



Welcome to the Dec 19 / Jan 20 issue of Surrey News

In this issue....

For details of local meetings, see Calendar on p 6 & 7

- Branch Conference 2020 – p3
- Children's Christmas party in Woking – p3
- Free SEN Advice Sessions in February & March – p3
- Suicide Prevention full-day workshop for parents – p4
- 'Surrey Next Steps' Post 16 Support Info Events – p5
- Information Morning for Families in Molesey – p7
- New NAS Godalming Children's Club in Godalming – p8
- Home / School transport consultation – p8
- Inclusive sporting activities for children & adults – p8
- **Meeting Reports:** Talks on ADHD & Autism and Autism & Puberty p. 9-10

Information for Adults & Young People:

- New Support/Social Group for Autistic Adults in North Camp – p11
- Survey of Siblings of Autistic Adults – p11

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.

As we get ready for Christmas, we're delighted to announce details of our conference on May 16th 2020, which will also be when we celebrate the Branch's silver jubilee.

Since the branch was founded with 11 parents in 1995, many things have changed in the world of autism, and we will be looking at the past, present and future of autism support in Surrey and nationwide.

There are several opportunities for you to make your mark on how services are delivered in the future, including a consultation on home / school transport in Surrey, signing an open letter to the Government about the delayed new autism strategy and opportunities to contribute to academic research projects designed to increase our understanding of autism.

The Branch's online support group and email forum "NASSB" is moving from Yahoo to a new platform, Groups.io, in the next couple of weeks. There may be a pause in activity and adding new members until the transfer is complete, so please bear with us during the changeover.

Wishing you a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year,

Sara Truman,
Chair (volunteer)

NAS Surrey Branch

General email: nassurreybranch@nas.org.uk

Website: www.nassurreybranch.org

Twitter: @NASSurreyBranch

Facebook: @NASSurreyBranch

Donations: www.justgiving.com/nassurreybranch

NAS Surrey Branch Contacts

Chair:

Sara Truman 07423 435413
nas@mugsy.org

Treasurer:

Haywood Drake
bobdrake357@btinternet.com

Branch Membership:

Nancy Rowell
membership@mugsy.org

Deputy Chair / Website & Newsletter:

Emma Whitfield
emma@mugsy.org

Events, activities and fundraising

Please email events@nassurreybranch.org with the name of the event in the subject line

Sarah Mead
Emma Searle
Jill Goulding
Jo Dilworth
Emma Ellis

Parents of Girls' Group

Rachel Pearson
racheldpearson@gmail.com

Parents of Adults' Group

Hilary Dyce
hilarydyce@yahoo.co.uk

Dads' Group:

Simon Bunch
bunch.simon@gmail.com

Weighted Blanket Loan

E Surrey – Penny Sims po.sims@yahoo.co.uk
W Surrey – Emma Whitfield
emma@mugsy.org Blankets are suitable for a child from 25kg (about 8 yrs)

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

Other Useful Contacts

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

NAS web site: 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

SSIASS Parent Support: 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 Conference 2020: Autism – Past, Present and Future

The next NAS Surrey Branch conference is on **Saturday 16th May 2020** at the University of Surrey in Guildford, from 10.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m. Next year is the 25th anniversary of the Surrey Branch being formed, and to mark this, we will be looking at how understanding of autism has developed over the last 25 years and the latest research, approaches and issues around today. We will be thinking about the future too, for our individuals with autism and the wider autism world.

Our main speakers are **Carol Povey, Director of the NAS Centre for Autism**, and **Ros Blackburn, an autistic adult**. There will also be workshops on some of the current big issues in autism: mental health, Pathological Demand Avoidance, teenage girls with autism, managing difficult behaviours, employment, and adult social care.

If you book by 31st January 2020, you can secure your place at a discounted rate of £30 for parents, autistic people and family carers, and £60 for professionals (suggested donations). From 1st February 2020, it will be £35 for parents, autistic people and family carers, and £70 for professionals. To book go to: <https://bit.ly/2KWdjQd>

Free SEN Advice Sessions

Do you need some 1:1 advice about your child's EHCP, Annual Review or potential appeal to Tribunal? Have you been told by your child's school that he or she doesn't need an EHCP, but you feel differently? Are you unsure how to proceed?

The NAS Surrey Branch is hosting an SEN clinic run by Tanya Williams, founder of www.senadvice.com. She is an 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. Through the NAS Surrey Branch, Tanya is offering free one-off 40 minute 1:1 sessions for parents/carers of autistic young people in Surrey to give you advice on next steps or possible ways forward.

The sessions will be on **Friday, 7th Feb in Guildford** and **Sat 14th March in Leatherhead**. Places must be booked and will be allocated on a first-come, first-served basis.

Please note that due to time constraints, Tanya is unable to provide detailed advice on individual EHCPs. She is also unable to assist anyone who already has legal aid or other solicitors already acting for them.

For a booking form please email events@nassurreybranch.org with "SEN Advice" in the subject line. You will also be sent a questionnaire to complete ahead of the session.

Indoor Climbing – Sunday February 23rd

We are hosting two, one-hour indoor climbing taster sessions for children on the spectrum and their siblings aged 7 – 17 on the afternoon of **Sunday 23rd February**. It will be at the climbing wall at Xcel Leisure Centre, Walton-on-Thames, and the sessions will be 2.00 – 3.00 p.m., and 3.00 – 4.00 p.m. We are subsidising the cost, and are asking for a suggested donation of £7.50 per child. To book, please email Emma Whitfield at emma@mugsy.org with 'Climbing' in the subject line and let us know how many places you'd like, which session time (or no preference), and the ages of the child / children. NB Parents remain responsible for their children throughout this event.

Suicide Prevention Full-Day Workshop in January

We will be hosting a one-day course on Saturday, 11th January, teaching the theory and practice of suicide intervention skills. As many families know, suicide is more common in autistic people than in the general population and is an issue which has very sadly impacted our autism community. We are therefore pleased to be able to host this course designed for anyone who is seeking a greater understanding of and confidence in the topic. The training will be tailored to the needs of families supporting autistic people of any age. The course will start at 9:15am and end at 4:30pm and will be held in Woking.

We are delighted that Fiona Aldred, Director of Operations at [The National Centre for Suicide Prevention Training](#), who was the speaker at our afternoon workshop on this topic earlier in 2019, is able to deliver this more in-depth course. Fiona has been working in the fields of Suicide Prevention and autistic spectrum conditions for the past 15 years, and has significant experience working to support positive outcomes for autistic people. She is also a parent of autistic children.

Places are limited, and MUST be booked in advance. The event is designed for parent / carers of autistic children or adults and they will have priority for places.

The actual cost of the course is over £100 per person, but we are asking for a **minimum donation of £25 per head**. Please contact us if the suggested donation is a problem.

For booking details, or if you have any queries, please email events@nassurreybranch.org with 'Suicide Prevention' in the subject line.

Update on Godalming and Ashtead Local Support Groups

Our parent support group in **Godalming** will be running again on Friday mornings from 10th January 2020. For more information contact volunteer host Katherine Frogley, email: katherinefrogley@gmail.com

Our **Ashtead** group will now be alternating morning and evening get-togethers, with morning meetings starting later than before at 10.30am, and evening meetings at 8.00pm, both at the Leg of Mutton & Cauliflower pub. The next meeting is a morning meeting on Wednesday 4th December. Thanks to new volunteer Tarah Basu who is helping Sam Caine run this group.

See pages 6 and 7 for details of all our local support groups.

Wills and Trusts Advice

The NAS has launched a new service offering advice over the telephone on Wills and Trusts, delivered by fully qualified solicitors. The service will give you access to:

- Free professional legal advice
- Future planning support.

This service will help you to protect your child financially without disruption to their benefit entitlements. The call appointments are on **Fridays between 12pm-2pm**. You can book your slot by calling **0808 800 4104**. or complete the online form here: <https://bit.ly/33ft4ln>

Activities for Autistic Girls

On Sunday 15th Dec from 10.30 to 12.30 there will be a morning of ceramics and craft-making in Woking for autistic girls aged between 7 and 12. Places are limited and must be booked in advance. Cost is £10 per girl or the cost of the ceramics and includes snacks. To book, or for more information, contact Jo Dilworth:
jo.dilworth@googlemail.com

This will also be an opportunity to hear about a new organisation being set up by Jo, Rachel Pearson and Cathryn Jagger called **Appeer Community Interest Company**. This new venture will provide social interest groups for girls aged 7 - 12 underpinned by a range of social, emotional and life skills objectives, sessions for parents/carers from a range of professionals including trainers from The Curly Hair Project and activities for teens in due course. This initiative is being supported by the NAS Surrey Branch.

If anyone wants to know more about Appeer Community Interest Company, but cannot go to the event on 15th Dec, contact Jo Dilworth on the above address for more information and for details of an evening information event on 9th January 2020.

Post-16 Support for Young People with SEND

Surrey County Council is investing in new ways of Preparing for Adulthood, focusing on Adult Pathways for Post-16 SEND young people for September 2020.

'Surrey Next Steps' is a programme that will focus on developing appropriate support and provision for young people with SEND to successfully move into the adult world, with a particular focus on creating opportunities and pathways into employment.

Eamonn Gilbert, Surrey County Council's Assistant Director of Commissioning, will be discussing Surrey's new approach to supporting Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) post 16 at meetings across Surrey. He will provide details of how pathways and provision in Surrey will be developed to achieve the best outcomes for young people. He will also share plans regarding the development of a comprehensive employment training and employment offer.

The dates of upcoming meetings are below, with links to book your place. If the links do not work, try them on the Local Offer webpage below. If problems persist try emailing localoffer@surreycc.gov.uk or calling 0300 2000 1004 to see if there are still places available.

- [South West Surrey: Ash Youth & Community Centre](#), Tuesday 3 December, 6.30pm to 7.30pm
- [North West Surrey: Walton Youth Centre](#), Weds 4 December, 6.30pm to 7.30pm
- [South East Surrey: Banstead Youth Centre](#), Tuesday 10 December, 6.30pm to 7.30pm

Surrey Local Offer webpage:

<https://www.surreylocaloffer.org.uk/kb5/surrey/localoffer/site.page?id=hy7lx6VfTCU>

A Big Thank You

Thank you to regular supporters of the branch, Neil and Mandy McRae, for donating £158 to the branch raised by hosting a private pinball event.

NAS SURREY BRANCH CALENDAR DEC 2019 - FEB 2020

NAS Surrey Branch local meetings are a great way to meet up with other families who understand autism to share experiences, find out information and seek support. Most meetings run during term-time only. **NB Please always contact the volunteer host before going along to make sure nothing has changed.** *If you can't see a meeting in your area, why not host one yourself? To find out more, contact info@nassurreybranch.org*

Ashtead – The Leg of Mutton and Cauliflower, 48, The Street, Ashtead, KT21 1AZ

NB Note new start time for morning meetings, and mornings & evenings now alternate.

Weds 4th Dec 10.30 a.m. – 12.30 p.m. Contact: Tarah Basu tarahbasu@googlemail.com

Weds 8th Jan 8.00 p.m. Contact: Sam Caine sjcaine@hotmail.com

Weds 5th Feb 10.30 a.m. – 12.30 p.m. Contact: Tarah Basu tarahbasu@googlemail.com

Dorking – Mum's Group evening meet-up

Meetings currently not taking place due to lack of numbers. Anyone interested in an evening support group in Dorking, please contact Helen Trenaman trenamans@talktalk.net 01737 360069

Frensham – The Holly Bush, Frensham, GU10 3BJ.

Contact: Christine Malik christinemalik@btinternet.com or Bonnie Noyce jbnoyce@yahoo.com

Mon 9th Dec 9.15 – 11.30 p.m.

Mon 13th Jan 9.15 – 11.30 p.m.

Mon 10th Feb 9.15 – 11.30 p.m.

Godalming – venue to be confirmed

Contact: Katherine Frogley katherinefrogley@gmail.com Tel: 07976 180674

Fri 10th Jan 10.00 a.m. – 12.00 noon.

Fri 28th Feb 10.00 a.m. – 12.00 noon

Guildford

Contact: Sara Truman nas@mugsy.org Tel: 07423 435413

Morning venue: **Caffe Nero, 66 North Street, Guildford GU1 4AH**

Evening venue: To be confirmed - check with contact.

Tues 10th Dec 10.00 a.m. – 12.00 noon.

Mon 20th Jan 7.30 - 9.30 p.m.

Thurs 13th Feb 10.00 a.m. – 12.00 noon

Hinchley Wood – Hinchley Wood Primary School, Claygate Lane, Esher KT10 0AQ

Contact: Emily Gorvy email: emily.gorvy@hotmail.co.uk

Fri 24th Jan 2.00 – 3.00 p.m.

Redhill – Home Cottage, Redstone Hill, Redhill, RH1 4AW

Contact: Leila Gregory leilalgregory@gmail.com

Thurs 5th Dec 8.00 p.m. (to be confirmed)

Thurs 9th Jan 8.00 p.m.

Thurs 6th Feb 8.00 p.m.

Weybridge – Oatlands Chaser, 25 Oatlands Chase, Weybridge KT13 9RW

Contact: Fi Phippen f.phippen@talktalk.net

Weds 22nd Jan 8.00 p.m.

Woking – Wyevale Garden Centre, Egley Road, Mayford, Woking GU22 0NH

Contact Sarah Norris sarah4ian@ntlworld.com tel: 07543 920917

Weds 4th Dec 10.00 a.m. – 12.00 noon

Weds 8th Jan 10.00 a.m. – 12.00 noon

Weds 5th Feb 10.00 a.m. – 12.00 noon

SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS

Dads' Group – Redhill

Contact Simon Bunch bunch.simon@gmail.com

A monthly social meeting for fathers of sons or daughters with autism.

Friday evenings – email Simon for next dates

Parents of Girls Group – Woking and Guildford

Contact Rachel Pearson racheldpearson@gmail.com

A group for parents of girls that meets approximately once a month during term-time.

Friday 6th Dec 10.00 a.m. Twelve Thirty Café, Christ Church, Jubilee Square, Woking GU21 6YG

Sun 15th Dec - 10.30am – 12.30pm - Ceramics and crafts for girls age 7 – 12, Woking

BOOKING ESSENTIAL See p5 for details. Contact Jo Dilworth on:

jo.dilworth@googlemail.com

January date to be confirmed.

Parents of Adults Groups – Locations around Surrey

A chance to meet parents and carers who have an adult offspring on the spectrum for an informal meal or drink. Meetings start at 7.30 p.m.

Weds 4th Dec – Weybridge - Hilary Dyce hilarydyce@yahoo.co.uk 01276 66032

Thurs 2nd Jan – Farnham - Hilary Dyce hilarydyce@yahoo.co.uk 01276 66032

Weds 5th Feb – Camberley - Hilary Dyce hilarydyce@yahoo.co.uk 01276 66032

Date tbc Feb – Redhill - contact Sara Truman nas@mugsy.org 07423 435413

Spouses and Partners Group, Guildford

Contact Sara Truman nas@mugsy.org 07423 435413

Evening meetings for partners of people on the spectrum (no diagnosis necessary).

Weds 29th Jan 8.00 – 9.30 p.m.

Weds 26th Feb 8.00 – 9.30 p.m.

* * * * *

Information Morning for Families with a Child age 0 - 7 with SEND

Home Start Elmbridge is hosting an information morning for the families of children up to age 7 with Special Educational Needs and / or Disabilities (with or without a diagnosis) on Tuesday 21st January from 10.00am – 1.00 pm at Molesey Youth Centre.

At the drop-in event, you can meet professionals and organisations who can give you advice and answer your questions. SEND Advisers, Portage and Early Support are attending, as well as organisations such as Surrey SEND Advice and Information Service, Action for Carers, National Autistic Society Surrey Branch and more.

If you have any queries, please contact Anne Hubble, tel: 0203 757 2330, email ahubble@home-start-elmbridge.org.uk

New NAS Godalming Children's Club in Godalming

Due to the demand for places, a second NAS children's club for ages 5 to 11 is opening in Godalming, to run on Wednesdays from 5.30 – 7.30 p.m. This is in addition to the Godalming Children's Club which meets on Thursdays from 6.00 – 8.00 p.m.

There is also a Children's Club in Staines, two youth clubs in Woking and Godalming and an all-ages club in Horsham. These clubs are all run by the NAS professional service (not the Surrey Branch). For details contact the NAS Resource Centre - email: SEResourceCentres@nas.org.uk tel: 01483 521743.

NAS professionals also run half day workshops for parents (including those whose child is awaiting diagnosis) on a range of topics. To go on the mailing list for information about upcoming courses email the above address or call 01483 521744.

Jack and the Beanstalk Panto

Head 2 Head Theatre are producing a multi-sensory Pantomime for 2019: Jack and the Beanstalk will be suitable for children, young people and adults with autism, ADHD and similar conditions. There will be loads of sensory experiences, an advance pack, a chill-out sensory room and many other adaptations.

- Sunday 8 Dec - Camberley (hoist available) 11.15am & 2.00pm
- Saturday 14 Dec - Crawley (hoist available) 11.15am & 2.00pm

Pre-booking is essential at office@head2headtheatre.co.uk or call 01372 278021/07519 747 290. The cost is £5 per person aged 2yrs and above. <https://bit.ly/2rrNSzm>

Reminder – Home / School Transport Consultation

There is still time to contribute your views to the Surrey County Council consultation on proposed changes to its Home to School/College Travel and Transport Policy. The survey is here <https://bit.ly/2mOWPjl>

Inclusive Sporting and Activities

Here is a summary of inclusive sporting/activity opportunities in and around Guildford:

Pan Disability Cricket for ages 11 and above - open to all with any disability, come down to join the fun, learn new skills, make friends and get active. Guildford Spectrum, GU1 1UP – parking available, Thursdays, 1pm to 2.30pm
Cost: FREE. Contact: Gavin 07725 203962 or greynolds@surreycricket.com

Dolphin Swim Club, ages 18 and over – friendly, inclusive swims for anyone with a physical or mental health impairments. There are also in-water volunteers, including a physiotherapist. Surrey Sports Park, Guildford, Fridays 11.45am to 12.45pm
Cost: 50p per swim. Contact Cliff 07752 054370 or cliffbush51@gmail.com
(Dolphin Swim Clubs are also in Woking and Tandridge, same contact details.)

Pan Disability Football – all abilities are welcome to come down and give football a go, make friends and have fun supported by qualified coaches to learn new skills. Kings College Guildford, GU2 8DU, Sundays 9.30am to 11am.
Cost: Annual Membership – there is funded membership available (limited number of places available). Contact Dawn 079700091797 or dawn.davies11@btinternet.com

In the north of Surrey, there is also Spelthorne parasports club:
<http://www.spelthorne.gov.uk/parasportsclub>

MEETING REPORTS

Autism and Puberty, Talk by Mark Brown

In October, we hosted a talk by Mark Brown, a Special Needs Advisor with a particular focus on sex education who runs Special Help 4 Special Needs. In an engaging talk, he covered topics such as consent, risk and vulnerability, physical and social development, relationships, sexual activity and social norms.

Mark encouraged parents and carers to be proactive by thinking about puberty early. His advice was to prepare ahead; gather information from publications and the internet, create social stories, source diagrams and provide relevant items, but adapt the material to the needs of the individual. He discussed how accessing pornography on the Internet gives a false picture of what healthy sexual relationships look like. To the autistic young person, the pornography they view is factual representation, so it is vital that the sex education includes a true picture of sex and relationships.

In the section on physical changes, Mark pointed to research showing that 33% of autistic children develop epilepsy during puberty. He advised parents to prepare in advance for the physical changes that come with puberty that can be upsetting for young autistic people. He recommended planning for girls' menstruation with appropriate information and being ready with the right sanitary products. He advised discussing erections and wet dreams, masturbation and how to address the issues surrounding location, frequency, privacy and safety.

As parents or carers of any adolescent – with or without autism - know, puberty can lead to anger and anxiety because of hormonal changes, as well as increased social expectations and the worries that this may create. Mark pointed out that obsessional behaviours may increase as the adolescent retreats to avoid the demands of transitioning into adulthood. Gender identity and sexuality may also need to be explored at this time. However, recognising the issues, talking about them and developing strategies to support the young person will help to transition through this period.

For the women in the audience the section on 'The Etiquette of the Urinal' was as enlightening as it was entertaining. Where to stand, where to look, trousers up or down, whether to talk or not talk, avoiding physical contact. It underlined the need to give specific information about appropriate behaviours in social situations to the young autistic people we look after.

Mark discussed how young people on the Autistic Spectrum can be vulnerable because they lack social understanding, have less awareness of boundaries and poor recognition of social cues. They may not understand intent, or recognise the responses of another to their own actions. Reducing vulnerability relies on learning about relationships, how to say 'no', the difference between public and private and the difference between strangers and friends.

He went on to discuss ways to prevent or manage inappropriate behaviour, warning that people with autism have entered the criminal justice system for what may have been an innocent mistake. His message was that it is easier to modify behaviours in a child to help avoid them getting into difficult situations than it is to change adult behaviour.

Recommended Books – Autism & Puberty

Mark recommended the 'Talking Together' series, which include 'Talking Together About Growing Up', 'Talking Together About Contraception', 'Talking Together About Sex and Relationships', and Kate Reynolds' books, 'What's Happening to Tom?' and 'What's Happening to Ellie?'. He has also kindly allowed us to publish his presentation to members and the slides can be found at: www.nassurreybranch.org/resources.html

Find out more about Special Help 4 Special Needs here: www.shsn.co.uk

Autism & ADHD in Adults and Young People, Talk by Denise Thornton

Denise Thornton spoke to members of NAS Surrey Branch in Woking in November. She is a Chartered Psychologist (BPS) and Registered Educational Psychologist with a Postgraduate Diploma in Paediatric Neuropsychology and has worked with young people and adults with autism and ADHD for over 20 years. She said that traits of autism and ADHD can sometimes be confused and also often overlap. Many young people and adults with autism also have ADHD and are frequently misdiagnosed and unsupported due to a lack of understanding on how these conditions can co-occur.

Denise explained how autism and ADHD often present differently in boys and girls, and men and women. More boys are diagnosed with both autism and ADHD because schools are more likely to pick up on problems in 'lively' boys, while girls tend to try not to draw attention to themselves, so don't stand out.

A diagnosis of autism usually takes place in a clinic not a school, and may be undertaken using different diagnostic criteria - either DSM V or ICD 10. Denise said that in the past it has been very difficult to get a diagnosis of both ADHD and autism, but that both conditions can include hyper- or hypo- reactivity to sensory input or unusual interests in sensory aspects of the environment.

Although she is not a fan of medication for ADHD, Denise said that it can have a benefit for some children, although it can take many weeks to get the dosage right. Denise assesses dosages by observing children timed tasks at school before and after medication to see if drugs have a positive effect.

Denise concluded by saying that many of the strategies used to support autistic children also work with children with ADHD, and vice versa.

* * * * *

Open Letter Asking Government to Publish New Autism Strategy

The next national autism strategy, which will set out the Government's plans to improve services and support for children and adults, was due to be published by the end of this year, but has been delayed due to the General Election. The NAS believes that autistic people can't afford to wait for the changes in politics before vital improvements are delivered, so is asking people to sign an open letter asking the party leaders to publish this strategy as soon as possible if they are elected.

The NAS estimates that as many as 327,000 people across the country struggle to do the things others take for granted, like getting ready in the mornings, getting out into the community or working. Children and adults can face waits of years to get their autism diagnosis. You can add your name to the thousands who have signed [here](#).

INFORMATION FOR ADULTS AND YOUNG PEOPLE

New Support/Social Group for Autistic Adults in North Camp

The NAS professional service has started a new group for adults with autism on the Surrey/Hampshire border. It meets in North Camp once a month on a Monday evening.

The group is for adults of all ages who wish to discuss issues relating to autism, share experiences and meet other adults with similar experiences. To be eligible to attend the group, you need to live within Surrey or the North East Hampshire Clinical Commissioning Group area (which includes Aldershot, Fleet, Farnborough and Farnham).

The group is not a drop-in, so you need to have made contact with the NAS before attending, though you do not need to be referred to the group by someone else. For more information, email aspire.groups@nas.org.uk

Survey of Siblings of Autistic Adults

Sibs, the charity for brothers and sisters of disabled children and adults, is looking for adults with a sibling who has a learning or developmental disability to take part in a survey.

They want to hear about your experiences, wellbeing, your relationship with your sibling, as well as what your support needs are.

The study, a collaboration between Sibs and the University of Warwick, will help Sibs develop relevant support to improve outcomes and relationships between siblings where one has a learning or developmental disability.

To take part, you need to be 18 years of age or older, have a sibling with a learning or developmental disability and reside in the UK.

This is a great opportunity to have your needs and experiences heard by the only UK charity whose sole purpose is to support siblings of people with disabilities.

If you are interested in finding out more about the study, please follow this link to the survey: <http://ow.ly/mCQU50x4Xbk>.

If you have any questions about this study, you can contact Nikita Hayden via N.Hayden@Warwick.ac.uk

Easy Read Breast screening leaflet

Some easy read leaflets have been produced for women with learning disabilities to help them understand breast screening; why it is important and what happens when you go to a screening centre. You can see the general leaflet here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/765594/Easy_guide_to_breast_screening.pdf

There is also one specifically about having a screening test at a mobile centre. See <https://www.breast-screening.surrey.nhs.uk/files/Breast-Screening-Easy-Steps-mobile-leaflet.pdf>

Research into Loneliness in Autistic Adults

Kana Umagami is a PhD student at the Centre for Research in Autism and Education (CRAE) at UCL Institute of Education, and is autistic. She is investigating loneliness in autistic adults and is recruiting participants to take part in an online survey on this topic.

The online survey takes approximately 20 minutes to complete, and is available [here](#). She would be grateful for responses from anyone who is:

- Aged over 18 (with no upper age limitation)
- Living in the UK
- Able to express their own thoughts (regardless of the ways they communicate)
- Diagnosed or self-identified as autistic

Kana hopes her research will provide a better understanding of loneliness in autistic adults.

* * * * *

Separate from this, The Grange in Bookham is doing research into loneliness in adults with learning disabilities. They have set up an online survey for people with LDs to complete, with the help of their parents/carers if required. You can complete the survey here <http://tiny.cc/as4tfz>, or if anyone would like a hard copy of the survey, please email Eloise Appleby Eloise.Appleby@grangecentre.org.uk

About NAS Surrey Branch

NAS Surrey Branch is a volunteer-run, support group for the parents of autistic children and adults. It's FREE to join (although a small donation is appreciated) and we have around 2,000 members. We hold regular support group meetings, organise social events and special interest groups 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 info@nassurreybranch.org 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 2,000 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, policy-makers, 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.

The views expressed in Surrey News are not necessarily those of the National Autistic Society, and reference to any specific services or approaches to autism does not imply endorsement. All material is copyright NAS Surrey Branch and cannot be reproduced without permission.