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Welcome



Dear Members,

I have to confess, this is a little delayed in making its way to you. Coalition life has been extremely hectic over the past few months. With the changes to the NHS - Surrey and Sussex have now merged, as well as the ongoing Local Government Review (LGR) we find ourselves in unprecedented times.

However, thanks to all of your support, our new 3 year strategy has been published and is on our website <https://surreycoalition.org.uk/news/the-next-chapter-in-our-story/> For those of you that receive your Coalition News by post, we have included a copy in the envelope for you!

As you'll read in this issue, we've had lots of different events going on for our members. Whether that's a cuppa with the mental health team, a spot of darts with the Get More Active team, taking part in a fundraising event or working with one of our wonderful tech angels. There's lots more to come over the Summer so keep a look out for updates on our weekly update or on our social media channels. Please do encourage others to join us, we've seen quite a few new faces recently and it's lovely to hear how much they are enjoying being part of The Coalition.

Finally, I wanted to thank you for all of your support as always. Our members are a truly lovely bunch and are always willing to help where they can. Our staff team are a wonderful team. I'm so proud to lead such a wonderful charity with members and staff that will go above and beyond for our community.

Hope to see you over the Summer, Nikki, CEO

Brian's Poem: We Are Here



Brian, one of our members, has written a wonderful poem about The Coalition and the positive impact our work is having on him and other Disabled people in Surrey, helping to ensure they are included in the community and that services are as accessible as possible. Give it a read!

We Are Here

We stand, we speak, we rise as one.

Voices raising battles won, not for pity not for pride, but for doors flung open wide.

Hands that reach. And minds that see, strength in every step, we free.

No shadows cast, no voice too small, where building change and going all.

From quiet rooms to public Light, we claim our place, we speak our right.

With courage, we and hearts that care, where the change already there,

Coalition strong, stand, we fight, for every hand, for every right, together we, with hope and grace, build a world that includes every face.

Not asking for more, just asking for fair, a seat at the table, a voice in the air.

To walk, to work, to learn, to lend, to plant a hope, to meet a need.

To share a laugh, to lend a hand, to stand together, side-by-side, not stand in the sand.

For every barrier we find a way, with courage kindness day by day.

So here we stand, bold and true the Surrey Coalition strong, not few, we didn't just to be seen, but to build a world that's fair and keen.

Where every voice, every dream, every fight, it's met with courage, day and night.

Disability? Not a wall, its strength, it's so, its power, it's mine.

And when we speak, the world leans in: this is the change.

This is where it begins.

Fundraising News

thank you!



It's been a busy time since my last update, and I would like to say a big thank you to everyone who has bought a raffle ticket, filled in an on-line survey or completed a sponsored walk/wheel, swim to raise money for the Coalition. Every penny allows us to keep offering our free services and support to Disabled People in Surrey

Fundraising surveys

Not another one, I hear you say! However, did you know that the data I collect from surveys and feedback provides the vital evidence I need for funding applications. For example, the results of our Heritage surveys is helping us make heritage sites more accessible for everyone! We are currently working with the Rural Life Living Museum, Guildford Museum and East Surrey museum, carrying out Access visits with our members and Disability Awareness Training for their staff and volunteers, which is making a real difference. Our next project is with Alice Holt Forest in Farnham, co-producing information on activities, using visual stories, allowing all visitors the opportunity to independently plan their visit. Your input really does make a difference!

Funding good news

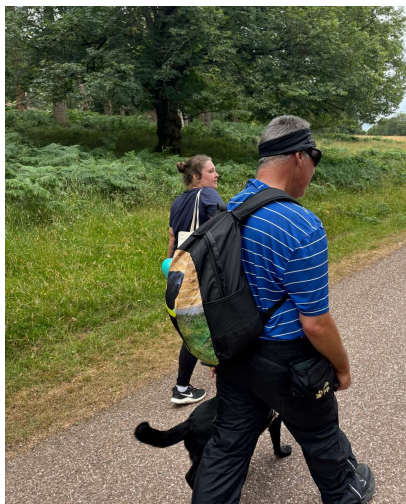
This year, we have been funded by the SES Water to continue running our fortnightly online Peer Support Groups, which are a vital space to talk about health concerns and hear speakers talk on interesting topics.

BUPA in Staines have funded us to run a series of fun wellbeing activities and Elmbridge Borough Council have funded our Tech Angels team to provide digital literacy training for the digitally isolated and vulnerable in Elmbridge.

The National Lottery have funded more of our 'Get More Active' activities and Thames Water have given us a grant to run accessible river-based activities, such a canal boat cruise (with an accessible lift!), nature walks on beautiful tow paths in Surrey, canoeing, kayaking and visits to historical sites on the river.

Finally, watch out for great things happening on the campaigning front at the Coalition, as the Legal Education Fund have awarded us a generous grant to explore using the law as a tool for social justice and equality. We can't wait!

There really is something for everything to have a go at or get involved in, or if you aren't quite sure yet, why not just come along and watch, meet some members and see how things work. The social aspect of our activities, including the tea and cake afterwards is just as important as joining in!



Member fundraising

It has not gone unnoticed that some of lovely members have been independently organising and taking part in sponsored events to raise money for the Coalition. We really appreciate all your efforts, and it has been so much fun to coming along to support you - thank you!

We need your help to vote!

This year we have been lucky enough to be chosen to take part in the Co-op Community Fund. We have until November to get as many votes for the Coalition as possible.

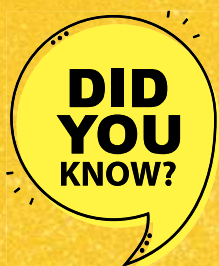
If you are already a member of the Co-op, just search for the Coalition on their website or App and vote, if not, it is quick and easy to become a member and vote (it costs £1 but this amount will go straight into your wallet to spend.) Don't forget to send the link to friends and family too!

Do you have any local contacts?

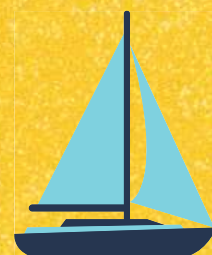
Please help us by having a good think if you have any contacts in organisations, such as schools, businesses, golf or sporting clubs, social clubs, Lions or Rotary clubs etc Perhaps they have a charity of the year we could apply for, or they are involved in helping local causes. Simply suggest to them that you could pass on their details to me, and I will do the rest!

If you have any good ideas for fundraising, or you would like a chat about organising a sponsored event, I would love to hear from you.

Please email me at: rachel.roberts@surreycoalition.org.uk or give me a call on 07940 136895. Thank you!



It costs The Coaliton £10 per Disabled person to take part in an accessible sports activity, e.g. sailing or cycling



Technology News

It's Not Complicated. You're Already Using It

When people hear "technology," they imagine coding or complicated stuff. But in reality technology is all around us, and usually something that makes the life easier.

Your phone. Your television. Even newer models of your washing machines. That's all technology.

Take your mobile. It's pretty much your life now (well, most of us). You wake up and you check the time on your phone. You go somewhere - you use maps. You use it to talk to people by calling, messages, or WhatsApp. When you are bored, you check Instagram, TikTok, funny cat videos.

Technology, when used wisely, can save you a lot of time. Before you had to go to a bank in person, call restaurants to order food, or ask people for directions. Now we have access to banking apps, where with one click you can pay your bills or check your expenses, we have abundance of food deliver apps, and easy access to Google maps or Waze (application to give you directions based on real time traffic updates – Waze even warns you if there is a pothole in a road!).

But we shouldn't be scared of technology. It doesn't have to be something very complicated and doesn't have to overtake our lives. It's not an enemy. Technology is just tools, smart tools that can help in our everyday lives, can help to make our life easier, more convenient and faster when used wisely.

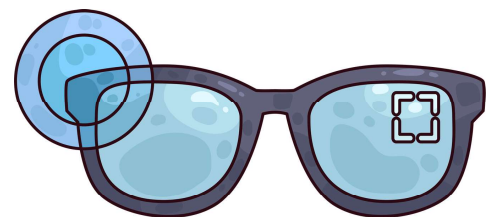
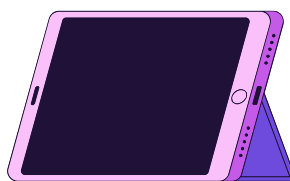
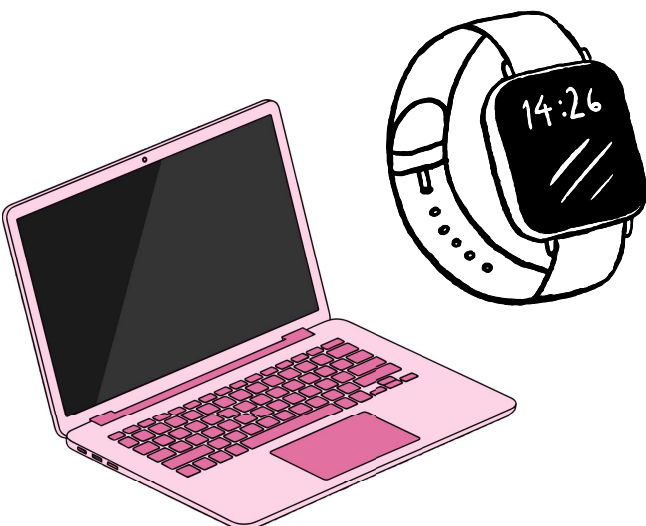
Even things like Netflix, Amazon Video or BBC iPlayer – that is technology too. The app suggests things for you to watch, and you usually just go with it. The suggestions are not random, they are based on your watching history and are using very smart algorithms!

What is important, is that you don't have to understand technology to use it. You don't need to know how internet works, how apps are built or what AI actually means (artificial intelligence, but that's a whole new topic). You are probably using it without even realising!

Technology makes life easier and helps us do things faster, but like with most things, it also has its disadvantages. We are spending too much time on our phones or online, as opposed to socialising in real life. We get lazy as everything is so easy thanks to technology. Our attention span is getting worse. We are comparing our real lives with glamorised lives created for the Instagram reels where everyone looks perfect and has perfect, happy life all the time.

Also it's important to remember that big companies such as Meta or Google are constantly collecting our data, things we like, what we search for, and what we click. That allows them to show us advertisements that are specifically tailored to us and what we like.

But we shouldn't be scared of technology. It doesn't have to be something very complicated and doesn't have to overtake our lives. It's not an enemy. Technology is just tools, smart tools that can help in our everyday lives, can help to make our life easier, more convenient and faster when used wisely.



**For more information about Tech Angels,
please contact The Coalition or visit:
[https://surreycoalition.org.uk/areas-of-
work/technology/tech-to-community-
connect/](https://surreycoalition.org.uk/areas-of-work/technology/tech-to-community-connect/)**

Mental Health News



Do we have the right information?

Focus has begun to undertake, at the request of SABP, a member data update. Members of FoCUS are currently being contacted to fill in gaps and check the accuracy of the information we have held. If you have received an email or phone call from our staff we would greatly appreciate you taking the time to update your information.

Thank you!

Fancy a cuppa?

The mental health team have begun holding social coffee mornings for members to come along and spend some time chatting with others. This year we have held them in The Old Moat in Epsom & Caterham Costa, and hope to have several more upcoming this year!

Wendy's a star!

Surrey's Coalition's Wendy Smith has won an award for her work with Surrey and Borders Partnership NHS Foundation Trust. Wendy was presented with the Gold award for Involvement and Contribution at Surrey and Border's Staff Awards.

As part of the Coalition's mental health team, Wendy has spent the last four and a half years helping Surrey and Borders understand what matters most to people with lived experience of using mental health services, their families and carers.



Community mental health services

At the end of last year, we ran a survey about accessing mental health services in the community. Asking people who have used community mental health services about their experiences and understanding barriers to access.

98 people completed our online survey and 15 more spoke to us at an event.

We asked "if you could change one thing about mental health services, what would it be?". The top three answers were easier access, shorter waiting times and more joined up services. Other answers included improved communication, a choice of support tailored to the person, and better support for people before or whilst in a mental health crisis.

If you'd like to see the survey results for yourself, you can find them on our website here.

<https://surreycoalition.org.uk/accessing-mental-health-services-in-the-community-survey-results/>

Silverwood's Royal Opening

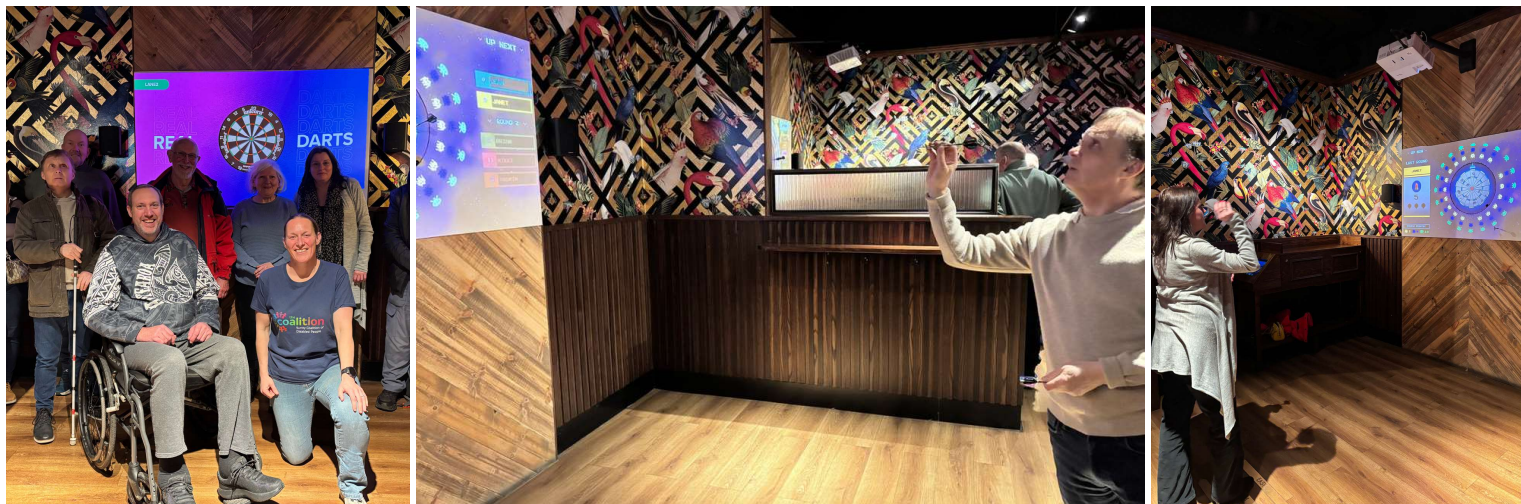
Silverwood, Surrey's mental health inpatient service, has now been officially opened by Her Royal Highness the Duchess of Gloucester. Silverwood has been up and running since February year, on the site of the old Abraham Cowley Unit at St Peter's hospital in Chertsey and had its royal opening on Tuesday 31st March. Our mental health team worked on running a lived experience group which fed experiences into the design and operational set up for the last 2 years.

Wendy Smith, from the Coalition's mental health team, was introduced to the Duchess. Wendy explained her role in the project, speaking to people with lived experience of using mental health services, their families and carers about what mattered most to them, and representing those opinions throughout the design, development and delivery of Silverwood.

The Duchess was keen to hear about the importance of involving people with lived experience in the project, and how that shaped the overall design.

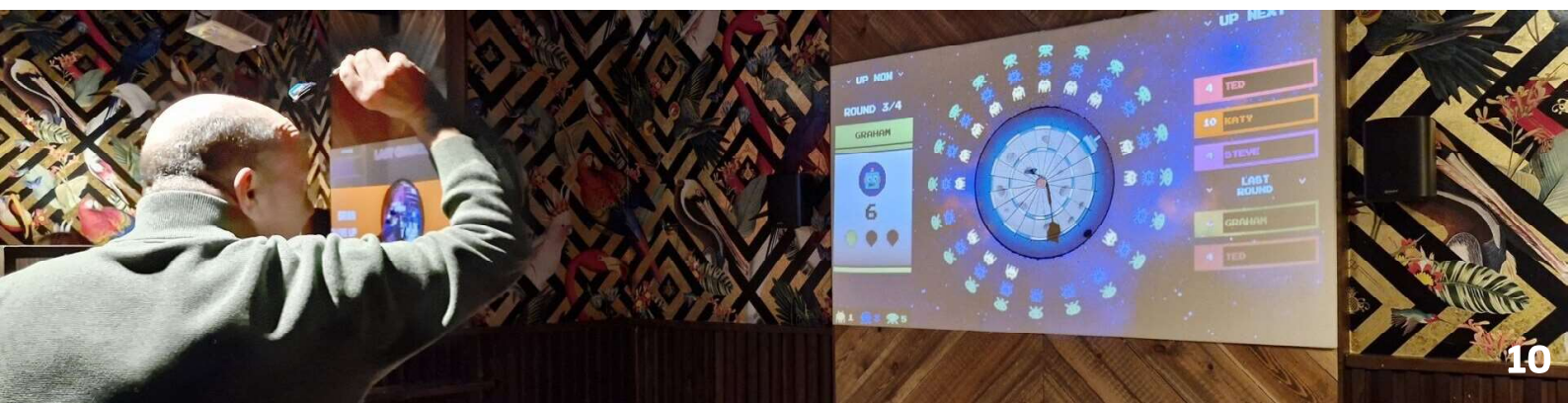
For more information about the mental health team, please contact The Coalition or visit:
<https://surreycoalition.org.uk/imhn/>

Get More Active News



We have certainly had a busy start to the year with plenty of Get More Active Get Togethers!

Our first trip was to the Light in Redhill for a fun packed morning of interactive darts. Darts was an activity that lots of our members said they would like to try. So, we had to make sure that we delivered. Interactive darts takes the traditional dartboard and adds a bit of technology to project images onto the board as well as digitally tracking each throw. The immersive screens guide you through a variety of games and the digital scoring system keeps the game flowing without anyone needing to calculate scores. As we were a mixed ability group, we chose the simpler games that give everyone a chance to score and since each mini game is quite short, we could try out several different options. There were cheers when someone hit the bullseye and plenty of laughter when darts landed... well, somewhere unexpected. By the time our session ended, and we were enjoying a well-earned cuppa we were already talking about when we could do this again!



In March, we experienced a few days of sunshine and spring seemed to be well on its way. So, for our second Get Together, we decided to head outdoors to Priory Park in Reigate for a walk and wheel. The park is a great accessible location with lots of opportunities to experience nature, some interesting history and, of course, it has a good café! There are also plenty of benches to rest on as well as opportunities to take a shorter route depending on how you are feeling that day.

Although it was a chilly day, we managed to stay dry and we could enjoy the birdsong, the spring flowers and, of course a good chat with friends old and new.



Our final Get Together was something a little different. We travelled to the beautiful surroundings of Sayers Croft Outdoor Learning Centre near Cranleigh and channelled our inner warrior for some axe throwing and some archery. First up was axe throwing, and our instructor Jared, made it look very easy – which it certainly wasn't! However, with some coaching and practise everyone managed to at least hit the target and it was a great feeling if you got the axe to stick! We were able to give feedback on how the activity worked best for wheelchair users and visually impaired throwers too. The archery was indoors and we could choose between manual bows and an adapted bow which is mounted on a frame and pulls the string of the bow for you. It can be aimed easily using a handle to pivot it on the frame and makes the game accessible for people with less mobility. It was great to enjoy something new and it's safe to say that this activity has become a firm favourite with our members!



For more information about Get More Active, please contact Katy Hubbard or visit: <https://surreycoalition.org.uk/get-more-active/>

Involvement News

Food Bank Training

Megan, our Involvement Officer has completed a number of Disability Awareness Training sessions for food bank staff thanks to funding from Surrey EDI. The sessions have been very successful and Megan has received some great feedback.



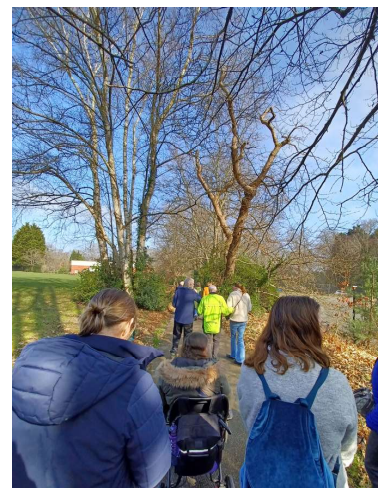
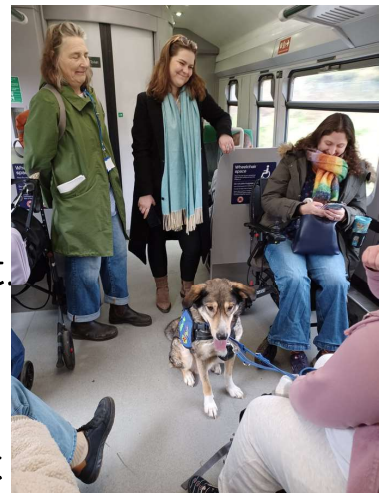
Access Reviews

The Involvement Team and Coalition members have visited a number of venues to look at access this year including Hurtwood Hideout. Epsom Playhouse and Guildford's and Waverley's Borough Council Offices.



Exploring Nature by Train

Coalition members have taken part in two train trips funded by the Community Rail Partnership. Members have visited Blackwater and Dorking West. On both trips members have travelled together by train from either Redhill or Guildford and had a wander in a park identifying trees and birds. Whilst eating lunch and cake (of course) members then used what they saw as inspiration for some great art work and poems. As well as enjoying ourselves the trips have highlighted a number of access issues which we hope to work on with the Community Rail Partnership. We have one last trip left in April to Shalford.



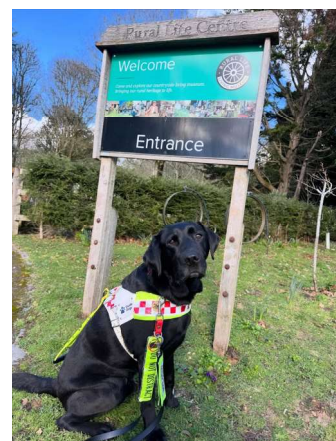
Tour of Reigate Town Hall

Coalition members and staff visited Reigate Town Hall for a tour and tea and cake courtesy of the Mayor of Reigate. The history of the Town hall is very interesting and we can thoroughly recommend the tour if you get the chance.



Museum Heritage Project

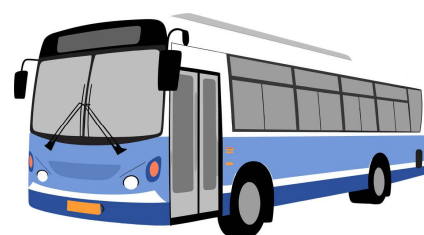
We have completed our first access review and disability awareness training session for museum volunteers as part of the Museum Heritage Project which was funded by Surrey Community Foundation's Heritage for All. Our first visit was to the Rural Life Living Museum where Coalition members took part in an access review. We recorded their experience and comments and put together a report with recommendations on improvements to access which could be made to improve the experience of Disabled people when visiting the museum. Following this we provided Disability Awareness training to around 80 museum volunteers. The next museum we will visit will be to Guildford Museum followed by East Surrey Museum.



Disability Awareness Videos for Buses

The Coalition is working with Surrey County Council, Brighton and Hove Metro Bus and other partners on Disability Awareness videos for frontline staff bus service staff. The videos will feature Coalition members and locations in Surrey. Filming has started! We will update more in the next edition.

**COMING
SOON**



Surrey Vision Action Group (SVAG) visit to the Google Accessibility Discovery Centre

In February members of the SVAG visited the Google Accessibility Discovery Centre in Kings Cross. The visit was scheduled instead of our usual SVAG meeting. Members were taken on a tour of the Accessibility Discovery Centre, they got to hear about and feel various accessibility tools and products. Jane, Chair of Surrey Vision Action Group, share's her experience of the day:

"We had an amazing day at Google head office at Kings Cross. We learnt about the Xbox racing game, a braille slate , braille display, a steady spoon which has a large ball bearing on the end of the spoon and it keeps its balance and the spoon straight. We also saw the first braille edition of Harry Potter and the Philosopher's stone, and the Gruffalo. Which was designed for a parent with a blind child, the tactile diagrams were incredible!"

One member of the group loved the braille Lego that we saw at Google they ordered it to share with their grandchildren as braille has been a big part of their life!



**To get involved, please contact The Coalition or
e-mail involvement@surreycoalition.org.uk**

Events

Weekly Online Events

Online events are hosted on Zoom.

To access online events, please contact the Involvement Team for the Zoom meeting link.



Day	Time	Activity
Every Monday (excluding Bank Holidays)	11am - 12pm	Cafe
Every Tuesday	4pm - 5pm	Glee Club
Every Thursday	2:30pm - 4pm	Weekly Quiz
Every Friday	11:30am - 12:30pm	Cafe

July 2026

Date	Time	Activity	Location	Type
Wednesday 8 July	12 - 1:30pm	East, Mid and North West Surrey FoCUS meeting	Unifer House, Chertsey	Hybrid
Thursday 9 July	12:30 - 2pm	West, South West Surrey and Northeast Hants FoCUS Meeting	Guildford Baptist Church	Hybrid
Friday 17 July	10.30-2pm	IMHN Wellbeing meet up	Knowle Park	In person
Wednesday 15 th July	TBC	Thames Water Hogsmill river walk and wheel		In person
Friday 31 July	1 - 3pm	IMHN Coordinating Group		Online

August 2026

Date	Time	Activity	Location	Type
Tuesday 4 th August	2.30-4.30pm	FoCUS Committee meeting	Online	Online
Tuesday 4 th August	TBC	Thames Water River Wey Accessible kayak	TBC	TBC
Tuesday 13 th August	9.30-12pm	IMHN & Action for Carers Coffee Morning @ The Boathouse Cafe	The Boathouse Cafe, Guildford	
Saturday 15 th August	All day	Superhero Tri	Dorney Lake	In Person
Thursday 27 th August	12-1.30pm	IMHN Listening Lunch (drop in)	Online	Online

September 2026

Date	Time	Activity	Location	Type
Wednesday 2 nd September	TBC	Thames Water Hogsmill river walk and wheel		In person
Wednesday 9 th September	12.30-2.30pm	FoCUS Talk & Learn, Hybrid	TBC	In person
Thursday 10 th September	TBC	Golf Day	Milford Golf club	In person
Tuesday 22 nd September	TBC	Dorking walking festival - walk and wheel	Dorking	In person
Friday 25 th September	1-3pm	IMHN Coordinating Meeting	Online	Online

Contact Us

We always love to hear from you!



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