

# Member Briefing

**Number: 1085**

**Title:** The National Autistic Society's Autism Hour initiative

**Summary:** Information for Members on The National Autistic Society's Autism Hour initiative and how Cheshire West and Chester Council are supporting.

National research shows that 99 per cent of the public say they have heard of autism but 87 per cent of autistic people don't think the public really understands what autism is or how it affects people. Autistic people might behave differently in public and feel judged which leads to people staying at home to avoid social interactions. Nationally 70 per cent of parents and 79 per cent of autistic people feel socially isolated.

The National Autistic Society's Autism Hour initiative is part of the Too Much Information campaign which aims to improve the lives of autistic people and their families by changing public perceptions, attitudes and behaviour by improving public understanding and access to community facilities such as shopping centres, cafes, leisure centres, heritage sites and other public places.

The Autism Hour initiative begins on Monday 2 October 2017 and asks retailers and businesses to choose an hour in the week to turn down music, dim the lights and share information with employees and increase public understanding. The Council is working with a number of partners to take part in this important initiative and there will be a number of events and activities being held throughout the borough.

## **Getting involved in the Autism Hour initiative**

Encourage local shops, businesses and services to sign up on the National Autistic Society's website: [www.autism.org.uk/autismhour](http://www.autism.org.uk/autismhour) by the 15 September 2017. The website has resources such as letters and flyers to explain the importance of the initiative.

The local branch of the NAS, in conjunction with Story House Chester and Cheshire West and Chester Council, are running a Too Much Information event to raise awareness about autism as part of the Autism Hour initiative. This will take place on Monday 2 October at 10am at Storyhouse.

The Council is also holding awareness events in local offices on the 3 October at Chester HQ 10am – 11am, Winsford Wyvern House 1pm – 2pm and Civic Way Ellesmere Port 3pm – 4pm.

People nationally will be able to look at the website to find an interactive map that will help them find out who is taking part in their area and when. Experiences will be shared on social media by checking in when people attend #AutismHour and #AutismTMI.

**For further information contact:** Judith Culleton, Strategic Commissioning

**Telephone:** (01244 9)75936

**Email:** [Judith.Culletin@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk](mailto:Judith.Culletin@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk)

**Responsible Committee, Cabinet Member:** Councillor Nicole Meardon

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