

South Hampshire Branch

Dear Friends

A very Happy New Year to you all and we hope you had a good Christmas break. Welcome to our 10th year as a National Autistic Society Branch – a milestone we hope to be able to celebrate later in the year with a special event.

Please find below all the latest information from our branch, along with other information that we hope you will find useful.

We have information about our new LEGO club starting in February and details of how you can be present at the final decision regarding cuts to Short Breaks funding, and show how important this service is to our families.

Monthly Support Group

Our next support group is on **Monday, 19 January** held, as usual, at Bishopstoke Evangelical Church at 7.30pm (a location map can be found at www.shantsnas.org.uk/Home/SupportGroup).

We welcome, as our guest, **Luke Syddall**, an adult with Asperger syndrome who is a long-standing member of our branch. It is a while since Luke has spoken at our group and he will be talking about his experiences growing up with Asperger syndrome, through childhood and into adulthood. Luke is also a fellow member of Hampshire Autism Voice (the parent/carer/service-user group of the Hampshire Autism Partnership Board) and often gives talks at Hampshire County Council's autism training sessions and to other professional organisations.

There will be plenty of time at our meeting to have a chat and to browse our Resource Library, comprising over 300 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.

Family Youth Club

Unfortunately, our scheduled Family Youth Club on Saturday, 17 January has had to be cancelled due to a shortage of helpers, but we meet back on **Saturday 7 February** at Chandlers Ford Methodist Church from 3.30pm to 5.30pm. Children accompanied by their families are welcome. As always, a variety of activities will be available and we look forward to an enjoyable afternoon. Karen (our play worker) will be present.

PLEASE NOTE: Parents must be responsible for their children during the duration of the youth club and must remain in the same room as their child at all times – thank you.

Richard Jones, a Gestalt Psychotherapist who works with people with autism, often attends to offer advice to parents and children. There is also an opportunity to book further sessions with him.

The club costs just £1.50 per child. Entry is via the children's garden at the rear of the church, next to the car-park.

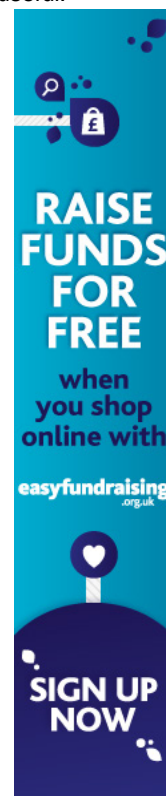
Full details, including a map of the venue, can be found at www.shantsnas.org.uk/Home/Family%20Youth%20Club.

LEGO club



Our new monthly LEGO club will run from **Saturday, 7 February** (on the same Saturdays as our Family Youth Club) at Chandlers Ford Methodist Church from 2.00 to 3.15pm. We ask parents to remain on site during the activity, however we do offer a separate room for parents, where they can chat over a cup of tea, supported by one of our committee members.

A speech and language therapist, Jo Ashwood, will be running the sessions on a voluntary basis and will be applying the Lego Therapy framework. LEGO Therapy involves building LEGO models in small groups or pairs where the children take on different roles and work together. The children are encouraged to practice turn taking, sharing, joint problem solving and general social communication skills. Additionally, Education and Psychology student volunteers from The University of Winchester will be present to help and encourage the children to take part during the activity.



Accept difference. Not indifference.

The Club will start with a small 'pilot' group for children aged between 9 and 13, so that we can evaluate this activity.

PLEASE NOTE: We have been advised that, unfortunately, this type of therapy is not successful with children who have an ADHD or PDA diagnosis.

The cost per session will be £2.50 per child. Each session will build on the previous one, so it is essential that your child attends regularly.

To express an interest in your child joining this club, please complete the form (which can be found on our website at www.shantsnas.org.uk/home/lego). We will offer a place to the first eight suitable registrations of interest received; others will be placed on a waiting list.

We are most grateful to Jo and the student volunteers for offering their services and to Sarah-Jane Eades who has made a very generous donation, in memory of her late mother, which has enabled us to purchase a quantity of LEGO and get this long-awaited new activity underway.

Our Southampton social groups

Children's social group

This restarts on **Tuesday, 13 January** from 6.30pm to 8.30pm. The group meet fortnightly (all the dates are on our website). An exciting programme of events is being put together for the New Year.

Adult's social group

This has already restarted, the next meeting being on **Tuesday, 20 January** from 7.00pm to 9.00pm. The group meet fortnightly (all the dates are on our website). Again, there are lots of plans this year for this popular group.

For more details of both of these social groups, email aspsq.shants@gmail.com or contact Sue on 023 8043 2612 or Tracey on 07532 282301. New members are always welcome to attend. Both groups meet at St Patrick's Church, Portsmouth Road, Woolston, Southampton, SO19 9BD.

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 have just purchased over 40 new books which will be added to the library in the next few weeks, bringing the total number of books, videos, DVDs and games to around 350 items.

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. *Currently we have a number of items that, despite constant reminders, are very overdue, so ask that these be returned immediately please. Thank you.*

Social Skills groups

We have now filled all places for our next social skills course starting at the end of February and running throughout March. This will be for 9 young people aged 11 to 14. We hope, funding permitting, to run another group later in 2015 and will circulate details of how to express an interest in this nearer the time.

An Introduction to autism

We are considering running a family seminar 'An Introduction to Autism' to be held over two sessions (possibly a week or two apart) in the Spring. These seminars would be held in Eastleigh, during the day (probably from around 10.00am to 2.30pm) with a light lunch provided. There will be charge for attendance. We would be very pleased to hear from parents who may like to attend so that we can gauge the level of interest. Please email us at shants@nas.org.uk.

Short Breaks consultation – the final decision

On **Wednesday 21 January**, Councillor Mans (Executive Lead Member for Children's Services and Deputy Leader, Hampshire County Council) will announce his final decision over the proposed funding cuts to our short breaks service. As you will be aware, we have been working with Hampshire Parent/Carer Network (HPCN) and many other local organisations to campaign against these cuts since the start of 2014 and we have been extremely grateful for all the support we have received from parents, carers and many others groups both locally and nationally.

HPCN will, of course, be attending the announcement on the day. They extend an invitation to anyone who would like to attend and show, for the last time, how important this service is to our families. They will be asking local press to attend and are planning on gathering as many people as possible at the front of the building for some photos.

Details of the meeting are at http://www3.hants.gov.uk/councilmeetings/meetingsummary.htm?date_ID=1421.

HPCN are proposing to meet outside the front entrance of the HCC main building 'Elizabeth II Court' at 1.30pm to allow time for any press photos/interviews, etc. The official meeting starts at 2.00pm.

We really hope you can join them for one last push!

Challengers Southampton Youthscheme

Saturday Youthscheme and youth nights, run by Challengers, are for disabled young people aged 13–18 and provide a place where young people can make friends and try loads of new activities. There are spaces at every Youthscheme for young people who need 1:1 support and who have complex impairments. Challengers Southampton Youth runs on Saturdays from 10.00am to 4.00pm and on Tuesday nights from 6.30 to 8.30pm, at Great Oaks School, Vermont Close, Southampton, SO16 7LT. Costs are £17 (10.00am–4.00pm) and £6 (6.30–8.30pm). To book and for more information, contact 01483 230 939 or visit www.disability-challengers.org.

Hampshire CAMHS Participation Project – ACE

Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust provide Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) in Hampshire and is looking to set up a participation project across the county called ACE. They would like to recruit young people, parents and carers to get involved in how their services are run, and get involved much more widely with tasks and activities.

This is not just for those who have accessed CAMHS. They feel that all young people have a view and should have an influence on how services are managed and run for those that need CAMHS. It is also about getting involved in raising awareness and reducing stigma around mental and emotional/psychological difficulties.

An application form, wellness guidelines, poster and a flyer outlining what ACE is, can be found on our website at www.shantnas.org.uk/News/Newsarchive#110115_01.

For more information, please contact Helen Dove, hdove@nhs.net.

Multi-arts Group

Multi-arts Group meets each week at Wildern School in Hedge End on a Tuesday evening during term time to have fun, build social skills, and work in many different art forms, such as art, dance, music, cooking, and drama. The sessions are open to any young person with or without disabilities and they warmly welcome new members.

They meet at The D@rt Centre and walk around to the room together. There are two different age-groups that meet and from 6.15pm – 6.30pm they all come together at The D@RT and have a drink and biscuit with each other.

This terms dates are **Tuesday 13 January to 31 March** (no session in the half term on Tuesday 17 February) from 5.00pm – 6.30pm (7-12 year olds) and 6.15pm – 7.45pm (13–19 year olds). Sessions only cost £2.50 per session (paid in blocks of six weeks) as they are subsidised by Hampshire County Council funding.

You are welcome to go to a FREE taster session to see for yourself. Your parent or carer can stay with you if you wish. For further information contact Vicki Hargreaves, Dance Development Manager and Multi-arts Leader, The Point, on 023 8062 7815 or email Vicki.hargreaves@eastleigh.gov.uk.

Community First New Forest

Community First New Forest's ASD meetings for the next few months are:

Wednesday 21 January, 10.30 - 12.30, Ringwood Fire Station

Wednesday 11 February, 10.30 - 12.30, Ringwood Fire Station

Wednesday 11 March, 10.30 - 12.30, Ringwood Fire Station

For further information, contact Carol Malky at cypservices@cnf.org.uk.

Cuts to social care services

The NAS Haringey Branch is currently fighting a campaign to stop millions of pounds of cuts to social care services, which will hit adults with autism hard. Haringey Council have proposed making cuts which will see all day centres for people with autism and learning disabilities shut down, a residential centre shut down, all care packages for those who have them be massively reduced. They have stated that the focus will be on the 'community' and 'carers' to provide more and 'alternative' care.

As you know – it is already a constant battle and struggle for carers of children or adults with autism to get the right help and support for their children. These cuts will mean people with autism who also have challenging behaviour and very complex needs having their care and support massively reduced.

If these cuts go through it will set a precedent for other local authorities, who are also under pressure to reduce their budgets, to make similar cuts – that is why it is essential that we try and stop Haringey Council going through with these cuts because it won't just be people with autism in Haringey who suffer but will only be the start of severe cuts to the most vulnerable all over the country.

Haringey Branch and carers have worked tirelessly to lobby the Council, MPs and other local decision-makers and now they have also set up a petition. If they can get 2,200 signatures on the petition, Haringey Council will have to debate it but more importantly, if we can get thousands signing up to this – it will show the strength of opposition to these cuts and will help us get this in the spotlight and hopefully into national media.

So please sign the petition, at <https://you.38degrees.org.uk/partnerships/the-national-autistic-society?bucket=nas> and share it with your friends and any other networks you have. Your signatures could make all the difference!

Thank you!

Parent Voice DLA guide

Disability Living Allowance (DLA): Parent Voice's guide on DLA has been updated. Applying for DLA can be a very daunting process especially if it's the first time you have completed the form, if your child is newly diagnosed or if you haven't been given a diagnosis yet. However there is support available, both nationally and locally, if you need it. Parent Voice have put together this factsheet to signpost you to that support and also to give some tips and advice on completing the form. View the factsheet at www.parentvoice.info/en/DLA_Support_and_Advice_- or call 0300 303 8603

The Children and Young People's Mental Health and Wellbeing Taskforce

The Children and Young People's Mental Health and Wellbeing Taskforce has been set up to consider some of the biggest challenges facing mental health provision for children and young people, and to find ways to tackle these problems across the system.

For more information please visit <https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/children-and-young-peoples-mental-health-and-well-being-taskforce> or follow #CYPMHTaskforce or #youngmentalhealth on Twitter.

Reminders:

Routes to Employment event

Young people, parent carers, people who provide and buy services are invited to take part in an interactive session to explore what works to support young people with special educational needs and disabilities into employment. This takes place on **Thursday, 22 January** at Hope Church Middle Brook Centre, Middle Brook Street, Winchester SO23 8DQ from 10.00am to 3.00pm.

The event will explore the variety of routes to employment and opportunities that can be capitalised upon such as educational settings, work based learning, person centred planning, volunteering and community based activities. It will take an evidenced based approach to identifying what helps to get people with special educational needs and disabilities on the pathway to work.

To book a place contact Alex Tye on 01962 847262 or email health.wellbeing.partnership@hants.gov.uk. Lunch will be provided, so please let her know if you have any dietary requirements when you book.

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/>

Help us boost our fundraising

A great way to raise money for us for free, simply by shopping online through a website called easyfundraising.

Whenever you buy anything online (e.g. presents, groceries, clothes, books, train tickets, hotel rooms, etc.) you can raise a free donation for our Branch. There are over 2,700 retailers registered with the site, including Amazon, John Lewis, eBay and Tesco who will 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.



The poster is for Easyfundraising and features a grid of shopping categories: STATIONERY, BOOKS, DVDs & GAMES, HOLIDAYS, CLOTHES, HOME APPLIANCES, INSURANCE, GIFTS, BROADBAND & UTILITIES, SCHOOL STUFF, MOBILES, TRAVEL, ELECTRONICS, BUSINESS SUPPLIES, and GROCERIES. Below the grid, it asks 'What do you buy online?' and shows a cartoon woman. The text says: 'Whatever you buy online, you can raise free donations for us by simply buying through **easyfundraising.org.uk**'. A green circle says 'Start raising free donations now!'. The URL www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/shantsnas is provided. At the bottom, it says 'WITH OVER 2,700 RETAILERS TO CHOOSE FROM' and lists logos for amazon.co.uk, John Lewis, Viking, TESCO, Expeditious, ASDA, M&S, Argos, and Sainsbury's.

As always, for full details of all our meetings, other dates, news items and information, please visit our [website](#).

Regards

David & Rachel Carter

The National Autistic Society, South Hampshire Branch

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You will have received this news update because we have your contact details on our list. Should you no longer wish to receive information, please let us know and we will remove you from the list. Thank you