

Autism Friendly Surrey



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News from East Surrey

We are keen to hear from you about any activities, events, developments happening in East Surrey related to autism friendly communities.

We will update you about the work we've been doing in East Surrey since November.

Please feel free to share any updates or news you may have.



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After School Multi-Sports Club

PMActive have launched this new offer at Horley Leisure Centre.

An inclusive after school club for all regardless of experience or ability levels. This relaxed, fun focused club will give those attending the opportunity to take part in a range of sports and activities.

- Term time Wednesdays
- 4.30pm to 5.30pm
- £3.50 a session



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Relaxed Adventure Climb

The Light in Redhill now offer their Relaxed Adventure Climb sessions on a Monday afternoon / evening.

Our Relaxed climbing sessions are open to all but ideal for youngsters and adults with learning difficulties and those that enjoy a more sensory-friendly environment.

They provide a fun and social way to get active while offering quieter, slower paced sessions that are limited to a smaller group size. We have mixed aged, adult-only and junior-only sessions.

[Relaxed Adventure Climb](#)



16:00	16
SEN Junior	
17:30	16
SEN	
19:40	16
SEN Adult	

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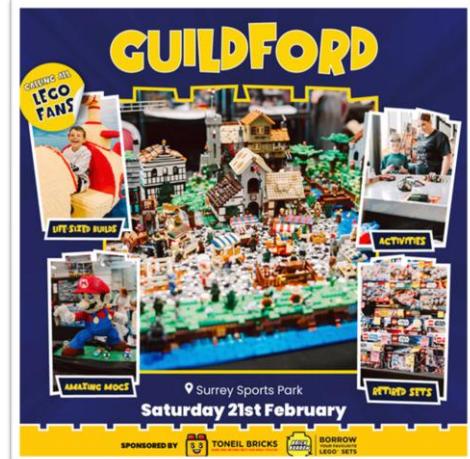
Lego Event - Guildford

National Brick Events are coming to the Surrey Sports Park on Saturday 21st February, from 10am to 4pm.

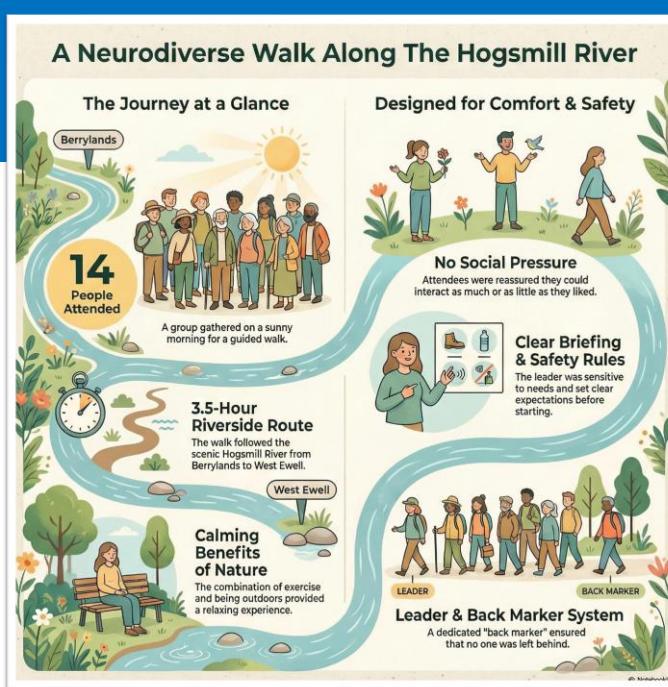
Rare sets, thousands of minifigures, and lots of LEGO to play with!

The first few hours of each event can be quite lively, but it tends to become much calmer from 2pm onwards. If you require a quieter environment, consider arriving later in the day.

[National Brick Events](#)



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We were contacted by Mark who is a member of Kingston Ramblers and has been piloting a series of neurodiverse walks.

We helped to promote the walk to neurodivergent people in Surrey.

We hope there will be further similar walks in the future.

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Grow and Glow

Grow and Glow is for women who are finding things hard and want somewhere supportive to go.

There is no expectation to share more than you want to. You can talk, listen, or just sit in the space. You do not need a diagnosis. You do not need to be in crisis.

There are groups in Epsom, Guildford, Reigate and Woking.

[Grow and Glow](#)



**WOMENS PEER
Grow and Glow
SUPPORT GROUP**
IT'S OK NOT TO BE OK

**JOIN US
EVERY WEDNESDAY
19:00 - 20:30**

VISIT OUR WEBSITE FOR LOCATIONS:
WWW.GROWANDGLOW.ORG.UK
[@GROW_AND_GLOW_XO](https://www.instagram.com/grow_and_glow_xo)

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LGBTQ+

We are supporting Justine who was keen to set up a social meet up for LGBTQ+ neurodivergent adults.

The first meeting is on Monday 26th January 2026 in a warm and cosy boathouse at the Weyside pub in Guildford.

For more information email Jo at

AFC@autismbyexperience.co.uk



LGBTQ+ Neurodivergent Social Meet Up

A social meet up for LGBTQ+ autistic and neurodivergent adults aged 18 or over

 Monday 26th January 2026 from 7pm to 9pm
The Weyside Millbrook, Guildford, GU1 3XJ

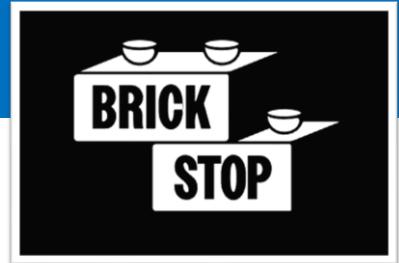
Jo and Justine will be hosting the meetup, and will be there from 6.45pm to welcome everyone and help people settle in.

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Brick Stop Lego Cafe

We are planning to run a taster session in February at Brick Stop Lego Café in Caterham for 16+ people.



Brick Stop is London's first LEGO® cafe. Aimed at adults and kids who find fast paced and loud environments overstimulating.

Brick Stop is a pay per hour calming space that offers over 100 LEGO® sets to choose from.

[Brick Stop Cafe](#)

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Cinemas

This week, we are launching our inclusive cinema survey, where people can give their views about different types of 'autism friendly' screenings.



Relaxed performances - where it's okay for people to move around and make noise if they need to. Usually aimed at children.

Quiet performances - where noise and lighting are adapted for a calm experience. Usually aimed at adults

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Focus group feedback

We have discussed cinema screenings at our evening focus groups, and several themes have emerged.

The foyer at the cinema can be very noisy and busy.

Subtitles can help people process the spoken word, though would be distracting for others.

It would help if cinemas published exactly what time the film ends to help people plan their journey home.

Why are the adverts and trailers often louder than the film !



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Sport and leisure in East Surrey



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Sport in Mind

We have worked with Sport in Mind to design a flyer aimed at autistic and neurodivergent adults.

It includes direct links to help people to sign up and find activities in their local area.

We plan to send this flyer out on our mailing lists this month

Sport in Mind



Sport in Mind is the leading mental health sports charity in England and Wales.
Our mission is to transform the nation's mental health through sport

www.sportinmind.org

Sport in Mind run a wide range of free adult sessions for people aged 17+ experiencing mental health problems. These free sessions are run at local venues such as leisure centres.

Surrey sessions include:

- Football
- Yoga
- Bowling
- Badminton
- Table tennis
- Pickleball

**Free
Drop in
sessions**

How to join Sport in Mind

Autistic people experiencing mental health problems can join Sport in Mind. Sport in Mind's definition of mental health problems include 'anxiety' and 'isolated / lonely'.



[Click here](#) or use the QR Code to join Sport in Mind - you will need to fill in their online form.

[Click here](#) to see the latest Surrey timetables

[Click here](#) to search for activities using the Sport in Mind map

Sessions are drop-in, so there is no need to book ahead. All equipment is provided - although you can bring your own. Sessions are led by friendly and approachable coaches, supported by enthusiastic volunteers and open to all abilities - You can also bring a supporter with you.

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Inclusive Leisure Centres

We have been working on a visual story for Dorking Sports Centre. This will give people information in advance about things like:

- Arrival and parking
- Booking activities
- Using the lockers
- Inclusive sessions
- Changing rooms



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Inclusive Leisure Centres

Once the Dorking Sports Centre visual story is ready we plan to design a 'Guide to being inclusive' for all leisure centres in Surrey, with tips on things like:

- Quiet sessions
- Dedicated quiet areas
- Designing a visual story
- Taster sessions (try before you buy)
- Beginners-only sessions



Active Surrey have done some great work around inclusivity



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Active Surrey

Active Surrey work in a targeted way to decrease inactivity levels, to challenge health inequalities and to create a happier, healthier and more active Surrey.

Their 2021 survey of 351 parents and carers and 122 professionals found that:

- 74% of children said "Yes, I would love to increase the sport and physical activity I do"
- The two main barriers were children's anxiety about doing activities and parents' fear of judgement by other children/parents

[Summary of research](#)



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Inclusive Leisure Centres

We are keen to design a 'sensory friendly' exercise class for adults and pilot this in 2026. The class could be based on existing classes, with adjustments such as:

- Reduced capacity
- Lower volume music
- Mood lighting
- Quiet area to go to for a break
- Supportive instructor
- Clear information in advance



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Training in 2026

We have planned a series of online workshops for businesses and services starting in February 2026

There are three types of workshops

- 1.5 hr
- 2.5 hr
- 4 hr

The details are on the flyer on our website, and we have had a good take up with over 80 people signed up so far.

[Training flyer](#)

FREE TRAINING ON AUTISM AND NEURODIVERGENCE FOR BUSINESSES AND SERVICES




Online workshops to help your business or service better understand the needs of autistic and neurodivergent people

THESE WORKSHOPS WILL BE DELIVERED BY AUTISTIC ADULTS SHARING THEIR LIVED EXPERIENCES

The Autism by Experience training team are informed by the latest research and are keen to share knowledge about approaches and adjustments that will help make your service or business as inclusive as possible - bringing you new customers.

THERE ARE THREE WORKSHOP OPTIONS

LEVEL 1 = 1.5 HOURS

A short introductory workshop aimed at people working in places like shops and cafes. Exploring both sensory sensitivities and communication differences.

LEVEL 2 = 2.5 HOURS

A longer workshop suited to people working in places like leisure centres, cinemas and libraries. Exploring a wider range of topics than in Level 1.

LEVEL 3 = 4 HOURS

Our most in-depth workshop, suited to community groups who offer support to autistic and neurodivergent people. Exploring key topics in much more detail.

Signing up is easy - Click here to go to our online sign up form or use the QR code



Autism in Surrey





Autism by Experience
Community Interest Company

For more information email: [AFC@autismbyexperience.co.uk](mailto:afc@autismbyexperience.co.uk) or visit www.autismfriendlysurrey.org.uk

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Training in 2026

Organisations that have signed up for the workshops include:

- The Quinnell School of Blacksmithing
- Dose of Nature
- YMCA East Surrey
- British Red Cross
- Gpims
- Matrix Trust
- Africa Community Surrey & Sussex
- Family Centres
- G Live
- Domestic Abuse Services
- Active Surrey
- Local Councils
- Community Connections services
- NHS
- Churches
- Arts venues



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Making travel more accessible

Network Rail - autism friendly guide to travelling by train.

This is a really useful guide to travelling by train, created by Network Rail in partnership with The National Autistic Society.

[Autism friendly guide to travelling by train](#)



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Aubin Travel App

ATLAS are the Surrey County Council Youth participation team.

They recently partnered with Aubin, a free travel app designed specifically to support neuroinclusive transport planning.

ATLAS conducted a three-day pilot across different areas of Surrey, followed by a focus group with the app developers.



[Click here to go to the video](#)

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Peer networks

We are continuing to support social groups that are run by autistic people themselves, to help them be open to new members if appropriate.



A key piece of work we are doing is developing a mental health distress handout that group leaders can have copies off to signpost people to services like safe havens if they are in distress.

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East Surrey Young Adults

We are working with young adults in East Surrey to further develop opportunities for young adults aged 18 to 39yrs.



The existing group, now called Neurospicy Ninjas, are keen to start offering a wider variety of social meet-ups and be open to new members by Spring 2026.

They have a facebook group and we are working with them to review the group rules.

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Late diagnosed women

We are working with two women in East Surrey (Epsom and Banstead areas) who are keen to host regular social meet-ups.



We are helping them to find a suitable venue for meet-ups on a late afternoon on a Sunday.

We've visited a couple of pubs/caf  bars that seem to be quite quiet at that time of day on a Sunday.

We will support the group initially and the two women are confident to host ongoing.

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Ongoing development

Autism Friendly Surrey is currently funded until the end of March 2026. We are waiting to hear about any future funding.

East Surrey and West Surrey will start to transition to become two unitary councils from April 2026.

Whilst things are uncertain, we will consolidate our work by end March 2026, and not start new initiatives until the funding situation is clear.



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Very isolated people

Our online meeting on the evening of Tuesday 25th November was a great success with 24 people attending.

The Autism by Experience team will continue to collate information about specific support that may be available for children and adults who are very isolated.

We will be hosting a follow on meeting on Tuesday 27th January 2026 from 7pm to 9pm.



Autism Friendly Surrey
A focus on very isolated people
Notes from our November 2025 meeting

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.



Common themes

24 people joined our online open meeting on Tuesday 25th November.

Attendees, including several members of the Autism by Experience team, shared their experience of feeling very isolated, and some common themes emerged.



Autistic children and young people can be vulnerable to experiencing burnout/fatigue due to trying to cope in overwhelming environments and 'masking' for long periods (typically school). Adults can experience similar difficulties in the workplace.

Socialising and connecting through shared interests - People often find it easier to socialise through an activity - where the focus is on the activity rather than just chatting. Ideas like 'gig buddies' could be helpful.

The importance of family support - Families are often a great source of support to help people to access their communities. At events and groups we support it's common for a parent or sibling to accompany a person until they are more confident. Family support needs to be highly valued.



A common experience is for a young person to have a network of friends and acquaintances at school and college and for these relationships to fade after leaving school/college. Some young adults struggle to maintain relationships once they no longer see people day to day.

Socialising and connecting through shared interests - People often find it easier to socialise through an activity - where the focus is on the activity rather than just chatting. Ideas like 'gig buddies' could be helpful.



Autistic people are particularly vulnerable to anxiety and can find the outside world unpredictable and overwhelming. Some people do not feel safe going out on their own and do not have anyone who can support them when going out.

Some people may have had experiences of bullying/abuse or of social activities not going well in the past.

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Active Wellbeing Coaches Programme

Active Wellbeing Coaching to support individuals who are 18 years old and above with a mental health condition / Neurodivergent diagnosis.

Our services are based in hubs across East Surrey, with our main team located in Reigate.

We are flexible in delivering coaching and workshops, whether online, face-to-face, indoors, in nature, or at your favorite locations.

[Active Wellbeing Coaching](#)



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Our January focus group

We will be hosting a focus group meeting later this month to discuss topics from this meeting and plan further events.

We will meet online using Teams on Wednesday 21st January from 6.30pm to 8pm.

Topics for discussion include:

- Sport and Leisure
- Health services
- Support and social groups



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The dates for our March 2026 meetings are:

Tuesday 10th March - 10am to 12noon

Wednesday 18th March – 6.30pm to 8pm