

# IN THE LOOP

**We're back with what's happening at Assert**

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Welcome to the Assert newsletter! We are pleased to publish our January edition of the newsletter. This newsletter contains information about how our staff are providing support through different services, our upcoming activities and events and member stories. We hope you enjoy reading it, as much as we did writing it!

## Walk on 12th December

By Sarah Bourne

I was able to attend the Assert weekend walk with a small group of people in December. The walks are one of my favourite activities and it was an utter pleasure to attend my first one in a year. We were incredibly lucky with the weather and had a beautiful and still day to walk across the Downs from Woodingdean to Lewes. The views during the entire walk were breath-taking, with the coast to one side and the rolling Sussex countryside to the other. A slight



wrong turn was quickly rectified and we were back on track, now heading downhill towards Kingston. The last descent took us into Lewes with several historic buildings to pass by on the final leg of the journey. A pleasurable afternoon, keeping fit, enjoying the fresh air and relishing good company (while social distancing of course) I can't wait for the time when we can share these moments again soon. The flapjack was pretty delicious too. I got a few photos, but they don't quite do the views justice.



## ORGANISATIONAL UPDATE

By Sarah Bourne

Happy New Year. We are entering 2021 in another lockdown and its as important as ever that we all do what we can to keep one another safe during these ongoing, really challenging times. Assert have had to once again review what services we can provide during the current lockdown and sadly, everything must once again go to remote delivery. We understand that remote support does not meet everyone's preferences and needs and as soon as we are able to safely once again reinstate some in person work- we will. In the meantime, we are still delivering a range of support services and group sessions on Zoom and on the phone. If you have any suggestions for new ways for us to work with you, please let us know, we are very keen to have people's ideas and suggestions.

We have just applied to receive funding via Brighton and Hove City Council to enable us to distribute vouchers for essential items such as food and clothes to people who are struggling financially and suffering hardship. We will hear in the coming weeks if we have been granted these funds. If successful, we will communicate via email, post and social media the process of how to apply for support.

## WELLBEING CLUB

By Jenna Dadak

Hey all,

2021 has got off to a strange start... but my Coffee Clubs will continue to run remotely via Zoom and I am still providing Support Sessions for anyone who would like to achieve a goal or overcome an issue in their life.

Unfortunately, the Active Club events are no longer taking place in person, however, this Friday 15th I am holding a discussion group where people can come and talk about what physical activities they enjoy doing. I would recommend this event if you are interested in hearing about other people's favourite exercise and are feeling inspired to start a new type of exercise. We will also use this event to discuss what activities you would like to do in Active Club over the next couple of months - I am excited to hear your recommendations for both remote and in-person activities.

Please email if me on [jenna@assertbh.org.uk](mailto:jenna@assertbh.org.uk) if you would like to attend Coffee Club on - 13/01/21, 27/01/21 & 10/02/21 - or the Active Club discussion on 15/01/21 or would like to start Support Sessions. I hope you are all well and safe,

## AUTISM SUPPORT

By Maria Riaza

Hi everyone, I hope you all had a great holiday and had a great start of the New Year.

We continue to welcome new clients to Assert every week. The registrations are being made via Zoom meetings due to Covid restrictions. I am also offering remote 1-1 support.

This could be getting advice, guidance and signposting around Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC), help with any specific needs/issues or ASC related support. This is task-focused and can be one or two sessions per case. Emotional and practical support is also provided. There might be a waiting list to access this support. Please contact me via email on **assert.bh@assertbh.org.uk** if you are interested in casework, general enquiries, or registering with Assert. Looking forward to hearing from you.

## **BENEFITS SERVICE**

By Alex Little

Hi Everyone!

Happy New Year! As we head in to 2021 in another National Lockdown, the Assert Benefits Service is still up and running, offering a full remote service. It is still an uncertain time for the Benefits System, so if you have any questions, or need any support at all please do contact me.

The DWP has released the new Benefits Rates for 2021/22, and these can be found on the Gov.uk website. Most Benefits are seeing a (very) small increase in the weekly rates, but the Government has still not released a decision on whether they will keep the £20 a week Covid-19 top up on Universal Credit. As soon as there is a decision, I will let you all know.

The DWP has confirmed this week that face-to-face assessments for disability benefits will remain suspended indefinitely at this time, as will any face-to-face appointments. You can still make new claims for benefits though. Please check out the Benefits Eligibility Guide on our website if you are thinking about making a new claim, or would like to know what is available, and get in touch if you need any support or have any questions: **benefits@assertbh.org.uk**.

# LIFESKILLS-COURSES

By Julia Martinez

Happy New Year!

As we kick start the new year with another lockdown (ughh), it's even more important that we undertake activities that improve our wellbeing, such as walking. Sadly, due to the latest national lockdown, Assert walks are suspended until further notice. That said, we are all still working and happy to provide suggestions of activities to help improve your wellbeing during these difficult and frustrating times.

Walking is not only enjoyable, it also helps restore us physically and psychologically. Regardless of the countless physical health benefits of walking, walking has various mental health benefits too -the brain releases endorphins- happy hormone, gives us a peaceful time to think about things from a different perspective, alleviates mood and energy levels, etc.

Despite the new lockdown we can all still exercise once a day outdoors with members of our household or support bubble, or walk as an individual with one other person from another household. Please check the latest government guidance ([gov.uk/coronavirus](https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus)), as this is regularly updated, and therefore our exercise limits are subject to change.

Some useful resources for walking & keeping active are given below:

**Brighton and Hove Health Walks group** (<https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/health-walks>)

- Motivating ourselves to walk more by recording our steps and miles with an exercise tracker app
- Brighton and Hove Health Walks group have also designed downloadable walking challenges: E.g. 'spot the bird' 'things I can hear'
- Walks and trails to follow on your smartphone (<https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/content/parking-and-travel/journeyon/walks-and-trails-follow-your-smartphone>)

**Mind Brighton and Hove** (<https://www.mindcharity.co.uk>)

- Trying some mindfulness activities on our walks, such as those produced by Mind In Brighton & Hove (<https://www.mindcharity.co.uk/.../wellbeing-information.../>)

**Remember – Gunny has produced a really useful walking log that can help you plan and record your walks! Feel free to share these with the us and these can be posted on our website for others, so that they can follow in your footsteps (literally!).**

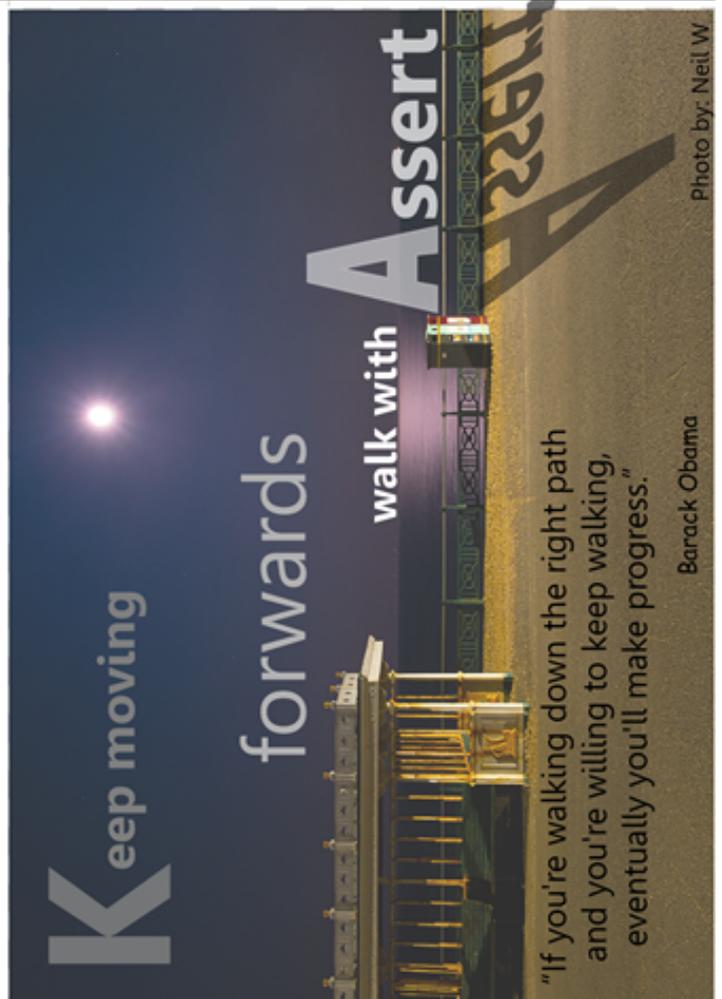
**You can also print them for your use.**

Day	Feeling/Mood at start	Location	Date/Time	Notes/Thoughts / Observations	Steps/Miles Walked	Feeling/Mood at end
S a t						
S u n						

Designed by Gunny

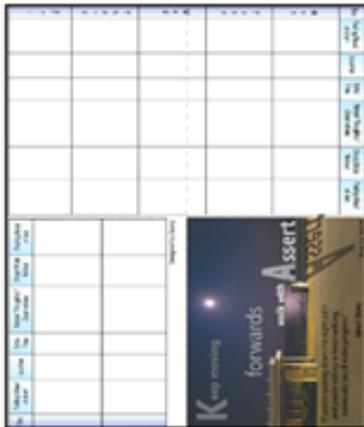
Name:

Day	Feeling/Mood at start	Location	Date/Time	Notes/Thoughts / Observations	Steps/Miles Walked	Feeling/Mood at end
M o n						
T u e s						
W e d						
T h u r s						
F r i						



# Folding the Walking Log

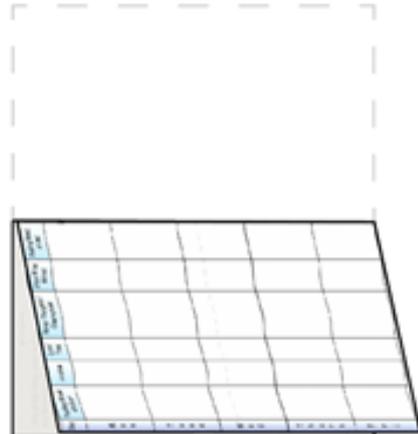
Designed to be travel/pocket friendly



With the image on the bottom right, flip the page over



Fold the page top to bottom like so



Fold in half once more



Done :)



# ASSERT OPERATIONS

By Debbie Taylor

Hi everyone, Happy New Year, although it does feel slightly strange saying it at this time. I hope you all managed to have a peaceful Xmas and any arrangement you may have had, weren't affected too much. I enjoyed meeting some more of you at our Assert Xmas celebration on the 22nd December. I know many of you enjoyed it too and it is hoped more zoom games events can be organised on a regular basis. I know Pictionary was popular and has shown how it is possible to play games and have some fun, even when we can't do this in-person. It will be great to hear your ideas for what you would like to see more of in relation to Assert social events via zoom? Wishing you all a healthy and safe 2021.

Debbie Taylor – [debbiet@assertbh.org.uk](mailto:debbiet@assertbh.org.uk)

## ASSERT PEER DISCUSSION GROUP (PDG)

Hi everyone, Maria and I want to let you know that the Assert Peer Discussion Group continues to operate weekly on a Friday, through Zoom. We discuss a wide range of interesting topics, which have included: Identity, what does this mean to you, Independence, what can help? The topics are chosen by you, we always welcome your suggestions for future topics. The flyers are sent out weekly, usually on Tuesdays.

Sadly the further current lockdown clearly prevents us giving consideration to returning to an in-person PDG at this time. Keeping safe and healthy has to take precedence above everything currently. We look forward to seeing you on Friday or perhaps at some time in the future.

Debbie Taylor – [debbiet@assertbh.org.uk](mailto:debbiet@assertbh.org.uk)

# ASSERT PARENT, PARTNERS AND CARERS GROUP

Hi everyone, I hope you are keeping safe during this challenging times.

We successfully had our first Parent, Partners and Carers Group over Zoom last month and we will be doing another session on Tuesday 26th of January at 6.00pm.

We are aware that it is not the same than meeting in the pub, but considering the current situation and the unlikelihood of being able to consider meeting in person throughout the next few months, we wanted to be able to offer the opportunity to connect to those parents, partners and carers that would like to do so.

The group is being facilitated over Zoom by Debbie and myself (Maria) and we will be happy to welcome those of you who want to join us.

Please get in contact on: **[assert.bh@assertbh.org.uk](mailto:assert.bh@assertbh.org.uk)**

## NEURODIVERSITY PROJECT

By Nicola Jones

Hello and Happy New Year everyone!

I hope everyone who came to the Christmas party and played Pictionary with me had a great time. And to everyone who didn't get the chance to: there's always next time! I'm still currently beavering away with the mentors and the volunteers. If anyone is interested in either being a mentor or having a mentor you can email me to go on the waiting list at **[nicola.neurodiversity@assertbh.org.uk](mailto:nicola.neurodiversity@assertbh.org.uk)**.



## JENNA'S WELLBEING COLUMN: WHAT YOUR HOME SAYS ABOUT YOU...

During a lunch break this week I decided to watch a couple of YouTube videos by the School of Life. I happened across a video called "What your home says about you..." - I wasn't sure what it was going to be about but these are sometimes the more interesting videos! The video discusses the importance of home, from an historical perspective and also using some modern & practical examples.

This topic felt extremely poignant and reflected something I have been thinking recently: with it looking like we will continue to spend all our time at home for the time being, what small (and inexpensive) things I could do around the house to make it feel more cosy and safe. And what in my house could I get rid of that no longer serves me. Is the layout of the furniture the more efficient and comfortable? Do I need more cushions and blanket to feel more warm on these cold evenings? And what about the lighting? I have also noticed recently how the lighting in my house affects my mood. I have found that having warm glowing lamps in furniture more comfortable than overhead lighting.

The video goes on to conclude that our homes are representations of our identity. And they do not have to be glamorous or expensive by any means, but that the choices we make in how to furnish and decorate are in fact glimpses into our personalities. This is quite a funny thought considering all of my furniture is second hand - some of it is even stuff found on the side of the road (Hanover ey!). But also I have had many of my belongings for a number of years now, and what is most important is that our possessions remind us of who we are. We have a sentimental attachment to them. The video explains that this is why we can become homesick when away from home for a while. And I know this is not an issue at the moment... but the video really highlighted for me the importance of curating a comfortable space for myself - especially during this winter lockdown.



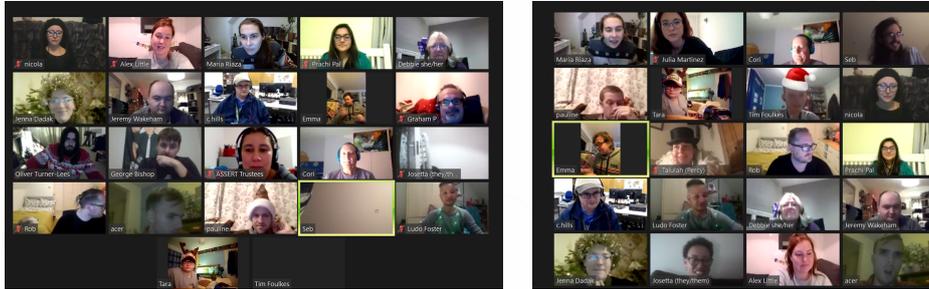
Knowing now my recent motivations to 'nest' were not frivolous distraction from the world outside world, but so do have actual, psychological reasons, has lead me to think more about the space that I call home. And while I may be sick and tired of the same four walls, this video has reminded me not to take it for granted. **What changes could you make to your living environment that could improve how you feel about you home?**

Video link: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HY-E7I\\_Gfe4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HY-E7I_Gfe4)





## CLIENT EXPERIENCES: ASSERT CHRISTMAS ZOOM PARTY



As someone who is basically a bit of a humbug at this time of year, I really enjoyed the Christmas party! I particularly love Pictionary, and it was really great to play it with the people I have gotten to know through Assert. And a revelation to find out it is playable online - perhaps uniquely suited to Zoom. I don't think there was anyone who took part who didn't find it as hilarious and ridiculous as I did. So much truly silly fun. The search bar game was also an unexpected surprise of a game - actually thought provoking but also really funny. I love playing games, and can seldom find people to play them with me. Except now I find that lots of other autistic people also love them and this is opening up all sorts of new possibilities! Realising there are (board) games I can play with people online is a revelation (Especially as someone who is mostly housebound). I actually have a lot to be grateful for in terms of the lockdown - being stuck at home is not such a problem anymore. I managed to track down a second hand Pictionary set the next day, and... anyone for Boggle?! Thank you Assert for adding so much extra colour to my life.

- Talulah Miers

It was lovely to able to attend the Assert Christmas Celebration this year, in a world of confusion and change being with other people really brought some light to what would otherwise have been a dark and dreary Winter's day.

- Ludo



## CLIENT EXPERIENCES: ASSERT CHRISTMAS ZOOM PARTY

I loved the Assert Zoom festive celebration and I usually loathe or avoid anything like that. I hadn't laughed that much all year! I went into the two games rooms; one was a mixture of games and one was just Pictionary. It was a total giggle and really nice to hang out with someone I already had met on the Exploring Autism course and to meet some new people in an easy and structured environment. Each room only had four or five of us in it, so it was very manageable, and we all got plenty of time to do the games and to take turns at Pictionary. Everyone was very relaxed and supportive, it was my first time attending an Assert event and I will definitely go to more socials in future. Thanks everyone!

- Josetta Malcolm

I thought the online party was really good fun and thoroughly enjoyed it. The Pictionary was a great laugh and the Movie Quiz was exciting and informative. It was great to meet fellow members of Assert and also staff too. Furthermore, I found it easier to cope with meeting people for the first time online rather than in person and felt more relaxed and at ease.

- Graham Parker

It was a lovely atmosphere that was well organised and I felt everyone got a chance to contribute. It was my first contact with Assert as I did not think the Zoom style meeting would work for me, it did work and I felt welcomed and it improved my sense of well being by getting involved. Thank you.

- Emma Chick



## STAFF/TRUSTEES EXPERIENCES: ASSERT CHRISTMAS ZOOM PARTY



The wonderful combination of my first ever time playing Pictionary, talking tech over a cup of tea, a little live guitar playing and some impressive festive headwear, made ASSERT's online Christmas party a great and fun experience. A huge thank you to the ASSERT team for setting up and running this.

- Anya Ustaszewski

A lot of fun was had in the Party Games Room at the Assert Christmas Zoom! We had 3 games available to choose from - Scattergories, Who Am I, and Weird Things Humans Search For - and everyone voted for what they wanted to play. We managed to play two of the games in both of the sessions, so everyone got to play what they wanted. Some of the games had clear winners, you know who you are! And some didn't! But fun was had by all, including myself, Julia and Maria! We hope to organise more party games in the future.

- Alex

A big thank you to everyone who came to the Christmas party and I hope that everyone had as much fun as I did. Especially the people who played Pictionary! Who knew that it could be so silly?? Hosting the Pictionary room was truly a highlight of my wintery period. There were a few people who were already Pictionary champions scoring points left, right and centre and quite a few others (like me!) who were new to Pictionary but were still able to rack up respectable number of points. Fortunately no artistic skills were needed! It was wonderful to hear everyone laughing and to see some Christmas jumpers and hats. I think Pictionary might have to become a new game in the Assert cupboards.

- Nicola

I really enjoyed organising the Christmas Celebration and hosting the Christmas Film Quiz on the night. It was so lovely to be able to have a fun evening of festive activities with so many of you. I especially enjoyed hearing the film trivia throughout the quiz. For those of you came, thank you, it really added something special to the festive period for me.

- Jenna

# ASSERT BRING BACK AUTISM AWARENESS CARDS!!!!

Assert have brought back Autism Awareness Cards, in a new design. These are really handy and small in size, which will fit your wallets. These can be used if you ever struggle to communicate your needs when out in the community. Presently, they are available electronically: You can choose to print your name, or handwrite it yourself. They will be available in a printed form in the coming weeks. Please email the office if you would like to order one! They're free of charge!



## TOGETHER, WE CAN

Assert are still here for you. We want to hear from you about how we can help you and what you would find beneficial. Please get in touch if you have any ideas for new ways to connect with and support you. If you cannot access remote support, we may be able to offer you in person support. You would need to be able to give a reasonable explanation regarding why remote support is inaccessible to you. Assert have spent time ensuring that we can do limited in person support safely. This offer is subject to change due to requirements from the Government changing or staff availability altering.



## DONATE TO ASSERT: YOUR SUPPORT IS VITAL TO US

The pandemic has had a huge impact on the wellbeing of everyone. It's been a really difficult time and has required continued adaptation, changes to routines and different ways of working. It has also impacted on funding opportunities for Assert and the services we provide. We have lost funding for our Activities Coordinator position and it is impossible to fundraise for this in current circumstances. Supporting our clients is now more important than ever and we need your support to help us to continue to offer our services and support.

Donations to Assert are vital in keeping the charity operational and free at point of service. We are incredibly grateful for any donations received. You can donate to us through PayPal or the 'donate' button on our Facebook page. You could also make donations in cash, via cheque or bank transfer, host your own fundraiser or use the link below:

<https://www.paypal.com/uk/fundraiser/charity/2333838>

**FOR MORE INFORMATION AND REGULAR UPDATES, FOLLOW US ON OUR SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS:**



/ASSERTBANDH



@ASSERT\_BH

# 2021

HAPPY NEW YEAR

## UPCOMING ACTIVITIES CALENDAR- JANUARY

**PEER DISCUSSION GROUP**  
EVERY FRIDAY, 5:30-7:00 PM  
VIA ZOOM

**COFFEE CLUB**  
WEDNESDAYS: 13TH & 27TH JAN AND  
10TH FEB  
FROM 11AM-1 PM, VIA ZOOM

**DISCUSSION GROUP- IN PLACE OF  
ACTIVE CLUB**  
15TH JAN

**PARENT, PARTNERS AND CARERS  
GROUP**  
26TH JAN, 6:00 PM ONWARDS  
VIA ZOOM

## PLEASE FEEL FREE TO CONTACT US VIA

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01273 234 853

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