



Supporting people with autism in London and the South East



Accept difference. Not indifference.

Introduction

More than 1 in 100 people in London and the South East are living with autism, a lifelong developmental disability that affects how a person interacts with, and relates to, other people. It is a serious and disabling condition and we know that

without the right support, it can have a profound – sometimes devastating – effect on individuals and families.

This is why The National Autistic Society is committed to providing the best services and sharing

our knowledge and experiences with the entire autism community. Across the country, we provide support, information and care at every stage of life. Whether you are affected by autism as a child, an adult or as a family, our services are here to help.



Growing up with autism

A diagnosis of autism (including Asperger syndrome) is often given without any guidance on what to do next. If you know little or nothing about autism, it can be confusing, frightening and overwhelming.

You and your child are not alone. Our Autism Helpline and local branch network exists to support people with autism and their families with practical advice and information.

We have around 100 branches of The National Autistic Society across the UK and around a quarter of these are based within London and the South East. All branches are run exclusively by volunteers who are mainly parents or carers of people with autism, but also adults with autism themselves. The way our branches are run can differ, depending on how many people are involved and what is needed in the local area. Our branches

also get involved in local and national campaigns and can offer you information on autism, local services and activities.

If you're a parent of a child with autism, we can offer family support and courses which will provide you with more information and an opportunity to talk to others facing a similar situation.

Our one-day courses for families range from a basic introduction to autism to courses on particular subjects like managing anger. In some areas we have befriending schemes, where a trained volunteer befriender spends a few hours each week with a child or young person with autism or their family.

To find out about the local support and services near you visit our website www.autism.org.uk/localsupport.

Alex is a bright four-year-old boy but when he began to show signs of aggression and a fixation on routines his parents became concerned and sought help.

The local autism spectrum disorder assessment centre diagnosed Alex with autism and referred the family to our family support service. Alex's mum, Helena has formed a close bond with support worker Vikki, who helped the family develop their understanding of autism and gave guidance on managing Alex's behaviour.

"Vikki helped us connect with our local autism community. She's our port of call, supporting us through any issues that we run into by helping to put us in touch with different services that we need," explained Helena. "We'd be lost without her."

Through attending autism workshops and participating in a parent support group co-facilitated by the NHS assessment service and The National Autistic Society, Helena has met other parents facing similar circumstances and friendships have grown. Most recently Vikki and Helena worked together on an application to a school which will support Alex to fulfil his potential during his primary school years.



Education

We all want our children to be happy and to grow up to reach their full potential. For many children with autism, this is best achieved by being supported and included in a mainstream setting, but for others it means attending a specialist school.

If you are concerned about the support your child is receiving at school, our Education Rights Service on 0808 800 4102 can offer you information and advice.

All our schools welcome children and young people with autism from across London and the South East. The majority of our schools offer residential placements and short breaks services.

We have three schools in the region, and have recently opened Thames Valley School in Berkshire. This is our first of a new generation of NAS Academies Trust sponsored free schools.

MyProgress™ is the name of The National Autistic Society's schools and free schools offer. We believe that progress should never stop and we are there to help transform the lives of children and adults with autism through their education and beyond.

Find out more today at www.autism.org.uk/schools



Helen Allison School

Helen Allison School in Meopham, Kent welcomes students aged 5-19 in primary, secondary and FE departments. We have our own therapeutic team, which works closely together with our teaching and care staff every day. Class sizes are kept small and each student follows their own individual programme.

The ethos of the school is preparing the students for fulfilling adult lives, the main curriculum is enhanced with a wide range of social activities and community-based learning. The FE campus is located in nearby Gravesend, giving students easy access to shops, amenities and public transport, preparing them for the transition to adulthood.



Sybil Elgar School

Sybil Elgar School in West London offers primary, secondary and further education (FE) for young people aged between 4-19 with autism. Students follow a range of subjects within the National Curriculum. The FE department, for students from the age of 16, is located on the campus of Acton College.

Founded in 1965, Sybil Elgar is known for being innovative, progressive and ambitious and our school is an exciting place for young people on their way to adulthood. Our creative and expressive arts programmes are much admired and students gain enormous confidence from our courses.



Radlett Lodge School

At Radlett Lodge School in Hertfordshire, students aged from 4-19 are prepared for as independent a life as possible. We emphasise on development of communication and social skills, through a curriculum which meets the specific needs of students with autism.

Staff work hard to make sure children have the best education, the best care and the best opportunities. The high staff to student ratio enables students to access all areas of the National Curriculum at the appropriate level. Through a structured and supportive autism-specific learning environment, students develop social relationships and receive a broad and balanced education.



Thames Valley School

Thames Valley School is our first free school and opened its doors to children with autism in Berkshire and neighbouring counties in September 2013. The purpose-built school is for day students aged 5-16.

We seek to excite students about school and learning through the delivery of a flexible and challenging curriculum, which provides them with a core foundation of knowledge and skills to prepare them for further study, university or employment. Your child will receive an outstanding, highly personalised education at Thames Valley School. Our aim is for your child to lead a successful, fulfilling life in society.

Growing independence in adulthood

Moving on from full time education presents change and challenges to most young people, particularly if they have a diagnosis of autism. Whether you are going to college or university, or moving on to a specialist adult service, we have services across London and the South East that can support that transition. Each student at our schools has a detailed transition plan, which is discussed with them and their parent or carers some years before their actual leaving date.

Our Transition Development Officer can offer you a range of information to help you plan for life after school or college. To find out more about the key changes in legislation that may affect your rights and entitlements please visit our website at www.autism.org.uk/transitions.

If you are moving into higher education and would like support, our **student support service** is here to help you reach your

full academic potential. We can provide one-on-one, tailored support at your college or university through mentors who can help you to manage your workload, overcome barriers to learning, adapt to change, deal with difficult emotions and develop social skills.

We also have Specialist Facilitators who provide enhanced support and reassurance in lectures, seminars, and lab sessions. Our facilitators use their expertise and training to help you access and understand your learning environment, they'll assist in a range of areas including facilitating communication with university staff and peers; advising on communication skills and strategies; library support; time keeping and note taking. They can also help on trips and support you through your exams. Contact us to check what's available near you.

"I have a mentor named Laura whom I meet with twice a week. Laura helps me with coping with university life since I have Asperger syndrome and I have difficulty with understanding and interpreting socially. When I first started university I was quite scared. They tell you that the jump between GCSE and A-Level is big, which I agree with, but the jump between A-Level and university is far greater, as you are expected to be much more independent. With the help of my mentor I have managed to break down and understand what I am expected to do and how I might do it. The mentoring system has really helped me work on my organisation skills and how to approach and communicate with tutors at university, since this is very different to my experience at college. I would highly recommend the support of a student mentor."

**Undergraduate student,
South Bank University**



Living with autism

No two people are the same and neither is the help we provide. Whether you want support in your own home, assistance in accessing the local community or help finding a university course, we can provide support.

Together we will work to develop a support plan and help you achieve your goals. You and anyone involved in your wellbeing will be welcomed at the regular meetings we hold to review these.

If you would like to maintain your independence our **supported living services** can help. Supported living services will provide tailored support from our specialist staff from a few hours a week helping with everyday tasks, to more comprehensive care packages and 24-hour support if you have more complex needs.

Our **outreach services** can help you in your day to day life by helping you get out and about in your community, improving your household management or accessing local services.

This service also supports you to go to a job interview, attend a college course or go on a day trip.

A package of support is built to meet your individual needs and is available to you if you live on your own, with your family or in shared accommodation. It can make all the difference to helping you to live the life you choose.

Our **specialist day opportunities** offer a range of leisure, educational and vocational activities through our activity and resource centres. These centres are well-equipped and offer a

wide range of facilities, such as sensory areas and equipment, a communication room, kitchen areas for developing cooking skills, ICT equipment and music sessions. All facilities offer a calming highly structured environment where you can choose how and when to participate.

For people with more complex needs our **residential services** provide around the clock support and assistance. Regardless of where you are on the spectrum, our staff will be there when you need them supporting you to live the life you choose.



We offer person-centred support in urban settings. Each of our residential services provide accommodation 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 52 weeks per year.

In Gravesend, Kent we have developed a weekend **short breaks** service at our adult residential service.

Short breaks provide respite for you away from your family or

carer. We also offer **social groups** for young people and adults.

ASSIST is our free, tailored service that aims to meet the needs of people affected by Asperger syndrome, aged 16 and over, as well as their families and carers. This service is available to anyone, whether you have a diagnosis of Asperger syndrome or are waiting to receive your diagnosis.

Our service is currently available in Surrey, Hampshire, and in some London boroughs. We welcome self-referrals as well as referrals arranged by a health professional or family member.

For all our services go to www.autism.org.uk/se-services.



Helping Michael move house

Michael had previously found transitions (changes in daily routine) difficult, even if they were very small. Therefore, his move from Hertfordshire to our supported living service in his own house in Westminster involved a lot of planning and the careful consideration of all of his needs. In the three months it took to transition we teamed up with Westminster therapy representatives and Michael's social worker to discuss how best to support him.

To gain his confidence and trust before the move our team

increased the amount of time they spent with Michael, working closely with him so he would become familiar with our presence and feel at ease. We supported Michael's visits to his new flat, and helped him choose furniture. This all helped to make Michael's new flat feel like his own and ensured that Michael was involved in all areas of his development.

Communication throughout the process was key. Michael uses sign language to converse and a fundamental part of providing support to him was having a team that could confidently

communicate through signing. Our behavioural coordinator also worked with staff and Michael to produce social stories and new TEACCH daily routines, enabling him to understand where he was moving to and why.

Since the move Michael has integrated into his local community extremely well, making use of buses, trains and the Tube. Michael has also joined a number of social, music and exercise groups, and he enjoys an active social life.

Choosing a service that's right for you

In London and the South East we support **families** through our family support programmes, our membership and through our local branches.

We provide an outstanding education to **children and young people** through three schools in the London and South East region and through NAS Academies sponsored free schools.

We're also here to help **adults** face the challenges of living with autism through our befriending and mentoring schemes, social groups, supported living, outreach services and residential care.



Where to find us

- Schools/education**
- Helen Allison School, Kent
 - Radlett Lodge School, Hertfordshire
 - Sybil Elgar School, Greater London
 - Thames Valley School, Reading
 - Kent, student support
 - Ladbroke Grove, student support
 - Surrey, student support

- Children and youth clubs**
- Croydon
 - Ealing
 - Hackney
 - Hampshire
 - Isle of Wight
 - Kensington and Chelsea
 - Surrey
 - Sutton

- Supported living**
- Croydon
 - Ealing
 - Gravesend, Kent
 - Greenwich
 - Harrow
 - Herne Bay, Kent
 - Kingston upon Thames
 - Surrey
 - Westminster

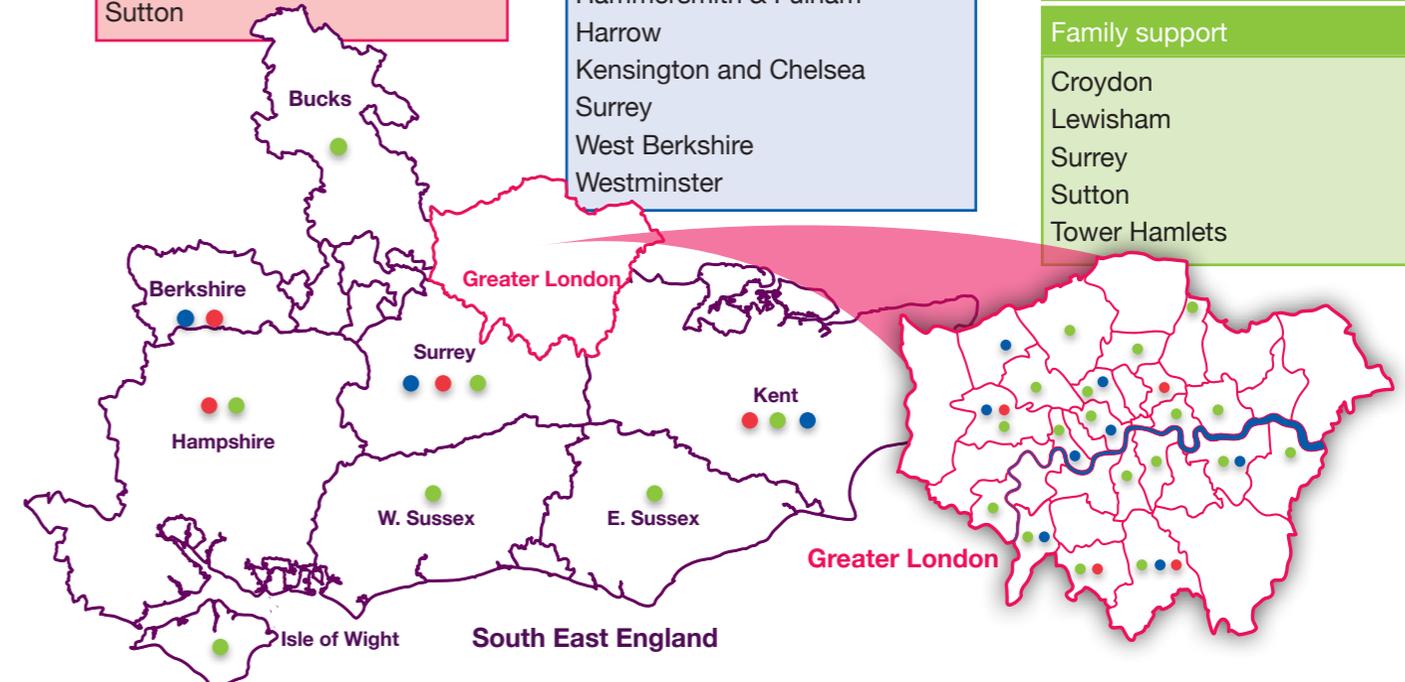
- Adult residential and community services**
- Croydon – outreach, residential, day services
 - Ealing – day services, outreach
 - Kent – residential, short breaks, outreach
 - Ladbroke Grove – day service, outreach, student support
 - Surrey – outreach, residential, day services

- Adult and ASSIST groups**
- Croydon
 - Ealing
 - Hammersmith & Fulham
 - Harrow
 - Kensington and Chelsea
 - Surrey
 - West Berkshire
 - Westminster

- London branches ***
- Barnet
 - Bexley
 - Camden
 - Croydon
 - Enfield
 - Greenwich
 - Haringey
 - Kingston
 - Lambeth
 - Newham
 - Richmond
 - Southwark
 - Sutton
 - West London

- Branches in the South East ***
- Alton & Bordon
 - Basingstoke
 - Bexhill & Hastings
 - Dover & Deal
 - Isle of Wight
 - South Hampshire
 - Surrey
 - Thanet
 - West Berkshire
 - Worthing

- Family support**
- Croydon
 - Lewisham
 - Surrey
 - Sutton
 - Tower Hamlets



*Visit our website for the latest branch information - www.autism.org.uk/branchesengland.

We'd like you to join us

We are the leading charity in the UK for people with autism (including Asperger syndrome) and their families. We provide information, support and pioneering services and campaign for a world in which people with autism get to live the life they choose.

We could not do this without the help of our members, volunteers and supporters.

If you would like to receive regular information on autism and receive our membership magazine sign up now at www.autism.org.uk/membership.

To sign up as a member, to volunteer, to take part in one of our great fundraising events or to make a donation call us on: **0808 800 1050**.

Contact us to find out about referrals and services:

London & South East Services

T: **020 3326 1200**

E: se.services@nas.org.uk

W: www.autism.org.uk/se-services

Nationwide services

T: **0117 974 8430**

E: services@nas.org.uk

The National Autistic Society

393 City Road

London EC1V 1NG

Switchboard: **+44 (0)20 7833 2299**

Autism Helpline: **0808 800 4104**

Minicom: **0845 070 4003**

Fax: **020 7833 9666**

Email: nas@nas.org.uk

Website: www.autism.org.uk