



The National  
Autistic Society

Lancaster & Morecambe Branch

# Newsletter

## Welcome

Hi everyone,

I'm sorry that this newsletter is so late. It's been a very interesting Christmas in our household for various reasons and we've had more than our fair share of viruses which have thankfully left us now. I hope that you are all well.

As a result I haven't been able to finish the article I was hoping to write on how to talk to your child about their autism diagnosis. I will save it for a future newsletter and use this one just to keep you updated on some meetings we've had recently.

I want to thank everyone who came along to one of our Christmas events and I hope you had lots of fun - I know we did!

The Lions club kindly gave us £100 toward the cost of our children's disco and we raised £147 from the raffle and from Kizzy's Ukulele performance collection. Thank you to everyone who donated raffle prizes and also their time to make the events happen.

I know many families appreciated the free tickets we were given for the Winter Wonderland experience in Manchester. I hope that they do this again next year.

Take care and see you soon  
Gill

## Information Meetings

The next information meeting will be at Firbank Children's centre on Wednesday 4th February, 10-12pm, and the guest speaker will be Josh Durham, hate crime officer from the Wyre & Lancaster District Hate Crime Project

The information afternoon at Morecambe wasn't well attended but we will try again soon. Similarly, we have stopped our regular coffee and breakfast meetings at Wetherspoons but will hold them ad hoc and inform you of when they are happening





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## Aspergers Youth Group pizza and brainstorming

Wednesday 14th January (6-8pm) @ Morecambe library -  
Pizzas are on us !

Please come along to share your ideas for a youth group we  
want to set up for teenagers with Aspergers (13-19 yrs)

I've invited some Psychology students from Lancaster  
University who are keen to help us set up and run this group.

The library is closed to the general public so you'll need to go  
to the back entrance, near to the main road (Central Drive), just  
past the Travelodge. I will put a poster on the door. If you have  
trouble finding it/getting in then call me on 07500 881831.

For those teenagers who would like to join a social group but  
don't have the confidence or the social skills to do so at the  
moment - one of our members has recommended a charity  
group called ACE who work with children to increase their self  
esteem and social development.

The service is not ASD specific but the work they do addresses  
many of the issues that our Aspergians face, including feelings  
of isolation and depression. They work with children 12-19 (25  
with additional needs)

For more information call Rehana Vada - 07715393475

## Survey for teachers / education professionals

The NAS is conducting a survey to get feedback on what NAS  
resources might be helpful to schools and to ensure they have  
everything they need to be able to support children with autism  
in their classroom and school environment.

Schools/educational staff play an extremely important role in  
the lives of children with autism and their families. Children  
spend the majority of their day at school and staff can often be  
the first to pick up on the specific needs of children with autism.

Please feel free to pass on the link below to anyone who might  
be interested in filling out the short survey which will be used to  
plan new resources and campaigns.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/3KSSDND>

## Training and Education

We have applied for funding which will help us to roll out the  
NAS seminars we purchased last month ie Understanding  
Autism, Managing Anger, Sensory Needs and the Social eyes  
training package.

If we are successful in our funding bids then Maria Lyon (an  
educational psychologist who runs the "What now" course) has  
kindly offered to deliver it with us.

She has also asked for our help to facilitate delivery of her  
"What Now" course as soon as she gets funding to start it up  
again.

We are keen to roll out the Social Eyes learning resource to  
mainstream schools to help those children who are struggling  
socially. Our plan is for schools to buy into some/all of this  
training and I hope it will benefit many of our families in  
mainstream education.

## NAS Active for Autism - free training

The NAS "Active for Autism" project is offering 2 hour free  
autism awareness sessions to the following people who work  
with our children/adults;

- voluntary sports coaches or activity leaders
- community sports leader/tutors
- voluntary community activity centres/clubs eg scouts, cubs,  
brownies, guides and riding for the disabled.

This course will enable them to:

- increase their awareness and understanding of autism
- explore the range of abilities found within autism
- access information to enable them to support people with  
autism more effectively.

There are 20 spaces for each session so if you know of anyone  
who would like to attend please tell them to send an e mail to  
landm@nas.org.uk and I will organise a venue.

Accept difference. Not indifference



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## Meeting with the Clinical Commissioning Group

We met recently with the Clinical Commissioning group (CCG) re: ongoing concerns relating to diagnosis and service provision for our children and their families.

We've had an update from Laurel White in the new post of "Service Manager for Community Paediatrics (Women & Children's Division)"

All children awaiting the MAAT panel should be discussed by the end of January, with the exception of Dr Formosa's patients as she is on maternity leave. These parents will be offered a transfer to another consultant so their cases can be discussed.

I know this will come as a huge relief to many families who have been waiting a long time. There have been lots of extra sessions in December and January, ahead of Dr Cade's departure. I know he will be sadly missed by many of us.

Funding has been approved to appoint a specialist Community Paediatrician and there are also plans to appoint two clinical leads, one for Autism (around July) and one for ADHD (around April). The plan is for these posts to be more community based.

We have been (and will continue to) pushing for a learning disability team to be established in this area. As many of you are aware, we have been without a learning disability nurse for many, many years since the departure of Mary Wilkinson who was never replaced. Other areas of Lancashire have a whole learning disability team with specialist CAMHS workers and courses for parents and their children to cope with managing their diagnosis.

The CCG recently approved funding to pay for staff from Central's learning disability team to come up and help support families in this area. At the meeting we were told that staff from the Central team are struggling to cope with the extra workload. I have asked the CCG for assurances that support will not be withdrawn from families who currently receive it.

## EHC plans

Guest speakers came to talk to parents about Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans at our recent information morning and the parent carer forum.

I know many of you still have lots of questions/concerns over the changes and there is SO much information to take in.

There's a link at the end of this newsletter to the local offer website which has lots of information you might find useful. Other organisations that can help are Parent Partnership, IPSEA and Barnardos. Please ask if you would like contact details.

A recurring question we receive from parents is what to do if you feel your child needs an EHC plan but the school don't agree that there is a need.

You don't need the school to initiate an EHC plan!

You can make a self referral to IDSS (Inclusion and Disability support service) and they have six weeks to make a decision on whether an assessment should be made for your child. If you are not eligible for an EHC plan then you may receive a SEN support plan so it is definitely worth applying. The self referral form can be found on the local offer website under the section "what is an EHC plan" and then "requesting an EHC needs assessment"

Many parents are concerned that when the time comes for their child to switch from their existing statement to an EHC plan that support may be reduced or even taken away. It is illegal for local authorities to reduce/remove support in order to make cost savings and if you feel this has happened to your child then the NAS would be very interested to hear from you!

There is also confusion about the transfer of Learning Difficulty Assessments (LDA's) to EHC plans and one college has told a parent that this transfer is not automatic and they must start the process all over again by requesting a new EHC plan. The NAS have informed us that not only is this incorrect but it is illegal so if it has happened to your child then please get in touch with us.



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# Contacts

## Lancaster & Morecambe Branch Contacts

### Branch Officer

Gillian Mann  
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07500 881 831

### Librarian, Education

Tracy Duffy  
tracy.d@naslandm.co.uk

### Campaigns, Education

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](mailto:autismhelpline@nas.org.uk) (replies within 14 working days)  
[www.autism.org.uk](http://www.autism.org.uk)

#### Local Offer

<http://tinyurl.com/mv2e47m>

### Education

#### IPSEA - Independent Parental Special Education Advice

[www.ipsea.org.uk](http://www.ipsea.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](mailto: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/discussions>

#### 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](mailto:E-befriending@nas.org.uk) or call 02920 629314 Mobile: 07920 295911

### Local Information

#### North Lancs Directions Group

[www.northlancsdirectionsgroup.com](http://www.northlancsdirectionsgroup.com)

#### FIND database - including on line newsletters

<http://tinyurl.com/kcfnmuc>



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# Diary Dates

*Tue 13th Jan, 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 14th Jan, 18:00-20:00**  
**Brainstorming - Aspergers youth group (13-19)**  
**Morecambe Library - side entrance**  
**Gathering ideas for a youth group we hope to**  
**set up for our teenagers with Aspergers. Free**  
**pizza. Under 18s must be accompanied**

*Sun 25th Jan, 10:00*  
Autism friendly showing  
Vue cinema, lancaster  
Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good,  
Very Bad Day

*Tue 3rd Feb, 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)

**Wed 4th Feb, 10:00-12:00**  
**NAS information morning**  
**Firbank Childrens Centre**  
**10.30-11.30 presentation and Q&A session**  
**from Josh Durham - hate crime officer from the**  
**Wyre & Lancaster District Hate Crime Project**

*Thu 5th Feb, 10:00-14:00*  
Lancashire parent carer forum - information day  
Garstang Golf club  
A chance to meet with other parent carers, find out  
more about the local and county forums and to  
meet the SEN team and professionals. Booking  
essential. Contact us for further details. Free &  
lunch included

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

*Monday, 13:00 - 15:00, Bright Sparks, Poulton CC*  
Contact: Ruth Threlfall – 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 Trampolining, 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](mailto:landm@nas.org.uk)