

Supporting and working with community groups and clubs to promote a deeper understanding of local health and care needs and experiences

## Spotlight on Autism Connected

Through conversations with this group, and surveying residents of West Sussex, it is clear there is a lack of the recognition of autism in females. Much of the advertising and support has a male bias and women tell us they struggle to get their needs acknowledged by healthcare professionals.

We are shining a light on a local group established for this reason and to provide peer support for individuals and their families.

It is important services are aware of this group and promote to girls and women in our county.

**The AUTISM Connected is an establishing voluntary support group for autistic, neurodivergent girls, women diagnosed or not, those who identify as women and non-binary. They are based in north of West Sussex and Mid Sussex but accept members from surrounding areas.**

This group has rarely been heard or listened to and live lives never being fully understood or accepted. It provides a safe place to disclose their status in their careers, training, education, health, employment, or social lives, and to feel accepted to be who they are. The AUTISM Connected exists to be self-advocates and for its members to decide what they need regarding advocacy, support or doing it for themselves. They range from 16-70 so far and has shown how much need there is to be accepted.

Once it is safer from Covid-19 there will be accessible get togethers but until then they are focussing on letting people know The AUTISM Connected are around and working out what is needed. This is not specifically for parents of young autistic children.

They have a closed Facebook group and website.

If you want to get in touch, please email: [theAutismConnected@gmail.com](mailto:theAutismConnected@gmail.com)  
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1521715131364026>



All of the insight we collect from people across West Sussex is collated and anonymised and forms part of the evidence that Healthwatch gather to identify common themes around what works and what could be improved for local people. **This insight is used to influence service development and can feed into**

- West Sussex Health and Wellbeing Board
- HASC - Health and Adult Social Care Select Committee
- WSCC Joint Strategic Needs Assessment
- Safeguarding Adult Board
- Sussex Health and Care Partnership workstreams (the NHS Integrated Care System for Sussex).

Healthwatch West Sussex also share reports with the Care Quality Commission (who are responsible for the registration and inspection of services which deliver regulated activities) and to Healthwatch England to form part of the national picture used to influence national developments, such as the NHS Long Term forward plan.

Not only do we collect the experiences of local people, but we can also provide free information and guidance just call: **0300 012 0122**. Email [helpdesk@healthwatchwestsussex.co.uk](mailto:helpdesk@healthwatchwestsussex.co.uk), Website [www.healthwatchwestsussex.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchwestsussex.co.uk).

**healthwatch**  
West Sussex

You can also follow our social media channels:  
Facebook [@healthwatchwestsussex](https://www.facebook.com/healthwatchwestsussex) Twitter [@healthwatchws](https://twitter.com/healthwatchws)

If you are setting up or would like to share news of a similar project we would be interested to hear from you. Please contact Cheryl Berry, Community Partnership Lead, email: [cheryl.berry@healthwatchwestsussex.co.uk](mailto:cheryl.berry@healthwatchwestsussex.co.uk)