

Autism Friendly Surrey



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Surrey Libraries



We are working closely with libraries across Surrey.

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Autism Friendly Libraries

Surrey libraries are keen to make their services inclusive as possible for autistic and neurodivergent people.

We are working with the library teams to design an 'autism friendly guide to Surrey Libraries'.

This is in development, but we have made progress and will soon have a draft ready to go through with Library Service Managers.

Surrey Libraries

Surrey Libraries are working hard to be safe, inclusive spaces for autistic and neurodivergent people.



Version 1a - published November 2025

This handout has been produced as part of Autism Friendly Communities Surrey.

The project is funded by Surrey County Council.

The team from Autism by Experience CIC is leading the project.



Autism in Surrey

Working to improve the lives of autistic people in Surrey

We will be keeping this handout up-to-date, so please do let us know if anything needs editing.

You can contact us:

Email: ARC@autismbyexperience.co.uk

Visit our website: www.autismfriendly.surrey.org.uk



Autism by Experience
Community Interest Company

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Gamers Lounge

Hello, my name is Andrew and I run Gamers Lounge, a retro gaming enterprise based out of Guildford.

We host a network of events at venues centres in Surrey including arts centres and social hubs where people can buy a ticket to play a wide range of retro games.

What started as an interest has now developed into a business and Gamers Lounge has been booked for a number of festivals and private parties over the past couple of years.



[Gamers Lounge Website](http://GamersLoungeWebsite)

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Gamers Lounge

Over the years we have collected and preserved a wide range of original games consoles. You can play a wide range of games on each console.



We have also developed a more portable Raspberry Pi emulator option

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Gamers Lounge

Gamers Lounge has a social mission:

- To bring people together through the medium of gaming
- To preserve the technology and aesthetics of the arcade experience
- To provide a safe, inclusive space for all generations to enjoy the retro 80's to Y2K gaming aesthetic



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Gamers Lounge

We host regular events at:

- The Boileroom in Guildford
- Cranleigh Arts Centre

We have just started a regular monthly event at Woking Library.

Sessions are open to both children and adults and parents seem to enjoy showing their children the games they used to play.



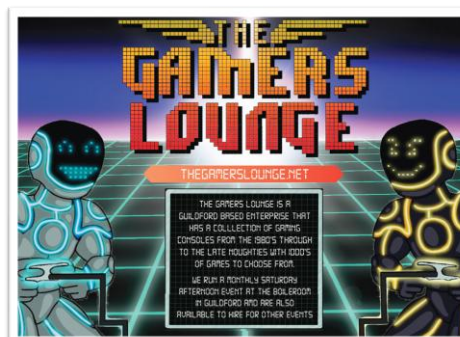
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Gamers Lounge

During the pandemic we started a weekly online retro gaming meet up to help people stay connected.

The group still meets every week on a Wednesday lunchtime for an hour and we share gaming related news. Once a month the group meets for lunch in Guildford rather than online.

Gamers Lounge is a community service rather than simply a business. Many gaming communities are vulnerable to toxicity, and we aim to counter that.



[Gamers Lounge Website](http://THEGAMERSLOUNGE.NET)

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Farncombe Community Garden

After presenting at the Guildford Aspire Group we were invited to Farncombe Community Garden.

We attended one of the garden's open sessions, which they run three times a week and received a lovely warm welcome from everyone there.

We were impressed with how peaceful and relaxing the garden environment was, as well as its accessibility; with gravel pathways and raised flower beds. We can understand why a number of autistic people already enjoy attending the garden regularly.



[Farncombe Community Garden](#)

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Farncombe Community Garden



We are looking forward to working with the community garden to create a visual story for their website, provide their Trustees and volunteers with Autism awareness training and work together to run an Autism friendly gardening session in the Spring.

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Neurodiverse Walk

We supported a walk organised by Mark from Kingston Ramblers.

The walk was a river walk from Surbiton to West Ewell. Mark led the walk and another Kingston Rambler was the back marker.

14 people joined the walk and it was calming to be out in nature with a structured group.

We will be exploring supporting future walks.



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Coffee and Cake

We are hosting our 3rd Coffee and Cake social meet up at Art and Grind on Sun 18th January.

These meet ups have been very well attended, with around 14 people coming each time. We have use of the upstairs room.

The venue can be busy, so too noisy for some. People can bring their own art/craft projects. We are keen to develop this into an independent social meet up.



Coffee and Cake
Social for autistic adults aged 18+



Join us for a friendly, relaxed afternoon at Art + Grind coffee shop and gallery



Sunday 18th January from 3pm to 5pm

Art + Grind
165 High Street
Guildford, Surrey
GU1 3AJ



Jo, Gill and Laura from the Autism by Experience team will be there from 2.45pm to welcome everyone and help people settle in.

Details of the meet up

- On arrival buy yourself a drink and come to the meeting room upstairs where it's quieter. (see middle photo above)
- Come along for as little or as long as you feel comfortable with
- Please feel free to bring a friend or supporter
- We will have some adult colouring pages, and you can bring your own art/craft project to work on if you like - there's no pressure to interact more than you want to

How to book your place



To let us know if you plan to come you can email us, or comment on the event on our facebook page (search for Autism Friendly Surrey or use the QR Code)

Email Jo at: AFC@autismbyexperience.co.uk



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Travelling by Train

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.

We have added a link to this guide from the Visual Stories section of our website.

[Autism Friendly Surrey – Visual Stories](#)



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High Score Arcade

High Score Arcade in Farnborough run a regular Quiet Hour on a Sunday morning.

We are planning to organise a taster session at the arcade on Sunday 15th February 2026.

We will promote this in January.

High Score SEN Quiet Hour

Our Quiet Hour runs once a month with a reduced capacity to ensure that High Score really is "Free-Play fun for Everyone!".
Our machine volumes are turned down whilst still allowing everyone to have a great gaming experience. Carers are welcome to attend and join in with the fun!

BOOK NOW

Upcoming SEN Quiet Hour dates:

- 16th November
- 14th December
- 11th January 2026
- 15th February 2026
- 29th March 2026

[High Score Arcade - Farnborough](#)

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Inclusion Live 2026

Since 2022, Youth Sport Trust have hosted Inclusion Live Week .

This is a series of virtual webinars aimed at equipping practitioners with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to deliver meaningful and inclusive experiences for young people with SEND.

Inclusion Live 2026 will take place from 26–30 January 2026, featuring six webinars throughout the week.



Inclusion Live Week

[Inclusion Live](#)

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Inclusive Cricket - Grayshott

Duncan Willows oversees the Inclusive Cricket Super 1s Cricket | Grayshott Cricket Club

On Monday evenings from 6 to 7, catering for 12 to 25s.

Numbers for these sessions have dropped, so if you do know of any young people who are interested in Cricket, please do mention this!



[Inclusive Cricket Super 1s](#)

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Youth activities

We have mapped the wide range of youth groups and activities across Surrey.

This information is on our website along with some mapping we have done to let people know about inclusive Christmas events across Surrey.

[Mapping Inclusive activities](#)

Autism Friendly Communities Surrey
Christmas events and activities

Autism Friendly Surrey
Community events, whilst supporting communities to be more inclusive for autistic and neurodivergent people.

Shows and pantomimes

Jack and the Beanstalk at The Leatherhead Theatre
The Leatherhead Theatre, 7 Church Street, Leatherhead, KT22 8DN.
Thursday 11 December at 8pm.
Revised performance of Leatherhead's Panto, Jack and the Beanstalk.
[Jack And The Beanstalk 2025 - The Leatherhead Theatre](#)

Aladdin at Camberley Theatre
Camberley Theatre, Knott Road, Camberley, GU10 3SY.
Wednesday 17 December at 8pm.
Revised performance of Camberley's Panto, Aladdin.
[Aladdin Camberley Theatre](#)

Youth Groups, Child Play Sessions and Activities

Autism Friendly Surrey
Connecting people, whilst supporting communities to be more inclusive for autistic and neurodivergent people.

The Autism by Experience team have mapped clubs, sessions and activities across Surrey. This list is broken down into East Surrey and West Surrey. We will keep this handbook updated so please do let us know anything you think should be added or updated. Please just email us on: [Email: info@autismbyexperience.co.uk](mailto:info@autismbyexperience.co.uk)
Version 10 - November 2025

Surrey Wide

Surrey Libraries
Libraries across Surrey offer a range of inclusive activities for children and young people, including:

- Sensory Rhymetime sessions
- Autism Friendly Lego Clubs
- Craft activities
- SEN Story and Play sessions

Each library advertises their events on their pages on the Surrey County Council website. Use the link below to find your local library and see what events they offer.
[Find your local library](#)

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Adult social and support groups







We are keen to help people to find the right group for them.

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Adult social and support groups

We have collated information about social and support groups on our new website

Current groups open to new members

			
<p>Guildford Autism and ADHD Friendly Meet Up</p>	<p>Autism Friendly Night Out - Activity Group (Redhill)</p>	<p>National Autistic Society Aspire Groups</p>	<p>The Autism Reference Group</p>
<p>This is a free group for people who are autistic and/or have ADHD</p> <p>We meet in Guildford once a month on a Saturday afternoon to catch up and arrange other activities between us. The group organise their meetings via the Meet-It!</p>	<p>The free group runs from 7pm to 9pm on the first and third Monday of each month at The Light in Redhill.</p> <p>On arrival people join us upstairs in the red room and can sign up for an activity such as howline crooks.</p>	<p>The National Autistic Society (NAS) are funded to support a range of free support groups.</p> <p>Email: aspiregroups@nas.org.uk for more information. You need to register with the NAS to join their groups.</p>	<p>The Autism Reference Group is a group that has been set up to give the opportunity for autistic adults to have input into the Autism Strategy and the work that is being done to implement the strategy in Surrey.</p>

[Autism Friendly Surrey – social and support groups](#)

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National Autistic Society Groups

The National Autistic Society are re-starting their Surreywide online group and their Women's Support Group.

Women's Support Group - For autistic women of all ages.

1st Wednesday of each month, 6.30 – 8.30 pm. Until March 2026 meetings will be online. After that they will alternate between online meetings and face-to-face in Godalming.

All Surrey virtual social group - For autistic men and women over 18.

Meets online on the 3rd Wednesday of each month 6.30pm – 8.00pm

[National Autistic Society Aspire Groups](#)



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Support and social groups

We have been visiting current social and support groups and offering support to groups run by members themselves, including:

- Designing posters
- Setting up processes for new members to join
- Discussing safeguarding issues

We are keen to support the growth of this network



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Support group v social meetup

We've been discussing the difference between a 'Support Group' and a 'Social Meetup'.

A Support Group is a facilitated group where people discuss issues related to their personal experiences.

A Social Meetup is more informal. People may drop in to meet others and the focus is on having a social time with people with similar experiences.

We are working with interested people to help them decide what kind of group they want to offer.



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Support group v social meetup

We have been developing some basic guidelines for these different types of group.

A Support Group

- Members register to join the group (usually via an online form)
- Emergency contact information is held by group leaders
- Group leaders have a 'mental health distress' signposting handout for members and are DBS checked



A Social Meetup

- Operates more as a drop in
- Venue may not be a private room
- No emergency contact information is collected, but event hosts will have a 'mental health distress' signposting handout and are DBS checked

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Groups we are supporting in West Surrey

Camberley Autism Group

This is a support group that meets once a month on a Wednesday evening in Camberley. The group currently hire a small meeting room in a town centre church.

To open the group up to new members we are helping them design an online joining form, group rules, mental health signposting handout and trying to find a permanent base with a larger room.



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Groups we are supporting in West Surrey

LGBTQ+ Neurodivergent Social Meet Up

This is a [social meetup](#) that plans to meet once a month on a Monday evening in Guildford. They will meet in a room in a pub.

Plans for this social meet up are at an early stage and we are meeting with the person keen to set it up in early December to discuss what support they need and we can offer.



We are also meeting with two women keen to run meet ups for late diagnosed women

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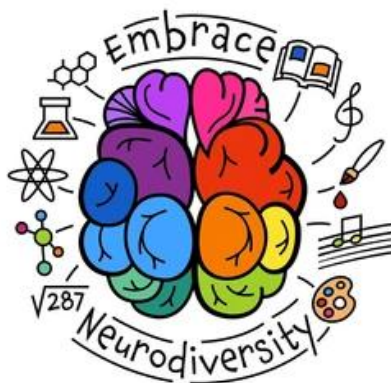
A Neurodiverse Night Out

We are developing the idea of a 'Neurodiverse Night Out' and have had discussions about what this might look like.

An evening that is open to everyone, but set up to consider the needs of neurodivergent people.

Bring your neurotypical friends and family !

A quieter, calmer sensory experience doesn't make an activity inaccessible for those not neurodivergent.



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Young Adults

One theme that has emerged strongly from our work since April 2025 is the potential for people to connect with others through their interests.

We are also aware that many autistic young adults can find it difficult to maintain friendships after they leave college where they see their friends regularly.

We are exploring developing a peer network for young adults in Surrey, starting in East Surrey. This idea is at a very early stage of development.



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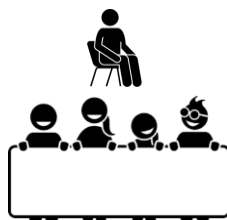
Developing Peer Networks

We are working to support the development of peer networks and activities – with a focus on safety.



Supported Events

Where an event host is present with the group for the activity



Semi- Supported Events

Where an event host is nearby and 'on duty' for support if needed



Unsupported Events

Where young adults organise their own activities

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Very isolated people

We hosted an online meeting on the evening of Tuesday 25th November to discuss connecting with children and adults who are very isolated.

This meeting was open to all and hosted by our team members who have experience of being very isolated.

It was great that 24 people in total attended the meeting, and we will be writing up the meeting notes early in December.



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 advance, just click the link below to join on the evening:

<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: afc@autismbyexperience.co.uk



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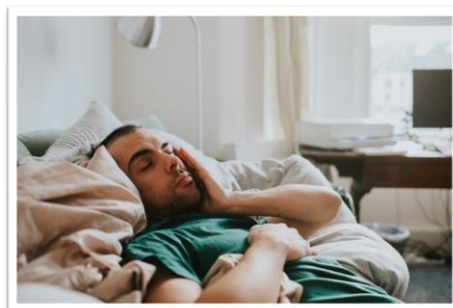
Common themes

Through the discussions we have had to date we have identified some common themes.

Burnout / fatigue

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.



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Common themes

Transitions

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 dwindle after they leave school/college.

Some young adults struggle to maintain relationships once they no longer see people day to day.



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Common themes

Anxiety

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 may 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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Common themes

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.

For example, on Sunday 23rd November we supported a Neurodiverse walk in partnership with Kingston Ramblers which 14 people attended.



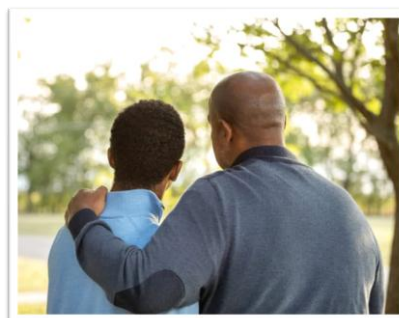
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Common themes

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.



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Common themes

Connecting with others online

Young people may have an online network of 'friends' they game with – often people not local to them.

There are online support groups for adults and also organisations offer online/virtual social opportunities such as supported gaming groups.

These online options can be a stepping stone to in-person meet ups.



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Common themes

Supported activities

There have been a few recent examples of very isolated people joining the structured and supported activities we have organised.

Knowing information in advance such as the start and end time, what will happen and who the supporters are seems to help, as well as providing this information visually.



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Training in 2026

We have planned a series of online workshops for businesses, services and community organisations 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 will be promoting these very soon.



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	LEVEL 2 • 2.5 HOURS	LEVEL 3 • 4 HOURS
A short introductory workshop suited to people working in places like shops and cafes. Exploring both sensory sensitivities and communication differences.	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.	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 or visit www.autismfriendlysurrey.org.uk

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Our December 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 10th December from 7pm to 8.30pm. Topics we will be discussing in more depth include:

- Our experiences of leisure centres
- Ideas for further developing a peer network across Surrey including connecting with very isolated people



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The dates for our February 2026 meetings are:

Tuesday 10th February - 10am to 12noon

Wednesday 18th February – 7pm to 8.30pm