

Newsletter



Welcome

Hi and welcome to the Christmas edition of our newsletter.

I know that Christmas can be a stressful time for many of our families and we certainly have our share of tears and laughter in this household. I hope that everything goes smoothly for you and that you have a good holiday,

We will do our best to answer your questions/emails as soon as we can but because we are all parents of young children ourselves I apologise if there is a delay in our response over the festive holiday.

I hope to see you at one of our Christmas activities - if not then I look forward to seeing you sometime in the new year.

As always - please keep your comments and suggestions coming. The theme for next month's newsletter will be talking to your children about their ASD diagnosis so if you have any stories or advice you wish to share then please do get in touch.

Take care, Gill



Supporting our members

We are always here to answer your questions and help you the best way we can. You can get in touch with us via e mail (landm@nas.org.uk) or by posting on our new facebook group (members only) where other carers and adults with ASD can also give advice and support.
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/NASLancasterandMorecambe/>

We love to chat with people at our information mornings but appreciate that sometimes, especially if you are new to the group, it can be a bit daunting coming on your own. If this applies to you then please get in touch and we will meet you before hand.

We are trialling a Morecambe meeting on Thursday 11th December and it will be in the afternoon for those who can't make morning sessions.

We are hoping to arrange an evening support group as soon as we get a venue and staff in place. If it's popular we can make it a regular event.

If you can't make one of our meetings you will be welcome at any of the other support groups. For a full list of when and where we meet please see the list on page 6.

There are lots of other support options from the NAS which are listed on page 5 and include a parent to parent telephone support service, an E mail befriending service (open to anyone over the age of 12) and an on-line community forum.



Newsletter



Campaigning

Last week we met Emma Shepherd from the NAS campaigns team who will be helping our branch to campaign on local and National issues which affect our families. The two campaigns we have chosen to start with are;

1) Improving waiting times for a child to be diagnosed with an autistic spectrum disorder.

We have been having meetings with the Clinical Commissioning group (CCG) for some time and they are aware of the problems and the frustration this delay causes our families. They are trying to make improvements eg bypassing the MAAT panel for more obvious cases (not all counties have a MAAT panel) but we just want to ensure that this stays high on their list of priorities

2) Increase the age of transition from Child and Adolescent Mental Health services (CAMHS) to adult services (AMHS) from 16 to 18 years.

Many children don't meet the criteria for AMHS and have had support taken away in the last year of school when they need it the most. In other counties the transition is at 18 years and we would like it to be the same here in Lancashire. Accessing these services in the first instance is sadly another issue and something we will be working on very soon.

After Christmas we will be sending out some surveys to gather information and case studies to take to our MPs/Press etc so please do take time to fill them in if they apply to you.

Emma will be at our Firbank information meeting on 7th January to chat to parents so please join us if you can.

Training and Education

We have had lots of feedback from you all that you would like us to organise some autism related training.

Our branch has used money kindly donated by Morecambe Road school (from their summer fundraising event) to purchase NAS training material which we hope to roll out very soon. There will be a small charge to cover material costs and room hire but we are hoping to get some funding so we can keep these costs to a minimum.

Three of these courses are for parents/carers of children with autism;

1) Understanding autism 2) Managing Anger 3) Sensory needs.

We have also purchased a fantastic learning package called "Social Eyes" which is a social skills learning resource to give advice and help to our high functioning children and adults on the spectrum. It covers topics such as conversational skills and how to cope with various social situations

We have spoken to Maria Lyons, the education psychologist who ran the "What now?" course which parents should be directed to upon receiving a diagnosis of autism for their child. Sadly the course stopped due to funding issues but Maria is hoping to start it up again in the new year. We'll update you in our next newsletter.



Newsletter



Adults with Autism/Aspergers

Since becoming a NAS branch we have had several adults with autism register with us. Our previous support group (F-ASD) consisted mainly of families with school age children. Obviously our children are growing up and many will be adults soon so it's great to have adults register with us and to hear how they are getting on.

We don't currently have a support group for adults with Aspergers but if this is something you would like to set up with our help then please do get in touch.

For adults with learning difficulties there are some great activities organised by the Friends and Relationships group. It is open to adults with aspergers and if you do attend it would be helpful if you could give us some feedback. More details can be found on their website <http://northlancslinks.net/>

A new centre for autism is opening in Preston in the new year and will provide tailor made support packages to suit the individual based on their needs. This support ranges from music & drama sessions and sensory/ICT suites to providing vocational and social skills training for those seeking employment.

For more information contact elizabeth.gordon@nas.org.uk

The role of the Autism Partnership Board

Following on from the Autism Act/Strategy, each local area has a planning forum responsible for developing autism provision for adults across health and social care and with a goal of improving services generally.

Here in Lancashire our forum is the Autism Partnership board which meets up regularly in Preston.

Several of our members sit on this board and also on various sub-groups including diagnosis and assessment, communication engagement and employment.

To find out more about what is discussed in these meetings or to raise any questions/issues please contact Kizzy Felstead (kizzy.f@naslandm.co.uk)

Think Autism

In 2009 the government passed The Autism Act and it was the first ever disability-specific law in England.

Out of this act came the autism strategy and statutory guidance for local councils and health bodies to ensure that the needs of adults with autism are met. These needs range from making it easier for adults to get a diagnosis to ensuring they get the help the need in the home, accessing services or seeking employment. There is a heavy emphasis on raising awareness of autism and providing training to all key staff eg social workers and health professionals.

As the guidance is statutory, local councils and health bodies have a legal duty to implement it. Obviously this will take some time and some authorities are doing better than others.

In April this year there was an update to the strategy called "Think Autism" which introduced 3 new key proposals and is expected to make a big difference to the lives, services and support for adults with autism over the next five years. Think Autism has a new focus on building communities that are more aware of, and accessible to, the needs of people with autism. It looks at promoting innovative local ideas, services or projects that can help people in their communities.

The government has set aside a package of £4.5 million called the "autism innovation fund" so that these improvements can happen. Lancashire County council successfully bid for funding to develop a peer and mentor support network within Central Lancashire. I am in the process of finding out more about this and how it can benefit our families here in North Lancashire.

The Government is currently seeking people's views on the proposed new guidance Sadly it's a short deadline of 19th December but if you get chance then please take a look and have your say.

There is an easy read version aswell on the following link;

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/adult-autism-strategy-guidance-update>



Accept difference. Not indifference

Library



Our library is now on-line so it's possible to browse our books/DVDs and also to reserve them
<https://naslandm.co.uk/library.php>

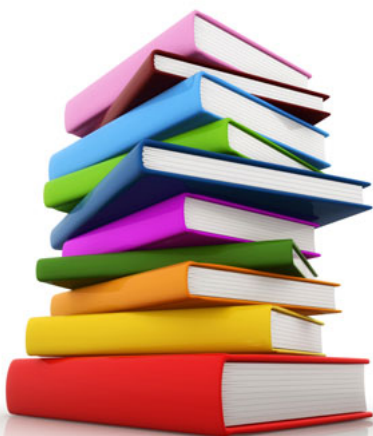
If you can't attend one of our meetings then we are happy to meet you in Morecambe or Lancaster town centre.

Sadly we've lost many books in recent years so they can now only be loaned by branch members and there are fines for any lost or damaged books. You can loan 2 books for 3 months and you can renew if no-one has reserved them.

Please ensure that you sign the book or DVD in and out otherwise you may be liable if it goes missing!

If you have any autism related books that you no longer need then we are always grateful to accept donations for our library.

If you have read a good book and would like to submit a review for the next newsletter then please do e mail it to us.



Review of "What's happening to Tom" by Kate E Reynolds

Trying to broach the subject of puberty with any child can be difficult and I was struggling to find books suitable for my 12 year old son who has autism. This book, using a cartoon character called Tom, was so helpful and my son related instantly to his character. There is another book in our library called "The things Tom likes" which is a follow up to this one. These books are wonderful because they have a feel of a social story and are short, not too "wordy" and include some explicit drawings (!). This is what my son needed in order to help him understand some very important rules regarding what is/isn't appropriate behaviour. We are awaiting two similar books about a girl called Ellie and will let you know when they arrive.

Review of "Autism - Explaining the Enigma" by Uta Frith

I love all books written by Uta Frith and if you ever get chance to hear her lecture she is a truly inspirational speaker. Uta was one of the first neuroscientists to recognise autism as a condition of the brain rather than the result of "cold parenting" and her students include Tony Attwood and Simon Baron-Cohen

This book is very academic and written from a psychologist's perspective but I find the whole subject of what she calls "theory of mind" fascinating. She explains how people with autism struggle to recognize and think about thoughts and are unable to integrate pieces of information together to form a coherent whole.

It's worth borrowing this book just to read chapter 5 on Mind blindness which describes how people on the autistic spectrum struggle to recognise and understand the thoughts and feelings of others and predict their behaviour. This can lead people to falsely assume that they are uncaring or come across as rude when they are simply failing to pick up on the unspoken signals and cues that people without autism take for granted.

The following short You Tube video is worth watching and Uta demonstrates the famous "Sally Anne" experiment which I have tried many times on my own son and he always comes up with the same answer!

<http://youtu.be/qsEP7QTIVT0>



Contacts



Lancaster & Morecambe Branch Contacts

Branch Officer

Gillian Mann
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07500 881 831

Information Officer

Lucy Ellis
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07873 818 153

Librarian

Tracy Duffy
tracy.d@naslandm.co.uk

Campaigns

Kizzy Felstead
kizzy.f@naslandm.co.uk

Fundraising

Debbie Callender
debbie.c@naslandm.co.uk

Fundraising

Debs Brookes
debs.b@naslandm.co.uk

Treasurer

accounts@naslandm.co.uk

Other useful contacts

Unless stated, organisations not endorsed by the NAS Lancaster & Morecambe Branch or the NAS

General

NAS Helpline:

Tel: 0808 800 4104 (10am – 4pm), or email autismhelpline@nas.org.uk (replies within 14 working days)
www.autism.org.uk

Support

NAS Parent-to-Parent line 0808 800 4106

a UK-wide confidential telephone service providing emotional support to parents and carers of children or adults with autism

Face to Face befriending scheme

set up by SCOPE to offer support to anyone caring for a disabled child. A trained befriender will visit you in your home or at a Children's Centre to offer a listening ear. For more information contact Debbie Lemmon on 01524 833644
Debbie.lemmon@lancashire.gov.uk

NAS community discussion forum

for people to talk about autism and share their thoughts, questions and experiences. To register go to their home page
<http://community.autism.org.uk/>

NAS E-Befriending service

open to anyone age 12+ Care is taken to ensure people are appropriately matched based on age and interest. For more information and an application pack please contact E-befriending@nas.org.uk or call 02920 629314 Mobile: 07920 295911

Local Information

North Lancs Directions Group

www.northlancsdirectionsgroup.com



Diary Dates



Tue 2nd Dec, 10:30-12:00

Local Parent Carer Forum, Poulton CC
Rachel Shatford 01772 532509. (Creche available for under 5s, please book with Lucy Ellis 07873 818153 or Sheila Dowbiggin 833644). Guest speaker: N-compass North West Carers Point.

Tue 2nd Dec, 13:00-15:00

Parent Partnership Officer by appointment
AOK, Lune Park CC
to book contact Trisha/Claire 01524 382818 or jill.marrs@lancashire.gov.uk

Wed 3rd Dec, 10:00-12:00

**NAS information morning
Firbank Childrens Centre
Parent Partnership by
appointment jill.marrs@lancashire.gov.uk**

Tue 9th Dec, 19:30

Relaxed Pantomime - Aladdin
Grand Theatre, Lancaster
Special relaxed performance for children and young people under 19 with additional needs and their families. Children £8, carers free, from the box office 01524 64695

Thu 11th Dec, 12:30-14:30

**NAS information afternoon
Morecambe Library
Information with coffee and mince pies!**

Sun 14th Dec, 15:00-17:00

**NAS Christmas Party
Lansil Club, Caton Road, Lancaster
fully booked**

Thu 18th Dec, 13:00-14:30

Diagnosis support and chat
Balmoral Children's Centre
Open to parents/carers of a child with any disability

Sun 28th Dec, 10:00

Autism Friendly Screening
Vue cinema, Lancaster
Boxtrolls £1.75. Any additional need

Mon 29th Dec, 16:30-18:00

Zone soft play
Dalton square, Lancaster
Exclusive play session for children with additional needs & their families

As most of the groups at Children's centres and other places will be closed for the Christmas break, please make sure you contact the venue of any groups you would like to attend after the 19th December as groups may not be running

More information on all groups available at <http://naslandm.co.uk/regular-events.php>

Monday, 13:00 - 15:00, Bright Sparks, Poulton CC

Contact: Matt Cooper on 01524 833644

Monday, 17:00 - 19:00, Kids United, Mencap, Charles St, Morecambe

Contact: Leona 07432274195

Tuesday, 13:00 - 15:00, AOK, Lune Park CC

Contact: Trisha/Claire 01524 382818. Parent supporter is Lucy Ellis

Tuesday, 15:45 - 17:15, Disability Multi Sports club, Salt Ayre sports centre

Contact: Salt ayre on 01524 847540

Wednesday, 10:30 - 12:00, Unique Kidz Coffee and Cake, West End Impact

Contact: Jane Halpin 07544570384

Saturday, 09:00 - 12:00, Bright Sparks, Heysham CC

Contact: Victoria Hutton on 01524 409569
booking essential

Saturday, 10:30 - 11:30, Multi-ball skills sessions, Globe Arena astro turf pitch

Contact: Morecambe community sports at the Globe on 01524 411797
booking essential

Saturday, 13:00 - 16:00, Saturday Superstars, Heysham CC

Contact: Victoria Hutton on 01524 409569
booking essential

Saturday, 15:30 - 16:30, Disabilities Trampoline, University of Cumbria

Contact: Sports complex on 01524 526526
booking essential

Sunday, 14:00 - 16:00, Sunday disability sports, Lancaster University

Contact: frances.jones2@barnados.org.uk 01772 629470/0792 0153460
booking essential

If you have a group or event that may be of interest to our members, please email landm@nas.org.uk

