N.A.S conference workshop title:-

What can we learn from social groups run by and for autistic people?
Dispelling myths

• Contrary to belief people on the autistic spectrum like socialising

• Strict group rules, times and days aren’t necessarily overly important

• There’s no set type of venue that suits

• There’s a huge variety of things that people want to do and have interests in
Funding support

• Three Guineas Trust

• Hampshire County Council-Autism Partnership Board

• The Colefax Trust

• Lynn Foundation
Hampshire-Groups

- Andover social group
- Winchester social group
- Nuffield social group
- St James Group
- Eastleigh social group
- Mayflower social group
- Milford On Sea social group
- Park Gate social group
- Highlands Hub social group
- Aldershot social group
- Basingstoke social group
- Singing Spectrum
- Swanmore social group
- Portsmouth social group
- Fareham evening social group
- Gosport social group
Sub Groups

- Singing Spectrum
- Mayflower Theatre social group
- Board Games group
- Cage Cricket group
- Music group
Success of project

• Appointment of project Coordinator-‘serendipity’
• Reducing isolation
• Increasing socialisation
• Signposting to support -Community Access (IAG) team
• Consultation forums for AH-CEO/Area managers attending groups
• Ideas formed into reality-singles group/employment/steering group/subgroups
• Valued by councils and local organisations-support/free goods and services
Successes continued

• 190 Adults who have autism attended at least 1 social group

• 103 adults who have autism attending groups regularly (attending 5 or more groups)

• 13 groups established that meet regularly, other groups have formed

• 17 volunteer group facilitators currently active, 10 who have autism
Quotes from group members

I enjoy being able to talk about things and being listened to and finding out how some have similar ideas and feelings.

I enjoy everything about the groups – the people, the venues, the ability to socialise and to make new friends.

I like that I get to spend time with others who have autism, knowing that others go through the same things that you do.

The only people I see apart from my daughter and granddaughter is the people at the social group. It helps greatly.

Being wheelchair bound, I like this group because it has easy access and I enjoy the diversity of people and subjects of conversation.
Innovation and Modernisation

Attendees of the groups have been involved in AH Projects:-

• Employment Pathway project
• Wellbeing Advice Partnership project
• Autism Alert APP
• Criminal Justice System
• Arts
• Fundraising
• Experts by experience trainers

Steering group set up and established to ensure representatives from the groups have an influence on the running of Autism Hampshire
What we have learned

• Locality is important
• Proved that socialising is important and much wanted
• Flexible person centred approach to volunteer recruitment
• Empowering all group members to take some ownership of their group
• Allowing attendees to get more involved in their interests
• Diversity in attendees – race, sexuality, gender, background, values
• Positive impact in all areas of their lives
**Next Steps**

- Financially self-sustaining by being involved of the running of social enterprises

- Development of groups in more areas of Hampshire, in particular East Hampshire and Isle of Wight

- Groups for 16-30 year olds, which run alongside and feed into the generic groups

- A wider variety of special interest groups, for example an autism awareness raising group

- Development of peer support opportunities

- Formalising the communication network which has evolved, to guide innovation and modernisation of services
Further information on Autism Hampshire and what we do.

https://www.autismhampshire.org.uk/
Any Questions?