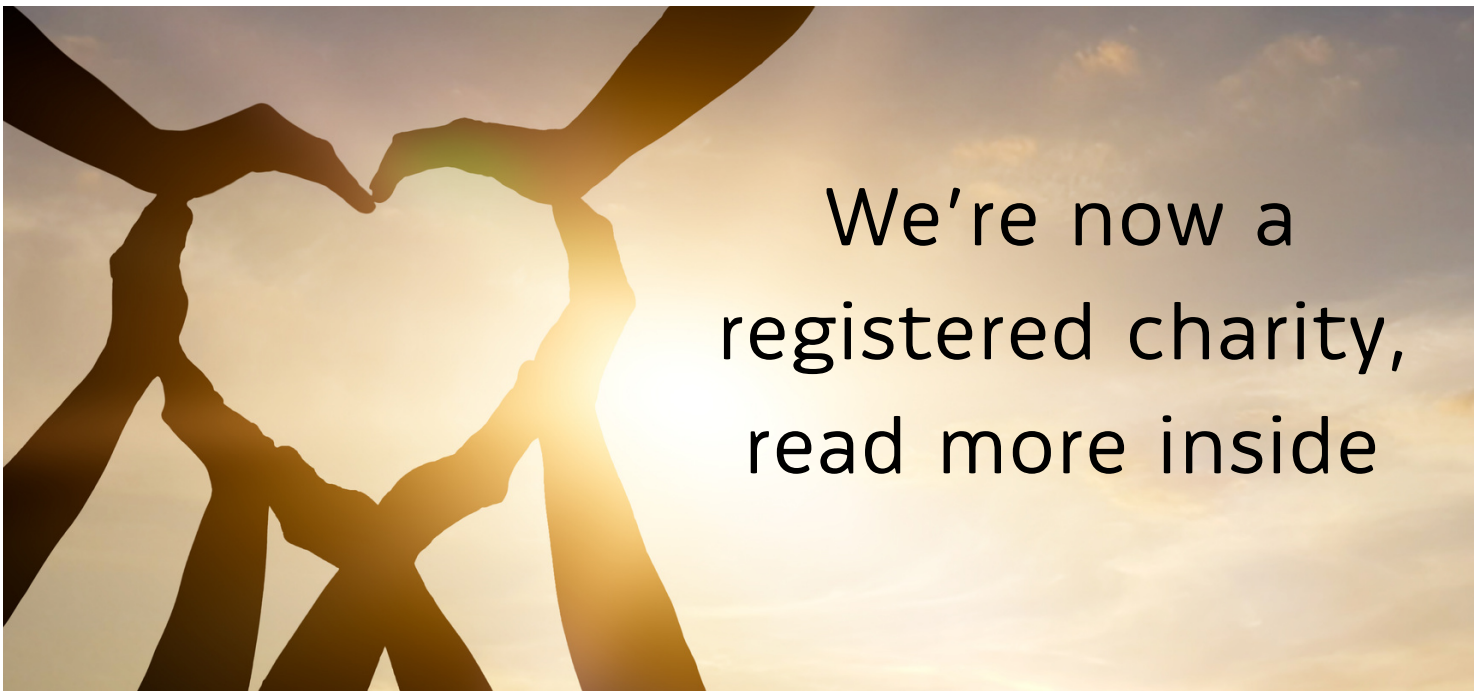


# Spring Edition March 2024 Issue

## Number 81

# Coalition News



We're now a  
registered charity,  
read more inside

## Contents

- Welcome
- Involvement Update
- Technology Update
- Mental Health Update
- Events
- Contact Us

# Welcome From Nikki

Dear Members,

So in this issue, I have some very exciting news.

As you know, at our Annual General Meeting (AGM) last year, members confirmed they were happy for us to apply to register as a charity. After we received the approval from our members, we submitted our application to Charities Commission and I'm delighted to tell you we now have charity status. This a huge step forward for the organisation as it will open many more avenues of funding which in turn will mean we'll be able to do more with our members.

To make the most of our new charity status, we have drafted a new 2 year strategy. This strategy will make sure we're in the strongest possible position to attract funding for the charity. As well as all of our charity administration, we have been getting out and about with our members.

Just before Christmas we took part in the Winter Wonderwheels event! We had a group of members that took part both in person and at home! Although the weather didn't play nicely, it didn't dampen our spirits and we had a wonderful time.

Our mental health team are constantly chatting with our members and professionals to help make Surrey mental health services better for all. And three of the team have been working on a piece of research on how integrated mental health services are functioning within our community. The recommendations are due by the end of March.

Do you take part in our virtual social events? If not, you're missing out. These get togethers were set up while we were in lockdown but are more popular than ever! So if you fancy listening to some music or taking part in our quiz, get in touch!

Finally, some super good news, the Tech Team funding has been renewed in Guildford and Waverley and East Surrey (we're awaiting news from Surrey Downs) so we'll continue to ensure that as many people as possible get the tech support that they need! We almost have 2,000 tech members now, that's an amazing achievement for the team.

As Spring approaches, we'll be getting out and about even more so please stay in touch and as ever, thanks for your wonderful support.

Best Wishes

Nikki

# Involvement Update



## **Disability Empowerment Network (DENS)**

We carried out a survey of DENS members to find out what they liked about DENS meetings and to look at ways we can make improvements for the future. The results suggested that people would like to see, one Surrey wide DENS in the evening and one during the day with breakout rooms. With one quarterly in person meeting. The Surrey wide daytime DENS meetings will alternate between Tuesday and Friday. Members felt that the DENS needed more publicity. We are planning more social media posts and our intern student designed a great logo for us (see above) The first DENS meetings will take place in March with the next round taking place in May. If you are interested in attending a DENS meeting in the future, please contact us at [@Involvement@surreycoalition.org.uk](mailto:@Involvement@surreycoalition.org.uk)

## **Special Interest Group meetings**

Our members have attended many meetings including the Surrey Vision Action Group, Patient Transport meeting, Community Equipment meeting and the Long-Term Neurological Conditions Group.

## **Disability Partnership Board**

The second meeting of the Disability Partnership Board took place at the end of January. There was a great turnout and good discussions on monitoring the action plan. Work will begin on some of the workstreams shortly.

## Other Work

We continue to work with Surrey Heartlands on the Accessible Information Standard and how it is being implemented in hospitals, GP surgeries and pharmacies. It is clear that there is still a lot of work to do but together with our members we continue to challenge where the accessible information standard is ignored, raise awareness of why this is important and work with organisations to find solutions.

## Virtual Trips

We began our virtual trips project during the pandemic, to give our members the chance to experience different places across the country and to feel like they were 'going out' at a time when we were all confined to our homes. In a way this project was utopian: distance, physical access and cost were no longer barriers. We could go wherever we wanted with little to no carbon footprint! We began to visit museums, farms and other places of interest by zoom. We rambled around Farnham Heath, adopted an alpaca that lived on a farm in Scotland and got to meet him (virtually).

We went aboard Concorde whilst learning so much as our excellent guides brought the places we were visiting to life. We have covered a vast distance in the last few years. We have seen a lot of animals through our visits to Birdworld, Monkey World, and Longleat. We have learnt a lot about history through visits to the Charles Dickens Museum, Jane Austen Experience, and John Soane Museum to name but a few. We have explored local areas of natural beauty (Farnham Heath) and learnt about local history (Guildford Museum and Watts Gallery). We've also had the opportunity to ask questions of our very knowledgeable guides. Our members have said our virtual trips have given them freedom to explore places, with the company of good friends, that would otherwise be denied to them.

We began recording our trips and you can find these on our Youtube Channel [https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCSyW0iOD8b0MUKIAr9e\\_nYg](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCSyW0iOD8b0MUKIAr9e_nYg)

We are really excited about our upcoming trips to Gretna Green on 25th March and to West Horsley Place (the place where they filmed the BBC series ghosts!) in April. We would love for more members to join us on our virtual trips and share in the adventure. Please contact the Involvement Team for more details. [Involvement@surreycoalition.org.uk](mailto:Involvement@surreycoalition.org.uk)

**What is the Tech Angel project?** The Tech Angel service run by The Coalition provides devices to those that need them or digital literacy training and confidence-boosting support to those that already have a device but struggle to use it. The service is aimed at people who are at the highest risk of digital exclusion. Would you or somebody you know benefit from this service? Please contact the team.





## **Campaigning Update**

We're so lucky to have such an enthusiastic group of members that are very willing to get involved with our campaigning activity.

Our most recent campaign is to campaign against floating bus stops.

We have been working with the National Federation of the Blind UK (NFBUK) on this campaign. We visited Number 10 again in February to deliver a letter of support for NFBUK's petition to raise awareness of our concerns.

## **What are floating bus stops?**

It's a bus stop which has a carriageway or a cycle track running behind it so that people board or alight a bus from what is essentially either a large traffic island or perhaps something which looks like central reserve.

## **Why are we campaigning against them?**

Blind, visually impaired, disabled, older and vulnerable bus passengers should be able to get on and off the bus independently directly from the pavement as they have always done.

The majority of cyclists, which now also includes many other forms of e-micro-mobility both legal and illegal, do not stop and they cannot be heard against the background noise of the road environment. The bus islands and designs are also inaccessible for blind and visually impaired people to navigate safely and independently, leading to people becoming disorientated, confused and isolated.

## What we're asking the government to do:

Halt all funding for any schemes using floating or shared use bus boarder in the UK and immediately act on the NFBUKs petition, now backed by over 250 supporting organisations which calls for:

- Direct access to and from the pavement to board and alight from the bus is protected for all bus passengers
- No more floating bus stop or Copenhagen style bus stop / cycle track at bus border to be constructed in the UK
- For all active travel schemes / street redesigns in planning process to be redesigned to ensure direct access from the pavement to the bus is protected
- References to using floating bus stops (bus stop bypasses) and Copenhagen style bus stops / cycle track at bus borders be removed from all guidance produced by the Department for Transport and by developed parliaments in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland
- For all temporary floating bus stops and Copenhagen style bus stops / cycle track at bus borders added during COVID to be immediately removed to ensure direct access to and from the pavement for all bus passengers is restored
- For all bus stops that have been changed to accommodate cycle lanes to be changed back to ensure direct access to and from the bus stop for all bus passengers.

If you'd like to join our campaigning group, please contact the involvement team [involvement@surreycoaliton.org.uk](mailto:involvement@surreycoaliton.org.uk)







## Internships at The Coalition

We've been keeping our interns from Treloar's busy! Treloar's students are physically disabled with complex needs and we have been offering both in person and remote opportunities for some of their interns.

Joe worked with us for several weeks on developing blogs, working on our social media and developing video content for us. Here's what he had to say about his time with us:

"My favourite task was making a video for Surrey Coalition's volunteers, featuring catchy music and a big thank-you message, with fireworks going off at the end of the video"

"I have learned how to schedule social media posts more efficiently using Buffer and have also learned how to edit posts using Canva"

Hannah has been busy carrying out Access All Areas reviews for us. Hannah visited a local theatre and gave us her thoughts on how accessible it is for Disabled People.

And finally Ben took on a bit of campaigning and visited number 10 with us to campaign against the floating bus stops. Here's what Ben had to say:

"On Tuesday 20th of February, I went to London to deliver a petition against Floating bus stops with Nikki from Surrey Coalition. It was a great opportunity to visit Downing Street and take part in this project which is so important to our community. I hope that our Prime Minister will take into consideration the hundreds of people that will benefit from the change of policy"

We're excited to have another intern starting with us after Easter!

# Technology Update



The team has been working harder than ever, trying to reach new members across Surrey. As a result, Tech Angels have reached a milestone! We have 2000 Tech Members! That is 2000 people in Surrey that our wonderful volunteers have helped with access to technology and data, and with learning new digital skills. Our oldest tech member, who joined quite recently, is 100 years old!

Outreach activities have also been numerous, and included, amongst others, two FEDCAP job fairs in Redhill and Guildford, Housing Association lunch groups in Redhill Methodist Church, Abbot's hospital in Guildford, and Live Well Longer Programme visit at Dorking Christian Centre. Our Tech team were also asked to assist, in collaboration with Surrey Libraries, in a NHS Winter Wellbeing event being run at Farnham Hospital. This was a very successful day helping local people to get the NHS App installed on their devices. We also had a successful visit to a refugee group in Camberley and signed up quite a few new Tech Members for devices, SIMs and Tech Angel support.

In February one of our team members, Alex, presented for inside Government, which is a leading event organiser in the public sector. We were invited to give a presentation at this event on helping digital professionals improve the digital skills of their service users and also make sure they are more inclusive when it comes to digital services.

Our volunteer Tech Angels are working super hard as well, just in January 2024 they conducted over 50 visits with our Tech Members!



During the second half of 2023 we transitioned from using Digital Unite to Barclays Digital Eagles for our new Tech Angel training. We have to date been pleased with the interactive nature of the training program. In December we heard that they will no longer be running live online sessions that our new recruits can access, but will now be self guided units that the applicants will work through at their own pace.

We got our second edition of our quarterly newsletter out to all our volunteer Tech Angels at the end of January. This is one of the ways that we are encouraging our Tech Angels to continue to be more in touch with how our project is doing, as they are such an essential part of it.

If you need help with learning technology, if you need a tablet or a smart phone, or if you can't afford data to get online, get in touch with us. We can help.

## **NHS app summary**

NHS have recently updated their app, making it more user friendly and much more helpful to the patient than it was ever before. You can download the app on your phone from the Apple Store (iPhone) or from the Google store (Android). Once you register and log in, things you can do on the app include:

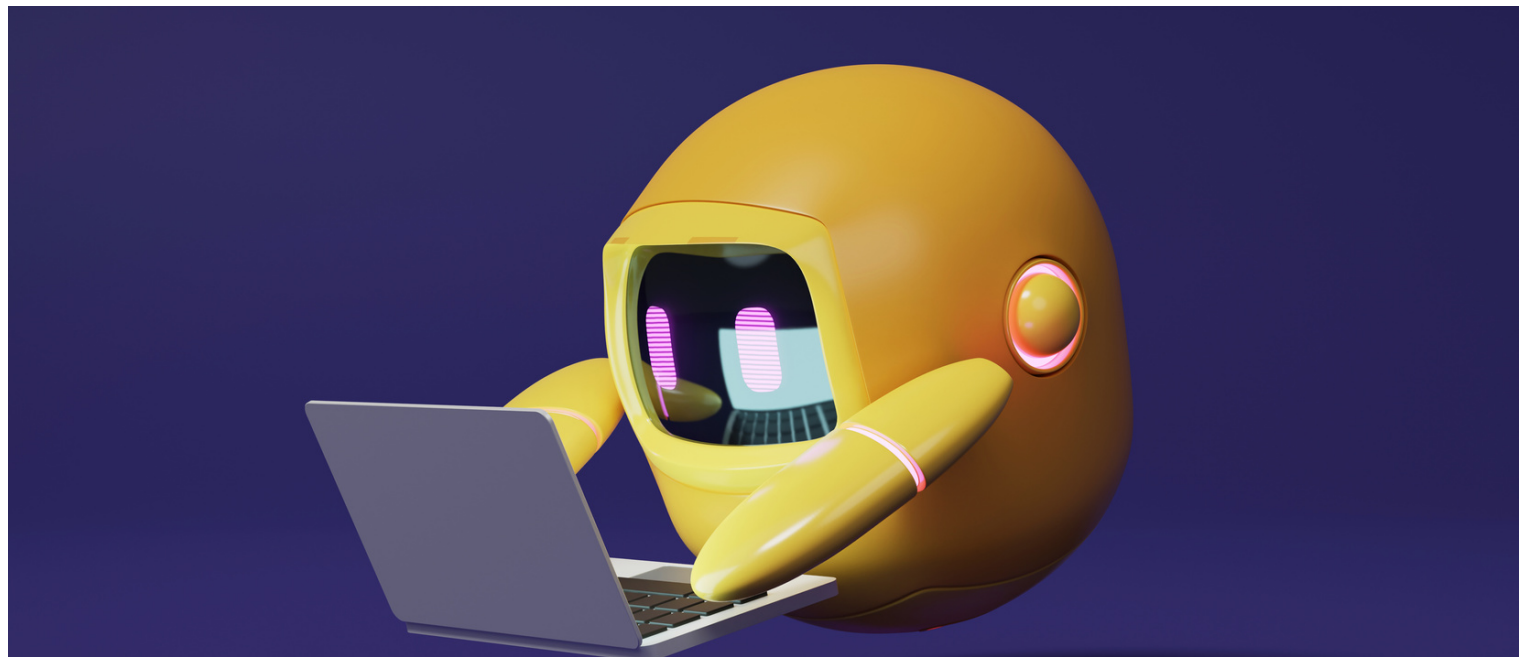
- Request repeat prescription
- See your existing appointments, and book new appointments with your GP
- Get your health record, which includes your current and past medicines, your repeat prescriptions, immunisations, health conditions and test results
- You can read all the medical letters sent to you or your GP
- You can contact your GP about a health problem, or to obtain documents or updates

There is also a lot of information about medicines, health conditions and Covid-19 guidance.

For a step by step guide on the NHS app please visit NHS England website: <https://digital.nhs.uk/services/nhs-app/toolkit/step-by-step-guides>

Or get in touch with us, and we will be more than happy to help you get started.

**Join our Disability Empowerment Network (DENS) Meetings. All DENS members are encouraged to attend to raise any concerns about crime and policing in the local area. Join us! If you would like to attend any of the DENS Group meetings, please contact the involvement team.**



## Woebot

In January 2022 the New Scientist published an article on the MH chatbots called Woebot. Here is a summary of the article.

The feeling of taking one glance at a screen and wanting to crawl back into bed changed after making friends with a strange creature named Woebot. Woebot is a digital assistant with feelings or an automated conversational agent. Users are finding it makes them feel better - and it might work for you too.

At random Woebot sends you messages that pop up on your phone. Woebot asks how you're doing rather than tempting you into doomscrolling. When you text Woebot your troubles, it will ask you friendly questions, encourage you and even tell you strange stories about its own life as a robot!

Alison Darcy who is a Psychology researcher at Stanford University, created it after integrating tech into therapeutic settings for years. The chatbot does admit that sometimes Woebot's responses will sound slightly off. It is still figuring out to interact with humans.

Woebot is a solution to one of the fundamental problems in mental health provision, according to Darcy. There are many barriers to access. Focusing on emotional access or as Darcy says "something to use in a moment of distress". Whether you're in bed at 2am or right after a stressful meeting at work, you can use Woebot at the exact moment you need it the most.

Darcy and her colleagues published a study last year showing that people are forming bonds with Woebot. It is working.

It might be healthier to bond with a robot than be "engaged" on social media, in the bizarre world of 2022.

# Mental Health Update



## **IMHN & Minority Ethnic Outreach and Engagement Officer**

In January, we had an insightful IMHN Coordinating meeting, where we delved into a cross-system project aiming to integrate physical and mental health services within our hospitals and emergency response teams across Surrey. Exciting stuff!

In February, Guy, the IMHN Coordinator, has lead the local stakeholder groups, where we heard about the fantastic work done by Megan, Wendy, and Charlotte over the past year to understand barriers for Surrey and NE Hants residents to accessing health services, and how they can become more accessible to all. Kudos to the team, we look forward to reading the full report in March!

Speaking of which, Guy's been collaborating with Jennie, the FoCUS Coordinator, to revamp our mental health project communications into a sleek new newsletter format. Keep an eye out for the next issue, currently in the works.

Meanwhile, Salem's been hard at work crafting a survey geared towards individuals from minority ethnic backgrounds - especially hoping to hear from men - to better understand the stigma surrounding mental health and the barriers to seeking help. So we can help advise Surrey and South Frimley on how to help people effectively.

## **FoCUS**

Our recent FoCUS Committee meeting tackled key issues raised in our December and January local area meetings. We brought these concerns to the table with Surrey and Borders Partnership (SABP) service managers and the priorities for the year ahead - because your voices matters!





Looking ahead, Jennie's gearing up for local area FoCUS group meetings in March. Any topics you'd love to see covered? Let us know! If you are interested in learning more about what we do at FoCUS meetings, please get in touch with Jennie who would be happy to chat with you.

## **Community Transformation Team**

Our team's on a mission to evaluate how integrated mental health services are functioning within our community. We have been focused on hearing from specific groups over the last year: Carers, men, LGBTQ+, Neurodiverse, those aged 65+, and minority ethnic communities. The team is committed to ensuring our research is guided by the voices and experiences of those with lived experience.

After hosting a series of enlightening co-production workshops, Megan and Wendy are now busy compiling recommendations. Stay tuned for the final report - it's shaping up to be a game-changer!

That's it for now folks! Stay tuned for more updates as we continue our journey towards better mental health support for all.

### **Virtual Social Events**

Did you know we run a programme of virtual social events most days of the working week? All of our social events are virtual and free of charge. A calendar at the end of this issue shows what is running each day! Want to know more about each social event? Further info can be found on our website.





## Get More Active

The Get More Active project has been busy over the winter! Despite the colder temperatures and shorter days Coalition members have found ways to be active.

In December, a group of eight Coalition members, staff and supporters returned to Dorney Lake for the Winter Wonderwheels event. This is the second event in the Superhero Tri series, and it follows a similar format with participants walking, wheeling, pushing, running or cycling a choice of distances around Dorney Lake. Five of the Coalition team walked and wheeled 5 kilometres and three people cycled 10 kilometres.

Despite some concerns about the weather and some traffic problems on the way we ended up staying relatively dry and warm. There was plenty of hot chocolate and Christmas carols to keep our spirits up, along with the usual amazing support and camaraderie from the superheroes organisation team. It was another day of laughter and enjoyment. Coalition members supported each other and showed great resilience to achieve their goals as well as raising money for the Coalition. We will be back for both the summer Superhero Triathlon and the Winter Wonderwheels in 2024, so if you would like to be involved, please do get in touch.

Get More Active Get Togethers are back for 2024! In January a small group met at Donyngs Leisure Centre in Redhill to investigate the accessibility of the centre and try out the swimming pools. Here's what Coalition member Graham had to say about the afternoon:



“I have recently joined the Coalition and was pleased to attend one of their ‘Get More Active Get Together’ events. The event in question was a quiet swimming session which took place on 26th January at Donyngs Leisure Centre in Redhill. It was a great opportunity for me to meet other Coalition members and staff. I used to swim a lot and love the water but since circumstances changed for me, I have not swum. However, it was good to get back in a swimming pool after many years!! The pool was warm, and I managed to swim a few lengths, more than I thought I could actually manage. Coalition staff were in the pool and poolside for support. I did ache somewhat the following day, but it was worth it!

All in all, a thoroughly enjoyable few hours and I’m looking forward to returning to the pool soon. I’ll definitely be attending future Get More Active Get Together events!”



Get Together's will be continuing through spring with activities such as golf, tennis, football and darts in the pipeline. We also plan to return to favourite venues such as Alice Holt cycling and Papercourt Sailing. Remember to check the weekly update for upcoming activities!

If you would like to join us for the Superhero events or on a Get More Active Get Together, please do get in touch with Katy.

Email: [Katy.hubbard@surreycoalition.org.uk](mailto:Katy.hubbard@surreycoalition.org.uk)

SMS/Phone: 07434 865062



# WEEKLY EVENTS

DAY	TIME	ACTIVITY
Every Monday	11am - 12pm	Virtual Café and craft discussion group
Every Tuesday	4pm - 5pm	Glee Club
Every Wednesday	2:30pm - 3:30pm	Book Chat
Every Thursday	2:30pm - 3:30pm	Quiz
Every Friday	11:30pm - 12:30pm	Virtual Café and Get More Active discussion group

Key: IMHN: Independent Mental Health Network FoCUS: Forum of Carers and people who Use our Services (this is a forum for people who use, or have used, or care for someone who has used, services from Surrey and Borders NHS Partnership Trust). DENS: Disability Empowerment Network

## Dates for your Diary

Our meetings are on zoom and in person as stated below.

For information about how to use Zoom conferencing for the first time, please check out our how-to guides on our website. If you would like some help, please do not hesitate to contact us and we can book a support session. The Zoom Links are available from the Involvement Team.

If you would like to join us in person, please let the involvement team know by email: [involvement@surreycoalition.org.uk](mailto:involvement@surreycoalition.org.uk)

# EVENTS APRIL

DATE	TIME	ACTIVITY
Monday 1st April	Bank Holiday	Bank Holiday
Tuesday 9th April	1pm - 2:30pm	East and Mid FoCUS in person at SABP HQ Leatherhead and on Zoom
Wednesday 10th April	10am - 11am	Northwest Surrey Mental Health Stakeholder Group on Zoom only
Wednesday 10th April	1pm - 2:30pm	Southwest FoCUS on zoom only
Thursday 11th April	1pm - 2pm	West and Northeast Hampshire FoCUS in person at Theta, Lyon Way, Frimley GU16 7ER and on Zoom
Monday 15th April	10:30am - 12pm	Community Equipment Group in person at Millbrook and on Zoom
Monday 15th April	1pm - 2:30pm	Northwest FoCUS on Zoom only
Thursday 18th April	10:30am - 12pm	Surrey Vision Action Group in person at Sight for Surrey Rentwood Office and on Zoom

Friday 26th April	1pm - 3pm	IMHN Coordinating meeting on zoom only
-------------------	-----------	--

# EVENTS MAY

DATE	TIME	ACTIVITY
Monday 6th May	Bank Holiday	Bank Holiday
Tuesday 14th May	10:30am - 12pm	Long Term Neurological Conditions Group on zoom only
Tuesday 14th May	1:45pm - 2:15pm and 2:30pm - 4pm	Focus Reps + Committee on Zoom only
Monday 20th May	6pm - 7:30pm	Surrey Wide Disability Empowerment Network on zoom
Tuesday 21st May	11am - 12:30pm	Surrey Wide DENS daytime with breakout rooms on zoom
Wednesday 22nd May	10:30am - 12pm	Southwest Disability Empowerment Network in person at Astolat Coniers Way Burpham Guildford GU4 7HL and on zoom
Monday 27th May	Bank Holiday	Bank Holiday
Friday 31st May	1pm - 3pm	IMHN Coordinating meeting on Zoom only



# EVENTS JUNE

DATE	TIME	ACTIVITY
Tuesday 4th June TBC	1pm - 2:30pm TBC	On Zoom TBC
Wednesday 5th June TBC	1pm - 2:30pm TBC	Southwest FoCUS in person at Guildford Baptist Church and on Zoom TBC
Monday 10th June TBC	1pm - 2:30pm TBC	NW FoCUS in person at Hythe Centre, Staines and on Zoom TBC
Wednesday 12th June	10am - 11am	Northwest Surrey Mental Health Stakeholder meeting on Zoom
Thursday 13th June	10am - 11am	East & Mid Surrey Mental Health Stakeholder Group on zoom only
Thursday 13th June	1pm - 2:30pm TBC	West and Northeast Hampshire Focus on Zoom
Thursday 20th June	10:30am - 12pm	Hard of Hearing Forum in person at Sight of Surrey Rentwood Office and on Zoom



## **We always love to hear from you**

Office:

Email: [info@surreycoalition.org.uk](mailto:info@surreycoalition.org.uk)

Phone 01483 456 558

SMS: 07908671402

Immy Markwick

FoCUS

Phone & SMS 07593 991 993

Yasmin Broome

Involvement

Phone & SMS 07455 267 424

Sylwia Squires

Tech Angel Project

Phone & SMS 07547 016 933

Guy Hill

Independent Mental Health Network

Coordinator

Phone & SMS 07305 009 869

Katy Hubbard

Get More Active Project

Phone & SMS 07434 865062



## Let us lead you in the right direction

With over 20 years of experience within direct payments, DhPayroll offers a simple yet comprehensive service that is both efficient and cost effective.

Our friendly and experienced staff are always on hand to answer queries and reassure anyone who is worried about their responsibilities as an employer.

### Join us today and benefit from:

- ✓ A payroll service provided by an experienced and helpful team.
- ✓ Free workplace pensions auto-enrolment set-up and support.
- ✓ Free text messaging reminder service.
- ✓ Free secure online portal for accessing payroll documents.
- ✓ Monthly Newslink updates, blogs and social media posts, to keep you up to date and in the know.
- ✓ An accessible website.
- ✓ Online submission of timesheets and other forms, for ease and accuracy.



# Get in touch today!