



Newsletter

Welcome to the February / March issue of Surrey News

In this issue....

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

- Climbing – see page 3
- Demand avoidance talk – p 5
- Autism in girls talk – p 5
- Mum's groups – p. 5
- Autism Awareness Week events – p7
- Transition events - p 9
- Research request – adults with autism or mothers of children with autism – p11
- Event for parents of adults – P 11
- Blue Badge consultation – p 12

Information for adults with autism on pages 11 & 12.

In this issue you will find news about two evening talks we are organizing. For Autism Awareness Week in March we are hosting a talk about demand avoidance in children with autism, and in February there is a talk on autism in girls.

We have also got news about a Mums Group to match the Dads Group - new regular evening support/social groups for mothers of autistic children in three locations. This should be particularly helpful for working mothers who are unable to attend our morning support groups – though all mothers are very welcome. We also have a new branch support group meeting in Oxted in the mornings, to add to our other support groups.

There are a number of events being put on by other organisations which will be of interest to our members, including one for parents/carers of adults with autism, and two about transition to post-16 or adult services. See inside for details of all the above – and more!

If you did not complete the very short branch survey publicised in our December newsletter, we'd be grateful if you would do so before it closes on 1st March. You will find it here:

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/PS3CF23>

Many thanks,

Sara Truman
Chair (volunteer)
NAS Surrey Branch
General email: info@nassurreybranch.org
Website: www.nassurreybranch.org
Twitter: @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 / Website & Newsletter:

Emma Whitfield

emma@mugsy.org

Events:

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

Sarah Mead

sarah_mead@hotmail.co.uk

Emma Searle

ephillpotts@gmail.com

Jill Goulding

Jill.goulding@gmail.com

Parents of Girls' Group

Rachel Pearson

racheldpearson@gmail.com

Fathers' Group:

Martin Trenaman

trenamans@talktalk.net

Parents of Adults' Group

Hilary Dyce

hilarydyce@yahoo.co.uk

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

POSTAL ADDRESS

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

NAS Surrey Branch

c/o Walton Charities,

2 Quintet,

Churchfield Road,

Walton on Thames KT12 2TZ

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: 0808 800 1050

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 additional needs under 3.5 years 0300 200 1004

Family Voice Surrey parent representation

www.familyvoicesurrey.org

Action for Carers tel: 0303 040 1234

www.actionforcarers.org.uk/

Parent Programmes

PAT-P for parents of under 5s. Replaces Early Bird course.

Cygnets for parents of children aged 5 – 19.

courses@sendteachingschool.co.uk

Tel: 020 8330 3009 ex 237

Redhill CAMHS group for parents of children with ASDs, tel: 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 ASDs and other difficulties 07876 762178

www.interaktive.org.uk

Adult Services

Surrey Adult Social Serv's: 0300 200 1005

NAS Surrey Service Tel: 01483 861600,

email: surrey.service@nas.org.uk

Employment Support

Employability for people with disabilities including ASDs 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

NAS Surrey Branch Climbing Taster Sessions in Walton

We are once again organising two one-hour taster sessions for children with ASDs and their siblings aged 6 – 17 at High Sports indoor climbing wall at the Xcel Leisure Centre, Walton. The sessions are designed to give children a chance to learn a new skill and socialise with others (whilst doing something else). There are two, one-hour sessions for up to 10 children with ASDs:

Time: 2.00 – 3.00pm OR 3.00 – 4.00pm

Date: Sunday 25th February

Location: High Sports indoor climbing wall, Xcel Leisure Centre, Walton-on-Thames

Cost: Suggested donation £7.50 per child (subsidised)

We have support from two High Sports staff who will explain about ropes and climbing. PLEASE NOTE, PARENTS ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR THEIR CHILDREN THROUGHOUT. We have reserved a dedicated area of the climbing walls, but other areas will be open to the public, so people will be coming and going throughout our sessions. The climbing area is adjacent to the main reception area in the leisure centre so can be very noisy and is only enclosed by a low wall, so is not fully secure. If your child has been to one of our events before, you may like to know that the facility has been extensively refurbished and re-branded 'Rockbox' so will look very different to previous years.

NUMBERS ARE LIMITED SO PLACES MUST BE BOOKED IN ADVANCE. Please email Emma Whitfield emma@mugsy.org for a booking form. (NB There may be a delay in responding to emails sent in the first week of February.)

Cygnets Courses Hosted by NAS Surrey Branch

Whenever time and funds allow, we commission two-day Cygnets courses for parents of children aged 5 - 18. The course in Guildford in May is now fully booked, and by the time you read this the Dorking course on 7th and 8th March will probably be full. We are hoping to hold another course in the autumn. To check availability for the March course, or to go on the waiting list for the next course, please email Sarah Mead at events@nassurreybranch.org with 'Cygnets' in the subject line, and give your contact details and the town you live in.

Surrey SEND Teaching School

The content of the branch hosted sessions is broadly the same as the main Cygnets programme in Surrey for parents of children with an ASD aged 5 – 19 run by the Surrey SEND Teaching School, but the pace is quicker to enable us to fit it into two days. To find out more about the courses offered by the SEND Teaching School, including the new 'PAT-P' programme (Parenting Autism Together - Pre-School, which replaces the Early Bird programme), go to <http://family.sendteachingschool.co.uk/services/family-support/>.

CANCELLED: DLA Workshop

We have reluctantly had to cancel our workshop planned for February in Leatherhead due to lack of interest. There is advice about claiming Disability Living Allowance (among other topics), on these websites: Cerebra <http://www.cerebra.org.uk/help-and-information/guides-for-parents/> and NAS <http://www.autism.org.uk/about/benefits-care/benefits/children/parents-carers-tips.aspx>.

NAS Surrey Service

You will have seen that there have been a number of changes to children's services offered by the NAS Surrey Service in Godalming over recent months. The services they now offer for under 18s are:

- Children's clubs (age 5-11) in Godalming & Staines + Reigate (age 7 – 14)
- Youth clubs (age 11-18) in Godalming and Woking
- All ages club (5-18 years old) in Horsham, W Sussex
- School holiday day outings for children and young people who attend clubs

For information about the above clubs, contact NAS Surrey Service on 01483 521 744 or email SEResourceCentres@nas.org.uk

Also see Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/NasSurreyResourceCentre>

For Families

Behaviour advice, emotional and practical support through workshops, email, telephone appointments and family support clinics for families with children aged 17 and under who have a CAHMS referral for the BEN (Behaviour & Neurodevelopment) Service in Surrey. Families can call the CAMHS One Stop number direct on 0300 222 5755.

The NAS is running workshops for families of children awaiting a diagnosis of autism. To go on the mailing list for dates of workshops, email SEResourceCentres@nas.org.uk

Surrey Short Breaks

In addition to the NAS children's and youth clubs listed above, there are three other providers of leisure activities suitable for children with ASDs funded by Surrey Short Breaks.

Aspens Charities, Elmbridge – inclusive play and leisure provision for disabled children and young people in Walton-in-Thames offering opportunities to try new activities, make friends, have fun and access social and leisure facilities in a friendly, safe and secure environment. Bookings are currently open for sessions this term. Easter holiday sessions will run from 9th to 13th April. Booking for this will open in February Half-Term. For details email:

childrensurrey@aspens.org.uk Tel: 0345 450 0060 ext 114 or go to:

<http://www.autismsussex.org.uk/our-services/childrens-services/surrey-short-breaks/>

Kids in Addlestone – a new play and leisure group for children and young people with autism. Sessions run from 10am – 4.00m on Saturdays and on selected days in the holidays in Addlestone. For details of the service and how to book, go to:

<https://www.kids.org.uk/surrey-short-breaks1> or contact Lisa Stevens on 0208 648 7020 or email surreyreferrals@kids.org.uk

YMCA East Surrey in Reigate – YMCA will be delivering Yippee & Yip4Youth ASD days during February, May and October half terms, as well as in the summer holidays. Sessions will be delivered across East Surrey, including at a purpose built centre for children and young people with disabilities in Reigate. All staff are trained in meeting the needs of children with disabilities and have special training in behaviour management and communication methods, such as Makaton. A high staff to child ratio ensures that each child receives the support they need and, with the help of young volunteers, they create a lively and fun atmosphere. 40% of spaces are for children and young people who require 1-2-1 support.

For more information and for a February half term booking form go to

www.ymcaeast Surrey.org.uk or email: yippee@ymcaeast Surrey.org.uk Tel: 01737 222 859.

Talk on Demand Avoidance

To mark the start of Autism Awareness Week we are holding a talk in Guildford on the evening of **Monday 26th March** from 8.00 p.m. to 9.30 p.m. Clare Truman, autism specialist teacher, will be speaking on “Living and Learning with Extreme Demand Avoidance”. The talk will cover:

- The debate surrounding the use of Pathological Demand Avoidance (PDA) as a diagnosis
- Supporting children who display extreme demand avoidance at home and school
- How to adapt autism strategies to meet the needs of children who display extreme demand avoidance

Places must be booked in advance. Please email events@nassurreybranch.org for a booking form. No charge, but donations would be gratefully received, either in cash on the night or via our justgiving page: www.justgiving.com/nassurreybranch

NB This talk may also be repeated in Redhill one evening during the summer term, if there is enough demand. If you would be interested in the talk being held in Redhill, please email events@nassurreybranch.org with ‘Redhill PDA Talk’ in the Subject line, by 28th February.

Mums’ Groups – Evening Support & Social Groups

The first Mum’s Group evening held in January in Dorking was very successful, so we have decided to have monthly evening get-togethers going forward, circulating between the north, south-west and south-east of Surrey. These will be informal socials/support groups open to any Mums of children with autism. We hope they will be particularly useful to mothers who are unable to get to our daytime support groups. Dates and contacts are:

Weybridge – Friday 23rd Feb

Contact: Fi Phippen f.phippen@talktalk.net Tel: 07377 549490

Dorking – Friday 23rd March

Contact: Helen Trenaman trenamans@talktalk.net tel: 01737 360069

Guildford – Monday 23rd April (provisional date – to be confirmed)

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

Talk by Dr Louise Connor for Parents of Girls

The Branch Parents of Girls group is holding an evening talk by psychologist Dr Louise Connor about autism in girls in Woking on **Wednesday 28th February**. Please contact Rachel Pearson for more details and to reserve a place. Email: racheldpearson@gmail.com

January Behaviour Workshop – Further Resources

We had a very informative workshop on managing behaviour by independent autism specialist and teacher, Sue Goldman. She provided a wealth of tips and advice about understanding behaviour, which she explained is effectively a form of communication – particularly in children and young people who struggle with verbal or interactive communication.

She gave a helpful action plan for parents to complete after an incident involving upsetting behaviour: 1) look at the reasons – sensory, communication, anxiety. 2) think of proactive strategies for future events when your child is in the ‘green zone’ – i.e. not upset and ‘orange zone’ – potentially heading towards a problem. Then think of any proactive strategies you could use when they are in the ‘red zone’, perhaps in a full meltdown for example. Sue stressed the importance of allowing a child (and parent/carer) time for recovery after a meltdown or outburst.

There are further resources on Sue’s website <http://www.suegoldman.co.uk/>

NAS SURREY BRANCH CALENDAR FEBRUARY – APRIL 2018

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. Please always contact the volunteer host before going along to make sure nothing has changed. Most meetings run during term-time only.

If you can't see a meeting in your area, why not host one yourself? To find out more, contact us at info@nassurreybranch.org

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

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

- Mon 26th Feb 9.15 – 11.30 a.m.
- Mon 12th March 9.15 – 11.30 a.m.
- Mon 30th April 9.15 – 11.30 a.m.

Godalming – In a member's home

Contact Cindy Barry cindybarry75@gmail.com, Tel: 07961 279518

- Mon 19th Feb 9.30 – 11.30 a.m.
- Mon 19th March 9.30 – 11.30 a.m.
- Mon 23rd April 9.30 – 11.30 a.m.

Guildford – Caffè Nero, 66 North Street, Guildford GU1 4AH

Contact Sara Truman nas@mugsy.org 07423 435413

- Mon 5th March 10.00 a.m. – 12.00 noon
- *Mon 23rd April Mum's group 7.30 p.m. – see next page*

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

Contact Juliette Sturge juliettesturge@gmail.com

- Fri 23rd Feb 2.00 p.m. – 3.00 p.m.

Oxted *NEW MEETING* Venue to be confirmed – café in Oxted

Contact Anne Pearce annepearcemcl@yahoo.co.uk Tel: 07946 461566

- Tues 20th Feb 10.00 a.m. – 12.00 noon
- Tues 24th April 10.00 a.m. – 12.00 noon

Redhill – In a member's home

Contact Helen Ruffhead h.ruffhead@ntlworld.com 01737 212043

- Thurs 22nd March 10.00 a.m. – 12.00 noon

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

Contact Sarah Norris sarah4ian@ntlworld.com 07543 920917

- Wed 21st Feb, 10.00 a.m. – 12noon
- Wed 14th March, 10.00 a.m. – 12 noon
- Weds 18th April 10.00 a.m. – 12 noon

SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS

Dads' Group – In a member's home

Contact Martin Trenaman trenamans@talktalk.net

A quarterly social meeting for fathers of children or adults with ASD.

- Fri 16th March. Venue to be confirmed.

SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS / Cont'd

Mums' Groups – Weybridge, Dorking and Guildford

A social evening for mothers of children or adults with ASD. Contact hosts for venue.

- Fri 23rd Feb – Weybridge.
Contact Fi Phippen f.phippen@talktalk.net 07377 549490
- Fri 23rd March – Dorking.
Contact Helen Trenaman trenamans@talktalk.net 01737 360069
- Mon 23rd April – Guildford. (Provisional date – to be confirmed)
Contact Sara Truman nas@mugsy.org 07423 435413

Parents of Girls Groups – Woking and Guildford

Contact Rachel Pearson racheldpearson@gmail.com

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

- Friday 9th Feb 10.00 a.m. – 12.00 noon Woking
- Weds 28th Feb 8.00 p.m. – 9.30 p.m. Woking TALK BY DR LOUISE CONNOR
- Weds 22nd March 10.00 a.m. – 12.00 noon Guildford
- Tues 24th April 10.00 a.m. – 12.00 noon Woking

Parents of Adults Groups – Locations around Surrey

A chance to meet parents and carers of adults on the spectrum for an informal meal or drink. Meetings start at 7.30 p.m.

- Weds 7th Feb – Guildford – contact Sara Truman 07423 435413 nas@mugsy.org
- Thurs 1st March – Haslemere - contact Sara Truman 07423 435413 nas@mugsy.org
- Weds 4th April - Weybridge - contact Hilary Dyce 01276 66032 hilarydyce@yahoo.co.uk

Spouses and Partners Group, Guildford

Contact Sara Truman 07423 435413 nas@mugsy.org

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

- Weds 28th Feb 8.00 – 9.30 p.m.
- Weds 21st March 8.00 – 9.30 p.m.
- Weds 25th April 8.00 – 9.30 p.m.

NAS SURREY BRANCH EVENTS

- Sunday 25th February - Indoor Climbing Taster in Walton, 2.0 – 4.00pm – see p3
- Monday 26th March - Talk on Demand Avoidance in Guildford, 8.00pm – see p5
(to mark World Autism Awareness Week)

* * * * *

World Autism Awareness Week (WAAW) Event

Tracey and Dean Pusey are holding a coffee morning for WAAW at St Mark's Church, Westfield Road, Woking, GU22 9NG on **Sat 24th March** from 10.00am – 12.00noon, including a talk by Ann Memmott. Do come along and support it if you can.

If you or anyone you know are planning a local event for WAAW, please let us know so that we can publicise it on our forum. For more information about WAAW go to:

<http://www.autism.org.uk/get-involved/world-autism-awareness-week.aspx>,

Express CIC Conference for WAAW

Express CIC in Kingston is holding a big day of events on **22nd March** from 10am - 3pm in Kingston upon Thames, including talks, workshops, information & product stalls.

For details go to <http://www.expresscic.org.uk/>

Courses for Parents and Professionals at Freemantles School

Freemantles School in Woking is holding a course on **Social Understanding**, including comic Strip Conversations™ and Social Stories™

Session one: A look into the issues around context blindness faced by many young people and the social context teaching which is needed to help this. There will also be training to enable staff and parents to use Comic Strip Conversations effectively to support social understanding.

Session two: The full Social Stories accredited training package, delivered on behalf of Carol Gray by members of the Freemantles Social Stories Satellite School.

This course is spread across 2 full day sessions at Freemantles School and is suitable for both professionals and parents.

- 10am-4pm on Thursday 22nd and Thursday 29th March
- 10am-4pm on Wednesday 13th June and Wednesday 20th June

Autism and Happiness

A look at promoting emotional wellbeing in children with autism, presented by Freemantles Headteacher Justin Price.

- 10am on 1st March

For booking information go to www.freeoutreach.org.uk/Training/

Local Facebook Groups

Here is a roundup of useful Facebook groups for families with children with additional needs, including autism. Most of these are parent-run:

Family Voice Surrey - a closed group for parents and carers for discussion, asking for or offering advice, making connections and seeking information.

We-Shine Local Network - private group open to local families of children with SEN to share resources, network and chat. Referral via We Shine support services or from existing members of the group.

Additional Needs Together Surrey – ANTS - support, advice and ideas around any special educational need, disability and medical conditions.

Sparklers Charity (Camberley Area) support, information, guidance and advice for individuals with additional needs & disabilities, and their families.

Surrey ASD - A group for parents of children with ASD in Surrey to share, discuss and ask for advice.

The-Zone (Farnborough area) – a parent-led group that holds regular meet-up sessions for families to break the feeling of isolation

EHCP Experiences Surrey - a group for Surrey parent carers only to share their experiences and say where they are within the EHCP process.

Other useful sources of information include: the Surrey SEND newsletter – sign up here <http://bit.ly/2rTkqz>; the Surrey Local Offer www.surreylocaloffer.org.uk and the Special Needs Jungle blog <https://www.specialneedsjungle.com>

Very Big Thank Yous

A very special thank you goes to the family and friends of Jasmine Bush who have raised around £10,000 for the NAS Surrey Branch and MIND, the mental health charity. Jasmine sadly died in August after a battle with depression and anxiety. She had been diagnosed with autism and PDA.

Three of her friends, Ben Susans, Carl Thayre and Adam Bicknell and her father Ian, organised a family fun day in Haslemere in her memory and to raise funds – you can read more here: <http://www.haslemereherald.com/article.cfm?id=124553&headline=Match%20in%20memory%20of%20Jaz§ionIs=news&searchyear=2017>

* * * * *

Thank you also to **Sheerwater Scout Troop** in Woking for raising £510 for the NAS by holding a sponsored silence.

Consultation on Expansion of the Blue Badge Scheme

Please give your views on this important consultation - see page 11 for details.

Transition Events East and West Surrey

East Surrey - Family Voice Surrey is hosting a 'Preparing for Adulthood' Event for young people with SEND (Special Educational Needs or Disabilities) in Surrey and their families at NESCOL College, Reigate Road, Ewell, Epsom KT17 3DS on **Saturday 17th March** from 10am – 2pm. The event is for year 8 students and older who are at school, home schooled or not, and their families. The day includes:

- Information to help young people plan for and access routes to employment, independent living, good health and community inclusion
- Success stories from young people and their families, schools, colleges and employers
- Key speakers - Linda Jordan from the National Development team for Preparing for Adulthood and Steve Broach - lawyer, disability & children's rights advocate and co-author of 'Disabled Children: A Legal Handbook'
- Surrey speakers from education, accommodation, care, health, community services and employers
- Stands by providers of education, accommodation, health, community services
- Something for all the family – face painting, nail treatments, drama and music and more

For more information contact Family Voice Surrey: email: contact@familyvoicesurrey.org

West Surrey - Brooklands College in Weybridge are hosting a free 'Transition Information Morning' for post-16 transition on **Saturday 21st April** from 10am - 12.30pm

Representatives and professionals from a variety of organisations and services throughout the borough will be attending. They will be able to give advice and information on social care, education, health, leisure, housing, careers and other issues. Parents and carers, young people with a disability or additional needs (aged 14-25) and professionals are welcome.

For more information please contact: Sarah Webster - Event Coordinator on 01932 797712 or email: sarah.webster@brooklands.ac.uk

NAS Surrey Branch is hoping to have a stand at both events, so if you attend, come and say hello!

Science Museum Free Autism-Friendly Sessions

The Science Museum in London runs regular 'Early Birds' sessions where families with a child or children with autism can go before the museum opens to the public.

Taking place on selected Saturdays throughout the year, they open the Museum early at 8.00am, and some of the interactive galleries remain available exclusively to booked Early Birds guests until 11.15. As well as exploring some of the galleries, you can enjoy a selection of fun workshops and exciting demonstrations.

All of these events are free and suitable for families with children under the age of 15. The next session is on 24th February. Places must be booked in advance – details at <https://www.sciencemuseum.org.uk/see-and-do/early-birds>

Concert Featuring Derek Paravicini in Reigate

The Derek Paravicini Quartet is putting on an evening of jazz and audience interaction at Reigate Park Church at 7.30am on Friday 9th March.

Derek Paravicini is an extraordinary pianist and musical entertainer, yet he is blind, autistic and has severe learning difficulties.

He shot to fame when he was nine, playing jazz with the Royal Philharmonic Pops Orchestra. Many TV appearances followed, in the UK and overseas, and his performances in London venues include Ronnie Scott's and the Queen Elizabeth Hall.

Booking now open on Eventbrite: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/the-derek-paravicini-quartet-at-reigate-park-church-tickets-38693373923?aff=efbneb>

Weighted Blankets and Lap Pads Available for Loan

Just a reminder that the Branch has two sets of weighted blankets and lap-pads available for members to borrow, to see if it is something that they would wish to buy for their child. There is one set in the west of the county and one in the east. The blankets weigh 2.5kg, so are suitable for children of at least ten times that weight, i.e. around 25kg.

It is worth reading the guidelines about using weighted blankets on the makers' website here <http://www.astitchdifferent.co.uk/?q=node/22>

To add your name to the waiting list, contact:

- E Surrey – Penny Sims po.sims@yahoo.co.uk
- W Surrey – Emma Whitfield emma@mugsy.org

You will need to arrange collection from the previous borrower and to deliver it on to the next person when your loan period is complete. Please return blankets in the condition you would wish to receive them, and always follow the care and washing guidelines.

Healthwatch wants your views

Healthwatch Surrey is an independent organisation that gives the people of Surrey a voice to improve, shape and get the best from health and social care services by empowering local people and communities. They want to find out what it is like to access health and care services when you have autism. They would like to hear from people with autism, their families, friends and carers, so that they can shape and challenge services. You can tell them about your experience by email to engagement@healthwatchsurrey.co.uk telephone: 0303 303 0023 (local rate number) or SMS: 07592 787533

Information Morning for Parents/Carers

Action for Carers are holding an information morning for parents/carers of children with special needs in Godalming on Thurs 26th April from 9.30 a.m. to 1.00 p.m. There will be a talk by Core Assets on Education, Health and Care Plans, updates on the new short breaks services, and workshops, including one on Transition. Places must be booked in advance. To book, contact Action for Carers – email: csadmin@actionforcarers.org.uk tel: 0303 040 1234.

Research Request: Autistic Adults and Mothers of ASD Children

A group of researchers at the UCL Institute of Cognitive Neuroscience are currently looking for autistic adults, as well as mothers of autistic children, to take part in their studies. The research group, autism@icn, investigates how autistic individuals and their relatives understand the world.

They are currently running two studies investigating socio-cognitive skills. They are looking for two different groups of adults who might be interested in taking part, one being autistic adults and the other being mothers of autistic children. For more information contact Zahra at z.ahmed.14@ucl.ac.uk

Information for Adults

Action for Carers Autism Event

Action for Carers are running a free event for carers of adults with autism on **Thursday 15th March** in Godalming from 9.30am to 3.00pm. (Lunch included.)

In the morning there will be a talk on managing challenging behaviour in adults with autism delivered by Mark Brown. In the afternoon there will be a carers' forum led by Howard Childs from the Adult Autism diagnostic service in Surrey. **Places must be booked in advance - contact Action for Carers – email: csadmin@actionforcarers.org.uk tel: 0303 040 1234**

Railway travel communication support

Southern Railway is one of several train companies which have developed resources to help people with communication difficulties when using their services.

There is a pictorial communication guide which has pictures of several different aspects of travel that passengers might ask about. There is also a free travel support card designed to help anyone who finds it hard to ask for help when travelling on trains. Your card can include details about:

- your journey
- who to contact in an emergency
- anything else you need help with

All you have to do is show the card at the station or on the train, so that you can be given the support you need.

For more details go to: www.southernrailway.com/travel-information/travel-help/assisted-travel/support-while-travelling

Asperger United Magazine Available Online

Asperger United, the magazine that features letters, features, short stories and artwork from the community is available via the NAS website <http://bit.ly/2Evzbxv>

Blue Badge Eligibility Consultation – Closes 18th March

There is a new government consultation on the blue badge parking scheme. This consultation is looking at a range of views on making a change to the eligibility to take into account people with non-physical conditions which affect a person's ability to get from place to place. This would include people with autism.

There is further information on the current blue badge scheme on the Surrey County Council web pages at www.surreycc.gov.uk/bluebadges

To respond to the consultation go to

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/blue-badge-disabled-parking-scheme-eligibility-review> The consultation is open until 18th March.

PIP Mobility award

Recent changes to the rules for getting Personal Independence Payment (PIP) for mobility have been successfully challenged in court. The change which came in last year meant that to qualify for the PIP Mobility component, claimants had to show that they couldn't travel without another person or assistance. Previously, one of the grounds for qualifying was that travelling caused psychological distress. The court ruled that the new rule was discrimination, so the rule change no longer applies and claimants may now qualify for the mobility payment if they can show that travelling causes them psychological distress. This may apply to some people with autism.

About the NAS Surrey Branch

The Surrey Branch of the NAS is a volunteer-run parent-to-parent support group for families in Surrey affected by Autism Spectrum Disorders. It's FREE to join (although a small donation is appreciated) and we have around 1,500 members. The branch holds regular meetings and organises social events, local coffee mornings and special interest groups, and represents parents in meetings with health, education and social services. We host an active Yahoo! online forum, and produce this newsletter every two months. To join, go to www.nassurreybranch.org or email nas@mugsy.org for a membership form.

If you are a member of the NAS at national level, you can nominate us as your branch by emailing supportercare@nas.org.uk which means we receive a percentage of your annual subscription.

*We're part of **The National Autistic Society**, a national charity founded by parents in 1962 which runs a wide range of services such as schools, clubs and adult centres. It has over 20,000 members, 100 branches and works in partnership with more than 50 local autism societies. The NAS exists to champion the rights and interests of all people with autistic spectrum disorders and to ensure that they and their families receive quality services appropriate to their needs. **National Autistic Society, 393 City Rd, London EC1V 1NG** www.autism.org.uk. **The National Autistic Society is a 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 specific services or approaches to autism does not imply endorsement. All material is copyright Surrey NAS and cannot be reproduced without permission.