

DAAS Newsletter No 2

March 2011

Dear DAAS Supporter

The DAAS year, like the financial year, runs from April to March. So as we are coming up to the year end it seems like a good time to give you a round up of what has been happening within DAAS over the last few months and what we are planning for the coming year.

Recent Changes

We've been very pleased to meet several new people who have come along to join us at both our venues in recent months. These include carers, people with Asperger's and members of local organisations with interests in common. We hope our numbers will continue to grow so we can become a powerful voice for change within our Community. But we don't forget that for many of you the opportunity to meet other people "in the same boat" and to share experiences and support is a key reason for coming along to the DAAS group. So we try to encourage a less formal and more relaxed feel to our meetings. At the Retreat this has been helped by the cafe style seating and the recent introduction of self-service teas and coffees, as well as the Welcome Desk. We've also introduced a more informative and inclusive programme, with a chance for you to have your say. In addition, following our Bournemouth meetings we send out a Programme Review Newsletter to act as a reminder of the event and a record of key information and contacts. This can also be found on the website in the Bournemouth & Poole Meetings section. If you can't get to the meetings then we hope this Review will still help to keep you informed and involved in our activities and items of interest. Further changes are in the pipeline (See below.) and if you have any ideas or suggestions please don't hesitate to let us know.

Recent Activities

Over the last few months DAAS has been trying to raise its profile and we were closely involved in the recent successful Understanding Adults with Aspergers Conference held at Merley House, near Wimborne, hosted jointly by NHS Dorset, NHS Bournemouth and Poole and Dorset County Council. Two of our Voluntary Directors took part in the Workshops: Martin Hedley provided a personal perspective in Lived Experiences; and Brian Cox was one of the three facilitators running The Role of the Voluntary Sector in advocating and delivering services for adults with Aspergers. In addition, the case studies used in this workshop were all produced by DAAS supporters and based on their own experiences. A DAAS stand set up in the reception area attracted a lot of interest and we added some DAAS bookmarks and posters (newly designed and printed by DAAS

supporters) to our supply of leaflets. Some very valuable feedback was received from the day and it is hoped to arrange a discussion session at a later date.

At the east end of the County we have been involved in joint consultation meetings with John Dermody, Head of Adult Social Care Services for Poole, acting as liaison for the CAAS (Community Adult Asperger Service) Monitoring Board. We have two groups. One group consists of 3 DAAS Supporters with Asperger's and the second group consists of 4/5 DAAS supporters who are carers or family members of people with Asperger's. The Aims of the groups have been officially set out as follows:

- to help to develop and progress the provision of clinical, diagnostic and social care services for adults with Asperger's and their carers, within the boroughs of Bournemouth & Poole and the catchment area of the CAAS team, through discussion, enquiry and support.
- to provide a vehicle for the local authorities and NHS Foundation Trust to take into account the views and needs of adults with Asperger's and their carers in developing and commissioning services and in complying with the statutory requirements and guidelines supporting implementation of the national autism strategy. These are set out in "Fulfilling and Rewarding Lives"

It is still early days and we have only had a couple of the quarterly meetings so far but this is a genuine opportunity for our voices to be heard. We are very grateful for those people who are giving up their time to take part in this process and to represent the views of people with Asperger's and their carers in Dorset.

From the Dorchester Group, both Brian & Martin have been closely involved in the work on the Pan Dorset Adult Autistic Spectrum Condition Commissioning Strategy. Quite a mouthful! But this is a very important document which will establish the foundation for future services for the whole of Dorset, including Bournemouth and Poole from 2011 to 2014. At the moment the paper is in the consultation stage and your views are sought on as few or as many points as you would like to make. The website details can be found at <http://consultationtracker.dorsetforyou.com/00,consultation,8322,330,00.htm> and there are links to the document and to the forms in standard and easy read versions. If you don't have internet access you can request a paper copy by phoning Lucy Bishop on 01305 224738. Please take a few moments, if you can, to look at the paper and send in your comments. Once the strategy is adopted it will provide the standard against which the provision of services can be judged and their quality assessed.

Membership

For historical reasons, when DAAS was first set up as a company to attract funding, the Voluntary Directors were the only people who were, and are, officially able to sit on the board and make decisions for DAAS. This is something we have been wanting to change

for some time. So from the beginning of April 2011 we are extending the opportunity to become a fully-fledged member of DAAS to a much wider range of people. For a nominal annual sum we hope many of you will want to join us and put your support on a more formal basis. This will give DAAS a more powerful voice when pressing for change and you will have the opportunity to shape the way DAAS is run and the direction in which it directs its limited resources. Membership brings with it the right to vote, to say who you want to represent you, and we hope to provide a special members only section of the website, giving you inside and up-to-date information. On the social side we intend to hold seasonal members events, bringing together members from all parts of the County, to share, support and relax together. More details will be available at the March meetings and will be sent out with the Programme Reviews. Membership forms will be available from early April.

DAAS -What do you think?

Over the last few months people attending meetings have been asked for their views on DAAS and have been kind enough to fill in a short questionnaire. As well as giving their ideas for future meetings and for extensions of the website people also set out some of the areas they would like DAAS to tackle for or with them. Several points arise from this.

- we are looking at holding some informal events for carers only. A provisional date has been set for Sunday 17th April for carers to meet for a carvery lunch at The Pilot, Canford Heath from 12.00 noon. This will be hosted by Carole and any carer is welcome to come along and share thoughts and ideas or just relax. If you can host something similar, at a local venue or even at home your support would be very welcome.
- we are also looking at holding one or two meetings in Bournemouth without a formal speaker as they do in Dorchester, giving you an opportunity to raise topics of personal interest or just to share your experiences and concerns.
- some people find it difficult to get to our meetings, either because of transport problems or because they prefer to have some social support. Would you be able to offer a lift (there and back) on an occasional or even a regular basis? Could you agree to meet up with someone to accompany them to a meeting or two?
- there is a need for other types of support eg. help with form filling, being a buddy – in a social or an official setting, sharing knowledge of how different parts of “the system” work, being an e-mail or telephone contact. This can’t all be provided by the Voluntary Directors. Are you able to help?

Reminder

March 27th is Census day. Your response is important and will help to ensure the right information is made available for future planning and funding decisions which will affect you and your community. The programme review for January 2011 gave details of some of

the help which is available (If you don't have a copy then you can find the review on the DAAS website against the January date for Bournemouth & Poole meetings)

Skills, Experience and Willingness needed.

Do you have an interest in marketing, design, promotion or publicity? Would you be willing to join a small group to look at developing ideas for DAAS literature and company branding? If so, please let one of the Voluntary Directors know.

We are also still hoping that one or two people will be brave enough to volunteer to host the occasional meeting. Help and support will be given and you will earn an enormous fund of gratitude! Please give it a go.

Back up skills are also required from someone not afraid of figures, particularly from the Bournemouth & Poole branch, to assist Brian with the routine and very basic accounts.

At the moment our resources are stretched fairly thinly so any offers of help will be very much appreciated. If you think there is something you can help with, however small, or however limited your time, please don't be wary of coming forward.

And finally

Some of you may receive this newsletter with a coloured background (it's intended to be cream but this depends on your computer set-up!). This is because we know that Asperger's is sometimes associated with certain types of practical reading or visual perception difficulties and we believe a non-white background may be helpful. Please let us know what you think.

I hope you have found some of the above information useful or interesting, or both! Comments and feedback are always welcome.

Kind Regards

Diane

<http://www.dorsetadultaspergerssupport.org.uk>

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