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Winter 2008

Speakeasy Advocacy

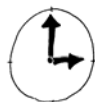
Invites members to the
Christmas Party



With food and drink, and a disco




Friday 12th December 2008



7.30pm - 9.30pm



17 New Road, Basingstoke

Bring food or drink if you can -  on 01256
332795 if you want to come

Speakeasy Advocacy

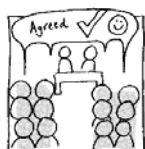
Giving a voice and support to people with learning difficulties,
autistic spectrum disorders and/or Asperger's syndrome



Registered charity number: 1108304



Speakeasy Advocacy News



Annual General Meeting

The meeting was on 30 July, and was well attended. People who came included group members, staff, volunteers, some local organisations and a representative from Hampshire County Council. There was a presentation of the annual report with information about all the different projects at Speakeasy over the last year. New trustees were voted in, and there was food and drink afterwards.



Debbie leaving

Our Children's advocate Debbie left in October to move to Scotland. She worked with us for 3 years and helped to make a difference to lots of local families affected by autism. She has written an article (on page 7) about her time at Speakeasy. We will miss Debbie but wish her good luck for the future!



Web site

Our web site has been updated to include more information and make it easier for people to understand. The web address is the same as before - www.speakeasyadvocacy.org.uk. We plan to include more information about the groups including photos and leaflets. Let us know if you think anything else should be added or changed. We will do another update in January so please let us have all your ideas.



Children in Need

In March this year we received 3 years funding from Children in Need for our project working with families affected by autism. BBC South asked us to take part in their coverage for the Children in Need event in November so people could see how we had used our funding. The Internet Explorers group was filmed - you can watch the film on our website by going to <http://www.speakeasyadvocacy.org.uk/news.asp> and clicking on the link to the film.

The group enjoyed taking part in the filming, but still managed to get time on the computers and play station in between interviews!

We have had lots of comments about our film, and we hope it will help inspire people in other areas to start similar groups. In fact people from around the BBC South region have already asked us if there are other Internet Explorers groups, so we plan to write a book that will help people start their own group in the future.



The BBC South film crew (from left to right) - Pete the producer, Trevor the camera man and Georgie the presenter.



Self advocacy groups

Self advocacy = speaking up for yourself



Internet Explorers

The group have welcomed 2 new members this year. They enjoyed an outing to the park in the summer, where they played football. The Halloween party was a success (complete with pumpkins, a fog machine and ghoulish costumes!), and the group want to go bowling soon.



Wicked and Wacky

The group have written an agenda and have visited Milestones and Eastrop Park. They have also been bowling and had a pub lunch.



They have taken part in a consultation called 'Ordinary people living ordinary lives' and have received feedback, which means Hampshire County Council are listening to groups like ours.



We have a two new members so hello to Victoria and Alana.



Happy Club



The group continue to grow in confidence and have just written a new agenda which included a Halloween party!



3 new members have joined the group so hello to Richard, Darren and Sally.



Members would like to remind everyone that they still meet one Saturday each month for bowling - the dates are in the group room.



Virtual Friends

This group is for people with Asperger's Syndrome and with support from staff and volunteers they run the group themselves. The members enjoy meeting up with their friends where they say "we can just be ourselves".

The group enjoy following an agenda that they have written and spend alternate weeks away from the group room.



1 new member has joined the group, and 1 existing member has returned so hello to Richard and welcome back to Matthew.



Friday Network

The network is for people in the community who either have had their access to services reduced, or who don't receive any support at all. It gives them the opportunity to explore self advocacy as well as a chance to speak to someone from Adult Services, Housing, Benefits and the Health team. They meet new friends, can have a person centred plan and find out about activities available in Basingstoke. Some members also have jobs within the network.



The health team have recently run a 20 week relationship course which also included visits from the Primary Care Trust.



Visits to the library are taking place and a communications group has been set up.



What people say about Wednesday Network

"I wish the Network was every day"

"I don't want to go home I like it here"

"I made a choice today are you proud of me?"

The group was set up for people from the day services to help them become more independent. They meet at the Roger Morris Centre in Eastrop and named their group the Wednesday Friends group. They like the location as they can get to go to the shop next door each week and can have ice cream in the park in the summer. The group welcome the structure, enjoy having tea and coffee available and some like to work in the kitchen.



The group agreed on their own rules and encourage each other to follow them. They are beginning to make their own choices as well as becoming more self-aware through the sessions, and becoming more confident in saying what they want. They are working on a health action plan as part of their person centred planning sessions. They are also thinking about new activities they want to try in the community.

Get in touch if you want to know more about the groups



Life with Asperger's syndrome

In this issue, we hear from Debbie who worked as the Children's Advocate.

"3 years goes by really quickly when you're enjoying what you do, and I certainly enjoyed my 3 years with Speakeasy as a children and young people's advocate. That's not to say it was an 'easy' job! I met a lot of people who were experiencing very difficult situations. Young people in trouble with the law; young people excluded from school; parents who had gone from service to service without ever getting any help. Some people were angry and some people were depressed; some people needed information and some people simply needed someone to listen to them, to try and understand the frustration of not being understood!

Advocacy will not solve every problem that people with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and their families face, but it can be a ray of hope in an otherwise bleak landscape. It has been a pleasure and privilege to work with a small, needs focused organisation where doing your job properly really can make some difference; may be not a massive difference, but enough of a difference that people feel listened to, better understood or better informed; supported to say the things they need to, to the people that matter. It can be hard to try and support people when you know that there aren't a lot of services out there to direct them to and when there's a lot of misunderstanding about ASD. A large part of my role was to also work with professionals to try and increase awareness of the needs of young people with ASD and to try and work towards a better future for them; one where statutory bodies have a greater understanding of the issues and focus effort on providing services that people need. Many young people with Asperger's Syndrome (AS) don't qualify to receive any sort of support, and this was one of the issues that I tried to address with people during my time in post. There's a lot of work still to do, and there always will be, but it's good to know that I've helped to do some of the groundwork. Helping to set up and run the Internet Explorer's group was a real highlight of my time with Speakeasy. Seeing a set of isolated, disparate children grow in to a group of confident, assertive young adolescents gives me a real buzz and is testament to the fact that given the right opportunities young people with AS can socialise, make friends, and interact with the wider community in a meaningful way. Seeing the various parents get themselves organised in to a support group has also been a very positive experience, and in spite of the difficulties involved, there is now a lively pro-active group meeting locally who are committed to working for families affected by ASD.

As a result of all of this there's a lot of work going on locally that didn't exist three years before. Thanks to the vision and commitment of the project this work will continue and progress, and I'm very happy to have been able to share in that. I really did enjoy my time in post and will miss working with my colleagues, the groups, and the other people I have worked with."



How to get in touch:



01256 332795



17 New Road, Basingstoke RG21 7PR



Email: speakeasy.advocacy@btconnect.com

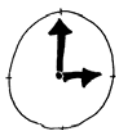
Web site: www.speakeasyadvocacy.org.uk



Coffee Morning Dates for 2009



Saturday 7 February
7 March
4 April
2 May
6 June
4 July
1 August
5 September
3 October
7 November
5 December



10.00 am - 1 pm



17 New Road, Basingstoke