



Newsletter

Welcome to the October / November issue of Surrey News

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Getting your voice heard

The local parent participation forum, Family Voice Surrey, held its very informative AGM in late September and shared some interesting statistics: Surrey has 5,750 children and young people with an EHCP or statement and there are another 21,540 others who are known to have special educational needs or a disability – and that's without even counting those children who are not known to service providers or whose additional needs haven't been diagnosed.

Yet despite tripling its membership last year, Family Voice still only has just over 1,000 members – which means that there are tens of thousands of families who are potentially not getting their voices heard or having a say in how services are developed and delivered. The committee of parent volunteers are currently working on dozens of projects including the development of Surrey's SEND2020 plan, the re-commissioning of short breaks (respite), the SEND travel and transport review, the Local Offer information service, the Joint Autism Strategy, the review of speech and language delivery and the transformation of CAMHS – to name a few. If you want to get involved with co-producing services, it's a very easy way to contribute your views <http://www.familyvoicesurrey.org/>

The speaker at the AGM was special needs blogger Stephanie Nimmo who kindly gave us permission to publish her advice on securing an EHCP, which appears on page 9.

Emma

Emma Whitfield
Chair (volunteer)
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NAS Surrey Branch Contacts

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Parents of Girls' Group

Rachel Pearson 01483 727378
racheldpearson@gmail.com

Fundraising

Sarah Mason 07973 379131
slmason78@gmail.com

Fathers' Group:

Martin Trenaman 01737 360069
trenamans@talktalk.net

Parents of Adults' Group

Hilary Dyce 01276 66032
hilarydyce@yahoo.co.uk

Postal library Service

(from 1st November 2016)

Susan Salters

nassblibrary@gmail.com

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 (replies within 14 working days)

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

<http://www.surreyparentpartnership.org.uk/>

SOS!SEN charity to support statementing, tel: 020 8538 3731, Web: www.sossen.org.uk

Family Support & Representation

NAS Family Support worker Surrey

Amy Sinclair amy.sinclair@nas.org.uk

Tel: 01483 521 744

Portage – support for children with additional needs under 3.5 years 0300 200 1004

Family Voice Surrey parent representation
www.familyvoicesurrey.org

Local parent programmes

Early Bird (parents of under 5s) / **Cygnnet**

(parents of children aged 5 – 18). Vicky Jones
training@linden-bridge.surrey.sch.uk Tel:

07747 595 155

Redhill CAMHS group for parents of children with ASDs, tel: 01737-287002

Activities for children and young people

NAS Resource Centre, Godalming Tel:

01483 521743

SEResourceCentres@nas.org.uk

interAKtive, Epsom-based charity for children with ASDs and other communication 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 ASDs tel: 01483-806806, email:

employability@surreychoices.com

Benefits advice

Carers Support <https://www.carers.org/>

NAS Tips page – via www.autism.org.uk

Cerebra DLA guide: 0800 328 1159

Children's Christmas Party 11th Dec

Our annual Christmas party for children with ASDs and their siblings aged 9 and under will take place from 4.00 – 6.00pm on Sunday 11th December at Woking Leisure Centre. We have exclusive use of the soft play area, plus you can book a timed slot for your child in the refurbished sensory room. Tea is served at 5.00pm and there will be a visit from Santa during the meal. He will hand out a small gift for each child - PLEASE BRING A WRAPPED GIFT FOR EACH CHILD, LABELLED WITH THEIR NAME. Older siblings are welcome to join us for tea.

Suggested donations are £5 per child for soft play + sensory room session + tea, or £4 for tea only. Please note: parents remain responsible for their children throughout the session. Places must be booked in advance by 27th November. **Please book online if possible using Eventbrite at <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/nas-surrey-branch-christmas-party-2016-tickets-28226334727> . Alternatively, email Sarah Mead to request a booking form to pay by cheque sarah_mead@hotmail.co.uk.**

Talk on NAS 'Too Much Information' Campaign, Redhill 11th Oct

A reminder that you can find out about the NAS 'Too Much Information' campaign, including the new phase focused on increasing understanding of autism in the workplace at our Redhill meeting on Tuesday 11th October.

Sara Truman and Emma Whitfield will take you through the campaign and what it is trying to do to improve understanding of autism for all our families. We will have some of the cardboard goggles to enable you to try the TMI virtual reality film for yourself. Venue & times in the calendar on p5 - 8 - please email emma@mugsy.org to let us know if you are coming along.

Update - talk on SEND and EHCPs in Woking, 23rd November

Our talk on EHCPs planned for Wednesday 23rd November in Woking has now been expanded to cover a SEND update by Gaby Close, Interim Head of SEND Operations and Autism Strategic Lead at Surrey County Council who spoke at our September meeting in Guildford. We had numerous interesting questions from the audience, but this meant that she was not able to cover important information about commissioning or some of the plans being covered within the new Surrey Joint Autism Strategy.

Wendy Jenkins from the Independent Support organisation Core Assets will also explain about how their services support families whose child is transferring from a statement to an Education, Health & Care Plan (EHCP), or applying for an EHCP for the first time. Core Assets is the organisation that has been commissioned by Surrey County Council to provide Independent Support to parents during the introduction of EHCPs. For more information, contact Core Assets on 0800 028 8455 or go to www.coreassets.com. They tell us that there is currently good availability of independent support workers.

Finding A School in Surrey

Surrey has published new guides to help parents to find appropriate schools for their children with special needs.

Finding the Right Primary School in Surrey

https://www.surreycc.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/97897/CS3414_SEND-School-Brochures_Primary_9.pdf

Finding the Right Secondary School in Surrey

https://www.surreycc.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/97898/CS3414_SEND-School-Brochures_Secondary_3.pdf . They appear to be easier to navigate than the previous lists and include information on the NAS Cullum Centres at Rodborough, Hinchley Wood and Salesian schools.

Two-day Cygnet Parent Programme in Dorking

We are hosting our final two-day Cygnet programme of the year in Dorking on 9th & 10th November. The programme is designed to help parents/ carers of children and young people aged 5 -18 with an autistic spectrum condition to understand more about autism and to learn different ways in which to support their child. Topics covered will include autism & diagnosis; communication; sensory issues; understanding behaviour and managing behavior.

The courses we host are delivered by experienced Cygnet trainer Liz Waters. The course is free, but we do request a refundable deposit of £10 per person to secure your place. Up to two people can attend from each family. **PLACES MUST BE BOOKED IN ADVANCE.**

To request a booking form, email Sarah Mead Sarah_mead@hotmail.co.uk

NAS Surrey Branch Postal Library Going Live 1st November

As you will have seen in the last newsletter, member Susan Salters has very kindly volunteered to run a postal library service for NAS Surrey Branch members, so we will not now have to sell off our books as we had expected. She is just finalising the mammoth task of photographing all our books and listing them on a web site so that members will be able to view a full list of books available to borrow online. Look out for details of the web address on our online forum or in the next newsletter.

It will be free to borrow books, but we are asking people wherever possible to make a donation equivalent to the cost of the postage via our Justgiving page

www.justgiving.com/nassurreybranch or by a cheque made payable to NAS Surrey Branch and sent to our postal address: NAS Surrey Branch, c/o Mayfield, 74 Hersham Road, Hersham Surrey KT12 5NU.

You will be able borrow up to 3 books at a time. Books must be returned within 6 weeks using the packaging it arrived in. We're making it as easy as possible to return books – when you are ready to return the book/s you've borrowed, you will just need to put it into the jiffy bag it arrived in, and then into the pre-addressed plastic postal wrapper supplied which will already have the appropriate amount of postage. You can then just pop it into a postbox. We will need to charge a fine for any books that are not returned within 6 weeks.

If you have any queries please email Susan at nassblibrary@gmail.com .

Please use Easyfundraising.com to raise funds for the branch

By the time you read this, there will be less than 70 shopping days til Christmas! You can raise money for the branch without it costing you a penny by doing your online shopping via **easyfundraising** <http://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/nassurrey>

All you have to do is set up an account, choose 'NAS Surrey Branch' as your chosen cause and shop from around 3,000 retailers including Amazon, Expedia, Asda, Argos, John Lewis, eBay, Viking and Next.

Supporting Carers

Surrey and Borders Partnership NHS Trust is holding an event about Supporting Carers on Weds 16th November from 10.00am – 1.00pm. It is being held at Princes Hall, Aldershot, GU11 1NX. Everyone is welcome to come along to chat and get advice and information from professionals who understand the role of the carer.

To register for your place, or for more information email engage@sabp.nhs.uk or call 01372 216158.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS, ACTIVITIES, AND COURSES

NAS Surrey Branch support groups, talks, parent programmes and activities are great places to meet other parents and get support - please contact the relevant volunteer for details. Our events get booked up quickly - to find out about things early, join the branch for FREE at www.nassurreybranch.org

Events shown in GREEN aren't organised by the NAS Surrey Branch: please contact the organisers direct.

OCTOBER

Mon 3rd Oct 7.30 pm, Parents of Girls Group, Woking

Contact Rachel Pearson racheldpearson@gmail.com 01483 727378

Mon 3rd Oct, 7.30 – 9.30pm, Parent Empowerment evening, Sheerwater

We Shine parent support group is running an event for parents/carers of under 5s with additional needs (no diagnosis needed). Guest Speaker Gina Davies of Attention Autism and blogger Sarah Roberts. Email info@we-shine.org.uk or call Gemma on 07923 235265

Wed 5th Oct, 7.30 Parents of Adults Group, Camberley

Contact Hilary Dyce 01276 66032 Hilarydyce@yahoo.co.uk

Fri 7th Oct, 1.00 – 2.30pm, Support group for Parents of Children with Autism, PDA & Challenging Behaviours, Hersham www.positiveautismsupportandtraining.co.uk

SORRY SOLD OUT Sun 9th Oct 2.00 – 3.00pm OR 3.00 – 4.00pm

Indoor Climbing taster session Xcel Leisure Centre, Walton on Thames.

Mon 10th Oct, 9.15 – 11.30am, Frensham Support Group, The Holly Bush, Frensham Village. Contact Christine Malik christinemalik@btinternet.com or Bonnie

Noyce jbnoyce@yahoo.com

Tues 11th Oct, 7.45 for 8.00 – 9.30pm TALK

PNL Centre at St Joseph's, 122 Ladbrooke Road, REDHILL RH1 1LF. An overview of the NAS 'Too Much Information' Campaign plus a chance to try the virtual reality film. Please email emma@mugsy.org if you are coming along.

Wed 12th Oct, 10.00am, Woking Support Group

Contact Sarah Norris sarah4ian@ntlworld.com 07543 920917

Weds 12th Oct, 10.00am – 2.00pm, Parents information morning, Woking

'Autism and Sensory Differences'. Charges apply.

Contact Freemantles Outreach Team info@freemantles.surrey.sch.uk or tel: 01483 545680

Thurs 13th Oct, 7.30 pm, Parents of Adults Group, Reigate

Contact Sara Truman nas@mugsy.org 01483 822630

Thurs 13th Oct, 6.30pm – 9.00pm, NAS Parent Workshop, Guildford

Introduction to Social Stories. BOOKING ESSENTIAL £3.

Contact Amy Sinclair on 01483 521744 or email amy.sinclair@nas.org.uk

Fri 14th Oct, 9.15 – 11.15am, Chertsey Support Group

Contact Emma Whitfield emma@mugsy.org

Fri 14th Oct, 2.00 – 3.15pm, Hinchley Wood Support Group

Contact Juliette Sturge juliettsturge@gmail.com

OCTOBER /Cont'd

Sat 15th Oct, 10am – 12.30pm, NAS Parent Workshop, Camberley

Introduction to Social Stories. BOOKING ESSENTIAL £3 per session.

Contact Amy Sinclair on 01483 521744 or email amy.sinclair@nas.org.uk

Tue 18th Oct, 11.00am – 1.30pm, Workshop, Teddington

ASD and Anxiety. Charges apply.

The Girl with the Curly Hair project <http://thegirlwiththecurlyhair.co.uk/>

Wed 19th Oct, 7.30pm, Milford Support Group

Cullum Centre, Rodborough School (Petworth Road entrance), Milford GU8 5BZ

Sue Briggs, home-school link worker sue.briggs@hotmail.co.uk 01483 411100 x185

Weds 19th Oct, 8.00pm, Spouses & Partners Group, Guildford

Contact Sara Truman nas@mugsy.org 01483 822630

Fri 21st Oct, 10.00am Guildford Support Group

Contact Sara Truman nas@mugsy.org 01483 822 630

Monday 24th Oct, 10.00 -11.00am, Autism Awareness Training for Siblings

Ages 6-11 years. 11.15am - 12.30pm 12 years +

Charges apply. www.positiveautismsupportandtraining.co.uk

Wednesday 26th Oct, 6.00 – 9.00pm, Behaviour Management Surgery

30 minutes free question and advice session covering behaviour management, autism, PDA, anxiety, EHCPs & family support www.positiveautismsupportandtraining.co.uk

Thurs 27th Oct, 8 – 10 pm, The Oatlands Chaser, Weybridge

Contact Fi Phippen on 07445668925 or Email: f.phippen@talktalk.net

Thurs 27th Oct, 6.30pm – 9.00pm, Parent Workshop, Godalming

Introduction to PDA. BOOKING ESSENTIAL £3.

Contact Amy Sinclair, on 01483 521744 or email amy.sinclair@nas.org.uk

Mon 31st Oct, 10.00am, Parents of Girls Group, Woking

Contact Rachel Pearson racheldpearson@gmail.com 01483 727378

NOVEMBER

Tues 1st Nov, 9.30am – 12.00pm, Parent Workshop Bramley

Sensory needs of people on the spectrum. Booking essential £3.

Contact Amy Sinclair on 01483 521744 or email amy.sinclair@nas.org.uk

Tues 1st Nov, 1.00pm – 3.30pm, Parent Workshop, Farnham

Internet Safety. BOOKING ESSENTIAL £3.

Contact Amy Sinclair on 01483 521744 or email amy.sinclair@nas.org.uk

Thurs 3rd Nov, 7.30 pm, Parents of Adults Group, Guildford

Contact Sara Truman nas@mugsy.org 01483 822630

Friday 4th Nov, 9.30am – 12noon, Autism awareness training, Leatherhead

For parents and family members with a recent diagnosis and or anyone wanting more information on the condition. www.positiveautismsupportandtraining.co.uk

NOVEMBER /Cont'd

Weds 9th Nov, 10.00am – 12noon, Support Group, Ewhurst
Contact Lucy on Lucy@lucytosh.co.uk

Weds 9th & Thurs 10th, 9.30am – 2.30pm. Two-day Cygnet parent programme, Dorking
PLACES MUST BE BOOKED IN ADVANCE. Email Sarah Mead Sarah_mead@hotmail.co.uk

Mon 14th Nov, 3.30 – 6.00pm, Parent Workshop, Woking
Best practices for transitioning in to adulthood.
Contact Amy Sinclair, NAS Family Support Worker on 01483 521744 or email amy.sinclair@nas.org.uk

Mon 14th Nov, 9.15am Frensham Support Group, The Holly Bush, Frensham
Contact Christine Malik christinemalik@btinternet.com or Bonnie Noyce jbnoyce@yahoo.com

Wed 16th Nov, 10.00am, Woking Support Group,
Contact Sarah Norris sarah4ian@ntlworld.com 07543 920917

SORRY FULLY BOOKED Thurs 17th Nov, 9.30am – 2.30pm Parent workshop 'Supporting your Young Person into Employment, Dorking. Contact Sarah Mead for details sarah_mead@hotmail.co.uk

Tues 22nd Nov, 9.30am – 12noon, Parent Workshop, Bramley
Visual Schedules. **BOOKING ESSENTIAL**
Contact Amy Sinclair, NAS Family Support Worker on 01483 521744 or email amy.sinclair@nas.org.uk

Weds 23rd Nov, 7.45 for 8.00 – 9.30pm TALK

Gaby Close, Interim Head of SEND Operations and Wendy Jenkins, Independent Support Manager, South East, Core Assets on SEND and EHCPs. Christ Church, Church Street East (night entrance), Woking. Please email emma@mugsy.org if you are coming along.

Thurs 24th Nov, 10.00am – 12noon, Redhill Support Group
Contact Helen Ruffhead h.ruffhead@ntlworld.com 01737 212 043

Thurs 24th Nov, 8.00 – 10.00pm, The Oatlands Chaser, Weybridge
Contact Fi Phippen on 07445668925 or Email: f.phippen@talktalk.net

Fri 25th Nov, 10.00am, Guildford Support Group
Contact Sara Truman nas@mugsy.org 01483 822 630

Friday 25th Nov, 10.00am – 3.30pm, parent seminar, venue TBC
Parenting Children with Autism, PDA and Challenging Behaviour.
Charges apply. www.positiveautismsupportandtraining.co.uk

DECEMBER

Fri 2nd Dec, 9.15 – 11.15am, Chertsey Support Group
Contact Emma Whitfield emma@mugsy.org

Mon 5th Dec, 10.00am, Ewhurst Support Group
Contact Lucy on Lucy@lucytosh.co.uk

Wed 7th Dec, 10.00am, Woking Support Group
Contact Sarah Norris sarah4ian@ntlworld.com 07543 920917

DECEMBER /Cont'd

Weds 7th Dec, 7.30pm, Parents of Adults Group, Haslemere
Contact Sara Truman nas@mugsy.org 01483 822630

Sunday 11th Dec, 4.00 – 6.00pm
NAS Christmas Party for children with ASDs and their siblings aged 9 and under,
Woking Leisure Centre. Exclusive use of softplay area, timed session in the sensory room,
plus tea and a visit by Santa.

BOOKING ESSENTIAL. Contact Sarah Mead sarah_mead@hotmail.co.uk

NAS Family Support Worker Workshops

Amy Sinclair has joined the professionals working at the NAS Resource Centre in Godalming. She is organising a range of short workshops and seminars (see calendar above) for parents and carers on topical issues related to bringing up a child with an ASD.

Tessa Emery is still working as a Family Support Worker, but is now working part-time. To contact Amy, email amy.sinclair@nas.org.uk, Tel: 01483 521744.

New Tuition Centre To Open Godalming

Spectrum Space is a new tuition centre for children with autism which will be opening in Godalming in February 2017.

Spectrum Space is a not-for-profit, community interest company providing personalised education programmes for children and young people aged between eight and nineteen years old with complex social communication needs and/or autism spectrum disorders who find it difficult to access school based learning. It offers “home from home” education packages that are tailored to each individual’s needs and interests which children can access at the company’s centre, in the child’s or young person’s own home, or through a combination of home learning and learning at the centre.

High staffing levels (most students are supported by two assistants most of the time) mean that the company is able to provide a highly individualised programme and adjust it instantly to meet the needs of children and young people whose tolerance of demands fluctuates from day to day or during the day.

To find out whether Spectrum Space can help your family, or if you would be interested in working with the project, please visit <https://spectrumspace.org/> to fill in an expression of interest form

New Support Group for parents with Under-5s

A group of parents has set up a new support group for children under 5s with additional needs, including ASDs, in Sheerwater. Called ‘We-Shine’, the group is meeting regularly in Sheerwater and hosting parent information events and visits such as outings to parks and other locations for parents and their children. The speakers at their next meeting on Monday 3rd October will be Gina Davies from Attention Autism and Sarah Roberts who writes ‘Don’t be sorry’, a blog about living with a child with Downs Syndrome.

For more details see calendar above or contact Gemma at info@we-shine.org.uk, tel: 07923 235265.

The EHCP Process: from SEND blogger Stephanie Nimmo

The speaker at the Family Voice Surrey AGM was Stephanie Nimmo, a blogger who is a Surrey-based mum of four, with two boys with an ASD and a daughter with Costello Syndrome, a rare genetic condition. Stephanie has given us permission to share her tips on going through the EHCP process from her blog 'Was this in the plan?' You can read the whole post at <http://bit.ly/1WPTcAq>

"If you are about to embark on the EHC process or the transition from Statement to EHC you may find my tips useful to help you survive (why are we even having to use this word?) the process:-

Identify your outcome, what you want for your child and keep that in mind at all time

Once I had identified a suitable setting for Jules that became my focus, I set myself a deadline that by the Easter holidays I would have the plan in place with the setting named. Keep your vision in sight and be realistic about what is possible. There is a finite pot of money, we all want the best for our child but chat to other parents who have a statement or EHC to understand what has been agreed to previously. I knew for the setting I wanted for Jules that there were already a few children from our Borough there, this certainly helped us get there. But ultimately it's about getting what's right for your child.

Build your team

You cannot do this alone, you need support, even a friend taking notes takes the pressure off you. I had the support of our Council funded Parent Partnership Officer (now known as Independent Advice & Support Services Officer) who is highly experienced and a calm voice in a sea of chaos. The Government has also funded Independent Supporters across the UK, this free service is invaluable and I really believe that working with them made the difference in our case. Where I live, the service is provided by Core Assets but your local authority should give you the details of who provides this service where you live.

I also contacted the free helplines at IPSEA and SOS! SEN, both invaluable sources of information and advice. All of these services are free, all the staff are highly trained in the EHC process

Identify your influencers

Who are the people important to your case, who will be providing supporting evidence, who will be making decisions? Identify them and communicate with them. In my case I had regular contact with the SENco and the Educational Psychologist, I also worked closely with the Psychologist from CAMHS. I worked closely with our SEN Caseworker and where necessary cc'd senior team members into conversations.

Know when to escalate

There will be a point in the process where you may need to escalate things. You don't want to be dismissed as a pushy parent so make sure you escalate after exhausting all other avenues and again know your outcome, what do you expect from this complaint? What is the difference you would like to see having made the complaint? I involved our MP only after we had tried a mediation meeting, I also wrote to the Director of Children's services. Other useful people would be your local councillor and the councillor who sits on the Education/Disability Committee in our Local Authority.

Keep a paper trail

Put everything in writing, email after conversations to confirm points, don't assume minutes will be done and sent to you following meetings (hence why it is good to take your own minute taker along with you), make sure you have a paper trail of information/decisions that you can refer back to. Make copies of all your forms and if possible hand deliver documents or send them recorded delivery.

Reports & evidence - more is more

The more evidence you can provide to support your case the better. We paid for a private psychologist report, it was worth every penny. School helped us by conducting a speech & language assessment and providing reports by an Autism Specialist as well as an Independent Educational Psychologist. We collated evidence to show the absences and falling grades and Jules himself wrote a letter to the panel explaining how he felt and what would make him feel better.

It's all about the child

In all the bureaucratic shenanigans and meetings it's easy to forget that there is a vulnerable child in the middle of this. Jules was fed up of all the testing and having to talk to various people who were sent to assess him, it all became overwhelming and I had to protect him from the stresses of the process as much as possible although he was acutely aware it was going on. The EHCP process is designed to be child and family centric and as parents and carers of children with SEN it is also our duty to make sure it does this at all times. The most important piece of documentation within the assessment, the one that is pivotal to all other elements is the first section, the Parent's/Carer's views. This is the document you need to spend a huge amount of time over, more, in fact, than you think. Do not write it on your own. I strongly recommend you book some time with your independent supporter, make a huge pot of coffee and write it over several days.

As Special Needs parents there are so many things we take for granted in our lives that we would not think to communicate, working with someone else and talking it through you can tease out so much more detail and paint a far clearer picture of your child's life than trying to do it on your own. Working with someone else helps give perspective, although it can be painful to put into words it can also be uplifting to at last put down on paper the hopes and aspirations you and your child have. In Jules' case it was to gain qualifications and to work towards a career in technology, in fact he wants to work at NASA so we put it down. In Daisy's case when we began work on her transition from statement to EHC it was to spend as much time in school as possible and have opportunities to be with her friends.

Do not forget to put a picture of your child in the document, and also include a picture the people important to your child. In Jules' case it was his family and our dog, Pluto. Draw a map of the people important to your child, this is your chance to remind people that this is your child and their life you are working for. Take a picture of your child to the EHC review meeting so that no-one forgets why you are there.

Be prepared to be exhausted

It's not an exaggeration. Despite everything, even if it goes well, you still feel you are fighting for your child, working to get the best for them, whatever the level of their needs. At least the people you are dealing with can go home and switch off, you are deal with all those SEN issues 24/7. Coffee will be your fuel, and chocolate, and crisps.....

Look after yourself and build a support network so that you can switch off and vent. Meet up with friends, go out for a walk, watch some reality TV, allow your brain to switch off.

Do not burn bridges

At all times be professional but assertive. I learned very early on in when Daisy was born that much as you breathe a sigh of relief when a professional you don't get on with moves to another role there is no guarantee that you won't come across them again, the world of SEN is actually pretty small. Keep your cool, count to ten, do whatever works for you to stay calm and collected in your discussions - even if you have to go home and vent at whoever will listen.

Do not give up

You may need to start tribunal proceedings on more than one occasion, do not give up, keep your vision in sight, make time for yourself so that you have the stamina to do this, gather your

evidence, your support network and keep on marching relentlessly forward.

Reward yourself

And when it's all over, and you've got your plan (with funding behind it of course!), reward yourself - bottle of wine, chocolate cake, spa day - whatever floats your boat. Sit back and smile at a job well done. But don't relax for too long, just because Jules is in a new setting doesn't mean that all the problems have gone away, they are still there, it's just he's in the best place to deal with them. I'm still firing off emails, attending meetings and discussing strategies, but at least I know that I have a plan and funding to support him so that he can achieve his goals and become that Apache Pilot or NASA Astronaut or whatever his latest career goal involves".

<http://www.wasthisintheplan.co.uk/>

Information for Adults:

Views on adult services?

Every year, Public Health England asks local Autism Partnership Boards to assess support for adults with autism in their area. As part of it, we would be interested to hear from people with autism or their parents/family members about their experiences over the year from April 2015 – March 2016. It is the nature of this kind of request that people are far more likely to respond with complaints than with praise, but to get an accurate picture of life for people with autism in Surrey it is important that we hear from as many people as possible, with good things to report as well as bad.

We are particularly interested in whether general council, health, transport, police or other services understand the needs of people with autism and make "reasonable adjustments" where needed. For instance, if you need a doctor's or dentist's appointment at the quietest time of day, are you able to get that? If you need the council to communicate with you by email instead of phone – or vice versa – have they done that if you asked? If you have needed mental health services, did they take your autism into account? We also want to know if you think that staff in public services such as health, care, housing, transport, police etc have any understanding of autism. Have you been able to get an advocate to help you get your views across if you needed one? Have parents/carers been offered a Carer's Assessment if the person with autism is having a social care assessment?

If you have any views or examples to give on any of the above, or anything else you want to say about services for adults with autism, please email Sara Truman at nas@mugsy.org or call 01483 822630. Your comments will be forwarded anonymously to Tom Moore, Autism lead for Surrey County Council. Please respond no later than **Monday 10th Oct.**

Social Media art workshops for people with LDs

Welmede provides housing and support for adults with learning disabilities, autism or mental health needs. The company is running a series of 3 art workshops in Kingston. With the support of resident artist Onkar Kular, they will facilitate the production of short videos to be uploaded onto social media platforms. Workshops are on Tuesdays on 25th Oct, 1st and 8th Nov, from 11.00am - 3.00pm. For details contact yourtime@welmede.org.uk

Parents of Adults Group in Haslemere

The Parents of Adult Group has added Haslemere to its list of towns it meets in, the other locations being Weybridge, Camberley, Guildford, Farnham and Reigate. The first Haslemere meeting will be on Wednesday 7th December. Contact Sara Truman for details

nas@mugsy.org

Spouses and Partners Group

Our new support group for spouses or partners of people with autism/Aspergers in Guildford is proving very popular. The group meets once a month in Guildford, from 8.00pm to 9.30pm and the next meeting is on Weds 19th October. For more details please contact Sara Truman email: nas@mugsy.org tel: 01483 822630.

Report on health services and autism

The Westminster Commission on Autism is an independent cross-party group of politicians and leaders from the autism sector which aims to influence policy and practice relating to people with autism. It has produced a report called A Spectrum of Obstacles on the health inequalities experienced by people with autism. Key findings were about the need for more training in autism for health professionals and improving data collection so that more is known about the health needs and experiences of people with autism.

To find out more go to: <https://westminsterautismcommission.wordpress.com/>

Christian Conference for Adults with LDs

Alive Together is a Christian conference for adults with learning disabilities and their carers, families and support workers. It is being held on Saturday 8th October in Chessington, from 9.30am – 4.30pm. The event is free; those attending are asked to bring their own lunch. The day will be split into two kinds of activity: celebrations and workshops. Participants can choose a workshop on either drama, creative arts, dance, music or “God, disability and me”. The event is organised by Praise Club – a group of churches which have regular meetings for people with learning disabilities. For more details email sarah.smith@thekingscentre.co.uk

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 emma@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.***

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