

DAAS Newsletter No 1

September 2010

Dear DAAS Supporter

This is the first in a series of occasional newsletters which we hope will help to keep you informed of DAAS's activities and plans and encourage you to tell us what you would like DAAS to do in order to support and encourage you and make the name of our group, Dorset Adult Asperger Support, really meaningful.

As many of you will already know, Will Coussell, who has been chairman of DAAS for the last 2 years has announced that he will be taking a well earned break and resigning from this position from the end of September. Will has devoted a great deal of time and effort to helping establish the group, attended numerous, interminable meetings to ensure that people with Asperger's and their carers and supporters have a voice, and carried out many of the routine and necessary admin. tasks which help to keep any organisation running. For this we owe him a debt of gratitude and our sincere thanks for everything he has done. Hopefully we shall continue to see both Will and his wife Sue at our Bournemouth and Poole meetings.

As a result of Will retiring from this role, the other Trustees will be looking at the way in which the group runs and, over the next few months, we hope to make a few changes to enable us to move ahead and take advantage of some of the improvements we anticipate will arise from the passing of the Autism Act 2009 and the consequent Autism Strategy "Fulfilling and Rewarding Lives" 2010.

Under Will's chairmanship we were successful in obtaining grants and funding to enable us to put DAAS on a firmer footing and we have recently received welcome news of a potential sponsorship to run a series of training courses in 2011 for people with Asperger's and their supporters. We are fully involved in the quarterly consultation process with Bournemouth & Poole councils and NHS Trust arising from the establishment of CAAS (Community Adult Asperger's Service) highlighting the widespread needs of people with Asperger's. And on the other side of the region we are similarly involved with the development of the ASC strategy with Dorset County Council and the PCT.

BUT we need your help to ensure this work can continue. The DAAS Trustees, now to be known as Volunteer Directors, can only do so much. We are looking at how to replace Will but there are many small tasks which we would greatly appreciate your help with. For example:

- We would like to move to a system of Meeting Hosts to chair the meetings at both our venues. This means that a small group of 3 or 4 people would agree to host one of our monthly meetings on a rota basis: welcoming people, introducing the speaker, reading out any notices and just keeping a general eye on proceedings. There would be no commitment to chair anything other than the agreed meeting and help and support would be available if wanted.
- We would like a couple of people to work together at a welcome table each month: to greet people, ensure the register is signed, draw attention to any relevant notices and help people meet and get to know each other. Each person could provide cover for the other when necessary.
- We would like someone from the Bournemouth & Poole branch to assist our Treasurer Brian Cox who is based at Dorchester. We have appointed a firm of chartered accountants to prepare our accounts so you don't need any qualifications, just an ability to add up and help organise paperwork. If you do want to become more involved we would like to consider the possibility of a joint Treasurer at a later stage.
- Sometimes help is needed in setting up the venues - furniture shifting etc and restoring the status quo afterwards.
- We would also like to hear from anyone who could be interested in playing a future role in DAAS supporting the Volunteer Directors in different areas as needed. Sorry this is rather vague but it would be helpful to know if anyone is willing in general to be called upon perhaps to attend a meeting, to give out leaflets, to take part in a future campaign or even to spare a couple of hours to help with the paperwork. If you have a special area of expertise that we might call upon it would be good to know about that too.
- Last but not least, whether or not you can help in any of the above ways, your continued support by attending meetings and taking part in discussions is always appreciated and welcomed.

If you can help in any of the above ways please let one of us know at the next meeting or by emailing one of the addresses below.

Many thanks and we look forward to hearing from you.

Diane

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