

National Autistic Society Surrey Branch Annual Report to members – July 2017

Over 1500 people in and around Surrey receive our newsletter and over 900 people belong to our moderated online forum. Key activities in the past year have included:

Local Support Groups

- **Local support group meetings** – Sadly we have had to close several local support groups this year due to volunteers no longer being able to run them and have stopped our Weybridge pub meetings due to lack of interest. Chertsey, Cranleigh and Haslemere have all stopped. Huge thanks go to past hosts and to the dedicated team still running meetings: Sara Truman in Guildford; Christine Malik and Bonnie Noyce in Frensham, Juliette Sturge in Hinchley Wood; Sue Briggs in Milford; Helen Ruffhead in Redhill; Fi Phippen in Weybridge and Sarah Norris in Woking.
- **Parents of Girls group** continues to meet in Woking and Guildford and to host social activities for girls and their parents. Thanks go to Rachel Pearson for all her work.
- **Parents of adults groups** meet regularly in Camberley, Farnham, Guildford, Haslemere, Reigate and Weybridge. Thanks to Hilary Dyce and Sara Truman for organising these.
- **The Dads' group** continues to meet about once a quarter in members' homes or local pubs and runs a dedicated email forum. Thanks to Martin Trenaman for keeping this going.
- **Spouses and Partners group** – Sara Truman set up this popular group which now meets every month in Guildford.

Events

- **Indoor Climbing** – this is always a popular event
- **Christmas Party** – This was well-attended in 2016. Thanks again to Santa, Matthew Searle, volunteers and Michelle Jackson and her team at Woking Leisure Centre.
- **Ice skating** in Guildford, held jointly with interAKtive, had over 130 attendees.
- **Bowling** – we held a very successful joint event with Sparklers Charity at Pine Ridge Bowl in Frimley in February and are repeating this in the autumn.

Thanks go in particular to Sarah Mead who manages bookings for all events. We are now using Eventbrite online booking which, whilst incurring a cost, makes events easier to book and manage.

Branch Committee

Sadly, two long-standing committee members, Sarah Mason and Eileen Bruce, resigned this year for personal reasons – we are very grateful for what they have done over the years. Huge thanks too go to the rest of the committee who have worked hard to fill the gaps:

- Emma Whitfield Chair
- Haywood Drake Treasurer / W Surrey Librarian
- Sara Truman Deputy Chair / Adult Issues
- Sarah Mead Event bookings
- Rachel Pearson Parents of girls / employment issues
- Emma Searle Events and residential education
- Jill Goulding Events calendar, meeting secretary


Our thanks go to other key volunteers including:

- Nancy Rowell for continuing as membership secretary
- Stella Drake for providing teas and coffees at Guildford and Woking

Thanks also go to Helena Bateman and Alessia Mitchell our branch support team at NAS head office.

Branch Talks

In February 2017, we took the difficult decision to stop holding evening talks due to a combination of dwindling attendance and lack of resources. Thanks go to the speakers for our talks in the past year: Vanessa Clark (outreach), Jane Stark (Short Breaks), Gaby Close (Surrey SEND operations), Wendy Jenkins (independent EHCP support), Jill Goulding & Jo Davis (eating, sleeping and toileting), Andrea Collings (Family Voice Surrey). Reports of past meetings appear in the newsletters on our website.



Until everyone understands

Representing the Branch at external events

We continue to receive more invitations than ever to attend external conferences, events, groups and schools and URGENTLY need more parents to help with these. Events we have attended in the past year have included the SEND sensory conference in Dorking, 'Day Around Autism' in Godalming, Autism and Anxiety conference, Freemantles conference, Transition event at Brooklands College, paediatric groups for parents of newly-diagnosed children at the Royal Surrey and Goldsworth Park and CAMHS parent groups.

Women & Girls Conference 2016

Our 'Women & Girls with Autism' event in September was originally intended to be a simple information day. In the end, it grew to a conference with almost 150 attendees at Leatherhead Leisure Centre with a world class line-up of speakers including autism consultant Sarah Hendrixx; Clinical Psychologist Dr Louise Connor; Sarah Wild, Head of Limpsfield Grange and Bettina Stott from the NAS ASSIST service. Thanks once again go to Sara Truman for organising and ably marshalling troops of volunteers and helpers. Our next conference will be in autumn 2018.

Parent Representation

Sara Truman continues her membership of the Autism Partnership Board and the LD Partnership Board. Emma Whitfield has been part of the Surrey Joint Autism Strategy Group, a role that will be taken over by Sara Truman.

Parent workshops

We have used donations to hire professional trainers to deliver a range of parent workshops:

- **Cygnets Parent Programmes** - we have continued to host Cygnets parent programmes, with six two-day courses in Dorking, Redhill / Reigate and Guildford. There will be another programme in the autumn. Thanks go to trainer Liz Waters.
- **Supporting your Young Person into Employment** – we were very pleased to have been able to be involved with AS Mentoring in the development of these valuable courses for parents of young people over 16 and have hosted two courses in the past year. We plan to continue these useful courses, including facilitating occasional social group meetings to enable parents of older children / young adults to meet one another.
- **Workshop for parents with young adults thinking of going to Uni** – we were delighted to be able to be a pilot group for AS Mentoring to 'road-test' this new course. Feedback was extremely good and we are hoping to host another workshop in 2018, funds and resources permitting.

Donations and fundraising

We continued to receive donations from our very generous membership which enable us to run the branch. Donors are too numerous to mention but include: the Pusey Family, Hayley Willoughby and friends, Epsom Downs School, William Cobbett School, MyLife Supported Living, Waitrose, Hilary Richardson and young people from the National Challenge Scheme.

Postal Library

Volunteer Susan Salters took on the huge task of setting up and running a new NAS Branch postal library last year. She spent many weeks cataloguing and photographing our 400 or so specialist books to enable parents to borrow them and return them by just dropping them in a postbox. The service is currently under-utilised.

Employment Works for Autism

Having identified a cash surplus from donations in 2016, we agreed to use some funds to support Surrey's Employment Works for Autism project run by Surrey Choices EmployAbility. This provides job coaching, internships and support to find long-term employment.



Emma Whitfield, Chair (Volunteer),
NAS Surrey Branch
5th July 2017



National Autistic Society Surrey Branch

Minutes of Annual General Meeting 2016

Date: Wednesday 13th July 2016 **Venue:** Christ Church, Woking

Present: Emma Whitfield, Haywood Drake, Sara Truman, Rachel Pearson, Sarah Mead, Stella Drake and approx 6 others.

1. **Apologies for absence:** Eileen Bruce, Sarah Mason, Emma Searle
2. **Minutes of last AGM** – accepted. No matters arising.
3. **Chair's report.** Emma Whitfield presented her report covering the branch's activities for the year.
4. **Election of Chair:** Emma Whitfield was the only person to stand for election as Branch Officer. Her appointment was proposed by Rachel Pearson and seconded by Avril O'Brien.
5. **Annual Accounts:** The branch accounts were presented, which showed that during 2014/15 the branch had a surplus for the year of 1,014.95. The total balance the branch held at the start of the year was £25,381.44 and the balance as of 5th April 2016 was £26,746.49. There were unrepresented cheques to a value of £350.10.
6. **Election of Treasurer:** Haywood Drake was the only person to stand for election as treasurer. He was nominated by Emma Whitfield and seconded by Sara Truman.
7. **Any Other Business:** Sara Truman thanked Emma Whitfield for her work as Branch Chair. The speaker was Tom Madders, Head of Campaigns & Community Engagement at the NAS who spoke about the new 'Too Much Information' campaign and showed us a virtual reality film designed to improve understanding of what it can feel like to be on the spectrum for some children.