

HeadlineZ

Newsletter from
Independence Trust
CALMHS + CASA
Services

Issue 16

MEET THE CASA (Community Autism Support and Advice) TEAM



From left to right: Alan Grist, Pippa Baker-Walsh, James Walford

Hi my name is James and in my role as the Autism Peer Worker at Independence Trust I use my lived experience of autism to help clients achieve a productive, interesting and inclusive life. I am on the autism spectrum myself and use my experience to better communicate with and understand clients' needs and aspirations. I organise one off activities and regular groups to be led by clients on the autism spectrum with support from myself. I am here to support clients to be included socially and to be able to explore new things independently at their own pace. The key word in my role is 'Inclusion'. No-one should feel alone and isolated. Feeling included is as fundamental to life as food and air.

Hi, I'm Alan and I am the Senior in the new CASA Community Autism Support & Advice service. I am very excited about the next 5 years we have to shape a new CASA service and I am passionate about supporting people on the Autistic Spectrum. The service started in April and our small team will be working with already established ASC Groups and with autistic people to set up more groups/activities across the county. I have been getting out and about meeting groups, forums, and individuals to put together what people on the spectrum would find most supportive from our service.

My name is Pippa and I am the Autism Bridge Builder on the CASA team. My job role is to assess individuals on the Autistic spectrum and to spend time with them to help understand what assistance they would like. This could range from accessing their local community, 1-1 support, joining a group to meet like-minded people or help to make sure reasonable adjustments are made in their employment. Their goals become my goals. I will offer advice and signpost to other agencies as appropriate in order for each individual to reach their goals and enable them to live a fulfilled and happy life.

Please see Page 2 for more
CASA information

NEW SERVICES LAUNCH

Independence Trust will be launching the **Community Advice Links Mental Health Service (CALMHS)** and **Community Autism Support and Advice Service (CASA)** in November 2019.

The services are funded by Gloucestershire County Council and have been running since 1 April 2019. The services provide support for those with Mental Health conditions (CALMHS) or those with a diagnosis of Autism (CASA).

The services are open to residents of Gloucestershire or those registered with a Gloucestershire GP.

Our Hubs are based at:

- **Gas Green, Cheltenham**
- **Conway House, Gloucester**
- **Parliament Street, Stroud**

There are also other venues across the County.

The Launch of the Services will link with **National Stress Awareness Day on 6 November** and the **10th Anniversary of the Autism Act**.

Events will take place as follows:

Tuesday 12 November	Eastgate St, outside Guild Hall	10am - 4pm
Wednesday 13 November	High Street, Stroud	10am - 4pm
Thursday 14 November	Co-op, Cinderford	10am - 4pm
Friday 15 November	Regents Arcade, Cheltenham	10am - 6pm

Do come along and visit us to find out more about the Services and meet our friendly teams.

From 1st April this year, Independence Trust have been delivering the newly commissioned Community Autism and Support & Advice (CASA) service for Gloucestershire. The Gloucestershire Strategy for people with ASCs (2018 – 21) identified that there was a need for post diagnostic support that helps people and their families to learn about, live with and manage the implications of being neuro-divergent.

The main objectives of the service are:

- Aim for the best possible outcomes for individuals
- Support individuals and families to understand Autism Spectrum Condition
- Support local services to increase their understanding of Autism Spectrum Conditions and make reasonable adjustments
- Increase individuals social inclusion
- Develop Peer Support
- To deliver a service that is outward looking and responsive to feedback from people with autism and their families

These will be achieved by providing:

- Information, advice and guidance
- A wide range of interventions and support
- Assisting individuals to live a life where they have a choice and are included in their local community
- Supporting individuals to reach their potential
- Signpost to other appropriate services
- Support individuals to identify areas of interest and help them to get involved
- Access to 1:1 work with a member of the team
- Access to Peer support where individuals can meet with others with similar interests
- Access to web based information

The service is available to those living in Gloucestershire who are registered with a Gloucestershire GP or funded by NHS Gloucestershire/County Council with a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Condition. The service is for those aged 18 and over and young people aged 17 and over to support transition to adult services and to those whose needs cannot be met by mainstream services or other specialist services alone.

Gas Green Greenhouse Project Cheltenham



When Independence Trust moved its Cheltenham location to Gas Green Community Centre it was a real change of scenery for everyone involved. There was a lot of work to be done in the building to meet certain standards. So it should come as no surprise that the outdoor aesthetic was a fairly low priority.

This is where James & Cathy who

run the Wednesday gardening group stepped in to make the outdoor area interesting, appealing and productive. The Barnwood Trust very kindly gave James a grant to purchase a greenhouse and construction began in February 2019.

By May the greenhouse was well up and running with chillies, tomatoes and flowers growing.

The project under the leadership of James has gone from strength to strength and is now (July 2019) an area that is flourishing with plants both inside and outside the greenhouse.

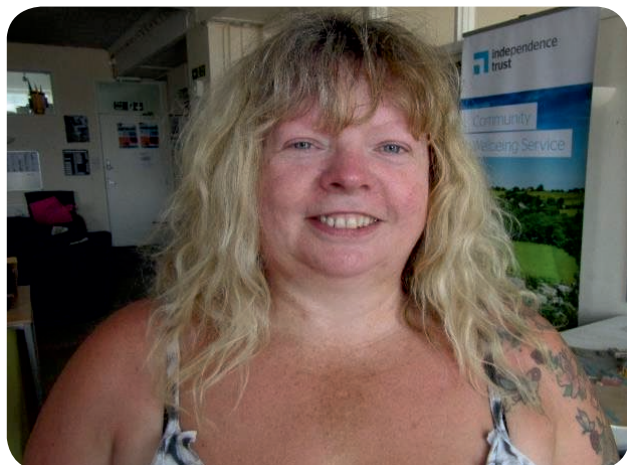
People who use the building regularly enjoy seeing everything growing and consistently comment,

saying what a lovely space it is. James intends to keep up the work as long as he's around because he enjoys seeing how much everyone enjoys it, and of course he gets a great deal of enjoyment from it himself.

Thanks to the Barnwood Trust, Gas Green Youth and Community Centre & Independence Trust staff who have helped make this project possible.



Walk this way.....



My name is Cathie and I came to Independence Trust as a very isolated person who suffers from depression, low confidence and low self-esteem. I am very, very slowly pulling myself up and when I have good days I want to do something good/positive. This is why I set up the Stroud Women's Power Walking Group. Don't get me wrong I still have a lot of bad days when I just want to shut myself off from the world, but I will keep pushing myself forward and up when I can.

I wanted to walk but didn't want to walk on my own, as the places I wanted to go I would feel vulnerable as a lone woman, so I put a message on Free Cycle asking if other women would like to join me, and to my surprise I received over 50 messages.

"What a brilliant idea" and "count me in" was the messages I received back.

I thought "oh my goodness what have I done?" I felt I had thrown myself in at the deep end I really didn't expect to hear from anyone. I set up a Messenger group and said Hi to everyone who was interested. I explained why I posted what I did - a need to get fit, lose weight make new friends. Their reply was "me too". So it was D-Day; destination Stroud's Lockkeepers Café. The first week four people turned up. Four miles later we had walked a little further than planned due to us all walking and talking. I took a photo and posted it and in the coming weeks more women joined us and now there are 10 regulars, all people I didn't know. We all have our stories and different reasons why we are there, all of us arriving on our own. This in itself is amazing - our group is a collection of women seeking fun, friendship and fitness.

One woman said, *"This is so great you have saved me!"* I think we have all saved each other one way or another.

If you are interested in learning more, or joining us:
Stroud Woman Power Walking Group

Cathie, Stroud Peer Lead - cathiimagee67@yahoo.co.uk



The Gloucester Carnival



On 13 July 2019, I took part in my very first carnival. I was dressed as a mermaid, along with others from Carmel Care and Support. It was enjoyable although very tiring. My costume kept falling down as I am very slim. It was a hot day but enjoyed by all. I would like to thank Maja (manager) from Carmel Care and Support for making the tutu dresses and the Poseidon. Without these we would have been unable to take part.

In the evening, I performed the 'loo poem'. It should have been the rap version but they didn't have a CD player. Again I would like to thank Maja for making it possible for me to perform by putting my name forward to entertain. I would also like to thank Hugo from Independence Trust for helping me to develop confidence and drama skills through Impro. Thanks again it was a wonderful day.

Helen Guy (Peer Lead)

Take a look at our exciting groups and sessions for the autumn - more groups to be found in our A-Z

Weavers Craft Gardening Group

You will not need to have any experience with regards to gardening skills or equipment. An opportunity to **bee** a part of this vibrant award winning project getting back to nature. Find out more about our golden hive.

Weavers Craft, Field Road, GL5 2HZ
Tuesdays 10am - 3pm

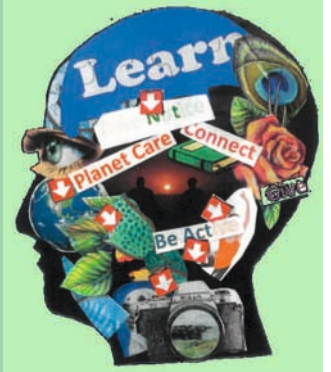


Art for Health

All abilities welcome, whether you have experience within the arts or just fancy trying something new.

The Bothy Cirencester
Tuesdays 1:30pm - 3:30pm

Xmas Crafts
Tyndale Centre Dursley
Thursday 7th Nov for 8 weeks
10:30am - 12:30pm



Cirencester Social

Meeting up for board games and chats

Ashcroft Rooms
Ashcroft Road
Cirencester GR7 1RA
1st and 3rd Friday of the month
11am-1pm



Curio Lounge
9-11 King St, Stroud
First Wed of the month
3pm-4:30pm



Book Club

Monthly meet up for book fans in a relaxed cafe environment. A book will be chosen between the group and discussed at monthly meetings.

Ashcroft Rooms
Ashcroft Road, Cirencester
First Fri of the month
11am-12pm

Impro

Engage clients in developing acting skills. Develop original material for multi-media performances. Raise self-esteem and confidence as a self-empowering activity.

Gas Green Community Centre
6 Baker St, Cheltenham, GL51 9HQ
Thursdays 12:30pm-3:30pm



Young Peoples Group

A group for young people to rediscover and maintain good mental health.
A chance to be social and meet up weekly.

Walk this way and join us.
Group meets every Wednesday at 7pm

Curio Lounge, 9-11 King St
Stroud GL5 3BX



Community Autism Support & Advice

Informal Information Drop-In about our CASA service

Gas Green Community Centre
6 Baker St, Cheltenham, GL51 9HQ
Wednesdays 3:30pm-4:30pm
New group to open soon in Stroud



Hearing Voices Support Group

Enables participants to talk about their experience of hearing voices. Sharing coping strategies for managing voices. Includes guest speakers.

Gas Green Community Centre
6 Baker St, Cheltenham, GL51 9HQ
Fridays 10am-11am



Group Equine Assisted Psychotherapy

Do you experience anxiety and depression, and live in Gloucestershire?

See our A-Z for more information



Sharon's Story

(it could help you too)



When I started coming to Independence Trust a couple of years ago, my life was a black hole of anxiety and depression; a head injury 3 years previously had completely changed my life for the worse. I had had to stop working, I couldn't leave my house most of the time and the times I did go out, my daughter had to come with me. I had panic attacks and anxiety most

of the time I left my home. I had tried lots of things to help me feel better about myself and the life I had now, always with the hope that I'd find the thing to make everything better, but with each thing I tried, I felt more of a failure and more anxious that nothing would work and I'd always be in the black hole.

Coming to Independence Trust changed things. I feel safe there. I have conversations with people who don't judge me and who just 'get me'. I am now able to go there on my own and not have panic attacks and I feel like an everyday person. I have always felt supported at Independence Trust by both the Staff and the other Clients.

I have done several courses at Independence Trust and although I enjoyed doing them, I never believed that they were the thing to make me better. I then discovered, through Independence Trust, a course on Positive Thinking. This is helping me change how I think about myself and how I do things in my life. I am now able to walk up my road on my own. I am going out more and doing things that I wouldn't have done before. I'm thinking of people and things differently because I'm learning to find a positive in most situations. I'm finally feeling a way out of the black hole, step by step. Saying yes to stuff has shifted my way off thinking.

Cheltenham Open Studios Event



The Mosaics and Pottery groups joined forces with 'Art for All', encouraging all clients to participate and take part in this year's Cheltenham Open Studio, opening up the Art room at Gas Green in Cheltenham for two weekends in June.

We also ran drawing workshops on the first Saturday and a pottery workshop on the second Saturday. Both were a great success and people who took part enjoyed themselves. They had wanted to get involved with the local art community event to show the wonderful talent developing within all the art groups run through the Independence Trust groups in Cheltenham. Lots of the clients work was displayed in the main hall at Gas Green, plus lots of nice refreshments and wonderful homemade cakes were provided.

We raised lots of interest, both in awareness of the workshops we run there and how the sales have financed each group to help them continue to run on a regular basis.

This now means the pottery group can purchase a portable pottery wheel, for those who attend the Pottery Group on a Friday afternoon. The Pottery Group is held downstairs due to a number of clients who cannot climb the stairs and getting them a portable wheel allows them to try out other pottery techniques, not just the

hand building. This promotes total inclusivity and wellbeing for all. This is one of the main reasons why these activities are promoted.

The Mosaic group were offered a commission, to help and promote the community spirit developed within the centre. When the public saw the amazing talent within the artwork, we got some wonderful comments.

Lastly, I would like to thank all of those who helped and took part with this event and hope all look forward to future exhibitions together.

Vicky Hendzel-Walker



Otters on Prescription



Photographed by Mark Halling

Otters on prescription - what a lovely thought! Every Thursday afternoon for 6 weeks a group of ten clients enjoyed a wide range of nature activities including otter feeding, birdwatching, canoeing, a land rover safari, a walk and picnic by the river and feeding the geese and their baby goslings. Much merriment was had by all and at the end of the six weeks everyone gave their feedback as to how these activities had affected their mental health.

Everyone was really positive about the whole experience and how they looked forward to those Thursday events.....in fact the only negativity seemed to be that it was over.

Still, the good news is we all received free annual membership tickets for a year and that on the basis of us taking part in the pilot, further funding was going to be applied for, to roll out the programme in the future. The project found...

Stats

Decrease in stress and anxiety after the 6-week programme

Increase in WEMWBS (mental wellbeing; average change of + 7 points)

People felt more connected to natural environments

They said

I feel so peaceful.

Here there's places where you can escape where there's not many people around you, you know.

I rarely leave the house so it's been great to have a reason; something to look forward to, to get out.

I just didn't expect it to be as relaxing as it was. It's an escape from reality.



You can't think angry thoughts when you have these little things right in front of you.

It's a two hour holiday every week to look forward to. You can feel refreshed when you're here.



Well I feel more relaxed and happy to talk to people more. Sometimes I can't do that. But here I find it ok.



Coming here you don't even notice you're doing the exercise. You are walking around and its good for you but it's not mandated. It's enjoyable.

*A lot of questions are asked about wildlife on quizzes. Now I've got extra stuff that now I can use.
I mean part of it is just being that close to them. Yeah. It's like I mean like you get the impression of this stuff on TV but it's not the same. Like looking them in the face it is just so real.
I mean it's just special to get out in nature. It's more engaging and this is just something more.
Just watching the ducks, I mean that was brilliant.*

[Usually] I am just switching four walls for another four walls. This is something outside, it's something bigger than myself. It's something to be connected to.

We are continuing to work with The Wildlife and Wetland Trust at Slimbridge and are about to embark on our next cohort of research

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**Community Project
of the Year**



Weavers Independence Project

Weavers Independence Project is dedicated to improving the lives of many Gloucestershire residents that struggle with mental ill health. The project provides tutors to educate and inspire its groups, offering opportunities to those who would

otherwise not have received the level of support necessary to improve their mental and physical health and wellbeing. They have created a beautiful, safe and productive environment for its groups.



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My passion has always been art but years ago I used my creative skills to make Wedding and novelty cakes. Since becoming ill with a permanent back problem I can no longer do that. I now want to follow in my dad's footsteps and do pencil drawings. My dad went to Art College when he was 18 but only started pencil drawings at the age of 68 and they are amazing. He is no longer with us but I hope he would be proud of what I've achieved so far. His inspiration has driven me to see what I can accomplish and my first two drawings, of a lion and a tiger, have given me such confidence to carry on. Shelley's expert advice has really helped me realise my potential and attending her classes has improved my anxiety and depression. I now feel I can actually draw for the first time!

Julie



Group Equine Assisted Psychotherapy



12 Months On



With thanks to Gloucestershire County Councils – Thriving Communities Grant the HHPDA Team and Independence Trust have been working hard, over the previous 12 months, to deliver horse psychotherapy sessions to groups of individuals experiencing depression & anxiety.

The project aims to address some of the key issues raised in the Gloucestershire Community Wellbeing Survey and supports individuals to live independently from services for a longer period of time.

Additional benefits to participants include:

- Reduction of symptoms of depression and anxiety
- Increased self-esteem and confidence
- Increased resilience
- Reduction of social isolation, increased sense of belonging to local community
- Increased friendship and support networks

We have been working hard to develop the project by seeking feedback from the participants and looking at how this therapy has impacted on their wellbeing.

There has been a lot of positive feedback and participants have reported that by taking part in the sessions they felt better equipped to deal with life challenges and had an overall increase in confidence and self-esteem. Many are now able to see obstacles as opportunities rather than challenges. Participants have described how they can now reframe thoughts that previously would have held them back and this has improved their motivation to do things, particularly things that they may have avoided previously.

For more information, or if you would like a referral form, please contact:
emma.royer@connexus-group.co.uk

Join our Autism Social Group

The group meets at The Cavern in Gloucester (GL1 2NF). Everyone is welcome, including friends, family & support workers.

2pm—4pm the third Thursday of every month.



We had a Bee-utiful day at our Barbee-que at Weavers Croft Gardens, Stroud. There was definitely a Bee theme going on from Bee cupcakes, Bee bunting and a Bee talk from Stroud Bee keepers.

Great food, Great turnout.



Voices Group by Ben Watkinson

Yes, I feel the voices group in Cheltenham on Friday morning has been a big success. I've been running it for 8 months now and we still get a turn out every Friday. It ranges between 3 and 7 of us. I think people like a space where they can say a few things about themselves. There is a certain bonding between us, a solidarity- i.e. it seems to mean something. The other thing I notice is that the members are starting to talk about things amongst themselves after the initial reports have been made. I like to think real progress is being made, there does seem to be some sort of development and growth exhibited by my members!!!

If you are interested in finding out more we will be running a taster session in Stroud look out for more details in the next A-Z



In the same boat

"There's a big thing about being in the same boat at Independence Trust. There is a protective, as opposed to protected, atmosphere. We may be faced with challenges from Independence Trust, otherwise we might as well stay in bed. But the challenges have a positive, constructive foundation. We know that if one of us is facing a destructive challenge from outside, there will be a response of support and encouragement from Clients and Staff to face that challenge and to repel it. (And to overcome the urge to stay in bed.)"

Stephen, Stroud

Our addresses are below:

Gloucester	Conway House (Regus Building), 31 Worcester Street, Gloucester GL1 3AJ	(01452) 317460
Cheltenham	Gas Green Community Centre, 6 Baker Street	(01242) 512812
Forest of Dean	Colliers Court, Latimer Road, Cinderford	(01452) 317460
Cirencester	Ashcroft Rooms, 21 Ashcroft Road and The Bothy, Ashcroft Road	(01453) 767999
Dursley	Tyndale Centre	(01453) 767999
Moreton-in-Marsh	50 Jameson Court	(01242) 512812
Stroud	Parliament Street	(01453) 767999

idt-info@connexus-group.co.uk www.independencetrust.co.uk