



Sheffield Autistic Society

Supporting people with autism and Asperger syndrome

Welcome to the Spring newsletter 2021

This is the first of our e-newsletters as we have now gone paperless.

First, we must apologise for the long delay in bringing news to you. During Covid the Society, like most other voluntary organisations, has had to make some significant changes to what we are able to offer to our members. However we have always aimed to provide as much information as possible on [our website](#), including information about our continuing activities, and this is regularly updated.

Unfortunately because of the restrictions we have had to discontinue all of our face to face meetings. But we are hopeful that we will be able to meet you again in person and to give you the opportunity to meet with other members at our meetings when we can resume safely.

Adult Asperger Support Group

We have been meeting online via Zoom for the last year to keep in touch and share experiences. For our April meeting we invited a guest speaker, Helen Eaton, who spoke about Social Anxiety and Emotional Regulation. Comments included: *an excellent, thought provoking talk* and *great insights provided*. If you missed the talk then Helen Eaton who is an autism consultant, runs a regular programme of online events which you can join for a small fee and the details are at www.heleneaton.co.uk

We aim to hold more events like this one in the future and will be seeking out other speakers for the future.

We have also met for cinema trips in the past and instead of the usual June meeting we will visit The Light Cinema for a long-awaited trip to see

a film. If you are on the circulation list for the Adult Asperger Group, then you will receive a notification in advance the week before. If you are not on the list and would like to be then please contact Liz at liz-friend@sky.com

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Lunchtime Meetings

We are hoping to resume our face-to-face lunchtime/afternoon meetings from September. The dates and time will change to the second Thursday of the month at 1pm. We will also have to change location as the Carers' Centre has now moved but will let you know as soon as we have a new venue as close to the city centre as we can.

Everyone is welcome at the lunchtime meetings: autistic adults; parents/carers; and anyone who has an interest in being part of the autism community in Sheffield. You are very welcome to come along for a chat and a cuppa and the meetings are very informal. We look forward to seeing you there!

Sheffield Autistic Society Photography Group

The Group started a couple of years ago with a couple of great tutors and some keen photography students with a real desire to capture some interesting images. We had visits to the Yorkshire Sculpture Park, Rivelin Valley, Graves Park and to different locations in and around the city.

Many students were interested in cityscapes and the Sheffield's industrial heritage and captured those images. We held our first exhibition in 2019 but were unable to stage the second exhibition planned for 2020 due to Covid.

During the lockdown we haven't been able to meet up but we have shared images on our closed Facebook Group and issued disposable cameras to members to keep snapping away! Our next project is to produce a book of images showcasing the work of all our lovely photographers and will let you know when this is published.

For now, however please see a couple of images by Wayne Shepherd below:



The Sheffield Autistic Society Summer Playscheme

Unfortunately we are again unable to offer a play scheme during the summer as we have in the past. Parents may however be interested to know about the Special Needs Inclusion Playcare Service (SNIPS) supported by Sheffield City Council. The aim of the service is to help children to access short breaks in the form of clubs and activities that they enjoy doing and to help families by providing a short break with the knowledge that their child is safe and enjoying themselves. Applications are restricted to families of children diagnosed as having disabilities / special needs. For more information see:

<http://www.sheffielddirectory.org.uk/kb5/sheffield/directory/advice.page?id=UrgO9wgJmTg>

Contact details:

Special Needs Inclusion Playcare Service

Level 6, North Wing, Moorfoot Building, Sheffield, S1 4PL

Tel (0114) 273 5368

Email: SNIPSBusinessSupport@sheffield.gov.uk

2021 could be a year of change for autistic people

(Report from the National Autistic Society)

"There are big opportunities on the horizon to improve the support for autistic people and their families. Governments are making important decisions about how to treat mental health, how to support children with special educational needs and how to improve local services for autistic people."

"We want to make sure that the needs of autistic people are a top priority for decision-makers. Read on to find out how you can be part of these changes..."

Why is all this happening now?

"2020 was the year a lot of us had to put things on hold. This was also true for the Government in England, who had to delay their planned

work in order to focus on the pandemic. That meant the Autism Strategy, the review into support for children with special educational needs (SEND) and the review of the Mental Health Act were all pushed back to 2021."

Why are these policy changes so important?

"The current level of support for autistic people and their families just isn't good enough. In 2019, we found that:

- *More than two in three autistic adults in England don't get the support they need.*
- *Only 14% said that there were enough mental health services in their area.*
- *50% of parents said their child had to wait more than a year for support at school."*

"We're calling for specialist autism support in every council in England, more mental health, education and care services in the community, and a national public understanding campaign."

"It is hoped that the new Autism strategy will come out in late Spring. Once it has been released, we'll want to make sure it is properly funded and that autistic people are involved in developing local strategies. [Sign up to NAS campaigner updates](#) to hear when the strategy is finally out."

Experts By Experience Panel

Sheffield City Council are looking for people interested in being part of an 'experts by experience' panel. They already have some people interested who are or have had caring responsibilities for someone in receipt of home care, or are home care users themselves. However, it would also be good to hear from any other carers who are interested in being involved.

"What are we asking volunteers to do? Be part of an Expert by Experience panel, that can contribute to, and be a critical friend for, the 'Home Care Transformation Programme' and particularly the development of a new model of home care.

We would like people who have some experience of home care services, either as a carer or relative, or as a person in receipt of care themselves. It's likely any meetings or events will be on Zoom for the foreseeable

future, so access to the necessary IT will also be essential. What to do to take part? If people would like to take part, please contact Chris Boyle, Commissioning Officer by emailing: chris.boyle@sheffield.gov.uk or calling 07768 278453.

Carers Week 7th to 13th June 2021

According to Sheffield Carers' Centre:

There are an estimated 90,000 unpaid carers in Sheffield!

These unpaid carers are providing a wide range of help and support to relatives and friends. The pandemic has caused an increase in numbers – but as many people still don't think of themselves as carers the total could be even higher. They need to be recognised for the difficulties they are experiencing, respected for all they doing, and to be supported with information and understanding. So for Carers Week many organisations are coming together to help Make Caring Visible and Valued.

For information about events, activities and offers for carers in Carers Week see: <https://sheffieldcarers.org.uk/carers-week-2021/>

Has your child had a diagnosis of autism? Are you waiting for an assessment?

An important source of new information and help for parents and carers of children with autism and other neurological disorders is now available on the Sheffield Children's NHS Foundation Trust website. You can find it here:

<https://www.sheffieldchildrens.nhs.uk/services/child-development-and-neurodisability/social-communication-disorders/autism-resources/>

The authors say:

“We hope that the information on our website can help with strategies, and support you and your family with the difficulties that lots of young people with neurodevelopmental conditions experience. There are a number of pages filled with resources to manage difficulties around sleep, mood, anxiety, sensory issues and going back to school. Additional information and resources are also available on our [DCD webpage](#) (DCD

is Developmental Coordination Disorder / Dyspraxia).”

There is also a child autism Mythbuster, developed in conjunction with various partners including the Sheffield Parent Carer Forum:

<https://www.sheffieldchildrens.nhs.uk/services/child-development-and-neurodisability/social-communication-disorders/autism-resources/mythbuster/>

Covid 19 For the Latest on Restrictions, Permissions etc

NB For the latest on permissions, restrictions, support and other information about the impact of Covid 19, especially in relation to autistic people and their families, and including the new National Lockdown rules updated 28th May, the Spring 2021 Roadmap and how the rules changed on 17th May [see this post](#) on the Sheffield Autistic Society website. Updates are regularly being added when they are received.

And finally...

We need your help!

For many years the Sheffield Autistic Society has tried to provide a focus for autistic people, for families and for carers in Sheffield to share knowledge, to meet, to give and to receive support, and to take part in activities and experiences that are beneficial to their lives.

For most of this time the Society has continued to be run by largely the same very small number of dedicated and unpaid volunteers.

We are now at a point where we desperately need new volunteers, energetic people, maybe younger and with new ideas to help us take the Society forward into the future.

We realise that, because of the nature of autism, many of you will feel that you have more than enough to do just managing your own lives and looking after your own families. But if you feel that you might be able to

help, if you are up to organising activities and meetings, or perhaps contributing in other ways such as providing material for our website or newsletters, joining our committee or representing the Society in other organisations where autism is discussed - please leave a message on the [Contact page](#) of our website or send us an email to: sheffieldasoc@gmail.com

Our membership fees are voluntary, and many of our activities, regular meetings or special events are provided free or at low cost to members. So, alternatively if you would like to make a donation to help us to continue our work, you can use the ['Just Giving' facility](#) on our website. Thank you for any help you can give us.