06/09/2021

**Adult social and support group information – Aldershot**

Dear interested people,

The aim of this letter is to provide information about the Aldershot adult support / social group organised by the National Autistic Society in the Southwest Surrey / North East Hampshire area.

**Who can attend the group?**

This free group is for autistic adults of all ages and gender. It is for adults who wish to discuss issues relating to autism, share experiences, and meet other adults with similar experiences. To attend the group, you need to live within Surrey or the North East Hampshire clinical commissioning group area (which includes Aldershot, Fleet, Farnborough and Farnham).

This group is not a “drop in”, so you need to have made contact with us before attending. However, once you have registered your interest in attending by completing the ASPIRE form, you may attend whenever you choose. You do not need to be referred to the group by someone else.

**When the group meets**

The group meets once a month on a Monday evening from 6.30 pm to 9 pm.

The dates for the remainder of 2021 are:

September 13th

October 11th

November 15th

December 13th

**Topics**

Topics are chosen by those attending and thus far in 2021 we have discussed An Update over the Holidays, Autism at Work, Anxiety, Job Interview Questions, and topics suggested but not yet covered, are How Autism Affects Employment, Overlapping Issues such as ADHD, Executive Function/Dysfunction, Employee Rights and the Disability Act, Mindfulness, Relationships and Closeness and Sharing Difficulties and Coping in Covid (May). There was also an initial discussion of having an occasional Games Night, which we need to discuss again. The topics are really up to the group.

**Where the group meets**

We meet at:

The Old Ford Pub, Lynchford Road, North Camp, Hampshire. GU12 5QA.

The pub is directly next to North Camp railway station.



We will be using the private function room in the back of the pub. To reach the Function Room, after entering the pub, go around the right side of the bar, through the hall and to the rear of the pub.

If you feel nervous about entering alone, please let us know and someone will try to meet you outside.

* Drinks and crisps can be purchased from the bar. (Freda or someone kind will assist if desired).
* The pub does not serve food on a Monday evening.

It has been hard to find a venue for this group and we will periodically review the suitability of the pub as a venue - particularly in relation to peoples’ experiences of travel.

**Who will be supporting the group?**

Freda Minton from the National Autistic Society will be supporting the group. There may be occasional guest speakers who will be briefed on group confidentiality.

**Contacting us about the group**

To contact Freda on the evening of the group please either phone or text [(07592) 038221](tel:+447592038221). Please note that this phone is switched off at other times, though checked for messages a few times a week. The email address is aspire.groups@nas.org.uk is the contact email for all our adult groups. It would be helpful to put the group name in the subject line of the email.

**What happens at the meetings?**

The Guildford and Aldershot groups are modelled in roughly the same way. In these we briefly outline some thoughts around key issues which help ensure the smooth functioning of the groups. When new members attend, there are introductions, confidentiality, language, alcohol, heating, room lighting, raising concerns, emergency exits, etc. We start with a social time then we have a discussion around the topic. We generally use a projector with some illustrative slides to aid the discussion.

We understand that not everyone is comfortable talking in a group so the discussion is facilitated by Freda and members are most warmly welcomed to contribute but will usually not be specifically asked to contribute unless they have been in the group long enough that it’s known for a fact that they would not mind being asked.

**Travel to and from the group**

Freda will arrive at the venue at 6:15 so people can arrive any time between 615 and 7 o’clock

**Travelling by car**

There is free parking in the pub car park for those arriving by car

**Trains**

There are trains arriving at North Camp station direct from Blackwater, Farnborough North and Ash stations which arrive between 615 and 630. There are direct connections to the station from Aldershot and Farnham.

Train journeys from Camberley and Frimley go direct to Ash Vale station which is a 10-minute walk to North camp station (we understand not everyone would be comfortable making the journey on foot.)

A direct train leaves North Camp for Ash Vale station at 2034 and a direct train leaves North Camp for Farnborough/Blackwater at 2023.

Trains leave Ash Vale for Camberley and Frimley at 4 minutes and 34 minutes past the hour.

**Buses**

Unfortunately, it seems that buses in the evening travelling through North Camp are few and far between. The number 1 route operated by Stagecoach appears to go to North Camp, but not frequently and from selected locations. Here is a link to the timetable which is under the tab Departures and Arrivals:

<https://www.gwr.com/plan-journey/stations-and-routes/north-camp>

Please look at the timetable for times, as they may change occasionally.

The one train which stops at North Camp is the Reading-Redhill train. The stops include Redhill, Reigate, Dorking Deepdene, Gomshall, Chilworth, Shalford, Guildford, Ash, North Camp, Farnborough North, Blackwater, Sandhurst, Crowthorne, Wokingham, Reading.

I hope this information is helpful and please do email Freda Minton using aspire.groups@nas.org.uk for further information.

Best wishes,

Freda Minton

Aspire Groups Coordinator