

# COALITION NEWS



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now! We can't  
wait to see you!  
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# WELCOME FROM CLARE

Dear Coalition members,

Welcome to the autumn edition of Coalition News!

I am sure you will enjoy reading about some of the activities that members have been involved in over the last few months: what a busy (and hot!) summer we have all had.

We have seen members involved with all manner of co-production and involvement with Surrey County Council and local NHS teams as well as campaigning work driven by our members, such as work focused on improving the Wheelchair Service in Surrey.



Two particular highlights of the last few months for me, were the Access For All action day in Dorking (page 16) and The Get More Active Get Together with Sailability (page 20).

A 'lowlight' of the last few months has been the awful accounts we are hearing from people about how the cost-of-living crisis is affecting them. Spiralling costs are having a disproportionate impact on Disabled people. We are feeding into national campaigns (run by Disability Rights UK and Inclusion London) to make sure Coalition members have their voices heard at a national level. More locally, we have been distributing the Household Support Fund, and Vodafone sim cards with a 6-month free data package. We will be continuing to work hard to find sources of direct support for our members over the coming months.

Some members have shared some great cost-of-living savings ideas with us and we are going to compile all of these into a guide – so far we have information on the cost savings of changing to LED bulbs, the energy efficiency of slow cookers and a guide to 'smart price' products and savings. Please do get in touch with us to share your tips with other members, or to tell us one thing we could do to help you with the cost-of-living crisis.

As always, thank you for all your support, for getting involved and making sure that our voices are heard. It is an incredibly difficult time for so many, and supporting each other has never been more important.

With very best wishes, Clare



# NEWS!

## The BIG Coalition Catch-up!

Friday  
14th October

It's been a while since we have been able to get together for a big catch up! There will be plenty of tea and cake, a good line up of speakers and, of course, good company. Sign up on the links below or call the office to book your place!

[Members registration](#) or [Professionals registration](#)

### Parking at Aldi!

One of our members contacted us regarding a parking fine they received at Aldi for staying in the car park for about 7 minutes longer than the 60-minute time limit. We contacted Aldi about this. Following further discussions, Aldi have agreed to make a national change to their policy. Disabled people can send them a photo of their blue badge and they will register them with parking eye for 3 hours parking rather than one! We are delighted at this news, but advise you check with the store you use before parking for more than an hour (and please note that you should register your blue badge with Aldi and parking eye in advance of your visit). If we receive further updates on this, we will let you know.



## Increase in the cost of living

We're so pleased that so many of you were able to apply for some financial support with your energy or food bills from the Household Support Fund. We understand that the increase in living costs is of ongoing concern for our members. If you have any ideas on how we can help, please do get in touch at [info@surreycoalition.org.uk](mailto:info@surreycoalition.org.uk). In the meantime, we're pulling together as many different resources and as much information as we can to share with you over the coming weeks.

## New Website Coming Soon!

Behind the scenes, we're busy developing a new website that'll be launched at our AGM event in October.

Thanks so much to everybody who's been involved so far with providing suggestions and testing support. If anybody else would like to get involved, please contact Nikki at [nikki.roberts@surreycoalition.org.uk](mailto:nikki.roberts@surreycoalition.org.uk).





# Meet Naomi!

Hello!

I'm Naomi and have joined the Surrey Coalition as a full-time Technology Trainer. I have worked in many Special Educational Needs (SEN) schools around Surrey, as well as working as a carer/personal assistant, so helping people is something that I find very rewarding.

I believe that my patient and caring personality will stand me in good stead to empower our Tech Members to use technology to help them in their everyday lives.

When I am not busy working, I love to be in the great outdoors and exploring new places. I am passionate about health and wellbeing, and often practice yoga to relax. I love musical theatre and I started online singing lessons during the Covid-19 pandemic. I am also a keen baker and have recently needed to develop my skills making allergy-friendly recipes, which my family also enjoy! And speaking of family, I adore spending time with my nieces and nephews.







# Meet Erhan!

Hello everyone!

My name is Erhan and I am a Tech to Community Connect Area Coordinator. I started with The Coalition in August 2022, looking to embark on a journey that helps share and educate about the wonders of technological development. The digital world is fast moving and there are many innovations that can have a positive impact on our lives, which is something everyone should have access to.

I live in the Epsom area, and have a mixed breed, rescue dog named Cosmo (extremely shy, but a gentle soul).

My passions in life include the progression of game development and cooking (though I am no MasterChef!).

Stay up to date with us!

As well as our quarterly newsletters, we send out a weekly update email to everybody that wishes to receive it. Please make sure we have your email address so that you don't miss out or become a member for free to receive all of our updates!





## Meet Kirsty!

Hi! I'm Kirsty, one of the Trainee Peer Researchers at The Coalition.

I recently completed my undergraduate degree in Psychology & Counselling. In my final year, I conducted a research project into how support can be offered to individuals in interactions about mental health.

Within The Coalition, I am working on a project which explores how admissions to hospital for mental health can be avoided, and how people can be discharged sooner. We will be learning from individuals with lived experience of admission, or experience of caring for someone who has been admitted.

In my free time, I enjoy being involved in local theatre and music events and exploring new places around London.

## Contact Us!

Want to get in touch? All of our contact details are listed at the end of this issue





## Meet Alex!

I am delighted to join Surrey Coalition of Disabled People as a Lead Peer Researcher.

I am currently studying a part-time PhD at Aberystwyth University, which focuses on residential crisis houses. Crisis houses offer intensive, short-term support to help individuals manage a mental health crisis in a residential setting.

Previously, I taught at SOAS University of London and the University of Chichester, and worked as a research assistant at Aberystwyth University and the University of Virginia.

### Inpatient Mental Health Services Research

Over the last couple of months, our Peer Researchers, Alex and Kirsty, have been working on a research project looking at admissions to and discharge from mental health hospitals. They created a survey which has generated some valuable data and insights into service user, carer, and mental healthcare worker experiences of admission and discharge. They have also been holding follow-up conversations with individuals to gather more in-depth data about how admissions could be reduced and how discharges can be improved. To view their progress with the report and to stay updated, visit their blog and vlog page at: <https://www.imhnsurrey.com/blog> and search #InAndOutProject on social media!





## Meet Fiona!

Hello I'm Fiona and I'm really excited to take on the role of FoCUS Involvement Coordinator.

I have an arts and culture background, and have worked with a wide range of community groups, using creativity to improve wellbeing and help elevate unheard voices. This can be anything from crafts to movement or music to writing.

I truly believe that everyone is creative and that we all need and deserve the opportunity to create. I'd love to incorporate my love of arts and culture into future FoCUS groups across the county, and hope to meet some of you there!

Do you use any of the Surrey and Borders Partnership Trust's services?

Do you care for someone who uses our services?

Join our Forum of Carers and people who Use our Services (FoCUS) as one way of having your say about the way services are run and help us improve services. Contact Fiona if you're interested in getting involved.



# TECHNOLOGY UPDATE

The weather has been exceptionally hot this summer, but it hasn't slowed our Technology Team down, we have been as busy as always!

In May we organised a volunteers' training session for employees of Woking Borough Council. A group of 15 wonderful people expressed their wish to become Tech Angels. Sylwia, Technology Lead, and Caroline, Volunteer Lead, spent a day providing them with all the necessary training.

The session was such a success that we have another one scheduled for September!



Back in June, we organised a trip to Denbies Wine Estate in Dorking to show appreciation for our wonderful volunteer Tech Angels. The train trip around the vineyard was enjoyed by everybody! A big thank you to all of our wonderful Tech Angels!







We are looking into expanding our technology service. We have been talking with the Technology Enabled Care team from Woking Borough Council regarding setting up a collaboration to provide equipment to care homes, which will help people to live independent lives.

The team visited our office demo suite to learn about the current technology that's available to help people live independently.

While we were all together, we thought it might be fun to try and spell the word 'technology' with our arms - The photo above, shows our attempt, We'll let you decide how successful we were!

## Get in touch!

If you don't have access to the internet or feel a bit scared of technology and don't know where to start, get in touch and we will be more than happy to help you, support you and walk you through it step by step.

If you have some IT knowledge and a couple of free hours a week to spare, you could become a volunteer Tech Angel and help people who need you!



What goes around comes around, as they say, and I would love to mention here two wonderful people who wanted to show their gratitude to The Coalition and Tech to Community Connect Project.

Our Tech Member, Vivienne, has generously donated a substantial amount of money to buy smart phones for people who need them – thank you so much, Vivienne!

I also would like to mention our customer services manager from Curry's, Ben Harris, who has been relentless in helping us to get the best price for our tablets. Ben and his manager have also very generously personally donated a tablet each to the project.

And finally, continuing to share the good vibes, here's a quote from one of our Tech Members below.

"Thank you for the training at Merrow Methodist Church this Wednesday. I found it extremely useful and will use this, as well as your very useful resources, to help my mother use the tablet that we now have on loan from you.

As someone who has had to learn digital skills on the job, it was lovely to have some training.

Alex - thank you for the great training. It was always delivered with patience! After 2 years of lockdown it was great too to be back in a community space and I think what you do is marvellous".



# INDEPENDENT MENTAL HEALTH NETWORK (IMHN)



Our members voted in our annual elections for the voluntary roles of Chair and Vice-Chair of the Network and the results were announced at our July meeting. We are very excited to announce the new IMHN Chair will be Megan Siarey and Vice Chair will be David Muir!

Thank you to everyone who participated and voted. Our staff team look forward to working with them both next year.

The IMHN held a highly enjoyable coffee morning at a Surrey -based supported accommodation for mental health and learning disabilities. Our team enjoyed meeting the residents and hearing their experiences of services in Surrey. There were fascinating discussions around the differences between mental health hospitals in the area and the importance of good hospital discharge for a successful recovery.

Salem has continued his work with Surrey's minority communities, recently focusing on engaging with different Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities throughout the county. He provides education and awareness around mental health and also listens to people's experiences of using mental health services.

## Surrey and Borders Partnership (SABP) Our Strategy project

Over the past few months, Megan, Project Officer, has continued engagement around the content of the strategy with the IMHN mental health stakeholder groups; SABP; FoCUS groups; Surrey Minority Ethnic Forum stakeholders; and stakeholders from Surrey's Nepalese community. Young adults are also providing feedback on what they would like to see from Surrey and Borders Partnership services over the next five years.

A series of video blogs explaining the Our Strategy work are available to watch on the IMHN blog. Blog | Surrey & North East Hampshire Independent Mental Health Network ([imhnsurrey.com](http://imhnsurrey.com))



## We want to hear from you!

The Independent Mental Health Network wants to hear your views about Surrey's mental health service provision. To create positive change within Surrey for mental health, we need to hear from as many people as possible about their experiences of using services or caring for someone who does. We want to hear any experience good or bad, but this month are particularly keen to hear from people who:

- Have experienced a lengthy stay in A&E under police detention.
- Have a history of mental ill-health and drug or alcohol use. We are looking for people to provide feedback on plans for a specific counselling service that is able to offer short, medium and longer-term dual diagnosis counselling.
- Have been in a mental health hospital since 2017, and were a Surrey resident at the time.

If you feel you fit into one or more of the descriptions above please email [guy on Guy.Hill@surreycoalition.org.uk](mailto:Guy.Hill@surreycoalition.org.uk).

## New hospitals programme

Wendy, Project Officer, has been gathering views about SABP's plan to build a new mental health hospital to replace the Abraham Cowley Unit, Chertsey, at numerous meetings and events over the last couple of months. A meeting of the Lived Experience Group took place to update people who use SABP's services and their families and carers about progress on the work of the new hospitals programme.

Wendy also provided evidence from talking to service users within the LGBTQIA+ community to SABP regarding the adequate and appropriate provision of hospital bedrooms for trans and non-binary individuals.



# GET INVOLVED



## Special Interest Groups

**Hard of Hearing Forum (HOH)** – Following the HOH meeting in June we sent a letter to Surrey Heartlands Complaints team regarding the lack of ear wax removal services in Surrey. We met with a representative from Surrey Heartlands to discuss our concerns. We will update you on our progress.

**Surrey Vision Action Group (SVAG)** – The SVAG has two new co-chairs, Jane Sellers and Luke Tye. At the July meeting, the group discussed the RNIB REACT system and whether people would like to see this introduced in Surrey. The REACT system reads out real-time passenger information at bus stops, triggered by a fob linking to the passenger information signs. We heard from someone who works for West Sussex Council as they already have this system and were able to give us an idea of the pros and cons. A representative from SCC transport was also at the meeting and is now following up on this. We hope to have an update on this by the time the SVAG meets again in October.

## Physical Disability and Sensory Impairment (PDSI) Strategy for Surrey

A new draft PDSI Strategy plans how Surrey County Council (SCC) will support adults with a disability, looking at how support needs change and develop to facilitate Disabled people to fulfil their aspirations. The strategy can be found on the [website](#) along with an easy read overview of the strategy. SCC would like you to review the strategy and send any comments by 18th September to: [psd.strategy@surreycc.gov.uk](mailto:psd.strategy@surreycc.gov.uk) or

Phone: 0300 200 1005

SMS: 07527 182 861



## Access All Areas!

Following the success of the Let's Hear visits, where some of our members who use hearing aids got together to check loop systems in shops, cafes, and other venues, we set up an Access All Areas visit for Wednesday 7th September in Dorking. A group of Coalition members met to check access in shops and cafes etc.

We plan to hold an Access all Areas Day quarterly in a different area of Surrey. If you would be interested in taking part in the day, please contact the Involvement team on [Involvement@surreycoalition.org.uk](mailto:Involvement@surreycoalition.org.uk)

## NEW! Books Beyond Words

Books Beyond Words are award-winning wordless picture stories covering a variety of topics on feelings and experiences people may have in their life.

Beyond Words say that "Each story is co-created with, and for, people who find pictures easier to understand than words"

Charlotte, our Involvement Officer, has been trained to run a new group with Coalition members.

We hope that our new book club, starting this Autumn, will be a place for people who don't normally use books to enjoy stories together. If you are interested in attending, or helping to set up the group, please contact Charlotte by emailing [Charlotte.Payne@surreycoalition.org.uk](mailto:Charlotte.Payne@surreycoalition.org.uk) or by phone/SMS on 07492 249 513.





## Disability Empowerment Networks (DENS)

DENS – The DENS groups will meet in September. All DENS will discuss access to GP appointments following some concerns raised by members. All feedback will be passed on to Surrey Heartlands. The Surrey wide DENS group will focus on adaptations, home improvement and handyman schemes. Representatives from a number of Districts and Boroughs will be in attendance. All DENS members are welcome to attend this meeting.

The East DENS will meet in person in September at YMCA East Surrey. We hope that Metro bus will have a bus for people to try (to be confirmed at time of writing!) and members will be able to have a short tour of the YMCA and its facilities. The meeting will also be available online via Zoom for those unable to attend in person.

The Coalition sent a letter to Surrey County Council regarding concerns over Community Transport in Surrey following discussions at DENS groups. In response to this, Councillor Matt Furniss has offered to set up a Community Transport Forum. We do not have any further details at present, but if you would like to register your interest in attending the forum or join your local DENS group please contact the Involvement Team on [involvement@surreycoalition.org.uk](mailto:involvement@surreycoalition.org.uk)

## Social Activities

We continue to offer our social programme and have at least one virtual social activity a day for our members. Activities include virtual cafes, craft group, glee club, book chat and a quiz. If you would like to join any of the activities, please contact the Involvement Team for the joining details. Members of our book chat group have been sharing their own poems which we hope to share with you all soon.



## Out and About!

The Coalition have been out and about a lot. We had a stall at the Cranleigh Show in June, which was a fun event! Following a social media post of Angie, our Engagement Officer, meeting the Lion at the Cranleigh show, she was asked to do a small feature on her role at The Coalition for the local newspaper.

Belfry centre – Our Involvement Team and Tech to Community Connect Team had a stall in the Belfry Centre and spoke to lots of people about the Coalition and what we can offer. The team had an enjoyable day and managed to sign up several new members. We hope to visit another shopping centre in Surrey soon. Please look out for and us and come and say hello!

Surrey Pride – The Coalition had a stall at Surrey Pride. It was great to be able to attend the event and meet lots of new people!

## Coming Up!

Free digital skills workshop in Leatherhead.

Wednesday 21st September, 2-4 pm, Fairfield Centre, Leret Way, Leatherhead, KT22 8AH.

The workshop has been organised by one of our members in conjunction with staff at Mole Valley District Council. There will be a series of guest speakers giving advice and guidance, after which there will be the opportunity to attend stalls, ask further questions and register interest in local digital and IT support services. No need to book, just turn up if you'd like to attend!





## Vocational Skills Programmes

Work continues on developing branding and a microsite for our vocational skills programmes in Surrey. The vocational skills programme will be a one stop shop for anybody looking to start or return to employment.

A survey was sent out to both providers and our members to decide on a name – as vocational skills programmes did not mean much to everyone. We are really pleased to tell you that we all agreed on Skill Up Surrey.

Our small working group have met to discuss what they want from the brand and the website. Work on this has already begun and the working group will meet once a month to view progress and make decisions. We look forward to showing you the final designs in the next Coalition News!

## New! Young Adults Group

We have set a date for our group for young Disabled adults aged 18 – 25 to meet up. The group will meet on the last Monday of each month starting on Monday 26th September at 7pm at YMCA East Surrey. The first group will focus on making connections and getting to know each other. If you are a young adult and would like to attend the group, please contact Charlotte on [involvement@surreycoalition.org.uk](mailto:involvement@surreycoalition.org.uk)

# Physical Activity News



## Sailability - Get More Active Get Together

Our latest Get More Active Get Together was in the beautiful surroundings of Papercourt Sailing Club. Having spent most of the week beforehand closely watching a very changeable weather forecast, we were pleased to see relatively clear skies that morning!

When we arrived at the club, it was clear that the Sailability session was very popular. We weren't the only group there. There were plenty of people registering and getting ready to sail. As it was our first visit, it took a little time to register but our friendly volunteers promised that for future visits we would just need to quickly sign in.

Our group were mostly novices at sailing but we were all keen to get out onto the water. Despite closely watching the weather forecast for rain, one thing we hadn't considered was the wind and unfortunately there was none! Of course, without wind, one cannot sail! However, Papercourt have a fully accessible motorised "Wheels on Water" boat and we were told that everyone could take it in turns to go out in this boat.

While we were waiting, we chatted over a cup of tea and some delicious home made cakes. While chatting the wind started to increase – hurrah!

The volunteers took us through the options available. We could go out on the double helmed access dinghies, the crabber "Lady Jay" or the Wheels on Water or WoW boat.

For the access dinghies, each sailor was paired up with an experienced volunteer who could also teach the basics of sailing and gave us the chance to have a go ourselves.





The crabber was a larger and more stable vessel that could take 6 people at a time. The WoW boat also took 6 people and had a sort of “low loader” access which meant that you could walk or wheel straight onto the boat.

Chris and Christine were first out in a group on the Lady Jay, shortly followed by Steve and Angie who went out with volunteer sailors on the access dinghies. Safety was paramount and anyone going on a boat was fitted with a life jacket, with anyone going near the jetty to assist also having to wear a buoyancy aid. Hoists are available to transfer into the boats and in no time the first of our members were out on the water shortly followed by the first group of 6 on the WoW boat.

There is no pressure to go out on the water at Sailability. Anyone is welcome to watch and see what it is all about before making up their mind. Having the time to decide meant that all of our members felt comfortable and prepared for their trip and every single person who came along ended up going out on the boat. It was very clear that everyone was enjoying themselves too – lots of laughter, happy chatter and smiles.

If you would like to visit Papercourt and try out sailing for yourself there is no need to book – just turn up during one of the session times. All sessions are run by volunteers and are free of charge. Sessions are run on the 1st, 3rd and 5th (if there is one) Friday of the month from April through to October. Sailing is from 1.30pm until 4pm. You can check dates on Papercourt’s website at [www.papercourt-sc.org.uk/sailability](http://www.papercourt-sc.org.uk/sailability)

Here's what our members that attended the event had to say!

“That was lovely – it was so peaceful on the water”

“I definitely want to go sailing again”

“I absolutely loved that”

“I’ve not been out for ages – it was really lovely to get out”



## Active Buddies

We're pleased to have matched our first active buddies with a volunteer.

The Active Buddies project provides support for Disabled people and those living with long-term health conditions.

Our friendly Active Buddies support you to attend activities in your community. For example, this could be attending a community gardening project together or helping with transport to the local swimming pool, whatever works best for you.

To find out more about Active Buddies - either to volunteer or to sign up for support, please email: [getactive@surreycoalition.org.uk](mailto:getactive@surreycoalition.org.uk) or Phone/text: 07434 865062

### Next Get More Active Get Togethers

Autumn Colours walk and wheels. Taking place in various locations across the county in October. For more information, please contact Katy at [katy.hubbard@surreycoalition.org.uk](mailto:katy.hubbard@surreycoalition.org.uk) or find out more at the virtual cafe on Fridays



# WEEKLY EVENTS

The following events are run every week and are free of charge. We look forward to seeing you there!

DAY	TIME	ACTIVITY
Every Monday	11am - 12 pm	Virtual Cafe
Every Tuesday	12pm - 1pm	Craft Club
Every Tuesday	4pm - 5pm	Glee Club
Every Wednesday	2.30pm - 3.30pm	Book Chat
Every Thursday	2.30pm - 3.30pm	Quiz
Every Friday	11.30am - 12.30pm	Virtual Café and Get More Active discussion group

# EVENTS SEPTEMBER

DATE	TIME	ACTIVITY
Monday 5th September	1pm - 2.30pm	North DENS
Monday 5th September	1pm - 3pm	East and Mid FoCUS
Wednesday 7th September	1pm - 3pm	SW FoCUS
Thursday 8th September	1pm - 2.30pm	West FoCUS
Monday 12th September	1pm - 3pm	NW FoCUS
Monday 12th September	6pm - 7.30pm	Surrey wide DENS
Wednesday 14th September	10.30am - 12pm	South West DENS
Monday 19th September	10am - 11.30am	East DENS
Thursday 22nd September	10.30am - 12pm	Hard of Hearing Forum
Friday 23rd September	1pm - 3pm	IMHN Coordinating Group Meeting
Monday 26th September	7pm - 8.30pm	Young Adults Social Group



# EVENTS OCTOBER

<b>DATE</b>	<b>TIME</b>	<b>ACTIVITY</b>
Monday 3rd October	1pm - 3pm	East and Mid Focus
Thursday 6th October	10am - 11am	Mid & East Mental Health Stakeholder Group
Thursday 6th October	6pm - 7.30pm	Surrey Wide FoCUS
Monday 10th October	1pm - 3pm	NW FoCUS
Wednesday 12th October	10am - 11am	NW Mental Health Stakeholder Group
Thursday 13th October	1pm - 3pm	West FoCUS
Friday 14th October	ALL DAY	The Big Coalition Catch Up/AGM
Thursday 20th October	10.30am - 12.30pm	Surrey Vision Action Group
Monday 24th October	7pm - 8.30pm	Young Adults Social Group
Thursday 27th October	1.30pm - 3.30pm	Adult Social Care Mental Health Reference Group

# EVENTS NOVEMBER

DATE	TIME	ACTIVITY
Monday 7th November	TBC	North DENS
Tuesday 8th November	1.45pm - 4pm	FoCUS Committee
Monday 14th November	6pm - 7.30pm	Surrey Wide DENS
Tuesday 15th November	10.30am - 12.30pm	Long Term Neurological Conditions group
Monday 21st November	1pm – 2:30pm	East DENS
Wednesday 23rd November	10.30am - 12pm	South West DENS
Friday 25th November	4pm - 5pm	IMHN Coordinating Group Meeting
Monday 28th November	7pm - 8.30pm	Young Adults Social Group

**Key:**

IMHN: Independent Mental Health Network

FoCUS: Forum of Carers and people who Use our Services (this is a forum for people who use, or have used, or care for someone who has used, services from Surrey and Borders NHS Partnership Trust).

DENS: Disability Empowerment Network





## We always love to hear from you!

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[www.surreycoalition.org.uk](http://www.surreycoalition.org.uk)

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