



NEWSLETTER

Autism Acceptance Flash Mob

By Sarah Faulkner

On Saturday 5th April 2014, the Brighton & Hove Autism Acceptance Group held a 'flash mob' in the city's central Jubilee Library. The event was organised to celebrate World Autism Awareness Day which was on April 2nd. A 'flash mob' is a group of people who assemble suddenly in a public place, perform for a brief period of time and then quickly disperse as if nothing happened.

Attendees of the event performed a simple dance along to the track 'Right Here Right Now' by local artist Fatboy Slim. The dancers wore white t-shirts and many featured the Autism Acceptance Group logo which was designed by Simon Smith, who led the dance. People who happened to be in the library at the time appeared pleasantly surprised to see this spectacle take place and afterwards they gave very positive feedback. Passers-by were given printed information sheets about autism and a staff member of the library spoke on the PA system to inform people that the event had taken place in order to raise awareness of autism in the city. The group received a big round of applause from all in the library. The event was open to anyone on the autistic spectrum and their family, friends and supporters.



LIFE SKILLS COURSES AT ASSERT

For those of you who don't know Assert run two Life Skills Course. Course One covers communication skills, building and managing positive relationships and managing anxiety. Course 2 covers managing stress, organisational skills, household management, managing finances, staying safe, using public transport and health and well being.

The courses consist of group sessions and one-to-one sessions with me on alternate weeks; both are relaxed and informal. Group sessions are based around discussions and activities, so don't worry, I don't stand at the front and lecture. Students are encouraged to contribute as little or as much as they feel able to. One-to-one sessions are created to the specific needs of the students. They can cover anything that might not have been understood in the group session, anything that is related but not covered or practical support that is related. I have helped people with; housing issues, look into joining the gym, make stressful phone calls, joining recruitment agencies and create meal or cleaning schedules to name just a few things. The courses run for 14 group sessions over approximately six months. There will be five or six students in each group. Group sessions for Course One last for 3 hours and Course Two lasts for 3 hours 30 minutes, both are split into three sections with two short breaks. If you are interested in finding out more about the courses, contact me by phone, txt or email. We can arrange a meeting so that you can meet me, find out more about the course, and see the environment where they will be held, before making up your mind. My contact details are: **Email:** lifeskills@assertbh.org.uk **Mobile:** 07879567881 **Office phone:** 01273234850



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By Catherine Neville

More muddy fun for fundraising

By Laura Priestnall

On Saturday 29th March, once again I decided to complete The Major Series in order to raise funds for Assert. The Major Series is a 10-12 km race, filled with many tough obstacles including things like barbed wire to crawl under, tree trunks to climb up and many streams to wade through. You get



incredibly muddy and by the time you finish on the triple water slide, you are very glad it is over! As many members will know, I do actually enjoy this kind of thing as I have been going to British Military Fitness classes for a number of years, but even so the race is hard work. The weather was sunny that day so it was a pleasant experience all round (no, really!) and I am happy to say I did the race 2 minutes quicker than in October 2013. The best thing was that thanks to the generosity of many Assert members, colleagues and supporters, I managed to raise over £200 for the charity. So thank you very much! As this was my 5th Major Series I think I will seek a new challenge for my next fundraising efforts, perhaps a 'normal' 10km race!

I am a great lover of the Assert walks

By Deborah Caulfield

Whenever I receive an email about an Assert walking event, I'm not slow in answering to put my name forward. Why? Because I love the Assert walks that are with a great company of people like myself, who I can relate to and who will make me feel comfortable, where I feel part of a group.

I never like missing the walks because Assert always arrange good walks to super interesting places, both relaxing and adventurous. We trek up the Downs, through forests and along cliffs, where I can really appreciate the environment we live in, plus being with my Assert friends.

As well as getting physical exercise and fresh air, the walks have benefited me in my whole wellbeing, where they make me feel good about myself because socially, the people in the Assert group are like close friends and I end the day with a good night's sleep.

I always feel part of a group instead of remaining on the outside because I have many other people to talk to, where we are like minded as well as having the love for the scenic landscape.



This makes me want to talk about these walks to other people to encourage them to come along. Although I had no fears before coming on the walks because I am a walker, I still wondered whether I would be someone just walking alongside the group, but this wasn't so, I am instead someone walking in the group and feeling part of the group.

Free things to do at Brighton Fringe

May is an exciting time in Brighton, as the Brighton Fringe Festival comes to the city! We've identified a few free things to do we thought the Assert members might enjoy. Events are running between 3rd May and 1st June.

BRIGHTON FRINGE.

Art Fare 3-16 May

at Buses Across Brighton And Hove (Fringe Venue 284)

Students from the University of Brighton in collaboration with Brighton and Hove Bus and Coach Company present 'Art Fare', a two-week exhibition of artistic intervention on public transport.

Tight Modern 2-11 May

at Next to the kissing statue (250 Kings Road)

The Tight Modern is a miniature replica of the iconic Tate Modern and goes on tour every two years. Visited by thousands, we believe it is the world's smallest temporary art gallery.

Odyssey, an Atypical Journey

24 May, 1100-1600

at Community Base

Assert showcases and celebrates life from an autistic spectrum perspective with this fascinating photographic exhibition. Each of the exhibiting artists will use photography to bring insightful and unique imagery to this original show.

Assert Yoga

By Catherine Neville

As many of you know Assert have had some funding to run some Yoga Sessions. These have been really popular and the places filled up really quickly.



The sessions start with students just lying down having chance to unwind from the stresses of their day, focusing on their breathing and how their body is feeling, if there are any aches or pains. Heidi demonstrates simple stretches, twists and balance poses for students to copy. If students are unclear of what to do then it is fine to ask. Heidi is really gentle and approachable. The exercises are simple and she keeps the routine similar each week just changing around one or two poses. Heidi is great at giving alternative variations on all the exercises to make them easier or harder, so the classes are great for all abilities. The session lasts for just over an hour and finishes with lying down on your back again just relaxing. By the end of the session all students say that they feel really relaxed and much happier. Here are some testimonies from people who have attended the sessions:

“ Here is my view of the Yoga classes.

1. *The environment is very friendly and supportive towards everybody.*
 2. *I have enjoyed coming.*
 3. *I recommend them for the above reasons and my other views.*
 4. *The classes have helped me gain a better understanding of yoga and great fitness levels increase.*
 5. *Heidi is very helpful and friendly when working with us.*
 6. *I feel like I have improved my fitness and Yoga levels since the beginning.*
- I hope that this encourages other people to take up Yoga “*

Oliver Pendington

“I went to ASSERT YOGA it initially reminded of The Priory's 'Relaxation Module' which was part of their daily CBT sessions. Happily the negative connotations soon disappeared for me, and I became an inflexible fat bloke rolling around the floor. In the end I really enjoyed being Humpty Dumpty. “

Sean Richardson



'Having been assured that Yoga could be as easy, or difficult, as I wished; and knowing that it would be good for me, anyway: yes, I thought; let's do it!

In a relaxed & welcoming atmosphere, where everyone feels included, Heidi, our instructor, expertly & gracefully demonstrates her 15 years' knowledge of yoga practice; taking us through & explaining each posture, and its benefits. Also exemplifying yoga's underlying philosophy of patience, understanding and being non-judgemental, Heidi gives individual tuition or further explanation, as needed, & always stresses that one should move at one's own pace & not do anything that hurts.

Although only half way through the course, so far, I've already noticed feeling more peaceful, balanced, and better able to concentrate; and consider that these lovely, gentle exercises leave one fitter and more positive in every respect.

Would I recommend yoga? Yes; most definitely!

Martin Pike

If you feel like you are too inflexible for Yoga, then feel encouraged by Sean. He enjoys coming and over time his flexibility will improve. Due to the sessions being so popular we are thinking about trying to run more Yoga classes. It will be helpful to know how many people would like to come so if you are interested in attending Yoga sessions with the support of Assert, please email Catherine at lifeskills@assertbh.org.uk

Member submissions for the newsletter needed! If you have an article, story, poem, or just a general musing on life that you would like to be considered for submission to the newsletter, please send it in! It can be on any topic, how about your special interest? Please email these to Laura at laura@assertbh.org.uk

ASSERT AGM

Assert's AGM took place on the 20th February 2014. 40 people attended the event and we welcomed a new trustee to the board, Philippa Cook. Sarah Bourne up-dated members of recent activity and successes. Anya who is Chair of the Assert board, then gave a talk on Anxiety and Autism. This was very well received and informative and was followed by an open mic session where members were invited to speak. Assert membership increased this year and we look forward to another busy year. If you were unable to attend but would like to become a member of Assert, please contact Sarah Bourne. sarahb@assertbh.org.uk

Benefits Update

By Laura Priestnall, Benefit Liaison Worker

Every newsletter edition, I'll try to add a benefits update for the Assert members so you are kept informed about anything I think might be important. I know the whole benefits system can be quite scary and worrying, but I'm here to help you all so if you have any worries or questions, or you want help with filling a form in, please make an appointment to see me at the office. You can always email me questions too! Here's a few things regarding benefits I think might be useful for you to know:

ATOS and medical assessments

Firstly—I am sorry for mentioning ATOS! I know it causes a lot of anxiety for our members. You may have heard that the government has decided to terminate the ATOS contract for delivering assessments for some benefits such as PIP and ESA. A new provider will be appointed at some point. This will mean that there is most likely going to be a delay with people who are waiting to be seen for a medical assessment, or those who have recently submitted a benefit form. Unfortunately I don't have much idea of the length of delay or when the new provider will be appointed, but if you have any worries or questions book in to see me.. If you are suffering from financial hardship, let me see if I can help you.

Council Tax Exemption

I am pleased I have been able to support a few of you with getting exemption from paying council tax. If you want any further information on how to do this, please get in touch. Please be aware that I'm only part-time (my days in the office are Tuesday, Thursday and Friday though I do try to be flexible when fitting people in. My email address is laura@assertbh.org.uk

Are you on a means tested benefit such as ESA or JSA?

If you are -did you know that you are entitled to a few things for free such as prescription charges, dental charges, NHS sight tests, wigs, and travel costs to NHS appointments? If you want any more information about any of these, please get in touch.



ASSERT ACTIVITIES UPDATE

By Kathryn Chuck

original and creative pieces made, the concentration was amazing and everyone really enjoyed themselves. The staff were friendly and helpful and made us very welcome, we will definitely do this again! Last month's activity was a film and popcorn night at Community Base, we watched the brilliant film 'Temple Grandin' which was both powerful and insightful, Claire Danes plays Temple Grandin set in the 1950's, an autistic woman who overcame the limitations imposed on her by her condition to become a Ph.D. and expert in the field of animal husbandry. We had a good number of people attend, it was a relaxing and pleasant evening and hope to do it again soon!

For April's activity we are making the most of the sunshine and going on the Brighton Wheel followed by chips by the beach!

On Saturday 24th May we are very proud to be part of the Brighton Fringe festival with our photographic exhibition '**Odyssey, an atypical journey**'. Assert members showcase and celebrate life from an autistic spectrum perspective with this unique and insightful photographic exhibition. We are lucky enough to have the lovely ladies from **Arthropod Arts** in Rottingdean joining us for the exhibition and providing arts and crafts entertainment for children! The exhibition will be from 11.00 – 16.00 on **Saturday 24th May 2014** in the Conference Room, South Wing, Community Base, 113 Queens Road, Brighton, BN1 3XG. It is a **free event** and there will be refreshments available. We hope to see you there!

On the 29th of May we are planning a trip to the Duke of York Cinema to see the National Theatre Live Broadcasting of 'The Curious Incident of The Dog in the Night time'. There has been lots of interest and requests to see this show so when the opportunity came up to see it in Brighton we knew it would be a hit! We still have a couple of tickets available so please contact Kat at activities@assertbh.org.uk if you are interested.

On 21st of June we are having the Assert Annual Day Trip! We will be going to Sheffield Park National Trust Gardens for a walk and picnic followed by a trip on the **Bluebell Railway** where we will have a ride on a steam hauled train through the beautiful Sussex countryside. The **Bluebell Railway** is a heritage line running for 11 mi (17.7 km) along the border between East and West Sussex, England. It uses steam trains which operate between Sheffield Park and East Grinstead, with intermediate stations at Horsted Keynes & Kingscote.

If you have any ideas for activities please let Kat know by email at activities@assertbh.org.uk or by text on 07950 277 420

Assert Contact Details Assert, Community Base, 113 Queens Road, Brighton, BN1 3XG

Tel: 01273 234 850 or 01273 234 853 www.assertbh.org.uk