



# Welcome Pack

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# About Leeds Autism AIM



Leeds Autism AIM is a free service. We provide advocacy, information and signposting, peer support, post-diagnostic support, mentoring and run autistic-led peer groups.

We are co-led by and run for autistic adults aged 18 and over in Leeds who get little or no funded support.

Our service is part of The Advonet Group, a Leeds-based independent advocacy charity. This helps us to have an advocacy approach, ensuring that everyone we work with is heard and has their rights met.

Most of our paid staff are autistic themselves, as are some of our volunteers, including autism mentors and steering group members.

We can meet you in person at our office or at the Lovell Park Hub. We can also meet you remotely, using either email, phone call, WhatsApp, Microsoft Teams or Zoom.

## Make a referral to Leeds Autism AIM

If you would like to access any of Leeds Autism AIM's services, we have an online referral form to fill in. Once completed, we will be in touch. To access it, scan the QR code or go to [tinyurl.com/leedsautismaimreferral](https://tinyurl.com/leedsautismaimreferral)



# What we do and don't do



## We do:

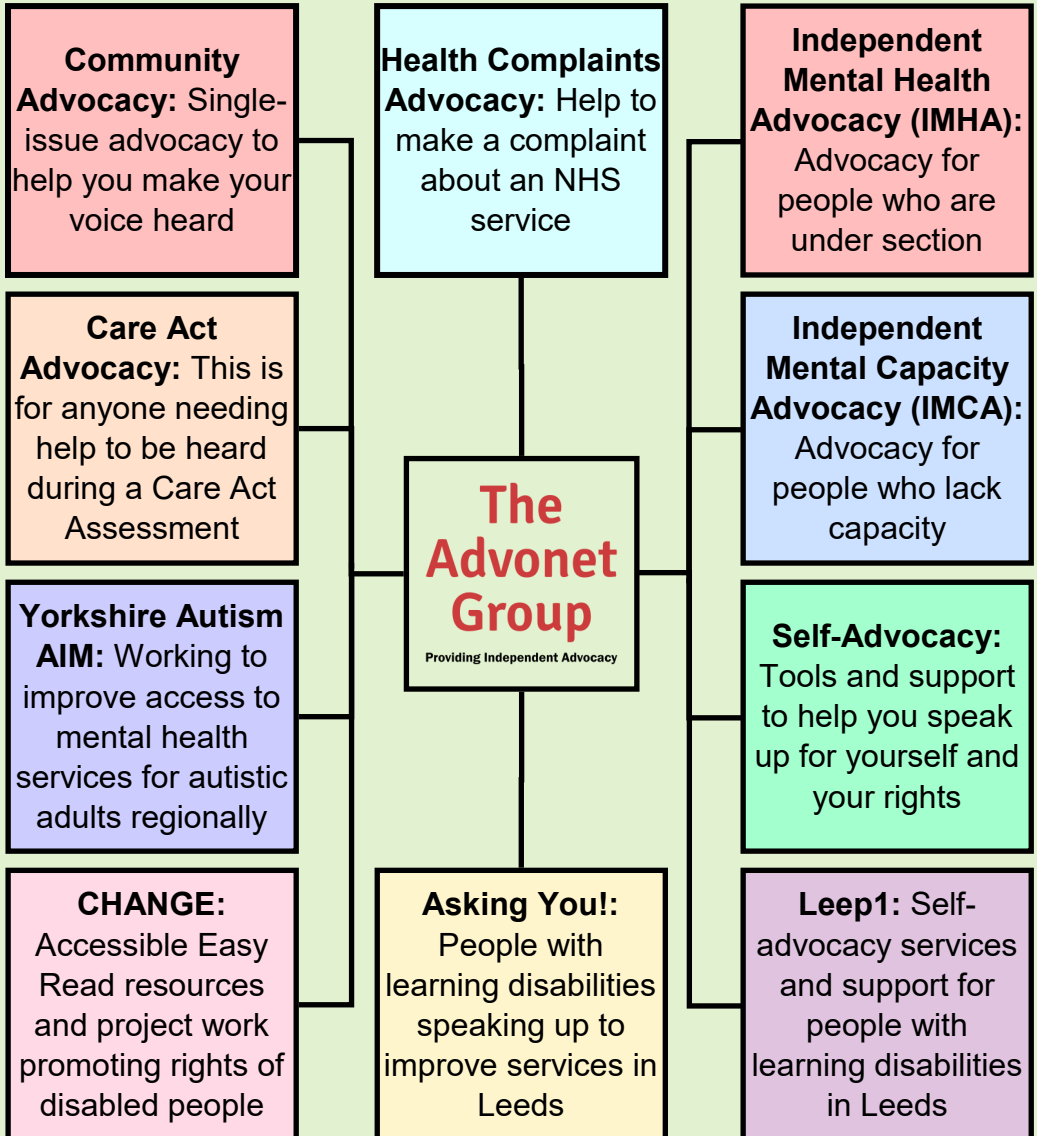
- Offer advocacy to help you with issues such as benefits and accessing local services
- Run autistic-led peer groups online and in person
- Offer one-to-one peer support and post-diagnostic support
- Produce free personalised self-advocacy resources such as autism alert cards
- Work with autistic adults aged 18 and over in Leeds
- Give information and signpost you to any services or support you want to access

## We do not:

- Work with anyone aged under 18
- Offer autism diagnoses ourselves
- Provide support workers
- Work with anyone who either lives outside the Leeds City Council area or is not registered with a GP in Leeds

# The Advonet Group

We are part of The Advonet Group, an independent advocacy charity in Leeds. They have lots of other advocacy and inclusion services that are all connected to us. Read all about them in the diagram below.



# Meet the team



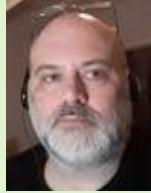
**Beth MacDonald**  
Volunteer Coordinator



**Cat Foote**  
Universal Advocate



**Chris Hattrell**  
Coordinator



**David Radford**  
Hub Supporter



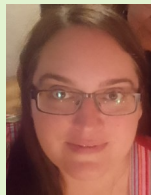
**Georgia Holden-Burnett**  
Peer Development  
Worker



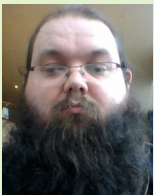
**Gill Loomes-Quinn**  
Peer Development  
Worker



**Jane Stark**  
Deputy Manager



**Lex Ragaliauskas**  
Peer Development  
Worker



**Luke Aylward**  
Information Officer



**Owen Walker**  
Leeds Autism AIM  
Manager



**Trudi Longbottom**  
Peer Development  
Worker

# Advocacy



We have an advocate in our team who can help make your voice heard and get your rights upheld. Advocacy can help you with issues like:

- Accessing services and support you want or need in Leeds
- Benefits - applications and appealing decisions on PIP, ESA and Universal Credit
- Being heard when trying to make a complaint about a service you have accessed
- Housing - whether it is where you live at the moment or if you are wanting to move somewhere and have support in place
- Accessing healthcare

Our Advocate can meet with you in person in our office or at the Lovell Park Hub. If you prefer, they can also meet you remotely by phone, email, text chat or video call via WhatsApp, Zoom or Microsoft Teams.

## Advocacy from The Advonet Group

As part of The Advonet Group, we are linked to their advocacy services including areas like sections and NHS care. To make a referral, scan the QR code or go to [advonet.org.uk/referrals](https://advonet.org.uk/referrals)



# Self-Advocacy



As well as providing advocacy to help make your voice heard, Leeds Autism AIM can also support you to speak up for yourself.

Speaking up for yourself, your rights and wishes is called self-advocacy. We have many free self-advocacy resources, including:

- Leeds Autism Alert Card: A free card made by us, West Yorkshire Police and other local services where you can communicate your needs when unable to speak up by showing it to people
- Autism Health Passport: Made by local NHS services, us and Leeds Mind, it is a profile where you can say what your sensory and communication needs are when using NHS services in Leeds
- One-page employment profile: A profile where you can talk about your autism, strengths, difficulties and how employers can help you
- Resources from our Health Access Project: These include a pain scale, symptom diary and mental fatigue scale

## Video: What is Self-Advocacy?

The Advonet Group's Self-Advocacy team made a short video to explain what self-advocacy is and how some of their free resources work. Watch it at <https://youtube.com/watch?v=i23mL2Anhu8>





# Info, signposting, access to services



We are able to provide information on any local services that you may want to access. We can do this in one-to-one booked appointments, via email, phone, text chat or video call. There is also plenty of information on our website about local services and support available.

As well as giving information, we can also signpost you in the direction of services you would like to access. We can signpost to services like diagnosis, mental health, GPs, housing, education and employment.

## Accessing services

A big part of what we do is trying to improve access to local services such as housing and healthcare for autistic adults. We do this by:

- Providing training to organisations around the needs of autistic adults, delivered by autistic members of our staff team
- Sharing consultations via social media and our newsletter
- Speaking to you one-to-one to see how we can help make the services you want to use more accessible
- Passing on feedback about services and supporting you if needing to make a complaint about a service you have accessed
- Through our Health Access Project's work, giving feedback on local NHS services

# Mentoring



Our autism mentors are volunteers who support autistic adults by:

- Meeting regularly with a mentee, either in person or remotely. This is usually once every two weeks
- Helping you, as a mentee, to identify, set and achieve life goals
- Work together on a mentoring plan, which includes life goals
- Signposting the mentee to any useful services they say they would like to access

All of our mentors will have received training on autism awareness and mentoring from autistic members of our staff team. There is also an induction session at the end of the training about volunteering with us.

Mentoring is free to access. It is for autistic adults aged 18 and over in the Leeds area who get little or no funded support.

If you would like a mentor to help you set and achieve your goals, please get in touch with us by emailing Beth MacDonald, our Volunteer Coordinator at **[Beth.MacDonald@advonet.org.uk](mailto:Beth.MacDonald@advonet.org.uk)**.

Please also email Beth if you would like to become a volunteer mentor yourself.

# One-to-one peer support



We have AIM staff there to facilitate one-to-one peer support. Peer support is when people use their own experiences to help each other. All of our peer support workers are autistic and use their own experiences to help others understand what it means to be autistic.

This service involves appointments, which can be held in person or via text chat. In the appointments, we offer:

- Information on what it means to be autistic
- Tips on managing day-to-day
- Information on any services you can access
- Greater understanding of different issues that affect autistic people
- Support from someone with lived experience of being autistic

Please note that you can have up to **four** peer support sessions.

## How to book

If you would like to access one-to-one peer support from us and haven't made an online referral to our service before, please refer at [tinyurl.com/leedsautismaimreferral](https://tinyurl.com/leedsautismaimreferral).

If you want peer support but have referred to us before, please contact us. We will then be in touch to arrange an appointment with you.

# Post-diagnostic support



Our post-diagnostic support is a free service giving newly-diagnosed autistic adults (diagnosed in the past year) the opportunity to meet and talk one-to-one with an autistic member of staff. You will get up to four sessions, each 45 minutes long and can discuss the following topics:

- Your diagnosis
- Understanding your autism
- Strategies to manage day-to-day
- Families and relationships
- Help to put forward your needs
- Disclosing your diagnosis or not
- Sensory issues
- Your rights / reasonable adjustments
- Mental health signposting / counselling signposting

Our post-diagnostic sessions can be delivered in person or remotely. To access it, please refer at [tinyurl.com/leedsautismaimreferral](https://tinyurl.com/leedsautismaimreferral). Please note that in order to access it, you need to have had your autism diagnosis within a year of your first appointment.

If we cannot offer you post-diagnostic support, we can support you in other ways such as signposting and one-to-one peer support.

# Health Access Project



This is a project where we work with autistic people across Leeds seeking additional support when accessing health services. The project will work with autistic patients to improve services and address health inequalities faced by local autistic people.

The Health Access Project's main aims are:

- Ensuring the health needs of autistic patients are met
- Giving autistic patients a say in how their surgeries services are run
- Involving autistic people more in the GP services they use

## How we can help you

If you are autistic and registered to a GP in Leeds, we can help you by:

- Meeting you one-to-one to help you communicate your needs
- Pass on any feedback you have about your GP services to them - please get in touch with us if you want help with that
- Offering peer support from an autistic member of staff
- Co-creating autism-specific health resources for GP appointments e.g. a symptom diary

If you would like support from the project, please make a referral at [tinyurl.com/leedsautismaimreferral](https://tinyurl.com/leedsautismaimreferral). For any enquiries about how we can help, please email [autismhealthaccess@advonet.org.uk](mailto:autismhealthaccess@advonet.org.uk).

# Autistic-led peer groups



We run a number of different groups led by and run for autistic adults. They meet regularly in person or online. The groups are:

- **Peer Support:** This is on the first Tuesday of the month, 6pm-7pm on Zoom. Group members can share/give support in a safe space
- **Women-Aligned Group:** For autistic women and femme-aligned non-binary people, they meet on the second Tuesday of the month from 5:30pm-6:30pm on Zoom. On alternating months, they have check-ins and themed discussions
- **Gaming Group:** Playing games online via our Discord server, this group meets on the fourth Tuesday of the month from 6pm-7pm
- **Coproduction Group:** Meeting on the third Thursday of the month from 5:30pm-7pm, this group reviews resources for autistic adults

We are open to helping you create groups run by and for members. If you have any ideas for groups, feel free to contact us.

## Our Online Community

As well as peer-led groups, we run an online community on the Discord app, checked during working hours by staff and volunteers. It has chats for a range of topics, news and introducing new members.

If you want to join, please let us know and we will send an invite. To join, you will need a Discord account, which is free to set up at [discord.com](https://discord.com).

# Volunteering



We have a number of volunteering opportunities for anyone who would like to help Leeds Autism AIM. Our volunteer roles are:

- **Autism Mentor:** Our volunteer mentors regularly meet one-to-one with an autistic adult (mentee) to help them identify, set and achieve life goals
- **Hub Supporter:** Helping out at our Autism Hub sessions with tasks like setting up the Hub, greeting new visitors and introducing them to members of the staff team
- **Steering Group Member:** Our steering group meets once every two months and helps to guide our future direction. They have a say in what work we do and how we can improve
- **Discord Chat Facilitator:** A new volunteering role, our Facilitators help to run different chats in our online Discord community. Their role involves monitoring messages and responding to queries from our members

## Volunteering opportunities

As well as mentoring, there are other volunteer roles available with us and The Advonet Group. Learn more by scanning the QR code or by visiting [advonet.org.uk/join-us/volunteering](https://advonet.org.uk/join-us/volunteering)



# Partner services



We work with a number of different services in Leeds who can help you with things such as diagnosis, accessing mental health support and issues with money and housing. They are:

- **Chapelton Citizens Advice:** They offer free, confidential, impartial and independent advice on issues like benefits (including forms), debts, employment, housing, energy bills, consumer rights, utilities and financial assessments/community care.
- **Leeds Autism Diagnostic Service (LADS):** The LADS team hold monthly consultation sessions for people seeking diagnosis at the Hub. Please note that they cannot diagnose you in those sessions.
- **Leeds Mental Wellbeing Service (LMWS):** They visit the Hub once a month to offer one-to-one sessions. In those, the LMWS team can signpost you to any mental health support that you might find useful. Sessions can be booked through Leeds Autism AIM.
- **Engage Leeds:** They are a housing support service that can help you if you're at risk of losing your home, want to live independently or stay in your current home or if you are isolated and want to be more involved in activities and your local community.
- **Carers Leeds:** They run a monthly support group for parents, carers and partners of autistic and neurodivergent adults in Leeds aged 16 and over. They meet on the third Thursday of every month from 1pm-2:30pm at Carers Leeds' office on The Headrow.



# Our locations



**Lovell Park Hub:**  
**For booked appointments and drop-in sessions**

- **Address:** Lovell Park Hub, Wintoun St, Leeds LS7 1DA
- **Parking:** You need a permit to park there. You can get one at the reception desk and then display it in your car's windscreen
- **Bus services:** The 2, 3 3A, 7, 7A, 7S, 12, 13, 13A, 36 and 48 services stop on North Street, going north towards Chapeltown, Chapel Allerton, Oakwood and Roundhay and south towards Leeds City Centre, Beeston and Hunslet

**Find us on What3Words: [author.sunset.solved](https://www.what3words.com/author.sunset.solved)**

**Advonet Group office:**  
**For booked appointments only,**  
**open Mon-Fri 9am-5pm**



- **Address:** Unity Business Centre, 26 Roundhay Rd, Leeds LS7 1AB
- **Parking:** There is some parking available outside the office on Manor Street, but it can be busy at times.
- **Bus services:** The 12, 13 and 13A services stop either side at the bottom of Roundhay Road. The 2, 3, 3A, 7, 7A, &s, 36 and 48 stop at Sheepscar Junction before North Street starts

**Find us on What3Words: [being.deputy.pepper](https://www.what3words.com/being.deputy.pepper)**

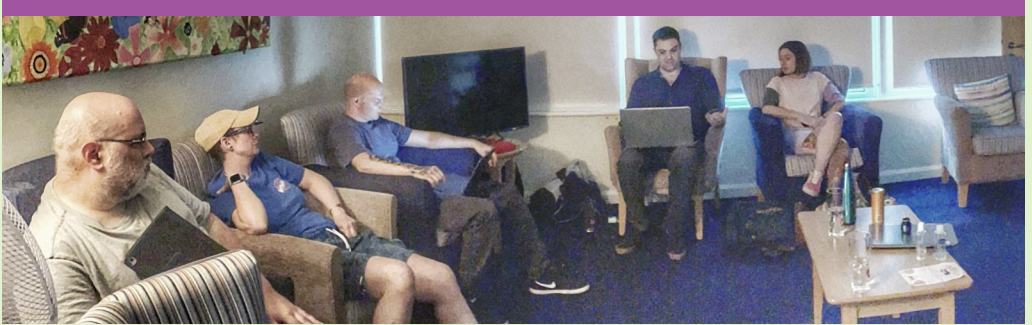
Documents with directions to the Hub or office are available on request.

# What to expect when meeting us



- **At the Autism Hub:** Whether you are coming for a booked appointment or to the monthly drop-in, we will ask you to sign in when at the reception. Then, we will let the person you're there to see know that you are there.  
We will give you some time to get settled before your meeting. Once the person you are seeing is ready, they will call for you in the Café Area (pictured above).
- **On the phone:** Before calling, we will ask when you would like to speak, making it less surprising when we do ring.  
We will also ensure our number doesn't come up as a 'Private Number' on your phone. Whilst speaking to you, we will make sure there is no background noise coming from our end of the call.
- **At the Advonet Group office:** We will arrange to meet you in an office space and try to keep background noise to a minimum. If you like, we are happy to get you a tea, coffee or water.  
If coming to the office by car, please use the car park outside the fencing near the Unity Business Centre building.
- **On Zoom or Teams:** Before a meeting, we will send you a link plus (if on Zoom) a Call ID and Passcode. Please use the details provided to join when the meeting is due to start.  
You don't need to have your camera on. If you prefer, you can use the text chat instead of audio.

# What else you need to know



- **Cancelling an appointment:** If you need to cancel an appointment with us, please let us know by emailing [leedsautismaim@advonet.org.uk](mailto:leedsautismaim@advonet.org.uk). Should you need it, we are happy to rearrange your appointment for a time that suits you. If you cannot make it to your appointment for any reason, we are able to support someone else at that time.
- **Our expectations:** As we have supported nearly 700 people between April 2021-March 2022, our service is in demand. By coming to your appointment, you are helping to make sure we can support as many people as possible. Unless you let us know you cannot make your appointment or there are circumstances beyond your or our control, we hope you can make it to an appointment on time.
- **Ground Rules and COVID-19 measures:** At the Hub, we have our ground rules and COVID-19 safety measures displayed on the walls of some of the rooms. They are in place to make sure you and everyone else feels safe in attending. Please try to follow them as best you can.
- **Data protection:** We follow The Advonet Group's Data Protection policies. We ensure that we will only use your personal data to contact you about any AIM service you want to access and nothing else. We securely store your data for up to seven years.

# Contact us



**Email:** [leedsautismaim@advonet.org.uk](mailto:leedsautismaim@advonet.org.uk)

**Phone:** 0113 244 0606

**Website:** [leedsautismaim.org.uk](http://leedsautismaim.org.uk)

**Facebook:** [@leedsautismaim](https://www.facebook.com/leedsautismaim)

**Twitter:** [@leedsautismAIM](https://twitter.com/leedsautismAIM)

**YouTube:** [Leeds Autism AIM](https://www.youtube.com/LeedsAutismAIM)

We are  
funded  
by:



**COMMUNITY**  
FUND

**NHS**  
NHS West Yorkshire  
Integrated Care Board



**The**  
**Advonet**  
**Group**

Providing Independent Advocacy



Leeds Autism AIM is part of The Advonet Group, an independent advocacy charity in Leeds.

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