



Exploring Autistic Space

21 – 24 August 2015 Giggleswick School, Settle, North Yorkshire, UK

## PART 2: PROGRAMME

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# INTRODUCTION

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The first thing you need to know is that everything at Autscape 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.

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

# ACTIVITIES

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## 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 Centre. In an attempt to ensure the evening does not last too long, we are asking that people limit performances to 5 minutes.

## Evening activities

There are a number of planned and unplanned activities in the evenings. Some of these are listed below in the schedule. Others will be announced at the Information Centre.

We'll run a cold drink and snack bar in the lounge (in Dutton Centre), but we will not sell alcohol. Bringing your own alcohol is allowed, but you may only consume it in the lounge area.

## 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 Autscape and get the best out of the experience by providing a small group that they can get to know a bit better and identify with. The daily home group meetings are scheduled in the programme just after the evening meal; see the schedule further ahead. Each home group has its own colour which you will be assigned upon joining it, if you so choose.

Information on how to join a home group will be given during the Orientation session (Friday at 16:30) and will also be available in the Information Centre, along with their locations.

## Interest groups

Interest groups are designed to meet people with a common interest. Like Home groups, Interest groups meet periodically, though you are not assigned to an Interest group. If you want to participate simply go to the one of your interest.

Interest groups will run in the classroom block at 13:30 on Saturday and Sunday. At the time of writing it has not been confirmed what specific interest groups will run at Autscape this year. We will announce this at the orientation session and post the list and the schedule in the Information Centre. To give you an idea, last year's interest groups were animals, art, autism, computers/gaming, gardening and science fiction.

## Leisure activities

A lot goes on during leisure time, some of it decided during Autscape itself. Go to the Information Centre to see what's on. You could organise an activity of your own, such as a board game or a discussion. You could also use this time to socialise, do something on your own or rest.

## Sensory room

We have a small sensory room set up for participants to explore and enjoy 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 in the Information Centre. If you would like to try a different lens or wheel and don't know how to change them ask any organiser to give you a hand. There are about a dozen wheels of different kinds of designs as well as a couple of distortion wheels. If you have the projector on a quick speed, please slow it down before you leave the room.

## Singing rounds

It is traditional at Autscape for small groups to gather in the garden to sing simple songs such as rounds. Feel free to join in, everyone is welcome. This activity takes place during breaks, after meals and at other times. Meet on the lawn outside the dining area.

## Sparklies in the Dark

This is one of Autscape's traditions! Time to share enjoyment with light up toys and glow sticks. Meet on Friday evening, outside (location to be announced) if the weather is nice, or in the sports hall if it's raining. Autscape will provide one glow stick per person and a pair of diffraction glasses if wanted. More sparklies can be purchased at the time.

## Swimming pool

The heated indoor swimming pool is open between 1:30pm and 3:30pm on Saturday and Sunday. For more information see part one of the information pack.

## Autism&Uni project

Autism&Uni is an EU-funded project that is developing ways to support autistic students as they apply for and enter into higher education. Based on a survey and a literature review, the project is designing interactive applications that will allow young students to familiarise themselves with typical challenges experienced by autistic people in HE. A poster presentation will give an overview of the current stage of the work on both these goals. Autscape participants will be offered an opportunity to try out prototype applications that will become available by the time of the conference. Autism&Uni project worker Heta Pukki will be available to answer questions about the poster and to demonstrate the prototype apps, primarily Sat-Sun 13:30-14:30 (other times by request), as well as contribute to the discussion group 'Autism in adult education: Sharing good practice'.

## Crèche hours

Saturday and Sunday: 09:45 to 12:45; 15:45 to 17:45. (Note: From 13:30 to 15:30 there will be leisure activities, some of which will be suitable for children and young people to attend with their carers. Childcare staff will be on hand to help children access leisure activities.)

Monday: 09:45 to 12:45.

Location: Childcare takes place in the Pavilion, beyond the dining hall.

## SCHEDULE

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### Friday, 21 August

#### 14:15-16:15 Registration

See Part 1 of the Information Pack for complete details of what to do. Registration takes place in the houses (Carr, Nowell, Paley and Shute). You should have received an email telling you your house and its PIN. If not, please contact Debbie at registrar@autscope.org as soon as possible. Note: house PINs are not to be shared with others.

#### 15:30-16:15 Refreshments (dining hall)

#### 16:30-17:15 Orientation (theatre)

Orientation will explain a few things about how things work at Autscope. There may be new information, so please come along even if you have attended Autscope before. Attendance is *strongly recommended* for all participants.

17:30-18:30 Evening meal

18:30-19:00 First meeting of **Home groups** (classroom block)

19:00-22:00 Various casual activities

In the evening there will be a variety of casual and semi-structured activities including discussions, films and games. Lists of exactly what's on and when will be available at Autscope.

20:00-21:30 **Organ recital** (chapel)

21:30 **Sparklies in the Dark** (location to be announced)

### Saturday, 22 August

08:30-09:30 Breakfast

#### 09:30-10:45 Concurrent workshops:

##### **Autistic inner space** (Caroline Hearst; discussion room)

One of the most important autistic spaces is inside our heads – how we think about autism and ourselves as autistic affects how we live our lives. Discovering I am autistic has helped me understand myself and meditation has helped me regulate my emotions and feel happier.

This presentation will briefly discuss various views of autism, and how belief in them might affect behaviour. There will be a brief overview of various practises used by and on autistic people to either change behaviour and/or help address challenges.

We will explore the use of meditation to expand the inner space available to us to think and exercise choice. I will offer a short guided meditation and there will be time to discuss the impact of this and other experiences with meditation. Meditation does not suit everybody and is rarely a quick fix; however it can be transformative for long term practitioners.

##### **Calming touch: autistic preferences and simple shiatsu techniques** (Heta; activity room)

Mapping and discussing the participants' preferences: what kind of touch they find calming or threatening, how these perceptions vary depending on situation and the people involved, what types of massage or other physical practices they have found useful. A brief introduction to the techniques involved in simple shiatsu massage: rocking, stretching, pressing with thumb, palm and elbow. Trying out some of the techniques in pairs or, if the participants are not comfortable with this, doing them as demonstrations. Participants could also demonstrate their own favourite techniques or guide the group to try them out.

10:45-11:30 Break

**11:30-12:30 Consecutive lectures** (theatre):

***A history of early autistic space*** (Martijn Dekker)

Autistic self-awareness and autistic space began on the early internet. It was in 1992 that a number of autistics got fed up with being patronised by the parent-dominated AUTISM mailing list and started their own autistic-led Autism Network International list. Back then, starting your own community on the net was virtually impossible for mere mortals, so Syracuse University provided the hosting. In 1996, ANI organised the first Autreat conference, which inspired Autscope. Other online community forms such as live online chatting (#asperger) and an autistic-dominated public Usenet newsgroup (alt.support.autism) appeared soon after, sometimes spurring community and organisation in "3D space" too. This lecture will give a broad overview, complete with images, demonstrations and anecdotes, of the history of autistic space as it emerged online and branched out into a "real word" social movement from there.

***Autistic People's Organisations, creating space for change: a case study*** (Kabie Brook)

I will use the Autistic People's Organisation ARGH (Autism Rights Group Highland) as a case study to explore the creation of Autistic Space/s as a vehicle for collective action, campaigning, political progress and the journey towards Autistic emancipation. I will include examples of what we do, how we do it and why. I intend to leave participants with a feeling that there is no one 'right' or 'wrong' way of being or doing Autistic spaces through organisational means but rather present a picture of what has been possible for ARGH as an example of one approach.

12:30-13:30 Lunch

13:30-14:00 First meeting of **Interest groups** (classroom block)

13:30-15:30 Swimming pool open

**14:00-15:30 Various leisure activities**

15:30-16:00 Break

**16:00-16:30 *Who's in and who's out? Diversity and acceptance within the autistic community*** (Kalen; theatre)

In order to form a coherent group of our own, we must define ourselves, and any such definition must include some and exclude others. Even within the autistic community, distinctions are made on the basis of autistic traits, diagnosis, intelligence, gender, age, and political ideology. Are these distinctions useful, or do they serve to unnecessarily divide our community? If we expect others to take steps to include us, perhaps we are obligated to do likewise. Or, as a special minority group, maybe it is acceptable for us to be exclusive. On an individual level, some find autistic space to be a welcoming home while others may be disappointed to find themselves misfits among misfits.

In this lecture and associated discussion, we will explore the boundaries and contents of autistic space. In so doing, we may also find ways to make our autistic space more welcoming to those we wish to include.

**16:30-17:00 Pre-AGM discussion** (theatre)

Make suggestions and ask questions to the board and the organisers before the AGM begins.

**17:00-17:30 Annual General Meeting** (theatre)

17:30-18:30 Evening meal

18:30-19:00 Meeting of **Home groups** (classroom block)

**19:00-22:00 Various casual activities**

**20:00-22:00 Disco** (Dutton Centre)

## Sunday, 23 August

08:30-09:30 Breakfast

### 09:30-10:45 ***Our natural space*** (Catriona; theatre, then outdoors if possible)

This workshop aims to create a space for connecting with our natural environment; it is partly lecture, in that it will share information about our relationship with the 'outdoors' space and the medicinal plants growing in the wild as well as in our gardens we can use for our health and well-being; it is partly hands-on workshop as, if the weather allows, we will spend some of our time outside; we will also share some tips on making basic home-made remedies and treats from common household ingredients, offer herbal teas to try and have explained how to make all sorts of nice things using essential oils and herbs.

10:45-11:30 Break

### 11:30-12:30 **Consecutive lectures** (theatre):

#### ***Beyond reasonable adjustment: autistic-friendly spaces and 'Universal Design'*** (Damian Milton)

A reasonable adjustment is considered to be an alteration made to enable a disabled person to carry out normative responsibilities, such as the duties of a job role. In practice the idea of alterations to cultural norms often make such adjustments exceptions rather than the rule. In contrast to this, the concept of 'Universal Design' (UD) suggests that environments need to be designed to be accessed, understood and usable to the greatest extent possible by people of all ages, sizes and abilities. Rather than making 'special requirements' to meet the perceived needs of a specified grouping of people, UD is based on the premise that environments that are accessible, usable, convenient and pleasurable lead to benefits for all. This presentation considers whether the theory of 'Universal Design' could potentially help in making the case for why creating autistic-friendly environments could simply be considered as 'good design' practice.

#### ***"To Be" or "Not to Be" - an exploration into Autistic Embodiment*** (Helen Kirk)

In this presentation we will firstly look at autistic people's experiences of space both inside and beyond their body. The session will reveal a deeper understanding of autistic spatial experience and also looks at how the absence of a concept of time can affect perceptions. I will demonstrate with the aid of neuroscience, psychology, philosophy and art how many autistic experiences of space can be issues about existence itself. These are fundamental issues that concern us all as human beings, whether neurodivergent or neurotypical. It is about how we "are" how we "exist" and our perceptions beyond this.

12:30-13:30 Lunch

13:30-14:00 Meeting of **Interest groups** (classroom block)

13:30-15:30 Swimming pool open

### 14:00-15:30 **Various leisure activities**

15:30-16:00 Break

### 16:00-17:30 **Concurrent workshops:**

#### ***Getting what you need from public services: understanding and using the law*** (Yo; Theatre)

Autistics can find it very difficult to get our needs met by public services (social care, health, education and other services provided by the state). When trying to access them we typically encounter a very low level of understanding of autism amongst public service staff; inaccessible systems; and confusing communications. Cuts are making the situation even worse.

This workshop will: explain clearly how to find out what the law says a public service should do; set out the actions which autistics can take if a public service is not acting lawfully; help participants to decide whether it is worth complaining or taking other action; support participants in learning how to express their issue clearly and effectively; help participants work to improve two way communication between autistics and public services; and explain what help is likely to be available and where to find it (e.g. advocacy, legal advice).

### **Spin Rock Express** (XXXXXX studio)

One of the many natural talents that autistic people have is a gift for acting. This session will be a fun, interactive, empowering drama workshop specifically designed for individuals on the spectrum and through which you will find your inner actor. It will incorporate easy and non-invasive, structured, non-verbal exercises with movement and improvisation, all of which are especially suitable for those who have no experience in acting. All levels of acting experience are welcome.

17:30-18:30 Evening meal

18:30-19:00 Meeting of **Home groups** (classroom block)

**19:00-22:00** Various activities and **Entertainment evening** (theatre)

## **Monday, 24 August**

08:30-09:30 Breakfast

**09:30-10:45** ***Autistic beings-in-the-world: Neurodiverse negotiations of space*** (Hannah Ebben; theatre)

The concept of autism has traditionally been described as a preoccupation with the self and a withdrawal from the outside world: 'autism' derives from 'autos', which is the Old Greek word for 'self'. In my workshop, I will problematise this pathologised notion of human deviance by focusing on the body and the space that surrounds the body. In my personal research, I propose new conceptualisations of everyday lived experiences that are predominantly called 'autism'. I argue that these experiences consist of a preoccupation with space and thus of an outwardness to stimuli in the outside world. The word 'autos' therefore needs a substitute. After a short introduction to the philosophy of Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Rosemarie Garland-Thompson, I will invite the audience to develop a choreography of perceiving stimuli and other people. The dance will form an inducement for further thinking about new concepts on neurodiverse movement through space.

10:45-11:30 Break

**11:30-12:30** ***Keeping a check on your mental health*** (Sharon Jeffreys and Mel Bruce; discussion room)

We all get stressed sometimes. For many of us it can be difficult to notice the early signs of stress. This means many people do not notice they are stressed until they are really stressed. This talk uses a simple model called the bucket model to explain how lots of stress can have an impact on mental health and how to notice when the stress is getting higher. This means that people can feel more in control of their mental health.

12:30-13:30 Lunch

13:30-15:00 Departure drop-in

## PRESENTERS' BIOS

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### Caroline Hearst

Presenting: ***Autistic inner space*** (Sat. 09:30)

Caroline has been meditating for many years and has attended several silent retreats, although this has not made her a paragon of calm and equanimity, it has definitely helped her navigate the ups and downs of life as an autistic woman and parent. Caroline discovered she is autistic six years ago and having previously trained as an art psychotherapist she now works as an autism awareness educator specialising in offering training to counsellors and therapists. She sits on the council of the National Autistic Society and is the founder and a director of AutAngel, an autistic community interest company.

### Catriona

Presenting: ***Our natural space*** (Sun. 09:30)

Catriona is a trained qualified western medical herbalist; she has studied autism for years (lived with for life!) completing an MSc exploring issues around diagnosis and intervention in 2004; her PhD, 2011, focussed on girls with Asperger's and anxiety, the findings published in Good Autism Practice, May 2012. She founded Scottish Women with Autism Network, SWAN, with Autism Network Scotland. She has two children, one daughter diagnosed in 2005 and she identified herself as autistic soon after. She has presented on females and autism in a variety of settings and regularly leads herb walks and workshops.

### Damian Milton

Presenting: ***Beyond reasonable adjustment: autistic-friendly spaces and 'Universal Design'*** (Sun. 11:30)

Damian is currently studying for a doctorate at the University of Birmingham. He is a member of the programme board for the Autism Education Trust, and a member of the scientific and advisory committee for Research Autism. Damian works for the National Autistic Society as Head of Autism Knowledge and Expertise (Adults and Community) and as a researcher for London South Bank University. Damian's interest in autism began when his son was diagnosed in 2005 as autistic at the age of two. Damian was also diagnosed with Asperger's in 2009 at the age of thirty-six.

### Hannah Ebben

Presenting: ***Autistic beings-in-the-world: Neurodiverse negotiations of space*** (Mon. 09:30)

Hannah Ebben is a Dutch Autistic postgraduate student with a background in Cultural Studies. In her research, she uses insights from this field in order to study art and culture on autism and to develop new ways of thinking about the pathologisation of human diversity. Her own identification with the concept of Asperger's Syndrome has had a great influence on this research. In the Netherlands, she has worked in the field of Disability Studies. In the UK, she hopes to continue her work on autism in the academic world and in Autistic advocacy and activism.



## Helen Kirk

Presenting: ***"To Be" or "Not to Be" - an exploration into Autistic Embodiment*** (Sun. ± 12:00)

Helen regularly partakes in Adult Autism Strategy meetings in Leeds where she continues to campaign for the rights of people on the autistic spectrum. She has a 25 year old non-verbal autistic son and has researched autism for 20 years. Her studies made her aware that mainstream theories of autism such as theory of mind, executive functioning and weak central coherence operated within their own domains and a more coherent and whole picture of being autistic was needed. It should be less abstract and involve everyday concrete experiences. Helen prefers the use of the word autistic rather than autism.

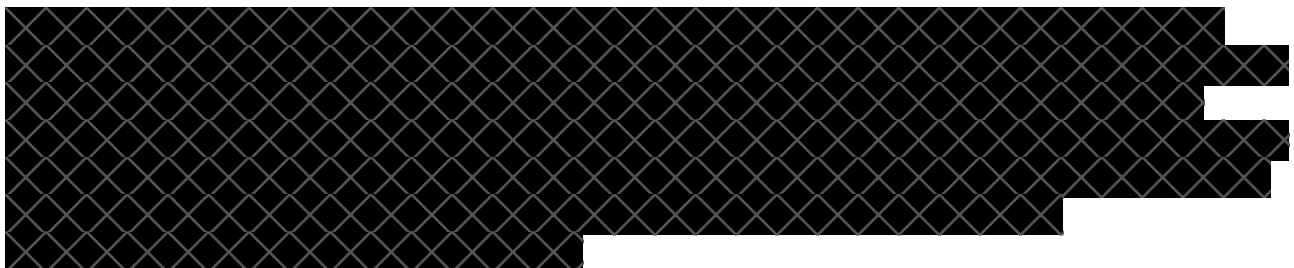
## Heta

Presenting: ***Calming touch: autistic preferences and simple shiatsu techniques*** (Sat. 09:30)

Heta has occasionally received and performed shiatsu massage over the past 25 years as a way to handle tactile defensiveness, stress, tension and health problems stemming from these. On the basis of running workshops and offering short massage sessions at autism events, she has the impression that many of these techniques are particularly well suited to autistic people who benefit from deep pressure but dislike sensations involved in other types of massage.



Presenting: ***Spin Rock Express*** (Sun. 16:00)



## Kabie Brook

Presenting: ***Autistic People's Organisations, creating space for change: a case study*** (Sat. ± 12:00)

Kabie has 25 years experience working with and for Autistic people of all ages.

Cofounder and current chairperson of ARGH, a collective advocacy, lobbying and campaigning group run by and for Autistic adults, Kabie is part of the Scottish Government Autism Strategy Governance Group as well as being involved with national and local organisations including Inverness Access Panel and as a community advisor for Police Scotland.

Kabie also has experience of organising and speaking at events, including training workshops for parents and practitioners and is particularly interested in pan-disability engagement, intersectionality and 'Autistic' as political identity.

## Kalen

Presenting: ***Who's in and who's out? Diversity and acceptance within the autistic community*** (Sat. 16:00)

Kalen has been involved in Autscope from the start and has presented at many of them. While her expertise lies elsewhere, Kalen's long experience with the autistic community online, within Autscope and in her personal life gives her a considerable breadth of experience with autistic people.

## Martijn Dekker

Presenting: ***A history of early autistic space*** (Sat. 11:30)

Martijn (rhymes with 'design') was diagnosed autistic in 1995 at age 21 and was actively present in online autistic space from then on. In July 1996, he started running the first entirely self-hosted online autistic community on the internet: InLv (Independent Living on the Autistic Spectrum), which lived until 2012-ish. In 1997, the New York Times dedicated an article to it. He has also done many conference presentations on autism and autistic community themes in various countries over the years. Martijn has been involved in the organisation of Autscope since 2006 and is currently chair of the board.

## Sharon Jeffreys and Mel Bruce

Presenting: ***Keeping a check on your mental health*** (Mon. 11:30)

Sharon is a learning disability nurse and a mental health nurse and is trained to diagnose autism. Sharon used to work as a nurse consultant and is now the head of commissioning for autism and learning disabilities in Lincolnshire.

Mel is a clinical psychologist for children and young people with learning disabilities in Norfolk. Mel leads an intensive support team and is the psychology champion across Norfolk.


Sharon and Mel used to work together in Norfolk where they tried to make sure people with a learning disability or autism could get support for their mental health when they needed it.

## Yo

Presenting: ***Getting what you need from public services: understanding and using the law*** (Sun. 16:00)

Formally diagnosed in 2001 and with two autistic children, Yo has spent most of her adult life using her skills as a legal geek to figure out how to access public services. She has a PhD in educational research. She now works as a trainer, speaker, consultant and advocate working with both public services and user groups to improve autistic access to public services. Recently: delivering training on the legal framework of the Care Act to local authorities all over England; training and consulting for local authorities and schools on autism; and public speaking on social care and autism.

# TIMETABLE

	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday		
		Breakfast				
09:00		<div>[Concurrent] 1. "Autistic inner space" &amp; 2. "Calming touch; autistic preferences and simple shiatsu techniques" 1. Caroline Hearst / 2. Heta</div>	Our natural space <i>Catriona</i>	Autistic beings-in-the-world - Neurodiverse negotiations of space <i>Hannah Ebben</i>		
10:00						
11:00			Break			
			A history of early autistic space <i>Martijn Dekker</i>	Beyond reasonable adjustment <i>Damian Milton</i>	Keeping a check on your mental health <i>Sharon J. &amp; Mel B.</i>	
12:00			Autistic People's Organisations <i>Kabie Brook</i>	"To be" or "Not to be" <i>Helen Kirk</i>		
		Lunch				
13:00		Interest groups		Departure drop-in		
14:00		Various leisure activities				
15:00		Registration	<div>[Concurrent] 1. "Getting what you need from public services; understanding and using the law" &amp; 2. "Spin Rock Express" 1. Yo / 2. </div>			
		Refreshments			Break	
16:00					Who's in and who's out? <i>Kalen</i>	
		Orientation			Pre-AGM discussion	
17:00					AGM	
	Evening meal					
18:00	Home groups					
19:00			Entertainment evening			
20:00	Organ recital	Disco				
21:00	Sparklies					