



# 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

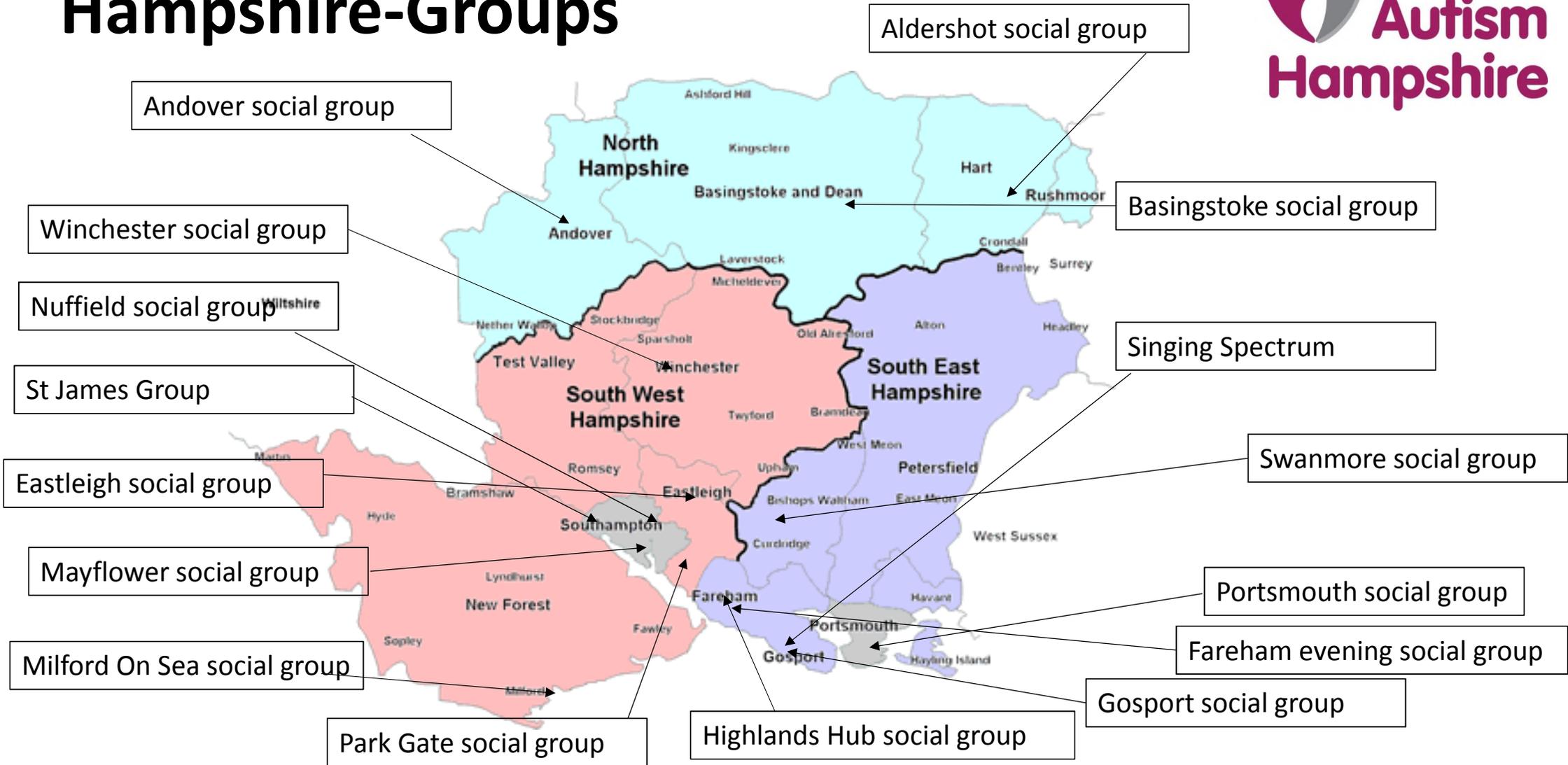
- Contrary to belief people on the autistic spectrum like socialising
- Strict group rules, times and days aren't necessarily overly important
- There's no set type of venue that suits
- There's a huge variety of things that people want to do and have interests in

# 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.



The screenshot shows the homepage of the Autism Hampshire website. At the top left is the Autism Hampshire logo. To its right are social media icons for Twitter and Facebook, and a search bar with a "Go" button. Below these are two blue buttons: "Local Autism Directory" (with subtext "Local events, groups, and services listed online") and "Message Board" (with subtext "Join our online community"). A navigation menu includes links for Home, About Us, About Autism, News, How we can help, Get Involved, Jobs, Contact Us, Professional Info, and Donate. The main content area features a large "Welcome to Autism Hampshire" heading, followed by a sub-heading "Creating opportunities, challenging perceptions, enhancing choice and providing high quality services." Below this is a link to "more information". To the right are four colored boxes: "About Autism Hampshire" (purple), "Specialist Mentoring Service" (green), "Services for Adults" (blue), and "Information and Advice" (orange). Each box contains a brief description and a "Find out more..." link.

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

The screenshot shows the Facebook page for Autism Hampshire. The page header includes the name "Autism Hampshire" and the profile picture. The main content is a photo of five women wearing festive Christmas hats and clothing, with the text "Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to you from all the team at Autism Hampshire." Below the photo are interaction buttons for "Liked", "Following", "Share", and "Send Message". The page also shows a status update area with a "Write something on this Page..." prompt, and a "Photos" section. On the right side, there is a "Community" section for "Charity in Fareham" with a 4.6 star rating and a link to "Invite your friends to like this Page".

[Screenshot of Facebook page](#)



**Any Questions?**