

Link ~ Up

No. 98 September 2007

Chair's Report July 2007

This has been a year of steady progress for the LAS. Membership continues to increase and we are providing an expanding service to our members through Link-Up, the helpline, family support work and the excellent meetings and activities organised by local groups throughout the county.

As you will be aware, part of my focus over the last year has been to plan for my retirement. Significant progress has now been made. Debbie Hudson has taken over the maintenance of the databases of families and professionals, which also involves printing out the 1000+ labels for Link-Up.

Carole Heubeck has agreed to take over Link-Up, subject to finding a new treasurer. We flagged this up in the June edition and we have an offer from our current auditor to take on the treasurer's post from Carole. This will be my last edition of Link-Up and I am very happy to be leaving it in such capable hands. Please send contribution for the next Link-Up to Carole by the end of November by email if possible to:

carole@heubeck.freemove.co.uk

I am happy to continue to run the 100 club for the time being, and to undertake a regular update of the Adult Directory of services. Please contact me if you would like a copy of Directory when I have completed the update.

We need to explore the possibility of the helpline being the collective responsibility of several people and it is also important that the LAS continues to be represented on the City and County Autism forums. And of course, we need a secretary and a chair!

It seems to me that "the LAS" is only the sum of its parts. The separate groups which collectively make up the LAS are all largely autonomous, organising their own finances and activities. The role of the LAS is to provide a channel of communication between the groups and to our members. We also have a crucial role in lobbying statutory services for improved provision for autistic people of all ages and their families.

Many thanks to everyone for your hard work in the past year.

Lindy Hardcastle

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100 Club

Winners for the last three months are June: Mrs Hefferin No 179. July: No 52, Muriel Tranter, August: Linda Smith, No 92

Thanks to all our members. To join the Club, call Lindy.



Useful Contacts



Leicestershire Autistic Society

Treasurer: Carole Heubeck, 5 Grey Crescent, Newtown Linford, Leics. LE6 0AA Tel: (01530) 244790

Chair/ Helpline: Lindy Hardcastle, 31 Flaxfield Close, Groby, Leics. Tel: (0116) 291 6958 e-mail lindy@flaxfield.demon.co.uk

Red Cross Advocacy and Family Support: Anne Lewis 0116 2710359 / 07921 492431

PDA Contact: Alison Mann 01509 561505

Jigsaw Contacts: Chair: Gillian Wisdish, 82 Lime Avenue, Groby, Leics. LE6 0EN Tel: (0116) 287 6747

Jigsaw Support Worker: Jenny Cornwell Tel 07958 235015

Asperger Syndrome Support Group: Chair: Shelagh Wilson Tel. 0116 270 1074 email shelagh.m.h.wilson@btopenworld.com Website: aspergerleics.org.uk

Monday Club Project Manager: email themondayclub@hotmail.co.uk

Chair: Mrs. Jenny Fisher email – jenfisher@btinternet.com Tel. 0116 2595351

Oakham/Melton SAC Club : contact: Kay Smith Tel. 01572 770765.

Loughborough ASD Group : contact: Carole Heubeck, 5 Grey Crescent, Newtown Linford, Leics. LE6 0AA Tel: (01530) 244790

Rutland and Melton Support Group: contact Carole Gamble 01664 434502

Market Harborough Support Group: contact Yasmin Delargy home 0116 279 2419, mobile: 07763823282

Birchwood Support group: Contact Lesley Herbert 01664 565155

Castle Donington Support Group Contact Jane Hall 07870 688973

Reality Support and activities for children and families, Contact Leisa Smith 078794 28553

Activity Club Contact: Jane Hall 07870 688973

Saturday Swimming Sessions at Bosworth Community College: Josh Wilson 07950 379447 email

josh.leicesterstride.co.uk

Children's Services

Leicestershire Educational Psychology Service: 0116-2845100.

Leicester City Educational Psychology Service: (0116) 221 1200

Leicestershire Autism Outreach Team: Contact George Thomas. (01530) 513600

Leicestershire Pre-school Support Worker: Jane Mansfield, Tel.(01530) 513600

Leicester City Learning and Autism Support Team: Tel: (0116) 225 4800

Rutland Autism Outreach: 01572 758496

Parent and Carers' Council: Tel. 07968 857598 e-mail enquiries@parentcarercouncil.co.uk.

Red Cross Family Support Centre: Anne Payne, Red Cross Family Support Centre, 54 Kenilworth Drive, Oadby. Tel: (0116) 271 035

Services for Adults with Autism in Leicestershire:

Fosse Autism Service: Chris Howell, Leicester Frith Hospital, Groby Road, Leicester. Tel: (0116) 225 5335

NAS, Grovebrook House Resource Centre: Brook Street, Whetstone, Leics. LE8 6LA Tel: (0116) 286 6956

LEAT 182 London Road, Leicester, LE2 1ND Tel 0116 2541664 e-mail: carolhunt@btconnect.com leat@btconnect.com

National Autistic Society (NAS): Helpline: 0845 070 4004 email autismhelpline@nas.org.uk

NAS Regional Office: Ester Vickers, Regional Co-ordinator, Central Region, Castle Heights, 4th floor, 72 Maid Marian Way, Nottingham NG1 6BJ Tel: (0115) 911 3360 Befriending Scheme: Gillian Keeling email Gillian.Keeling@nas.org.uk Tel. 0116 236 7524.

Local Authority-run Schools with Autism Units:

West Gate School, Glenfield Road, Leicester Tel: 0116 285 6181
Maplewell Hall School, Maplewell Road, Woodhouse Eaves, Leics. Tel: 01509 890237

Newbold Verdon County Primary School, Dragon Lane, Newbold Verdon, Leics. Tel: 01455 82236
Birch Wood School (Melton Area Special School) Grange Drive, Melton, LE13 1HA Tel. 01664 483340

Netherhall School, Netherhall Road, Leicester LE 1 5TS Tel. 0116 2417258

Vale of Catmose College, Cold Overton Road, LE15 6ND Tel 01572 771674

Support in Secondary Schools

We fought long and hard against the changes in the way support for pupils with special needs is funded. We felt we won the arguments, but inevitably lost the battle. The local authorities went ahead with their plans to delegate block funds to schools on the basis of a formula instead of the funding being related to the needs of specific children as set out in their statements.

We are now seeing the detrimental effects of this policy on support for children on the autistic spectrum. Your child's statement may say he needs 25 hours of support, and the primary school will claim that he is receiving that support. What they actually mean is that there is a LSA in the classroom for 25 hours, but he or she will be supporting all the other children with special needs in the class, often as well as providing general classroom support. The advice of the Local Authorities to schools was to "double up" their special needs pupils to save money. I recently helped a parent with her long battle to get a statement for her daughter. When the statement finally came through, it said she needed 25 hours of support. We asked the school how this would be delivered and were told that it would be by the LSA already working in the classroom.

In secondary schools, the situation is even worse, as there is often not one LSA per class, but one per subject, so your child, along with any others in the class with a range of special needs, will be receiving support from a different LSA every lesson.

This situation was highlighted recently by the parent of a child due to start secondary school in September 2008. He has a wonderful LSA in his current primary school who understands his needs and has helped him to make significant progress both academically and socially. His parents, and the primary school, want the LSA to go to secondary school with him, but they have been told this is impossible – the school has a full complement of LSAs and cannot employ another specifically for this child, as he will not generate extra funding. His parents are convinced he will not cope with secondary school with a variety of new LSAs who do not necessarily have any experience of ASD and who will also be supporting all the other children in the class. He is too able for special school, and he suffers severely from travel sickness which means that daily travel is not an option. His parents may have to, very reluctantly, look for an expensive out of county residential placement.

If you are having problems with your child's support in school, or if you have found a solution in your school, please get in touch with me so that I can feed this information back to the local authorities.

Lindy Hardcastle

SATURDAY SOFT PLAY DATES

JIGSAW is considering organizing and subsidizing Saturday Soft Play dates in the Market Harborough-Wigston area for children on the Autistic Spectrum and their siblings. This activity would cost families approximately £2-3 per child.

We need feedback or interest in this type of activity before the Soft Play venue can be booked. Ideally to begin before November.

If interested please contact Jenny Cornwell as soon as possible with your queries/comments/suggestions at 07958 235015 or email me at cornwellsuk@aol.com.

The Monday Club

The Monday Club continues to flourish. There are now 48 members, 3 members of staff and 5 volunteers. Chris Covill, the Project Manager leads this team. The Programme of Activities for members now includes 2 options each Monday many of which are visits outside the Club. The members will be visiting the Sculpture Exhibition in the Botanical Gardens early in August with a guided tour by one of the Garden Team. Starting this Autumn there will be specialist visits for small groups of members to Concerts and Lectures with the Leicester Literary and Philosophical Society of which the Club is now a member. Back at the base in the YMCA - computers, scrabble, member lead poetry sessions, art evenings and the baked potato evenings are very popular. Our oldest member is 57 and the ages range down to 18 – there is something for everyone but we are always ready to take up new ideas. The Club has applied for Ltd. Co. status and this is currently with Company House and a Business Plan of future development is being prepared.

This year the Club reaches its 10th Anniversary and will be celebrating this during the 'Open Evening' to be held at the YMCA on Monday 24th. September 5.30pm. to 8.30pm.

If you would like to come please contact :-

Margaret Hopkins 0116 2363080 or <bob.hopkins1@tesco.net> (no attachments please)

The contact details for the Club remain through Chris Covill the Project Manager –

Please contact Chris for the Open Evening Activities.

themondayclub@hotmail.com

Mobile 07804671783 and leave a message or write to-

The Monday Club, c/o Leicester Central YMCA,

7 East Street, Leicester LE1 6EY

The Monday Club is currently funded by City and County Social Services Departments and The Chase Trust, our thanks to them.

Jenny Fisher,

Chairman Management Committee.

Jigsaw Playscheme 2007

This year's scheme was held for two weeks from 23rd July to 3rd August at Guthlaxton College, Wigston. The children who attended were aged between 5 and 11 years and all had an ASD. As usual they enjoyed many and varied activities including horse riding swimming and a trip to Twin Lakes. At the scheme base they played with puzzles, soft play and ball pool, parachute games, art and craft, musical activities, dressing up with multi-cultural and other clothing. They could choose to play in a safely enclosed outdoor area with sand and water play, outdoor toys and games.

The staff as usual were very competent, most were experienced in working with children with an ASD and many had worked on the scheme before. They worked at a ratio of 1:1 with an allocated child each day.

If you are a parent of a child who attended the scheme and have any comment to make, positive or otherwise, I would be interested to hear from you. My details are on the contacts page.

If you would like your child to be considered for next year's scheme, please watch out for details in Link-Up in early 2008. If you work with children, particularly with SEN and would be interested in working on next year's scheme, please contact me as soon as you are able and I will let you have more information

Gillian Wisdich (Chair of Jigsaw and Playscheme Co-ordinator)

Reality

Reality holds monthly support group meetings on Thursday mornings from 11:00am to 1:00 pm at the Parkfield School on Pindar road, New Parks. The dates for the next meetings in 2007 are: September 6th. October 4th. November 1st. The November meeting will be attended by a Therapist from Bowen Therapy who will be talking to the group about the services they provide to disabled children

No formal diagnoses of ASD are required to attend and anyone is welcome. The meetings are always well attended and everyone is encouraged to participate. Parents can share their concerns or address any issues they may have, openly at the meeting, privately with each other, or with any of the guest speakers or visitors from within the ASD community who regularly attend Reality's meetings. Childcare workers are available to entertain your children and members will have access to the toy and book library.

Each year, as a group, Reality provides opportunities for various outings throughout the school holidays as part of its 'pro-active' approach to introducing ASD children to social settings. This year's first and last trips of the school summer holidays were to Drayton Manor, in between which, trips to Alton Towers (for which we managed to catch the first rain free day of the Summer!) and a day trip to Mablethorpe were available to our members. A visit to Cadbury world is planned for October and at some stage this year we intend to arrange a visit to the 'Think Tank' museum. The

first event for 2008 will be the 'Christmas Panto' in January. All of our members will be advised of the dates when they have been confirmed.

Special thanks to all of our friends at 'JIGSAW' for funding for the annual passes for Twinlakes in Melton Mowbray. By now, all of the groups members who requested them should have received confirmation from Leisa and have had the opportunity to use them by now. 110 passes have been requested for the children, their siblings and their parents / carers and can be used any number of times throughout the year.

Reality's 'Spectacular Annual Pre Christmas Gala Charity Evening Event' will be on November the 10th at 'Goals'.

The entrance fee includes the famous endless buffet, the best entertainment from Reality's resident singer, resident dancer, and tame DJ who together have made these events such a success in the past, and! a raffle ticket with which you can walk away with one of the many excellent prizes available.

Last year's November 'S.A.P.C.G.C. double E.' raised over £1600 for the group's activities and tickets sold out very quickly.

Any raffle prizes or other donations for any of Reality's charity events will always be gratefully received as these are the life blood of charitable evenings. Without them voluntary groups like ours would struggle to exist.

Members will be notified of any other

events and the information will also be available in future publications of LINK-UP.

Should anyone require any further information about Reality, have a better name for the charity evening, or wish to be added to the group's database, please contact Leisa Smith on...

07912850517 or via e-mail at leisa_smith3@hotmail.com

Jigsaw Coffee Mornings

Jigsaw support group for families with children on the autistic spectrum, meets on the third Wednesday of the month from 10 – 12 am. at the Red Cross Family Support Centre in Oadby. The next three dates are:

19th September – Speaker from the City Early Bird scheme.

17th October – Speaker from Westcotes House

21st November – Fundraising morning

For more details contact Gillian Wisdich (0116 2876747)

Dr Chris Lewis (CAMHS)

Congratulations to Dr Lewis, child psychiatrist from Westcotes House on his recent retirement.

The LAS have presented him with a book token in recognition of our gratitude for his help, advice and dedication in working with our children and their families affected by Autistic Spectrum Disorder.

We all wish you a happy and peaceful retirement

Anne Lewis on behalf of the LAS

Melton & District Autism Support Group,

For all parents & carers of an autistic child /children

We meet at Birch Wood Special School in Melton Mowbray (By kind permission.)

On a Tuesday morning 9.45 to about 11.30

Our future dates are as follows:-

2007

- September 18th
- October 16th
- November 20th
- December 18th

2008

- January 15th
- February 19th
- March 11th
- April 15th
- May 20th
- June 17th
- July 15th

Lesley Herbert (see Contacts)

Sponsored by The British Red Cross and 'Miracles To Believe In' Working in Partnership

HALLOWEEN PARTY

27th October 2007

Newtown Linford Village Hall

2 – 4pm for 5 to 10 age group

5 – 7pm for 11 to 16 age group

There will be a Bouncy Castle, Large Bouncy Slide

Plus food, and entertainment in the other room with a magician!

This is a special party for ASD youngsters and their siblings/friends.

Come in fancy dress

(but no problem if you don't like to dress up!)

To book a place contact Ann Lewis Autism Specific Family Support Worker on the following number 07921 492431 and leave a message

A refundable deposit of £5 will be required to secure a place and avoid disappointment

Places limited – first come – first served

If anyone has any news, views or comments to make about their own experiences, good or bad, we will do our best to include them in the newsletter,

As a general rule, items are published in the next newsletter unless space does not permit, in which case,

timebound or urgent items take priority. No items are edited for content unless space does not permit or the contents are potentially litigious. Other changes are made only with the permission of the author.

The views expressed in any article are solely those of the author and not

necessarily those of the editor, committee or any other part of the Leicestershire Autistic Society.

Deadline for next edition: 30th November 2007. Items to Carole Heubeck by e-mail if at all possible carole@heubeck.freemove.co.uk

Asperger Syndrome Support Group

At our meeting in September we will be welcoming two people who are conducting research into AS and are looking for help from both you and your child. I have already circulated the details of one researcher; the other works with Professor Brugha and will be explaining her planned research. The meeting will be at the Buckminster Road Baptist Church Hall and will start at 7.15pm. Please come along and see if you can help them.

As you know we have been concerned for some time about the number of people who are turning up for monthly meetings at Buckminster Road. Most of the people who attend are regular members and whilst they have on-going concerns about their son or daughter they do have an understanding of the condition and know where and how to get help. These parents are very willing to help those who have newly diagnosed children as they say they have had a great deal of help from attending meetings and would now like to give something back, having found help from talking to others. Meetings we believe provide a means of linking up with others who really understand what it is to have someone with an ASD diagnosis in the family.

We are however not attracting many new members, for a variety of reasons, and have therefore been considering our options. I recently wrote to all 130 members on our data base

to ask for their ideas. Gold stars to the five who replied. I am aware that some members cannot get to the meetings because they cannot get out in the evenings because of baby sitting problems or because they find the venue difficult to get to. At the moment I do not see any way for the Support Group to hold meetings at other venues or at other times. There are of course a number of other groups in the city and around the county that parents of younger children can access. Older people with AS of course can access the Monday Club and by the time children reach the age when they can access the Club parents have learned to deal with the issues. It is hoped that the Monday Club will be setting up satellite venues in different parts of the county so that those who find difficulty traveling can get to a meeting nearer their home. It may be in time that parents of older children can attend meetings at a Monday Club venue.

I shall be proposing at the next meeting in September that we hold meetings bi-monthly (every other month). Meetings will continue to be held at Buckminster Road from 7.15pm and will be on:

12 November 2007;

14 January 2008;

10 March 2008;

12 May 2008.

Shelagh Wilson

Chair

Treasurer's Report for LinkUp

Membership fees for April 2007 to March 2008 have now dried up to a trickle for which the bank tellers are exceedingly grateful! I had to keep a close eye on them as they were not processing all the sheets each time – can't blame with the number of cheques there was!

£800 has been donated on behalf of the Florence Turner Trust - we have been very lucky to be the recipients of these large donations for quite a few years now and it makes all the difference to a group such as ours which relies on subscriptions and donations.

Following on from the fundraising that Anne Lewis's mother did for us on her birthday recently when she requested donations to us instead of presents, one of her friends who lives nearby, Mrs Elsie Adams, decided to support us as well. Elsie, who has an autistic granddaughter herself had been saving up her loose coinage in a jam jar for charity. She decided that she would donate her proceeds to us. Wasn't this a wonderful idea – none of us would miss the odd coin that was in our purse. If she inspires you to do the same we would be very grateful – as it is surprising how our loose coinage all adds up! Many thanks to Elsie for thinking of us.

Please think of us when your work colleagues/employers or school are looking for a local charity to support – we would be very grateful.

Carole Heubeck, Treasurer

This year, the Mental Capacity Act 2005 comes into force. Here, Mia Rosenblatt, NAS Policy and Research Officer, looks at its provisions and what, it will mean for people with autism.

Calling the shots

The Mental Capacity Act 2005 provides the legal framework for acting and making decisions on behalf of individuals who lack the mental capacity to make particular decisions themselves and applies to people in England and Wales. The Act covers adults over 18, but a lot of it also covers 16-17 year-olds and some of it applies to those under 16. It puts the individual who lacks capacity at the centre of decision-making and emphasises the need to support people to make their own decisions.

People have the right to make eccentric or unwise decisions

The Act applies to everyone who looks after, or cares for, someone who lacks capacity to make particular decisions for themselves. Certain categories of people, including doctors and social workers, will have to have regard to the Code of Practice but the code will be useful for everyone. The NAS supports the placing into law of protections for people who lack capacity. During the development of the policy, as the Bill passed through Parliament and as the accompanying Code of Practice was produced, we campaigned to ensure that the needs of people with an autistic spectrum disorder (ASD), who lacked capacity, were accounted for.

The big five

There are five main principles that underpin the Act. These are:

1. A presumption of capacity. Every adult has the right to make his or her own decisions and must be assumed to have capacity to do so unless it is proved otherwise;
2. People must be supported to make their own decisions and given all appropriate help before anyone concludes that they cannot make their own decisions;
3. People must retain the right to make what might be seen as eccentric or unwise decisions;
4. Best interests. Anything done for, or on behalf of, people without capacity must be in their best interests - the Act provides a 'best interests' checklist; and
5. Least restrictive intervention. Anything done for, or on behalf of, people without capacity should be the least restrictive of their basic rights and freedoms.

What does it mean not to have capacity?

A lack of capacity cannot be based just on a person's age, appearance or a condition. To decide whether an individual has the mental capacity to make a particular decision at a particular time, the Act sets out a single clear 'decision-specific' test.

More protection

The Act also establishes additional protections for people in particularly vulnerable situations. These include:

1. The establishment of the Independent Mental Capacity Advocate (IMCA) service. This means that for people who lack capacity and have no family or friends, they will have an IMCA to represent and support them with major, potentially life-changing decisions, eg in relation to serious medical treatment or about where somebody is going to live.
2. A new criminal offence of ill-treatment or neglect of a person who lacks capacity.

As well as the above, the Act also establishes a new court (the Court of Protection) and a new public official (the public guardian) to protect people who lack capacity and to supervise and support those making decisions on their behalf.

The Act also changes what measures people can take to plan ahead for a time when they may lack capacity.

For details, visit: www.autism.org.uk/campaign

For more information, visit: www.dca.gov.uk/menincap/legis.htm or, to receive updates from the Department for Constitutional Affairs, subscribe by email: makingdecisions@dca.gsi.gov.uk

This article was first published in the National Autistic Society's Magazine - "Communication" which is sent to all NAS members. To join the NAS telephone 020 7903 3563 or visit their website www.nas.org.uk to access a wealth of information.

How to Do Person Centred Plans

You've learnt about recovery and mental health,

Now learn the skills to make person centred plans!

Volunteer trainers from Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland support this one-day training course. It's free to attend and is open to anyone who has already done our Good Practice in Mental Health training or the Introduction to Recovery and Person Centred Planning.

Places for this event are limited so book Now

Aims of the course

1. To reflect on the values underpinning person centred planning
2. To develop the skills needed for person centred planning including questioning, listening and graphic facilitation
3. To introduce and practice using three person centred planning tools

31st October 2007, The Towers, Leicester

5th November 2007, Glenfield

All Joint Training Group events are FREE to anyone who wishes to attend them. Training is open to ANYONE with an interest in mental health, as a worker, volunteer, service user, carer or member of the public.

The Joint Training Group actively encourages service users and carers to attend their training and can help with transport costs. Refreshments and lunch are provided.

Call Bernadette Somerset on 0116 295 6946 to book your place

Free Training

Good Practice in Mental Health

People who work in areas where mental health is a concern, people who use mental health services, people who work in mental health services, people who look after someone with a mental health problem, ANYONE interested in mental health.

25th September 2007 in Leicester New Parks

15th October 2007 Leicester General Hospital

20th November 2007 in Leicester City

23rd January 2007 in Leicester City

5th February 2007 Leicester General Hospital

3rd March 2007 Leicester General Hospital

All sessions are 9:30-4:00

To book places or get more information,

**call Bernadette on
0116 295 6946**

Loughborough Support Group

We are a small friendly mixed group of parents who meet on the last Monday of the month at 7.30pm at John Storer House in Loughborough. New members are always welcome.

Maggie McCormack from Sinclair's Solicitors (in Birmingham), Leading Experts in Education Law gave us a very informative talk in June which we all greatly enjoyed. Maggie had rung before hand as she had severe doubts anyone would want to come out on such a bad day due to the very heavy rain and flooding for her talk – she needn't have worried - it was our best turnout for quite a while!

On the 24th September we welcome Elaine Cummings, from Leicester-shire County Council's Valuing People Team) who will be talking to us about Person Centred Planning. This is being used in schools for all students from the age of 13 onwards. She will be explaining what it is, what changes there will be and what it will mean for us and our children..

Charles Huddleston from CLASP – The Carers Centre will be coming to talk to us on Monday 29th October. Charles is always a very entertaining and informative speaker and a fount of useful information. Having a older son on the Spectrum he is a very useful person to turn to for advice.

26th November will be our end of the year Social Evening. Last year we celebrated with goodies and grape juice – we know how to have a good time – even when we are driving afterwards! Had to wait till I got home for my glass of wine!

Please come along and join us for a coffee and friendly chat.

Carole Heubeck 01530 244790

Rawlins Summer Playscheme and Activity Week for children with an Autistic Spectrum Disorder - Lynda's Legacy Lives On!

This was the sixth year for the Summer Playscheme and Activity Week at Rawlins, organised for the first time by ASPIRE: Lifeskills, who nervously but excitedly attempted to step into the very big shoes of the Scheme's dynamic founder, Lynda Lowe, formerly of Autism Outreach, Leicestershire. Consultations with Lynda - usually over a meal and one or two drinks! - provided invaluable guidance and insights into her previous years' experience. Not only this, but we were extremely fortunate in 'inheriting' many of the staff from previous years, which was great for returning children, but fantastic for us as complete novices in this area!

This year, the Scheme allocated 26 staff to care for over 50 youngsters aged 5 – 16 years, who were split into four groups that held age-appropriate activities. The younger groups had Biscuit and Cake Decorating and Arts and Crafts sessions, the older groups had outdoor sessions such as Canoeing and Archery, and all groups had great fun in the extremely popular swimming sessions, and also enjoyed the highly-creative Music activity.

One of activity highlights of the week was undoubtedly a Fire Engine visit arranged with Leicestershire Fire Service, who were absolutely fantastic with all the children, allowing them to try on uniforms, sit in the driver's seat, and operate their hoses – under strict supervision of course! We owe a huge debt of gratitude to Paul Brown at the Fire Service; through its Rudolph Fund's Christmas Collection, a very generous and much-appreciated contribution of £1,500 towards the Scheme was made.

Another highlight was the Magic Day on Friday, where all youngsters were able to watch and learn a variety of magic tricks – including making balloon animals - for an afternoon show for parents and carers. Many thanks to Partytime Supplies for making this such a fun and exciting finale to the week! It was really wonderful to see the expressions on the adults' faces (staff included!), as they saw their own and other children proudly participate in dazzling and tricking them with their newly-found skills (or not, as was sometimes the case!).

We would like to say a really big "Thank you" to everyone who was involved in helping the Scheme get underway - it meant so much to us. Further thanks go especially to Lynda for trusting us with her 'baby', and the wonderful 'inherited' staff members, who were fantastic with the children, and very patient with us during the whole week. We also thank those new members of staff who did a wonderful job all week – we hope you all meant it when you committed to next year's Scheme!

Our final thanks are to the parents/carers (especially for the cards, gifts and kind words of support at the end of the week), but particularly all the youngsters, who trusted and allowed us to get to know them – they all seemed to have a really good time! All staff walked away with some very special moments and many fond memories of a rewarding and successful week.

To contact Aspire:

Mobiles: 0785 4918579 / 0785 4918575 / 0790 3137897

email: aspirelifeskills@hotmail.co.uk

Charnwood Saturday Club for 5 – 19 year olds

We are delighted to say that due to response from the last Link-Up that the Charnwood Saturday Club is now definitely taking place. There are still at the time of writing a few places still available

Details of the Saturday Club are as follows:

Venue - Shelthorpe School, Woodthorpe Road, Loughborough.

10am to 1 pm on 12 Saturdays per year commencing September and then one session per month.

Cost - Parents are asked to contribute £10 per child per session. (Concessions available for families receiving Income Support).

Places - 20 places are available for children on the autistic spectrum.

5 places for siblings not on the spectrum

Activities - Children will take part in a number of activities in small groups.

The Saturday Club activities will be led by Aspire staff, who are fully experienced in accommodating the needs of children on the autistic spectrum. The level of supervision will be determined by the needs of individual children, 1 to 1 is available where needed. A snack will be provided during the session.

If the demand exceeds places, further applicants will be placed on a waiting list and offered a place when a vacancy arises. After the first session, we are asking parents to commit to taking up their requested places for the next 3 months.

The Saturday Club sessions are provided by Aspire Life Skills with the backing and support of "Miracles to Believe In" – a charity for children with autism. If you are interested and wish more details or an application form, please contact Eileen from Miracles to Believe on 01509 506126 or email: eileen112@btinternet.com

Miracles to believe in

**Free Film Shows at The
Century Theatre,
Snibston Discovery
Park, Coalville –
Monday 20th October
at 2pm**

The next show at Snibston has been moved from Friday 24th to Monday 20th October due to Halloween Celebrations taking place on the weekend of the 25th/26th October. The actual film has yet to be arranged but will be suitable for all the family. Please come along and bring your family and friends to enjoy a lovely relaxed afternoon in comfortable historic surroundings.

Our last film was 'Arthur and the Invisibles' which was very enjoyable. We had a lovely welcome from Keith Pare and Bill the projectionist who have worked hard to help bring us some fantastic films for our children (and us) to enjoy. Unfortunately – a rare complaint this summer – the weather was so lovely and hot that we had very few families attend this time - for once I wanted rain - to bring everyone to the show!

We do not have to pay admission rates because we are going to the film and are taken straight through to the theatre

If you have any enquiries about visiting Snibston call their information line on 01530 278 444. It is also worth noting that they let one carer in free with a disabled child if you wish to visit it on other occasions.

Woburn Safari Park 24th October

The Woburn Safari Park trip has been fully booked up now – I will be sending out letters with the full details to those of you who contacted me after the last newsletter by the middle of September. We have a small waiting list in case some families who provisionally booked cannot make it on the day – if you wish to be added to the reserve list let me know.

For further information on either the Snibston Film Shows or the Safari Park contact Carole Heubeck on 01530 244790

Database and Information Service

Information event

Thursday 4th October

4.30pm-8.30pm

West Gate School,
Glenfield Road,
Leicester

Should the Leicestershire Autistic Society become Leicestershire branch of the National Autistic Society?

At our last meeting Kim Higgins came to talk to the Committee at our request to talk about whether it would benefit our Members if the LAS was to become part of a National Organisation rather than remain as an independent Charity.

Originally the LAS was an affiliated Group of the NAS, but a few years ago, the NAS decided to look at creating their own Branches while still offering support and advice to these Branches. This did not change our relationship and the LAS continued to have a good strong relationship with the local NAS Regional Office in Nottingham.

The LAS Committee would now like to consult members about changing our status from being an independent Charity to being part of a National Charity.

If LAS made these changes, our individual Groups would need to consider whether to continue under the one umbrella we have now (but as part of the NAS) or to run as autonomous Groups themselves.

Our Monday Club have themselves decided to amicably split from the LAS and are forming themselves into their own Charity to enable them to apply for funding and to avoid the LAS Committee Members being legally accountable for the decisions that the Monday Club themselves make.

To help formulate your views, the advantages and disadvantages of changing status are as follows:

Advantages of becoming part of NAS

- Regional Support Team
- Branch Manual
- Free NAS membership (for Officers/Treasurers)
- £200 on set-up
- Branch bank account
- Branch Helpline telephone equipment (and phone bills paid)
- NAS Email account/address
- Branch network meetings
- Training (Finance/Telephone Support/Fundraising etc.)
- Discounts on NAS goods and services (Publications/conferences & events etc.)
- Publications catalogue and updates
- Free sample of new publications
- Free NAS Fundraising materials
- Autism Update from the Info dept.
- Copies of all new info/fact sheets
- Communication Magazine
- Free leaflets, letterheads/comp slips
- Insurance cover for branch activities
- Access to Bupa counselling service
- Gift Aid claimed by NAS on branches behalf
- Campaigning 'toolkit'
- Branch Website provided
- Local NAS member lists
- Subs from NAS members (£7 or £8)
- No need to register with the Charity Commission
- Info/updates on seminars, workshops, Help!, social groups etc. in local area
- NAS name to fundraise with
- NAS name to lobby/campaign with

Disadvantages of changing status

- Adherence to the branch rules (and the liability that comes with it)
- Enhanced CRB check for key volunteers
- Fundraising restrictions
- Bank account set-up and changes (red tape, delays etc.)
- Financial rules (£500 cheque limit, 2 signatures etc.)
- Submission of B1 returns
- Limits of NAS branding/logo
- Cannot employ staff
- There would not be any problem with existing members continuing to receive LinkUp The Committee would need to comprise of 5 paid up members of the National Autistic Society but there would be no pressure on existing members to have to pay the NAS subscription fee – although I am aware that like myself many already are.
- We would welcome your comments and views regarding this major change to the LAS. Please contact Lindy Hardcastle via email or phone. (See contacts list.) Lindy is preparing for retirement from being such an active committee member so will be a more independent contact. You are welcome to attend the next committee meeting in January – when we will be taking a vote regarding this issue - more details in the next Link-Up. I will be taking over as the Link-Up editor from the next edition and would welcome letters both for and against the proposed change to print in the next edition.
- Carole Heubeck LAS and NAS member