

Assert newsletter

Spring 2018



Assert Update

I'd like to take this opportunity to wish everyone a belated Happy New Year.

The new year has been a busy time for Assert and we will shortly be saying a sad farewell to Kat Chuck, our Volunteer and Activities Coordinator. Kat has ensured that Assert have a dedicated and trained team of volunteers to support Assert and has also organised a great range of activities for us over this time. She has developed our newly established mentor scheme and has been a highly valued member of the team at Assert. We would like to wish her the best in her new adventures.

Emma and Liam are now both settled in their new roles and are enjoying meeting everyone. Catherine is enjoying her new role as a mature student in Newcastle.

I am saddened to pass on the news that a long standing service user at Assert, Neil Tideswell passed away suddenly in December. Neil was a familiar and friendly face at Assert activities, and once did a fundraising motorbike ride from John O'Groats to Lands End in support of Assert. We would like to offer our condolences to his family.

Sarah Bourne

Fundraising Volunteers Needed

If you have any ideas for fundraising, or for running a fundraising activity for Assert, please get in touch. We are always seeking to raise funds, to ensure that Assert can keep services at no cost for people needing them.

Annual General Meeting

Tuesday **17th April** 2018

Conference Room at **Community Base**

7pm Start
7-7.30pm Membership renewal
7.30-9.45pm Annual General Meeting (AGM)
and guest speaker

Light refreshments available

We would like to invite Assert members and service users to our AGM. This is an opportunity for an update on Assert's services over the past 12 months, to become an Assert member, or renew your membership for 2018-2019 (please note that only members can vote at the AGM) and to hear our guest speaker for 2018, Jon Adams.

Jon Adams FRSA is a neurodivergent artist and synaesthete. He works as a freelance artist, associate artist at the Portsmouth New Theatre Royal, National Autistic Society Cultural Ambassador, and polymath artist. Jon will be giving a presentation about his art.

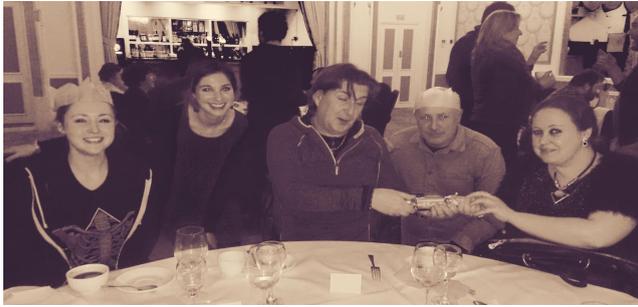
Membership

We would like to invite people to become members of Assert. The fee is £10 for single membership or £15 for family/joint membership. Membership forms for new members, and for renewals, can be requested from the Assert office at any time; they will also be emailed and posted out with the AGM invites, and will be available at the AGM on the night.

Activities

After what seems like it has been a very long winter, Spring is finally on its way... The evenings are getting lighter, the daffodils and crocuses are starting to bloom, and the birds are singing in the morning... hurray!!!

We have had a busy few months. In November we made **snow globes** which were brilliant!



In December we had the **Christmas meal** (above: Nicola, Julia, Philip, Ricky, Laura), it's always so lovely to get together and share a meal. Lots of festive fun was had. January's activity was a **film evening**. We watched the movie **Dunkirk**, which really captured the harrowing experiences and bravery of thousands of those who were there.



In February we had our ever-popular **pottery painting** session, and many Assert members braved the snow. We tend to run this activity once a year and it is

always lots of fun. The concentration, and beautiful pieces of pottery, are always a pleasure to see.

Looking ahead over the next few months, there will be activities such as Lazerquest and a quiz night. When the weather warms up, we will have our yearly picnic, and hopefully a boat trip too. Please let us know if you have any ideas for activities.

Kat Chuck

My First Three Walks

Four months ago I took over Catherine's post, which includes organizing the Assert walks on the third weekend of every month. I knew I was going to enjoy this part of the job very much! Walking in the countryside has so many benefits for mind and body, and I believe it also brings people together.

We are blessed to live in a small city and have access to all sorts of different landscapes. I have organized walks at **Stanmer Park**, the **Seven Sisters** and **East Brighton Park**, and we've had a great time on all of them, even the very slippery walk!

On all three of them, we've encountered situations where we've needed to be flexible, and adapt to the weather conditions, public transport timings, or the lack of a well-deserved piece of cake. With a bit of humour, our sense of fellowship and mutual support, we have managed to overcome every obstacle.

The monthly walks are very popular amongst our clients, especially as spring and summer approaches. Unfortunately, there are only a limited number of spaces available. I understand sometimes life can get a bit in the way... If you have signed up for a walk, and know you are not going to be able to come, let me know as soon as possible so I can offer the place to other clients.

Hopefully see you on the next walk!

Julia Martinez

Assert Resource Library

Assert has a small library of books and DVDs that people can borrow. We would like to add more titles to the library. If you would like to donate books or DVDs, or see what is available to borrow, please get in touch.

Clockwork by Damon Libby



Two things that I love are getting out in nature and making things. I find both activities help my state of mind greatly. Ever since I was young, I was always out collecting driftwood that I would carve into something, or build something with.

Last year I decided that I needed a clock to feature in my kitchen. Since my flat has a whole salvage feel to it, the clock would need to be made from items that I found and could up-cycle. I started with the base of the clock, which ultimately would become the face of the clock. I thought of such things as the end of a cable wire holder, or a piece of flat slate. All of which would have been good, but in the end, I decided to use an old hardcover recipe book I had found. I'm terrible at following recipes, so it would find an actual use as a clock now. I chose it for the image on the front, which was a bowl of eggs. That would look rustic, and look perfect for the wall.

I started by gluing the pages together on the outside with simple school white glue. Then I glued the front and back cover to the pages. In

the end I had a box of sorts. Then I recycled a old clock that I didn't like the look of, and took out the battery case and hands.

I placed the battery pack on the back of my new box clock and traced it with a pencil. Then I took a carpet knife and carefully cut out a box for it to fit into. With a drill, I drilled a hole into the bottom of my new hole for the hands base to pop out of. Then I removed the hand on the old clock and slide it into the hole and out the front. A bit of tape holds the battery case in place, and then I just reattached the hands. Some found pieces of driftwood are my numbers on the front, although it's so beautiful, I had thought about leaving them off, but in the end glued them on.

I love the clock, it makes me happy that I was able to bring new life into old objects, and that it has an actual story behind it.

Jokes by Stephen Robinson

Why did the bicycle not go to work?
Because it was two tired.

Why are dogs so good at games?
Because they are usually in the lead.

Two friends in a pub.
Friend 1: I'm going to Romania this year.
Friend 2: Romania?
Friend 1: Yes, I'm going to remain 'ere.

Give As You Live

Please use Give As You Live when you shop online to help raise funds for Assert
<https://www.giveasyoulive.com/charity/assertbh>

Autism Support Advisor



I am honoured to be part of the Assert team and the Autism community. In the past few years, whilst working at Autism Sussex, I always heard so many great things about Assert, and now I'm here I can confirm they are all true!

My first couple of months here have been excellent, and I would like to thank you all for that. From the meetings that I have had, to the drop-ins, events, walks, the Christmas meal (my table rocked - you know who you are), I have met some amazing people already. And my colleagues are alright, I guess (they're brilliant really - it's a great team). Thanks for all making me feel so welcome.

I worked at Autism Sussex for the past three years. During this time, I also did a Psychology degree, in which I wrote my dissertation on the cognitive functions of Autism, and I'm very proud to say that it has just been published in a Psychology journal. I'm very passionate about understanding Autism and supporting people on the spectrum.

I have many other interests and passions. I've been very lucky to play in many bands - I love music. I enjoy films, football, video and board games, sciences, and travelling.

I'm happy to be here at Assert. I feel this is the perfect job for me, and I hope that reflects in the work that I do with you all. I look forward to meeting more of you, and to continue the work with those of you I've already met.

Liam Ragless

Benefits Update

Personal Independence Payment

All 1.6 million current Personal Independence Payment (PIP) claims will be reviewed by the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) following a High Court ruling in December 2017, which found that changes made to the way PIP is assessed and scored were discriminatory to people with mental health conditions. The ruling has overturned the change from April 2017, which meant that people who find it difficult to plan and follow the route of a journey because of overwhelming psychological distress could no longer qualify for the mobility component at either the standard or enhanced rate.

It is anticipated that this change will positively impact around 220,000 people with mental health conditions and/or autistic spectrum conditions in the UK, and will also have a positive impact in relation to eligibility for the blue badge scheme and concessionary travel cards.

The DWP has advised that it will review everyone currently in receipt of PIP, and will prioritise claimants who have been disallowed PIP over those currently in receipt of the award. There is currently no further information or guidance available regarding timescales for this review, or what will be asked of claimants, although Minister for disabled people Sarah Newton told MPs earlier this month that there will not be a requirement for people to come in for an additional face-to-face assessment. Assert will continue to provide regular updates through the newsletter and website.

Newsletter contributions

Contact Assert if you have suggestions for the newsletter, or would like us to include something from you such as a poem or article you have written, artwork or photos.

Universal Credit

A full service roll-out of Universal Credit is now live in BN1, BN2 and BN3 postcodes, which means that residents in Brighton and Hove that want to make a new claim for Employment and Support Allowance (ESA), Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA), Working Tax Credits, Child Tax Credits or Incapacity Benefit will now have to make an application for Universal Credit. Whether you can make an application for Universal Credit is also based on your circumstances, and to find out if your postcode is now 'live' please visit <https://www.universalcreditinfo.net>.

It is important to note that once you make a claim for Universal Credit you will no longer be eligible to claim for any of the 'legacy' benefits listed above, even if you are currently waiting for a Tribunal hearing. This means, for example, that if you are currently appealing a decision regarding your claim for Employment and Support Allowance and start a claim for Universal Credit, you will no longer be eligible for Employment and Support Allowance, regardless of the outcome of your Appeal hearing.

For more information about what to do while you are awaiting the outcome of a mandatory reconsideration, or awaiting an appeal hearing for ESA, please contact Emma.

Support for Mortgage Interest

From April 2018, homeowners who receive financial support to cover the cost of mortgage interest payments will no longer receive Support for Mortgage Interest (SMI) in the form of a benefit, and will instead need to apply for a Support for Mortgage Interest Loan from the DWP, the cost of which would be recovered when your home is sold. To find out more about if these changes will affect you, or for more information please visit

<https://www.gov.uk/support-for-mortgage-interest>

Emma Fraser

Mentoring

Assert runs a mentoring/befriending service. Volunteer mentors work 1:1 with Assert members, meeting regularly, usually over a period of 6 months. The mentor can offer many kinds of support such as having a chat at a café, going for a walk, assistance using public transport, researching job opportunities, or many other possibilities.



Stephen Bylett (left, with Rusty) and I are coming to the end of the befriending process after several months. I have hugely enjoyed being Stephen's mentor.

Stephen reflected on his experience:

"I would recommend it [mentoring] because it's good. To have someone to be with, to chat to, to have discussions with. Someone to run through things with. Someone to encourage you. We always go for a cup of tea, to a cafe somewhere, and we chat about what's been going on, what activities I've done, et cetera. I talk about things that are on my mind, and holidays et cetera. I find it very encouraging. I've enjoyed my mentoring very much."

For more information, contact Assert.

Hayley Annhernu, Assert volunteer

Goodbye



It's with a heavy heart that I need to tell you that I will be leaving Assert mid-April. My family and I are going on an adventure – we are moving to sunny Spain. We are very excited and a bit nervous. It will be a big move, we will be living in the mountains with no

neighbours, completely off grid, and we will need to learn a new language, but we feel that the time is right for us.

Working at Assert for the past four years has been so wonderful, I couldn't have wished or imagined being so lucky to work with so many amazing people. I have spent these years planning loads of fun trips and activities, and have had the pleasure of getting to know you and sharing these experiences with you. I have absolutely loved my time with you all, and feel confident that I am leaving at a time where Assert is very strong with a brilliant staff team.

I would like to assure you that nothing will change for you in terms of the drop-ins, activities, or the mentoring service we provide. It may take a short period for the new person to get used to the role, but this won't be very long. My last drop-in will be Tuesday 10th April. It would be lovely to see you there, although I may be a bit teary saying goodbye.

Thank you so much for making my time here so memorable, Assert wouldn't be what it is without every single one of you

Kat Chuck

Personal contact details

If you have changed your email, postal address or mobile number, please get in touch to let us know your new contact details, so that we can update our records.

Helping Hand Card

Helping Hand is a card from Brighton and Hove Buses. Passengers who may need help can easily and quickly show the card to the driver. The card is particularly useful for passengers with "hidden disabilities", including people on the autism spectrum. The card has a brief instruction such as "Please wait until seated" or "Priority seating", or many other options.

The Helping Hand card can also be used on buses from other companies, including Stagecoach, Metrobus and Compass.

For more information phone 01273 886200
<http://buses.co.uk/helpinghand>



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LOTTERY FUNDED

