

Autscape

Annual Report

August 2006-August 2007

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Introduction

Autscape was created by autistic people with the aim of providing an autistic-oriented environment. At Autscape autistic people are fully included without having to adjust to the expectations of normal society. Presentations do not focus on how autistic people must be fundamentally changed in order to be acceptable. Autscape is a forum for autistic people to meet others and a positive and accepting environment.

Autscape has been running since 2004, with our first conference in July 2005. Both were great successes with 50 to over 70 participants and a high demand for the available places. Presentations are always relevant to autistic people's needs and interests and have included such topics as self-advocacy organisations, autistic identity, relationships and social interaction. Leisure and social activities have also been an essential part of Autscape and these have included Shintaido, meditation, films with an autistic theme, lively discussions (both structured and informal) and a music group.

All three events to date have been held at the Ammerdown Centre, near Bath, a peaceful rural setting for autistic people to have a relaxing time without feeling crowded or overwhelmed.

The current event is Autscape 2007: Accessing Our Worlds. This year's conference is taking place from the 7th to the 10th of August. About 65 people are expected to attend.

Objectives

As stated in our constitution, Autscape's objectives are to:

- Organize an annual retreat style conference in the UK for autistic people and their supporters.
- Facilitate the widest possible access to the conference
- Promote support and self-advocacy for autistic people, organized by autistic people and their supporters.

Over the past year we have continued to advance each of those objectives in a number of ways. Most importantly we have succeeded in mounting another Autscape conference. The conference will have presentations which look set to be at least as engaging and relevant as previous years'. Presentations topics range from loneliness and conversation skills to accessing formal supports delivered by experienced presenters from across Europe. There will be discussions on issues of importance to autistic people such as daily living skills and advocacy alongside leisure activities such as games, films and television recordings with an autistic theme, and singing.

Although we did not receive funding to be able to again provide bursaries, we have kept the fees as low as possible in order to remain accessible to those on low incomes. Having

received such generous grants last year, we were able to save enough income to secure a host for our website, which is a key source of information for participants. The website has been further developed for online registration, an essential aspect of our accessibility to those who may have difficulty with paper forms. In the coming year, the Autscope chat list, an active forum for participants to exchange information, socialise, meet other participants and debate issues will be moved to this server and the autscope.org domain.

This year's committee, the vast majority of whose members are autistic, has undergone significant internal conflict and a number of current members are not standing for re-election. However, this has been a learning experience, providing Autscope an opportunity to learn a great deal about organisations and committee functions. It has increased Autscope's dedication to a stable self-sustaining organisation and the likelihood of becoming a registered charity. The committee looks forward to a few new faces, voices and incoming members with the necessary skills for us to work towards a bright and stable future for Autscope.

The People Involved in Organising Autscope (August 2006-August 2007)

Chair: Katie Hodges (Aug '06-Dec '06), Kazumi Honda (Jan '07-June '07) Kalen Molton (June '07-Aug '07)

Treasurer: Charles Burns

Administrator: Yo Dunn (Aug '06 to June '07), vacant (June '07 to present)

Venue Co-ordinator: Kazumi Honda (Aug '06-June '07)

Others who have been involved in the committee over the year:

Robin May, Phil Lee, Matt Joyce, Paul Wady, Ian Molton, Martijn Dekker, Brian Scully, Michelle Evans

The Future

We hope that the momentum Autscope has created can be maintained. Our first priority is to ensure that Autscope 2008 happens and manages the transition to a new venue, but we are also looking towards creating a more structured self-sustaining organisation. To facilitate involvement by those who may not be able to make a full commitment due to their disability or other issues, we intend to make fuller use of a broader planning group to do specific tasks and give ideas and feedback on our plans. Training and support is available and autistic issues are taken for granted! If you want to see Autscope have a future, please join the Autscope plan list. We look forward to new people joining in the organization of Autscope and continuing to develop this small corner of autistic space for the future.

The Autscope Organizing Committee