take part in an online survey.

Participants need to be:

- Aged between 16-25 years old.
- Live in the United Kingdom.
- Have access to a laptop/computer/tablet and the internet.
- Have the reading ability (equivalent to GCSE level) to be able to complete the survey independently.

Participants willing to take part will be asked to complete a short online survey which will ask questions about a variety of topics including demographics, autism traits, restricted and repetitive behaviours and interests, camouflaging behaviours, and anxiety. All information will be strictly confidential and anonymized.

As a thank you for taking part in this study, participants will have the option to enter a prize draw to win either a £5, £10, £20, £50 or £100 Amazon voucher.

The email address for the research is Hannah Edwards
h.edwards@soton.ac.uk University of Southampton Ethics no. 63592.

Melatonin use in children with Autism Spectrum Conditions – UCL

Jade Horsnell is a Masters student at University College London and is carrying out a research project entitled 'A qualitative analysis of melatonin prescription to treat sleep disorders in children and adolescents with Autism Spectrum Disorders'.

She is hoping to find out about parent's views and experiences regarding the administration of melatonin to their autistic children (aged 5 – 18) who also experience/have experienced problems with their sleep. The study will include participating in one of four online focus groups, each consisting of 10-12 open ended questions, for you to answer in your own time.

The focus groups will take place on the online platform and will each contain around 4-6 participants. The study closes on 11th June. For details contact the researcher:
jadehorsnell@hotmail.com

University of Edinburgh Research into Adolescence & Aggression

Researchers at the University of Edinburgh are studying why some adolescents report higher rates of aggression during the period of change that is adolescence. The researchers are looking for parents and primary caregivers of adolescents aged 11 to 21 years old with or without a diagnosis of autism.

To take part, you are required to be living in the same household as the adolescent, be fluent in English and must not have a diagnosis of a neurological condition (conditions like epilepsy, cerebral palsy or Parkinson's) or intellectual disability.

The study involves completing a one-off online session lasting 35 minutes. You will be asked to complete several questionnaires asking about how your adolescent behaves and your relationship with them.

As a thank you for completing the study, you will be entered into a prize draw to receive a £50 voucher. If you have any further questions, please get in touch with Emma at e.thompson-16@sms.ed.ac.uk. For information go to <https://bit.ly/3utGLRN> and enter the password **study**.

Royal Holloway research into sensitivity to touch

Two Clinical Psychology Masters students at Royal Holloway, University of London are carrying out a study investigating the impact of tactile responsivity (over or under sensitivity to touch) in individuals with and without Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

Previous research has investigated issues in children with ASD but there is little research on whether tactile sensitivity continues to be a difficulty for adults with ASD. Adults over the age of 18 years with and without a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder are invited to participate by completing the questionnaire.

Participants will be asked questions related to difficulties experienced with tactile sensations, including clothing and the impact these have on daily functioning and wellbeing.

The study takes approximately 15 minutes to complete and the data collected is anonymous. Participants are given the opportunity to be entered into a draw to win a £50 Amazon voucher, any contact details provided are kept separate from the data and are deleted after the draw is made on July 1st 2021.

This study has been approved by the Royal Holloway Research Ethics Committee (Ref No. 2496). For more details contact alexandra.mladenovic.2020@live.rhul.ac.uk or use this link:

https://rhulpsychology.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_6XAUkYfdAaZU5zn

Imaginary Friends Research

Kate Boyle is a Trainee Educational Psychologist at the UCL Institute of Education and is carrying out some research into parents views on their autistic children's relationships with imaginary friends.

Imaginary friends have only been studied in 'typically developing' children before. To find out about getting involved, contact katharine.boyle.20@ucl.ac.uk

INFORMATION FOR ADULTS, YOUNG PEOPLE AND THEIR FAMILIES

Surrey Autism Strategy Housing Survey – Have Your Say

Work is currently under way to develop the plan to implement the new Surrey All Age Autism Strategy: you can see the Strategy Framework here: <https://bit.ly/3vs1ruM>

The people working on the issue of Housing and Independent Living would like to understand more about how easy or difficult it is for autistic people to apply for housing from the local council.

If you are an autistic person (or parent/family member of one) who has tried to get a flat or house through your District or Borough Housing Department, we would be very grateful if you would answer a very short questionnaire, organised by the National Autistic Society Surrey Branch.

The information gathered will be passed on to the Autism Strategy working group for Housing and Independent Living. This includes representatives from Surrey County Council, local district and borough councils, health services, autistic people, parents/carers and others. No names will be passed on, and you do not have to give your name when completing the questions if you don't want to.

To complete the questionnaire, click this link: <https://forms.gle/PajVn5ZnUbNT8kuq5>
The deadline for completing it is Monday 7th June.

AS Mentoring Workshop On Exploring Autism

AS Mentoring are offering a workshop on **Saturday June 19th from 11 am – 1 pm** for adults recently diagnosed with an ASC who wish to explore autism on a personal level as well as a medical one.

Through a combination of theory, practical and creative activities and discussion the session will explore the following:

- What is autism and how does it actually affect me?
- Coping with later diagnosis.
- How and when to disclose to those around you.
- What autism specific support is out there?

Tickets:

General admission: £35

Assisted Places: £12 - Assisted place tickets are subsidised by [Autism Forward CIO](#) and conditional to Autism Forward policy:

- You do not have other means available to pay for a place at the workshop
- You must have an autism diagnosis or be actively seeking one
- You must complete a 'before and after' survey to measure impact

AS Mentoring reserves the rights to cancel this workshop should it not meet minimum booking numbers. You must be 18 or over to attend this event. Please book here: <https://bit.ly/3fVPDdM>

Youth Justice Survey

The National Autistic Society (in partnership with the University of Kent), would like people over 18 who have been involved with the criminal justice system, or have or had concerns about being involved with it, to complete an online survey about their experiences.

They will not ask you to give details of any offences or criminal charges, just the circumstances around them and what support was received or needed.

You can view the survey before deciding whether you wish to complete it:

<https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/cjnewsaut>

New way of contacting the Police using Social Media

Ben Shiell, Surrey Police's Lead for Autism, has been in touch with the Branch to provide details of a new service for autistic people.

From working with a lot of autistic adults across the county, he has come to understand that phoning the police can be quite stressful – knowing which number to call, the number of questions you're asked, the background noise of talking and typing, the pressure of explaining everything that has happened, worrying about what will happen next etc.

There is a new method of contacting the Police that is now live in Surrey, nicknamed **Digital 101**. It is in essence the ability for the Police to take full reports of crimes and incidents via social media and live chat. Previously if Police received contact via one of these channels, the informant would have been asked to contact the Police via telephone on 101.

It is hoped that this new way of working will make the Police more accessible for people with communication difficulties and will take away some of the stress and make contacting the police easier. Surrey is one of the first forces in the country to go live with this way of working and now that it is embedded Surrey Police's Lead for Autism Ben Shiell wanted to make sure you were aware of it.

Digital contact with police is something that will become more common with legislation coming in soon to make sure all forces can communicate this way. However, it will be down to each force to decide how much information they take over social media and how much they divert back to the phones.

Services for People with Mental Illness and Their Carers, Including Those With Autism and Mental Illness

Space 2B You is a not for profit organisation providing services to support those living with various challenges, including mental illnesses, and their carers. They work remotely, via the internet, to provide a range of clinician-led services to give people the space to talk and explore their options and preferences, understand their challenges more fully and clarify what would help them live more effectively with mental health difficulties.

T: 0303 040 1234 E: carersupport@actionforcarers.org.uk

T: 01264 332297 E: well-being@andovermind.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 <https://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.

As the NAS approaches its 60th birthday it faces the challenge of reduced funding due to COVID 19. By joining the NAS, you can help boost funds, as well as providing additional information for you and your family.

The individual member price is £26 for card payment/£24 for direct debit
The joint member price is £32 for card payment/£30 for direct debit

Joint membership allows two adults living in the same household to take advantage of publications discounts and to vote in elections for the NAS' Council of Members. It also gives family members a chance to be involved and to show their support.

Parents often take out joint membership with an autistic child who is over 18.

**National Autistic Society, 393 City Rd, London EC1V 1NG www.autism.org.uk.
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