

Winter Edition December 2024

Issue Number 83

Coalition News



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We have lots of support available for our members for the winter period. The Household Support Fund is open again. You can apply for funding for your household to help with food or energy bills.

We can also help you with accessing food banks, help save you money on your energy bills, provide you with a warm pack - full of essential items to keep you toasty and we also have some air fryers and microwaves available too.

More information on pages 4,5 and 6.

Letter From Nikki

Happy New Year! It's 2025, a new year, an opportunity to take stock and think about the year ahead.

We're now entering our 2nd year as a registered charity. Prior to December 2023 we were a not for profit company which didn't give us the fundraising opportunities that a charity can benefit from. Throughout 2024, we have started to build our charity profile. Quite a lot of this work has been taking place behind the scenes - making sure we have the right processes and governance in place to enable us to thrive!

However, we have started to see the impact of our charity status externally too. For the first time ever, we have secured some National Lottery funding to run our mental health wellbeing programme. We have set up Easy fundraising - so when you shop online, a small donation comes to us at no cost to you [Support a Good Cause | Easyfundraising](#) and we have a couple of fundraising events planned!

We know that the early months of the year can be really tough for our members. This year, we have put together a really good selection of support for our members to help them through these tricky months. There's more information on the support available in this issue but flasks, blankets, electrical appliances, support to access food banks and supermarket and energy vouchers are some of the things that you can access. Please do get in touch with us either via email, phone or SMS if we can help you over the Winter months.

Finally, we're busy planning our activities for the coming year. All of the favourites will of course continue - the online quiz, virtual cafes and glee club! We'll also be organising some Get More Active activities again to support you with trying something new! Our mental health team will also be running some wellbeing events - Forest bathing was a firm favourite last year. Do get involved, we love to see you.

Best wishes to you all for 2025!

Nikki

Ps. Our Tech Angels are still on hand to help with your technology needs. They're wonderful and provide fantastic one to one digital skills support in people's homes.

Cost of Living Support

We know that the cost of living crisis is really having an impact on our members. We have been busy working behind the scenes to try and put in place some support for our members to help them through this tricky time. Here's how we can help.

Please note: Cost of Living Support/grants are very popular and can take up to 2 weeks to receive. These are not for immediate help. We are unable to check the status of your application until 2 weeks has passed.

Food Access Support

Access to Food provides funding to people struggling with the cost of living who may also have difficulty, due to disability or long-term health condition, getting to their local food bank. The scheme covers the cost of a taxi to a local food bank.

[Access to Food – Surrey Coalition of Disabled People](#)

Fuel Vouchers

As part of a new project funded by Surrey County Council (SCC) we are able to allocate £49 fuel vouchers to our members who need extra support with high fuel bills. If you would like to request a voucher please contact the Involvement team on Involvement@surreycoalition.org.uk Please note, we can only allocate one voucher per household.

Warm packs

During the colder months it can be difficult to stay warm. We can send you a warm pack free of charge to help keep you warm. The warm packs contain a woolly hat, blanket, pair of gloves, pair of socks, a snood and a flask. You can order via the involvement team, Involvement@surreycoalition.org.uk. A photo of what is included in the warm pack is below



Cost of Living Support



Energy efficient appliances

We can also supply energy efficient appliances for those in need. We can offer microwaves or air fryers to those without a means of cooking. If you would benefit from an energy efficient appliance, please contact the Involvement Team and we can arrange this for you. Please note the appliances will be delivered by a third-party company so you would need to give us permission to share your address with them.

Help with your Energy Bills

We now have a member of staff dedicated to helping you save money on your energy bills. We can support you in the following ways -

Telephone or video call appointments to assist with:

- Joining the Priority Services Register (PSR)
- Signing up for a Home Energy Advice Taskforce (HEAT) Survey, or using the Surrey Energy Advice Tool (SEAT)
- Help with energy grant applications
- Signing up for pension credit (this will give you automatic eligibility for the Winter Fuel Allowance)
- Referrals to boiler servicing for Reigate and Banstead residents only

If you would like to book an appointment for a telephone or video call please email involvement@surreycoalition.org.uk and a member of staff will be in touch to arrange support.

Alternatively, please call or text 0745 4759 684 and leave your name, a contact telephone number and a brief message outlining the support you require.

Further information about the services listed are on the next page.

Cost of Living Support

Priority Services Registers (PSR)

The Priority Services Register (PSR) is a free UK wide service which provides extra advice and support, including when there's an interruption to your electricity, gas or water supply. All customers with disabilities are eligible to register on to the PSR.

HEAT Surveys

In conjunction with Zero Carbon, nearly 70 Energy Champions from community groups across Surrey have trained to become the Home Energy Advice Taskforce (HEAT). We can refer you to them for a free thermal energy survey and personalised support.

SEAT

If you are not quite ready to sign up for an in-home HEAT survey, we can assist you to go through the Surrey Energy Advice Tool (SEAT) by putting in your information and finding out what support and grants may be available for you to apply for either independently, or with our assistance.

Grant Application Support

Following a HEAT survey or using the SEAT tool, you may be presented with a list of energy grants that you can apply for. We can support you in completing these applications.

Pension Credit Support

Applications for Pension Credit are made online. We can offer support by helping you to complete the forms, or by referring you to Age UK who have a Surrey specific phone line for queries around the pension credit application form and eligibility.

The details are:

Age UK Surrey

Telephone number: 01483 503414

Text: 07593 139560

Boiler servicing for Reigate and Banstead residents only

We know that many households are unable to afford annual boiler servicing, leading to an increased risk of heating equipment failing. Surrey County Council are supporting residents to ensure their homes are both safe and warm this winter. Surrey County Council is piloting a boiler safety and servicing scheme this winter for Reigate and Banstead households, and we are now able to refer you directly for this scheme.

Meet Megan



I am delighted to join Surrey Coalition of Disabled People as an Involvement Officer, and am excited to create positive change through the development of our peer advocacy support group, as well as supporting those worst affected by the cost of living crisis to access the services they need.

Outside of work, I enjoy volunteering as an Assistance Dog Trainer with Dog A.I.D (Assistance In Disability), and taking part in adaptive/disability sports including rifle shooting, sit-ski, swimming, hiking, cycling, golf, water sports and more! I am always up for a challenge and love trying new things with my life-changing Guide, Disability Assistance & Medical Alert Dog by my side.

Mental Health Update



Independent Mental Health Network (IMHN)

The IMHN held their Coordinating meeting and Stakeholder meetings over the last couple of months with a new Surrey County Council housing protocol and the changes to policing as a couple of the topics discussed.

We also said goodbye to our commissioner Neil Manrai who is moving on from Surrey Heartlands, he has been a supporter of the IMHN over the last few years so we will miss him greatly.

Wellbeing Events

In September, the Independent Mental Health Network invited it's members to join staff at Box Hill Village Hall for a relaxed coffee morning and a free session of accessible yoga. We had a great morning spending time socially with our members getting to know them better, and hearing about how wellbeing activities such as yoga help their mental health. The yoga session was gentle and fully accessible to all abilities but still left every one feeling well stretched and relaxed



Mental Health Update



We also held a meet up in December 'Mince Pie Madness coffee morning' at High Cross Church, Camberley. More wellbeing events to come in 2025. We'll keep you posted on dates and events!

FoCUS

Meetings have been going well over the last couple of months. Some of the themes and discussions we have been hearing recently from people who use mental health services and carers are around transitions from children's into adult services, combined physical & mental health care, support available to parent carers and service users, and Home Treatment Team experiences.

Jennie has also been working with commissioners and mental health hospitals to improve access to advocacy for in-patients in Farnham Road Hospital.

Thank you!

We wanted to say a massive thank you to two of our mental health team members who have moved on from the team in the last quarter. Salem and Megan have worked with us during the last three years making mental health more inclusive and accessible in Surrey. They both have done excellent work for the Coalition and their passion for the job was unmistakable! We have all enjoyed working with them and wish them the very best in their careers going forward.

The Independent Mental Health Network (IMHN) is a network of people (18 years +) that have lived experience of mental ill health or care for somebody with mental ill health. Join us! Contact Guy guy.hill@surreycoalition.org.uk or call/SMS the office number!

Get More Active Update



Coalition members were Getting More Active and raising funds for the Coalition by taking part in the Winter Wonderwheels series for the second time!

We had a team of 12 Coalition members and staff head to Dorney Lake near Windsor on the 1st of December. They took on the challenge of 5 or 10 kilometres of walking, wheeling or cycling around the lake. It was a very festive day with (fake!) snow, hot chocolate, mince pies, carol singers and plenty of tinsel!

Winter Wonderwheels also had an At Home event for those that cannot be at the in-person event and the Coalition had 3 members taking part. This challenge invites Disabled people from all over the world to take part in a virtual trip around the world; skiing in Norway, throwing snowballs in Japan and playing ice-hockey in Canada all whilst staying nice and warm at home! Participants can add up their miles in the way that suits them best and log the details online to help their team travel virtually around the world.

David M. chose to visit Windsor Great Park with his Active Buddy David S. David is a regular visitor to Windsor and enjoys wheeling around the lake and visiting the Cascade on his mobility scooter.

Well done David!





Pam enjoys riding an exercise bike at home. She finds it a fun and safe way to stay fit.

For the At Home Challenge Pam rode for a grand total of 2 hours and 35 minutes over 3 sessions! Her longest cycle was for an amazing 65 minutes in one go. Great cycling Pam!



Jean chose to complete her challenge by using her stairs to climb a virtual mountain - as there are 2 flights of stairs in Jean's house that's no mean feat!

Well done to Jean!

If you would like to sponsor our fantastic team members you can do so here: [Fundraiser - Winter Wonderwheels](#)

If you would like to join us at future Get More Active events please get in touch with Katy

Email: getactive@surreycoalition.org.uk

SMS/phone: 07434 865062

Involvement Update



Surrey Hills Project - Yasmin and 3 Coalition members visited Reigate Hill to look at access and suggest improvements that could be made using the Surrey Hills access fund. Members suggested a lot of improvements that could be made including the car park, braille menus for the café, seating and improved surfacing for a drop off point, contacting SES water to level out surfacing near their property, the provision of benches and advice on the accessible path which was dangerous to access to and from the roadside.

Growing Together - The Coalition has supported members to attend a bird watching event and a fungi fun session (learning about wild mushrooms but not eating them!).

Presentations - Yasmin presented at the Surrey Police Hate Crime Conference. Those present were particularly moved by the case study from one of our members with a visual impairment who was victim of a hate crime 3 times but was only believed when there were other witnesses.

Yasmin also presented to over 120 people from Guildford and Waverley on the issues faced by our members.

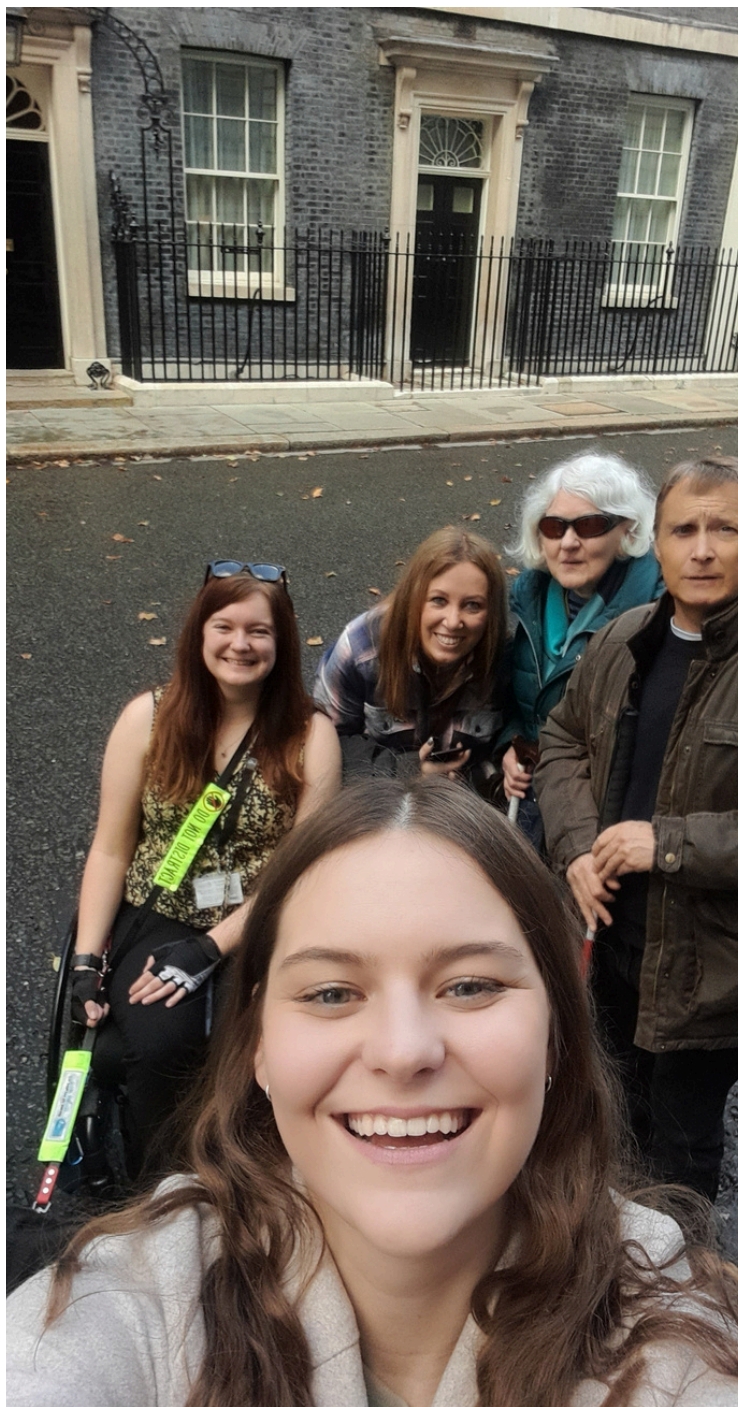
And finally, Yasmin presented to the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) on hate crime. Yasmin used an animation that Jasmine created to show some of the barriers that Disabled people face during the court process.

Membership of The Coalition is free - Join us by contacting involvement@surreycoalition.org.uk or calling/SMS the office

Peer Support Group - Megan has begun to hold peer support sessions every other Wednesday. The sessions are really good, and members are very welcome to get involved! Topics so far have included inclusive leisure, access to public transport and life hacks! If you have other topic ideas, let us know.

Energy project - Megan has been busy issuing energy vouchers, warm packs and has carried out energy advice sessions and supported people with pension credit applications.

Downing Street - Yasmin, Jasmine, Megan, 2 Coalition members and a Treloar's student went to Downing Street as part of the campaign against floating bus stops. Megan and Nikki had also attended an event at the House of Parliament the previous day to highlight the issues of floating bus stops to MPs.





Surrey County Council Cabinet meeting

Yasmin attended the SCC cabinet meeting at the end of October to give a 3-minute speech as to why an active travel scheme in Burpham that included a shared space (previously called a floating bus stop) should not go ahead. Yasmin was not allowed a right to reply but there were two speakers for the scheme and two against. Surrey County Council cabinet members took a vote on the proposals and 6 voted against whilst 3 were in favour.

However, the decision was called in and was put back to the cabinet on Tuesday 26th November. The cabinet agreed that the original decision still stood. This is really great news for our members.

Access to Food Project

We've just published an interim report on our Access to Food project. One of the key recommendations from this report is for all staff/volunteers at food banks to undertake disability awareness training. This is currently a major gap and could be leading low numbers of Disabled people accessing food banks.

Disabilities webinar for Frimley EDI Conference

Yasmin gave an hour-long presentation for the Frimley EDI conference. Yasmin told those attending about the Coalition and shared personal experience from members on barriers they had faced when accessing hospitals in Surrey.

Surrey Hills Symposium

Yasmin and Nikki attended the Surrey Hills symposium and were part of the information stall for the growing together project.

Accessible Information Standard NHS England Listening event

Coalition members submitted videos telling NHS England about how important the accessible information standard is to them.

Technology Update



We continue to assist Tech Members in Runnymede while also maintaining our regular activities in the other Surrey Boroughs. The drop-in sessions held at the Tesco Community Room in Addlestone have now concluded, during which we supported a total of 20 individuals across 12 sessions. Thanks to Runnymede Borough Council for this funding.

We were pleased to recruit a Tech Angel in Egham in October. Olha is a Ukrainian refugee and will be providing language translation assistance as well as technical support for our members in Runnymede.

We have started a new set of group sessions at The College of St Barnabas in Lingfield. The participants are primarily residents in their late 80s, many of whom are using touchscreen devices for the first time. These group sessions will be complemented by one-on-one support for individuals who may not thrive in a group setting.

Also this month in the East of Surrey we attended the Merstham Wellbeing Fair and an older persons group that meet at St Agatha's Hall in Oxted.

One of our Tech Angels, is conducting group sessions at Netherne on the Hill Cricket Club, a relatively remote and isolated village. Each week, he presents a different topic to the group, covering subjects such as copy and paste techniques, folder creation, and email attachments.



In Guildford, we are pleased to support the monthly Digital Café organised by the Community Wellbeing team at Guildford Borough Council. Our Tech Angel Will, facilitated the session in October, while our Tech Angel, Steve, will lead the upcoming session in November. This event takes place on the second Saturday of each month, in conjunction with the Repair Café, providing an opportunity for local residents to seek assistance with their enquiries.

We made additional efforts to increase our presence during October's Get Online week. We listed our events on the Good Things Foundation website and promoted on our social media. This outreach included:

- A drop in morning at Zero Carbon in Guildford High Street. We coincided with the Community Fridge support so it was very well attended.
- We ran an NHS app help workshop at Dorking surgery. They have now asked us to run two further workshops at their other surgeries at the end of the month.
- We linked up with Christians Against Poverty advice café in Epsom.
- We had our stand at Surrey Heartlands Health and Care Partnership Expo on 21st October, and we had a lot of interest from the attendees.
- On November 12th we attended the Surrey County Council TECH Engagement Day at Woodhatch. We remain actively engaged with this team throughout the implementation of their new Tech Enabled Care and Homes strategy.

At the end of November we attended 4 Action for Carers Fairs at their various hubs throughout Surrey.

Volunteer recruitment remains strong, with the majority of referrals coming from Voluntary Organisations or direct enquiries through our website.

All Tech Angels are currently engaged in an annual one-on-one catch-up call with the volunteering team. During these calls, we assess whether each volunteer is having a positive experience and encourage feedback on our processes for potential improvements. We recognise that volunteer retention is as crucial as recruitment. We currently have 31 active Tech Angels, who collectively average 14 visits to Tech Members each week.

The autumn edition of our newsletter was distributed to all Tech Angels in October. This issue provides them with further insights into our processes, including the registration of our Tech Members and their progression through the project until they are assigned to their respective volunteers.

16 Tech Angels and their partners joined us for a trip to Watts Gallery in Guildford. It was an enjoyable morning and our volunteers appreciated the opportunity to meet us and their fellow volunteers.

Exciting news! Kirsty, our new Tech Trainer joined us on 11th November. Welcome to the team Kirsty!



Hi, my name is Kirsty and I am a Technology Trainer at the Surrey Coalition. I am really excited to be working with the Coalition to empower others and to help them gain confidence in their independence.

Outside of work I am studying for my second degree as a psychology student, my first degree was in midwifery. When I get a bit of free time I enjoy reading crime thrillers and taking my two children on day trips out. Some of our favourite trips are to immersive, hands-on, experiences and this is an approach I enjoy bringing into my working life too. I believe learning should be enjoyable and I'm excited to make a difference in the lives of those I work with.

WEEKLY EVENTS

DAY	TIME	ACTIVITY
Every Monday	11am - 12pm	Virtual Café and craft discussion group
Every Tuesday	4pm - 5pm	Glee Club
Every other Wednesday	2:30pm - 3:30pm	Peer Support Group
Every Thursday	2:30pm - 3:30pm	Quiz
Every Friday	11:30am - 12:30pm	Virtual Café and Get More Active discussion group

Dates for your Diary

Our meetings are on zoom and in person as stated below.

For information about how to use Zoom conferencing for the first time, please check out our how-to guides on our website. If you would like some help, please do not hesitate to contact us and we can book a support session. The Zoom Links are available from the Involvement Team.

If you would like to join us in person, please let the involvement team know by email:

Involvement@surreycoalition.org.uk

EVENTS JANUARY

DATE	TIME	ACTIVITY
Tuesday 14th January	1pm - 2:30pm	Surrey-wide FoCUS, Astolat, Burpham
Thursday 16th January	1pm - 2:30pm	Surrey-wide FoCUS, Online

Monday 20th January	11am - 12pm	FoCUS Reps Meeting, Online
Friday 31st January	1pm - 3pm	IMHN Coordinating Group Meeting, Online

EVENTS FEBRUARY

DATE	TIME	ACTIVITY
Thursday 6th February	11am - 12pm	FoCUS Reps Meeting, Online
Friday 7th February	10:30am - 12pm	FoCUS Committee Meeting, Online
Wednesday 12th February	10am - 11am	NW Mental Health Stakeholder, Online
Thursday 13th February	10am - 11am	E&M Mental Health Stakeholder, Online

EVENTS MARCH

DATE	TIME	ACTIVITY
Monday 3rd March	12:30pm - 2pm	E&M and NW FoCUS, SABP HQ, Leatherhead + Online
Wednesday 5th March	12:30pm - 2pm	SW, West and North East Hants FoCUS, Theta, Frimley + Online
Friday 28th March	1pm - 3pm	IMHN Coordinating Group Meeting, Online



We always love to hear from you!

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Surrey Coalition of Disabled People
Astolat, Coniers Way,
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Get in touch today!