



Shropshire Parent and Carer Council Monthly Newsletter

March 2023

Autism Acceptance week

Welcome to the March edition of PACC's monthly newsletter. If you have any questions or require any further information, please email info@paccshropshire.org.uk



World Autism Acceptance Week

Monday 27 March - Sunday 2 April 2023



**World Autism Acceptance Week is back! The theme for 2023 is
COLOUR!**

Approximately 1% of the population (700,000 people) have a diagnosis of Autism. If you include families- Autism is part of the daily life of 2.8 million people.

Shropshire County has approximately 3500 people on the Autistic Spectrum.



Autism in Schools Project

Autism in Schools is a project that started in the North-East Region about 5 years ago, which recognised the difficulties that were being faced by autistic young people attending mainstream schools. The project started by talking to parent carers and understanding the issues they and their autistic children and young people, were experiencing in the school environment. There were clear messages that the school environment often created real difficulties for autistic young people and relationships were placed under pressure because the needs of these young people were not being understood. This lack of understanding meant that small issues escalated and “too many opportunities were missed” to adjust support and avoid autistic young people and their families going into crisis.

Autism in Schools also encourages schools to work in partnership with SEND families, creating opportunities for parent carers to come together, to provide support to each other, share information and to co-produce solutions to any issues identified. Schools were also supported to provide opportunities to enable autistic young people to directly share their experiences and to understand more about what living with autism means in their words.

[Read More](#)



Neurodevelopmental Pathway Update

Shropshire Council and Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin Health Trust are prioritising the Neurodevelopmental Pathway work taking place across the county. Following the SEND Inspection Revisit Outcome, which stated the Autism and ADHD assessment pathway was still a significant weakness within the Shropshire Area SEND System, there is a renewed focus on specific areas and opportunities.

PACC are continuing to inform and influence the development of services that support those with Neurodevelopmental needs.

[Read More](#)



Activities for Children and Young People

Identity school of dance

Inclusive dance school for children & adults with special educational needs & disabilities based in Shrewsbury, Shropshire

TIMETABLE

Tuesday

- 5pm-5.45pm Mini Street dance (5+)
- 5.45-6.30pm Young Adults Street dance (14+)
- 6.30-7.30pm Contemporary dance (14+)
- 7.30-8.30pm Senior Street dance (16+)

Thursday

- 5-6pm Mini's Musical Theatre (5+)
- 6-7pm Senior Musical Theatre (14+)
- 7-8pm Limitless MEGA CREW training (16+)

COMING SOON

Now exciting classes & much more!
keep an eye out on our social media pages

Instagram: [Identity_schoolofdance](#) Facebook: [Identityschoolofdance](#)

Email: Enquiries.isod@outlook.com

www.Identityschoolofdance.com

KIDS

SUNDAY SEN SESSION

9.30AM-12PM

£4 PER CHILD

EXCLUSIVE FOR SEN CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES

www.uklittlerascals.com - 07501855387

Actio Term-Time Activities

These activities take place throughout the school term time or regularly throughout the year. Please click on the arrow to find out more about each opportunity. The extra information provided on their dedicated page will include details about what happens in the activities, how you can book to participate, what facilities they have on site, and what needs they can cater for best. If you are unsure if your child's needs can be met, or if the opportunity may be of interest to them, please contact the providers to talk about this further as they may be able to help.

INCLUSIVE GROUP

Multi-Activity Inclusive Sessions

ACTIVITIES INCLUDING BOWLS, CYCLING, GYM, SPORTS & MORE!

TUESDAY 10AM - 12PM
TUESDAY 1PM - 3PM
WEDNESDAY 10AM-12PM
THURSDAY 10:30AM-12:30PM
£4.50 PER SESSION

PEDAL FOR HEALTH

Inclusive Cycling Session

PROCESSED BY CYCLE-CAFE AT 12PM-1PM with cycling4all shropshire

EVERY WEDNESDAY
1PM - 3PM
£4.50 PER SESSION

SHREWSBURY SPORTS VILLAGE, SY1 4RQ 0345 000 7002



Family Activities

National Trust Essential Companion Card



The Essential Companion card makes it simple to bring one or two carers or companions with you, free of charge. Show the card when you arrive, and your carer(s) or companion(s) won't need to pay an entry fee.

It's in your name so you can bring whoever you like, but even if you don't have an Essential Companion card, you can still bring carers or companions free – the card just makes it quicker and simpler for you.

[Read More](#)



Attingham Park

On Saturday mornings in April, the Mansion will be open for SEN (Special Educational Need) relaxed sessions between 10am and 11am.

These hour-long sessions in the Mansion are designed for visitors on the Autism Spectrum or those with sensory sensitivity special needs who may find visiting during regular opening hours overwhelming.

[Read More](#)



Did you know that you can search for family SEND friendly activities on The Local Offer? You can search by age group, location, and search key words for activities!

[Read More](#)



Courses/ Advice Sessions

Understanding Your Autistic Child – Shropshire Parents

29th March at 10:00 am - 12:00 pm

Cabin Lane Church, The Whole Life Christian Centre, Cabin Lane
Oswestry, Shropshire SY11 2LQ United Kingdom [+ Google Map](#)

Free



Online Autism Advice and Consultation Sessions – Shropshire County

1st May at 11:30 am - 12:30 pm

ONLINE, Autism West Midlands

Free



Useful Resources

(Click image to load website)





Ask Abi

This month we have been asked about masking behaviours at school and what school can do to help.

What is Masking and what effects can it have?

Masking is a social survival strategy. How it looks will vary from person to person, but masking can include behaviours such as:

- forcing or faking eye contact during conversations
- imitating smiles and other facial expressions
- mimicking gestures
- hiding or minimizing personal interests
- developing a repertoire of rehearsed responses to questions
- scripting conversations
- pushing through intense sensory discomfort including loud noises
- disguising stimming behaviours

People may mask autism for a variety of reasons, such as:

- feeling safe and avoiding stigma
- avoiding mistreatment or bullying
- succeeding at work
- attracting a romantic partner
- making friends and other social connections
- fitting in or feeling a sense of belonging

The effects of making include:

- **Stress and anxiety**
- **Depression**
- **Exhaustion**
- **Delayed identification of autism**
- **Loss of identity**
- **Risk of burnout**
- **Increased risk of suicidal thoughts**

If you are concerned that your child or young person is masking, it is very important to speak to their school/ college. Keeping a diary of behaviours that are worrying you may help.

Information for Parent Carers to share with school

1. Develop Your Own Understanding of Autism

In 2021, the government published the latest autism strategy, which, for the first time, now includes children and young people. This strategy recognises that autistic children are currently not receiving the positive educational experiences that they are entitled to, and states that by 2026 the government wants:

- Education settings to provide better and more inclusive support, [...] so that autistic people are better able to achieve their potential.
- More teachers and educational staff to understand the specific needs of their autistic pupils, ensuring that more school placements can be sustained.
- More autistic children to have their needs identified early on and to have positive experiences in education settings.

As education professionals, developing your own understanding of autism and what it means to be autistic (including awareness of the fact that children may mask their needs), will help you to work towards these aims.

2. Promote an Inclusive Whole-School Culture

For children to be less likely to mask, they need to feel that their autistic identities are respected and supported. Rather than expecting autistic people to change to 'fit in' to the environment, the environment needs to be changed to support neurodiversity.

Schools and other settings should aim to do this at a whole-school level, increasing understanding of autism within the school community (staff, pupils, and parents – including parents of non-autistic children). The whole school community should embrace the concept of neurodiversity, where they see autism as a difference, not a deficit.

3. Provide Individualised Support

Your support of children and young people with SEND should always be driven by their actual strengths and needs, and in line with the Graduated Approach. By making adjustments to effectively support individuals' differences, the impetus to mask should lessen.

Care should be taken to support autistic learners' social, emotional, and mental health. Figures show that 70% of autistic children have a mental health problem. Masking can both contribute to mental ill-health and camouflage the signs of mental-ill health. Therefore, it is doubly important to both understand masking and to support children's mental health to hopefully minimise the need to mask.

Building effective relationships with, and getting to know, the autistic learners that you support will be key in providing them with support that meets their individual needs. For example, knowing what makes them anxious, even if they mask their anxiety response, will allow you to remove that barrier, and therefore reduce the need to mask.

4. Listen to Parent Carers

Parent Carers are the experts on their own children. However, parents of autistic children who mask often report feeling unheard, shut down, or even judged as a bad parent when they report a picture of their child that is different to the one seen in school.

Many autistic children will present differently at home. This is often due to feeling safe, that they can fully be their true self at home, as well as experiencing less pressure to mask. (For example, they may stim more than at school because they don't fear judgement).

Often parent carers report what is sometimes called, 'the Coke bottle effect' – the pressure of coping with anxiety during the school day builds, and is only released when they get home. This can be one reason why sometimes school staff report seeing no signs of difficulty but at home parents report distressed behaviour.

In order to properly support learners, teachers need to get a picture of their strengths and challenges at home. Conversations with parents can provide you with valuable insight, and help to establish successful home-school collaboration.

It is imperative that parent carers are listened to. If they report concerns, do not dismiss them simply because you have not observed them. In fact, the difference between the two presentations should be a sign to alert you to the possibility that the child or young person is masking.

Find out more here:



Useful Resources:



Masking in girls



Shrewsability Fun Run

Saturday 15th April

10am Arrival

Montgomery Waters Meadow, Shrewsbury

600m fun run. Flat and fully accessible- participants will complete 2 laps around the pitch.

Each runner will receive a branded T-shirt, a medal and 2 tickets to enjoy the game that day!

Supported by



Booking essential, please book via
<https://forms.office.com/e/1SYAuVuMym>



ShrewsAbility Fun Run

Shrewsbury Town FC Foundation are excited to invite you to take part in their ShrewsAbility 600m Fun Run as part of Shrewsbury Town FC's Foundation Day on 15th April 2023.

The 600m ShrewsAbility Fun Run will be held on Saturday 15th April 2023 at Montgomery Waters Meadow Shrewsbury and will start at 10.30am (arrivals at 10am). This year's route will take place around the perimeter of the pitch and a video will be shared with participants once sign up is complete, so they can know what to expect.

If you want to join in the fun and help raise some money for disability sport please register on the link below

[Read More](#)

Foundation Day

Foundation Day 2023 will take place on Saturday, April 15 when Shrewsbury Town host Portsmouth! This year, they are hosting a kids takeover day!

“Do you know someone who you think could step into the shoes of one of our matchday workers? Nominate a young person and the role you think they'd be best suited to, to be in with a chance of winning a behind the scenes experience! All applicants must be aged 8 - 13 to apply!”

[Read More](#)



Meet the Team

This month meet Abi Taylor. PACC's Support & Development Lead and one of our Preparation for Adulthood (PFA) Navigators.

Abi has been part of the team since 2021.



- Personal lived experience of childhood trauma.
 - Single Parent Carer to a young person with a diagnosis of:
 - Autism Spectrum Disorder
 - Autism Spectrum Condition Anxiety
 - Social, Emotional and Mental Health Needs
 - Developmental Coordination Disorder
 - Emotional dysregulation
 - Sensory Processing Disorder
 - Process for assessment and diagnosis took 6 years.
-
- Young person has attended mainstream Infant and Junior School
 - Had a Graduated Support Plan (GSP) whilst waiting for Education Health Care Plan (EHCP)
 - Young person now at Mainstream Secondary School
 - Has an EHCP
 - Uses school transport



Information & Support | Influence & Change



Tuesday 25th April

10am-11:30am

Avalon Day Centre

Victoria Road, Oswestry

SY11 2JE



Monthly Coffee & Chat with PACC Reps

Join the PACC Rep Team for a monthly Coffee & Chat. We welcome Parent Carers to pop in and catch up with our team, to share your experiences, or simply to say hello.

These will be held monthly at various locations across Shropshire.

No need to book, just pop along if you have chance.

Preparation for Adulthood



What is Preparation for Adulthood (PFA)?

Our early life experiences help us to prepare for life as an adult and this should be recognised as early as possible, although there is an expectation that Young People with SEND focus on PFA from Year 9.

Conversations about a young person's future should involve themselves, their parent carers, their teachers and anyone else who works with them.

What areas does PFA cover?

PFA covers all areas of your Young Person's life that will enable them to have the best outcomes as they enter adulthood, including:

- Further education
- Activity Plans
- Finances and Benefits
- Employment and Volunteering
- Annual Health Checks
- Staying Healthy
- Being Part of the local community



How does our PFA journey start?

Planning for transition into adulthood should start from the Year 9 annual review of the EHC plan. Each review thereafter must focus on preparing for adulthood- including the move between children's and adults services outside of education.

The transition towards adulthood review from Year 9 will start to gather information regarding the young persons and their families' aspirations for their future, including who needs to be involved, target planning and the support needed. The review will explore provision accessible to students in order for them to be healthy, participating in society, living independently, and accessing further education and/or employment where appropriate.

For more information, please contact our PFA Navigators



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