

Serendipity Groups

Guidelines for Members attending Serendipity Groups

We want everyone to feel safe and comfortable to attend the Serendipity Groups. Please help us to make the groups a safe and friendly place for all by following the below guidelines.

Good Housekeeping:

It is important to us that all group members and the team are happy during group sessions. Although we encourage our team to discuss good housekeeping with each group separately, these are some important housekeeping rules that should be observed at all Serendipity Groups.

- Observe the mood badges (please do not talk to people wearing red stickers)
- Listen to each other
- Take turns talking and avoid shouting over people to be heard
- Avoid touching people to get their attention
- Avoid shouting across the room
- If the group is busy, remember to lower your voices
- Offer to help with clearing up and packing away if you can
- If you get a phone call while at the group, please go outside the room to answer it
- Please use earphones to listen to music or audio while at the group, as this may cause sensory overload for other members

If you are not sure what to do in a given situation, please ask to Speak to a Team Member

Appropriate and Inappropriate Behaviour

We respect and value each individual that attends our group sessions. However there are certain things that we will need to address to ensure the groups continue to run safely and ensure everyone is having a good time. We have tried to make it easier for everyone to identify appropriate and inappropriate behaviours with a table on page 2. This is not an exhaustive list and Autism Hampshire will address any inappropriate behaviour that compromises the safety of the group in a fair and open way.

| Appropriate Behaviour | Inappropriate Behaviour |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be polite and kind to all members, volunteers and staff • Be accepting of others no matter what their background or ability is • Ask Autism Hampshire before you bring a friend or someone you know to join the group. • Let Autism Hampshire know if you need to bring support to the group. • We advise you make sure you really know people before you add them on social media (we do not monitor social media activity of group members outside of Serendipity Groups) • Volunteers and Staff must be contacted on their Autism Hampshire email address unless they have agreed otherwise with you • Take responsibility for any personal possessions that you bring to the group. Autism Hampshire will not replace any personal items. • Autism Hampshire staff can be contacted on serendipity@autismhampshire.org.uk from Monday to Friday between 9am and 5pm • If we provide you a contact mobile number for your group, this will only be available within working hours and at the specified times only • Let Autism Hampshire know if you no longer plan on attending a group | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excluding people on purpose from conversations • Inviting under 18s to join the group • Expecting volunteers or staff to provide personal hygiene care. If you need this level of support, you must bring someone with you to manage your care. • Making fun of people's physical appearance, race, mental health, disability or religion • Swearing directly at any individual in the group in a negative or threatening way • Being physically intimidating to anyone in the group • Verbally threatening people at the group • Asking volunteers and staff to provide you with contact details or confidential information about other group members. • Texting or calling provided work mobile numbers outside of work hours and allocated times • Forcing or coercing people to be in contact with you on social media. • Bringing drugs, alcohol, weapons, knives, illicit substances and dangerous items to group meetings |

Behaviour Management Procedure

Incidents will be dealt with on a case by case basis and by level of severity. We would like to give the opportunity for individuals to rectify their behaviour where appropriate. Please note if you behave in a way that is deemed inappropriate (table above), you may be:

- **asked to remove yourself from the group**
- **attend a meeting with Autism Hampshire staff**
- **given a verbal warning**
- **given a (final) written warning**
- **asked not to attend the group for a set amount of time**

Any incident where police, fire or ambulance crew have been required to deal with the incident because of inappropriate behaviour, this may result in automatic suspension from the group while an investigation is undertaken by Autism Hampshire.

If you are asked not to attend the group, this will be reviewed to see when and if it is appropriate and safe for you to rejoin the group. Please report any disputes to Autism Hampshire staff.

Contacting other members, volunteers and staff:

- Volunteers should only be contacted through their Autism Hampshire email address unless they have agreed otherwise with you.
- If you want to contact another member outside of the group, you should ask permission to do so before you contact them.
- Autism Hampshire staff and volunteers will not be able to give you contact details for other members.
- Autism Hampshire staff can be contacted on serendipity@autismhampshire.org.uk between 9am-5pm Monday-Friday.
- Work mobile numbers will only be answered within the specified times to help with access to in person or online groups. We cannot offer a chat service.

Support and transport:

- Volunteers and staff cannot offer 1-2-1 personal hygiene care at the group for an individual. If you need this level of support to attend the group, you will need to advise Autism Hampshire staff and ask to bring support with you.
- All our staff and volunteers are here to listen, but we cannot offer 1-2-1 counselling for an individual at the group which would take volunteers and staff away from supporting the group as a whole.
- If your mental health has severely deteriorated while you are attending a group session and you feel you cannot keep yourself safe, please inform a member of the team wearing an Autism Hampshire lanyard or badge.
- You must arrange your own transport or lift to get to and from the group meetings. We cannot offer you a lift or transport. You are advised not to take lifts from anyone you do not know.

New members:

- Potential new members to the group will be asked to attend a taster session to ensure they feel it is the right group for them.
- If you would like a friend or someone you know to join the group, please let Autism Hampshire know before inviting them. This is because some groups have limited space and we need to make sure it is safe for people to attend.
- New people must register with Autism Hampshire to attend the group.

Costs to attend the groups:

- The Serendipity groups are free to attend unless otherwise stated.
- If you would like to buy refreshments at the group, you may need to pay for these. Unfortunately, Autism Hampshire cannot guarantee to cover the costs of food or refreshments unless it is agreed in advance.
- Some activity costs might not be covered by Autism Hampshire and you may be asked to cover or contribute towards these. This will be communicated to you in advance.
- If you damage any property at the venue, you will have to pay for the replacement or to have this fixed.

Health conditions:

- If you have a health condition that Autism Hampshire may need to support you with in an emergency, we would like you to let the Autism Hampshire staff team or volunteers know in advance of the meeting.

Feedback:

- We would love to hear your feedback on the Serendipity Groups. You can complete a feedback form after each group meeting that you attend. This will be sent to you on email.
- You can also post anonymous feedback on written paper when at the group meeting.
- You can also talk to the volunteer or Autism Hampshire staff if you prefer.

We want to make sure you feel safe and comfortable to join our Serendipity Groups. Thank you for reading these guidelines.

If you need help with reading this document, please email:
serendipity@autismhampshire.org.uk