



A very warm welcome to the second edition of Bridging the Gap Together! Newsletter.

Bridging the Gap Together! is a new independent Community Interest Company, our aim is to provide a wide range of events covering Autism, Anxiety, Behaviour concerns and much more. These events are aimed at young people with Autism or other disabilities, their parents, carers or professionals who might benefit from attending our events.

We have continued to host events over the last few months. In July working in partnership with Supportive Parents we hosted a well-attended Behaviour Event delivered by Graham Valentine from BIBIC. At our August coffee and cake event we recruited two new Young Partners, Adam Baker who has slotted in nicely as part of the team and we are looking forward to Charlotte joining us in the near future.

During September we had a very busy month; Keith Stuart very kindly delivered his presentation of A Boy Made of Blocks at Clevedon School. We would like to say a big thank you to Keith Stuart and Sarah Morris for supporting Bridging the Gap Together! A few days later we took part in the Walking Out of Darkness Event. Whilst Racheal and I looked after our information stand two of our Young Partners Lauren Smith and Adam Baker took part in the walk, more about that later.

Our Young Partners have continued to work hard behind the scenes and they are about to start an exciting new project. We will of course give you more information on this when it is completed. Contained in this newsletter is another article written by Lauren, Sam's cartoon strip, Shane's What's on Page and an article written by a parent.

Where does the time go, it's hard to believe Bridging the Gap Together! is almost a year old. We will be celebrating this milestone by having a 1st birthday party and Fundraising Event at the Hornets Rugby Club on Friday 15th December. If anyone would like to contribute some prizes for our raffle or have any ideas and would like to get involved in any way for this event. Please contact us at events@bridgingthegap.ltd or call Pat on 07980749757

Once again we would like to thank everyone who has supported us. Our special thanks goes to our Young Partners Lauren Smith and Adam Baker, they were joined by Sandra Smith, Mandy Baker, Barbra Neary, Tracey White and Gabby White to raise money for Bridging the Gap Together! The final total raised was £304 we really appreciate you all giving up your Saturday to raise this money for us.



Index

Welcome Note From Liz Kelly	Page 2
Thought provoking piece from Lauren	Page 3
Mental Health—A personal view	Page 4
What's on by Shane	Sam Potters Comic strip

Useful Phone numbers

Samaritans
116123

Positive Steps
0300 300 0834

Mind info line
0300 123 3393

1 in 4
01934 622292

Wellspring Counselling
01275 810879



If you want to share a good news story or raise awareness of a disability we are looking for articles to place in future newsletters.

If you are a Young Person aged 16—25 with a disability and would like to become a Young Partner please contact us by email
admin@bridgingthegap.ltd



Autism is a neurological condition which affects the individual's ability to interpret the world and communicate with others around them. The main difficulties that a person with autism may face can be referred to as the 'triad of impairments.' These impairments include social communication, social interaction and social imagination.

I think, after many negative experiences in education, particularly in schools, it's vital to not only accept autism, but to understand it. I have found that very few people have a genuine understanding of the condition. We are the same as everyone else, although at times, we present and express ourselves differently. These differences are often judged, which can cause us to have low self-esteem and feel undervalued.

As October features Mental Health Awareness Week, I'd like to explore how I can often feel incredibly anxious in social situations. I struggle with heightened anxiety particularly when I'm around new people, large groups, in an unfamiliar place or when starting something new. The level of anxiety presented in people with autism compared to those not on the spectrum is sky high. Just the simplest of things, that other people take for granted, can strike up a debilitating spur of angst, upset and sometimes anger. When I was younger, I used to avoid social outings as much as I could because I wouldn't know how to act, what to say and I couldn't understand the 'social cues' that everyone else seemed to grasp instantly.

Autism can be challenging – I used to need a lot of specialist support and interventions. However, having autism is something that I am proud of. I am proud to be me, I am okay. I am slowly learning to build confidence and support others, using my previous experiences.

Below is an extract from a poem that I've written based on a comment from a specialist support instructor at college (that I should meet her halfway). As I was under tremendous pressure at the time, I turned to paper in the hope that my tears would fade and my words would somehow portray the anxiety, upset and anger I wanted to express.

I am now getting a book published to share my compilation of poetry.

"Autism awareness is a highlight for me,
No matter how many books you've read, videos you've watched or people you've spoken to about the subject,
If you haven't walked my long trudge of a path,
You don't have the true understanding of the disability.

That's right – I have a disability,
A hidden disability, where guilt, shame, upset, anger and anxiety threaten to trickle through, when I'm overwhelmed,
My life is a battle – a rollercoaster – a challenge,
So, maybe you should, for once, meet me halfway!"

Please keep updated on my Facebook page
'My Rainbow Life.'

Lauren



Autism and Mental Health from a Mother's Perspective.

Within the first year of my son starting primary school he was referred to the Vulnerable Learning Service, Speech and Language Therapist and CAMHS. Sometime later he was diagnosed with Autistic Spectrum Disorder. Over the years he has had a number of different therapies to help him with his Autism, Anxiety, Behaviour issues, Grief, and more recently thoughts of Self-Harm. He has been seen by many professionals including a Specialist Nurse, Paediatrician, Psychologist, Counsellors and a Psychiatrist all of whom have done an excellent job with helping him through every phase.

A few weeks ago I came home from a stressful day at work nothing really bad just the usual, things not going according to plan, road works, traffic delays etc. My only thought was to get home as quickly as possible to put my feet up and relax for the rest of the evening. When I finally arrived home I asked my son how his day went, his response was I didn't go in today. I immediately asked if he had contacted his Tutors' to let them know he wasn't going in and I explained it was his responsibility to inform them. He shouted back "No, because I felt like jumping off a cliff and I've also thought about throwing myself under a train".

I was horrified that he was having these thoughts. My mind raced through some of the conversations we have had over the last few weeks trying to work out the how and whys of his feelings. It didn't make sense he had recently started two new courses and while he had been anxious about one of the courses he appeared to be really enjoying it and had talked very positively about other students on the course.

After spending sometime processing that bombshell I finally approached my son and began to put a plan of action into place. However, given it was now gone 7pm the plan was on hold until the next morning. I can tell you right now I didn't sleep very well that night or any night since then. I did contact the Mental Health team currently working with my son and set up an appointment. I also contacted his Education Provider to give them the limited information I had at that time.

It was suggested that my son continued to attend the lessons that caused the problems while people worked behind the scenes to move things around for him, however some of these changes made matters worse and for the next three weeks every time I dropped him off I could see the physical change in his appearance as his anxiety grew. I could also feel my own stress levels rising wondering if this would be the day he acted on his thoughts of taking his own life.

I should have trusted my own instincts and instantly removed him from immediate danger, instead of listening to others. It was only on the third occasion it finally hit me just what I was putting my son through and it needed to stop right there and then whatever the consequences. I know we are all guilty of not taking Mental Health issues seriously but the guilt I now feel is unbearable at times. I'm his mum, the one person who should protect him from harm at all costs, if he acted on impulse it is me and the rest of the family who would be left devastated. We would never recover from this, he has to come first and everyone else will just have to deal with it.

I know we've only started this latest journey into the unknown with my son's very recent Mental Health problems and I am aware that with each new problem the stakes have increased; this really is now, a matter of life or death. With all the previous stages I was confident he would come through them because of the people he had supporting him. While I have the same amount of confidence in the current team supporting him, this is by far the worst stage and if he ever decides to act on impulse and carry out a sudden thought of throwing himself under a train or jumping off a cliff there would be no coming back.

Now when I think back to that day, I am grateful I found those silly little things irritating because if it hadn't have been for that, I wouldn't have got annoyed with him and he wouldn't have told me how he was feeling. I know if he had carried through on his thoughts that day, it would not have been just a bad day it would have completely shattered the lives of everyone in the family.

To anyone I might upset by being agitated or appearing aggressive and emotional please understand this is my way of coping as it effects my mental health too. If I don't answer an email, phone call or need to cancel arrangements with you at short notice please take a moment to consider why. I will do my utmost best to contact you in advance to let you know but there maybe a day when I can't do that because I'm dealing with the unthinkable. Unfortunately, I'm not the only parent of a young person with Autism and Mental Health conditions, I've heard too many similar stories from other mums living this life.

To my Son I am extremely sorry for putting you through so much, I hope when you read this you will realise what an amazing and remarkable young man you are, never forget how much I love you. Thank you for letting me share your story, I am so proud of you.

I urge everyone to take Mental Health seriously it's closer than you think. It could be a colleague or family member that is struggling to cope, asking someone is there anything you can do to help may just save a life. A few minutes of your time could really make a massive difference to someone trying to cope with a Mental Health condition. To anyone not coping asking for help is not a sign of weakness but a sign of strength and you just might find that life is really worthwhile.

Signed an extremely anxious and very worried Mum

WHAT'S ON PAGE

My name is Shane and I am your What's On Editor, my picks for this Newsletter include something for all ages.... Hope you have a great Autumn and Winter!

Halloween Pumpkin carving this Autumn - 29th October at Paintworks Event Space, Love Food festival, fun for all ages. Contact them on 01179 714320 for more details



Something for all the family

Icescape @ The Tropicana 3rd November to the 7th January covered winter Ice rink, attractions include Santa's Grotto, Snow Slide, Festive rides, food stalls and an artic themed bar. Full details here <https://www.icescape-tropicana.co.uk/>

Concessions for Carers take ID and DLA/PIP letter

Festival of Light, at Longleat -

5th November throughout the Christmas and New year season, , stunning Chinese lanterns, Santa Express for younger one's, Day passes available or longer stays - go online at www.longleat.co.uk/events/light-festival for more details.

Something for the Parents -

An evening with Frank Bruno - 11th November, Grand Pier, includes fireworks at sea display, a two course meal and an Q&A, with Frank Bruno, tickets available 07855077039 - 01934 620238

Christmas is coming

Christmas light switch on - 16th November, The Mall, Cribbs Causeway with the Vamps who will be performing a charity concert, tickets given away every day from 16th October in exchange for a £2 donation for Globals Make Some Noise, ages 14+



Friday 15th December

Fundraising Birthday party to celebrate our first year
7.30pm -11.30pm at the Hornets Rugby Club,
Hutton Moor Rd, W-S-M BS22 8LY

For more information contact events@bridgingthegap.ltd



#02 Spell Checker



<http://exmedal.deviantart.com>

© 2017 WakoStar Ink all rights reserved

Sam Potter/ExMedial/WakoStar Ink