

TELFORD ADULT AUTISM HUB NEWSLETTER

TELFORD AUTISM HUB (ADULT SERVICE) NEWS, UPDATES AND INFORMATION



As we embrace the vibrant energy of Summer and look forward to the warmer days, I am filled with gratitude for each and every one of you who, makes our Autism hub a place of connection, support and growth. At our Autism Hub we are committed to fostering a welcoming and inclusive environment. As a service manager I am continuously inspired by the resilience, creativity and determination from those of you who access our service.

In this newsletter we look at how we can harness some of that creativity in our art project with Weston Park. We look back at some of the social activities you have participated in and reflect on how the Hub can be part of your journey.

As we embark on this new season, lets continue to embrace the spirit of community, compassion and collaboration that defines our Autism Hub.

Best Wishes,
Lucie Roberjot

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WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO

WELLBEING WALKS

As part of the Adult Autism hubs three-month programme of activities we offer Wellness Walks. The Wellness walks are an opportunity for Clients to come together Socially as well as take part in an activity that enhances the over-all wellbeing of the individuals. Walking is a positive physical activity and the environment in which the walks take place are healthy for the mind and mental health. Activities promoting independence, consideration of cost implications and the social aspect are fundamental when it comes to the planning of our programme.



"I enjoy going on the wellness walks because I struggle to get out of the house to do this on my own. It's nice to walk with friends from the group and it's very chilled out. I find it good for my mental health in being outside and seeing what's around. Gets me a bit more motivated. It's also good for all walking abilities."



"At the beginning of Spring I was lucky enough to join an Autism Hub Wellness walk for the first time. The group was very welcoming, as always, and I had a great time. I sometimes struggle in social settings, but doing a casual walk was perfect for me. I am always most relaxed when doing an activity. The outdoors are soothing for me and I was pleased to walk some local routes that I didn't previously know. We were fortunate enough to have some lovely sunshine for the walk and it was great to get some good exercise."

I met loads of new people and, as is always the case, I had the most interesting conversations! It has been transformative to connect with others who experience the world like I do. And I am always encouraged by how supportive everyone is. It's always a shock to the system when I leave an event and realize just how different it feels re inhabiting spaces.

I'm looking forward to future wellness walks and activities. A big thank you to the autism hub team for all they do to create a safe, engaging environment and to put on activities like this."

"The wellness walk was a great opportunity to chat socially with others. At the same time, nobody was under any pressure to talk if they didn't want to. The town park is lovely and it was nice to get some gentle exercise and sit with a coffee after. There are a lot of friendly people who come to the hub and this helps to break the isolation that can come with autism. The hub is also a good place to get information and support. This can be help from a staff member or from one of the agencies who come to the monthly drop-in, or just a friendly chat with a fellow user who might be going through similar things as you. There is a good variety of interesting activities on offer, and the timetable is published in advance so you can pick and choose what you want to participate in."

MEAL AT THE WREKIN GIANT

Despite facing the challenge of accommodating a large group of 20 attendees, our outing to The Wrekin Giant pub proved to be an enriching experience. This gathering provided an opportunity for people to socialise in a welcoming environment. It also highlighted the importance of inclusive spaces where everyone feels comfortable and valued. The event fostered a sense of community and belonging among participants, emphasising the positive impact of such initiatives on mental well-being and social integration.

"Such a wonderful time today at the Wrekin Giant for lunch! It was amazing to see everyone come together in such a supportive atmosphere."

Loved seeing all the chatting and laughter fill the air."

INFORMATION, ADVICE AND GUIDANCE SESSIONS

Our once-a-month drop-ins are a huge success with our clients and are an opportunity for other services to come together in one space to offer support and guidance to adults with Autism. It's a way of our clients getting to know and build relationship's up with professionals, within a familiar environment, which supports clients when it comes to attending appointments and accessing support outside of the Autism Hub. Our drop-ins also provide a space where those attending can feel a sense of belonging and acceptance and access support from the Autism hubs team of workers over a cup of tea or coffee.

“The drop in is a relaxed places to access and build relationship with services and individuals. To stop felling isolated and services you thought you did not need.”



AUTISTIC WOMEN'S GROUP

Many participants have praised the group's significance, mentioning its role as a unique platform for women to convene, share experiences, and address various challenges in a nurturing and secure environment. The absence of similar opportunities underscores the group's importance in facilitating meaningful discussions and connections among women facing similar circumstances.

In our June Women's Group, we conducted a discussion to choose a new name for our Women's Group as we felt that AFAB was no longer appropriate. We had some amazing suggestions such as Aurchids, FantasticFems and Inclusion Initiative. However, after much deliberation and a communal vote, the group have spoken and have elected WAG (Women's Autism Group) as their new official name.



WORKSHOPS

BY SAM BARRETT

Hi all, just a quick note about our workshops that have been taking place once the month at the Autism hub. Firstly, a huge thank you to all those who have attended the workshops – your support has been incredible; and an even bigger thank you to those who have felt able and willing to contribute to the discussion, your experience and openness have been invaluable in making the workshops such a supportive and welcoming environment. Numbers have really increased recently, and we are now regularly seeing 20+ people attend for a cup of tea and a chat around a specific topic. These have included Autism and ADHD; Autism and emotions, and social communication to name just some.

Whilst it may feel uncomfortable to think about being in a group environment for some, the workshops are a relaxed and (hopefully) light-hearted way to learn more about being Autistic. There is no expectation to join in and our friendly team are always available for a private chat should you wish to discuss something away from the group.

It would be great if we could improve these events further, and if there are any changes that could be made to the way the workshops are delivered, we would love to hear from you. Here at the Autism Hub we look forward to seeing you again at the next workshop for some more lively discussions.

CHRISTMAS CRAFTS SESSION



The Christmas Craft Drop-in was well-attended. The crafts were particularly chosen for some being low sensory and some being high sensory. This was a great opportunity for people to allow themselves to have a creative outlet. The craft involved the creation of Christmas tree mason jars which showcased impressive talent. Beautiful Christmas cards and totes bags were also crafted so not only did people have an opportunity to embrace their crafty side but also take home a lovely souvenir.

CHRISTMAS LUNCH AT THE SEVERN GORGE

To raise some Christmas spirit, we arranged a Christmas meal at The Severn Gorge. This event was extremely well turned out and had a bustling atmosphere. Christmas hats were at the ready and air was filled with Christmas cheer.



SUPPER CLUB



We hosted our first Supper Club in January, with fish and chips on the menu. The social interactions during this event were extremely positive.

Supper Club is an event marketed towards people who may work 9:00am until 5:00pm and don't have the availability to attend our events during the day. Therefore, giving everyone who is a member of the Hub opportunity to engage and take part in activities.

Our Supper Club for Valentines Day was a resounding success. Decorated to give that romantic feeling. Serving traditional pie and mash, the event brought together individuals from diverse backgrounds.

What truly made the evening exceptional was the seamless communication and interaction among participants. Everyone engaged comfortably, fostering a welcoming atmosphere where connections flourished. The success of the Supper Club exemplifies the power of inclusive environments and shared experiences in building community and creating meaningful connections.

Supper Club commencing in March was a curry themed evening. Now from the feedback gathered from previous Supper Club we were told that the consensus was that they would prefer a mild curry so that is what we provided!

On the menu was chicken korma with plain or garlic naan. We even provided the starter of poppadum's and a range of dips to give that authentic Indian experience. We catered to restricted dietary requirements and provided a vegan rogan josh which we also enjoyed by the non-vegans attending!

Take a look at our upcoming menu, and book your place via. the Hub.



COOKERY COURSE

The successful completion of the first four-week group of the cookery course is not just a testament to the initiative itself but also highlights the immense potential and impact of such programs for individuals on the autism spectrum.

The choice of meal for the first week, Chilli Con Carne, demonstrates a thoughtful approach towards both practicality and versatility. By encouraging the group to freeze leftovers for later use in quesadillas, the course not only promotes efficient meal planning but also addresses the issue of food waste—an aspect often overlooked in traditional cooking classes. This approach not only teaches valuable culinary skills but also fosters a mindset of sustainability and resourcefulness.

The overwhelmingly positive response from the participants, as indicated by their feedback forms, underscores the importance of tailored programs like this within the autism community. Learning new abilities and socialising in a supportive environment are crucial for individuals on the spectrum to build confidence and independence.

Furthermore, the feedback emphasising feeling welcomed from the start is particularly significant. As feeling accepted and included in social settings can often be a challenge due to differences in communication and social interaction. Creating an environment where participants feel valued and embraced from the beginning sets the tone for a successful and enriching learning experience. It fosters a sense of belonging and encourages active engagement, ultimately maximising the benefits of the program for all involved.

Another culinary adventure we had partaken in centred around the preparation of bubble and squeak, a quintessential dish renowned for its resourceful use of leftovers. The participants not only honed their culinary skills but also fostered a supportive and inclusive environment where everyone's contributions were valued.

The collaboration among the group members, united by their shared experiences and goals, exemplifies the power of community-building within our programme.

This is an ongoing programme. If you think you would benefit from attending, please contact the Hub to sign up for our next course. A Big Thank You to Sainsburys for nominating the Hub for a Neighbourhood grant to support the running of the course.



If you would like to attend any of our social events, feel free to contact us directly on 01952 916109 or email us at admin@telfordautismhub.org.uk to book a place.

AUTISM NEWS/ARTICLES

COMMUNITY CAFÉ CORNER!

Spring has well and truly Sprung at Wellbeing – Madeley Community Café!

A couple of highlights include:

February saw Cookery Courses offered by Telford Adult's Autism Hub for their beneficiaries. A popular offer in a calm, quiet and friendly environment – here at Wellbeing Community Café.

March delivered the heavily anticipated outcome for our funding Application to the Inclusive Communities Fund: We were successful! This wonderful news provides certainty for the Café to operate reliably and scope to extend our opening hours... More information below!

April brought the exciting launch of our Pop Up Pantry! Working with Pantry Plus we are now have an offer for our customers whereby they are invited on a Tuesday 10am-12pm to have the opportunity to purchase low cost stock cupboard items from the Pantry. For just £2 a hot drink and slice of delicious home made cake can also be enjoyed during this time or alternatively a frozen home cooked meal can be taken away.



Coming up:

At the moment, the Café are in the process of completing recruitment to open during the evening. We will be hosting themed cuisine supper clubs and invite you to join us for Wellbeing Around the World. For any further information please contact through the Madeley Community Café Facebook Page or jeni_kuczynska@tandwcvcs.org.uk

POP UP PANTRY

Pantry Plus is a non-profit organisation who aim to reduce food waste and provide food at low cost to the community The Pop Up Pantry will support residents to purchase store cupboard items at a low cost as well as being able to buy a hot and drink, and a cake, or a meal to take home and heat up for £2.

Residents in the community can get a pantry plus membership (annual fee of £5) which can be used at any Pantry Plus location, including Wellbeing - Madeley Community Café on a Tuesday.



WELLBEING FOR CARERS

Autism Central has launched six webinars on looking after yourself as a parent or carer of an autistic person. Themes include the impact of self-critical thinking and what we can do to be more compassionate with ourselves. Find out more at autismcentral.org.uk/balance



GUIDING MENTAL HEALTH

BY NATIONAL AUTISTIC SOCIETY

Our new, free e-learning module, 'A guide to the mental health experiences and needs of autistic teenagers' is for parents and professionals, supporting autistic young people aged 13-18. It aims to increase understanding of autistic young people's mental health experiences and explore strategies to support them.

Visit autism.org.uk/mentalhealthmodule

FEEDBACK

As part of our ongoing service development, we are asking for feedback on your experiences of the Telford Autism Hub. Providing feedback not only gives you the opportunity to say what is working well but can also let us know where improvements can be made to further develop our hub and meet family's needs.

Please can you take a few minutes to answer some questions for us. We really do value your feedback.

<https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=vvhnBQJflkWOjxAVprfcIMsqj49RgoJKTyDvMmHj-XpURFFSV1FLTERBRkNQCQ05Q1FPT01RTkJWNY4u&origin=Invitation&channel=0>

WESTON PARK ART EXHIBITION

During the month of November, the Adults Autism Hub, a project within Telford and Wrekin CVS have been invited to exhibit Art Work that our beneficiaries have created. The Art Exhibition will take place in the Rose Patterson Gallery at Weston Park from Friday 1st November until Thursday 28th November 2024.

The gallery is open daily from 11am until 4pm free of charge to the public.

We would love for our clients to create Art centred around their response to Telford and Wrekin CVS values: Involving, Inspiring and Supporting. We would love you to incorporate nature as an underlying component of your work as well – if at all possible. Art Work can be expressed through a variety of mediums; paintings, crocheting, photography, poetry to name a few!

If you would like to find out more, please email us at admin@telfordautismhub.org.uk.



NOT RECEIVING A DIAGNOSIS OF AUTISM

Coping with not receiving an autism spectrum disorder (ASD) diagnosis can be a challenging and complex process, but there are several steps you can take to navigate this situation:

Give Yourself Time:

Receiving or not receiving an ASD diagnosis can evoke various emotions. Allow yourself time to process the news and come to terms with it.

Understand that you are still the same person as before. Autism is not an illness or disease; it's a unique way of experiencing the world.

Allow yourself to validate your feelings, they may be disappointment, frustration, or confusion. It's normal to experience a range of emotions when facing uncertainty about your identity and experiences.

Seek support, reach out to family or friends who can provide empathy, understanding and validation.

Focus on strengths - Shift your focus from the absence of a diagnosis to identify and celebrate your unique strengths, talents and abilities. Recognise that autism might have been just one aspect of who you are, there is value in all aspects of your identity.

Practice self-care – whether its engaging in hobbies, spending time in nature, practicing mindfulness or seeking professional support, taking care of yourself is essential during times of uncertainty.

Set realistic expectations - be gentle with yourself and set realistic expectations for your journey. Navigating uncertainty and self-discovery takes time and patience, its ok to take one step at a time.

Stay hopeful - remember that a lack of diagnosis does not invalidate your experiences or diminish your worth, Stay hopeful and open to possibilities of self-discovery, acceptance and growth on your journey.

TELFORD AUTISM HUB COMMUNITY CONTRIBUTIONS

Do you have a piece of artwork, poetry or article of interest that you would like to share with us? Here are some contributions from our regular readers:



Dawn created this quilted wall hanging of a guitar as a gift for someone.



Nikki captured this beautiful photograph of a kingfisher along a canal.

INTERNET SAFETY GUIDE FOR PEOPLE WITH AUTISM

BY WIZCASE

People identified with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) experience the world differently compared to people who are not autistic. As a result, people with ASD might use the internet differently, and so might face different risks online compared to others. For example, children in the UK are 12% more likely to be bullied online if they have a special educational need like autism.

Tendencies toward compulsive behaviour and social naivety also present different risks online for autistic people compared to others. However, to say that the internet is inherently more dangerous for autistic people is an oversimplification that can result in incorrect, unhelpful, or even offensive advice. In fact, autistic people are often immensely satisfied with online experiences, and the internet delivers a lot of practical benefits for people with autism.

In this article, I want to celebrate this.

The internet exposes all of us to risk – just like nearly every big, complicated, human activity. But awareness and education can help us to mitigate risks and live safely. This guide is meant to help autistic people (and their parents, family, friends, and caregivers) learn about online risks and how to mitigate them. But it also highlights the positives to show how autistic people can use and enjoy the internet confidently and safely.

For the full article, follow this link; <https://www.wizcase.com/blog/internet-safety-guide-for-people-with-autism-spectrum-disorders/>



NEED A FORMAL DIAGNOSIS TO QUALIFY FOR ADJUSTMENTS?

BY EMPLOYMENT UK

Whilst you certainly can ask for adjustments to be made you need to be prepared for what might happen if your prospective employer pushes back, asks for further evidence or declines your request.

As described in further detail here, an employer's duty to provide reasonable adjustments is triggered when it knows or reasonably ought to know that:

- the employee in question is disabled; and
- the employee in question is likely to be placed at a substantial disadvantage in comparison with persons who are not disabled

Your employer may decline your request on the basis that they do not consider you to be disabled for the purposes of the Equality Act 2010 and therefore not entitled to reasonable adjustments.

If you decide to contest your employer's decision you will need to commence proceedings in the Employment Tribunal to do so (you may wish to file a formal grievance and try early conciliation through ACAS before doing so.

For further information, follow this link; <https://employmentautism.org.uk/need-a-formal-diagnosis-to-qualify-for-adjustments/>

Watch out for our Disability Confident Job Fair later in the year.

If you would like to send us any of your contributions for future editions of our Newsletter, feel free to contact us directly on 01952 916109 or email us at admin@telfordautismhub.org.uk



OUR RECIPE RECOMMENDATION

FRUIT SALAD KEBABS

**DURATION:
15 MINUTES**

**ENERGY RATING:
LOW**

**SKILL LEVEL:
MEDIUM**

To make when; you need a pick-me-up if you have had a hard time recently an like to have extra 'input'; you are having to grapple with changes such as a new job or a new college.



INGREDIENTS

1 small bunch of green grapes	1 handful of strawberries
1 mango	1 kiwi fruit
2 plums	1 orange

EQUIPMENT YOU WILL NEED:

1 chopping knife
1 chopping board
1 colander
2 kebab sticks

HOW TO MAKE Pre-preparation

Before you do anything, cut all of the fruit up on the chopping board and set aside for later. If you are a sensory avoider, cut into the smallest pieces possible, and if you prefer plainer flavours, only use plums, strawberries and grapes, for example. Wash all of the fruit and drain it in a colander over the sink. When it comes to the grapes, cut them in half. Peel the oranges and take off as much of the pith as possible.

Method

1. Using the kebab sticks, spear the halved grapes on to them.
2. Do this with all of the fruit pieces until you have filled up both of the sticks to create a 'kebab'. Enjoy!

EXPAND YOUR REPERTOIRE

When making the kebab sticks, try mixing and matching fruit combinations. Strawberries and grapes are a great duo; the tang of the strawberries contrasts with the plain flavour of the grapes. Using specific combinations could be a great way to add in extra sensory input. This can also be converted into a dessert very easily - and there is a recipe for fruit salad next. You could always upgrade that by serving with a small scoop of vanilla ice cream.

DIRECTORY FOR USEFUL LOCAL SERVICES

Information and Advice

This is a list we have compiled as a service which we feel may be of benefit to you if you feel you require any further support.

Age UK - 01952 200010

Anti-Social Behaviour Team - 01952 384384

Job Box - 01952 382888

Telford Job Centre - 0800 169 0190

Stonewall (LGBTQ+ Advice) 0800 050 2020

Independent Living Centre (ILC) - 01952 457181

Children's Autism Hub - 01952 262062

All Ages Carers Centre - 01952 240209

Wellbeing Independence Partnership (WIP) - 01952 916030
(First point of contact for enquiries relating to adult social care)

SENDIASS - 01952 457176

PODS - 01952 458047 (Support families who have a child with a disability or additional need (aged 0 – 25 years))

Shropshire Youth Support Trust (SYST) - 01952 299214 (provide a range of support services for young people in Shropshire that are between the ages of 16-30)

Finance

Telford and Wrekin Council Tax Benefit Support
- 01952 383838

Citizen's Advice Bureau - 01952 567193

Housing

The Wrekin Housing Trust - 01952 217100

Thrive - 01952 504325

YMCA (Supported Accommodation Service)
- 01952 400401

Maninplace - 01952 248248

Reviive - 01743 588458 (Affordable Furniture)

Advocacy Services

POhWER - 0300 456 2370

VoiceAbility - 0300 303 1660

Taking Part - 01743 363399

Health & Wellbeing

Telford and Wrekin IAPT - 01952 457415

ACCESS Team - 0808 196 4501 (Mental Health Support)

MIND - 07434 869248

Family Connect - 01952 385385
Option 1 - Children
Option 3 - Adults

Crisis Support (Telford Food Bank) - 01952 586646

24 Hour Domestic Abuse Helpline - Text 85258

Samaritans - 01952 256161

Healthy Lifestyles Team - 01952 382582

WHERE TO FIND US

Telford Autism Hub, Telford & Wrekin CVS

Suites 12 - 15 Hazledine House

Central Square

Telford Centre

Telford

Shropshire

TF3 4JL



We are located between Little Dessert Shop and the Independent Living Centre, opposite the Thomas Botfield Wetherspoons. Upon entering Hazledine House, you will take the stairs/lift up to the 2nd floor.

Facing away from the stairs, the CVS reception will be on your right and the Family Zone will be on your left.



CONTACT US

Telephone - **01952 916109**



Please note - our phone lines are open 9:30 - 13:00, Mon to Fri.

For emergencies, please contact **0808 196 4501**.

Email -



admin@telfordautismhub.org.uk (general enquiries)

asd.telford@nhs.net (ASD Assessment enquiries)



Website -

Telford Autism Hub | telfordautismhub.org.uk



Facebook -

Telford Autism Hub | <http://www.facebook.com/telfordautismsupport/>



Instagram -

@telfordautismhub