



Autism Services

APRIL 2021

Autism Awareness Day 2nd April 21

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SaraRose-age 15

Supports Autism Awareness Day by sharing her thoughts about autism.

So what is autism— Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) effects the way the brain functions. Specifically how people communicate with others, how their senses work, how they think and process things. Autism falls on a spectrum, it is important to know that not everyone with autism is going to be the same.

Literal thinking

I and many autistic people think very literally so it can be hard to understand certain jokes and phrases and we may need them explained to us.

Struggling socially

I have never been great so-

cially and still struggle today. I do try and get involved in conversations more but it can still be difficult. I do feel like I'm getting better especially when I meet people with similar interests to me.

Special Interests

When I was younger I would try and get my friends into the same things as me, I would give them too much information they didn't care about.

Sensory Issues can make an autistic persons life very challenging depending on how sensitive they are. Whenever there is too much going on in the per-

sons environment that has to do with their senses. As I have gotten older I have learned the things I like and what to avoid.

Routines

Autistic people like to follow routines because it is calming. Repetitive patterns help me cope with my anxiety.

ME

When I left primary school I started to go to groups with others with autism. Since then I have never felt so welcomed and included in my life.

Parent Zoom Groups

From September to June each year we host a parent information zoom session on the

first Wednesday of each month at 5.00pm-6.00pm

We want to thank all

our parents for joining us and look forward to May (play therapy)and June (panel question and answer session.



Southern Health and Social Care Trust



“We continue to consider new ways to support our young people and encourage their development.”



Walled Garden Update



We are
delighted

to share the news that during lockdown we have been able to begin work on our new walled garden outdoor space at The Oaks.

This new facility has been a long time in the planning and our friends at Acorns for Autism have been supporting the funding of this new resource.

This will be a valuable resource to have at The Oaks.

Lockdown Stories



During lockdown Daryl age 16 spent his time growing his garden. Daryl had an interest in gardening and plants. He used his time off school to learn new skills and develop his knowledge of plants and growing from seed. Photos include; skimmia japonica, hawthorns, sycamore & fir trees.....and even some Brussel sprouts!



Daryl is hoping to attend Clanrye College in September to begin a horticulture course.

Psychology Team

The Psychological Therapies Team consisting of Anthony Watson (Family Therapist), Fiona Lappin (Associate Psychologist), Dr Peadar Mallon (Highly Specialist Clinical Psychologist), and Tracy McNally (Senior Mental Health Practitioner) have been working hard to adapt our therapeutic interventions available to young people and their families in the Southern Trust area.

Face to face appointments, when appropriate, are continuing with the use of PPE and social distancing. The utilisation of the latest technology to help reach out to families and young people and provide them with the resources to help with emotional regulation, wellbeing and adjustment. Several initiatives have been developed. Podcasts have been created. Anxiety Management groups have been

made available online and through virtual platforms. The development of a group regarding feeding issues has been co-developed with our colleagues in the Occupational Therapy Team. A sleep workshop has been developed for virtual training for young people and parents.

We truly miss the in person contact but we will endeavour to continue with development of our interventions to best meet your needs in these times.



Occupation Therapy Team

Visual
SEE IT



Auditory
HEAR IT



Kinesthetic
DO IT



Occupational therapists ask 'What matters to you' not 'what's the matter with you?'.

As individuals we are all unique and we all learn differently. There are 3 main ways of learning: Watching (visual), listen-

ing (auditory) and doing (kinaesthetic). As you can see all three rely on the information we receive and process using our sensory systems!

If we have difficulty with the information we receive from our sensory

systems this can make learning and participating in everyday activities more challenging. You may find this clip useful in explaining this:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RbwRrVw-CRo>

Below are some top tips to help learn new tasks in order to become more independent

The individual

Tips

Firstly we need to be in a calm alert state

Movement and exercise can be regulating

Heavy work exercises like gardening or household chores like filling/emptying the washing machine, push/pull tasks

Warm up exercises for our hands before homework

Access parks, outdoor gym, swimming, yoga

The task itself

Tips

Is the activity too hard or easy
Break tasks down into simpler chunks

Does the activity relate to their interests? For example, a child who dislikes handwriting may prefer to draw on a whiteboard, blackboard or paint. Explore a different medium

The Environment

Tips

Is it too noisy, busy, cluttered?
Are there smells that cause difficulty?

Keep spaces calm and tidy
Reduce excess noise where possible

Reduce visual distractions
Provide the young person with a work station

Prepare the environment using social narratives or visual timetables

Links

- www.southerntrust.hscni.net
- Get advice in Northern Ireland - www.citizensadvice.org.uk/about-us/northern-ireland/
- www.autismni.org
- www.nidirect.gov.uk/campaigns/unclaimed-benefits (make the call)
- www.autism.org
- www.middletonautism.com
- www.eani.org.uk



Useful links to other services:

New Spaces.....

Young people have helped us with our design for our group room—we may not be able to use it at the moment but we want to be ready. A local graffiti artist transferred the designs and the results are great.



Zoom Sessions

We have created a new **introduction to intervention** zoom session which invites parents of the under 12's to join and learn more about the service.

We also have a member of the AAIS team within the education authority join us on these calls

to support parents around school concerns.

The under 12 intervention team are working closely with families to offer 1:1 support and parent information sessions.



Assessment Team

Families are able to bring their own toys to structured play appointments.

The Assessment Team continue to carry out Autism Assessments. This is done by initially completing a Developmental History with the parent/carer via telephone, gathering information from relevant professionals, then completing observations based on what is needed for each child, for example, observations via Zoom, Structured Play Sessions in The Oaks and School or home visits.

Here is a photograph of the

Assessment Room at The Oaks, where families come in, bring their own toys of choice and carry out a Structured Play Observation. These are some of the games that have been a popular choice by families.

If you would like to find out more about the Autism Assessment Journey, please watch our "What to Expect" Video linked here:

<https://youtu.be/n5mZPaignj>





Our admin team are working hard to take your calls and arrange appointments

Phone: 028-37566777

E-mail: autism.services@southerntrust.hscni.net

Please ensure your contact details are up to date including a current email

9.30-12.30 appointment booking line

09.00—5.00 for general enquiries

Photography Competition

These photographs are the top 3 of our recent competition.

If you want to join in please email your photograph with your name age and date of birth to the service.

Photos on the topic of :

Easter or Spring -

Closing date Friday 30th April @ 12 noon



Our Young Adults

I have found the Autism Adult service very useful, for the first time in years I am interacting with people and boosting my social skills. It is a very friendly bunch of people who couldn't do more to help you. I would recommend them to anyone with autism. The Southern Trust must be very proud of the service to do so well especially during times of Pandemic when people would otherwise be very low dealing with isolation and loneliness. The service is tailored especially for the service users themselves and takes into account or interests and needs.

Many thanks

Philip



Lego, Easter/Spring Art, Star wars, lord of the rings, music and animal theme groups—

These are some of the planned zoom groups for the adults in April—watch out for your