



SERENDIPITY SOCIAL GROUPS PROJECT

N.A.S conference workshop title:-

What can we learn from social groups run by and for autistic people?

Dispelling myths

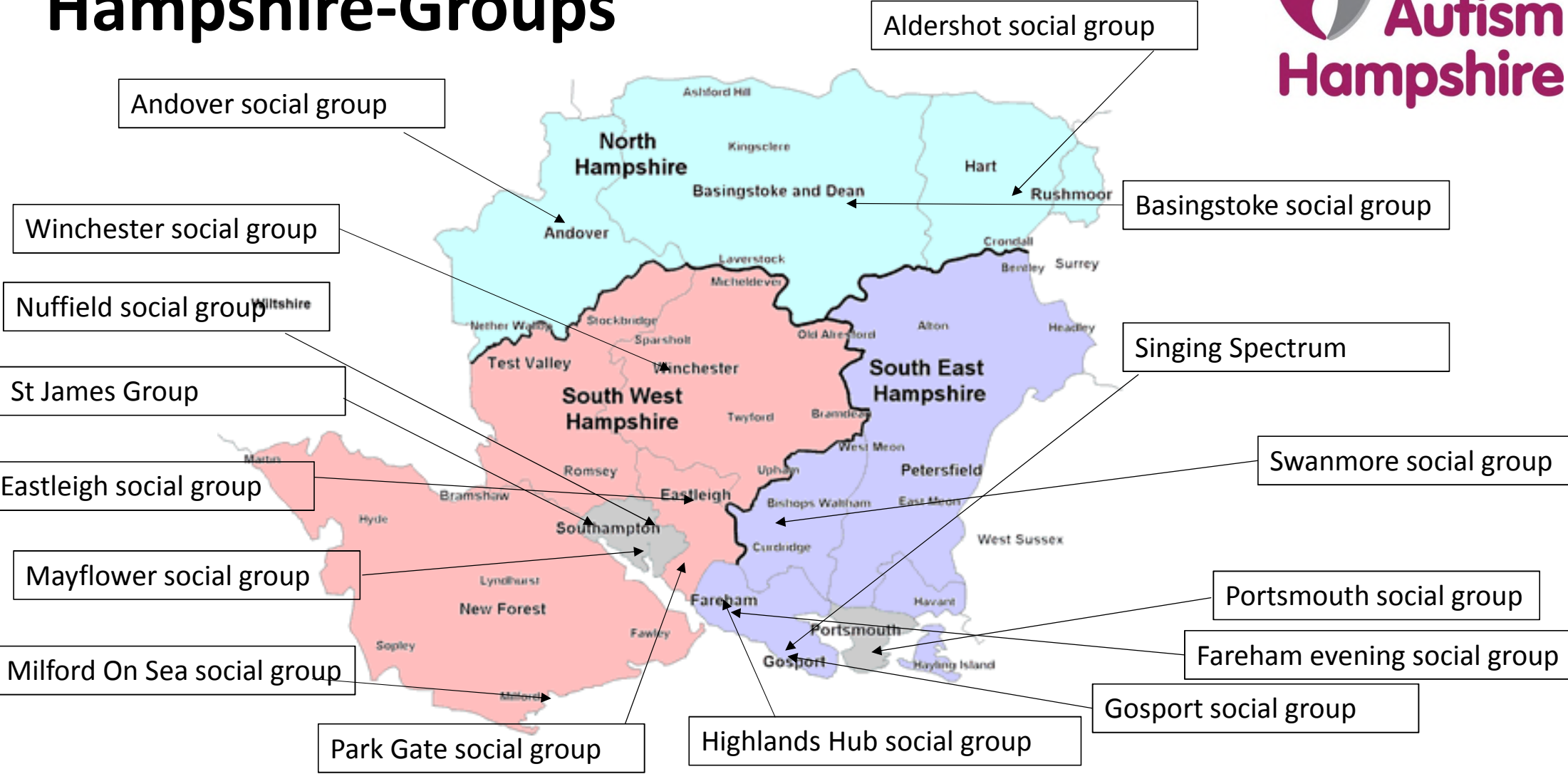
- Contrary to belief people on the autistic spectrum like socialising
- Strict group rules, times and days aren't necessarily overly important
- There's no set type of venue that suits
- There's a huge variety of things that people want to do and have interests in



Funding support

- Three Guineas Trust
- Hampshire County Council-Autism Partnership Board
- The Colefax Trust
- Lynn Foundation

Hampshire-Groups



Sub Groups

- Singing Spectrum
- Mayflower Theatre social group
- Board Games group
- Cage Cricket group
- Music group

Success of project

- Appointment of project Coordinator-'serendipity'
- Reducing isolation
- Increasing socialisation
- Signposting to support -Community Access (IAG) team
- Consultation forums for AH-CEO/Area managers attending groups
- Ideas formed into reality-singles group/employment/steering group/subgroups
- Valued by councils and local organisations-support/free goods and services

Successes continued



- 190 Adults who have autism attended at least 1 social group
- 103 adults who have autism attending groups regularly (attending 5 or more groups)
- 13 groups established that meet regularly, other groups have formed
- 17 volunteer group facilitators currently active, 10 who have autism



Quotes from group members

I enjoy being able to talk about things and being listened to and finding out how some have similar ideas and feelings.

The only people I see apart from my daughter and granddaughter is the people at the social group. It helps greatly.

I like that I get to spend time with others who have autism, knowing that others go through the same things that you do.

I enjoy everything about the groups – the people, the venues, the ability to socialise and to make new friends.

Being wheelchair bound, I like this group because it has easy access and I enjoy the diversity of people and subjects of conversation.

Innovation and Modernisation

Attendees of the groups have been involved in AH Projects:-

- Employment Pathway project
- Wellbeing Advice Partnership project
- Autism Alert APP
- Criminal Justice System
- Arts
- Fundraising
- Experts by experience trainers

Steering group set up and established to ensure representatives from the groups have an influence on the running of Autism Hampshire

What we have learned

- Locality is important
- Proved that socialising is important and much wanted
- Flexible person centred approach to volunteer recruitment
- Empowering all group members to take some ownership of their group
- Allowing attendees to get more involved in their interests
- Diversity in attendees – race, sexuality, gender, background, values
- Positive impact in all areas of their lives

Next Steps



- Financially self-sustaining by being involved of the running of social enterprises
- Development of groups in more areas of Hampshire, in particular East Hampshire and Isle of Wight
- Groups for 16-30 year olds, which run alongside and feed into the generic groups
- A wider variety of special interest groups, for example an autism awareness raising group
- Development of peer support opportunities
- Formalising the communication network which has evolved, to guide innovation and modernisation of services



Further information on Autism Hampshire and what we do.



<https://www.autismhampshire.org.uk/>



[Series and play for the Facebook page](#)

Any Questions?