

# Newsletter



## Welcome

Welcome to the Easter edition of our newsletter,

As you are probably aware, Fri 27th March - Thur 2nd April is World Autism Awareness week and we are looking forward to our sponsored walk from Morecambe to Lancaster Castle this Saturday and an Easter egg hunt at our information stall on Thursday.

If you would like your school or place of work to organise something to help us raise awareness/funds during April then please get in touch or visit our website for some ideas  
[www.naslandm.co.uk/waaw](http://www.naslandm.co.uk/waaw)

We are pleased to announce that the lego club is starting up again in Carnforth. There are quite a few groups/activities out there (which are always listed at the end of each newsletter) and we've given a brief description of the ones we are aware of. If you can recommend any "autism friendly" groups or clubs then please do pass on details so we can share with others.

We are close to announcing an evening support group for parents/carers, probably in Lancaster, for those who are unable to attend during the day.

We are also talking to several members who are keen to set up a group for adults with autism. We will arrange a meeting very soon for us to brainstorm some ideas so please come along if you would benefit from, or could help with, such a group

There will be no information meeting at Firbank this month as it falls in the Easter holidays but we are holding a coffee morning at the Bridge house Tea rooms in Wray on Tuesday 14th April (10-12). We will keep you posted of any informal coffee mornings in Morecambe/Lancaster via e mail or our website.

I hope you all have a lovely Easter and I look forward to hearing from you after the holidays

## World Autism Awareness Week - events

### Sponsored Walk - NEXT at Morecambe to Lancaster Castle

It's still not too late to join us on our walk this coming Saturday - 28th March. The walk starts at 1pm and will finish around 3pm. If you can't make it but would like to sponsor someone then please visit the donations page on our website or get in touch with us. Fingers crossed for some nice weather!  
[www.naslandm.co.uk/donate.php](http://www.naslandm.co.uk/donate.php)

### Information stall

We will have our information stall at St Nicolas Arcade on World Autism Awareness day which is Thursday 2nd April. Come and see us for an Easter Egg hunt and some free chocolate eggs! The stall will be near Boots from 10-2pm

### Preston Flag market - Autism awareness stalls

To celebrate World Autism Awareness day there will be a Flag market in Preston with 30 Autism related stalls and some fun activities. The event will take place from 11am - 3pm on Thursday 2nd April outside the Harris library (Market Square) in the town centre

### Toys R US

There will be another "autism friendly" early opening at the Preston store this coming Sunday - 29th March. Stores will open their doors from 9am for people to browse and place items in their trolley. They will be able to return to pay for their items when trading starts at 11am. The NAS are offering a £5 voucher when you spend £30, for all members. This voucher is available to download from their facebook page or please contact us if you are having trouble accessing it.

### Autism Friendly Cinema Screenings

During World Autism Awareness week local cinemas will be showing a variety of films in their "autism friendly" viewings.

Saturday 28th March, 11.30am  
Home at Reel cinema, Morecambe. £3.50

Sunday 29th March, 10am  
Paddington at Vue cinema, Lancaster. £1.75

Tuesday 31st March, 7pm  
National Theatre Live - Treasure Island at Vue Cinema, Lancaster.  
£15.00 / £12.50

Thursday 2nd April, 4pm  
Sponge Bob Movie at Vue cinema, Lancaster. £4.50



Accept difference. Not indifference.



The National  
Autistic Society  
Lancaster and  
Morecambe Branch

# Newsletter

## Fun stuff coming up...

### Lego Club

One of our committee members is starting up a lego club at Carnforth Children's centre on Tuesdays from 4.30-6pm (term time only). The first session will be Tuesday 21st April. More details can be found under 'groups and activities for children'.

### Circus Starr

Our free tickets for Circus Starr have arrived and we are pleased to have been allocated the 1pm showing on Saturday 9th May. If you haven't already requested tickets then please get in touch with Debbie (details above). We will be organising a coach for those who can't/don't want to drive at a donation of £5 per seat and these can be reserved and paid for on our website.  
[www.naslandm.co.uk/diary-dates.php](http://www.naslandm.co.uk/diary-dates.php)

### Luke Jackson

We are pleased to announce that the author Luke Jackson has agreed to come and give a lecture to our group in June. Luke (who has Aspergers) is the author of "Freaks, Geeks and Asperger's syndrome" and is writing a sequel to this book. There will be a Question and Answers session after the lecture. We will be asking for a suggested donation to cover costs but priority and a discount will be give to our members. We will inform you when the booking system is open on our website.

### Music Performance

As part of Autism Awareness week/month, one of our members (Kizzy) is helping to organise a musical event which aims to raise awareness and a positive profile of autism. Individuals with autism have been involved in its production and/or the actual performance. It's called "a song sequence for band and choir" and features "Hayes and Whitfield and fifteen instruments" ! The event is at the Dukes on Saturday 25th April at 8pm. Tickets cost £8 and can be purchased from the Dukes

## Existing groups and activities for parents/carers

**Unique Kidz Coffee and Cake**, Wednesday, 10.30 - 12, Woodhill Lane, Morecambe. children welcome. Contact: Jane Halpin 07544570384

**Parents United**, Monday, 10 - 11.30 at Mencap, Charles St, Morecambe. Term time only. Contact: Leona 07432274195

**NAS Information Morning**, 1st Wednesday of the month, 10 - 12 (term time only) at Firbank Childrens Centre. Other meet-ups and drop ins are arranged regularly so check the newlsetter and website for updates.

## Existing groups and activities for children

**AOK**, Tuesday, 1pm - 3pm (including holidays) at Lune Park Childrens Centre. Peer support group for parents/carers of children with additional needs (0-8yrs) with/without a diagnosis. Chat with other parents/carers whilst your children play, do craft activities and use our sensory room.

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

**Kids United**, Monday, 5pm - 7pm (term time only) at Mencap, Charles St, Morecambe. Stay and play for for children with any additional need and their siblings. Make friends and have fun. £1 per child, 50p additional children. Contact: Leona 07432274195

**Disability Multi Sports**, Tuesday, 15:45 - 17:15, Salt Ayre sports centre. For children (8+), young adults and their families. Try a variety of sports activities. Cost £3 per person & a free swim afterwards (including carers) No need to pre-book but places are allocated on a first come first served basis. Contact: Salt ayre on 01524 847540

**Multi-ball skills**, Saturday, 10am - 11.30am, Globe Arena astroturf pitch. For children with an Autistic Spectrum Disorder and their siblings. £3.00 per child. Booking essential. Contact: Morecambe community sports at the Globe on 01524 411797

**Disability Sports**, Sunday, 2pm - 4pm, Lancaster University. Range of sporting activities for children with disabilities aged 13-19. Booking essential. Contact: frances.jones2@barnados.org.uk 01772 629470 / 0792 0153460

**Disabilities Trampolining**, Saturday, 3.30pm - 4.30pm & 4.30pm - 5.30pm (term time only), University of Cumbria. Trampolining session for children with additional needs. Pre bookable sessions only. Contact: Sports complex on 01524 526526

**Aspergers Youth Group**, Wednesday, 6pm - 8pm (term time only), Morecambe Library. open to children aged 13-19 with a diagnosis of Aspergers/high functioning autism. Contact: landm@nas.org.uk/ 07500 881 831

**\*\*NEW\*\* Lego Club**, Tuesday's, 4.30pm - 6pm (term time only) at Carnforth Children's centre. The first session will be Tuesday 21st April and the cost will be £2 for the first child and £1 for additional children. Siblings are welcome and the child with additional needs must be 4 years plus. For more details please contact Debbie on 075 175 19905 or [debbie.c@naslandm.co.uk](mailto:debbie.c@naslandm.co.uk)



Accept difference. Not indifference.

# Newsletter



## Training & conferences

### Autism Awareness Session

The Adult college at White Cross Education Centre, Lancaster, is organising an Autism Awareness Session on 12th May. The daytime session is 1-4pm and the evening session 6-9pm and both cost £14.25. For more information, or to book a place, please contact the enrolment team on 0300 123 6711.

### 2 Hour Autism Awareness Training for Sports Staff

Our NAS branch has organised a two hour autism awareness session to help staff/volunteers working with our children and young adults to engage in sports activities and active groups such as cubs and brownies. The course aim is to;

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

The training will take place on Thursday 23rd April. For more information on times and venue please contact Tracy Duffy on [tracy.d@naslandm.co.uk](mailto:tracy.d@naslandm.co.uk) or call 07500 881 831

### Conference with Tony Attwood

The Witherslack Group are holding a one day conference for parents and carers of children and young people with special educational needs. The guest speaker will be Tony Attwood who will be delivering workshops focussed on Making Friends and Managing Challenging behaviour. There will be a choice of further "bite size" sessions on topics such as anger management and social awareness/communication.

The conference is on Wednesday 13th May, 9.30am 4pm at Pontville School, Black Moss Lane, Ormskirk, Lancashire, L39 4TW. The cost for parents/carers is £20 (£80 for professionals) and places will go quickly. For more information please contact [events@witherslackgroup.co.uk](mailto:events@witherslackgroup.co.uk) or call 015395 66081 and speak with Clare or Matt.

## Other News

We know many of you have already been down to see the new Autism resource centre in Preston (The Parc) to find out for yourselves what they can offer for adults on the spectrum.

We've had an e mail from the service manager, Elizabeth Gordon, to say sadly the open day has been delayed until May due to the fact they need a new roof! In the meantime, if you would like to talk to them about what they can offer for you/your child then please contact Elizabeth on 0743 6267399

## Campaigning

### General Election

We are still waiting to hear back from Parliamentary candidates for Morecambe and Lunesdale who have been invited to attend a "Question time" style meeting as part of the NAS I'm One campaign. We will keep you posted of any progress with this.

### Autism Diagnosis Pathway

As many of you are aware, we have been liaising with the Clinical Commissioning group and staff from Longlands child development center for some time now to discuss how the pathway for childrens' diagnosis of autism can be improved.

Staff agree with us that the current process isn't working and so they are planning meetings to discuss the way forward.

We have a meeting with them in April as they are keen to hear our views. We are also hoping to discuss gaps in services post diagnosis - in particular the absence of a learning disability service and any education for our parents/children. We want to take your views to the meeting so if you haven't already expressed them, and would like them known, please send them to [landm@nas.org.uk](mailto:landm@nas.org.uk) or call 07500 881 831. No names will be mentioned at the meeting.





The National  
Autistic Society  
Lancaster and  
Morecambe Branch

# Newsletter

## Talking to your child about their diagnosis

One of the questions I get asked by many parents is one that I myself struggled with for many years.

How do you know when to talk to your child about the fact they have autism?

It's a difficult question to answer since all our children, despite having autism in common, are very different in terms of their development, their level of understanding and also their personality.

My son was diagnosed at the age of three and I have never hidden the fact that he has autism from him. I've used the word openly whilst talking to people when he's been present and the house has always been littered with magazines and books about autism!

But I decided to wait until he started to ask me specific questions before we had "the talk" on what autism meant to him and how he felt about having it and was coping with it. My son was 11 years old and that just happened to be the right age for him. Because he is in a (fantastic) special school and because we tend to only go to special needs clubs I think it took him a lot longer to realise that he was different. For children in mainstream education this realisation seems to happen a lot earlier. For those at the lower functioning end of the spectrum that realisation may never happen.

The best advice I can give is to do as much reading as you possibly can before hand and have lots of books or links to websites to follow up your talk. For some children it might take time for the information to sink in or they might go quiet for a while and refuse to talk about it whilst they come to terms with the news. In our case it lead to (literally) hundreds of questions and I struggled to find enough literature to satisfy him.

There is some very good advice on the NAS website and I think this is a great starting point if you are considering having this talk with your child. <http://www.autism.org.uk/about-autism/all-about-diagnosis/diagnosis-the-process-for-children/recently-diagnosed-children.aspx>

In terms of "is is the right time" some questions you might consider are;

Does your child realise that they are different from their peers and does this upset them?

Would it help them if more people were aware they had autism eg classmates, friends, neighbours?

The following is a mixture of advice taken from all the books I've read on this subject and from my own experiences or those of other parents;

1) Don't give too much information or expect too much too soon

Some children might be overwhelmed if you give them too much information too soon. For others, like my son, I couldn't give him enough. You know your

child best and can judge their reaction. Start off with just a small amount of information and when they feel they are ready you can provide more. Give them literature that's relevant to their diagnosis and at a level they will understand.

2) Try and keep it positive

I know this isn't always easy and this is where choosing the right books can come in useful. My son loves to hear stories about famous people who have autism - a great book is "Different Like Me: My Book of Autism Heroes" by Marc Thomas or to read books written by people on the spectrum. Many books suggest working on a "picture of me" profile to talk about what your child's strengths and skills are before starting to talk about the areas where they might struggle or are "different" to their peers.

3) Involve siblings and family members

If your child has siblings then there are some great books to help them understand autism and what it means living with a brother or sister on the spectrum. I think I speak on behalf of many parents when I say that quite often it's the extended family who struggle to accept a child's diagnosis so try to get them involved by giving them some leaflets. We have lots of free ones you can take which gives a basic description of autism.

4) Be prepared for all possible reactions

In the case of my son, our talk didn't come as a shock but he did get very upset and we had lots of tears and comments such as "why did it have to be me" and "Why can't you make it go away". I felt this was a stage he had to go through before he reached "acceptance" but it was a very upsetting time for us both. Some children might go through a phase of denial or get angry/anxious for a while. Allow time and be patient. Don't force them to talk about it but be ready to listen and answer questions when they feel ready.

5) Use Peer support groups and networks

The one thing that helped my son enormously was attending the ASD football sessions at the Globe Arena. He was asking the other boys "do you have autism" and the fact that he was no alone really helped him to come to terms with his diagnosis. For children who attend mainstream school/mainstream clubs this isn't so easy but our branch has just started up a group for teenagers with Aspergers and it's so nice to see them relaxing in the presence of like minded children.

If they don't want to go to social groups then they can use the NAS e befriending service, open to children 12+, where they can chat and confide in someone close to their age group. For more information tel 02920 629314 or 07920295911 or e mail e-befriending@nas.org.uk



Accept difference. Not indifference.

# Newsletter



## 6) Look after yourself and chat to other parents

This can be a tough time for you as well as your child so try and get some support from other parents who have been through the process and can listen to and support you. Our branch is always here to support you but you can also use the other services provided by the NAS eg

Parent to Parent Service 0808 800 4106/[www.autism.org.uk/P2Pform](http://www.autism.org.uk/P2Pform)  
The online community <http://community.autism.org.uk/>  
Autism Helpline 0808 800 4104/ [www.autism.org.uk/enquiry](http://www.autism.org.uk/enquiry) contact .

Before I go I just wanted to tell you that one thing our branch has been, and will continue to campaign for, is some support for our children once they receive a diagnosis. It can be such a traumatic time, especially if they receive the news at later age and we are so disappointed that there is nothing out there to make it easier for them to come to terms with their diagnosis. Other health authorities run courses but sadly it's not happening in this area - yet! It's something we will mention at our next meeting with the Child development centre/Clinical commissioning group.

Please feel free to contact us if you would like to discuss this further. Good luck ! Gill

## RECOMMENDED BOOKS

There are SO many books out there on this subject. Our branch has many of the books below in our lending library so it's worth borrowing some to see if they would be suitable before making an expensive purchase

### **Books for children with Asperger Syndrome**

What is Asperger syndrome and how will it affect me" by Martin Ives

Freaks Geeks and Asperger syndrome - a guide to Adolescence by Luke Jackon

The Asperkid's Secret book of social rules by Jennifer Cook O'Toole.

I'm a teenager... get me out of here! by Carolyn Brock

I am Aspien girl by Tania A.Marshal

Asperger United is a free quarterly magazine written by people with Aspergers and offers a pen pal service. Free downloads available on the website or it can be posted to you  
<http://www.autism.org.uk/aspergerunited>

### **Books for children with Autism**

I have autism. What's that? by Kate Doherty, Paddy McNally and Eileen Sherrard

My Autism Book - A child's guide to their Autistic Spectrum diagnosis by Glòria Durà-Vilà and Tamar Levi

Can I tell you about autism? Jude Welton

### **Books about talking to siblings**

My family is different by Carolyn Brock.

My Brother is different by Louise Gorrod and Beccy Carver

My Sister is different by Sarah Tamsin Hunter

Everybody is different by Fiona Bleach

Ian's walk - by Laurie Lears

### **Books for parents/carers**

Asperger's Syndrome - from diagnosis to solutions - a guide for parents by Quigg and Nugent

Talking Together About an Autism Diagnosis: A Guide for Parents and Carers by Rachel Pike

I am special - a workbook to help children, teens and adults with ASD to understand their diagnosis, gain confidence and thrive by Peter Vermeulen

Autism Spectrum Disorder - the Complete Guide by Chantel Sicile-Kira





# Contacts

## Lancaster & Morecambe Branch Contacts

### Branch Officer

Gillian Mann  
landm@nas.org.uk  
07500 881 831

### Librarian, Education

Tracy Duffy  
tracy.d@naslandm.co.uk

### Fundraising

Debbie Callender  
debbie.c@naslandm.co.uk

Debs Brookes

debs.b@naslandm.co.uk

### Campaigns, Education

Kizzy Felstead  
kizzy.f@naslandm.co.uk

### Branch Treasurer / IT

Tracy McCarthy-Allen  
tracy.m@naslandm.co.uk



NASLandM



@NASLandM

[www.naslandm.co.uk](http://www.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)

### Education

#### Barnados Independent supporters

E mail [IndependentSupporters@barnados.org.uk](mailto:IndependentSupporters@barnados.org.uk) 01772 629470

#### IPSEA - Independent Parental Special Education Advice

[www.ipsea.org.uk](http://www.ipsea.org.uk)

### Support

#### NAS Parent-to-Parent line 0808 800 4106

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

#### 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 newsletter and service

<http://tinyurl.com/kcfnmuc>

#### Local Offer

<http://tinyurl.com/mv2e47m>



Accept difference. Not indifference.





The National  
Autistic Society  
Lancaster and  
Morecambe Branch

# Diary Dates

*Sat 28th Mar, 11:30*  
Autism friendly Screening 'Home'  
Reel cinema, Morecambe  
£3.50. Any additional need, no proof needed

**Sat 28th Mar, 13:00**  
**WAAW Sponsored Walk**  
**NEXT Morecambe to Lancaster Castle**

*Sun 29th Mar, 09:00-11:00*  
Autism Friendly Opening, Toys R Us  
Toys R Us stores nationwide  
Please note that the tills will not be open until  
trading laws allow

*Sun 29th Mar, 10:00*  
Autism Friendly Screening 'Paddington'  
Vue cinema, Lancaster  
£1.75. Any additional need

*Mon 30th Mar, 16:30-18:00*  
Zone soft play  
Dalton square, Lancaster  
Exclusive play session for children with additional  
needs & their families

**Wed 1st Apr**  
**Onesie Wednesday**  
**Wear your onesie (or dress in pink and purple)**  
**and raise funds for the NAS**

**Wed 1st Apr, 10:00-12:00**  
**NAS information morning**  
**CANCELLED DUE TO SCHOOL HOLIDAYS**

**Thu 2nd Apr, 10:00-14:00**  
**Information Stand**  
**St Nics, Lancaster**

*Thu 2nd Apr, 16:00*  
Autism Friendly Screening 'Sponge Bob Movie'  
Vue cinema, Lancaster  
£4.50. Any additional need, no proof needed

*Mon 6th Apr, 16:30-18:00*  
Zone soft play  
Dalton square, Lancaster

**Tue 14th Apr, 10:00-12:00**  
**Wray drop-in**  
**Bridge House Farm, Wray**  
**[www.bridgehousefarm.co.uk](http://www.bridgehousefarm.co.uk)**

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

*Monday, 10:00 - 11:30, Parents United, Mencap, Charles St, Morecambe*  
Contact: Leona 07432274195

*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, Woodhill Lane, Morecambe. LA44NW.*  
Contact: Jane Halpin 07544570384

**Wednesday, 18:00 - 20:00, Aspergers Youth Group, Morecambe Library (term time only)**  
**open to children aged 13-19 with a diagnosis of Aspergers/high functioning autism.**  
**Contact: [landm@nas.org.uk](mailto:landm@nas.org.uk)/ 07500 881 831**  
booking essential

*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)



Accept difference. Not indifference.