

Annual General Meeting
NAS Cambridge Branch
10 January 2018
Chitra Sethia Centre
Fulbourn Road
7.30-9.00pm

Attendees: Alex Murphy, Liz Day, Cari-lène Mul, Terri Johnston, Alan Cross, Ben Stephen, Mark Stephen, Emma Gerrard, Andy Stroud, Ann Smith

Welcome

The acting chair (Cari-lène Mul - CM) welcomes everyone and presents the agenda for the meeting.

Report on branch activities and future plans

CM gives a report on the activities the branch has undertaken in the last 3 years:

- Telephone Helpline
The branch has helped 7-10 people every month in the past years, amounting to over 100 calls in 2017. Typical issues: diagnosis, education and EHCP, employment, mental health.
- Email support
The branch responds to 7-12 autism related queries every month. We would welcome volunteers to the committee to help with this.
- Facebook group Cambridge NAS
The branch has a closed Facebook group that provides peer-support and shares (local) information relevant to autism. We have 200 members
- NAS Cambridge website and e-Newsletter
The branch has a new website since 2015. It contains information on our activities, other relevant local activities, and links to other organisations. While in 2015 we had 136 subscribers, in 2017 we had 204 subscribers. We would welcome volunteers to the committee to keep the website up-to-date and help compile the Newsletter
- Parent support meeting
The Branch has held parent support meetings for parents/carers of people with autism every first Monday of the month (except August) in the Chitra Sethia Centre, 7.30-9.30pm. It used to be well attended but since the move to the Chitra Sethia Centre numbers have dwindled. From now: In the Meadows Community Centre (Arbury)
- Adult Social Club
The branch hosts a social club for adults (18+, no age limit) with autism every 2nd and 4th Sunday of the month (except August and X-mas) in Christ the Redeemer Church on Newmarket Road, 7.30-9.30pm. It provides chat, board and card games, Wii games, Lego. There are around 70 members on the mailing list, and it has 10-25 attendees per session.
- Huntingdon Drop-in
Since 2016 the Branch hosts a drop-in support session for adults (18+, no age limit) with autism and their parents/carers every 1st Wednesday of the month in the Maple Centre in Huntingdon, 12-2pm. It provides chat,

support, games, and an occasional outing. It has 4-10 attendees per session.

- **March Drop-in**
Since 2017 we also host a drop-in for adults (18+, no age limit) with autism and their parents/carers in March. It is held every last Wednesday of the month in the March Community Centre, 12-2pm. It provides chat, support, and games. We currently have around 5 attendees per session
- **Email support**
The Branch responds to 7-12 autism related queries every month. We would welcome volunteers to the committee to help with this.
- **Gardening Club**
- **The Branch has started a gardening club at the Chitra Sethia Centre, Saturdays 2.30-4.30pm. A few sessions have been held in 2017 and the club will restart again in spring 2018. It offers gardening activities in the lovely garden designed by Alan Gardner, "the Autistic Gardener" from Channel 4. The gardening club received a grant from the NAS in 2017 for a new greenhouse. This allows us to offer financial support for travel cost for attendees. We welcome new members and volunteers.**
- **Talks by speakers with autism**
We have held talks by Hannah Belcher, of Aspertypical (Facebook) and PhD researcher at ARU, about females on the spectrum, and Chris Bonnelo, of Autistic not Weird (Facebook), about 10 things he wished he knew when he was a boy. Both sessions were very well attended and appreciated.
- **Workshops**
We have held several workshops in the last few years: Understanding autism family seminar by the NAS support manager. Communication Skills by Communication Cambridge. They were very popular.
- **Toddler Group (discontinued)**
When Cherry Hinton Children's Centre closed and numbers dwindled, we discontinued this. Our committee members continued to visit other existing toddler groups for autism support for a while, but have now retired from the committee.

Report on finance

Emma Gerrard (acting treasurer) gives a report on the finances of the Branch. In summary, our financial situation is healthy. Since 2014-2015, we have spent more than our annual income from donations and membership fees, but thanks to a large donation in 2013-2014, we can afford this at the moment. Our expenditure in the past few years has been between £1100 and £3000 pounds, while our income was between £500 and £1500, with the biggest expenses being the talks/workshops we've held. In the future we will need to increase our fund raising to meet our expenses. Full reports can be available on request.

Nominations and vote for Branch committee members:

CM thanks the committee members of the past years for all their efforts, and especially mentions those who have now retired from the Branch.

Judy Middleton (Toddler group; Helpline; Facebook)

Heather Rhodes (Toddler group; Helpline)

Robert Noakes (treasurer)

Sue Astwood (Toddler group; Helpline)

Joseph Simon (Branch officer/chair; Helpline; Adult social club; Parent support group).

CM welcomes our new committee members:

Terri Johnston (March and Huntingdon Drop-in; Helpline)

Liz Day (Parent support group; Helpline)

Alan Cross (March and Huntingdon Drop-in; nominated for Treasurer).

The following nominations were made for the positions of chair and treasurer.

For Chair - Mark Stephen

Nomination by Ben Stephen, seconded by Cari-lene Mul

For Treasurer - Alan Cross

Nomination by Emma Gerrard, seconded by Terri Johnston

Both nominations received a supporting vote by the AGM (8 votes for, 2 abstentions).

Any other business

Mark Stephen announces we have been asked by the NAS to share our experience with setting up the social club so that the formula can be copied by other branches, and he is willing to travel to London to do this.

A short discussion was held about (lack of) services in the Cambridge area.