



Chair:

*Dr. Joseph Simon
c/o Chitra Sethia Autism Centre
Cambridge Road
Fulbourn, Cambridge
CB21 5EF
E-mail: NASCambridge@nas.org.uk
Helpline: 07920 150407
<http://www.cambridge-autism.org.uk>*

NAS Cambridge Branch/Hub Annual General Meeting

Report 2012-2014

September 24, 2014, 6.30-8.30pm

Chitra Sethia Autism Centre, Cambridge

Background

The Cambridge Branch of the National Autistic Society (CNAS) was formed in August 2009. We set upon the foundation laid down by Umbrella Autism, a small charity, who had supported people with autism and their families in the Cambridge area for many years.

The Branch provides a local hub where parents, carers and people with autism can get help, access services, meet other people and families in similar situations and support each other. The National Autistic Society oversees the Branch activities; providing communication facilities (dedicated branch e-mail address on its server, and a mobile phone), advice, support and training to the Branch. Meetings and other branch-organised activities are covered by the NAS general insurance. The NAS Regional Branch Support Officer, Alessia Mitchell supervises the branch committee and its activities. The branch supports and promotes nationwide campaigns of the NAS on various issues. Although the Branch is responsible for its own fundraising, and can keep the raised money for running the Branch and funding its activities, but it is financially accountable to the NAS Head Office.

We have not had AGM since 2012 because last year the branch participated in the NAS Hub pilot project and was also heavily involved in the Chitra Sethia Autism Centre development.

We have had a few resignations from our committee since our last AGM but we have successfully recruited some new members. Currently the committee has got 11 members. Our current committee members are mostly parents of people with autism, retired professionals and one person with autism.

Changes in the CNAS Committee

Since our last AGM, sadly the following members retired from the committee for family reasons and other work commitments: Caroline Goodall, Claire Littlewood (Secretary), Chris Baines (webmaster) and Sam Sizer.

Fortunately the following people joined to the Committee: Sue Astwood, Dr. Fatima Janjua (retired paediatrician, with lot of experience in diagnosing children with autism), Maggie Jones (Fundraising Lead, mother of twins with autism), Cari-lene Mul (become our new secretary, mother of a child with autism) and Mark Stephen (father of 2 young persons with autism).

Current CNAS committee

- **Dr. Joseph Simon** - **Branch Officer /hub Chair**
(leading the Evening Parent Support Groups and helping out at the 18+ ASD Social Club)
- **Emma Gerrard** - **Treasurer**
- **Cari-lene Mul** - **Secretary**
(helping out at the 18+ ASD Social Club)
- **Heather Rhodes** - **Information lead**
(Leading the Meet & Play Group with Judith Middleton)
- **Dr. Alex Murphy** - **Committee Member**
(editing and publishing the CNAS E-News)
- **Judith Middleton** - **Parent Training Lead**
(Leading the Meet & Play Group with Heather Rhodes)
- **Dr Fatima Janjua** - **Local Services Lead**
- **Maggie Jones** - **Fundraising Lead**
- **Ben Stephen** - **Campaigns Lead**
(leading the 18+ ASD Social Club)
- **Mark Stephen** - **Branch Library**
(helping out at the Daytime Parent Support Group)
- **Sue Astwood** - **Committee Member**
(helping out at the Meet & Play Group)

Our aims

They have not changed.

- **Information and signposting.** Using the NAS resources and academic knowledge present in Cambridge as well as working together with local health, education and social services we would like to become the one stop information source on autism spectrum disorder (ASD) for the wider community.

- **Raise ASD awareness.** Not only within the community, but within the Local Authority services, i.e. health, education, social services, police, also local business.
- **Listen and support all individuals (child or adult) with ASD.** Through the whole autistic spectrum which often coupled with other disabilities, such as learning disability, mental health problem etc.
- **Lobby for early intervention for children diagnosed with ASD**
- **We shall campaign for each individual with ASD to have access to the right kind of support and education that is specifically tailored to their needs.**
- **We shall invite service providers to work with us, explore and extend existing recreational, educational and work opportunities.**
- **We would like to create opportunities for individuals with ASD and their families to meet like minded people, share their experiences.**
- **Explore training opportunities for our members.**
- **Explore work opportunities and promote the development of community safety training, to gain maximum independence for individuals with ASD.**
- **Advise employers with regards supporting their employees who experience symptoms of ASD. We will do our best to ensure equality at the work place.**
- **Work closely with the NAS Branch Family Support Coordinator and the NAS Adult Autism Support Managers to provide better services to people with autism and to their families.**
- **WE SHALL ACTIVELY SUPPORT ALL INDIVIDUALS TOUCHED BY THE AUTISTIC SPECTRUM IN REACHING THEIR FULL POTENTIAL.**

At the last AGM we said what we would like to do:

1. Continue to run our established services, helpline, E-news, raise ASD awareness among the community.
2. Continue our dialogues with the Local Authority, Education, Health Services and work within the ASD Consortium and other established groups to improve the life of people with ASD and their families.
3. Invite speakers on various topics of member's choices.

4. Continue to run our support groups and increase their membership.
5. Set up a Social Group for Adults with ASD.
6. Create a new website.
7. Working in partnership with other voluntary sector organisations such as Pinpoint, VoiceAbility, Romsey Mill, and Red2Green.
8. Work closely with the Tom Purser NAS Community Campaign and Policy Officer on campaigning about issues important to our membership.

What have we achieved this year?

1. During the year our membership has grown steadily. We have about 350 members.
2. As part of the NAS pilot project our branch has recently been selected as one of the Charity's three regional hubs. As a regional hub we help to develop other branches in the Eastern region and offer new services including parent training programmes. Some of our committee members become Lead for certain areas of support (see above). The hub also works closely with the Branch Family Support Coordinator, Jessica Gray, who provides advice, support (including home visit) and training to local families whose children have been affected by autism. As part of the hub development programme, members of the branch/hub committee have received information, helpline, data protection and campaigns trainings to improve our services.
2. We have continued to run our established services; helpline, website, E-news, raising ASD awareness among the community.
 - We have had almost 500,000 hits on our website. However, it has become out-dated over the years and also Chris Baines who built it resigned as webmaster and committee member, therefore we decided to build a new, better website. Emma Gerrard has been leading this project and we are just about to launch it.
 - We operate our 24/7 helpline in rotation among our helpline trained committee members. Our Information Lead Heather Rhodes collated and regularly updates our helpline booklet on local organisations and available services.

Some statistics of the usage our helpline:

2011: 76

2012: 113

2013: 129

2014: 89 (January-August)

E-mail enquiries per year: ~200

- We have continued publishing our monthly newsletter, the E-news. Many thanks to its editor, Dr. Alex Murphy.
 - The branch also has facebook page with 85 active members. It has been moderated by Judi Middleton and Dr. Alex Murphy.
3. We have continued working with the Local Authority, Education, and Health Services.
- *Cambridgeshire Multi-Agency Adult ASD Consortium:* Dr. Joseph Simon, Ben Stephen and more recently Maggie Jones are members of the consortium and worked on the Cambridgeshire Adult Autism Strategy and Diagnostic Pathway.
Ben Stephen (as a person with autism) has been involved in producing training material and in trainings delivered by the Local Authority Workforce Development Team to their employees.
 - *Cambridgeshire Multi-Agency Children ASD Strategy Group:* Dr. Joseph Simon and Emma Gerrard are members of the Strategy group and involved in the development of the Children Autism Pathway – the Local offer for Cambridgeshire.
 - *Chitra Sethia Autism Centre Development:* The branch served as an advisory group. Our committee member, Ben Stephen sat on the development committee and advising on autism friendliness design of the building.
Since its opening, the Chitra Sethia Autism Centre become the base of our branch where we hold our committee, parent support meetings and other events.
4. The branch has been heavily involved in the NAS Push for Action Campaign preceded the Think Autism National Strategy update.
5. We hosted again the NAS Family Right Project Workshops in March 2013. The workshops again were very successful and well-attended.

6. We have continued to run our support groups;

- Meet&Play Group: This is a support group for families with pre-school children, with or waiting for a diagnosis of ASD. The meet and play sessions are taken place on the first Tuesday of the month at Cherry Hinton Children's Centre. The Group is led by 3 of our very experienced committee members, Judi Middleton and Heather Rhode and Sue Astwood. We are very grateful to the Centre which provided the room, toys and refreshments. For some time the Children's Centre run a second group during the month, using a similar approach, for families with child(ren) with wider range of disabilities. Our committee members served as advisers to this second group. However, due to the closure of the Children's Centre we had to change the venue and now we are in discussion with Romsey Mill (another local charity) to continue the group there in somehow different form.
- Evening Parent Support Group: The group has grown steadily since our last AGM it has 106 registered members. Since last January the group meets at the Chitra Sethia Autism Centre. The group sessions are facilitated by the branch officer Dr. Joseph Simon with the help of Mark Stephen. The group mostly provided peer support and information and advice from the facilitators. However, we have had talks about available NAS and other services, carer's support etc.
- Day-time Parent Support Group: This is an alternative group to our the Evening Support Group as some of the parents, especially with young children are unable to attend regularly to the evening support groups, but they would have time to attend during the day while their children are at school.. The purpose of the group is to give parents an opportunity to meet during the day in an informal setting to share information and offer advice and support. The group is facilitated by one of our ex-committee members, Claire Littlewood and helped by Mark Stephen. Since last January this group meets at the Chitra Sethia. The attendance of this group has never been as high as the evening one. Recently the attendance has declined even further, questioning of feasibility of running this group.
- 18+ ASD Social Club: is our most successful group. After a slow start the membership has grown dramatically over the years. Currently the club has 51 members. The Club is led by Ben Stephen and Dr. Joseph Simon, runs the administrative tasks for the group. The Club members are also helped by our volunteers; Polly Daniel, Ben Belek, Lee and Emma Franks, Mohammed Shah, Gavin Cook and Cari-lene Mul. The committee would

like to thank them for their invaluable work. The club meets at the Christ the Redeemer Church Hall (an outstanding venue), originally once a month (on the 2nd Sunday evening). However due to its popularity, we decided to run fortnightly (2nd and 4th Sundays) from the beginning of this year. Usually at least 15-20 members attend at a time.

6. Interaction with other voluntary organisations:

The branch is represented on the Cambridgeshire Carers Partnership Board (Dr, Joseph Simon, Chair) and on the Board of the Cambridgeshire Alliance for Disabled People (Dr, Joseph Simon, Trustee). We have had positive interactions and partnership working with other voluntary organisations such as Voice Ability, Red2Green, the Romsey Mill Aspire Project and Pinpoint. The branch has helped a number of researchers, post and undergraduate students from the University of Cambridge and Angia Ruskin University in their research projects or thesis.

7. We established a branch library, mostly from books on autism donated to the branch. We have got about 160 books and they are in the information corner in the Garden Room at the Chitra Sethia Centre. Our librarian is Mark Stephen. The borrowing is possible during committee or parent support meetings and free to all of our members. All borrowed book should be returned within 4 weeks.

8. Fundraising

During the past 2 year the branch has raised almost £12,000 (see Treasurer's report). Large part of this money came from a single donation. The captain of Gog Magog Golf Club in 2013, choose our branch as his charity and organised 4 fundraising golfing event over the year. They raised £8,500 for our branch. We would like to use part of this money sup support an extra day of working for a period of time for our branch family support coordinator who work only 3 day a weeks.

We have applied and been awarded with small community grant (£500) from Accent Nene housing association to ASD Social Club. We bought a new Wii console and some games for the club and also used to pay the running cost for a year.

Finally, I would like to thank all of our present and former committee members and volunteers for their work during the year.

National Autistic Society Cambridge Branch

Treasurer's Report 2012-2013

Preparation

The accounts cover the financial year ending 31 March 2013.

Financial controls and risk

All reserves are held in an account with the Co-Operative Bank, in line with branch financial processes as set by the National Autistic Society. The branch has responsibility for its own fundraising and spending but the accounts are overseen by the NAS head office...

Income and Expenditure

Income this year totalled £2,330, which mostly came from donations and grant funding. This is around £260 more than last year. We would particularly like to thank Meldreth Primary School, Ken Stevens Music Shop and Waitrose for their generous donations, and Claire Littlewood, who raised funds for us with a sponsored race event. We would also like to thank the branch members and their friends and relatives who have supported various branch events.

Expenditure during this period totalled £1,098. This was mostly hire of premises and refreshments for support groups and branch events.

Reserves

The excess of Income over Expenditure of £1,231 means that Reserves stood at £12,169 at the beginning of the current financial year. This puts the branch in a good position to continue and extend the support currently offered.

Emma Gerrard, Treasurer

5 July 2013

National Autistic Society Cambridge Branch

Treasurer's Report 2013-2014

Preparation

The accounts cover the financial year ending 31 March 2014.

Financial controls and risk

All reserves are held in an account with the Co-Operative Bank, in line with branch financial processes as set by the National Autistic Society. The branch has responsibility for its own fundraising and spending but the accounts are overseen by the NAS head office...

Income and Expenditure

Income this year totalled £9,460, which mostly came from donations and grant funding. This is a big increase on last year, largely because of a very successful year of fundraising by the Gog Magog Golf Club who raised over £8,500 for the branch. We would also like to thank Sarah McSpadden, Domino Finance, and the Warboys Resource Centre for their generous donations, and our branch members and their friends and families who have supported the branch and its' activities and events. We also received grant funding of £500 towards the running costs of the Adult Social Club.

Expenditure during this period totalled £1,434. This was mostly hire of premises and refreshments for support groups and branch events, and gaming supplies for the Adult Social Club.

Reserves

The excess of Income over Expenditure of £ £8,026 means that Reserves stood at £20,195 at the beginning of the current financial year. This puts the branch in a good position to continue and extend the support currently offered.

Emma Gerrard, Treasurer

14 June 2014

Plan for next year

1. Continue to provide our established services, helpline, E-news, raise ASD awareness among the community. Raise our memberships.
2. Continue to run our support groups and increase their membership.
3. Continue to run the 18+ (Adult) Social Club and increase its membership.
4. Organize social activities for our membership.
5. Continue our work on the Adult ASD Consortium, the Children ASD Strategy Group and on other groups where we got representation to improve the life of people with ASD and their families.
6. Continue working in partnership with other voluntary sector organisations.
7. Invite speakers on various topics of member's choices.
8. Fundraising
 - organize fundraising events
 - contact our previous fundraisers
 - apply for small grant/bursaries to cover the running cost of some of our branch activities
 - to cover part of the family support coordinator's employment cost

Dr. Joseph Simon
Branch Officer/Hub Chair
NAS Cambridge Branch/Hub

September 24, 2014