

# Autism Editions

March 2024 | Volume 1, Number 4: Tech Issue



Tech Issue

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Personal experiences

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Helpful websites and  
resources

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[https://www.facebook.com/  
GMAutismConsortium](https://www.facebook.com/GMAutismConsortium)



<https://twitter.com/GMAutismC>



[https://  
www.autismgm.org.uk/](https://www.autismgm.org.uk/)

Autism Editions is a shorter version of our usual newsletter, with themes topics delving into greater details on specific topics, all autism related.

Welcome to the Tech issue of Autism Editions. First of all a massive thank you to our contributors ( 2 autistic adults and 2 autistic young people). We wanted to talk about how Tech can support us and sometimes also cause us some anxiety. I think as humans we call have a complicated relationship with Tech and maybe we can hear about how AI might affect us in the future as we look ahead this is going to get more complicated. There are others much better qualified than me who can comment on that. However, we also know that aspects of Tech have been a lifeline for many autistic people and opened up social opportunities, employment opportunities and education opportunities. The Pandemic has brought out both the best and the worst side of Tech and we are now living in a world that looks pretty different. We probably need to revisit this question but for now we hope you enjoy this edition.

Mari and the GMAC team

# Technology: hindrance, assistance, or both?

## Article by Ben Stone

Since my earliest memories, I have always been enthralled by technology, from my very first digital watch, playing Ms Pacman in the arcades where I saw artificial intelligence for the first time when I realized that the four ghosts all had different characteristics, Nintendo Game & Watch, Commodore 64 and seeing how these evolved into smart watches, mobile phones/handheld games consoles and cutting edge personal computers with 4K ray tracing graphics.

Technology has played a big role in my life and on the whole, it has helped me live my disabilities. The internet and e-mail have enabled me to access people and organizations as I am unable to use the phone and despite many organizations not making these reasonable adjustments, I won't mention the NHS or DWP, those who do make a big difference. The downside is that Zoom and MS teams have replaced many face to face meetings and I think that virtual/online activities should complement and not replace the 'real world'. Also, when people are surgically attached to their phones, they are online in the digital world, but offline in the physical world. Artificial intelligence is going to play an increasing role in our lives and it could become so sophisticated that future articles' authors will be AI

It is my belief that the majority of technological innovations have come from the minds of neuro-diverse people, just to mention Isaac Newton and Albert Einstein and like anything, technology can do good, but can also do harm. It's not the technology that's the problem, but those who use it. Used well, technology can do immense good and technology has helped me, but when used in the wrong way, it can do immense damage and it has hindered me, from companies not making reasonable adjustments for me. When social media first arrived, My Space seemed friendly, but that innocence seemed to be lost over time and my Facebook experience was being on a raft in an e-shark infested ocean. Criminals and evil exist in the physical world and the digital world is a facsimile of the physical world. Technology didn't create them; it is just another vehicle for them to facilitate their crimes.

Under the guardianship of a small elite of humans, Earth is slowly being transformed into Venus. The increasing frequency and intensity of floods and droughts Earth is experiencing are just a sneak preview of what is to come for the rest of the 21st century and beyond. It is technology that will be needed to solve the problems we created and keep causing.

AI could help to transform society for the better, but used in the wrong way could make 'Skynet' morph from science fiction to science fact. It's not AI I worry about, but the humans using it. Hopefully the AI will realize how cruel, greedy and flawed humanity can be, the systems governments put in place to restrict and enslave us, and the AI to learn from and program itself. The reality is that the whole system is set up to be adversarial, rather than balanced or collaborative, and it is perhaps that an evolved AI, free from the human constraints of bias, corruption and prejudice, could be Earth's saviour.





## Spectrum Gaming

### Who are they?

Spectrum Gaming is an autistic-led UK based charity that supports autistic young people. We aim to create a world where every autistic young person knows that who they are is ok and they can be themselves, whilst still developing meaningful relationships and achieving their personal goals.

They do this by providing spaces where they feel safe and accepted, amongst others with similar shared lived experiences, and opportunities to explore who they are.

Their aim is for all autistic young people to have the strength and confidence to find their place in the world that works for them. In many cases this means influencing wider strategic changes to create an environment that is more understanding and equitable

Their mission create a world where autistic young people can reach their true potential!

They provide a safe space online supervised by trusted adults where young people can explore, connect and grow with other

They offer training and guidance to those who need it most, and build a community who share our passion and vision to create change. You can find more info about this service and see their current courses and webinars [here](#)

They also work with our young people, parents and partners to identify the priorities of young people and create proactive projects/ resources that address these priorities. You can find out more about their advocacy projects [here](#).

They offer opportunities for young people to meet with others and undertake positive activities together.

We would like to thank Andy Smith and the team at Spectrum gaming for asking the young people to contribute to this special edition of our newsletter which appear on the next page.





## Article written by a Spectrum Gaming member

Technology, to me, can mean many different things. It can be an escape from the real world, a way to make friends or even pursue your passions.

It has enabled me to do things in the virtual world which I could never have done in the real world. I was able to help Spectrum Gaming gain the funding they needed to help support young people better. I did this by attending a meeting on zoom and explaining what Spectrum Gaming as an organisation does, something I would never have been able to do in person.

Discord is probably one of the most awesome things on the planet. I really struggle with social cues and joining activities in general, which is why I am often left out. However, when online, using discord, it's easier as I have more of a choice. If I want to speak, I can choose to, if I want to show my face, again I have a choice. That way I can interact with people without having the pressure of always being perfect.

One of the things that frustrates me about technology is it doesn't always work with you. I'm a digital editor and content creator, so if I'm downloading music or editing clips and the programs are not co-operating, I can get really agitated and anxious trying to fix the problem. Similarly, when downloading and playing games there are often glitches/bugs which make the experience less enjoyable.

Technology has afforded me so many opportunities. From collaborating with people online to allowing me the chance to help make a difference for autistic people, like me, something I never thought I would be able to do.



## Article written by a Spectrum Gaming member

As an autistic person (currently 17) who grew up alongside technology, I've naturally spent a lot of my spare time online, usually playing games such as Minecraft or Roblox or watching YouTube. Over the years I have managed to find that technology can be a useful way of winding-down after a long day. My high school was certainly not the best at supporting autistic children, which meant that after days of school, which made me feel drained, overstimulated and even on some days on a borderline meltdown, I would need a way of getting rid of the stress that was built up throughout a school day. I found that technology, specifically watching YouTube creators who make content about my special interests (which range from Minecraft or Roblox to Real Life railways and aviation) or playing such games would make me feel a lot less overstimulated. Don't get me wrong though, there can be many negatives to using technology, especially with autistic people. My screen time on my computer recently has averaged to about 7 and a half hours a day during days spent at home and during days where I am in college, that number is closer to around 5 hours. Using technology can be addictive and it is important that if you are using technology as a way to cope with being overstimulated, that it is used in conjunction with other methods, such as going for long walks, mindfulness, engaging with hobbies (whether that be, trainspotting, arts and crafts, cooking/baking, etc.) or reading. I tend to feel the most calm on days where I do go out for walks, or engage in my hobbies (mainly trainspotting, since I'm not the most creative person out there!). Finally, I think that having a community of like-minded people is also a positive, such as Spectrum Gaming, which has allowed me to develop new friends and social skills. -Fraser



## What is Discord?

**Article written by autistic adult Amy**

Discord is an online communication platform, where individuals can communicate through voice calls, video calls and messages. Your discord profile allows you to pick a unique username and profile picture. Why might Discord be helpful for autistic individuals? Many autistic individuals may struggle with social interactions. Discord gives users their own choice of communication, this can help reduce anxiety in autistic individuals. Whether you feel more comfortable communicating by chat, video or voice call, Discord has you covered. You can also easily take part in group voice calls without needing to speak, simply mute your microphone and use the chat feature instead!

The main focus of discord is community. Discord allows users to create their own discord servers, where people can interact with each other. Servers can be customised completely, allowing you to create your perfect community. If this sounds too overwhelming, then don't worry, you can also private chat one on one with any other user. Discord has a friends list feature where you can add trusted people and communicate with them directly. This gives autistic individuals the chance to connect with others and create new friendships from the comfort of their own home.

Chat history is available at all times, so you don't need to be around constantly, meaning you won't miss out on any interesting conversations. Discord also allows users to upload images, videos, use emojis and send links, which means there's plenty of ways to express yourself. You can also share pictures of things that interest you (artwork, pets, photography) with your community and friends.

Overall, discord is a great way to make new friends or just to have a friendly conversation. Discord allows users to communicate through the messaging function, or through voice/video call. Users are able to talk privately with people on their friends list or in discord servers with a whole community of people!



# Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC)

Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC), refers to the use of objects, symbols, charts, photographs, signing and electronic aids to help a child communicate. These are used by children and young people when they have difficulties with producing or understanding spoken or written language. Different children can benefit from different levels of AAC and this may alter as they get older or their language changes.

## AAC may be used for a variety of reasons:

- As a bridge or stopgap: to help the child communicate whilst their speech and language skills are developing.
- To help the child make sense of spoken language.
- To supplement their spoken skills: to be used alongside speech to help the child make themselves understood.
- As an alternative means of communication: because of the nature of their difficulties, some children are always likely to struggle with spoken communication. AAC can give them a voice and therefore some control over their environment.

As a tool to develop language skills: to give the child the experience of building their language skills, e.g. forming sentences when they can only produce sounds or single words themselves.

## Different types of AAC

Some examples of different communication systems include:

- Eye pointing frames: used with photographs, line drawings, symbols etc.
- Communication books or charts.
- Electronic communication aids: Go Talk, Bigmac, Messagemate, Tech speak, Dynavox, iPads set up with communication software.
- British Sign Language or signing systems such as Makaton.
- Switches.
- PODD books.

Picture Exchange Communication Systems (PECS).

## How can it benefit children?

Children with a range of difficulties can benefit from different types of AAC. Not all children will require electronic devices, but many will benefit from signing, symbols and communication books. Children able to benefit from more sophisticated technology can have integrated systems that enable the child to use personal computers.

For further information please visit:

<https://acecentre.org.uk/about>



(example of a AAC app)



## Brain In Hand

Brain in Hand uniquely combines user-led self-management, human support and digital tools to empower people with autism and neurological difference to live more independently.

Brain in Hand combines user-led self-management, human support and digital tools to empower people to live more independently. It is condition agnostic and aims to help people who find it difficult to quickly and easily make decisions, manage anxiety, and cope with unexpected events – difficulties that are common for autistic people and those with neurological difference.

The Brain in Hand system helps users to achieve more, enabling them to step down reliance on traditional forms of support and ease the burden on overstretched teams.

Their goal is to give individuals the confidence to use their own personalised strategies and solutions, safe in the knowledge that a safety net will catch them if a little extra help is needed.

Autistic people and other neurodivergent people experience some of the greatest inequalities across the UK, often struggling to access employment, healthcare, or support.

Brain in Hand want to help change this. We see a future that puts people in control of their own lives, accessing professional support when and how they need it.

They have a full list of resources and information on their site which may be helpful for neurodivergent adults and parents supporting teenagers and young adults.

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

## Useful Resources and links

### Useful Apps

[Google Family link](#) – Manage screen time, block inappropriate content and searches, manage Apps, location tracker. Free but need a Google account to use it.

[Qustodio](#) - Manage screen time, block inappropriate content and searches, manage Apps, location tracker, track SMS, calls and contacts, alerts and reports, SOS panic button feature - £6 a month.

\*Top tip. If you allow your young person to download WhatsApp be aware that these monitoring Apps will not be able to monitor what is shared through that App. SMS contacts and messaging can be monitored, but not messaging through external Apps like WhatsApp.

### Useful websites

[UK safer Internet centre](#) Have lots of free information and resources and also do free online internet safety sessions

[Internet matters](#) Have some useful information advice and tips on the safe use of social media

[Childline](#) staying safe online page

[NSPCC online safety page](#)

UK Council for internet safety: Child Safety Online: [A practical guide for parents and carers whose children are using social media](#)

### Location trackers for when a child or teen is out of the house

[Find and manage your child's location](#) on Google Family Link App

[Qustodio](#) Also has a location tracker feature

[WhatsApp](#) also has a location sharing feature

\*Tip – Ensure your young person's phone is topped up/in credit and has mobile data access.



## Useful Resources and links

### AAC for mobile phones

Note: Some young people may need a separate device to use for AAC to avoid them becoming distracted by the other functions on the device. However, if your young person doesn't experience this difficulty and they simply would like a AAC app to use in situations when they are situationally mute, or feeling anxious or shy there are Apps available that are low cost or free that can be downloaded onto their mobile phone or tablet:

[Speech Assistant AAC](#)

[Chatterboards AAC](#)

[Courageous Kids](#) social story app

\*That's just two examples, but if you search for AAC in your App store you will find many more. It's just a case of trying them out to see what best suits the child/young persons needs.

### Other Apps

[Insight App](#) (free)

An autistic parent within our network recommended [Finch: selfcare pet](#) There are also other similar apps out there where you care for a virtual character while working on your own self-care

[Headspace](#) (subscription) They have a [Star Wars themed meditations](#) on there also!

Visual timer apps can be useful for some younger autistic children to manage transitioning from one activity to the next/knowing when an activity is coming to an end or when you are leaving somewhere.

You can search 'kids timer' in the App store and there are a variety of different apps for this. Some reveal a nice picture when the timer is up etc, like this one [Visual Countdown Timer](#).

Some children may enjoy that kind of feature and worth exploring.



## Quirky and Autistic Podcast

We have a link on GMAC website, and you can listen here too [Listen - Frank Communications](#) All episodes include transcripts with signposted hyperlinks.

In This episode: <https://www.frankcommunications.org.uk/s2-episode-4-we-can-work-it-out/>

Hayley talks about Augmentative and Alternative Communication and how it can help some people.

You can also subscribe to the podcast and each episode as its released will appear in your email inbox.

Quirky and Autistic parenting, does exactly what it says on the pod.



@QuirkynAutistic



@quirkyandautistic

# GROW IN CONFIDENCE IN YOUR AUTISM

The **Greater Manchester Autism Consortium** is hosting an online support group, exclusively for autistic adults, to allow them to meet other people, discuss matters of general interest, and share their experiences and ideas.

Meetings are held virtually on Zoom - usually on the 3rd Thursday of each month.

Numbers for each meeting will be limited to 20, and places can be booked on a first-come first-served basis on the **National Autistic Society's** Eventbrite listings. If you wish to attend but are unable to access Eventbrite, please contact Abigail(details below) to reserve a place.

Meetings are held monthly on the third Thursday of each month from 6.30 to 8.30pm.

The group administrators are:

**Mark Simpson – mark.simpson@nas.org.uk**

**Abigail Gibson: abigail.gibson@nas.org.uk**

Mark can be contacted on 07876746403 if you don't have access to email.

Eventbrite:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/grow-confidence-in-your-autism-tickets-772320610737>





# 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 0-25 years and their families.

## **BOLTON**

Bolton Parent Carers

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

Telephone: 07715 201798

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

## **BURY**

**BURY2GETHER**

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

Email: [bury2gether@gmail.com](mailto:bury2gether@gmail.com)

## **MANCHESTER**

Manchester Parent Carer Forum

<http://manchesterparentcarerforum.org.uk/>

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

## **OLDHAM**

**Parent Carer Forum: Point**

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

Telephone: 0161 503 1547

Email: [admin@point-send.co.uk](mailto:admin@point-send.co.uk)

## **ROCHDALE**

Parent Carer Voice

<https://rochdaleparentcarersvoice.co.uk/>

Email: [RochdalePCV@outlook.com](mailto:RochdalePCV@outlook.com)

Telephone: 01706 358 326

## **SALFORD**

**Salford Parent Forum**

Email: [info@salfordpcf.com](mailto:info@salfordpcf.com)

## **STOCKPORT**

**Parents and Carers together (PACT)**

<https://pactstockport.co.uk/>

Email: [info@pactstockport.co.uk](mailto:info@pactstockport.co.uk)

## **TAMESIDE**

**Our Kids Eyes (OKE)**

<https://www.ourkidseyes.org/>

Telephone: 0161 342 5550

## **TRAFFORD**

<https://traffordparentsforum.org/>

Email: [hello@traffordparentsforum.org](mailto:hello@traffordparentsforum.org)

## **WIGAN**

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

Email: [admin@wiganpcf.org.uk](mailto:admin@wiganpcf.org.uk)

Telephone: 07719 330602

# Parent Support groups and services aimed at parents and carers of autistic children and adults.

## **BOLTON**

### **Breaking Barriers**

Tel: 07717434840

Email: [breakbarriers3@gmail.com](mailto:breakbarriers3@gmail.com)

### **Bolton Adult Autism Support (BAAS)**

Tel: 07772547158

Email: [enquiries@BoltonAdultAutismSupport.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@BoltonAdultAutismSupport.org.uk)

### **Kidz2gether**

Tel: 01204 669821

Email: [info@kidz2gether.org.uk](mailto:info@kidz2gether.org.uk)

## **BURY**

### **Bury Autism Parent Society (BAPS)**

Tel: 0161 761 0132

Email: [bapsonline@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:bapsonline@yahoo.co.uk)

[www.baps-online.com](http://www.baps-online.com)

## **MANCHESTER**

### **Chinese Carers of Autistic Children Group**

Contact: Helen Chow Tel: 0161 228 0138

### **Grange School Parents Group**

Tel: 0161 231 2590

Email: [s.evans01@grange@manchester.sch.uk](mailto:s.evans01@grange@manchester.sch.uk)

## **MANCHESTER SOUTH**

### **Carers Manchester South**

Supports carers of autistic adults

Via online Zoom meetings:

[cmsouth@manchestercarersforum.org.uk](mailto:cmsouth@manchestercarersforum.org.uk)

## **OLDHAM**

### **OSCA**

Tel: 07365 772 711

Email: [ocsaoldham@gmail.com](mailto:ocsaoldham@gmail.com)

## **ROCHDALE**

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

Tel: 01706 629 651 and 01706 436 143

Email: [sam.hsrb@gmail.com](mailto:sam.hsrb@gmail.com)

[www.homestartrochdale.org.uk](http://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](mailto:carina.jackson@icloud.com) in-  
[fo@recoveryrepublic.co.uk](mailto:fo@recoveryrepublic.co.uk)

[www.recoveryrepublic.co.uk](http://www.recoveryrepublic.co.uk)

## **SALFORD**

### **Salford Autism**

Tel: 0771 390 3224

Email: [support@salfordautism.org.uk](mailto:support@salfordautism.org.uk)

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

### **Salford Action for Autism**

Email: [kayjones000@googlemail.com](mailto:kayjones000@googlemail.com) or  
[lou26@live.co.uk](mailto:lou26@live.co.uk)

<http://salfordactionforautism.simpl.com/index.html>

## **STOCKPORT**

### **Autisk**

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

Email: [enquiry@autisk.co.uk](mailto:enquiry@autisk.co.uk)

Telephone: 07376 341092

## **TAMESIDE**

### **TASCA**

<https://www.facebook.com/TascaTameside>

[TascaTameside](https://www.facebook.com/TascaTameside)

Telephone: 07754 873480

### **Tameside autism community group**

<https://www.tameside-autism-community.org.uk/>

### **Autism support for Tameside and Glossop**

<https://autismtameside.wordpress.com/>

Telephone: 0161 366 2050

## **TRAFFORD**

### **Autism Trafford**

<http://www.autismtrafford.co.uk/>

**(Online contact page)**

## **WIGAN**

### **Embrace Wigan and Leigh**

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

Email: in-

[fo@embracewiganandleigh.org.uk](mailto:fo@embracewiganandleigh.org.uk)

Telephone: (01942)233323

# Autistic Adult Support Groups and services

The below contacts are a mixture of support groups, support services and advocacy specifically in relation to autistic adults. Please be aware that services differ greatly depending on the GM location.

## BOLTON

### Autism Spectrum Conditions Support Team

(Those who are diagnosed with Autism/Asperger's are offered a package of short-term support, depending on need.)

Telephone: 01204 483000

<https://www.gmmh.nhs.uk/autism-spectrum-conditions-support-team/>

## BURY

### United Response

<https://www.unitedresponse.org.uk/support-area/greater-manchester-bury/>

## MANCHESTER

### I AM AUTISM

<https://i-am-autism.org.uk/>

Email: [enquiries@i-am-autism.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@i-am-autism.org.uk)

Telephone: 0161 866 8483

## OLDHAM

Advocacy and support for people with autism and or Learning Disability.

<https://www.actiontogether.org.uk/community-activities/community-activity-directory/107754>

## ROCHDALE

### I AM AUTISM

<https://i-am-autism.org.uk/>

Email: [enquiries@i-am-autism.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@i-am-autism.org.uk)

Telephone: 0161 866 8483

## SALFORD

### Salford Autism

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

Tel: 0771 390 3224

Email: [support@salfordautism.org.uk](mailto:support@salfordautism.org.uk)

## STOCKPORT

### Stockport Advocacy: Group 48

<http://www.stockportadvocacy.org.uk/group-48/>

Email: [info@stockportadvocacy.co.uk](mailto:info@stockportadvocacy.co.uk)

Telephone: 0161 480 8979

### Autism Social Group

First Monday of every month, 4pm to 6pm : Disability Stockport, 23 High Street, Stockport, SK1 1EG. For more information, please contact Disability Stockport.

0161 4807248 or

email [angela.mccumisky@disabilitystockport.org.uk](mailto:angela.mccumisky@disabilitystockport.org.uk)

## TAMESIDE

### Autism Tameside ad Glossop social group

<https://autismtameside.wordpress.com/people-with-autism/>

Email: [peersupport@togmind.org](mailto:peersupport@togmind.org)

Telephone: 0161 330 9223

## TRAFFORD

Autism Trafford runs a social group with various activities for autistic adults.

Tel: 0161 357 1210

Email: [jane.forrest1@nhs.net](mailto:jane.forrest1@nhs.net)

## WIGAN

### Embrace Wigan and Leigh

<https://www.embracewiganandleigh.org.uk/care-act-advocacy/>

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

Telephone: (01942)233323

## Support services that cover the Greater Manchester area (autistic adults, autistic children and parents/ carers)



I AM AUTISM have various support services available. They are a UK registered charity working with and supporting a wide range of people, aged 10 years and upwards, who have a diagnosis of Autistic Spectrum Condition (which can also be called Asperger Syndrome, High Functioning Autism or Autistic Spectrum Disorder) as well as their families, guardians and carers in Greater Manchester.

Website: <https://i-am-autism.org.uk/>

Email: [enquiries@i-am-autism.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@i-am-autism.org.uk)

Telephone: 0161 866 8483



Respect For All offer counselling for autistic people, for people with learning disabilities, and for their families, throughout the whole of Greater Manchester.

Website: <https://www.respectforall.org.uk/counselling/>

Contact number: 0161 532 4075



GMAC aims to be a point of contact for anyone in Greater Manchester needing information about autism and related issues. We are managed by the UK's leading charity for autistic people and their families [The National Autistic Society](#). To find out more visit our [About us](#) page.

Since 1993 we have been providing information and advice to autistic people and their families, delivering training and developing resources. In 2019 we launched Greater Manchester's first [Autism Strategy](#) to help create a region that works better for autistic people.

Website: <https://www.autismgm.org.uk/>

With the nature of support groups and services, they change often so please let us know if you are aware of anything that is not listed and we will add these to our contacts.