

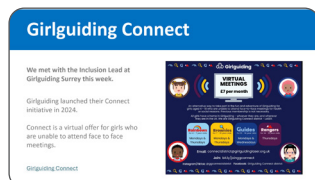


Autism in Surrey

Working to improve the lives
of autistic people in Surrey

West Surrey Autism Friendly Communities Group

Notes from our October 2025 meetings



Click here to go to our website where the slides
and these notes can also be downloaded.

Slides from our October 2025 update meeting

The slides from our October update meeting are live on our website and have been emailed to people on the West Surrey Autism Friendly Communities mailing list.

The slides have a lot of new information on inclusive opportunities across West Surrey, a summary of the work we have been doing in West Surrey and ideas for future development.

Making cinemas more autism friendly



We are keen to work with cinemas in Surrey to help to design autism friendly cinema experiences.

Different people have different needs:

Relaxed screenings

These are aimed at children and adults who may need to move around and/or vocalise during the film.

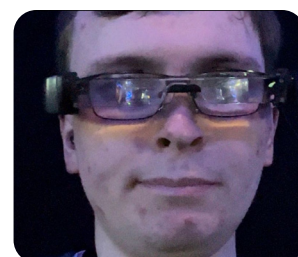
Quiet screenings

These are aimed at people who want a calmer, quieter cinema experience.

We discussed people's cinema experiences at our October focus group meeting, and here is a summary of our discussion.

- For people with a visual impairment The Light in Addlestone offer audio description headphones for all their screenings. Staff do sometimes set the headphones up for the hearing loop rather than the audio description, so it's important to check !
- The foyer at the cinema can be very noisy and busy when you arrive. When putting on a quiet screening it's important to turn the music off in the foyer too.
- Some people find subtitles help them to process the spoken word in the film, though other people said they would find subtitles distracting. We found out that some cinemas are piloting the use of UK cinemas are trialling new subtitle glasses which enable a person to see subtitles through the glasses.

Click here to view the article.



- We discussed adverts and trailers. The adverts before a film seem to be louder than the actual film, and many people would prefer not to have adverts, or at least make the adverts quieter. Some people enjoy the trailers, but these can be overwhelming, particularly if you are watching a film like a romantic comedy and have to sit through trailers for action and horror films !
- It would help if cinemas published exactly what time the film starts and ends. People could then choose to miss the adverts and trailers and also be better able to plan their journey home. Vue cinemas seem to advertise the end time of their screenings, but many other cinemas don't.
- Cinemas could be creative with their autism friendly screenings and create a calming sensory environment before the film starts by playing quiet calming music and using sensory lighting.

People who are very isolated



We have an open meeting planned on Tuesday 25th November 2025 from 7pm to 9pm

This meeting will focus on the needs of children, young people and adults who are very isolated.

After leaving college some young adults struggle to maintain friendships. A structured, supported network to link with others could be helpful.

It's important to recognise the impact fatigue and burnout has on many autistic people.

- At our focus group meeting people shared experiences of being very isolated themselves, and people they know who are very isolated.
- We will explore setting up peer networks for people to use to connect with others. We need to value the online connections people make with others through activities like gaming.
- People described how anxious they can feel going to an event on their own. Group members were keen to explore the idea of a peer buddy scheme, where an autistic/neurodivergent person would connect with a very isolated person either online or in-person.
- People's anxieties can be very specific and may need a lot of planning, support and reassurance to feel safe enough to try out a new experience and meet new people.
- Clear, visual information about what to expect can help people feel more confident about joining a group or activity. It can really help when an activity is flexible and welcomes friends and family members coming along to support a person who is very anxious.

Please do share the details of our open meeting to anyone you think may be interested.

The meeting will be hosted by members of the Autism by Experience team who have experiences of being very isolated in the past.

We have attached the meeting flyer to the email with these notes sent to the West Surrey mailing list.

Here is the link for the meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88540258810>

A focus on very isolated people

As part of the Autism Friendly Communities project we are keen to focus on the needs of autistic children, young people and adults who are very isolated.

What we mean when we say 'very isolated'

There are autistic people who enjoy a more solitary life, and whilst others may feel they are isolated, they are fairly happy.

There are also children, young people and adults for whom the outside world does not feel safe and they spend most, if not all, their time at home.

They would like to connect with others but issues like anxiety, fatigue and burnout have a huge impact on them.

We have set up an online meeting on Tuesday 25th November from 7pm to 9pm to discuss this issue.

If you are very isolated yourself, or support someone who is you are very welcome to join us. The meeting is hosted by members of the Autism by Experience team who have experience of feeling very isolated.

We will explore things like:

- Creating safe community spaces for people
- Online networks for very isolated people and their families/supporters
- Helping people to connect with others through shared interests

There is no need to book your place in person. Just click the link below to join on the meeting.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88540258810>

The meeting will take place on Zoom, and there will be no pressure on anyone to speak at the meeting - it's okay to just come along and listen. It's also okay to keep your camera off.

For more information email: ac@autismbyexperience.co.uk

A Neurodiverse Night Out



Generally, autistic people attend social activities in venues much better suited to non-autistic people.

The idea behind a Neurodiverse night out is that the venue is adapted to better suit autistic and neurodivergent people, but neurotypical friends and family are also welcome.

We are keen to set up some neurodiverse nights out.

- At our focus group discussion people generally supported the idea of a neurodiverse night out that is open to everyone, but highlighted the need for 'autistic only' spaces such as support groups.
- Some people mentioned that they'd had experiences of going to an event on their own and feeling left out as other people all seemed to know others or have come with a group. We discussed the need to have identified 'peer buddies' at a neurodiverse night out whose role would be to support those who have come on their own and don't know anyone. This is a role Autism by Experience team members have taken on at our recent supported taster sessions.
- Laura from Autism by Experience told us about Autscope which is a conference with a difference. Rather than talking to a primarily non-autistic audience about autism, this conference is specifically by and for autistic people.

[Click here](#) or use the QR code to visit the Autscope website.



- At Autscope they use a colour-coded badge system so people can visually tell others their preference for interactions. For example, a green badge indicates they would like to socialise, but have difficulty initiating. Please initiate with me - whereas a red badge means please do not initiate any interaction with me.

Glow at RHS Wisley SEN Session - Thursday 11th December 2025



The Glow winter illuminations return to RHS Garden Wisley in Woking, Surrey. They are hosting a special Glow evening adapted to have fewer visitors, minimal noise and less distractions for those with sensory needs on Thursday 11th December - 4pm – 9pm.

[Click here](#) or use the QR code to find out more. We plan to see if we can make a group booking at reduced price, as we'd like to make this one of our supported events.



Our December 2025 meetings

Our next West Surrey Autism Friendly Communities meetings will be held on Teams on:

- Update meeting - Tuesday 2nd December - 10am to 12noon
- Focus group - Wednesday 10th December - 7pm to 8.30pm



We will send the meeting Teams invitations early in November 2025.

Email Autism by Experience for more information: AFC@autismbyexperience.co.uk

