

AUTISM GM NEWSLETTER



www.autismgm.co.uk

Winter Edition 2021

Welcome to our Winter 2021 Newsletter

At the time of writing, we find ourselves in our third lockdown since March 2020 and I think most of us are all finding this tough. We just wanted to remind you that we are here for you (0161 998 4667). Remember that even though we are not in the office at the moment and we have a strange automated voice mail, I get an email with that voice mail immediately so don't be put off. Alternatively email us at mari.saeki@nas.org.uk or abigail.gibson@nas.org.uk and we can arrange a chat.

In February our colleague Emma Roberts is back from maternity leave and we will be back to being a team of 3. Even though we will not be able to be together in the office, we are delighted to have her back on board. We hope you enjoy this edition of the newsletter, and remember, we love to have contributions from you so get in touch if you have a burning desire to write an article, review a book or a film, tell us about something!

Mari Saeki- Project Lead for GMAC

AUTISMGM Newsletter
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Breaking news: Government proposal to change mental health law



The Government has published promising new [proposals](#) to change mental health law in England and Wales which could result in fewer autistic people being wrongly sent to mental health hospitals. This is a huge step forward. We and hundreds of thousands of campaigners have been calling for changes to mental health law for years, so it respects autistic people's rights. At the moment, it allows people to be sectioned because they're autistic – even though autism isn't a mental health problem. The proposals will change this in some really important ways.

It's right that the Government has listened and is taking action. But it's important to remember that these changes will take years to come into force and, crucially, won't end the scandal of autistic people being stuck in mental health hospitals alone. The Government and NHS need to stop autistic people reaching crisis in the first place, by investing in better social care and mental health services that work for autistic children and adults.

Background

The proposals are part of the Government's 'White Paper' on the Mental Health Act. White Papers are documents that set out what governments plan to do about certain issues. The Government is [consulting](#) on its proposals, so you can have your say on how to make sure the Mental Health Act works better for autistic people who have mental health problems.

Because the proposals need changes to the law, they will take around two years to come into force. During that time, the Government and the NHS need to continue to work to stop autistic people reaching crisis in the first place. This can be done by better investing in social care and mental health services and making sure that these actually work for autistic adults and children.

In 2019, we and autistic activist Alexis Quinn launched a petition calling on the Government to stop autistic people being inappropriately detained in mental health hospitals, get them discharged sooner and improve support in the community. Over 217,828 of you signed our petition, thank you. The Government heard your voices and today's White Paper includes many important things that will help make this happen.

Here are some of the main changes in the White Paper that will affect autistic people:

- **The definition of “mental disorder” in the Mental Health Act.** This definition currently includes autism, which means you can be sectioned for being autistic, even if you don't have a mental health condition. The White Paper proposes to change this for one important type of 'section', sometimes called a 'section 3'. This would mean that autistic people couldn't be sectioned for longer than 28 days unless it is to treat another mental health condition. Autistic people could still be detained in two circumstances:

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- For “assessment” for up to 28 days (sometimes called a ‘section 2’). If during this time the assessment does not find a mental health condition, then there would no longer be grounds to detain the autistic person.
- In cases where otherwise it would mean someone would go to prison (sometimes called “criminal justice” or “Part 3” sections). This would mean that autistic people could still be diverted away from prison to get more support.

This is a very big and welcome change. We hope that it will mean that fewer autistic people are sectioned because they’re autistic or because of misunderstandings about their actions or needs.

Making Care and Treatment Review actions enforceable. Care and Treatment Reviews (CTRs) are held by clinicians and other professionals responsible for people’s care and can help autistic people get discharged sooner. But too often their recommendations and actions aren’t followed. The proposals in the White Paper mean that actions agreed in CTRs would be included in new statutory care and treatment plans, which would be looked at by mental health tribunals and could be enforced.

We have been calling for legal backing behind the actions in CTRs to make sure they are actually followed.

This proposal is positive because Mental Health Tribunals will now be able to make sure CTR actions are followed, which we hope means many autistic people get out of hospital sooner.

The introduction of a duty to provide adequate community services. Too many autistic people get stuck in mental health hospitals because there aren’t the right services to support them in their homes. In the White Paper, the Government says there will be a duty for councils, NHS England and local health decision makers to provide enough services for autistic people in their area.

These services could include: enough mental health services, better supported housing or more social groups to stop people becoming lonely and developing mental health problems.

We have [called for many years for stronger duties](#) to provide community services. We hope that with more community support, this can prevent autistic people reaching crisis in the first place and that no autistic person will have to stay in an institution because there is nowhere else to go. But we need to know more about how this duty will be monitored to make sure it’s working. And it is important to remember that many of these services will need more investment in social care, which is desperately needed.

Changes to “detention criteria”. When someone is sectioned, they have to meet the “detention criteria”, which means as well as professionals agreeing that you have a “mental disorder”, they must also agree that you are at risk of harm, or harming other people.

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The White paper sets out some key changes to this criteria, the Government says for someone to be sectioned it must be demonstrated that:

- The purpose of the care and treatment has a clear “therapeutic benefit” to the person
- The same treatment cannot be done in the community
- That there is a “substantial likelihood” of harm – they will be revising the act so it is clear how serious this harm must be or how likely it is that the harm will occur in order to justify someone being sectioned.

These important changes to the detention criteria could make a big difference in the number of autistic people who are sectioned.

In addition to this, other key proposals mentioned in the paper include, more frequent reviews of the decision to be detained, more choices available to people over their treatment and improved support for those who are sectioned with better access to help from advocates.

Have your say

You can have your say in this consultation by responding to the [Government's survey](#).

Some additional things you might want to consider are:

- Do you think the changes for autistic people are good?
- What should be included in training for mental health professionals?
- What community services are needed to stop autistic people going into hospital?
- Why it’s important that mental health law recognises that autism is not a mental health condition and cannot be “treated”.

Anything from your own experience that you think is relevant and you are comfortable to share with the Government.

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FAQs

What is the Mental Health Act and what does it do?

The Mental Health Act is the law which sets out when you can be admitted, detained and treated in a mental health hospital. It is also known as being 'sectioned'. For this to happen, certain people must agree that you have a 'mental disorder'. They also need to think you are putting your own safety or someone else's at risk.

Being sectioned can mean that you are treated even if you don't want the treatment. However, you have certain rights under the Mental Health Act, including the right to appeal and the right to get help from an advocate.

Mental health and autism

Autism is not a mental health condition, but often, due to a lack of recognition of their autism and because of inappropriate support, many children and adults on the autism spectrum develop mental health problems. You can find out more about autism and mental health on [our website](#) and **you can read more about what we are doing to support autistic people's mental health in [our blog](#).**

What happens next?

The Government will be [gathering feedback](#) on these changes which is a great opportunity to have your say on what the changes in the Act will mean for autistic people.

They will gather feedback until 21 April 2021. After this time, depending on the feedback they may make changes to the White paper before it becomes the final Bill. The Bill is then taken to Parliament for them to debate and vote on it before it becomes law. This means it will take some time for these changes to come into force.

The Government's proposed timings for this are:

- A 12-week consultation gathering responses to the White Paper
- Final policy decisions and the publication of their response to the consultation
- Draft Bill ready for pre-legislative scrutiny
- Then it will go through a number of Parliamentary sessions to be debated by both the House of Commons and the House of Lords

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- It will then be formally Introduced in Parliament
- Starting to implement new laws introduced in the bill

Full implementation

Further information

For confidential support and advice, including our Autism Helpline and [Autism Inpatient Mental Health Service](#) casework service, visit the [Help and Support section of our website](#).

Bringing us Together have produced this very useful [Survival Guide](#) for care and treatment reviews.

[Read about our campaign to stop the scandal of autistic people being wrongly admitted to hospital.](#)

The All Party Parliamentary Group on Autism, with support from our charity, held an inquiry into the state of support and services for autistic people in England – 10 years on from the Autism Act. Find out more by reading about out [Not Enough campaign](#).

Read [Alexis' story](#) about being “locked inside” various mental health hospitals for three years.

If you're a professional looking to build your knowledge of autism and mental health, look out for our [conference](#) 11 March 2021.

Helpful Resources available via the National Autistic Society website

The NAS website now have a number of resources in relation to navigating services in relation to Coronavirus protocol. They may be helpful to be aware of and explore during these times:

<https://www.autism.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/topics/coronavirus>

Will the buses pick you up tomorrow as usual? (Article written by Ben Stone: Autistic adult living in Greater Manchester)

Hi all, Ben Stone is a font of knowledge on all things buses and agreed to write us this article to introduce the TfGM survey at the bottom. The views expressed here are Ben's own and we really appreciate him doing this for us as it's a lively history of the buses in GM.

Will the buses pick you up tomorrow as usual?

Throughout most of the 20th century and even when I was growing up, bus services were operated by local/county authorities. In Greater Manchester, prior to 1974 when the county was created, bus services were operated by local councils. In 1969, with the onset of the new Metropolitan County of Greater Manchester planned to supersede parts of South East Lancashire (including Manchester, Salford, Oldham, Bury, north Stockport, etc), north east Cheshire & north west Derbyshire (including Sale, Altrincham, south Stockport) and the West Riding of Yorkshire (Springhead, Uppermill and Diggle), all bus services in the area were amalgamated and run by SELNEC (South East Lancashire, North East Cheshire). It was the predecessor of Greater Manchester Transport and all their buses carried a cream and orange livery. In 1974, when Greater Manchester was born, SELNEC became Greater Manchester Transport (GMT) and the buses retained the orange livery, alongside the GMT logo.

For 12 years in my opinion, GMT was a well-run operation with comprehensive bus services, numerous depots across the county, with good fleets, many bodied by Northern Counties, based in Wigan. Because GMT was state run, providing a service was the main aim, not making a profit. It was funded by Greater Manchester County Council and the 10 county district councils.

The writing for bus privatization was on the wall in 1983, when, following the Falklands War, the Conservative Party won a landslide general election. In 1983, just like in 2019, the Labour leader Michael Foot helped the Tories to a big majority. The DNA of the Conservative Party is to control from the centre and have power in the hands of the few (Margaret Thatcher did not like counties such as Greater London and Greater Manchester having such local powers and believed these powers should reside at Westminster. Apart from anything else, all the Metropolitan County Councils were Labour councils, so in April 1986, Greater Manchester County Council, along with the others were all abolished. Greater Manchester went from being a county with an identity to a fragmented area of 10 unitary councils – divide and rule. In October 1986, all bus services in England with the exception of Greater London were privatized.

Overnight in Greater Manchester, several depots were closed (including my local depot), bus services were cut, numbers & routes changed and other operators were allowed to run services. The irony was that most of these operators were using ex-GMT buses to run these services and often duplicated existing services on routes such as Wilmslow Road. GMT became GMPTE, who lost most of their role, but still were responsible for bus stops, bus stations, timetables, etc. GM Buses took over the GMT bus services, but in 1994, it was decided that they were stifling competition and were split into two companies. These were both shortly taken over by First and Stagecoach – so much for privatization and competition. The orders for new buses plummeted, so the whole supply chain was affected and Northern Counties is consigned to history.

Having lived through both, I believe that bus privatization has failed and I would like to see Transport for Greater Manchester operating bus and Metrolink services directly. The pandemic has exposed how vulnerable bus services are as private bus companies exist to make a profit and with falling passenger numbers, without subsidies, many bus services are unviable because they are loss-making due to having so few passengers, so the stock value is low. Rather than paying to run mostly empty buses, the money would be better spent acquiring the buses directly. I do believe that companies such as First, Diamond and Go North West if made a modest offer for their fleets/depots, they wouldn't think twice at accepting it.

TfGM are making changes to buses in GM. Many autistic people (myself included) and their families rely on the buses and may have views on this, and GMCA who have been tasked with running the consultation are really keen to hear from a diverse set of voices. The consultation will run until 29 January and is being hosted on gmconsult.org. If you are interested, use the link below to read what is being proposed:

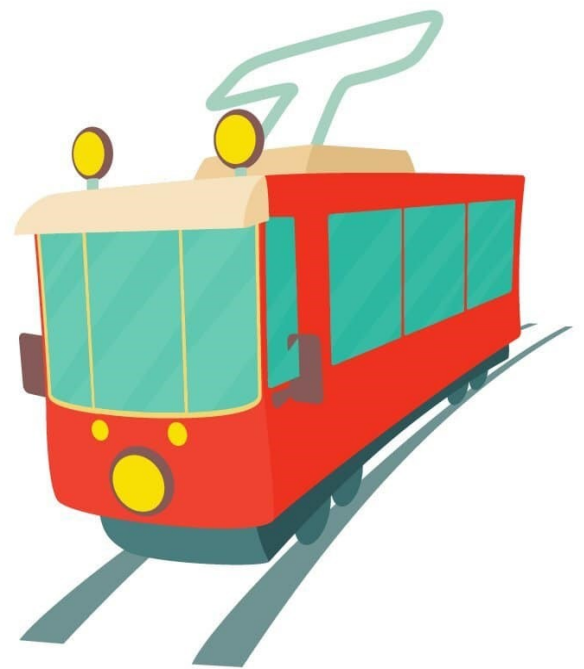
https://www.gmconsult.org/strategy-team/greater-manchester-bus-consultation/?utm_source=Paid%20Search&utm_medium=Google&utm_campaign=Bus%20consultation&gclid=CjwKCAiAt9z-BRBCEiwA_bWv-AeR6pb4iPZp7wR5j3FGV8nwFV_4XOyCnME5gNZu7MhOPbDJR9itRoCKCwQAvD_BwE

The consultation will run until 29 January and is being hosted on gmconsult.org.

Disability Design Reference Group - searching for a new member!

Are you an autistic person, who lives or works, and uses public transport in Greater Manchester?

The DDRG is a reference group working with TfGM to ensure public transport is inclusive and accessible. To cover the requirements of our work, members have a range of impairments and lived experiences. If you are an autistic person and have knowledge of travelling on public transport independently, we'd love to hear from you!



For more information phone 0161 234 3950 or email admin@breakthrough-uk.co.uk or visit www.breakthrough-uk.co.uk and search vacancies.

Helpful Podcasts, Media links and websites to explore

Autism peer is a new set up that aims to support the mental health needs of autistic young people, and there are a variety of resources available, including a video from autistic adult Andy Smith:

<https://autismpeer.education/>



Spectrum Gaming was set up by a group of autistic advocates who wanted to create a friendly and accepting community for autistic people who have a shared passion for gaming:

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCfd9V_w9g6kPRDg1oaXEzhg



Cripchat UK is a podcast run by autistic adult Peter Marshall. Peter is very insightful and has very interesting viewpoints: <https://cripchat.podbean.com/>



1800 seconds of autism is a podcast with a variety of topics from home, family and humour. this is a funny and enlightening podcast With autistic hosts Robyn Steward, Jamie Knight and guests:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p06sdq0x>

If you would like to get in touch, to share any a recommendations for podcasts, books, websites or anything else then please get in touch with the GMAC team and we can share these.

CONTACT abigail.gibson@nas.org.uk

New GMAC Resources

The past 12 months have been tough but I wanted to remind people that we have not been idle here at GMAC and in the wider community of people involved with the GM Autism Strategy. All of the resources listed below are on our website but can be hard to find if you do not know what you are looking for (we are aware that it needs work and we are planning a major overhaul during 2021!) so here is a quick guide and reminder.

Parent Seminars- Our Parent Facilitators have created narrated videos of the Managing Anger and Sensory seminars. The seminars are split into 4 sections to make it easier to dip in and out <https://www.autismgm.org.uk/parent-seminar-resources> There are also PDFs of the booklets available on the site.

Once you have done the seminars, we are offering Webinars to discuss the seminars with up to 4/5 other parents.

We are getting feedback that many of you do not have the time for the seminars currently, so we are also offering more informal parent Drop ins with our Parent Seminar Facilitators. For both the webinars and the Drop ins get in touch with Abigail on abigail.gibson@nas.org.uk

As part of the GM Autism Strategy, we have also developed a few resources around housing. These documents were published in September 2020 and cover the following issues:

Ø A guide for autistic and/or learning disabled people in Greater Manchester who need help due to threat of eviction

Ø A guide to renting a home for autistic and/or learning disabled people in Greater Manchester

Ø A guide for private rented sector landlords to supporting autistic and/or learning-disabled tenants in Greater Manchester

Ø A guide for council and housing association landlords to supporting autistic and/or learning-disabled tenants in Greater Manchester

Ø A guide for housing support organisations to supporting autistic and/or learning-disabled customers in Greater Manchester All these documents can be found here <https://www.autismgm.org.uk/gm-housing-resources>

We have also developed a number of resources on transition between adulthood and childhood for autistic young people. This includes a template for use in reviews. The template has been designed for young people without an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP) but we think it could also be useful for those with an EHCP as the checklists are autism specific. Those resources can be found here <https://www.autismgm.org.uk/blank>

There are also some more resources aimed at parents of young people in transition. Those cover the Care Act 2014, Benefits for adults with autism- Personal Independence Payment (PIP) and Benefits for adults- Employment Support Allowance (ESA). Those are here <https://www.autismgm.org.uk/resources-for-individuals-with-auti>

We are planning to add more resources over the coming months so keep in touch with us. I have a mailing list called GMAC Stakeholders for anyone interested in regular updates and information. I usually end out emails around once a week so if you would like to be kept informed more regularly then get in touch with me on:

mari.saeki@nas.org.uk and I will add you to this mailing list.

How are you doing?

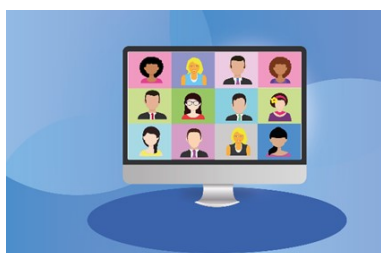


Lockdown restrictions are impacting families with children on the autism spectrum and many parents are finding themselves further isolated.

GMAC face-to-face parent seminars are on hold at the moment due to



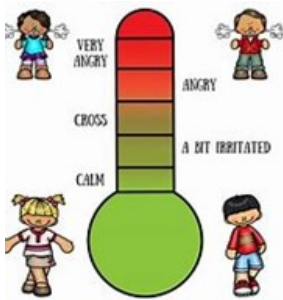
GMAC Parent drop-in sessions via Zoom:



GMAC are holding some parent drop in sessions, we can provide all the technical information on how to join us online via Zoom.



Join a small group of parents in an online group to share ideas on sensory needs or anger issues and to connect with other parents in a safe space without judgement.



We now have our Managing Anger and Sensory Needs seminars available to watch on our website:

<https://www.autismgm.org.uk/parent-seminar-resources>



This may not be something you have the headspace for at the moment but if you are interested in any of the online sessions then please contact the GMAC team.



Telephone: 0161 998 4667

Email: abigail.gibson@nas.org.uk



More than **1 / 100** of us is autistic – that's one person on every other street.

The challenges and joys of parenting an autistic child can be a lonely and confusing journey. 'Somewhere only we know' a new podcast by parents to support and empower parents and other family members and provide the kind of life lessons we can all learn from. Launching soon on **AUTISMGM.ORG.UK**



Hayley, Samera and Kay will pick apart topics sharing personal insights, quizzing trusted advisers, and tackling listeners' own issues.

The flexibility of podcast listening and the friendly hosts will offer a new lifeline to ASC parents whether you're listening when out walking the dog, relaxing with a cuppa or even doing the chores!

Connect with an autism parenting community through the podcast and hear some much-needed light relief with surprising, touching and funny stories.



The episodes are currently being recorded; topics including early, late and female diagnosis, family dynamics, schooling, nutrition, double empathy and mental health.

If you would like to get in touch, share stories, ask questions or want us to cover a topic you think would be of interest to our listeners,

CONTACT abigail.gibson@nas.org.uk



Do you worry about your child being exploited or autistic children/children with learning disabilities that you work with being exploited?

We have received funding to be able to run some workshops looking at these different areas of exploitation:

- Cybercrime
- Radicalisation
- Child Sexual Exploitation
- County Lines
- Fraud

The **parent** sessions will be give you information about these different types of exploitation, what to be aware of and ideas for how you can help your child. You can choose whichever one(s) are most relevant or of most interest to you. All sessions will be delivered online and will last about an hour. They will be delivered from March to June this year. **If you are interested in any or all of these sessions, please register your interest by contact: clare.hughes@nas.org.uk**

Dates for all sessions will be circulated shortly.

The **professionals** sessions will provide you with information about specific issues relating to autistic young people/young people with learning disabilities and exploitation, communication and interview techniques and the impact stress and anxiety can have on young people's susceptibility and ability to learn and engage. As with the parent sessions, all sessions will be delivered online and will last about an hour. They will be delivered from March to June this year. **If you are interested in any or all of these sessions, please register your interest by contact: clare.hughes@nas.org.uk**

Dates for all sessions will be circulated shortly.



ASD Parent Support Groups

BOLTON

Breaking Barriers

Contact: Steph Sherrat
Tel: 07717434840
Email: breakbarriers3@gmail.com

Bolton Adult Asperger Support Group

Contact: Graham Heywood
Tel: 07772547158
Email: g.heywood@gmail.com

BURY

Bury Autism/Asperger Syndrome Support Group

Contact: Chris Parkinson
Tel: 0161 763 4867
Email: burycarers@yahoo.co.uk

Bury Autism Parent Society

Contact: Joanne & Tony Moran
Tel: 0161 761 0132

MANCHESTER

Chinese Carers of Autistic Children Group

Contact: Helen Chow
Tel: 0161 228 0138

Grange School Parents Group

Contact: Laura Rhodes
Tel: 0161 498 0312
Email:
emma.caring@gmaddventures.org.uk

OLDHAM

OSCA

Contact: Marie Aspin
Tel: 07913672175

ROCHDALE

Littleborough Autism, Asperger Syndrome and ADHD Support Triangle (L.A.A.S.T)

Contact: Liesl Beckles
Tel: 07980983872
(Telephone Contact Only)

You Are Not Alone (YANA)

Monthly support group with activities for the children
Tel: 0161 655 3827

Rochdale Homestart Parent Support Group & Sam's SIBS Sibling Group

Tel: 01706 629 651 and 01706 436 143
Email:

sam.hsrb@gmail.com

www.homestartrochdale.org.uk

The Recovery Republic Well-Being Centre/Autism and Asperger's Parents Group

Contact: Carina Jackson
Tel: 01706 622 722 OR 07771523775
Email: carina.jackson@icloud.com
info@recoveryrepublic.co.uk
www.recoveryrepublic.co.uk

SALFORD

Salford Action for Autism (SAFA)

Contact: Kay
Tel: 07858 495266
www.salford-action-for-autism.com

Autism & Friends

Contact: Sandra Moore
Tel: 07544 649696

Sensory Stay and Play

Tel: 0161 778 0051
Email: belve-
dere.childrenscentre@salford.gov.uk

STOCKPORT

Stockport Autism Team Parent Support Group

Contact: Cheryl Knupfer
Email: Cheryl.knupfer@stockport.gov.uk

Stockport Carers for Adults on the Autistic Spectrum

Contact: Rayonette Jude
Tel: 0161 439 0627
Email: stockportCAAS@gmail.com

TAMESIDE

TASCA

Contact: Valerie & Neil Bayley
Tel: 077548 73480 (mon-Fri 9am-330pm only)
Email: tasca4u@ntlworld.com
www.tasca.org.uk

Tameside Asperger Syndrome Support Group

Contact: Julie Scrymgeour
Tel: 0161 716 3600
Email: Julie.scrymgeour@nhs.net

Tameside Autism Support for Parents & Carers

Contact: Gerard Ratchford
Tel: 0161 304 5364

THE AUTISTIC SOCIETY GREATER MANCHESTER AREA (ASGMA)

A group for parents of children & adults with Asperger's syndrome.

Also holds a monthly family group session on Saturday mornings.

For further information regarding dates and times please contact the ASGMA Information Officer

Tel: 0161 866 8483

OR email:

information@asgma.org.uk

www.asgma.org.uk



National Network of Parent Carer Forums
'Our Strength is our Shared Experience'
www.nnpcf.org.uk

PARENT/CARER FORUMS IN GREATER MANCHESTER

Parent Carer Forums are groups of parents and carers of disabled children who work with local authorities, education, health and other providers to make sure the services they plan and deliver meet the needs of disabled children aged between 0-25yrs and families.

Bolton

Bolton Parent Carers

<https://www.boltonparents.org.uk>

Telephone: 07715 201798

Email: info@boltonparents.org.uk

SALFORD

Salford Parent Voice

Tel: 0161 603 6833

Email: info@salfordfamilyforum.org

www.salfordfamilyforum.org

BURY

BURY2GETHER

<https://www.bury2gether.co.uk/>

Email: bury2gether@gmail.com

STOCKPORT

Parents In Partnership (PIPS)

07786 101 072

Email: info@pipstockport.org

www.pipstockport.org/index.html

MANCHESTER

Manchester Carer Forum

Tel: 0161 819 2226

Email: info@manchestercarersforum.org.uk

<http://www.manchestercarersforum.org.uk/>

Manchester Parent Carer Forum (Previously known as PACT).

Tel: Not yet available

Email:

info@manchesterparentcarerforum.org.uk

<http://manchesterparentcarerforum.org.uk>

TAMESIDE

Our Kids Eyes (OKE)

Tel: 0161 371 20084

Email: ourkidseyes@ntlworld.com

www.ourkidseyes.org/contact-us/

TRAFFORD

Trafford Parents Forum

Tel: 0161 872 0183

Email: traffordparentsforum@gmail.com

www.traffordparentsforum.org

WIGAN

Wigan Parent Carer Forum

Tel: 01942 233323

Email:

parentparticipation@embracewiganandleigh.org.uk

www.embracewiganandleigh.org.uk

OLDHAM

Parent Carer Forum: Point

<https://www.point-send.co.uk/>

Telephone: 0161 503 1547

Email: admin@point-send.co.uk