

Dear Friends

As always, we have details of our activities over the next month or so, plus other information that may be of interest.

Next Monday we resume our monthly support group meetings and have already booked a number of interesting speakers for the coming months. We have also made a decision to change the regular date slot for our Family Youth Club and Lego Club (see below). Our Partners' group has successfully launched and we hope this will soon become a regular fixture in our calendar.

We look forward to seeing some of you at our forthcoming meetings and at the very popular Southampton and Hampshire SEND days in March. Also put Monday 16 April and Friday 20 April in your diaries now! – read on...

Support Group Meeting

Our next meeting is on **Monday, 19 February** at Bishopstoke Evangelical Church at 7.30pm.

We welcome as our guest, **Tim Harrison**, Clinical Nurse Specialist (Learning Disabilities & Autism), Learning Disability and Autism Liaison Service, Southampton General Hospital. Tim will be speaking about this new service across University Hospital Southampton NHS Foundation Trust and would be grateful for our members' thoughts in regard to what should be included in their Autism Strategy.

There will be plenty of time at our meeting to have a chat and to browse our Resource Library, comprising around 400 books, videos and DVDs on many aspects of autism and Asperger syndrome.

If you have any books due back or overdue, please don't forget to bring them along.

We have excellent speakers lined up for forthcoming support group meetings (details at www.shantsnas.org.uk/Home/SupportGroup). Our **19 March** meeting will have the theme of 'Preparing for Employment'. **Monday 16 April** is our Annual General Meeting and we have just booked a nationally-known speaker to give a talk at this event – more news very soon!

Family Youth Club and Lego Club changes

We are delighted to report that we had a good attendance at our February Family Youth Club and hope this will now continue for the rest of the year, avoiding any of our concerns about having to close the group due to lack of support.

We have been considering the future planned dates for both our Lego Club and Family Youth Club and have realised that our regular slot of the 1st Saturday in the month often tends to clash with bank holidays, etc. In fact, the next three would have clashed with Easter, May Day Bank Holiday and Spring Bank Holiday respectively!

We have therefore taken the decision to **move to a new regular slot of the 3rd Saturday in the month** for both these clubs, starting from April. We are very grateful to Chandlers Ford Methodist Church for their support in changing our regular booking. Please note: we have **no Youth or Lego clubs in March** due to clashes with other commitments.

Our next Youth Club and Lego Club therefore take place on **Saturday, 21 April** at Chandlers Ford Methodist Church. Lego Club from 2.00pm; Family Youth Club from 3.30pm to 5.30pm.

Lego club is currently full but for more information and to express interest in your child joining the waiting list, complete the form at www.shantsnas.org.uk/home/lego

Full details of our Family Youth Club, including a map of the venue, can be found at www.shantsnas.org.uk/Home/Family%20Youth%20Club

Reserve the date now!

Friday 20 April – Open evening at Winchester Science Centre exclusively for branch members – more news soon!

New Partners' Group

A successful initial meeting of this group, specifically for partners of people with autism (whether the partner is diagnosed or not), took place last month. The meetings are for the partner of the person with autism only (not the person with autism themselves). It is now planned to continue this as a regular monthly activity and we are currently investigating suitable venues and dates. As soon as arrangements have been completed we will announce the details.

Our Southampton social groups

Both our Children's and Adults' social groups are meeting during term time on alternate Tuesday evenings at St Patrick's Church, Portsmouth Road, Woolston, Southampton, SO19 9BD. Dates can be found on our website. For more details, email nassouthampton@gmail.com or contact Sue (023 8043 2612) or Tracey (07532 282301).

Branch Facebook page

Don't forget to regularly visit our Facebook page where we post information and news (in addition to our newsletters and emails). Visit <https://www.facebook.com/nassouthhampshirebranch> and 'Like' and/or 'Follow' us.





Held Back campaign



In November 2017, The National Autistic Society and the All Party Parliamentary Group on Autism published a report on autism and education. It found that autistic children and young people in England are being let down and held back from achieving their potential by the education system.

That's why, together with Ambitious About Autism, they have launched their Held Back campaign. They want the Government to make sure no children are held back from meeting their potential because they're autistic.

Over 20,000 people signed their open letter calling on the Government to develop a national autism and education strategy. On 31 January, the NAS hosted their Held Back parliamentary campaign launch in the House of Commons. Over 1,800 of you contacted your local MP to invite them to this event – thank you. Visit www.autism.org.uk/heldback

SEND Information days

As previously announced, this year, both Hampshire and Southampton are holding SEND Information Days in March and we will be present, with our stand, at both events.

The **Southampton free Information Day** takes place on **Saturday 10 March** at Oasis Academy, Romsey Road, Lordshill, Southampton, SO16 8FA from 10.00am to 3.00pm. The day includes lots of local services attending, Parent/Carer workshops based around subjects that matter to you and your families (we are giving an *Introduction to Autism* talk), children's entertainment provided and refreshments will be available. For more information contact clairepritchard@roseroad.org.uk or visit <https://www.facebook.com/events/924178264406911/?ti=icl>

Hampshire SEND Information Day will take place at Noadswood School, North Road, Dibden Purlieu, Southampton SO45 4ZF on **Saturday 24 March** from 10.00am to 3.00pm.

Support4SEND has been holding these free events for many years, giving families and practitioners the opportunity to gather information about support and services available across the county. They have become increasingly popular, not only with families and professionals but also with exhibitors, who welcome the opportunity it gives them to meet families and offer their support. They anticipate there will be 40+ exhibitors from support services, statutory services and commercial organisations to be on hand on the day to chat with visitors and offer information and advice.

The whole event is free to visitors, other than refreshments and snacks, which will be available to buy. There is ample free parking on site and disabled access. They hope to have entertainment for children accompanying their parents.

The planning of workshops and talks is well under way, and full details will be available on the Support4SEND website at <https://www.hants.gov.uk/socialcareandhealth/childrenandfamilies/specialneeds/support4send/informationday> very soon. Topics so far confirmed include:

- An overview of autism
- Empowering parent carers to speak up for their child or young person with additional needs
- Living with dyspraxia
- Career Companion, gateway to careers, learning and training information on the internet
- Social and friendship skills
- Supporting teenage girls with high functioning autism
- Bullying
- Transition from Early Years to school
- The EHC needs assessment process

If you would like to receive further information as soon as it is available, email enquiries.support4send@hants.gov.uk

Autism Spectrum Intermediate full-day training programme

Autism Hampshire is running this day for parents, carers, professionals and other interested individuals, being held on **Friday 9 March**, 9.30am-3.30pm, at Fairways House, Mount Pleasant Road, Southampton, SO14 0QB. This informative, interactive and interesting training programme is delivered by professionally qualified and experienced trainers from Autism Hampshire who have a wealth of autism knowledge. Visit www.shantsnas.org.uk/Diary%20dates for course content. The cost is: £35 Unwaged/Parent/Carer • £70 Professional/Statutory Body Worker • £60 Voluntary Sector Worker. This includes refreshments but you need to bring your own lunch or visit a local café. For further details and to book, call 01489 880881 extension 0 or email trainingadmin@autismhampshire.org.uk

Relaxed performance of Pinocchio

There is relaxed performance of Disney's Pinocchio on **Saturday 17 March** at 1.30pm at the Lyttelton Theatre at the National Theatre in London. All tickets: £16. Call box office staff on 020 7452 3961 and quote promo code: RELAXED or visit their website at <https://www.nationaltheatre.org.uk/your-visit/access/relaxed-performances>

Join the NAS and PLAYMOBIL for World Autism Awareness Week

The National Autistic Society's World Autism Awareness Week is back from **26 March to 2 April** and they'd love you to join the fun and raise some cash. Their lovely little friends at PLAYMOBIL have helped create a stop-motion animation film (coming soon) encouraging everyone, big or small, to get behind World Autism Awareness Week.

Sign up today and choose from a whole host of fundraising activities and events in your community, at work, or at school, including sponsored night walks, Onesie Wednesday and their new 7k for the 700,000 challenge event.

Whatever you do, however small, you'll be helping to make a huge difference to the lives of the 700,000 autistic people in the UK.

For further information visit <http://www.autism.org.uk/get-involved/world-autism-awareness-week/playmobil.aspx>

Chris Packham's five favourite facts about autism

Fact fan, autistic man and National Autistic Society ambassador, Chris Packham, has put together a few of his favourite facts about autism to help school kids (and curious adults!) across the UK celebrate World Autism Awareness Week. Download your poster from <https://www.autism.org.uk/get-involved/media-centre/news/2018-01-16-poster.aspx>

The Review of the Mental Health Act

There is currently a consultation on reviewing the Mental Health Act which has surveys for individuals and carers to complete. This is a good opportunity to raise the issues that autistic people (of all ages) face accessing the mental health support they need. The more people that do it, the more the review will realise that autism is something it really needs to look at within the Act. The NAS has done a news story with links in to the consultation:

<http://www.autism.org.uk/get-involved/media-centre/news/2018-01-22-mental-health-act.aspx> (deadline **28 February**).

If you have not already done so, to get a good idea of some of the issues involved locally, view our recently made film about Autism and Mental Health at www.shantsnas.org.uk/consult

Government to review 1.6 million Personal Independent Payment claims

Following the recent High Court decision which found that changes to the Personal Independence Payment mobility rules were discriminatory (visit <https://contact.org.uk/news-and-blogs/high-court-says-pip-rule-changes-are-unlawful>), the government has announced that it will now review 1.6 million Personal Independence Payment (PIP) claims. The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) will look again at all existing PIP awards as well as any decisions where PIP was refused since November 2016. They want to identify claimants who should have been awarded more points for planning and following a journey. The review exercise will seek to identify claims where psychological distress causes difficulties when planning or following a journey. For more information visit <https://contact.org.uk/news-and-blogs/government-to-review-16-million-personal-independence-payment-claims/>

Autism and gluten/casein-free diets

Emma Jordan is a Community Paediatric Dietitian and Chair of the British Dietetic Association Autism sub-group. In her article for Network Autism, Emma discusses factors that may cause gastrointestinal problems in autistic people, and explores whether gluten and casein-free diets may be beneficial. View the article at <http://network.autism.org.uk/good-practice/evidence-base/autism-and-glutencasein-free-diets>

Reminders:

Visiting the Hampshire Countryside and Exploring the New Forest by Bus booklets

We still have a few of these booklets left which will be available at our next support group meeting. These are designed for families and teachers of children with autism and can also be downloaded free from <http://autismandnature.org.uk/>

Autism Support Group in Totton

An evening autism support group at Youth and Families Matter (the community project of Testwood Baptist Church), which runs alongside their daytime group. Hosted by two of our branch members, it aims to provide an opportunity for parents to meet up, have a chat, support each other as well as finding out information. The next meeting will take place on **Monday 12 March** from 7.30 to 9.00pm at Testwood Baptist Church, 283A Salisbury Rd, Totton, Southampton SO40 3LZ and then every second Monday of every month (9 April; 14 May, etc).

Parent Forum – Alex Kelly Ltd

Speech therapist, Alex Kelly, is running a programme of seminars at Speaking Space, Fleming House, Alma Road, Romsey, SO51 9EP from 7.00 to 9.00pm during the year. Entry is a £5.00 contribution at the door towards the costs and cake! All the dates and topics can be found at <http://alexkelly.biz/2017/12/08/parent-forums-2018/>. If you are interested, email office@alexkelly.biz or phone on 023 8098 7134.

Alex Kelly Ltd, are also running a series of Social Skills groups for primary age children, secondary age young people and adults at their base in Romsey. Leaflets about these groups can be downloaded from our website at www.shantsnas.org.uk/News/Newsarchive#031017_01

Free Autism Support and Information Programme for parents in Hampshire and Southampton

Hampshire CAMHS, Southampton City Council and Autism Hampshire invite you to a free programme of sessions offering learning, support, and advice in various aspects of autism during your child's assessment, or following their diagnosis. Each session will cover a different aspect of the condition with the aim of increasing your understanding of your child's unique way of looking at the world, and how this may show itself in how they behave. If you prefer a less public forum, you may also book a 5-minute 1:1 slot with any of the panel members. These groups take place in each of the seven Hampshire CAMHS areas and in the city of Southampton – full details and dates at www.shantsnas.org.uk/Support/camhs

Clarks Quiet Hour Appointments

This service is available in the Southampton, Above Bar store on **Sundays**, 9:30am – 10:30am to offer consumers a quiet and relaxed environment for fitting appointments. You are also encouraged to bring toys, sensory aids, tablets and other appropriate items to ease the experience. To ensure that your appointment goes as smoothly as possible, you are encouraged to make an appointment in advance by calling the Southampton store on 023 8022 4515.

Sensory Sundays at the Swan Centre, Eastleigh and The Marlands, Southampton

Both shopping centres now run a *Sensory Sunday* on the **last Sunday of each month**. Most of the shops lower their lighting levels and reduce the volume of music and announcements during the day. All customer-facing Swan Centre staff have undergone training from our NAS Branch to help them understand the issues that people with autism face in a busy shopping centre and have an understanding on how to support customers with sensory issues.

On the same dates, alongside the activity in the retail part of the Swan Centre, Partyman World of Play hold SEN sessions (see below) and Vue Cinema (<https://www.dimensions-uk.org/families/autism-friendly-environments/autism-friendly-screenings/vue-autism-friendly-cinema-screenings>) hold special SEN sessions and Autism friendly screenings.

Partyman World of Play SEN sessions

Partyman World of Play, Unit L10, Swan Leisure Centre, Eastleigh, SO50 5SF is a children's soft play centre. The venue has a café, slides, ball cannon areas, climbers, rockers, and a designated toddler and baby area. They offer complimentary morning and evening sessions dedicated to children and young adults with special needs where they close the entire venue just for you. Morning sessions will be held from 9.00 to 10.00am on Sundays: **25 February and 25 March**. Evening sessions will be held from 6.00 to 8.00pm on Wednesday: **7 March and 28 March**. For more information or to book, call Jessica on 02380 018336 or email jessica.campbell@partyman.co.uk

SEN sessions at Monkey Bizness, Southampton

Monkey Bizness, a soft play centre with huge play frames, games, machines, slides and more, special areas for toddlers, free WiFi, comfy seating and a bright airy cafe serving freshly prepared food, at 234 Empress Road, Southampton, SO14 0JY is running SEN sessions on the **last Thursday of every month** from 5.30 to 7.00pm at just £3 per child. For further details call 023 8055 0580.

Flipout sessions

Flipout, the biggest trampoline arena in Hampshire, at Unit 1a Chandlers Park, School Lane, Eastleigh, SO53 4DG, is running Rebound Therapy sessions on **Wednesdays** and **Fridays** between 9.00 and 11.00am or 3.00 and 5.00pm for these hourly group sessions. Prices are: Ages 1 to 5: £4.50, Age 6+: £7.50 dependant on disability. Between 12.00 and 3.00pm they run half an hour one to one sessions at £18 per 30 mins. They also run SEN sessions **every Monday** at 16:00pm – £7.50 for a jumper and up to two carers. The arena is closed to the public, the music is turned down, the strobe lights are off and staff are around to help and monitor. For further information, phone 023 8214 7811, email southampton@flipout.co.uk or visit <https://www.flipout.co.uk/locations/southampton/>

Dimensions autism-friendly cinema screenings

Dimensions work with ODEON, Cineworld, Vue and Showcase to host Autism Friendly Screenings at over 250 cinemas nationwide. For a limited time and at nine selected cinemas, including Southampton, ODEON are showing autism friendly screenings for older audiences. See what autism-friendly cinema screenings are coming to a cinema near you at <https://www.dimensions-uk.org/families/autism-friendly-environments/autism-friendly-screenings/>

Autism-friendly performances

Following a number of autism-friendly performances across our region over Christmas, don't forget The Mayflower Theatre's relaxed performance of 'War Horse' on **Thursday 24 May** at 2.00pm. Contact: Box Office 023 8071 1811 or visit https://www.mayflower.org.uk/Whats_On

Disney's 'The Lion King' will present its fifth dedicated autism-friendly performance in London on **Sunday 3 June** at 1:30pm. Visit www.thelionking.co.uk/autismfriendly for more information.

Inspiring You Inclusion Weekends

At Avon Tyrrell Outdoor Centre, Bransgore, BH23 8EE: Enjoy two nights in the main house, a range of exciting adventure activities and delicious meals to help you refuel. Have a go at climbing, archery, pioneering, bushcraft, kayaking and more... The activities are led by experienced instructors who will support you and help you challenge yourself, build confidence and try something new. These events are a fantastic opportunity for families to spend time in a safe and friendly environment, with specialised equipment and fully trained staff. Thanks to partnership funding, they are able to offer this for just £60pp for Gateway card holders. If you live outside of Hampshire, they would love you to join them too, so please contact them for alternative pricing. Dates for 2018 breaks, which commence on the weekend of **6-8 April**, can be found on their website. They also run one-night breaks and one-night camping experiences. For details and to book, visit https://www.avontyrrell.org.uk/inclusion_weekends.html, email info@ukyouth.org or call 01425 672347.

ActiveAbility Solent – New Timetable

Visit <https://www.activecommunity.org.uk/activeability> to see their timetable (January to March) which will include any updates and new sessions. They offer a range of accessible and fun activities that run seven days a week, including martial arts, athletics, boccia, tenpin bowling and many others. Locations are mainly in Southampton but do also include Totton, Eastleigh, Chandler's Ford and Warsash. On average the sessions are just £3 each and it is as simple as just turning up and their experienced and qualified coaches will take it from there. You can also make bespoke bookings where they can supply equipment, coaches and facilities. If you would like more information, contact Tom Grave, Activities Coordinator on 02380 784131 or email tom.graves@activenation.org.uk

Family Information and Services Hub

To view activities taking place in your local area, visit <https://fish.hants.gov.uk/kb5/hampshire/directory/results.page?familychannel=3&searchtype=event> to view the Leisure and Play – Hampshire Gateway section on the Family Information and Services Hub.

Rose Road Association Stay & Play Family Coffee Morning

Every **Saturday**, 9.30-11.30am, at The Bradbury Centre, 300 Aldermoor Road, Southampton, SO16 5NA. Music, arts & crafts, sensory and soft play and lots more activities. Suitable for children and young people with disabilities and additional needs aged 3-16 years. Siblings are also welcome. This is a free session for all families! Donations for refreshments. For more information contact Claire Headington on 02380 721234 or 07823 353887 or email claireheadington@roseroad.org.uk. The sessions are funded by BBC Children in Need.

Hampshire Local Autism Directory

The Local Autism Directory (LAD) is funded by Southampton, Hampshire, Isle of Wight and Portsmouth (SHIP), 8 CCGs and Adult Services, Hampshire County Council. Information within it covers children and adults. Visit the LAD at <http://www.autismhampshire.org.uk/local-autism-directory/directory/>

First Steps to Autism Information – local guides

Autism Hampshire's set of useful local guides for Southampton, Hampshire, Isle of Wight and Portsmouth, for people when they first want to know more about autism and the local support services available. Available from the Hampshire Local Autism Directory at <https://www.autismhampshire.org.uk/local-autism-directory/directory/#stepbystepguides>

My World, National Autistic Society

The NAS offers a FREE autism classroom resource pack and fortnightly resource emails for teachers who sign up to *My World*. Please pass this information on to all teachers you know. For a video with more information, please visit www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fv66Q-MUXqc and sign up at www.autism.org.uk/myworld

Friends of In Touch

This registered charity in Eastleigh, funded by the BIG Lottery, supports children and young people with autism. The aim is to enable anxious or socially-vulnerable children and young people to feel more engaged with mainstream education and social activity by helping them develop self-confidence, self-esteem and coping skills. Lots of fun activities include cooking, arts and crafts, bushcraft, games, construction toys for the Junior group (9 to 13) and cookery, pamper evenings, film nights, quizzes, bowling, book club, sports, meals out and BBQs for the Senior group (13 to 21). Both groups are currently full but anyone interested in being added to the waiting list should contact info@friendsofintouch.org.uk. Both groups meet at Y-Zone Youth Centre, Fair Oak on Tuesdays during term time (Juniors 4.30 to 6.00pm and Seniors 6.30 to 8.30pm). Holiday groups are also planned. For full details visit www.friendsofintouch.org.uk

Our Resource Library



Our library is available to members at our support group meetings and a small selection is available at our family youth club. Members can join the library for a one-off donation of £5. We now have around 400 books, videos, DVDs and games. Up to 3 items may be borrowed for a maximum loan of 2 months. We do ask that items are returned promptly to enable others to borrow them.

Help us boost our fundraising

A great way to raise money for us for free – shopping online through *easyfundraising*.

Whenever you buy anything online (presents, groceries, clothes, books, train tickets, hotel rooms, etc.) you can raise a free donation for our Branch. Over 2,700 retailers have registered with the site, including Amazon, John Lewis, eBay and Tesco who donate a percentage of what you spend to us to say thank you for shopping with them.

1. Sign up – go to www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/shantsnas and click on the button to sign up.
2. Shop – from the *easyfundraising* website, search for the retailer you'd like to shop with and click through to the retailer to make your purchase. This tells the retailer you came from *easyfundraising*. The price is exactly the same as if you'd visited the retailer directly.
3. Get a donation – after you've made your purchase, the retailer will give you a cash reward that *easyfundraising* turn into a donation for our Branch.

Please be assured that using the *easyfundraising* website will not cost you a penny. There are no catches or hidden charges and we benefit from any donations you make once registered.

Thank you for your support.

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As always, for full details of all our meetings, other dates, news items and information, visit our [website](http://www.shantsnas.org.uk) and/or [Facebook page](https://www.facebook.com/nassouthhampshirebranch).

Regards

David & Rachel Carter

The National Autistic Society, South Hampshire Branch

Email: shants@nas.org.uk | Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/nassouthhampshirebranch> | Website: www.shantsnas.org.uk
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