

## CANadda members enjoyed a coffee morning with Mr Stephen Phillips MP

On Friday the 20<sup>th</sup> of May at 11.05am Stephen Phillips MP turned up at the Washingborough Methodist Church. Debbie Marshall Chair of CANadda invited Stephen Phillips MP along to the church to give concerned members the opportunity to ask questions to Stephen Phillips about the benefit reform.

Debbie Marshall applauds the fact that the Government want to seek out the dishonest people that are claiming and working the benefit system, but she is afraid for the innocent people especially the people that have a hidden disability will lose out.

When you have a physical disability you can see it, but if you have a condition called Asperger's Syndrome (otherwise known as Autism Spectrum Disorder ASD) which is a mild form of Autism, it is a hidden disability and not always obvious initially.

It was a good turn out Friday morning with a diversity of different people and backgrounds who had a variety of questions and some very good points were raised. Stephen Phillips took on board everything and is taking everyone's concerns and valuable points of view back to central government.

We all realise and understand about the cuts, people on the Autistic Spectrum aren't looking for more money but they are fearful that they are going to lose their current benefits - it is also about how the government spend and make better use of the money they have. People with the condition find it extremely hard to get employed yet a high percentage of them want to find work. It is hard for people with ASD as from the start when applying for a job if they are honest on the application form about their disability, they then find it hard to get an interview and then they feel discriminated against, which then leaves them having no chance in actually getting a paid position.

One third of adults in the UK with an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) are currently without employment or access to benefits. Only 15% have a full-time job. 79% of those on incapacity benefit want to work.

People with this condition can have a great amount of knowledge as they think differently and learn differently, giving them strengths in various areas. Some adults with an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) have the ability to succeed with the right level of support.

There are many famous people and professionals who have a learning disability or condition and are very successful. They offer a wide range of talents and skills in their chosen profession. They will have average or above average intelligence. Many lead a very normal life without the need for support. Inclusion of people with ASD can bring a lot of advantages to companies and the world around us. It is the lack of understanding that may deter employers from hiring.

**What is Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)?** An Autism Spectrum Disorder varies from person to person. Fundamentally it means that there is a reduced level of ability in the following areas: Social Communication, Social Interaction and Social Imagination. ASD is a lifelong developmental disorder and people with ASD may demonstrate repetitive behaviour patterns, narrow obsessional interests and resistance to change. They can have unusual sensitivity to their environments. It can affect how they talk with people – they can be very literal, not understanding jokes, lack understanding when to start or end a conversation and not knowing what to talk about. They find it hard to make and maintain friendships, lack awareness of social rules, can find others confusing and unpredictable, they may have inappropriate behaviours and manners.

Children with ASD don't grow out of it once they enter into adulthood, there is no "cure" and it is a lifelong condition. ASD is not a mental illness but people (whether diagnosed or not) will probably go through life experiencing difficulties as they encounter communication problems, ASD affects how they relate to other people, and also how they see and make sense of the world around them. People can be extremely sensitive to specific sensory stimuli and this varies depending on the individual.

When a situation goes wrong for a person with ASD, it may be confusing for them as they're trying to make sense of what has happened and where it has gone wrong as they lack understanding of it. Anxiety is a real difficulty for lots of people with ASD. It affects a person psychologically and physically. Anxiety may affect the mind and the body for a person with ASD. It can affect a person's day to day life, when they are stressed they take less information in as they may not be functioning really well, their brain just stops working to its full potential.

It can take a lot out of a person; it can be very tiring and draining and can take them two or three days to get back to normal. A person who struggles with anxiety can be affected differently to people who normally work well with understanding and rules. Some people may experience a meltdown; this can have a big impact on their lives. The person may experience rumbling before a meltdown or a trigger (fight or flight). After a meltdown the person needs space and time to recover as it can take days or weeks to get better. The person that is recovering may find it hard to get out of bed in the morning as they have no energy, they may be withdrawn, want to hide away, lack confidence or be confused.

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