

LONDON
AUTISM
GROUP
CHARITY

2021 Newsletter

London Autism Group Charity

It Starts With the Will to Make a Difference

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<https://www.londonautismgroupcharity.org>
Charity no. 1176341

Contents

- 2 Introduction
- 3 London Autism Group on Facebook
- 4 Neurodiversity Consultancy
- 7 The Autism Podcast
- 8 Solace
- 9 Community Resources and our response to Covid 19
- 12 Our Charity Support work
- 17 London Autism Research Advisory Group
- 18 FAQ - How to access Support
- 19 Ways in which you can help
- 20 Fundraising

2021 Newsletter



Introduction by our Founder Dr Chris Papadopoulos

Welcome to our charity newsletter. In this update, you will find a wealth of information describing our charity's activities throughout the last year, supporting the autistic and wider autism community.

You may be wondering, who are the London Autism Group Charity? Well, in this newsletter you will find out all about the work that we have been doing in the past year which should give you a clear sense about our values. All of the work we do is aligned to our overall mission which is to promote the social acceptance and inclusion of autistic people and their families, to promote their health and wellbeing, and to reduce the appalling stigma and discrimination that so many people in the autistic and wider autism community so regularly experience.

We are proud that as a small but growing charity with minimal funds, that we have been able to produce real action and meaningful change to people's lives. This is mainly because of our commitment and dedication to what we believe in; that everyone deserves the chance of a happy, prosperous and long life free of discrimination and inequality. There is a still long way to go but, as our charity motto states, '*It Starts With the Will to Make a Difference*', and we certainly have the will.



We aim to bring a wide range of targeted support, to eventually offer help at every stage of an Autistic person's life.

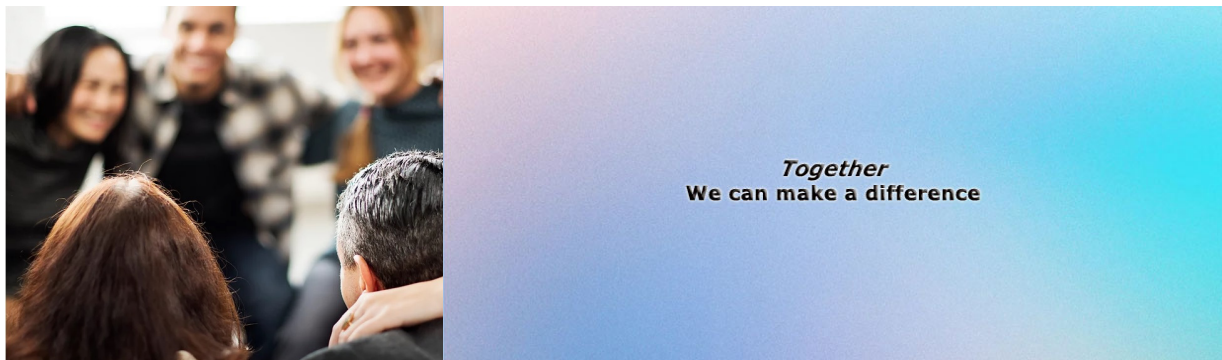
London Autism Group

The 'London Autism Group' is a private Facebook group for anyone living in (or near to) London. We are a very friendly, supportive, sensitive and respectful group.

The group is for anyone whose lives have been influenced by autism in any way. Feel free to post any thoughts, questions or concerns you have so we can support you.

As this is a private group, nothing you post will be posted on your timeline, so only group members can see any posts/ comments you make.

We have almost 3000 members from all across London (and surrounding counties), and we get over 60000 views per month on comments that are made.

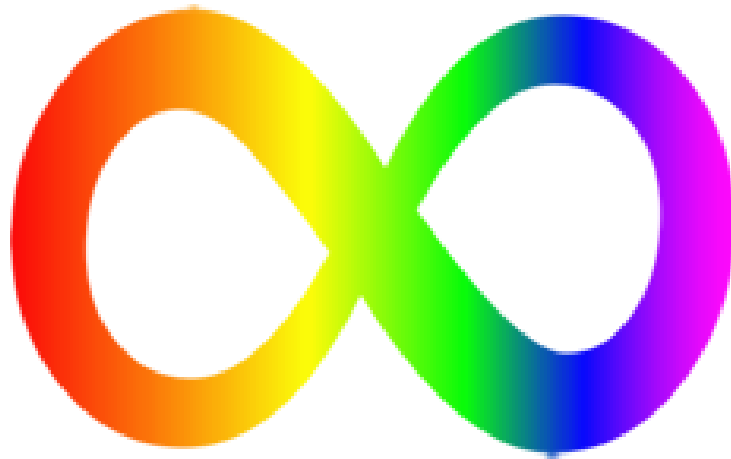


London Autistic Students Group

This is a private Facebook group for autistic university students based in London or the surrounding counties. The aim of the group is to create an online community where autistic students can connect with others in the same position as themselves, who share the same interests, passions and face the same problems.

As this group is administrated by volunteers of the London Autism Group Charity, the students have direct access to whatever advice or support that we can provide or signpost to, in order to fully meet their needs.

It is also our goal to connect students socially, in order to combat stigma and isolation, and to improve mental health.



Neurodiversity Consultancy

One part of the work we do is offer consultancy on Autism and Neurodiversity to organisations, employers and educational institutions.

We have been helping companies to support autistic employees appropriately, by both providing educational training activities as well as guidance on enabling them to provide a more relaxing and inclusive work environment. This in turn will help you to get the most out of employees and ensure that they can reach their full potential.

We have also supported Media organisations looking to ensure that their autistic representation is accurate and appropriate.

We also offer guidance to educational institutions on how to support neurodivergent students and to help make schools, colleges and universities autistic friendly.

Helping the Government



As part of our consultancy initiative, Charity Trustee James Gordon has done some work for the government Department of Culture and Sport on behalf of the charity. They required expert knowledge in Neurodiversity and applying this to reasonable adjustments in the workplace.

Assistance was given to help an autistic applicant for a job the Department had advertised. James transcribed a report based upon conversations that were had with the applicant, on how they would meet the job's requirements.

Collaboration with Stack Recruitment



We have also worked in collaboration with Stack Recruitment, who are a recruitment service specifically for autistic and neurodivergent people. We've promoted them to the Autistic and Autism community to direct interested people to find the wide array of employment opportunities that they offer.



Promoting Autism related services in and around London

The charity also promotes hundreds of other Autism related support organisations in the London and surrounding area by use of the Google Map of Services created by our Trustee James Gordon. It is available on the charity's website and is also recommended by the City of London Family and Young People's Information Service.

James has also designed a Google Map of SEND Schools for London and a Map of Legal firms that have SEND expertise.

All Google Maps are accessible on our website.

Pointing out opportunities

We have also been able to signpost several autistic people to opportunities that we knew about within the large network of our contacts within the Autism community.





What is SOLACE?

We have a fantastically successful early intervention (at the point of diagnosis) service for parents and family carers, to help them to cope with autism-related stigma. This consists of 8 Weekly group meetings. The first, fourth and eight meetings take place in-person at a locally arranged venue. The other five meetings (meetings 2, 3, 5, 6 and 7) will take place online through free Zoom video conference.



The aim of SOLACE is to help improve your well-being by learning and sharing experiences together in a confidential, safe, supportive and friendly group environment facilitated by a psychologist with experience in SOLACE.

It also aims to develop skills to be able to address and challenge the misunderstandings, stereotypes and misconceptions of autism, and in turn view autism in a positive, hopeful light.

Participants will have the opportunity to share experiences and support each other in a safe and friendly environment.

Our feedback from parents has been universally positive. The parents involved all stayed in touch and have formed their own support network.

Community Resources and our response to Covid 19

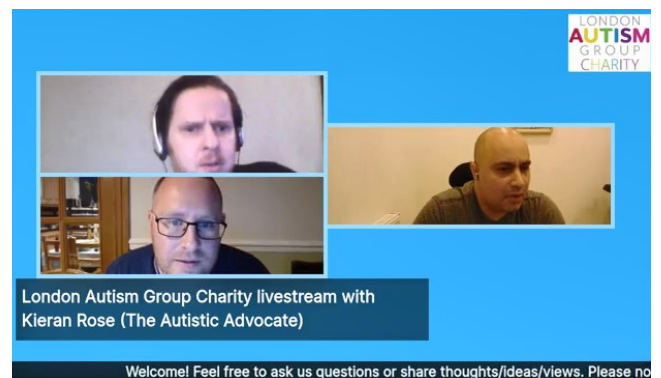
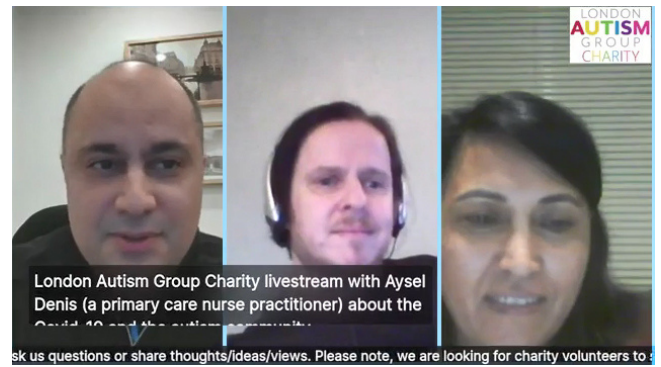
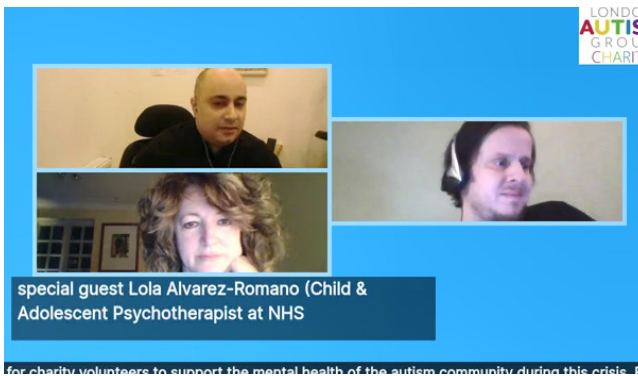
In response to the coronavirus outbreak, we have created a number of support services for the Autism Community. This is to protect and support the good mental health of us all. These turbulent and unpredictable days have made our lives, as autistic people and families of autistics, even more difficult.

To this end, we have moved forward with a range of support measures, the first of which is a list of useful resources on our website.



During these very stressful times, we have conducted over 20 Community Live Streams on our Facebook Charity Page, where we have held Q & A sessions, and heard helpful advice from professional guests with backgrounds in the NHS, Mental Health, Special Education, and Autistic Advocacy. These livestreams gained many thousands of views and regular participation from the autistic and wider autism community, and provided a sense of collective unity.

Livestreams to support the Autism Community



Media Work

Our Charity Lead, Dr Chris Papadopoulos has been a prominent figure in the media, speaking out and educating on Public Health issues in his role as a Senior University Lecturer on the subject. He has written many newspaper articles and been interviewed for television many times, advocating (among other things) on the impact of covid19 on mental health.



He has appeared with his son Leo, who is autistic and with other parents from the Autism community, on BBC Radio 5 live several times, where they have talked about the impact of lockdown has had on family life. Topics raised were, the loss of established routines being particularly tough to cope with, provoking huge anxiety and distress.

Chris and Leo have shared their experiences in public, in the hope that other families in the same situation can learn from the ways in which they have learned to cope and to manage the fragile situation. Chris also invited several other parents and researchers to participate in these radio discussions which were very well received.

This echoes the shared experience of most of the Autistic community, who have been badly affected by the isolation and anxiety caused. The disruption of predictable norms has seen a rise in mental health problems.

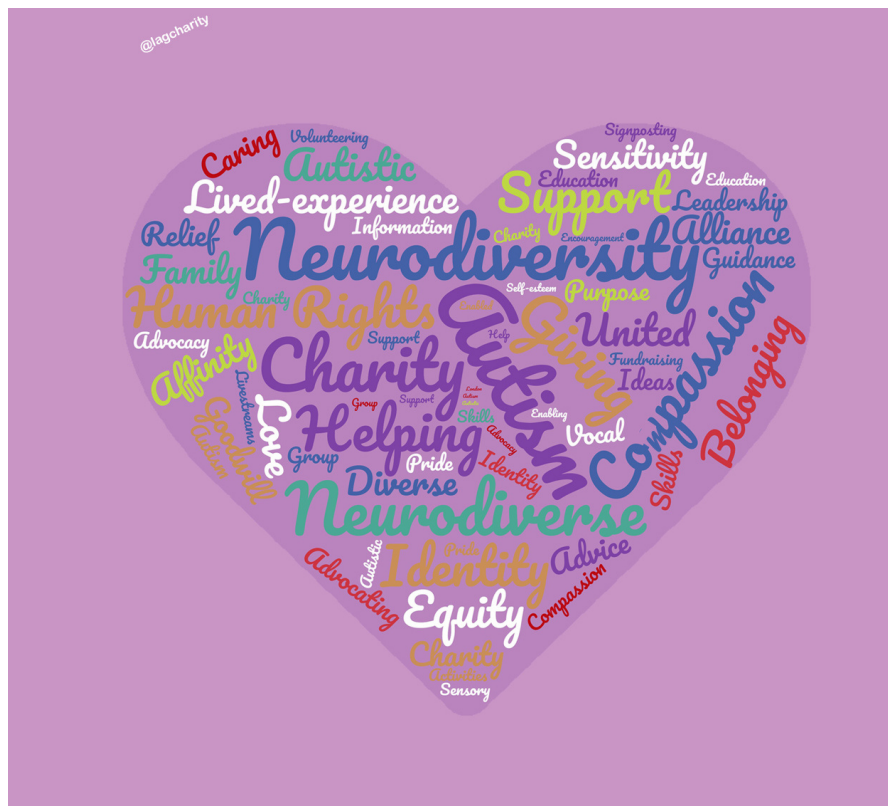
More recently, Chris has appeared on ITV News discussing the case of Nelio Salles De Siqueira whose autistic son Caique Pires Salles was forcibly quarantined after an essential trip to Brazil. The quarantine led to significant mental health problems for his son given the stress this caused. Chris has advocated that authorities must give autistic people with significant support needs exemption from such policies.

Our Charity Support Work

We have supported many parents, family carers and autistic people who were in crisis, arranging for and allowing them to have much needed professional mental health support.

Our Charity has also funded several autistic people who were in need of essential help, in circumstances that were impacting on their well-being.

This year we also supported several young autistic advocates with whatever they needed to become influencers for the Autistic community on social media. We are so happy that they will go on to educate and advocate on behalf of Autistic Rights. We look forward to see all that they achieve in the future.





Neurodiversity Articles

Some of our volunteers have written articles for the charity about the issues that are important to the Autism and Autistic Community. These include experience of Autism diagnosis, Autistic preferences on functioning labels, identity first vs person first language, Autistic Pride and identity.

A big thank you to all who have contributed and made their views known. The articles are available to read on our website.

The logo for City News, featuring the words "CITY NEWS" in white, bold, sans-serif capital letters on a dark red rectangular background.

CITY NEWS

Interview with City University of London News Service

A special thank you to our brilliant volunteer Charlotte, for speaking on behalf of the charity to the City University of London News service on the controversy surrounding the Sia film.

Zoom Workshops

Throughout the year, we have had several volunteers facilitate workshops on behalf of the charity. Each person has brought with them their own specialist knowledge and skills, and used them in order to support the Autistic community. Here are some examples of their amazing work to bring enjoyment to some of those who have been among the most isolated in the Community.

The feedback we have received has been incredibly encouraging. It shows that these events have had a profound and positive effect upon some people that attended. We are delighted that we can help to combat the anxiety of lockdown and to improve people's mental health.



Makeup Workshop

Our amazing volunteer Marion works in the fashion and makeup industry, so has provided workshops for those interested to learn tips and tricks to apply perfect makeup. She plans to provide similar tutorials with fashion tips and also social groups.



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Let's play with make up!

If you want to learn a few tricks on how to enhance your beauty, join me for this fresh and natural make up tutorial.

Together we will go step by step to create a beautiful and easy make up that can suit everyone.

You are ALL welcome to join me!



Siblings Support Group

Our brilliant volunteer Oliver has provided his own insights in running our Siblings support group, as he has an autistic brother. By sharing the story of his own family, he was able to engage those who attended the zoom, and to demonstrate that he could empathise with their own experiences.

Oliver is very patient and compassionate. He has been amazing as a member of the charity's befriending service.

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GROUP



Monthly siblings zoom support

Monthly Zoom support group starting on Tuesday 2nd March, 7:30pm - 8:30pm UK time.

This private support group is for siblings of autistic people to share experiences, connect and get advice and support. It is a very friendly and open group!

It is facilitated by charity volunteer Oliver, who himself has an autistic brother.



Rail Talk

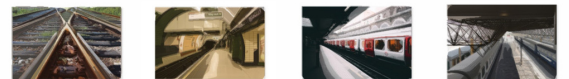
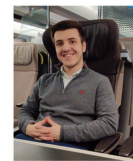
We are very lucky to also have as a volunteer Elliott, our Rail and Tube expert, who is a Network Rail Engineer. He has facilitated some zoom workshops on the these areas of special interest for Autistic young people.

With fun quizzes, discussion and a special guest appearance of a famous Youtube train enthusiast, these workshops have brought their audience great happiness. The feedback has been that over lockdown, these sessions have created friendships and provided a much needed boost to participant's mental health, which is what our charity is all about.



Rail Talk 2 Zoom Workshop

Our second Workshop will feature a quiz and Q & A all about the railways and underground. The workshop will be facilitated by our expert volunteer Elliott Gordon, who works as an Engineer for Network Rail.



*Friday 26th February 1930-2030 pm UK Time
All ages welcome.*

To register please email londonautismgroupcharity@gmail.com

Tai Chi

The wonderful Nick is a teacher of Tai Chi, an internal form of Chinese martial arts. He is an expert in teaching individuals with learning difficulties and provides sessions for many London organisations and residential care settings.

Nick relates that Tai-Chi has helped him in his life, especially during autism diagnosis, to feel focused and to have self belief. It is extremely sensory, which is good for the body and for peace of mind.

"It makes me feel like a bigger part of the world." he says. It is his hope that by taking part in this workshop, everyone can share in this feeling and that it can bring us all closer together.

Tai Chi Zoom Workshop and Free Prize Giveaway

Hi everyone, my name is Nicky and I teach Tai Chi, an internal form of Chinese martial arts.

It has helped me in my life, especially during my autism diagnosis, to help me feel focused and to believe in myself.

It is extremely sensory, which is good for my body and for my peace of mind. It makes me feel like a bigger part of the world.

I hope that by taking part in this introductory free workshop you can share in this feeling, and that it can bring us all closer together.

Take care,
Nicky

Friday 13th November at 17:00pm – 18:00pm UK Time
All ages and levels welcome.

Registering is easy. Follow the link below, fill in your name and email address, then click 'Register'. You can also register by emailing us at: londonautismgroupcharity@gmail.com



London Autism Research Advisory Group

This is a branch of the charity created by our founder Dr Chris Papadopoulos.

This is dedicated to promoting, supporting and creating ethically sound research that actually helps to improve the quality of autistic people's lives. This is in direct contrast and opposition to many research projects, that have their origins in the medical model of Autism, and aim to eliminate Autism and therefore Autistic people too.

Our charity listens to the views of Autistic people and respects their views. These voices of experience tell us of the long term psychological harm that some so called therapies can do. This mirrors the results of many large studies. Thus we obviously oppose such therapies and any research that is based on the misconception that autism is a disease to be cured. Autism is a neurological difference and a neurotype i.e. a type of mind that is different to the majority of neurotypical minds. Therefore, we believe that difference and diversity is something to be celebrated and to be embraced.

Over the course of the last year, London Autism Group Charity has given support to important research papers from Academics, who also seek to improve and enrich the lives of autistic people, and to find new ways to better support their needs.

Frequently asked questions and how to access support

- We seek to support Autistic people and their carers whenever they need help the most. In this regard we have contacted people in the Autism Community whenever we have witnessed them in distress. There are many ways in which we can offer support.
- We are commissioned to support autistic people and carers in London and the surrounding Counties. If you're inquiring about support services, then please let us know which ones you're interested in. You can see a list of our activities on our website here: <https://www.londonautismgroupcharity.org/what-we-do>
- For general questions and advice then we recommend you join our Facebook community group for London. There is also a wealth of useful information on our website, accessible via the 'What we do' menu option.
- Our mental health and befriending services are telephone based, and our workshops are run on zoom due to covid restrictions.
- We use text-message based support via mobile phone for the mental health of autistic people and family carers. Volunteers providing this service will have had training in mental health, but will not necessarily be mental health professionals. They will provide a safe space to for people to explore their emotions, how they are feeling, their wellbeing and mental health.
- Our Befriending service involves you being paired with one of our charity volunteers who will happily make contact with you first via whatsapp and, if you wish, 1-1 conversations over Zoom.
- There are also various livestreams and workshops run by the charity, aimed at people's special interests, to boost positive mental health and combat the anxiety of lockdown.
- If you feel that you need a different kind of support, then we are always open to finding ways to help you access it. We would need to know the individual's situation, needs and requirements. We will then assess how we might help and we may ask to speak directly over the telephone or zoom to discuss your needs.

Ways in which you can help

Donate

If you can afford to donate something, then we will be forever grateful. As you can see by reading this news letter, we manage to do a lot of good work for the Autistic and Autism Community.

By making a contribution, you will be enabling us to carry on with the important task of achieving our ultimate goal: providing support at every stage in an autistic person's life.



Sign up to volunteer on our website

All of our work comes from people donating their time and effort to help others. We do not take a salary. Everything donated to the charity is used to help the next person that needs help. So we are always on the lookout for new volunteers to join our team. We believe in harnessing people's skills, so whatever you want to do, we will find a way to put your time to good use. Find out more on our website.



<https://www.londonautismgroupcharity.org/volunteering>

Promote the charity

Connect with us on social media.

Share our posts.

Spread the word.

Tell your family, friends and work colleagues about us.

Also share our details with your family GP, pediatrician and your child's school.





Fundraising

There are many ways in which people have supported us over the last year. Here are some examples:

- Some have held fundraisers for their birthdays on social media.
- Others have done physical challenges.
- Companies have donated SEND related products for us to give to the Community.
- In return for our supporting them, some people have given back by offering their services to the charity and the community we support.
- Many have supported us by using Amazon Smile, a free service by which Amazon will give a small donation to our charity with each purchase made.

These generous contributions have enabled us to support a growing number of people in an increasing number of ways.

We give our sincere and humble thanks to all of those who have given a donation (whatever the amount), it allows us to make such a difference to people's lives in so many ways.

Thank you for reading

www.londonautismgroupcharity.org