World Autism Awareness week is taking place between 1-7 April 2019. Each year World Autism Awareness Day is held on the 2nd of April, this is an internationally recognised day. This year BOAT have some great activities to educate people about and to celebrate autism. The events are all being held in the Library at Brent Civic Centre, Engineers Way, Wembley.

**What is Autism and the Autism Spectrum? - Tuesday 2 April 12noon -1.20pm**
Come and join us for an informative and interactive talk about children and young people with a diagnosis of autism. We will share our experiences of working with autistic children and young people, their successes and how we can continue to offer support.

**Playing and Learning with Children with an Autism Diagnosis - Wednesday 3 April 10-11am**
Do you have a child with a diagnosis of autism? Do you know someone who has children with autism and wonder how to play and interact with them? Join us for an informative discussion to support you interacting with your child/a child you know with a diagnosis of autism.

**Autism Family Workshop - Thursday 4 April 10 - 10.45am**
We will be hosting a sensory filled activity session for early years children with a diagnosis of autism. We welcome you to come play and celebrate autism awareness week with us. For ages 2-5.

Places may be limited so please book your space in advance by calling 020 8937 4659.
Playing with food

Is your child fussy about food? Playing with foods of different textures and smells can help your child to become more comfortable touching and being in close proximity to new and different foods.

Away from mealtimes, try encouraging your child to play with new foods with no pressure to eat, just a chance to explore it and become more familiar with it. Also, join in playing along with them and model things like picking up the food yourself and smelling it or even picking up food to give it a kiss. Be creative in what you provide and try to link the play to something your child likes, for example a mushy pea swamp goes really well with dinosaur play. Include some utensils such as spoons, tongs and spatulas as some children might feel more comfortable using these first before touching the food with their hands.

**Why not try?**

Driving cars through cereal
Buried and finding treasure in dried pulses, beans, rice
Pulling ‘spaghetti’ worms out of soil
Playing with ketchup or other sauces in sealed plastic bags
Playing with edible dough
Hammering and smashing up crackers
‘Water play’ with different liquids, e.g. fruit juice, milk, yoghurt
Making fruit kebabs
Playing with food frozen in ice
Adding water to oats (see photo below)
Adding food colour to cooked spaghetti (see photo below)

Top tip: Feel free to try these ideas but also make sure to use your own ideas and imagination
Morgan Flandrin, a local child who attends a Brent primary school has been on some exciting adventures since knowing of his diagnosis of autism.

The ‘Flandrin Summer School’ started off as a little idea Morgan’s mum came up with to put a smile on his face after a particularly challenging meltdown, and it turned into a wonderful and memorable summer adventure for him and all those who joined them on their journey. Morgan decided that he wanted to educate people about autism and told his mum that he wanted to raise money for the National Autistic Society (NAS) and hold an autism awareness brunch which he will host this April 2019.

During one of the family outings Morgan visited his Aunty Helen at her place of work and created a PowerPoint presentation about autism, how it affects him and why he was raising money. With the support of his aunt, Morgan presented his pitch to a room of the company’s employees and one of the managing directors via video link. He was able to raise £300!

Morgan particularly enjoyed this trip as he met new people, raised money for the NAS and was given the role as ‘Acting Managing Director’. He was able to give an employee a pay rise and let another employee go home one hour early for the day as he had a long commute home to his family. In addition to this, Morgan’s Aunty Sinead was so impressed with his speech her employers matched what he had raised and donated another £300!
The Autism Act: 10 years On

Ten years ago, the National Autistic Society’s (NAS) “I Exist” campaign identified a lack of support for autistic adults in England. They and other autism charities campaigned for an Autism Act to make new legal duties to provide adult autism services. The charities were successful and the Autism Act became law in November 2009. The Act says that there has to be a Government strategy for improving services for autistic adults. The Act has a built-in review when the strategy and the statutory guidance are reviewed.

This year, the Government is reviewing the autism strategy again. The NAS will work with the All Party Parliamentary Group on Autism (a cross-party group of MPs and Lords) to find out; what has worked well, what hasn’t worked and what needs to change. The NAS are keen to find out what people with autism and their parents think about services on offer in their areas. They are asking everyone to take part in a survey to tell them about your experiences of autism services and support.


Gatwick Airport - The first UK airport to open a sensory room for passengers.

The North Terminal of Gatwick airport has opened a sensory room designed for passengers with conditions such as Autism, Dementia, Cognitive Impairment and any other special needs who would benefit from a space to help them feel at ease before their flight.

It offers a choice of a relaxing or interactive environment:

- The ‘Chill out zone’ is for those who need a calm space provides floor cushions, bean bags and digital display panels to produce colourful wall features.

- The ‘Interactive zone’ is where your senses can be stimulated through tactile panels, textures and a game to improve your memory and motor skills.

The room is free to use for departing passengers and their families or carers who can book a 45 minute session at the north terminal’s special assistance desk after they have passed through security.
HELLO TO ALL THE YEAR FIVE TEACHERS

‘The London Eye Mystery by Siobhan Dowd is the story of an autistic young man and how he solves the mystery of his cousin who is missing. Many year five classes are reading this book and our team are happy to offer to come and provide a session regarding autism and relating it to the book. Oakington Manor have been our first year five classes to engage in this with the teacher reporting ‘the children really enjoyed the session and felt they understood what autism is and many felt the session was clear to understand.’

These sessions provide a great opportunity for the students to ask questions about autism and relate it to the text they are reading. It is also an opportunity for teachers to learn about autism and be supported to answer questions that the students may have.

If you would like one of the team to come and support your class alongside reading the book contact: clare.henshaw@brent.gov.uk

PARENTS AND CARERS

Please keep an eye out in your email inbox for an email from the team. We will be emailing you to collect your thoughts on the service and any comments you may have. It is a short questionnaire which is completed online. This provides us with your views regarding the support and advice we offer and any areas that we can improve upon.

WE WOULD GREATLY APPRECIATE YOU TAKING A FEW MOMENTS TO COMPLETE THESE FOR US.
For the first time we are holding a BOAT Family Day for our secondary students and their families. The event is being held in the Learning Zone in Wembley Stadium and is open to all our secondary students and their families.

The event is being held on the **23rd of March from 12.30-4pm**. The day will consist of fun activities and sessions followed by tours of Wembley Stadium. This event is NOT suitable for those under 5 due to strict regulations in the stadium. We have a maximum of 70 spaces for this event and due to popular demand these spaces are filling fast.

For more information or to book your young person and their family a space then please email **sophia.antoni@brent.gov.uk**.

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**BOAT YOUTH GROUP**

We had another successful BOAT Youth Group which we held in February with the highest number of our young people attending so far.

The event was our most creative and fun yet with our young people creating their own costumes or characters by using only cardboard.

Our young people were able to design, create and build whatever fabulous creation they wanted to. One of our young people said "it's been the best youth group so far!".
POST 16 HORIZONS EVENT

This year saw the fourth Horizons event, designed to support our students’ understanding of post 16 pathways.

The event provided a bigger and broader experience which included a greater variety of representatives from local businesses and the community.

Seven Brent secondary schools attended plus some BOAT students from Out of Borough schools.

The day was packed with activities such as, highlighting the differences between the Post 16 environments, different expectations in those environments, how to prepare for an interview and how to write a personal statement. The students were also encouraged to think about their strengths and weaknesses and what they aspire to do in their future lives.

Eighty nine students participated in the day and together with their accompanying adults, made the day a great success. In an initial evaluation 88% of the students who answered the question, "Do you have a better understanding of Post 16 choices?" responded with a "yes".

A huge thanks has to go to our hosts in the Learning Zone in Wembley Stadium who again have given us invaluable support in our endeavours to support our ASD and vulnerable young people in Brent.

Our heartfelt thanks goes to the following people who made the day such a success.

Brent Apprentice Project
Dornan Engineering Services Ltd.
William Morris 6th form college
Prospects (careers)
Surespark
The FA (Football Association)
Brent Youth Foundation
Brent Council

Q: How do bunny’s stay healthy?
A: Eggs-ercise

Q: What do you call a bunny with a large brain?
A: an egg head
Helping Your Child’s Sensory Needs Day and Night

Going Out

Children with autism can find going out very scary and unpredictable. Some places for example; shops, cafes and cinemas or public transport such as buses, trains can overwhelm their senses. Below are some of the most common statements we hear or are asked about taking your child with autism out and some strategies that can help.

He runs off when we go out in the community.

- Try and prepare them as much as possible for where they are going, what is going to happen and what they will hear, see, feel. Do this by using photos, pictures and social stories.
- Establish the rules for when you are out and about before you go. For example, “We’re going to do the shopping, when we have finished you can have 1 lollipop.”
- Just before or on the way engage them in some activities involving deep pressure, working their muscles and giving their body more feedback (heavy work) so they feel calmer.
- Let them wear ear defenders or headphones, a peaked hat, hood, weighted or tight fitting clothes, this can help them to feel calmer.
- When you are out watch carefully for warning signs that they are overwhelmed, upset, anxious, angry.
- If needed and if possible try to move them to a quiet, calm space. (Museums and large galleries in London often have quiet spaces available, ask where they are at the main desk when you arrive)

She constantly seeks movement when we are out.

- Deep pressure and or heavy work activities can support children who seek movement. Activities such as carrying heavy items in shopping baskets, pushing trolleys or buggies can tire the muscles and help them to feel calmer.
- Let them wear ear defenders or headphones, a peaked hat, hood, weighted or tight fitting clothes this can also help them to feel calmer.
- Have fidget toys e.g. stress balls or tangle twists available or encourage them to wear a rucksack and weight it down (5-10% of their body weight).

He refuses to walk and sits down in the middle of the pavement.

- Stay calm and try to wait it out so that they get up themselves.
- Be clear about why they need to walk and where they are going to.
- Be clear about how much longer (use a timer on your phone) they need to walk for.
- Give them a reason for getting up and walking e.g. a reward for when they arrive.
- Try not to force them or get angry.