

# 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 June 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!

## CREATIVE WRITING INSPIRATION

By Louise Tondeur

Hello everyone. My name is Lou. I'm a writer and a writing tutor. In case you'd like to try some Creative Writing, I thought I'd share some writing prompts. I often write about Creative Writing and Mindfulness so I've based these prompts around that. They probably won't all work for you, but pick the ones you like and use them to kickstart your writing.

**My top ten Writing and Mindfulness tips are:**



1. Stop where you are right now and notice what's around you. Use all of the senses available to you. Simply noticing will help you to write.
2. Stop several times during one day or one week and notice what's around you. Jot down some notes.
3. Sit in a place you find relaxing, at home or in nature. (For me, this is my writing shed or on the beach!) Make lists of what you experience around you based on one or more of the senses. You don't have to write sentences – words and phrases will do fine.

4. Play word association with yourself. Start with a word like 'blue' or 'ocean' or pick one of your own. Write down the next word that comes into your head, and then focus on that word, what word comes to you? And repeat until you have 10 or 20 words.

5. Based on what you did for numbers 1 – 4 above, use any words or phrases you found interesting to write a poem, to start a nonfiction article about a topic of interest, or to come up with ideas for a story.

6. If you can, go on a mindful walk around your local area. (I sometimes go to the graveyard down the road to do this.) As you walk, observe the world around you: colours, smells, sounds, shapes etc. When you get home, write down what you experienced. If you can't get out, observe the world through a window or doorway or imagine going on a walk.

7. Go somewhere interesting to write: a park bench, a café, the beach, for instance. (Again, if you can't get out, imagine it, or observe through a window or door.) Tune into the place and get a sense for it. Take a notebook and write a description of a made up person who works in or lives in that place.

8. Using the place you wrote about in number 7, imagine another (made up) person who lives or works in the place and have them meet the first person you described and have a conversation. Write down what they say.

9. Based on numbers 6 – 8 above, use any of the colours, smells, sounds, shapes etc., people, places or conversations you came up with to tell a story.

10. Write down the words you associate with a particular colour or smell or sound. Look out for that colour or smell or sound over a week. At the end of the week make up a poem or story that includes what you observed.

Once you've worked on the writing prompts, go back to numbers 1 – 3 and repeat them because they'll help you to come up with more words and phrases to use in your writing. There are more writing prompts on my blog: [www.louisetondeur.co.uk](http://www.louisetondeur.co.uk)

# STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT MANAGER

by Mark Bromfield

Summer is upon us and those among us that grow flowers and vegetables are busy people.

The Assert office base has been upgraded with new plug sockets and some electrical wiring. The slow internet access in the office and the meeting room is being checked out for a fix so that we have less 'lagging' or none on virtual calls and meetings. The array of trailing cables in the office has gone (Wi-Fi connections rather than cables connecting to the internet). We had a meeting with the Lottery funders (Life skills), a meeting at Hove park. It was a positive meeting, and the funders are happy with Assert's progress. We also had a meeting with the Henry Smith Foundation who fund the benefit advisor role and service, again positive and helpful engagement with the funders.

The other news is that Brighton and Hove City Council are working on establishing a new Autism Partnership Board in Brighton and Hove, the initial meeting was on Monday 23rd May 2022 at 4 PM. A hybrid meeting of in-person and virtual attendance. The meeting was organised with invited representative organisations to discuss the current position and take direct action with respect to strategic leadership and direction and delivery of services and support to individuals of all ages living with autism and their families and close carer networks.

The meeting gave strong support for the establishment of an Autism Partnership Board and preparation of an Autism Strategy for the City. To help establish the Partnership Board the City Council will prepare a draft Terms of Reference and circulate with the group that attend the meeting ahead of the next meeting for further discussion prior to being agreed. "The work will progress at every step in the spirit of co-production and effective collaboration" quote from Brighton and Hove City Council.



# ASSERT OPERATIONS

By Debbie Taylor

Hi everyone,

Welcome to June's Newsletter.

I hope you are all well and healthy and enjoying the summer.

I know some of you will already have heard, but for those of you who haven't, we will be saying farewell to both Julia Martinez (Adult Learning Coordinator) and Alex Little (Benefits Adviser) for a year from mid-June, while they are maternity leave. We wish them both a happy and fulfilling year and will very much look forward to welcoming them back to Assert next year.

Maria who has returned from maternity leave will be delivering both Julia's 'Exploring Autism' and Life Skills courses, over the coming year. Maria will likely tell you more in the July newsletter.

In relation to the Benefits Service, we ask that you are patient, as it may be necessary to have a pause in delivery for this service, but hopefully this will be for a short period, we will keep you informed. Alex will ensure information is circulated about alternative services providing support for 'Benefits' in the meantime.

Mark Bromfield, our Strategic Development Manager and I have recently attended a meeting convened by a Commissioner for Adult Social Care within Brighton and Hove City Council. This is in relation to the creation of an Autism Strategy for Brighton and Hove and I understand that a Commissioner for Autism is also being recruited by the Council. While this has been a very long time coming and Sarah Bourne had tirelessly raised this need over the years, it does feel positive that there is a willingness to pursue this again, I remember attending meetings back in 2011.

It is likely that in the not too distant future there will be an invitation for autistic people to be involved, which we all clearly stated is imperative. If you feel this is something you might be interested in getting involved in, please do get in touch with me and I will ensure your voice can be heard.

Assert are continuing to take precautions to decrease the risk of spreading Covid within our face-to-face appointments and groups and to ensure that we are promoting safe spaces for our activities. We are still observing the following measures:

- **Importantly please do not attend any Assert face to face appointments or activities if you have any covid or cold-like symptoms. This is regardless of negative lateral flow testing, following having had the virus.**
- **Assert asks that you do not attend any activities for one week after you have been in close contact with someone who has tested positive.**
- **If possible and you still have access, please do a Lateral Flow Test before you attend in-person appointments or activities.**
- **If you can, please wear a mask when indoors and when in close proximity to each other, if you can.**

I know it can feel frustrating to remain mindful of covid safety, but we currently have two Assert staff members who are pregnant. Although not contracted at work, we have had staff and Assert users having had covid. One member of staff having prolonged symptoms, which has caused a delay in new registration appointments. If staff become sick, it impacts the services and activities we can provide, in a relatively small team.

Thank you for your continued understanding, it is appreciated.

Best wishes

Debbie

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# BENEFITS SERVICE

By Alex Little

Hi Everyone!

This will be my last newsletter for a while, as I will be going on Maternity Leave from 14th July.

Assert is currently recruiting for Maternity Cover for the Benefits Service and will keep you all updated as this progresses. If you need benefits support in this interim period, Assert will be able to signpost or refer you to other services.

In other benefits news, following recent announcements from the Government about extra help for those struggling to cover the cost-of-living increases, many benefits claimants will receive up to an extra £1,200 this year. This is made up of:

- £650 one-off 'Cost of Living Payment' for those who claim means tested benefits (UC, JSA, ESA, IS and Pension Credit). This will be split into two payments. The first payment of £326 will be automatically made to you between 14th July and the end of July. The second payment of £324 will be made in the Autumn if you are still eligible. You may also be eligible if you receive Child Tax Credits or Working Tax Credits. If you have a joint benefits claim, you will get one payment of £326, and then £324 for your joint claim.
- £150 'Disability Cost of Living Payment' for people who claim disability benefits (PIP, DLA, AA). This payment will be made from September.
- £400 payment from the 'Energy Bills Support Scheme'. It is likely this will automatically be applied to your energy bills as a reduction from October. The Government is finalising how this will be rolled out at the moment.

- £300 one-off 'Pensioner Cost of Living Payment' for those who are over pension age. If you are entitled to a Winter Fuel Payment for Winter 2022 to 2023 you will automatically qualify for this extra £300. It will be paid with your normal winter fuel payment from November 2022.

The Government has also confirmed that next April, benefits payments will be uprated by the consumer price index as it is in September this year, even if inflation then decreases by the time these changes are due to come into effect. This is great news for next year's benefits rates.

PIP reviews are still taking an incredibly long time to be looked at and reassessed, so if you are still waiting for your result, please don't worry. You can always call the PIP helpline to see if there are any updates on your claim.

If you are required to submit fit notes to support your benefits claim, or to your employer, where you can get these from will expand from 1st July. From this date, if you work with a Nurse, Occupational Therapist or Physiotherapist, these professionals will also be able to issue you a fit note.

## WELLBEING CLUB

By Jenna Dadak

Hey all,

Both Coffee Clubs are now going to be held in-person, at the Pavilion Gardens Café. These are on the 2nd & 4th Wednesdays at 11am - 1pm every month. The group is a relaxed, social group where you can get a drink or snack from the café.

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*I have made new friends and had the opportunity to socialise more which has made me feel less lonely and less socially isolated. It's given me the chance to get out of the house and do something fun.*

*- A service user*

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The next Active Club will be a trip to Saltdean Lido on Friday 5th August. More information about this activity will be sent out on Friday 22nd July.

I hope you are all well,

Jenna

[jenna@asserth.org.uk](mailto:jenna@asserth.org.uk)

## **ASSERT PEER DISCUSSION GROUP (PDG)**

By Jenna Dadak

Hello,

Summer is finally here, and with it comes a mixture of feels about it. This is the topic for next Peer Discussion Group on Tuesday 22nd July.

Each month, the online group is on the 1st Tuesday and the in-person group is on the 3rd Tuesday of the month.

## **ASSERT PARENT, PARTNERS AND CARERS GROUP (PPC)**

By Jenna Dadak

The Parent, Partner & Carers group (PPC) meet every 4th Tuesday of the month at the Earth & Stars pub. The group provides an opportunity for people to share their experiences of loving and caring for someone on the spectrum. Discussions can be both practical and emotional, but the consistent aim of the groups is always to support one-another.



# BOOK RECOMMENDATIONS FOR YOUR READING TIME

By Prachi Pal

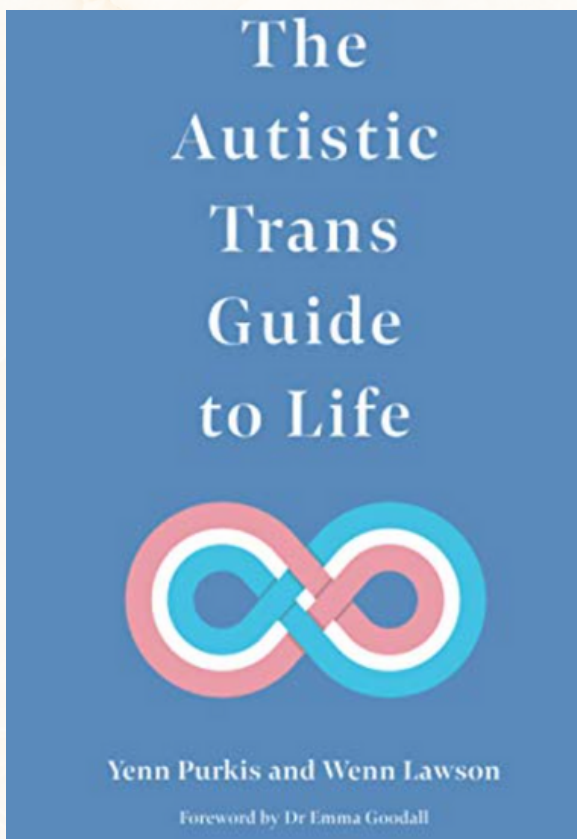
Reading has been my major source of learning and exploring the world. I came across these amazing book suggestions to learn more about autism, what's interesting is that each of these books have been picked by autistic people for others to read!

1



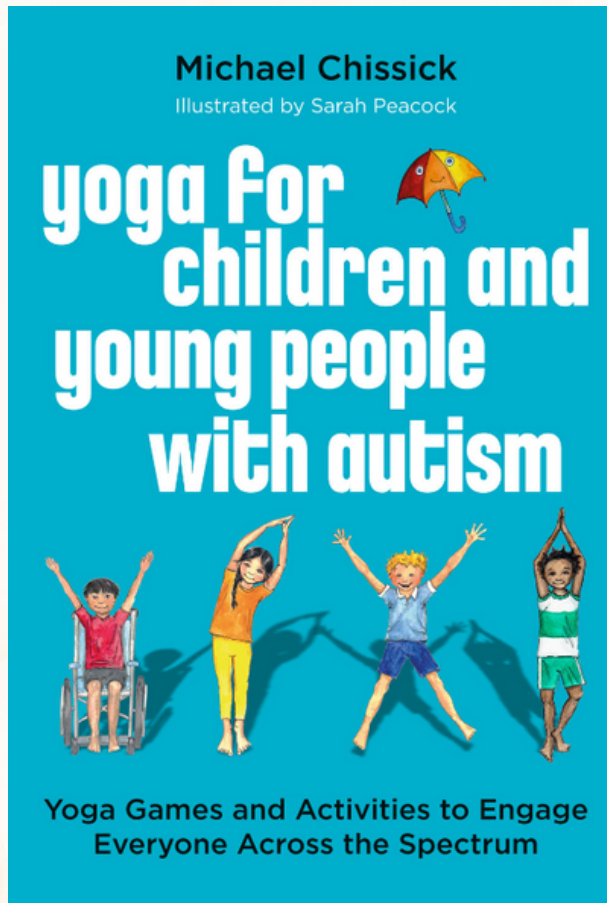
Written by Kathy Hoopmann, this book provides a gentle introduction to autism. It contains photographs of cats with witty captions which helps in explaining the nuances of grappling with day-to-day life on the spectrum.

2



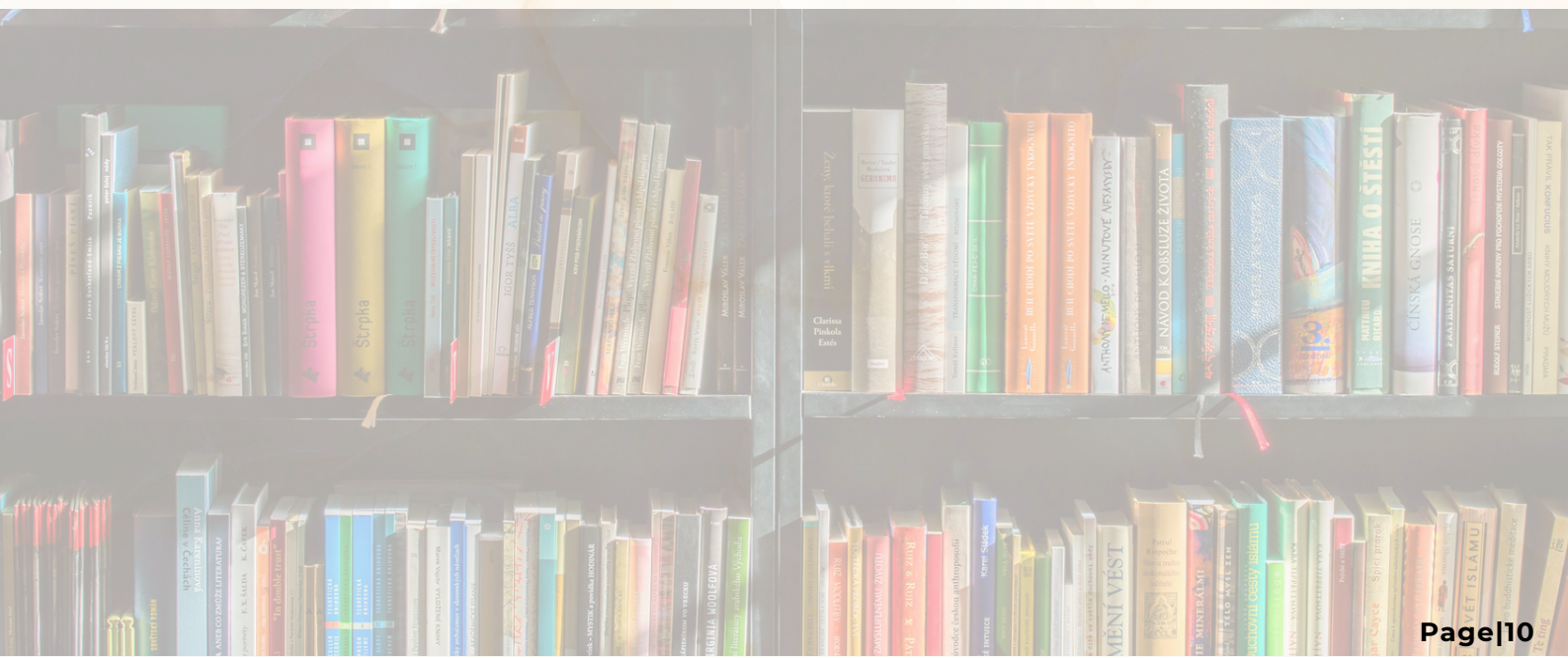
Written by Yenn Purkis and Wenn B Lawson, this book is one of its kind with a unique perspective on navigating the world while being autistic and trans.

3



Gyms can be very inaccessible. Written by Michael Chissick, this book makes yoga more accessible – including with adapted language, easier poses and even games to play.

In case you have ready any of these books, or plan to read any of these in the near future, we would love to hear your thoughts, opinions or even book reviews!!





## SHARE YOUR VOICE AND FEEDBACK IN THE ASSERT NEWSLETTER

**Assert would love to hear more from you!**

Your voice and feedback are important to us and this newsletter is a space to amplify your voices, experiences, opinions and contributions. We would love to receive your write ups, drawings, puzzles, poems, photographs, articles etc. on topics that interest you and which can benefit other clients too. We will be publishing these in our monthly newsletter. If you would like to be anonymous, we will respect your decision.

Please email your submissions at [supporters@assertbh.org.uk](mailto:supporters@assertbh.org.uk).



## 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 the 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>

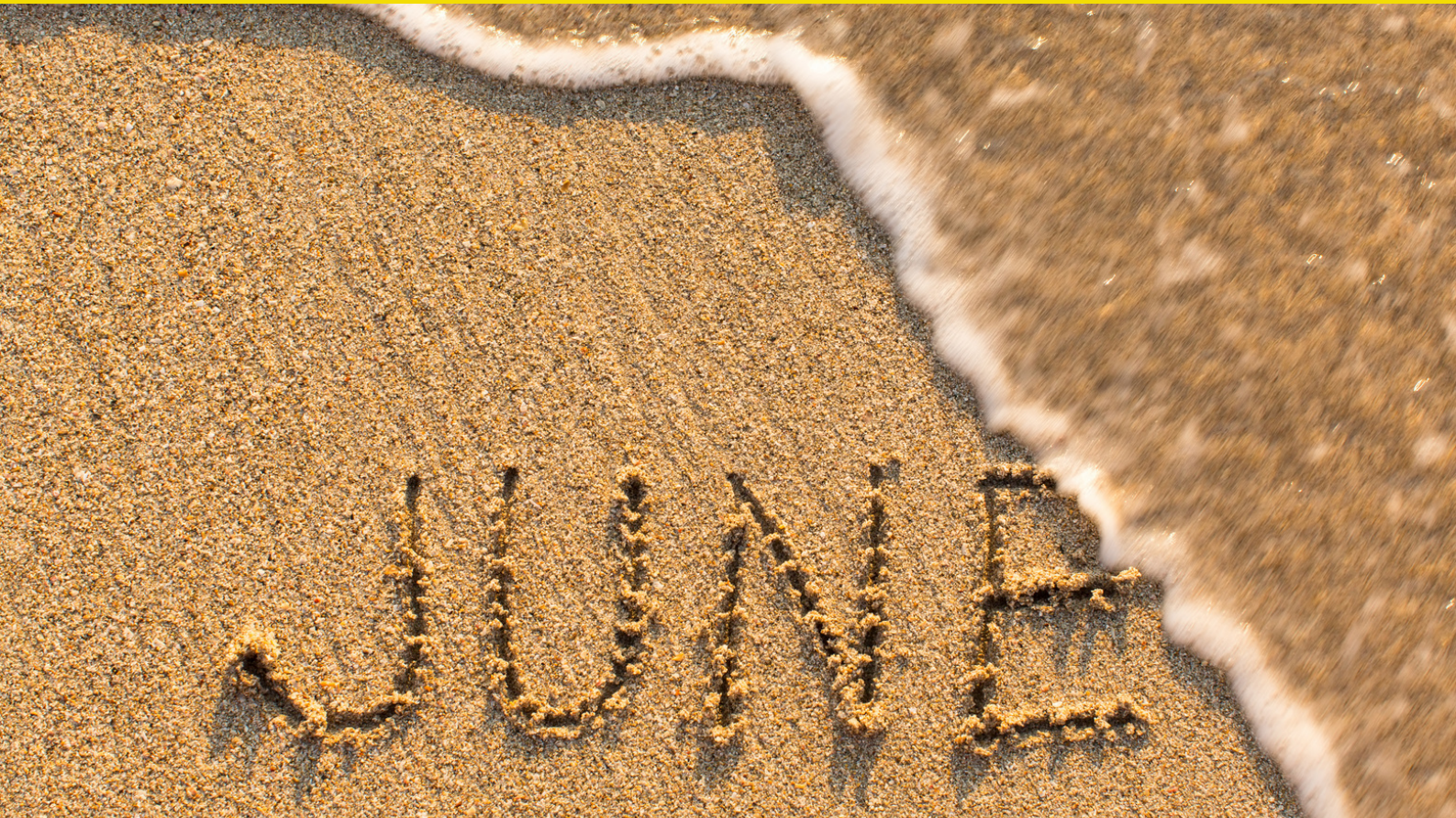
**FOR MORE INFORMATION AND REGULAR UPDATES, FOLLOW US ON OUR SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS:**



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@ASSERT\_BH



## **UPCOMING ACTIVITIES CALENDAR**

### **PEER DISCUSSION GROUP**

22ND JULY

### **COFFEE CLUB**

BOTH IN PERSON

### **PARENT, PARTNERS AND CARERS GROUP**

EVERY 4TH TUESDAY OF THE MONTH

### **ACTIVE CLUB**

5TH AUGUST

## **PLEASE FEEL FREE TO CONTACT US VIA**

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