



AUTSCAPE 2019

Making Connections

Handbook



Photo © Panda Mery

If you need help

Please talk to an Autscape organiser, not to the staff of High Leigh.

Urgent issues

Find someone in person.

Organisers: Debbie, Elaine, James, Kalen, Martijn and Seth.

How to find an organiser:

- Wearing a **blue** high vis vest, sash, arm band, hat or badge,
- At the **information area** next to the coffee area from after breakfast until 10pm, except for meal times when we will be in **Barclay Restaurant**.

We also have a number of volunteers who may be able to help you. There is always an organiser 'on call' at night. Their name and room location will be posted in the information area.

You can also phone or text us on:

07770 696066

Non-urgent issues

If your issue is not urgent, you can still do any of the above, or you can:

- send us an email at info@autscape.org, or
- put a note in the 'action needed' box, which you will find at the **information area**.

Asking for help

We will:

Be identifiable (wearing blue) and available (at the info desk).

Provide ways to reach us without talking.

You can:

Rehearse some scripts you may need.

Write a note and hand it to an organiser or put in the action needed box.

Ring, text or send an email.

Take a breather. Rest, relax, and gather yourself for the next activity.

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Introduction

Welcome to the 15th annual Autscope event! This booklet contains most of what you need to know about the physical environment, social interaction, and the programme of activities at Autscope. Even if you've been before, it is worth a quick look to find out about this year's event and any changes. This is our first time at High Leigh Conference Centre, and we are looking forward to holding an event at this well-equipped venue.

We take autistic people's needs and preferences into consideration in every aspect of planning and running each event, but that doesn't mean it will be a perfect fit for you. We cannot always anticipate or accommodate every need of every autistic person. One autistic person's needs might clash with another's opposite needs. In such cases, we will do our best to work out a compromise, but a little goodwill on your part may also be needed. See the orange boxes for more about how to deal with some common challenges.

Everything at Autscope is completely optional. You are not obliged to attend anything, speak to anyone (unless you are a parent or carer), or participate in any way. If you are interested in doing things, there is plenty going on throughout the day - serious, fun, structured and unstructured.

Challenges

Even though Autscope is autistic space, there are still some things many people find challenging.

We will:

Identify common challenges in boxes like this.

Explain what we will do to try to make it easier.

You can:

Try some of the tips to make it easier for yourself.

Help ensure it goes well for everyone.

Environment

Rules and procedures

House rules

For the comfort, safety and health of everyone, Autscope has a few 'house rules.' All of these have reasons behind them, and organisers will explain them to you if you ask. The venue also has a few of its own which we may not understand but need to follow to keep the goodwill of venue staff and make sure we are welcome to return.

- Smoke only in designated areas, well away from all windows and doors. Smoke can make some people ill.
- Please leave all equipment (including Autscope's sensory toys and games) in the room in which you found it.
- No food or drink (other than water) in the meeting rooms. Even if you are careful and coordinated enough to avoid knocking over your drink, someone else might not be! Exceptions are the Chapel Barn and Barclay Hall where it would be ok to have drinks if you are sitting at the tables.

Important differences

The most important difference between this year and recent events are:

1. There will be a **guide dog**. This is an officially trained guide dog which will be impeccably behaved. Please do not disturb the dog while it is working.
2. **Restrictions on entering**. To avoid disturbing others, we ask that you avoid entering lectures, workshops and discussions more than 10 minutes after they have started. You may still leave at any time.
3. Lectures and workshops taking place in the Yew Tree Hall will be **broadcast to Mulberry Room**. If you have difficulty staying quiet through a lecture or may need to leave, please use this room. You will not be able to interact with the presenter, but in most cases they will have a discussion scheduled later the same day that you can join in.

Physical space

4. **No hot or 'wet' food.** The venue's rules are that only prepackaged food such as crisps and sweets may be brought into the venue. Also, please don't take your meals to your room; there are quiet spaces in the dining area and outside nearby.

Departure

Vacate your room by 9:30am on your day of departure. You do not have to strip your bed. If you don't have a car, leave your luggage in Barclay Hall, which is near the venue's main reception desk. If you have not booked the extra (Thursday) night, please leave the venue by 3:30pm Thursday. If you are staying Thursday night, please leave by 11am on Friday.

Spaces

Activity spaces

Sensory room (Boardroom)

We have a sensory room set up for participants to explore and enjoy the equipment at their leisure. This is open throughout the day, although it may occasionally be used for scheduled activities or silent times.

Please treat all equipment with due care! The equipment includes a projector. There are instructions regarding how to use it at the **information area**. If you would like to try a different lens or wheel and don't know how to change them, ask an organiser to give you a hand. Please make sure the projector is on a low speed or off before you leave the room.

Games Room (Upper Lounge)

On the first floor there is a games room with a small snooker table, table tennis, air hockey and board games. There is also a large room nearby (Walnut Room) that has no formal activities scheduled in it and is available for booking or to use for other activities when not booked.

Lounges

There is a general social area (Garden Lounge) and a quiet lounge (Oak Room), details of which are on pages 18 and 19.

Information area

At the **information area** (signposted 'Woodland Suite') you can:

- Find an organiser.
- Get more badge supplies or swap what you were given.
- Buy Autscape merchandise.
- Sign up for activities that have limited audience sizes or need planning, e.g. entertainment evening, lightning talks and home groups.
- Find surveys for feedback to Autscape.
- Add your own activity to the schedule.

Participants' area

This is in the **Mulberry Room**. This room is also used for broadcasting main lectures and workshops from Yew Tree Hall. This is where you can:

- Buy and sell things between participants,
- Find information about various initiatives, projects and research,
- Display your art or other work or look at the work of others.

Finding your way

We will:

Provide you with a map and post them in strategic places around the venue.

Offer to show you to your room and give a tour of the site.

You can:

Wander around the facilities to familiarise yourself with the location of everything.

Head to activities with plenty of time for getting lost and found again.

Locate essential facilities such as toilets, fire escapes, and dining hall.

Keep your schedule and map with you.

Be prepared to ask for help or direction, with gestures if necessary. (E.g. point to the name of what you're looking for on the map.)

Conference Rooms

Name	Purpose	Location
Yew Tree Hall	Main conference room	Beyond restaurant
Mulberry Room	Secondary conference room	Beyond restaurant
Barclay Hall	Art and active sessions (hard floor)	Near reception
Chapel Barn	Discussions, workshops, leisure	Outside main entrance
Willow Hall	Childcare	Accommodation block

Discussion and other rooms

Name	Capacity	Step free?	Location
Willow 1	12	Y	Ground floor
Walnut	60	N	1st floor
Sycamore 2	25	N	1st floor
Maple 1	20	N	1st floor

Taking care of yourself

Expectations

There is no formal or professional support structure in place at Autscape. All participants are considered competent and autonomous. We believe you can make your own decisions and manage your needs in the way that best suits you. Sometimes that might mean bringing someone to support you.

- Take care of your health, hygiene and stress levels.
- Respect others' space and property.
- Follow rules about things like smoking and noise.

**All participants are
considered
competent and
autonomous.**

- Organise your time and manage your activity level.
- Orient yourself.
- Say 'no'
- Ask for help when needed.

See the inside of the front cover for details of how to get help.

Routines

We will:

Structure the days to help with routines such as getting up, eating and taking breaks.

Ensure meals are cooked for you and served at specific times, so you should get enough nutritious food.

You can:

Use a medication box with compartments for each day which you can fill ahead of time.

Put reminders on your phone for meals and activities you want to go to.

When planning how much time you will need to get ready, leave extra time for dealing with an unfamiliar environment.

Sometimes you and another participant may agree to help each other with small tasks, as long as you recognise that in the end, you are still responsible for yourself.

Catering

If you are a full time participant, all of your meals and refreshment breaks are included. Single day participants normally get lunch and dinner (evening meal). All meals are in the Barclay Restaurant. Meals are served at a servery where you queue up and take your meal away on a tray.

Breakfast 8:15-9:00

Lunch 12:30-14:00

Evening meal 18:00-19:30

There is no need for everyone to join the queue at the same time. But please do try to get there within the first 40 minutes.

There will be a **quiet dining room** which is not silent, but in which voices are to be kept low and unnecessary noise is not permitted.

As a way of reducing crowds, home groups (see page 19) are scheduled during the first half hour of meal serving time. If you go to a home group, please go straight to get your meal afterwards.

Food options

The venue will always prepare a plain alternative to each main dish. We have asked them to make more than the usual proportion of these. They will also provide a salad bar, jacket potato options, and cater for all dietary needs we have been told about in advance.

Hot drinks

There are coffee and tea making facilities in your room as well as in the **Garden Lounge**.

Queuing

We will:

Stagger mealtimes to minimise queuing.

Provide a quiet dining room.

You can:

Stand well back from the person in front.

Ask others to leave space.

Wait five or ten minutes before going to your meal.

Be prepared to communicate your meal choices by word or gesture before you get to the front of the queue.

Sit down at a table for a while first or get a salad and then go for your main meal after others have been served.

Sensory issues

Sensory issues are common among autistic people. Others have sensitivities that may be different from yours; please be considerate if someone tells you something is bothering them, even if it is not listed here or doesn't make sense to you.

Minimising distress

Smell

- Remove strong odours (e.g., tobacco, alcohol, coffee) as much as possible before rejoining groups.
- Please avoid highly scented products such as perfumes and aftershaves (lightly scented soap and deodorant are fine).

Light

- Others in the room may be distracted or distressed by toys with lights. If you would like to use these in presentations, please sit towards the back of the room.
- Get permission from everyone in the room before using a camera flash.

Touch

- Ask before touching anyone, including children.

Sound

- Be quiet in corridors and outside bedrooms.
- Make sure sound doesn't 'leak' from headphones.
- If you would like to play an instrument, please do so away from the main public spaces and windows.

Sensory overload

We will:

Do our best to keep things orderly and calm.

Have quiet spaces to get away to, both indoors and out.

Have the main dining room separated into smaller areas to keep noise down.

Ask people not to clap after presentations and performances.

Use natural lighting whenever practical.

You can:

Use equipment to reduce sensory input. No one will think it odd if you wear tinted glasses, earplugs, headphones, or whatever you require.

Take time out as needed. Here are some places you can do that: sensory room (Boardroom), Quiet Lounge (Oak Room), your bedroom, or outdoors.

During meals you can use the quiet dining room or the patio outside.

Autistic community

Being autistic

Autscape is an autistic space, and autistic spaces tend to include autistic people. Stimming (repetitive movements), echolalia, distractibility, different or impaired conversation skills, avoidance of eye contact, perseveration (obsessiveness), are expected and accepted as part of an autistic conference. Appearing (or, indeed, being) completely neurotypical is also perfectly acceptable.

At Autscape, being autistic is ordinary, not special. Others are probably not going to go to extraordinary lengths to accommodate your needs because they have their own to deal with. This is one of the great things about Autscape, but can also be one of the more difficult aspects if you're accustomed to others making adjustments for you.

We try hard to make Autscape a place where autistic people can feel free to be themselves without fear of being judged or excluded. Try to be tolerant. If anyone makes you feel unsafe or unwelcome, please come and talk to an organiser.

At Autscape, being autistic is ordinary, not special.

Organisers

Autscape is organised and run on a completely voluntary basis, mainly by autistic people. We have many of the same needs and difficulties you do and may be struggling to cope just as much as you are. We may not be able to do everything we would like to make the ideal Autscape. Please remember to extend respect for these guidelines to organisers and children, who are as much a part of the community as adult participants.

While being autistic brings many good things, it also means that certain difficulties are more common. Social mistakes are part of the territory in autistic space. Autistic people may forget to look for initiation badges, interrupt, talk too much or too little, ask too many questions, or misgender you, all without any intention to offend.

Social space

Being autistic is common and “normal” at Autscope. It is important to remember that almost everyone at Autscope, including presenters and organisers, is also autistic. We've done our best within the constraints of our knowledge, energy and resources, and the limitations of the venue and its staff.

Diversity

Autscope welcomes participants from across the spectrum, and sympathetic non-autistic people (NTs). We are primarily oriented to autistic people's needs and interests, but there is much to be learned and enjoyed for an open minded non-autistic person. We have participants of all ages, from a few months to over 80 years.

**Diversity enriches
the experience for
everyone.**

The whole spectrum

Autscope is not 'Aspies only'. We welcome people with high care needs, little or no speech, and behaviours the neurotypical society finds strange or problematic. There are some parts of the event where sitting still and quiet for long periods are required, but if you can't manage this you can do other things during those times. If you very much want to go to an activity and need help to manage, let us know and

Difficult behaviour

We will:

Make rules and boundaries as clear as possible.

Provide initiation badges.

Help or intervene if you have a problem you can't solve.

Be forgiving when social mistakes happen.

You can:

Be tolerant. Part of being in an autistic space is accepting differences and difficulties of all kinds. Let others make social mistakes and be forgiving. That doesn't mean letting others make Autscope unpleasant for you. If you have a problem, please contact an organiser.

Be direct. Autistic people may not get hints or signals, e.g., that you don't want to interact with them. You don't have to be nasty, just clear.

If you can't handle the situation or someone is bothering you, please ask an organiser for help.

Social space

we'll try to find a way to make it more accessible to you.

No matter where on or off the spectrum you find yourself, there is no need to be afraid that you won't fit in. Diversity enriches the experience for everyone.

Different beliefs

Autscape is an autistic space, but not an activist space with shared beliefs. Some autistic people may have different political or religious beliefs or ideas about autism. While most people who attend Autscape are positive about autism, some find it more negative and may even wish they could have a treatment or a cure for their difficulties. It is important that they find themselves respected and included at Autscape. Disagreement is absolutely fine, but please keep it civil. It is not permitted to tell someone that they do not belong at Autscape on account of their beliefs or experiences around autism.

Children

Children are welcome at Autscape and are part of our autistic community. Autistic children benefit from being at Autscape because they get to see adults like them, who are uncommon in the general population. We also welcome neurotypical children of autistic parents.

Registration of a child includes participation in our childcare for children up to 16 years old. Children are not required to go to childcare. Those age 12 or older may have some freedom to attend suitable activities on their own at their parents' discretion, but remain the responsibility of their parents at all times. Younger children must be in childcare or under close supervision of parents.

This year's venue has a playground in the garden and a games room on the first floor that may be of interest.

Gender identity and expression

You are likely to notice that there is a wide variety of gender expression at Autscape. Please respect each individual's choice for how they wish to be identified, and as much as possible refer to them using the pronouns (e.g. he/him, she/her, they/them) they prefer. On the other hand, please be tolerant of others not getting this right. Some autistic people have

considerable difficulty being flexible in the way they use language or in the rules they use to classify people.

Interacting

While it may be aversive to some people, most of our participants enjoy socialising with other participants. Just be sure to respect the initiation badges. You may find someone who shares interests or experiences with you, but if you don't, try not to take it as anything more significant than just having unusual tastes.

Initiation badges

There is a coloured badge system for those who have difficulty regulating social interaction, such as by approaching people or responding to unwanted approaches from others.

If you are able to manage approaches without this help (even if you do not wish to interact, but are able to say so) you **don't need the coloured badges**. The white badge you are supplied with is just to cover up the coloured badges if you don't want to take them off. Not having a badge means that social approaches happen on the same terms as in the 'real world' where no one wears badges. However, in autistic space it's quite normal to be clear and direct (not rude) about whether you feel like talking right now.

Joining in

We will:

Have topic tables at each meal time with popular conversation topics such as cats and science fiction. If you sit at a table with a topic you are not required to talk about only that topic, but it should be something everyone at the table is happy to talk about.

Have facilitated discussions and home groups so everyone who wants to can participate.

Provide everyone with a set of initiation badges including a green badge that means "I would like to interact but have difficulty initiating. Please interact with me."

You can:

Choose an area that already has one or more people in it rather than sitting by yourself and hoping someone will join you. Others may assume you want to be alone.

Use your green badge and remember to take it off when you are not actively seeking interaction so it is more effective for everyone.

Look for people wearing green badges.

Ask people if it is ok to join in their group in the dining room, drop-in, café or other social spaces.

Join a home group.

Red

A red badge means that the wearer does not want anyone else to initiate any interaction with them.

Yellow

A yellow badge means that the wearer does not want anyone to initiate any interaction with them unless they have already said they can. Permission should not be assumed and needs to be renewed at each Autscape.

Green

A green badge is used if you want to interact but aren't able to initiate contact with others. When people use green too much, it loses its effect and some people end up with very few people talking to them through all of Autscape. If you are open to interaction but not experiencing difficulty initiating, use white or no badge, **not green**. Try to use the green badge **only if you want someone to interact with you right now**. So if you are sitting in a lecture, you should not be on green. If you have a moment when you feel like you could reach out to another person, please make an effort to talk to someone on a green badge.

It is very important that everyone respect the initiation badges, including for children, presenters and organisers. If you make a mistake and are reminded that someone is on red, for instance, try not to take it personally. They may be just taking some time to regroup and may be happy to talk to you later.

Symbol badges

Teddy bear: You may ask me for a hug

Book: You may ask me to be quoted or participate in research or interviews

Camera: You may ask me to be in a photo or video. **This is a major change from how photography permission was done prior to 2018.**



Even if a person is wearing a badge, they may say “no” and that should be respected. If you don't feel like you can say “no,” don't wear a badge! If someone asks you for one of these

Social space

things even though you are not wearing a badge, try to gently remind them that they are not meant to ask you and that no, you don't give permission.

Researchers and contributing to projects

If you are conducting research or a project you would like to solicit participation in, here is what we can do for you:

- You can have up to half a table in the participants' hangout space to put your surveys and a box for returning them (pens may be a good idea).
- You can do a lightning talk at our projects forum beginning at 2pm on Tuesday. It is helpful if you sign up for this at the **information area**.
- You can have a scheduled discussion slot. If you want one, please add it on the participants' calendar **online**, or at the **information area**.
- We will have badges that participants can wear if they are willing to be asked to participate in research and/or to be quoted. Other than those, you must not approach participants to ask if they will participate in your project.

Social spaces

Drop in/Hangout

For those who like socialising with a little more structure and a little less intensity, there is a drop-in room in the **Garden lounge** room. In the Garden Lounge you can find board games, some sensory toys, hot drinks machines, and simple craft activities. You can pop in whenever you like, or you can schedule an activity to do with others here. Here you can:

- Get refreshments during break times.
- Enjoy a game, puzzle or other activity alone or with others. Please feel free to bring any games you are willing to share.
- Socialise in the evening.
- Buy drinks from the bar (8-10:30pm)

There will be no background music or flashing gambling machines that are present in some pubs.

Garden Lounge

Quiet Lounge

Oak Room

Near the venue's main reception there is a cosy traditional lounge with sofas and armchairs. We ask that you keep this as a quiet space to relax, read, or perhaps socialise with a small group of friends. If you want to engage in more boisterous activities, please move to the Drop-in (Garden Lounge), described above.



Social activities

Home groups

Are you looking for some help with meeting new people? Home groups have been created to help people, especially those who are new, feel comfortable at Autscap and get the best out of the experience by providing a small group that they can get to know a bit better. This is just something we are trying to do to help. Of course, it's not a guarantee you will connect with someone else, but it may improve your chances.

Social space

This year, home groups will meet in various break out rooms throughout the venue. Most don't have step-free access, but some do. You can sign up for a home group using the participants' calendar, or by coming to the information area on site. Most will meet six times throughout the course of Autscape, for half an hour before each lunch and dinner time. A few groups will skip the first evening slot and begin on Wednesday lunchtime instead, having five meetings in total.

Avoiding interaction

Many people are, understandably, quite concerned about the heavy social demands of being in a large group for several days. There is no requirement to socialise at all, and there will be no implicit or explicit disapproval of those who choose not to interact with others.

Bedrooms are a haven. You can go to your room whenever you like. Never enter someone else's bedroom unless you're specifically invited, and don't ask for others' room numbers.

Programme

This section includes a schedule telling you when and where everything is happening at Autscope and descriptions for each session. But first, there is an overview of some of the activities happening at Autscope (see the schedule for the times).

You can stay up to date on the programme and any changes at: www.autscope.org/programme/

Leisure and informal programme

Full up to date timetable can be found at the **information area** and **online**, linked from www.autscope.org/programme/.

Unscheduled activities

These are things that are ongoing all the time or just when they're wanted, so they don't fit in the schedule neatly.

See page 18-19 for more information about social spaces such as the Drop-in area (**Garden lounge**), Quiet Lounge (**Oak Room**) and Games Room.

Participant-led activities

We always have a variety of offerings by participants. This year we are not scheduling them for you because it is

Getting a break

We will:

Schedule long (at least 30 minutes) breaks between each activity, and a leisure session each afternoon.

Have more relaxed early afternoons and evenings, with practical activities and discussion groups.

Provide quiet spaces in public areas.

Provide single bedrooms.

You can:

Take time out to relax in whatever way works best for you. Taking adequate rest and sleep will help you cope with as much activity as you would like.

Decide not to do a particular activity, or to leave early if you're feeling stressed. Only you can choose what you would like to do with your time at Autscope. See also the *Choices* box.

Sit at a 'no interaction' table and eat without interruption.

Wear a red badge.

Go to a quiet place such as the gardens, the Quiet Lounge (Oak Room). You may find that the sensory room (Boardroom) is also quiet much of the time. You can also go to your bedroom.

Programme

too easy to get wrong. You can look at the participant-led activities calendar and choose your own time and place. You can then schedule it in yourself or ask an organiser to help you.

Spontaneous activities can be added to the schedule at any time during Autscape. Check on the bookable rooms calendar, linked from www.autscape.org/2019/programme/ or at the **information area** for a suitable space and time. Activities can include going for a walk, having a discussion, playing a game, or anything else you would like to offer.

Ongoing activities

In addition to the social activities in the previous section, we have some possibilities for entertainment during the event, such as:

Retro computer games

Cherry Room

We have a retro computer museum visiting with 12 retro games consoles for participants to enjoy. This will be open from 10am to 6pm on Tuesday and 12pm to 8pm on Wednesday. The room is located on the first floor in the accommodation block and has lift access.

Things we'd like you to sign up for

In nearly all cases you can just decide whether to go to something (or not) spontaneously. However, we would like you to sign up in advance or at the **information area** if you would like to do one of the following:

Home groups

A small social group meeting twice each day throughout the event.

Autistic project and research forum

An opportunity to showcase your autistic project or research with a lightning talk (maximum 5 minutes, 2 slides) and/or poster.

Entertainment evening

The entertainment evening has become a regular feature at Autscape. We have had various acts, musical and otherwise. If you are interested in performing this year, please sign up on the list at the information area. In an attempt to ensure the evening does not last too long, we are asking that people limit performances to 4 minutes. Also, this year we will have a limited number of spaces with priority for half of them going to those who have never performed before.

Lectures and workshops

There is a programme of formal presentations throughout the day, from approximately 9am to 5pm. There is usually more than one thing on at a time so you will have to make some choices about what to attend. Many autistic people find it hard to choose, but with 200 people to accommodate, we have multiple activities on offer at the same time to cater to different needs and preferences. Asking about the things you didn't attend is a possible conversation starter during social times.

Workshops have some level of audience interaction included, whereas lectures are not interactive but have an associated discussion on the same topic later on the same day.

Presentations

Guidelines

- Please try to be quiet during presentations. If you find it very hard to control interruptions you can step outside the room for a bit and come back when you're ready, or you can watch a broadcast of main sessions in the **Mulberry Room**.
- Presenters who really can't cope with interruptions will be asked to use a **red badge**. So if you see a presenter with a red badge, please don't interrupt them at all. If you have a question, write it down for later.
- It is always ok to leave an activity whenever you wish, but try to do so quietly. For scheduled activities (not drop-in) please try to arrive on time.
To avoid disrupting the session, you may not be allowed to enter after the first 10 minutes.
- Flap, don't clap. Please show your appreciation for presentations and performances without clapping, such as by flapping or wriggling fingers.

Choices

We will:

Try to give as much information as possible in advance so you can consider your options.

Try to minimise the amount of concurrent workshops to limit the number of hard decisions.

You can:

Consider your options well ahead of time. Decide which workshops and leisure activities you would like to do. This can limit the stress of having many choices to make when you have a lot of other things to cope with.

Programme

- An organiser or volunteer may raise their hand to quiet a group to make an announcement. Please also raise yours and stop talking. The mass of raised hands will cause silence to spread without anyone having to shout louder than the crowd.
- Please keep questions and comments brief. There are others in the room who want to hear what the presenters have to say. There will be time later for more detailed discussion. Written questions will be collected if you hold it when you raise your hand.

Discussions

Most lectures will have an associated discussion on the same topic either straight after or later on the same day. They will always be facilitated. Again, try to keep your own input brief so others have a chance to speak.

Discussions that may be used for research

Discussions at Autscape are normally confidential. Non-confidential activities will be clearly marked on the door and at the start of the activity. If you change your mind, you can ask to have your comments removed.



An appliqué made at a workshop at Autscape 2018, by Ceri Dobbing

Events

Only activities that are organised by Autscope are here. Those that are offered by participants can be found in the online 'bookable rooms' calendar www.autscope.org/2019/programme/. An up-to-date timetable can be found at the **information area**. Please check these for updates, particularly to discussions and leisure activities as these may change time or place, and to book your own activities.

Monday 12 August

14:00-17:00 Registration Chapel Barn

15:30-17:00 Childcare orientation (drop-in) Willow Hall

Childcare staff will be available to meet children and their carers, discuss needs, and show around the childcare area and equipment.

16:15-16:45 Afternoon tea Garden Lounge

17:00-18:45 Childcare Willow Hall

17:15-17:45 Orientation Yew Tree Hall

An essential introduction to Autscope. Particularly important for first timers. Attendance at this session is strongly recommended. Even if you have been to Autscope before, there are always changes and things related to the specific venue to update you on. If you don't come to orientation, please have a good look through the handbook because some things have changed, particularly around coming and going from activities.

18:00-18:30 Home groups Various

Are you looking for some help with meeting new people? Home groups have been created to help people, especially those who are new, feel comfortable at Autscope and get the best out of the experience by providing a small group that they can get to know a bit better. This is just something we are trying to do to help. Of course, it's not a guarantee you will connect with someone else.

This year, home groups will meet in various break out rooms throughout the venue. Most don't have step-free access, but some

Programme

do. You can sign up for a home group using the participants' calendar, or by coming to the information area on site. Most will meet six times throughout the course of Autscope, for half an hour before each lunch and dinner time. A few groups will skip the first evening slot and begin on Wednesday lunchtime instead, having five meetings in total.

18:00-19:30 Evening meal Barclay Restaurant

19:30-22:00 Evening activities Various

There is a variety of leisure, social and discussion activities on offer in the evenings. Please check the calendar online or at the information area to be sure you're up to date.

20:00-22:30 Bar open Garden Lounge

Each evening there will be a bar selling alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks.

21:30 Sparklies in the dark Barclay Hall

This is one of Autscope's traditions! Time to share enjoyment with light up toys and glow sticks. Meet on Monday evening in Barclay Hall. Autscope will provide one glow stick per person. More sparklies can be purchased at the time.

Tuesday 13 August

8:15-9:00 Breakfast Barclay Restaurant

9:15-13:00 Childcare Willow Hall

9:30-10:30 Workshop Yew Tree Hall

Getting unstuck: anti-inertia strategies - Kalen

Autistic people report a range of difficulties with starting and stopping activities which are often informally called 'inertia'. Considering how common these problems are, and how much of an impediment they can be to independent functioning, there has been nowhere near enough attention from researchers and clinicians. For the most part, they see these difficulties as 'non-compliance' or 'lacking (social) motivation' and go about trying to fix them.

Programme

I believe 'inertia', like autism itself, is actually a number of different underlying issues that overlap and end up sharing characteristics on the surface. In this workshop I will share some of what I think is causing inertia, because understanding these starting points can help find ways to overcome the difficulties. I will also share the many anti-inertia strategies I have developed and collected over the years. There will be an opportunity for the audience to share and discuss their own approaches.

10:00-18:00	Retro computers	Cherry Room
10:30-11:00	Morning break	Garden Lounge
11:00-11:45	Lecture	Yew Tree Hall

Intense Connections: autistic community and our other identities - *Sonny Hallett*

Autistic people often make intense connections with one another throughout our lives, and this spirit of recognition and community can be so important for so many of us. However, it can also cause difficulties when this recognition is not properly understood, when individuals are otherwise very isolated, or when it intersects with other identities that are underrepresented in the autistic community (such as race, other disabilities, gender, etc).

Illustrated with drawings and anecdotes from my own and others' experiences, and from emerging research into the 'double empathy problem', I will explore both the importance of these intense connections, their pitfalls, how to support those searching for belonging, and what the autistic community could do to better embrace those with other intersecting identities.

11:45-12:30	Lecture	Yew Tree Hall
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The intersection of autism and complex PTSD - *Katie Linden*

The subject of this lecture would be the links between autism and complex posttraumatic stress disorder. C-PTSD is a condition which develops over repeated exposure to difficult life events, but particularly those involving pain caused by other people, which autistic people are especially vulnerable to. I will outline the ways in which common aspects of autism and symptoms of C-PTSD

Programme

might interact, some of the research around autism, trauma, and recovery from trauma, and how I would like to see research and understanding develop on the subject (including what I'm planning to do with the rest of my PhD).

12:30-13:00 Home groups Various

An opportunity to meet with the same small group a few times during Autscope. Please sign up in advance at Registration or at the Information desk. More details on Monday's listing at 6pm.

12:30-14:00 Lunch Barclay Restaurant

14:00-18:30 Childcare Willow Hall

14:00-15:30 Leisure sessions

A variety of leisure sessions are on offer after lunch on Tuesday and Wednesday. Look at the 'bookable rooms' timetable online or at the **information area** for details. Remember we also have:

Retro computers Cherry Room

Sensory room Boardroom

Drop-in/Hangout Garden Lounge

Games Room Upper Lounge

15:30-16:15 Lecture Yew Tree Hall

What do we want our doctors to know about autism? And how should we tell them? - Dr Mary Doherty

Being autistic, we commonly face difficulties accessing healthcare and often have poor physical & mental health.

During Autscope 2018: Exploring Inclusion, this was investigated by means of a discussion workshop and qualitative survey entitled "What do you wish your doctor knew about autism?" Themes were identified for a subsequent quantitative survey conducted online, which examined barriers to accessing GP services.

This presentation will explore ways to engage effectively with our healthcare providers, and discuss current trends in autism training for medical professionals.

Programme

It will also include an overview of the AsIAM Autism Friendly Town initiative in Clonakilty, Ireland, since this study was conducted as part of the healthcare strand of that project.

16:15-16:45 Afternoon break Garden Lounge

16:45-17:45 Workshop Chapel Barn

Creative Writing Workshop - David Hartley

A creative writing workshop designed for autistic adults. Participants will be led through a series of simple exercises to encourage creative expression in the form of 'flash fiction' (very short stories). Examples of published works of flash fiction will be read and discussed. By the end, participants will have written their own original pieces of flash fiction and time will be set aside for informal 'live readings', should participants wish to share their work. Workshop led by writer and researcher David Hartley, an allistic flash fiction author with ten years of writing experience. No previous writing experience required – all welcome!

16:45-17:45 Discussions

Scheduled discussion on the topics of earlier lectures and workshops.

Autism and complex PTSD Sycamore 2 (1st floor)

Autism and health care Yew Tree Hall

Intense connections Mulberry Room

18:00-18:30 Home groups Various

An opportunity to meet with the same small group a few times during Autscape. Please sign up in advance at Registration or at the Information desk. More details on Monday's listing at 6pm.

18:00-19:30 Evening meal Barclay Restaurant

19:30-22:00 Evening activities Various

There is a variety of leisure, social and discussion activities on offer in the evenings. Please check the calendar online or at the information area to be sure you're up to date.

Programme

19:30-20:15 Annual General Meeting (AGM) Yew Tree Hall

This is the meeting where Autscope members elect the board of trustees who make decisions about Autscope's policy and direction.

20:30-22:30 Disco Barclay Hall

Come and enjoy an autism-friendly disco in Barclay Hall. The music will be a bit quieter than a typical disco, and no one will judge whether you can dance. You're also welcome to come and just play with the light.

Wednesday 14 August

8:15-9:00 Breakfast Barclay Restaurant

9:15-13:00 Childcare Willow Hall

9:30-10:30 Workshop Yew Tree Hall

The identity of disconnection? - Paul

The session will examine the widespread assumption that 'connection' is worth pursuing. The impetus is to forge & foster connections. Behind the connections are power relationships. Sometimes transparent, sometimes not. This is a philosophical discussion.

Personal experiences in the workplace and elsewhere will kick-start a wider dialogue with participants.

What is the agenda behind any connection and who benefits?

Are some connections simply not worth making?

Subversion or disruption of some of these connections may be of more benefit to autistic individuals or groups than connection itself?

Connection = communication = identity. Discuss. These concepts apply to all human experience as well as autistic experience. The challenge of making connections is part of our autistic identity. I would suggest that this is universal.

10:30-11:00 Morning break Garden Lounge

11:00-11:45 Lecture

Yew Tree Hall

The problematic nature of forming connections whilst passing - *Lexi Orchard*

Passing is a necessary and important part of surviving in a neurotypical world whether in the workplace, school or social settings as well as interacting with systems within society. The processes of passing such as masking, scripting and precognition build models of interaction to facilitate avoiding harm and hiding in plain sight.

At the same time, they can also hinder being in the moment, complicate building lasting connections with others, emotionally connecting with people and leave you constantly drained, feeling lonely and alone. Can we find a balance between using personas, pre-empting every interaction, scripting our way through a day or masking who we want to stay safe from harm and prejudice but also find meaningful connections?

In this session we examine some of the mechanics of passing and how they impair, augment and complicate building friendships, empathy, emotional engagement and enjoyment in day to day life. We also ask what can we do about it and try to unpack if there is a way to find social fulfilment, love, friendship and beat loneliness whilst passing in society.

11:45-12:30 Lecture

Yew Tree Hall

Reinventing the wheel. Descriptions of autism in non-autism research - *Kosma Moczek*

While autism-specific research didn't start until the 20th century, the foundations that underline developmental psychology predate it by over 200 years. The presentation will explore existing, well-established concepts that allow for better understanding of autistic development, comorbid conditions, trauma, identity, communication and behavior. I'll try to show that by looking for existing research - instead of inventing brand new "autistic" concepts and vocabulary - we can greatly benefit from standing on the shoulders of giants and realize that, after all, autistic humans are still humans, and are subject to the same

Programme

developmental and psychological dynamics and processes that have been known and described for centuries.

12:00-20:00	Retro computers	Cherry Room
12:30-14:00	Lunch	Barclay Restaurant
12:30-13:00	Home groups	Various

An opportunity to meet with the same small group a few times during Autscope. Please sign up in advance at Registration or at the Information desk. More details on Monday's listing at 6pm.

14:00-18:45	Childcare	Willow Hall
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14:00-15:30	Leisure sessions
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A variety of leisure sessions are on offer after lunch on Tuesday and Wednesday. Look at the 'bookable rooms' timetable online or at the **information area** for details. Remember we also have:

Retro computers	Cherry Room
Sensory room	Boardroom
Drop-in/Hangout	Garden Lounge
Games Room	Upper Lounge

15:30-16:15	Discussion: Identity of disconnection	Chapel Barn
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15:30-16:15	Lecture/Performance	Yew Tree Hall
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Bigger on the Inside - Kate Fox

A stand-up/storytelling performance lecture which intertwines the history of Dr Who, autism and autistic activism and one woman's personal story (and makes connections between them all).

At last there is a female Doctor in Doctor Who - are autism's women also finally being heard?

16:15-16:45	Afternoon break	Garden Lounge
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16:45-17:45 Workshop Yew Tree Hall

Stability in Peer Support: Experiences and ideas

- Emmi Varis

This workshop introduces an ongoing project, called Stability in Peer Support, run by Autistic Spectrum Finland, a national association led by autistic adults.

The project aims to support and improve the association's peer groups and activities and support peer group leaders.

The project started in 2018. The project workers have conducted a survey, group discussions and observation to map why people in Autistic Spectrum Finland attend groups, what types of groups and activities they want, what challenges they face, what kind of support the peer group leaders need, and how to react to problems that may arise.

The introduction will be followed by a discussion on these themes.

16:45-17:45 Discussions Various

Scheduled discussion on the topics of earlier lectures and workshops

Connecting while passing Mulberry Room

Descriptions of autism in research Chapel Barn

18:00-18:30 Home groups Various

An opportunity to meet with the same small group a few times during Autscape. Please sign up in advance at Registration or at the Information desk. More details on Monday's listing at 6pm.

18:00-19:30 Evening meal Barclay Restaurant

19:30-20:45 Entertainment evening Yew Tree Hall

Contributions strictly limited to 4 minutes each. For the first 50% of spaces, priority goes to anyone who has never performed at an Autscape entertainment evening before. The remaining 50% will be selected randomly from all those wishing to perform.

Thursday 15 August

8:15-9:00	Breakfast	Barclay Restaurant
9:15-13:00	Childcare	Willow Hall
9:45-10:30	Workshop	Yew Tree Hall

Connecting autistic-led organisations in Europe

- Heta Pukki

This presentation describes efforts to provide channels of communication and other structure to groups and organisations of autistic people from around Europe. Benefits of connecting and sharing information will be outlined on the basis of interviews conducted with individuals who have participated in the informal European Autistic Network over the past three years. An initiative to develop more formal collaboration will be introduced, and the audience will be invited to discuss any fears or hopes they might have regarding potential international representation or campaigning. Members of the European network who are available at the time will be connected to the session via an online chat platform, to demonstrate the practices developed for negotiation and decision-making, and to allow dynamic interaction with the audience.

10:30-11:00	Morning break	Garden Lounge
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11:00-11:45	Panel of selected presenters	Yew Tree Hall
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An invitation only panel of selected presenters to speak to the topic of inclusion and take questions from the audience.

11:45-12:15	Feedback and farewell	Yew Tree Hall
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This is an opportunity to tell the organisers of Autscope what went well for you at Autscope, and what you'd like to see done differently.

12:30-13:00	Home groups	Various
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12:30-14:00	Lunch	Barclay restaurant
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Speaker Biographies

David Hartley

Presenting: **Creative Writing Workshop**

David Hartley is a writer, performer and PhD student at The University of Manchester studying Creative Writing. He is writing a fantasy novel for his PhD based on his childhood as the sibling to an autistic older sister. His PhD has been fully funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council. Hartley's works of fiction have been published in many literary magazines including *Ambit*, *Black Static* and *The Shadow Booth*. He tweets at @DHartleyWriter and regularly performs at spoken word nights in Manchester and beyond.

Dr Mary Doherty

Presenting: **What do we want our doctors to know about autism? And how should we tell them?**

Dr Mary Doherty MB BCh FCARCSI is a consultant anaesthetist with over 20 years experience in the Irish health services.

She developed and delivered autism training for healthcare providers as part of the AsIAm Autism Friendly Town initiative in Clonakilty, Ireland in 2018.

She is a member of an autism working group with the Royal College of Psychiatrists and advises various Irish medical institutions on autism. Her interests include increasing autism understanding and acceptance, and improving the healthcare experience and outcomes for autistic people.

Emmi Varis

Presenting: **Stability in Peer Support: Experiences and ideas**

Emmi Varis is an autistic public speaker and project worker. She received her diagnosis five years ago at the age of 27 without prior knowledge of autism. After two years of contemplating, she began giving speeches about her life as an autistic person. Currently she works on a project called Stability in Peer Support that aims to support and improve peer groups and activities in Autistic Spectrum Finland, a national association

led by autistic adults. Before working in the autism field Emmi worked in business administration. Besides autism, Emmi is very enthusiastic about cats.

Heta Pukki

Presenting: **Connecting autistic-led organisations in Europe**

Heta Pukki is autistic, and has family members and close friends on the spectrum, which has given her many perspectives to both the strengths and the challenges. She self-identified and connected with autistic people's online communities in the late 1990's, and was diagnosed a few years later. Over the past two decades, she has had many roles in the Finnish and international autism scenes, both voluntary and professional, as advocate, NGO activist and employee, translator and writer of professional literature, project worker, educator, event and peer group organizer, and personal assistant. She is particularly interested in supporting groups of autistic people to connect with each other across cultural and language barriers. She has a degree in biology from the University of Helsinki and another one in special education, focusing on autism, from the University of Birmingham.

Kalen

Presenting: **Getting unstuck: anti-inertia strategies**

Kalen is involved in autistic community and research in various capacities, with Autistica, the National Autistic Taskforce, autism@Manchester, Autscape, and as a PhD student.

Kalen suffers from severe 'inertia' that may be related to catatonia. She is currently studying autistic inertia for her PhD. This began by looking at everything that has already been written about it, which was easy because nothing has. She did, however, find some possibilities for what may be leading to 'difficulty doing stuff'.

Kalen lives in the English countryside with an assortment of children and pets, some of whom are also autistic.

Kate Fox

Presenting: **Bigger on the Inside**

Programme

Kate Fox is a professional stand up poet who has made two comedy series for Radio 4 and been Poet in Residence for the Glastonbury Festival, Radio 4's Saturday Live and the Great North Run.

She has written about autism and comedy and done a PhD in stand-up performance as a tool for resistance. Her show about Northern women "Where There's Muck There's Bras" has toured to sell out theatres and is developing "Bigger on the Inside" as her next show.

She was diagnosed with an ASC in 2017, at the age of 42.

Katie Linden

Presenting: **The intersection of autism and complex PTSD**

Katie is a psychotherapist in private practice, and a PhD student at Newcastle university. She trained as a therapist before her autism assessment, but somehow was still diagnosed; her assessor said that being in a career requiring empathy wasn't necessarily a barrier as she might just be terrible at her job. Luckily most of her clients seem to disagree, although possibly not all. She started her PhD in 2018, looking at the impact of interpersonal trauma on autistic people, which is a subject she has considerable personal interest in, as well as professional.

Kosma Moczek

Presenting: **Reinventing the wheel. Descriptions of autism in non-autism research**

Electronics engineer, old-school photographer, eccentric fiddler, hopeless sailor, social activist, and an autistic self-advocate. An autism professional in the making, defender of human rights, an incurable extrovert. Tools of trade: empathy, drama, and science - in that order.

Lexi Orchard

Presenting: **The problematic nature of forming connections whilst passing**

Lexi Orchard is a Expert in Passing, a Mistress of Masking, and an unparalleled practitioner of precognition for over thirty years.

A non-binary autistic, diagnosed in their early 30's with "female autism" after a physical illness prompted years of misdiagnosis by the NHS.

Programme

Once a well-paid, software designer passing as an eccentric cisgender male. Now suffering from PTSD, and a severe anxiety disorder. Failing in style to finish their book, quietly in isolation and exile.

This is their second ever lecture after completing a talk at AutGenSex last year on the subject of Passing and sexuality.

Paul

Presenting: **The identity of disconnection?**

Paul is a 57 year old man, diagnosed at 54. Experienced public speaker. Had his own H&S consultancy for a few decades, has presented many training courses...later, crashed and burned and was subsequently diagnosed. He spends his time now living with Helen and travelling between the city of Cambridge and a small market-town in Gloucestershire. Published author of technical journals, and still writing, although it's mostly social comment and fiction these days. Generally content.

Sonny Hallett

Presenting: **Intense Connections: autistic community and our other identities**

Sonny Hallett is an artist and autistic activist based in Edinburgh, who grew up between China and the UK. They are the current chair and a co-founder of AMASE (Autistic Mutual Aid Society Edinburgh), and the lead author of 'Too Complicated to Treat', AMASE's report on autistic people's access to mental health support in Scotland. They are an advisor on DART's Diversity in Social Intelligence study, looking into intra- and cross-neurology communication and rapport. They also presented a talk at the AutGenSex Intimate Lives conference last year on physical intimacy, autism, gender and culture.

W33	12 Aug 2019	Tue 13	Wed 14	Thu 15
9:00	Retro computers (10am-6pm) (Cherry Room)	Retro computers (12pm-8pm) (Cherry Room)		
10:00	9:30 Getting unstuck: anti-inertia strategies (Yew Tree Hall)	9:30 The identity of disconnection? (Yew Tree Hall)	9:45 Connecting autistic-led organisations in Europe (Yew Tree Hall)	
11:00	11:00 Intense Connections: autistic community and our other identities (Yew Tree Hall)	11:00 The problematic nature of forming connections whilst passing (Yew Tree Hall)	11:00 Panel of selected presenters (Yew Tree Hall)	
12:00	11:45 The intersection of autism and complex PTSD (Yew Tree Hall)	11:45 Reinventing the wheel: Descriptions of autism in non-autism research (Yew Tree Hall)	11:45 Feedback and farewell (Yew Tree Hall)	
13:00				
14:00	14:00 Registration (Chapel Barn)			
15:00				
16:00	15:30 What do we want our doctors to know about autism? And how should we tell	15:30 Bigger on the Inside (Yew Tree Hall)		
17:00	16:45 Creative Writing Workshop (Chapel Barn)	16:45 Stability in Peer Support: Experiences and Ideas (Yew Tree Hall)		
18:00	17:15 Orientation (Yew Tree Hall)			
19:00	19:30 Annual General Meeting (AGM) (Yew Tree Hall)	19:30 Entertainment evening (Yew Tree Hall)		
20:00	20:30 Disco (Barclay Hall)			
21:00	21:30 Sparklies in the dark (Barclay Hall)			