

Autism Friendly Surrey



1

Autism by Experience CIC



We are a not-for-profit Community Interest Company called Autism by Experience CIC.

www.autismbyexperience.co.uk

We have 13 paid staff, most of whom are autistic and we took over the lead role in the Autism Friendly Communities project in April 2025.

2

Our facebook Group

We have uploaded information from the mapping of inclusive activities we are doing onto our facebook group which we've recently set up.



These are word documents for now, but we are now creating some themed booklets as a more accessible way of sharing this information.

We are also on [Instagram](#) as Autism Friendly Surrey and recent posts attracted over 2000 views



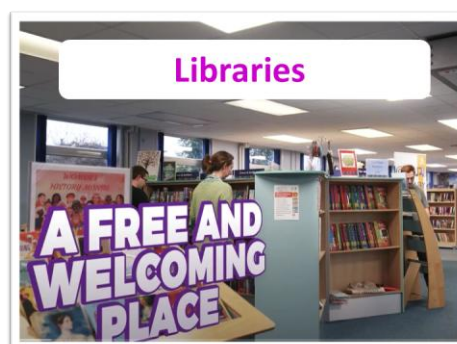
3

Themed booklets

We are creating a series of themed booklets on different types of venues and activities, highlighting details of their inclusive offers.

We are currently collating information for booklets on:

- Libraries
- Leisure centres
- Social and support groups
- Outdoor activities



4

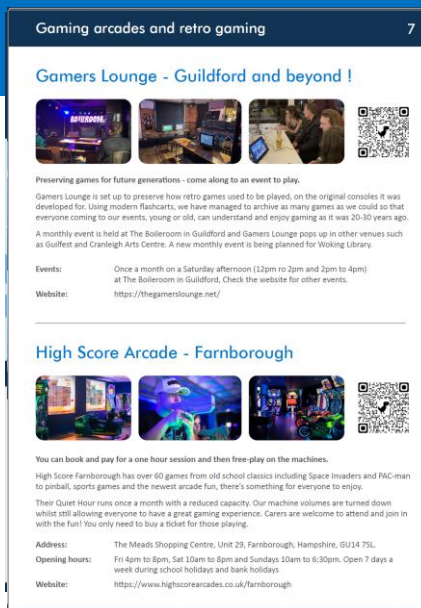
Themed booklets

We have designed three themed booklets to date:

- Supermarkets
- Where to find out information
- Games and gaming shops and events

Download these from our website:

<https://autismbyexperience.co.uk/autism-friendly-surrey>



5

What does 'Autism Friendly' mean?

Events and activities often use a wide range of terms to appeal to autistic and neurodivergent customers.

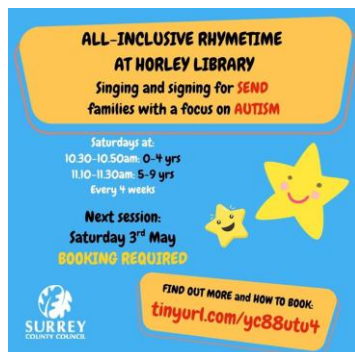
Quiet Performance
SEN activity
Inclusive session
Sensory friendly
Relaxed session
Autism Friendly



6

What does 'Autism Friendly' mean?

It helps when more detailed information is given, especially when photos are included.



7

'Autism Friendly' cinema screenings

Some autism friendly screenings are very different to others.



At a 'relaxed' performance customers understand that some people may need to move around and vocalise.



At a 'quiet' performance customers appreciate reduced capacity and a calm atmosphere.

8

Cinema survey

In the autumn we plan to circulate an online 'cinema survey' for autistic people, supporters and families.

We want to find out what would make both a relaxed screening and a quiet screening as accessible as possible in relation to:

- Booking tickets
- Arrival – environment
- Lighting
- Volume
- Adverts and trailers



9

Autistic Parents

We ran some online meetings for autistic adults in July 2025. The aim was to get autistic people views on developing peer networks.

We will be setting up a facebook group open to all parents in Surrey who are autistic – mums and dads.

We will be setting up monthly evening support group meetings for 'autistic mums' starting in early September 2025.

We can also set things up for autistic dads if there's interest.



Surrey Autistic Parents Network



As part of the Autism Friendly Communities project we are developing a support network for parents in Surrey who are autistic.

Join our Facebook group



We have set up a facebook group called **Autistic Parents Surrey – Peer Support Network**

The facebook group is for autistic parents of any gender to connect, share information and provide mutual support.

You can join if you are an autistic parent (you do not need to have a formal autism diagnosis).

Use the QR code above, or click [here](#) to find the group.

Surrey Autistic Mum's Group



We will be hosting monthly online meetings for autistic mums to share advice and experiences.

Gill and Sophie (both autistic mums) will host the meetings. The group will initially meet on the first Tuesday of each month from 7.30pm to 9pm (unless group members vote to meet on a different evening).

Our first meeting will on Tuesday 2nd September 2025 and we will be discussing sensory differences.

To join the mailing list and receive meeting invites use the QR code above or [click here](#).

If there is interest we will explore setting up an online group for autistic dads



These groups are supported by autistic members of the Autism by Experience team. For more information email us at AFC@autismbyexperience.co.uk

10

Event volunteers

We have attended several events over the summer including Guilfest, Surrey Hills Wellfest and RecoveryFest.

Many autistic people like to have a role at an event (you will often find us washing up at a party!!!).

The supported stewarding at Guilfest was a great success, people generally litter picked and gave information to customers.

We are exploring how to develop this team who could help at many local events.



11

Recent visits and meetings

The Autism by Experience team have been busy meeting organisations and visiting venues in and around West Surrey.

Recently we have connected with:

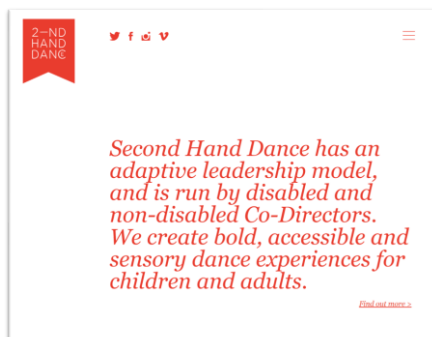
- The Guildford Institute
- Oakleaf Enterprise
- Girlguiding
- The Recovery College
- Wayfarers Rest
- Camberley Library



12

The Sticky Dance

Second Hand Dance are coming to libraries in West Surrey this autumn.



[Second Hand Dance](https://secondhanddance.co.uk)

The Sticky Dance for Sensory Groovers by Second Hand Dance

An interactive dance performance developed for home-educated, neurodivergent and/or disabled children aged 3-8 years.

Coming to Surrey Libraries this autumn, these performances are adapted for a smaller audience. The Sticky Dance fosters a relaxed and inclusive space, supporting diverse sensory and accessibility needs for children to interact with dance in their own unique way.

Two dancers' shimmy through the audience inviting you to explore freely, to stick and groove or be still, watch and listen



"The best children's performance I've ever seen - incredibly engaging and fun" Library audience, June 25



Performances in November 11.30am - 12pm

Tuesday 4 Nov at Camberley Library
Wednesday 5 Nov at Staines Library
Thursday 6 Nov at Weybridge Library
Friday 7 Nov at Farnham Library

Spaces are limited and BOOKING IS ESSENTIAL!

Click [here](https://www.eventbrite.com/) for more information and to book or search eventbrite.com / Surrey Libraries. Please note that tickets are available with a minimum donation of £1.

13

Sport in Mind

We have recently made contact with Sport in Mind.

Sport in Mind are a charity that uses sport and physical activity to improve the lives of people experiencing mental health problems.

They offer activities across Surrey, and we will be visiting one of their sessions in September to find out more and discuss how we can work together.

[Sport in Mind](https://www.sportinmind.org)



August 2025

West Surrey

"We are Sport in Mind - the charity that uses sport and physical activity to improve the lives of people experiencing mental health problems". To find out more about sessions near you, check out our Activity Map on [sportinmind.org](https://www.sportinmind.org) or contact the office on our free, confidential phone line 0300 102 1400!

No sessions on bank holidays
Monday 25th August

Day	Time	Activity	Instructor	Venue
-----	------	----------	------------	-------

Guildford Sessions

Tues	2:30-3:30pm	Yoga	Loni	Sequoia Yoga, 89 Woodbridge Road, Guildford, GU14QD
Thurs	2-3pm	Football	Simon	Astro-turf pitches (AGP1 Pitch A), Surrey Sports Park, Richard Meyjes Road, Guildford, GU2 7AD
Fri	11-12pm	Bowling	Amy/Steve	Guildford Spectrum Leisure Complex, Parkway, Guildford, GU1 1UP
Fri	2-3pm	Tai Chi	Debbie	Information Kiosk, Dapdune Wharf, Wharf Road, Guildford, Surrey, GU1 4RR

Camberley Sessions

Mon	5:15 - 6:15pm	Badminton	Mieko	Camberley Places Leisure, Grand Avenue, Camberley GU15 3QH (Sports Hall 2)
-----	---------------	-----------	-------	--

Woking Sessions

Tues	3-4pm	Yoga	Shena	Eastwood Leisure Centre, Albert Drive, Sheerwater, Woking, GU21 5RF (Studio 2)
Weds	2-3pm	Badminton & Table Tennis	Jay	Woking Leisure Centre Astro Turf, Woking Park, Kingfield Road, Woking, GU22 9BA

No session on 15/08 & 22/08

14

Gamers Lounge events

Gamers Lounge run a monthly Saturday afternoon retro gaming event at **The Boileroom in Guildford**. Generally, they host two 2-hour sessions in an afternoon.

They also run regular events at Cranleigh Arts Centre during school holidays. Their next Cranleigh event is on Thursday 28th August which is already sold out.

A new monthly Saturday event is being planned at Woking Library

[Gamers Lounge website](#)



15

Girlguiding Connect

We met with the Inclusion Lead at Girlguiding Surrey this week.

Girlguiding launched their Connect initiative in 2024.

Connect is a virtual offer for girls who are unable to attend face to face meetings.

[Girlguiding Connect](#)

Girlguiding

VIRTUAL MEETINGS
£7 per month

An alternative way to take part in the fun and adventure of Girlguiding for girls aged 4 – 15 who are unable to attend face-to-face meetings for health or social reasons. Previous membership is not necessary.

All girls have a home in Girlguiding - wherever they are, and wherever they are in the UK. We are Girlguiding Connect district - LoSER.

Rainbows for 4 – 7 year olds Mondays & Thursdays	Brownies for 7 – 10 year olds Mondays & Thursdays	Guides for 10 – 14 year olds Mondays & Wednesdays	Rangers for 14 – 18 year olds Thursdays
---	--	--	--

Email: connectdistrict@girlguidinglaser.org.uk
Join: bit.ly/goinggconnect
Instagram/TikTok: @ggconnectdistrict Facebook: Girlguiding Connect district

16

LinkAble

Inclusive Games 2025

It's an inclusive event with chance to try Boccia, Wheels for All accessible cycling, Indoor Cricket, Golf, and Walking Football.

In the afternoon there is chance to compete for a medal.

Everyone is welcome and we will have lots of volunteers around to help people join in.

[LinkAble Inclusive Games](#)

LinkAble Inclusive Games 2025!

Come and play some accessible sports in this friendly charity event!

You can play:

- Boccia
- Table Cricket
- Accessible Cycling
- Walking Football

Disabled and non-disabled people are very welcome.

The games are for all!

Scan the QR code or visit www.linkable.org.uk to find out more.

August 26th
At Woking Sportsbox
£10 entry
Carers free



Registered Charity 1119596

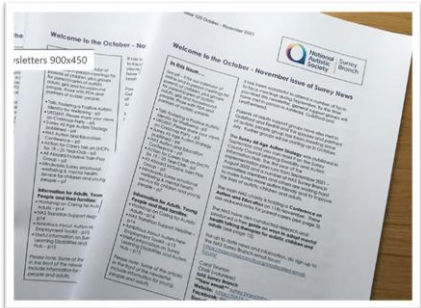


National Autistic Society Surrey Branch support groups for families



The Surrey Branch host regular support groups for parents and carers across Surrey

NAS Surrey Branch support groups enable parents or other family members of autistic children or adults to meet up and share their knowledge and experiences.



NAS Surrey Branch

- Local in-person support groups
- A monthly online support group
- Parents of Adults Group
- Parents of Girls Group
- Spouses and Partners Group, Guildford
- Parents of children and young people with PDA

Support and social groups

We have been mapping the range of support and social groups for autistic adults in Surrey. Here we will focus on groups in West Surrey.



We have discovered that whilst there is a mix of different groups, many are unsupported, and it can be hard for people to find out about them.

Most unsupported groups don't have a process for recruiting new members.

Guildford Aspire Group

This group is facilitated by The National Autistic Society (NAS).



It's for adults of all ages and meets in Guildford on the first Thursday of every month.

We have been invited to talk to the group about our work at their October 2025 meeting.

Other NAS Groups

The Godalming Women's Group and the All Surrey Virtual Support Group are not currently meeting due to staffing issues, but they are recruiting.

[Go to the NAS Surrey Branch for more information](#)

Guildford Autism & ADHD Friendly Meetup

This group is run by members themselves without funding.



[Go to their MeetUp page for more information](#)

This is a free group for people who live with autism and ADHD.

They meet once a month in a Guildford pub function room on a Saturday afternoon to catch up and arrange other activities between members.

Interested people need to set up a free MeetUp account to join the group.

21

Camberley Group

This group used to meet fortnightly in Camberley but couldn't afford to pay for room hire once they were unsupported.

We met with the group earlier this month and are supporting them to find a new venue to meet in and also develop a system for recruiting new members.



22

Guildford Young Adults Group

This group is run by members themselves but was supported by The National Autistic Society until 2024.

Group members meet fortnightly on a Weds evening in a pub in Guildford.

We met with the group earlier this month and are supporting them to develop a system for recruiting new members and organising some activities.



23

Aldershot Group

This group is run by members themselves but was supported by The National Autistic Society until 2024.

Since running the group themselves, members meet once a month in a pub for a social evening, and a fortnightly board games event.

The group members are currently discussing recruiting new members



24

Gamers Lounge social

This group is run by the Gamers Lounge team and focuses on discussing all aspects of gaming.

The group meet online every Wednesday from 12noon to 1pm, and once a month some members meet up in Guildford for lunch on a Weds in place of the online group.

The group are open to new members, but don't currently advertise the group.



25

Catalyst

We plan to make contact with Catalyst to find out more about the Autism Support Group they offer.

This group is run as part of the Community Connections Service offering support & wellbeing groups across Surrey.

Monisha attended once, there were around 10 people who took turns to share their experiences. It was heavy discussions.

[Community Connections website](#)

Autism Support Group
Group A – 12th & 26th
Group B – 5th & 19th
6:00pm – 7:30pm

Where? Online



26

Different groups for different people

People have very different reasons for wanting to join a social or support group.

I want to meet up with other autistic people to talk about being autistic.



I want to make more friends, maybe to go to the gym with or even for walks.



I want to meet up with other young adults to go out and have fun.



I enjoy playing complicated board games and would like to meet others who also enjoy this.

27

Introducing people to groups

The more 'in common' group members have the better a group tends to run. If a new member has very different needs this can make things tricky.



I ran an unsupported group and two people with significant mental health difficulties ended up dominating the group and a lot of members left.

I went to a board games night, but the games were too complicated for me.



We are an informal group that meets in restaurants – we had to ban a new member, who got very drunk.



28

From individual groups to a network

We are currently collating information about social and support groups in West Surrey, and will be producing a handout



The handout will have detailed information about each group (that wants to be included).

It will include a guide as to who each group is aimed at and what happens at the group. Some groups may keep their venue and dates private until they have screened potential new members.

Connecting individuals is an important step in making communities more inclusive.

29

Support for group supporters

We are planning to continue to offer support to people who informally run social and support groups, or who are interested in setting up a group.



We will be setting up a network for people running support and social groups in the autumn.

This will encourage peer support and we can offer advice where needed.

30

Quarterly get togethers

We are working on an idea to develop a quarterly get together for autistic adults in West Surrey.



We are discussing setting up a 'bowling evening' with Guildford Spectrum.

The Autism by Experience team would help run the event and be there to give people information about other groups and activities in the West Surrey area.

31

People who are very isolated

We are keen to focus time on considering those children and adults who may be very isolated.



There are people who rarely leave the house and find the outside world stressful and overwhelming.

We had a discussion with some families about 'safe spaces' for very isolated people, and members of our team met this month to explore what we might be able to do to connect with very isolated people.

32

People who are very isolated

It's important that we recognise that some autistic people are happy with a fairly solitary life, but that others are isolated due to things like anxiety and burnout.

My son can't currently manage demands and is out of school. He wants to go out, but his anxieties are too intense.



I'm in my 30's and live with my parents. I hardly leave my room, but I do connect with others through online gaming.



I've been off work with burnout for 6 months. The thought of going out and doing anything is so overwhelming.



After leaving college I lost touch with my friends, so I feel pretty lonely these days.

33

What we think is important

Some of the Autism by Experience team have personal experiences of being out of education or being very isolated.

- It's important to connect with people through their interests
- People need to feel safe
- Measure progress by inchstones rather than milestones
- Help people work out what an ideal life might look like
- Supporters need to understand autism



One idea is to perhaps have a meeting for people supporting someone who is very isolated to share ideas – families can become isolated themselves.

34



The dates for our October 2025 meetings are:

Tuesday 7th October - 10am to 12noon

Thursday 23rd October – 7pm to 8.30pm