

# IN THE LOOP

We're back with what's happening at Assert

Welcome to the Assert newsletter! We are pleased to publish our May 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!



• **BRIGHTON & HOVE'S** •  
**AUTISM STRATEGY**  
**SURVEY IS NOW LIVE!**

# AUTISM SUPPORT ADVISOR / STRATEGY AND FUNDRAISING LEAD

By Alex Barbuti

## Assert clients assemble, Brighton & Hove's Autism Strategy Survey is now [LIVE!](#)

**YOU** have a vital role in shaping the Autism Strategy for Brighton & Hove.

This is a fantastic and rare opportunity **to have your say** on services for autistic people and life as an autistic person in our city. What do you want to see prioritised? More support after diagnosis? Greater social opportunities? Better mental health services? Have your say!

Assert believes this is one of the best opportunities we and our clients have to improve their lives. With your views on topics including health, housing, social care, relationships, support for autistic parents, jobs and social opportunities, the Autism Partnership Board can create an Autism Strategy that is truly led by what you want to see change and improve in Brighton and Hove. This strategy will be implemented over the next five years, with improvements promised from year one.

The survey is open until the **19th June** so make time to make your voice heard: [Autism strategy consultation](#).

We will be sending out email reminders to complete the survey as well as an invitation to focus groups on specific topics.

Assert is represented on the Autism Partnership Board by Alex, our Autism Support Advisor, Debbie, our Operations Manager and Anya, our Chair of Trustees. Assert clients also sit on the Board.

## Alex's tips for completing the survey:

- Get comfy – you'll need a bit of time so grab a cup of tea and a slice of cake and allow plenty of time to complete the survey.
- The survey can't be saved, but it doesn't time out. If you need to take a break, that's fine, just keep your browser window open on your device. The survey can be completed on any computer, tablet or smartphone.
- Want some support? Ask a friend or family member to transcribe your answers as you speak or read your responses back to you.
- You do not need a diagnosis to complete the survey – anyone with a diagnosis, self-identifying as autistic or waiting for diagnosis can respond.
- You can complete the survey more than once – if you are autistic and the parent or carer of an autistic child or adult, or work with autistic people you can complete the survey from each perspective that is relevant to you.
- You can choose which topics you want to answer questions on. Don't have a diagnosis yet? You can still share your views of the diagnostic process.
- Think you might miss the deadline? Set a calendar reminder now to **complete the survey before the 19th June.**

If you have any questions about the survey, email [alex@assertbh.org.uk](mailto:alex@assertbh.org.uk).

Those who are unable to complete the survey can also share their experiences by email or interview by sending an email to [Lorne.Power@brighton-hove.gov.uk](mailto:Lorne.Power@brighton-hove.gov.uk).

## **Below is the full press release for the Autism Strategy Survey**

“The Autism Partnership Board have this week launched its autism consultation as part of its commitment to developing the city-wide Brighton & Hove Autism Strategy, which focuses on improving the lives of, and celebrating the strengths of autistic people.

The Autism Partnership Board is a joint partnership led by autistic people with the support of organisations including the NHS, police, Brighton and Hove city council and voluntary and community sector organisations that work to improve the lives of autistic people across the city.

The consultation gives autistic people, their carers, family members and staff who work with autistic people the opportunity to share their views on services available in the area and how we can work towards becoming a city that recognises and values neurodiversity.

The responses received to the consultation will help develop six key themes to help shape the strategy. Working groups around the themes identified will then be developed and help influence the autism action plan for the next five years. It is the ambition of the Autism Partnership Board that autistic people will be able to see improvements in their lives from year one.

The survey focuses on autistic adults without a learning disability to address current gaps. The city already has an Adult Learning Disability Strategy and a Special Educational Needs and Disability Strategy so autistic adults without a learning disability will be the current focus of this Autism Strategy.

Accessible public engagement sessions will also take place in May and June to discuss the strategy and will be open to autistic people and members of their support networks.

Rob Persey – Executive Director of Health and Adult Social Care at Brighton and Hove City council – said:

“We are really excited to announce the launch of this vital consultation and co-design the local autism strategy in partnership with autistic people and members of their support network. We are very keen to take a real collaborative and participatory approach in taking guidance in what needs to change to make Brighton and Hove an accessible city for autistic people, whether it is in areas of social care, health, interactions with the police and justice systems, supporting healthy and meaningful relationships or feeling truly valued within our community.”

Alice Conroy – Autistic co-chair of the Autism Partnership Board – said:

“This work represents a meaningful paradigm, culture and power shift, incorporating progressive thinking around autism and neurodivergence - prioritising the strengths and lived experience of Autistic people and the view that autistic people are not broken, needing 'fixing', but experts and the experts of their lives and of their own experience. The emphasis on listening to Autistic people and prioritising their views, offers true participation rather than tokenism and respects "Nothing about us, without us.”

There is often a lack of understanding of invisible disabilities and accessibility needs. It's exciting that through this work there is a commitment towards systemic change and 'doing things differently,' to improve the lives of Autistic people. I am passionate that the Brighton and Hove Autism Strategy will promote a neurodiversity-affirming culture and practice approach that amplifies Autistic Voice, celebrates Autistic strengths and identifies supportive environments for us to thrive.”

### **Further Information:**

The consultation will run until **Monday 19 June** and can be found at [Autism strategy consultation](#).

Those who are unable to complete the survey can also share their experiences by email or interview by sending an email to [Lorne.Power@brighton-hove.gov.uk](mailto:Lorne.Power@brighton-hove.gov.uk).

More information regarding the work of the Autism Partnership Board can also be found here: [The Autism Partnership Board and Brighton & Hove Autism strategy in easy read.](#)"

## ASSERT OPERATIONS

By Debbie Taylor

Hi everyone,

Just letting you know that I am still working with Assert to bridge the gap, while recruitment for my post takes place, although working reduced hours. If you do contact me, I will respond as soon as possible.

The staff team are doing their very best to meet the growing demands on Assert services, this has resulted in the regrettable decision to pause our waiting list for new registrations currently. This is to allow time for some important strategic and developmental fundraising to take place.

You will have seen in this newsletter that Alex has given details of a consultation process, aimed to inform the development of a long-awaited Autism Strategy for the city. This is exciting and the opportunity to really make a positive difference for all.

**The consultation has recently gone live and closes on the 19th June.**

This is the opportunity for you to give your views on the different aspects of services across our area. I encourage you to get involved and complete the survey. Please do come along to one of the scheduled events Alex is organising if you would like to receive some support or just connect with others, in completing the survey.

Best wishes

Debbie Taylor

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

## PPC (Parents, Partners, Carers Group)

We currently meet on the 4th Tuesday of the month, 7.00pm upstairs at the Earth and Stars pub in Church Street, Brighton. If you haven't been along before, you would be very welcome to attend. It's very informal and friendly and most attendees report it is really helpful to have a space where you don't have to explain yourself, don't feel judged and may even have a bit of fun....but crying is fine too. As a parent, this group was my first introduction to Assert well over 12 years ago and I have met some very lovely, caring people as a result.

Although I will be leaving Assert, there will be an automated monthly reminder for PPC, but always remember it's the 4th Tuesday of the month... not necessarily the last Tuesday...

I will likely continue to attend as a parent, as I do currently. A parent has started the process of setting up a Whatsapp group for PPC to maintain regular contact. If you have attended and would like to be added, please let me know your details and I will pass on.

In the short term I can be contacted [debbiet@assertbh.org.uk](mailto:debbiet@assertbh.org.uk)

## Drop In

The Assert Drop-In is held on the second Tuesday evening of each month, in the Conference Room at Community Base at 7.00pm. If you are interested in attending or would like to know more about this activity, please do get in touch. Look out for the regular mail chimp flyer which will be circulated by e-mail or by post. Do give the office a call and someone should be able to give you more details. 01273-234850 or 01273-234853.

## Peer Discussion Group (PDG)

While we recruit, PDG will not be operating and we sincerely apologise for the auto promotion last month and any inconvenience caused.

# HOUSEHOLD FUND

Assert are pleased to have further been awarded government funding from Brighton and Hove City Council. This is to support those of you who are finding it hard to pay your energy bills or buy essential items, or find you have no spare money left after doing this.

We can award this funding to support you with:

- Gas/ water/ electric bills
- Food
- Clothing
- Costs related to energy, food and water, such as boiler service/ repair, or purchase of items such as fridges, freezers or ovens
- Household items (such as bedding or blankets, essential cooking items, essential toiletries such as soap and sanitary products)
- Limited support for other costs such as broadband, phone bills, car repairs, bike repairs etc.

If you or someone you care for are struggling with any of the above, please get in touch. All we need to know is what you would like to apply for this financial support for, and if your household includes anyone under the age of 19 or over 65 years.

You do not have to be in receipt of benefits to be eligible for this funding. If you feel that you would benefit from this, but think you might not be entitled to it, please do get in touch to talk about your individual situation.

We know from previous demand, that we will unlikely be able to support all applicants at this time. This may particularly be the case if you have benefited from this fund recently. There will be more than one round of applications.

Please contact Debbie Taylor to apply or with any questions you may have:  
[debbiet@assertbh.org.uk](mailto:debbiet@assertbh.org.uk)

**The deadline for the first round of applications to Monday 3rd July at Midday.**



# AUTISM CASEWORKER

By Debbie Taylor

I wanted to update you regarding Assert's Wellbeing Programme.

Some of you may be aware that Riley-Fynn Morrell has sadly been suffering significant health issues and has recently been away from work for further medical reasons. Riley-Fynn has made the decision that ongoing it will be beneficial to give himself time to focus on improving his health, but mostly he felt it would be better for Assert and the programme for him to leave his role at this time.

## Coffee Club

Coffee Club will continue twice monthly as usual, with Debbie Caulfield, one of Assert's Trustees and member in attendance.

For anyone thinking of coming along to Coffee Club, there are usually 6-12 in attendance, who meet in the Ledward Centre Café for a drink and a chat! If the group is small enough, usually we all engage in the same conversation, whereas when there are more people, there might be two or three smaller conversations going on. You can participate as much or as little as you like; there is no pressure, and plenty of people simply like to sit and listen. There is a range of hot and cold drinks available, pastries, comfy velvety armchairs, a small library, and a small corner with crafts and stim tools. Coffee Club continues to meet every fortnight at the Ledward Centre, Wednesdays from 11-1.

## Casework

This does mean that 1-1 casework will necessarily be on hold currently.

# ANOTHER LOVELY DAY WITH THE 'HEARTS AND FLOWERS'



On the 1st June, Assert had another lovely day with the 'Hearts and Flowers' people who have a plot of land within Stanmer Organics at Stanmer Park. It was a beautiful day and the creative art of 'Hapa-Zome' - The Japanese art of pounding flowers, was taught and experienced by participants.



Participants also picked beautiful bunches of flowers.



Look out for flyers for two further scheduled days. the next being on 27th July where artist Ali Rabjohns is coming to run a session, as part of the day, on our relationship with colour. Ali is reported to be fantastic and highly skilled.

There will one further session this year in September.

## **BENEFITS SERVICE**

By Megan Archer

Hello everyone,

I have to let you all know that I will be reducing my hours greatly until Alex is due to return from maternity leave at the beginning of August. From June 8th I will go down to one day a week, to keep in touch with those clients I have open cases with and finish any outstanding paperwork. Regrettably, I will not be able to take on any new clients in this time, but will instead be finishing work with those of you I am already working with.

I'll still be available to answer questions via email, though I will only be attending to these once a week so it may take a moment to get back to you. If you have emailed with a new query and want support with your benefits from August onwards, I will place you on a waiting list for when the service resumes in August.

If you need support with new applications or appeals, please contact either of the following organisations:

Possability People: <https://possabilitypeople.org.uk/about/contact-us/>  
or on 01273 89 40 40

St Lukes: <https://www.stlukesadviceservice.org.uk/> or on 01273 54 92 03

I have really enjoyed working with you all, and wish everyone all the benefits, enough money to live on, and total peace and quiet from the DWP forever and ever.

All very best,  
Megan

# LIFE SKILLS COURSES

By Maria Rianza Fernandez

Hi everyone! I hope you are enjoying the nice weather.

We recently finished a group of Exploring Autism and will be finishing Life Skills 2 next week.

We had as a part of Life Skills, a session using our problem-solving skills completing an escape room! The group was so talented at solving all the puzzles that lead us to find out what happened to the missing Dr. Wilder. Having reached the end of the tax year, the courses will have a pause for summer whilst I catch up with admin and have some of my annual leave and they will start again in July. These are the courses that Assert runs, if you are interested in joining any of them please email me: [maria@assertbh.org.uk](mailto:maria@assertbh.org.uk) and I can add you to the waitlist.

**Exploring Autism** is a 7 week course designed to help autistic adults who have been newly or recently diagnosed to come to terms with and understand their diagnosis. (restricted to Brighton and Hove residents due to funding)

**Life Skills 1.** A 10 week course. The group is formed of 5-6 participants to allow discussions. The focus of this course is on communication skills. Some of the topics we discuss are; conversation skills, non-verbal communication, communication styles, types of relationships etc.

**Life Skills 2.** A 10 week course. The group is formed of 5-6 participants to allow discussions. Some of the topics we discuss in this course are cooking and shopping, cleaning and tidying, problem solving, boundary setting, wellbeing and routine etc.

**Three short courses on Self-Management, Resilience and Interoception.** One hour each on a 1:1 basis. A chance to explore practical strategies to manage stress, energy levels and resilience. These short courses can also be useful to develop and strengthen the skills needed for the longer and more in-depth courses Assert offers (above). These are offered in a form of a written pack to read on your time and a one-to-one session to discuss the information.



# DIGITAL AND MARKETING ASSISTANT

By Prachi Pal

Hi everyone,

Thank you for continuously sharing your submissions in the newsletter; super helpful for us at Assert. **Yours is the most important voice in this newsletter!**

We keep trying something new with the newsletter - such as embedding links, icons, pictures, theme-based design, etc., to make it more engaging for you. Your feedback is very welcome.

If there's anything that you want this newsletter to have, please write to me at [supporters@assertbh.org.uk](mailto:supporters@assertbh.org.uk) with your suggestions! We would love to make it more customized according to your preferences.



## 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. 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).

**DONATE**



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

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



HELLO  
JUNE

**UPCOMING ACTIVITIES  
CALENDAR - WATCH OUT  
FOR EMAILS!**

**DROP IN**

EVERY 2ND TUESDAY EVENING

**PARENT, PARTNERS AND CARERS  
GROUP**

EVERY 4TH TUESDAY OF THE MONTH

**COFFEE CLUB**

EVERY FORTNIGHT - WEDNESDAY 11 AM  
-1 PM

**PLEASE FEEL FREE TO  
CONTACT US VIA**

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