



Welcome to the October/November issue of Surrey News

In this issue....

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

- Children's Christmas party in Woking – p3
- Few places left: Helping your young person to find work – p3
- NAS half-day workshops in Godalming – p3
- Sunflower Lanyard Scheme – p4
- Two important surveys on Home - School Transport – p5
- NAS Public Attitudes survey – p5
- Autism Hour – p8
- Surrey & Hants Autism and ADHD Marketplace – p9
- Inclusive Football clubs – p10

Information for Adults & Young People:

- Conference on Suicide Prevention – p10
- NAS 'Not Enough' Campaign – p10
- Free places at Alan Aykbourn's 'Bedroom Farce' in Guildford – 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.

Can You Help at NAS Surrey Branch Events?

We urgently need volunteers to help out with the growing number of daytime and evening events that we are asked to attend.

You don't need to have any special skills – just an understanding of living with autism either as a parent, carer or someone on the spectrum. If you come along to an event, we'll explain what you need to know and lend you an NAS T-shirt.

If you can spare some time, especially during the day, please get in touch.

Please Don't Waste Spaces at Events

We know that when you have someone with autism in your family, things don't always go to plan.

However, we have seen an increasing trend of people not turning up for events or activities that they have booked and not letting us know.

Many of our events are over-subscribed, so if you don't let us know that you can't make it, someone else could miss out as we can't give your place to people on the waiting list.

It can also mean that we waste money, as we often have to pay for event venues or attendees by the number of attendees.

Thank you for your help with this.

Sara Truman,
Chair (volunteer)

NAS Surrey Branch

General email: info@nassurreybranch.org

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 / Website & Newsletter:

Emma Whitfield
emma@mugsy.org

Events, Activities & Fundraising:

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

Sarah Mead

Emma Searle

Jill Goulding

Jo Dilworth

Parents of Girls' Group

Rachel Pearson
racheldpearson@gmail.com

Dads' Group:

Simon Bunch
bunch.simon@gmail.com

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 (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

Children's Christmas Party

Our annual Christmas party for autistic children and their siblings aged 9 and under is on Sunday 8th December from 4.00 – 6.00pm at Woking Leisure Centre. The suggested donation is £5.50 per head including tea. We have exclusive use of the soft play area from 4.00 – 5.00pm, plus a timed slot in the sensory room. Tea, consisting of sandwiches, sausages, pizza etc, is served at 5.00pm.

During tea, there will be a visit from Santa who will hand out a small gift for each child (PLEASE BRING A WRAPPED GIFT FOR YOUR CHILD, LABELLED WITH THEIR NAME). If your child won't want to see Santa, you can take them out before he arrives. Older siblings are welcome to join for tea only at a cost of £4 per head.

Booking essential via Eventbrite <https://bit.ly/2kudaJT>. For queries, please email events@nassurreybranch.org with 'Christmas Party' in the subject line.

Few Places Left: Supporting Your Young Person to Find Work

We have a few places left for our parent seminar on Tuesday 22nd October in Ashted about what parents can - and can't - do to help their autistic son or daughter to get into employment. The talk is for parents of young people **aged 16 – 25**, and runs from 9.45am – 2.30pm. It will help parents understand how to assist their son or daughter to prepare for the world of work and how best to support them to find employment as they leave education. It aims to give parents practical advice and ideas and signpost them to potential areas of further support/funding. Topics covered will include:

- Routes into work and higher education
- Looking for work – the role that parents/carers can and can't play
- Declaring an ASC diagnosis to an employer?
- Reasonable adjustments in the workplace
- Available support

The seminar is being delivered by AS Mentoring www.asmentoring.co.uk a specialist organisation which works with people with autism to help them find and retain work, as well as encouraging employers to develop more inclusive workplaces. Places are very limited and must be booked in advance – for a booking form please email events@nassurreybranch.org (or text/call 07423 435413.)

The course usually costs £48 per person, but we are subsidising this session and are asking those attending to make a **suggested minimum donation of £15 per person** to help towards costs. Details on venue & how to pay will be sent with booking form.

NAS Half-Day Workshops in Godalming

Professional staff from the NAS Surrey Service (which is separate from the NAS Surrey Branch) are running free parent workshops in Godalming. The workshops are for parents of children and young people with a diagnosis of autism, or parents of those waiting for an autism assessment. The next workshops are:

- Thurs 24th Oct 10.30a.m. – 1.30 p.m. Sensory differences
- Tues 26th Nov 10.00 a.m. – 1.00 p.m. Developing social skills

Places at the workshops are limited and **MUST** be booked in advance. To book, or for more information, email SEResourceCentres@nas.org.uk or call 01483 521 744.

Blue Badge Disabled Parking

The changes the Government promised to make to the Blue Badge Scheme last summer came into force recently. The expanded eligibility criteria will mean that many more autistic people will qualify for a 'Blue Badge' disabled parking permit.

Under the new rules, there will be two important new ways that autistic people may qualify for a Blue Badge:

- If you can't undertake a journey without being at risk of serious harm, it causing "very considerable psychological distress," or if you have very considerable difficulty when walking. You could be eligible subject to a further assessment.
- You should be automatically eligible if you have qualified for PIP Mobility Component and have exactly 10 points for "planning and making a journey" because making a journey causes "overwhelming psychological distress."

Children who get Higher Rate Mobility Disability Living Allowance (HRMDLA) will continue to qualify as before. If you think you could be eligible, check online with the Government eligibility checker here: <https://www.gov.uk/apply-blue-badge>

Sunflower Lanyard Scheme

The Hidden Disabilities Sunflower offers a discreet way of identifying people with a hidden disability so help or assistance can be offered without them feeling awkward. The Sunflower lanyard was launched at Gatwick Airport in May 2016 and is now recognised by most of the major UK airports, supermarkets, local authorities and railway companies, as well as in the NHS.

Wearing the Sunflower Lanyard indicates that you may have a hidden disability and that help may be required. You can use the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower to tell people about the type of assistance you need – it may be as simple as a little more time. There is no qualifying list to being able to access a lanyard and it can be worn by children or adults who are yet to be diagnosed.

Lanyards are 55p each from Hidden Disabilities

<https://www.hiddendisabilitiesstore.com/products-10/products.html>

Chessington Garden Centre SEND Sessions

Chessington Garden Centre is offering SEND sessions for two of its experiences:

Spooky Zoo – SEND Sessions 20th Oct – 3rd Nov offers a chance to see and handle a creepy and fantastic array of reptiles including snakes, crocodiles & lizards. Cost: £4.50 for a SEND child and carer.

<https://www.chessingtongardencentre.co.uk/activity/details/act-sendzoo/spooky-zoo-send-session>

Christmas Wonderland – SEND Sessions Nov 24th – Dec 23rd. Bright lights and loud noises will be turned down to create a calmer atmosphere and the centre will be closed to the general public. Cost: Off-Peak £14.50/ Peak £16.50 for a SEND child & carer.

<https://www.chessingtongardencentre.co.uk/activity/details/act-wonders/santas-christmas-wonderland-2019-send-session>

Please book using the links above, or if you have any queries, email Tracy Dale at tracydale@chessingtongardencentre.co.uk.

Have Your Say on School or College Transport

There are currently two surveys running on Home – School Transport:

The Parent Participation group **Family Voice Surrey** would like to hear from you if you use transport arrangements provided by Surrey so that they can assess what is working and what isn't and report it back to Surrey CC. Please take 5 minutes to take their survey and share with anyone else you know is affected <https://bit.ly/2kRwcdn>

Surrey County Council would also like parent/carers' thoughts and opinions on proposed changes to its Home to School/College Travel and Transport Policy, which is currently being reviewed ahead of changes in 2020. The survey is here <https://bit.ly/2mOWPjl>

There is also a useful page on the **Contact** website which summarises national policies and how to challenge transport decisions <https://bit.ly/2L6lqHz>

Reminder: Rodborough School Cullum Centre visit

The NAS Cullum Centre at Rodborough School in Milford near Godalming is holding an open evening on **Weds 23rd October from 5.00 p.m. to 6.00 p.m.** Parents are invited to visit to see what it is like, meet the Head of Centre, and network with other parents to share ideas on helping young people to succeed at secondary school.

For more information email Hilary Baldwin at HBaldwin@rodborough.surrey.sch.uk

NB This meeting is for parents only, so please don't bring your children with you.

The NAS Cullum Centre at Rodborough is one of four such centres in Surrey and provides educational places within a mainstream school in a specialist resource base for pupils aged 11-16 with autism who would otherwise find it difficult to access a mainstream education. There are also Cullum Centres at Salesian, Chertsey; Hinchley Wood School, Esher and The Howard of Effingham School.

NAS Public Attitudes Survey

If you have visited the national NAS website recently, you will probably have seen a pop-up inviting you to take part in a survey on public attitudes towards autism to try and understand more about the experiences that autistic adults and children, along with their families, have in public places.

They need to know more about how the public reacts to autistic people and their behaviour, what would help improve your experiences of public places and what you want the public to know about autism. They also want to know more about how public understanding might have changed in recent years and what, if anything, you think might be helping improve this.

The results of this survey will go towards shaping future work to improve public understanding of autism as well as giving us insight into the impact our past work has had. Everyone who completes the survey has a chance to win a £100 Amazon voucher! <https://www.autism.org.uk/get-involved/media-centre/news/2019-08-27-public-attitudes-survey.aspx>

Autism Alert Cards & Wristbands

One of the ways many people tell members of the public about their autism is through an autism alert card, wristband, sticker or pin badge. There is also a survey to find out how effective these are and whether they could be improved: <https://bit.ly/2m6ELkR>

NAS SURREY BRANCH CALENDAR October – December 2019

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 us at info@nassurreybranch.org

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

Contact: Sam Caine sjcaine@hotmail.com

- Weds 2nd Oct 10.00 a.m. – 12.00 noon
- Weds 6th Nov 10.00 a.m. – 12.00 noon
- Weds 4th Dec 10.00 a.m. – 12.00 noon

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 14th Oct 9.15 – 11.30 a.m.
- Mon 11th Nov 9.15 – 11.30 a.m.
- Mon 9th Dec 9.15 – 11.30 p.m.

Godalming

Meetings currently not taking place due to lack of numbers. Anyone interested in a support group in Godalming, please contact Sara Truman nas@mugsy.org tel: 07423 435413.

Guildford

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

- Mon 21st Oct 7.30 - 9.30 p.m. **(venue to be confirmed)**
- Mon 11th Nov 10.00 a.m. – 12.00 **Caffe Nero, 66 North Street, Guildford GU1 4AH**

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

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

- Fri 29th Nov 2.00 – 3.00 p.m.

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

Contact: Leila Gregory leilagregory@gmail.com

- Thurs 3rd Oct 8.00 p.m.
- Thurs 7th Nov 8.00 p.m.
- Thurs 5th Dec 8.00 p.m.

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

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

- Weds 6th Nov 8.00 p.m.

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

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

- Weds 2nd Oct 10.00 a.m. – 12.00 noon
- Weds 6th Nov 10.00 a.m. – 12.00 noon
- Weds 4th Dec 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.

- Mon 14th Oct 7.30 – 10.00 p.m. Woking – Patches of Horsell, 80 High Street, Woking, GU21 4SZ
- Thurs 14th Nov 10.00 a.m. Costa Coffee, Spectrum Leisure Centre, Parkway, Guildford GU1 1UP
- Friday 6th Dec 10.00 a.m. Woking – Twelve Thirty Café (see above)

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 2nd Oct – Guildford – contact Sara Truman nas@mugsy.org 07423 435413
- Thurs 7th Nov – Haslemere - Hilary Dyce hilarydyce@yahoo.co.uk 01276 66032
- Tues 12th Nov – Redhill - contact Sara Truman nas@mugsy.org 07423 435413
- Weds 4th Dec – Weybridge - Hilary Dyce hilarydyce@yahoo.co.uk 01276 66032

Spouses and Partners Group, Guildford

Contact Sara Truman nas@mugsy.org 07423 435413

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

- Weds 30th Oct 8.00 – 9.30 p.m.
- Weds 27th Nov 8.00 – 9.30 p.m.

Branch meetings:

Weds 9th Oct 8.00 – 9.30 p.m. Guildford: Talk on PDA. LIMITED SPACES AVAILABLE - to book go to: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/pathological-demand-avoidance-registration-62075032092>

Sat 19th Oct 2.30 – 4.30 p.m. Woking: Talk on Autism and Puberty. FULLY BOOKED - to go on waiting list use: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/autism-and-puberty-registration-62391191734>

Weds 13th Nov 8.00 – 9.30 p.m. Guildford: Talk on Autism and ADHD. LIMITED SPACES AVAILABLE - to book go to: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/autism-and-adhd-registration-66584320495>

Autism Hour 5th – 12th October

The NAS is once again running a campaign to ask businesses to commit to making minor adjustments regularly, like dimming lights and reducing noise, so that autistic people and their families feel welcome and safe whilst shopping or attending venues and activities.

Dozens of businesses around Surrey are taking part, including **Clarks, Pets at Home, CeX** and many more. To find out which stores are participating near you, go to the interactive map on the NAS site: <https://www.autism.org.uk/get-involved/campaign/autism-hour/map.aspx>

Brooklands Museum in Weybridge is taking part in Autism Hour with an event called 'Flying Starters' on **Saturday 5th October** from 9.30 – 11.00am when families will be able to explore the motoring village before the museum opens to the public. To register email the museum direct at bookings@brooklandsmuseum.com A volunteer from the NAS Surrey Branch will be there collecting donations for the branch.

Petition to Stop Treating School Refusal as Truancy

As you may have seen on BBC Breakfast at the end of September, Square Peg and Not Fine in School have a petition calling for Minister Damien Hinds to create a new legal attendance/absence code that will measure the scale of school refusal, ensure a consistent school response and alleviate parents from the threat of prosecution. If you would like to sign the petition, go to <https://bit.ly/2mvRygJ>

Freemantles School Training Sessions

Autism and Happiness

It is unfortunately common for young people with autism to suffer with anxiety and other mental health issues. Justin Price, Head Teacher at Freemantles School, is giving a talk about what families and schools can do to promote happiness and wellbeing in the young people they support, and why this is so important. This training is suitable for both parents and professionals. 26th November

Social Stories Training

Freemantles has a team accredited in providing training in Carol Gray's Social Stories™ and are offering a training package including Comic Strip Conversations, Social Context and Social Stories for parents and professionals on 5th & 19th Nov.

Booking essential via the Freemantles website

<https://www.freeoutreach.org.uk/Training/Training-for-Parents-and-Carers/>

Diving for Adults and Children with SEND

Diveability is a registered charity that offers supported access to scuba diving through monthly pool sessions near Alton, Hampshire. They offer expert tuition and support for children and adults with a wide range of disabilities, as well as social meetings after the dive sessions.

The Chair's son has aspergers and cerebral palsy and is now a qualified diver. For details, please contact Simon Davis email: <mailto:sjdavis1006@gmail.com> or tel: 07306111006 or go to <http://www.diveability.org>

Proposed SCC Mental Health Parent Carer Network

Surrey County Council's Children's User Voice and Participation Team are trying to establish a Network of Parents/Carers whose children have accessed Wellbeing or Mental Health Services. The aim is to establish a network where Parents/Carers are supported with their child's journey through the services by one another and the team.

In order to set up the network, the Team are asking for small snippets of your experiences of the services that your child has been involved with, and the things which you feel you and other parents may need more advice, support and guidance about.

If you feel you would benefit from a Parent/Carer Support Network, please answer the short questionnaire <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/97FDMK3>. This can be completed anonymously, however if you wish to become part of the Network then leave your details and one of the team will be in touch with you shortly with more information. If you wish to contact someone in the team before filling the survey then please email Georgia.Kinsella@surreycc.gov.uk

Sensory Sessions at Xcel Leisure Centre Walton

There are now sensory sessions at Elmbridge Xcel Leisure Complex on Fridays from 4.00 – 5.00pm which allow children to develop and heighten their senses using a variety of different objects, helping sensory development and working on different muscle movements in the body whilst stimulating a variety of senses. The cost is £5 for members and £6 for non-members. Sessions are suitable for children with additional needs aged 5-8 years. No need to book - for more information call 01932 260300.

Singing Hands New Year Treat

White Lodge has organised a show by Singing Hands, a Makaton sing-along duo, at Grovelands School in Walton at 3.00pm on 12th January 2020. Tickets will be sold to cover the cost and any extra money raised will be donated to White Lodge in Chertsey. All the family are welcome and you do not have to be attending White Lodge to buy a ticket. Refreshments are available for purchase on the day.

To book, go to their Facebook event page

https://www.facebook.com/events/661951880983027/?active_tab=about

Surrey and Hampshire NAS and ADHD Marketplace

Be Ready ADHD ASD Information Network (BRAAIN) is running a Surrey & Hampshire Market Place event on Saturday 12th October at Portesbery School in Camberley. Exhibitors include National Autistic Society Surrey Branch; Surrey Police; Mustard Seed Autism Trust; The Makaton Charity; The Autism Trust UK; LinkAble; ADHD Surrey UK; The hallow project; The-Zone Page; Action for Carers; Surrey Moves Matter and Challengers Bootcamp. Tickets are £5 and available for a morning or afternoon slot from

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/o/braain-18226897372>

Focus Social Skills Club in Cheam

Focus Surrey is a Saturday club for autistic children aged 2 to 16 running for two terms per year, based in Cheam. The charity aims to help the children develop their communication, play and social skills using the principles of Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA).

For more information, see <https://www.facebook.com/ABASurreyFocus/>

Inclusive Football for Children and Adults

There is now a choice of 'Football for All' or Inclusive Football sessions running in Surrey:

- East Surrey Hawks (Redhill/Reigate area - age 6 - 16) eastsurreyhawks@gmail.com
Facebook: search for East Surrey Hawks or tel: 078777 101442
- Mytchett Athletic FC (Camberley area) <http://mytchettathletic.com/ffa-disabilitysen/>
- Abbey Rangers F (Addlestone – under 13s) <https://www.abbeyrangers.co.uk/teams/151994>
- Chelsea FC (Cobham - age 4 – adult) <https://www.chelseafc.com/en/foundation/disability>
- Guildford Saints F (age 7 & over) <http://guildfordsaints.org/>
- Woking Wolves Disability Football (age 6 & over) <https://sites.google.com/site/wokingwolvesdisabilityfootball>

INFORMATION FOR ADULTS AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Can You Support the NAS 'Not Enough' Campaign

In September, the NAS launched *Not Enough*, a campaign to demand better support and services for autistic people in England. Ten years on from the Autism Act, the NAS says the government has not done enough to live up to its promises to autistic people and their families, so is calling for specialist autism support in every council in England, and for councils to be given the money they need to fix the crisis in social care.

The campaign is based on the findings of an inquiry, published by the All Party Parliamentary Group on Autism (APPGA) and the National Autistic Society. A survey of around 11,000 autistic adults and their families in England found that:

- 71% (2 in 3) of autistic adults in England aren't getting the support they need.
- 26% (1 in 4) of autistic adults need support to live more independently; just 5% (1 in 20) get this.
- While 20% (1 in 5) of all autistic adults need support with day-to-day tasks, like washing, cooking and going out the house; only 6% (just over 1 in 20) get this.

You can support the *Not Enough* campaign by contacting your MP to invite them to an event in Parliament, which will take place before the end of the year. At the event, autistic people, families and professionals will talk to MPs about what they must do to better support autistic people.

Mental Health Network Conference on Suicide Prevention

Surrey's Independent Mental Health Network is holding a conference in Dorking on Tuesday 19th November. The main focus for the day will be suicide prevention and keeping mental health healthy. There will also be a speaker talking about the experience of family members of people who have attempted suicide. In addition to speakers, there will be round table discussions, exhibition stands and opportunities to hear more about the work of the Independent Mental Health Network. Please note, this event is for the general public with an interest in mental health, it will not cover autism specifically.

The conference is free and lunch is provided. To book go to <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/independent-mental-health-network-tickets-67971252847?aff=ebdssbeac> or email guy.hill@surreycoalition.org.uk

Free Places for Alan Ayckbourn's Bedroom Farce

Merrow Dramatic Society in Guildford is staging an amateur production of Alan Ayckbourn's comedy Bedroom Farce in October, and they are planning to put on a special performance for local groups/charities including the NAS Surrey Branch on Weds 16th Oct at 7.30 p.m.

The venue is the Electric Theatre, Guildford, and this performance will be a 'relaxed', autism-friendly event. Thanks to sponsorship from Guildford Amateur Theatre Association, they are able to offer FREE places for teenagers or adults with autism and/or their parents/carers. Places are limited and MUST be booked in advance.

If you don't know the play and need to decide whether it is suitable for your autistic family member, you can see a detailed synopsis (with spoilers!) here:

<http://bedroomfarce.alanayckbourn.net/styled-4/>

For more information, or to book your tickets, please email Jenny Pegman, vicechair@merrowdramatic.org.uk as soon as possible but by Weds 9th Oct at the latest. Parents/carers are welcome to come to the relaxed performance without their autistic family member if they wish.

Healthwatch Surrey Report on Services for People with LDs

Healthwatch Surrey recently investigated the views of people with learning disabilities and their families about using health and social care services. The report says there are around 21,800 adults with Learning Disabilities in Surrey, a figure which has fallen by about a third since 2011.

Healthwatch asked people with LDs and their parents and carers about their experience of accessing health services, social care services and other issues that impact health and wellbeing.

The report says that they heard how people with LD are not a homogenous group and have different talents, hopes and dreams. Many people with LD dislike change, which can make improvements difficult, but also said they need flexibility, as a person's needs change over time.

They heard about the importance of employment, and the fact that changes to bus pass rules makes travelling to work more difficult. The report says that many people with LD have multiple health conditions and face specific challenges when visiting hospitals, GPs, sexual health services and dialling 111.

According to the report, parents of children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) said that there are some people who are 'working wonders' to support adults with LD and children with SEND to live fulfilling lives. However, some parents feel that they are fighting a battle, and sometimes not listened to by professionals, which can make them feel stressed, belittled and guilty and that the transition from 'childhood' to 'adulthood' is particularly difficult.

You can read the report in full here: <https://www.healthwatchsurrey.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Learning-Disabilities-Insight-Report-July-2019.pdf>

Research on Body Image

Heather Westwood is a trainee clinical psychologist who is looking for autistic adults and non-autistic (neurotypical) adults for a research study on body image and eating, being conducted by Royal Holloway University of London.

The study involves completing an online survey which should take 20 – 30 minutes. On completion of the survey, you can be entered into a prize draw to win one of several Amazon vouchers. To participate, or just to find out more, go to:

https://rhulpsychology.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_3UJhQlm2HpzkAVT

Materials for Businesses Interested in Employing Autistic People

NHS England has produced some resources to encourage employers to employ people with learning disabilities or autism (or both), and family carers.

The resources include a 'toolkit' about employing autistic people, a blog from a learning disability and autism adviser, a blog from a family carer adviser at NHS England and a video blog about employing people with a learning disability.

They can be found here:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/learning-disabilities/about/get-involved/involving-people/employing-people-with-a-learning-disability-autism-or-both-and-family-carers/>

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.