Branch Induction pack for New Volunteers

Contents

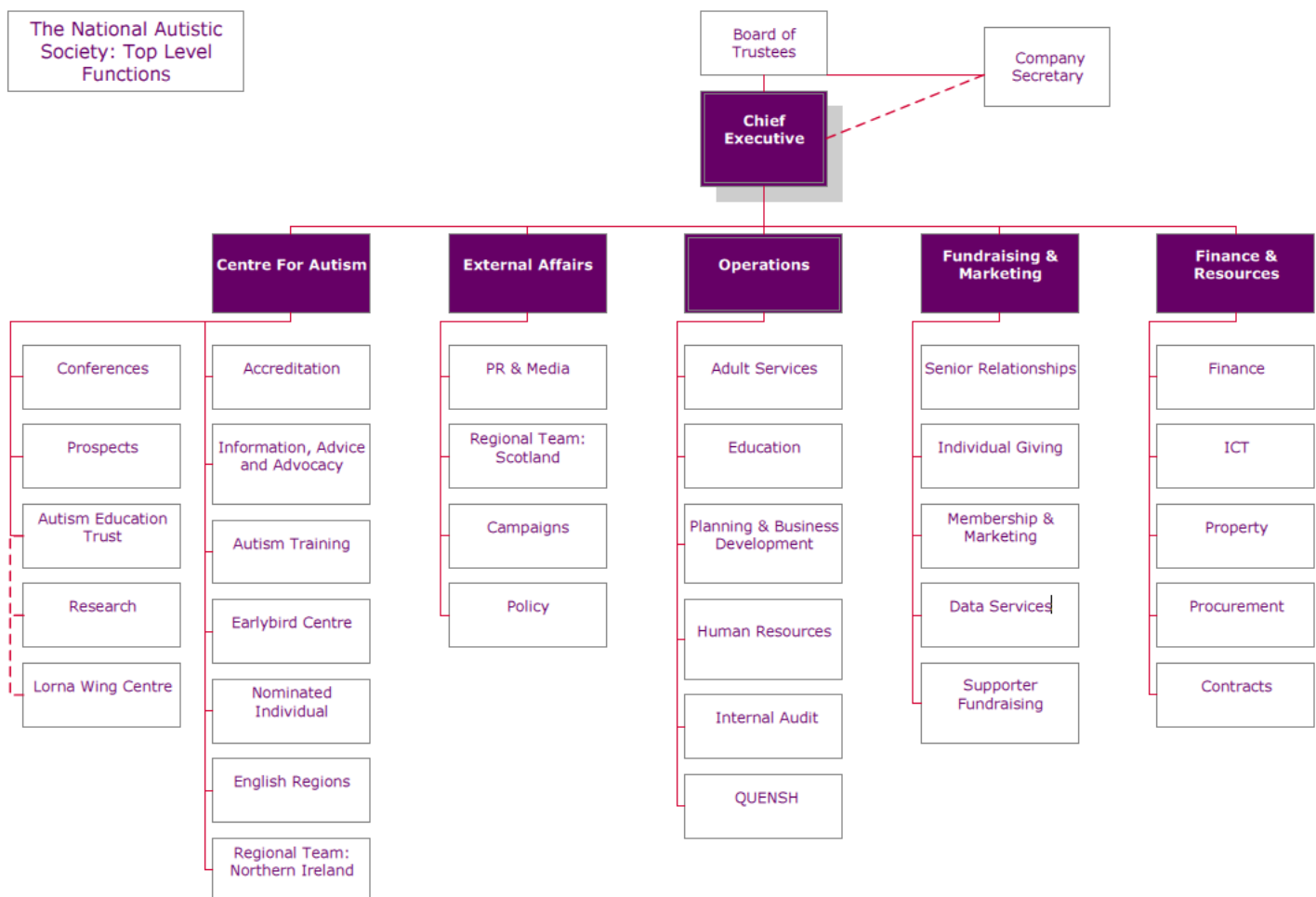Accept difference. Not indifference.

Welcome to the NAS

Welcome to the National Autistic Society! We're really glad that you have decided to become part of an NAS branch: they are at the heart of what we do and are crucial to us. Branches make an enormous difference to people with autism spectrum disorders and their families, and make things happen that we just couldn't do without volunteers.

We have over 100 branches around the UK, and they vary hugely. They all offer different things but their activities generally fall under 4 categories: information provision, family support, campaigning and fundraising. Some branches are more active than others but all of them are equally valuable to us and the people they support.

We have put together this induction pack to ensure branch volunteers get off to a good start and are provided with all the information you need to begin getting involved in volunteering for a branch and planning your branch activities. Included in this pack is a list of additional guidance and templates available to branches which may answer any of your more detailed questions or alternatively, feel free to speak to any of the people on the contacts sheet for additional support. You can always speak to the Branch Officer and the committee for guidance and support.

We hope you find this pack useful, remember, you are very important to us and we will support you as much as we can. Please get in touch with your Branch Support Officer or one of the specialist teams in Head Office if you need help with something and we'll always try to help.

Structure of the NAS

The National Autistic Society: Top Level Functions

Board of Trustees

Company Secretary

Chief Executive

Centre For Autism	External Affairs	Operations	Fundraising & Marketing	Finance & Resources
Conferences / Accreditation	PR & Media	Adult Services	Senior Relationships	Finance
Prospects / Information, Advice and Advocacy	Regional Team: Scotland	Education	Individual Giving	ICT
Autism Education Trust / Autism Training	Campaigns	Planning & Business Development	Membership & Marketing	Property
Research / Earlybird Centre	Policy	Human Resources	Data Services	Procurement
Lorna Wing Centre / Nominated Individual		Internal Audit	Supporter Fundraising	Contracts
English Regions		QUENSH		
Regional Team: Northern Ireland				

Our vision

We want a world where all people living with autism get to lead the life they choose. This means a world where everyone living with autism:

- gets the support, education and training they need
- lives with dignity and as independently as possible
- feels part of their community and wider society
- is understood by all professionals who support them
- is respected for who they are by a knowledgeable public.

Our mission

We will transform understanding of autism, and make sure everyone living with autism gets the support they need.

- We will provide the best possible education and support.
- We will share our learning and experience.
- We will have a skilled and committed workforce.
- We will involve, inform and empower people living with autism.
- We will champion the rights and interests of people living with autism.

What do NAS branches do and what support will we receive?

As previously mentioned, branch activities generally fall under four categories: information provision, family support, campaigning and fundraising. Here you'll find details on our three offers to branches, one for each of the first three categories, plus some additional information on branch fundraising and the extra support that is available to branches. Branches are expected to sign up to at least one of the offers – you will find more information about which offers your local branch has signed up to and which activities are offered in this document.

Information Offer

Providing information at a local level is an invaluable source of support to parents, carers and adults on the spectrum. We know how much it is appreciated by your branch members to receive information from someone locally and who has a personal understanding of autism. However, we also know that providing information can be difficult – knowing what you can and can't say and when to talk from your own personal experience, for instance – but we provide training and guidance to help alleviate some of these issues and help protect you as a volunteer.

Information provision through branches can take many different forms and some branches do this more formally than others, but you should choose this offer if you engage in, or plan to start, the kinds of activities listed below;

- Provide information over the phone
- Provide information via email
- Provide information face to face at events
- Run a website
- Use social media

- Create and distribute a newsletter
- Create and distribute leaflets
- Communicate with other local groups or services etc.

What are the expectations of branches who engage in these types of activities?

- attend training (including safeguarding and data protection) and ensure the information you are providing is the most up to date (including local information)
- provide information based on the training and manual that you receive
- make referrals to other NAS helplines: Parent to Parent, Community Care Service, Welfare Rights Service and the Education Rights Service where appropriate
- additionally, if you provide information over the phone:
  - decide on the opening hours (or will it be a voicemail service?)
  - create a volunteer rota for the phone

- o   keep the voicemail message updated
- o   monitor the phone during the opening hours
- o   complete a call log and ensure this data is protected
- o   maintain the confidentiality of the callers
- o   send follow up emails after the calls within 24 hours
- use correct NAS branding on all branch communications
- keep your Branch Support Officer informed of all planned activities
- adhere to the general branch rules (at the end of this guide)

What support will we receive?

You'll be provided with:

- training (covering information provision, ASD communication strategies, safeguarding, data protection) and a manual (including regular information updates)
- branded templates including:
  - o   a script for the beginning and end of calls
  - o   a voicemail script
  - o   standard text message response
  - o   text for an email out of office and signature
  - o   simple to use follow up email
  - o   call log
  - o   website
  - o   branch literature (leaflets, posters etc)
- a route to make direct referrals to other NAS helplines
- an out of hours emergency support service

Family Support Offer

The majority of branches tend to engage in some form of family support activity, although some branches may run them more frequently than others or focus on different groups.

These activities also make a huge difference to people in your local community, providing them with opportunities to meet people in similar situations to their own and engage in activities knowing they are surrounded by people who understand and care.

You should choose this offer if you engage in, or plan to start, the kinds of activities listed below;

- Parent support groups
- Children's activities
- Adult social groups
- Speaker evenings

What are the expectations of branches who engage in these types of activities?

- at least the branch officer should have completed safeguarding and data protection training offered by the NAS (although more volunteers are encouraged to)
- at least one volunteer at each activity (including the branch officer) should complete the health and safety and risk assessment training
- all activities should have a risk assessment and be covered by NAS insurance
- parents must remain responsible for their children at all activities
- correct NAS branding should be used on all branch communications
- your branch support officer should be informed of all planned activities

- the general branch rules should be adhered to (see enclosed document)

What support will we receive?

You'll be provided with:

- training (safeguarding, data protection, health and safety and risk assessments)
- guidance for planning events from your branch support officer
- template risk assessments and support writing them from your branch support officer
- branded templates for branch communications
- peer support
- an out of hours emergency support service (at the end of this guide)

Campaigns Offer

Branches who take up the Campaigns Offer will play a crucial part in the work the NAS does to influence change by campaigning for a better world for people with autism and their families.

Local campaigning is crucial to the work of the NAS' policy and campaigns team, and branches are our best asset in progressing this work effectively.

Campaigning can take many different forms, some of them quick and simple, some more time-consuming – it can be a long and difficult road! But the NAS is there to support you to campaign for the things that you want, and we have a good track record of successfully campaigning with branches to improve the support available to people with autism in their area.
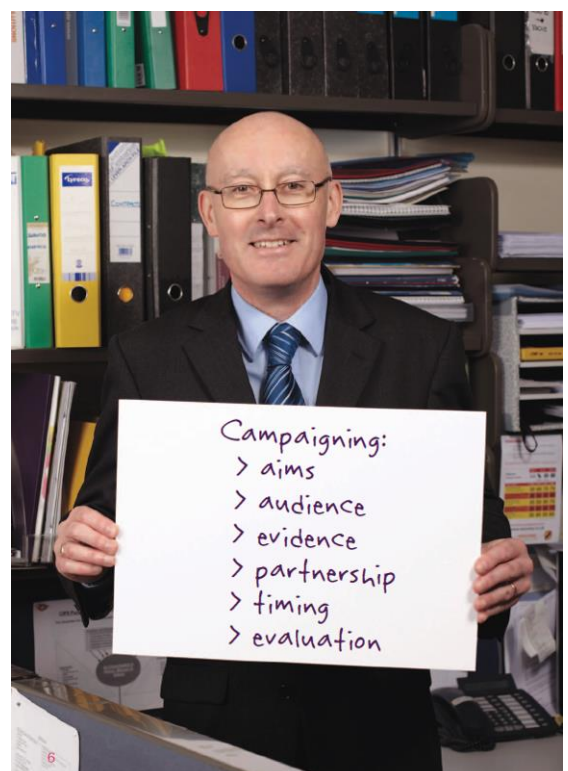
Campaigning can be a very empowering, energising and positive experience. Many branches already see it as a core part of their work and we are always pleased to support branches who are keen to get involved.

There is no 'set' way to campaign, but typically a campaign plan will involve some of the things listed below:

- contacting local decision-makers
- meeting with local politicians such as MPs and councillors
- coordinating local petitions and consultation responses
- encouraging branch members to participate in national NAS campaigns
- organising focus groups and surveys
- organising public meetings and events, and working with local media

What are the expectations of branches who engage in these types of activities?

- take part in training opportunities as provided by the NAS
- take part in the NAS' national campaigns (as appropriate)
- feed into national planning activities (as appropriate)
- inform (or involve) your branch support officer (and area policy participation officer) in any campaigning-related activity that you do
- use correct NAS branding on all branch communications
- adhere to the general branch rules (at the end of this guide)

What support will we receive?

You'll be provided with:

- training in campaigns skills, such as planning a campaign, working with the media, influencing your local MP
- support with your campaigning activity, such as support in meetings with decision-makers, with writing letters, with media activity and with planning your campaign (from NAS staff and other volunteers)
- campaigning toolkits and resources
- template letters, press releases and other resources which can be tailored for local delivery of national campaigns

Fundraising

Fundraising falls outside the three offers because all branches fundraise whether it's on a small or large scale. There are lots of different ways of raising money in your community, from organising a cake sale to placing collecting tins in your local shops. We provide lots of hints and tips to get your ideas flowing but as well as organising your own activities, you can also get involved with events and campaigns organised by the fundraising team at the NAS. For more information visit http://www.autism.org.uk/amazingdays

What are the expectations of branches that fundraise?

All branches and local fundraisers should operate within the boundaries of the law and accepted general best practice when fundraising for the NAS. We provide all branches with finance guidelines that help you with this.

Branches should also make sure that the logo and charity number of the NAS is included with all communications and materials. The easiest way would be to use the branded merchandise created by the NAS.

What support is available?

To help make sure that branches and local fundraisers receive the best support possible, we have centralised our fundraising support so there is a Supporter Care team available to assist you. They organise events, create ways for local communities to support the NAS and where possible work in your area to help create new relationships to the charity.

NAS Supporter Care: 0808 800 1050 or supportercare@nas.org.uk

You'll also receive a branch fundraising guide and finance guidelines to help you plan your activities and give you inspiration for new fundraising ideas. We also send seasonal hints and tips to help give you more ideas throughout the year.

You'll be able to order NAS branded materials such as t-shirts, balloons, collection buckets and banners. To make sure we keep fundraising costs down, each branch is given an annual allowance of £30 worth of merchandise.

Additional Support

- designated Branch Support Officer (your regional contact) – there for support, to help you with your more complex queries, problem solve, plan your activities and help you meet the requirements of branches
- templates, policies and guidance
- other, non-essential, online training available to branch volunteers – ask the Branches Manager for the full list available
- support with media activities from the NAS Press team
- branch mobile phone
- branch email address
- branch website
- regular updates via social media and Branches Newsletter
- a proportion of NAS membership fees – If people become members of the NAS and nominate the branch, up to £8 of their fee will come back to the branch
- lists of NAS members in your branch area
- discount on NAS goods and services
- 25% off NAS publications
- £100 a year towards the cost of your AGM
- £200 towards the cost of a launch party
- access to free advice and counselling service for branch volunteers
- annual survey

Who is going to run the branch?

Every NAS branch must have at least 6 volunteer committee members, although we understand that in rural areas this may be difficult, in which case the size of a committee may be negotiated with the Branch Support Officer. Two of the committee must take on these key roles: branch officer, and treasurer. These are important roles, so before signing up to take one on, you need to know what's involved.

What the branch officer does

Your branch officer is essential to the running of your branch, whether it is large or small. They act as the leader and co-ordinator for the branch so will have an active role in the launch of the branch. They are the key contact both within the NAS and with the wider community.

Your branch officer is responsible for making sure that your branch complies with NAS requirements and charity law so they have a number of formal duties too:

> agree to, sign and return the branch rules to the Branch Support Officer

> be a signatory to the branch's bank account

> attend branch network meetings in the relevant NAS region

> comply with the financial procedures

> arrange, oversee and attend the branch AGM

> monitor and report on the health and safety of branch activities including risk assessments and the return of an annual insurance renewal form

> make sure that the treasurer is carrying out his or her role effectively.

We describe the financial and health and safety procedures in detail in our main branch guide.

Branch officers may do more than these basic duties, especially in larger branches. Below we've given

examples of the kinds of additional activities that some branch officers take on:

> correspond with NAS regional and national staff

> be responsible for the branch email address

> maintain a mailing list of branch members

> attend external meetings on behalf of the branch – for example with education or health services

> co-ordinate and promote local campaigns and bring others on board to help you

> sign local funding applications and support fundraising in the branch

> liaise with other branches in the region

> raise the profile of the NAS within your branch and local community

> nominate, or act as, a telephone parent contact in the branch's area

> allocate tasks to, and motivate other people involved in your branch

> organise branch activities and services such as play schemes and social outings

> ensure that an agenda and notification go out for all branch meetings and chair the meetings

What the treasurer does

Like the branch officer, the treasurer launches the branch and is then also elected annually at the branch AGM. They too sign the branch rules.

The treasurer's role is set out in full in the branch handbook. The NAS will give training and help with the role. The treasurer's key responsibilities are to:

> comply with all financial procedures

> be a signatory to the branch's bank account

> keep accurate records of income and expenditure

> keep the petty cash and other cash balances secure

> provide returns to the Branch Finance and Admin Officer

> make sure that all expenditure is properly authorised

> keep records of gift aid donations

> make sure the bank account stays in credit.

Many treasurers take on other, non-financial roles within the branch though this can be too demanding as the treasurer's role is already a significant commitment.

What the committee does

Before a branch can launch, there must be at least 4 other committee members. This can be very useful to help delegate some responsibilities. The size and roles of a committee depend entirely on your branch's activities and plans. Your Branch Support Officer can provide you with sample role descriptions if you would like them but other roles can include:

- Branch Secretary
- Librarian
- Fundraising Officer
- Health and Safety Officer

- Newsletter / Website Editor
- Outings Coordinator
- Publicity Officer
- Campaigns Officer

What to consider when running a branch

Committee meetings

Branch committees should meet regularly to discuss any issues, review their financial situation (budget, donations coming in, expenses) and also to plan upcoming activities. We would suggest that branches meet at least once per quarter, to ensure that everything discussed is up to date and that everyone on the committee gets a chance to speak about ideas or concerns on a regular basis. Every committee meeting should be minuted and a copy of the minutes should be sent to the whole committee after the meeting, as well as your Branch Support Officer.

Prior to the meeting, it can be helpful to arrange for one person to chair the meeting and circulate an agenda, so that everyone can add items to the agenda that they would like to discuss. If you would like to receive guidance and/or a template agenda, your Branch Support Officer can provide you with this.

Branch Data

Every branch has the responsibility of looking after their membership database. This means raising awareness locally of autism related issues and keeping their branch membership up to date with branch events. Most branches classify a person to be a member of their branch when they are on their mailing list and receive information from the branch either by post or e-mail. To recruit new members, branches should hand/send out a branch membership form to new members, so that they can fill in their contact details. The Branches Team has a template membership form for branches that is on NAS brand and includes all the legal disclaimers to be in line with the Data Protection Act 1998. If you would like to receive a template or create your own membership form, get in touch with your Branch Support Officer and they will help you create one that suits your needs.

Membership forms should be stored securely, either in hard copy or electronic copy, e.g. on a computer or on a USB stick. However, the most convenient and secure way to store data of branch members if to transfer data to the address book in the NAS branch e-mail account. We encourage all branches to exclusively use the branch e-mail account for correspondence to other organisation as and branch members and to store membership data, as it is the best way to share the responsibilities of looking after the database and the e-mail communications amongst the branch committee.

The Branches Team delivers Data Protection training to branch volunteers that at least one person on the committee should attend, to ensure that the responsibilities of looking after the

branch membership in a safe and secure way are fully understood and implemented at the branch.

NAS Membership

Apart from being a branch member, a person can also be a member of the National Autistic Society. To become a member of the NAS, a person needs to complete a membership form and pay the membership fee. By doing so, they are added to the NAS membership and receive regular communications and updates from the NAS.

If an NAS member nominates your branch as their local branch, you will receive part of their membership fee to the branch bank account.

To let people know about this, you can refer them to the NAS Supporter Care team and they can become a member or amend their existing membership to nominate your local branch.

NAS Supporter Care: 0808 800 1050 or supportercare@nas.org.uk

Other useful things to know

Insurance

The NAS provides insurance cover for most branch activities and equipment. If you want to arrange an event or activity you need to contact your Branch Support Officer to ensure that there is appropriate insurance cover. Some activities may require additional cover so it is important that you tell your branch Support Officer about all activities. There are some activities that we cannot cover such as bungee jumping or parachuting. You will also receive an insurance renewal questionnaire each year, please make sure these get back to the Branches Team. Please be aware that the public liability insurance does not cover supervision for children by branch volunteers, therefore parents are responsible to actively supervise their children at all times during branch events.

DBS Checks

In line with the criteria for background checks done through the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS), background checks can only be done for branch volunteers who run branch activities for vulnerable adults, i.e. adults on the autism spectrum. If you have new volunteers joining you who require a background check, please get in touch with your Branch Support Officer, who can arrange a DBS check for this volunteer. For all other new volunteers joining your branch, we request that they fill in a volunteer application form and provide us with two referees. The Branch Support Officer will request references for the new volunteer and inform you of the outcome.

Communications

It's really important that a branch has all their means of communications up to date: the branch mobile phone should have a voicemail message on when it is switched off or the volunteers are unable to answer calls. This voicemail message should let people know when you will be able to respond to their query and whether you may be taking a longer break, e.g. during summer holidays. Ask your Branch Support Officer for a template voicemail message for branches.

The branch e-mail account should be checked regularly and depending on how many enquiries you receive, you may want to share the workload with one or more people on the committee. The mailbox needs to be emptied on a regular basis and it is useful to have a standard automated response on at all times, letting people know when you will be able to respond to

their query. Again, your Branch Support Officer can provide you with a template and help you set this up for you.

If your branch has a website or a Facebook page or Twitter account, it's important to maintain these. Having a website or Facebook page that is out of date can be a bad first impression to new members, so it's important to maintain your methods of communication and also keeping printed resources up to date.

Photo ID Cards

Some branch committee members like to have a form of ID to take out with them to prove that they are part of an NAS branch when fundraising, attending local meetings etc. We can provide cards that have a photo of the individual, the branch name, branch mobile number, their name and their role and start date. To get one, please send a passport photo and these details to the Branch Finance and Admin officer who will authorise it and get one made for you.

Branch Finance and Admin Officer

National Autistic Society

393 City Road

London

EC1V 1NG

New Volunteer Information

New Volunteer Information and Training

On starting as a volunteer you will receive the following documents/ information:

1. NAS Volunteering Policy online
2. NAS Branch Rules
3. Safeguarding Information
4. Representing the NAS guidelines (via email)
5. free NAS Information Leaflets

Soon after starting the volunteer role you will

1. Undertake NAS Health and Safety, Risk Assessment and Data Protection Training (if necessary)
2. Complete an online DBS check application if necessary
3. Be given a list of policy guidance, templates and available training from NAS
4. OWA (branch email) information and NAS IT acceptable use policy.

   Please note that you must read this information and return a signed form to Jamie Baladi, NAS Branches Manager, before you will be given access to the branch email account.

Branch contact details

Website: www.xxxx.org.uk
Tel: xxxxx
Email: xxxxx@nas.org.uk
Twitter: @NASxxxxxxxx

Facebook: NASxxxxxBranch

NAS xxxxx Branch Committee Members/ Volunteer List

Name	Position on the committee	Personal e-mail address (please do not circulate to others outside the committee)	Personal Telephone (please do not circulate to others outside the committee)
	Branch Officer		
	Treasurer		

What activities does the branch currently run?

Name of offer	Activity	How often does it run?

Family Support **(list volunteers involved)**	Parent Support Group Meetings and Adult/ Adult carer support meetings Family Activity Family Activity Sessions	
Information **(list volunteers involved)**	Website Telephone Support Email Support Attending local events, Attending council/ panel meetings re children and adult services	
Campaigns **(list volunteers involved)**	Education campaign, carried out initial research, now moved onto active campaign starting with online and paper petition relating to increased educational provision for children who have high functioning autism in local area	

Useful Contacts

Name	Job Title	Email	Phone
	Branch Support Officer		
Charlotte Bignell	Branch Finance and Admin Officer	Charlotte.Bignell@nas.org.uk	0207 923 5774
Jamie Baladi	Branches Manager	Jamie.Baladi@nas.org.uk	0207 903 3768
	Area Development Officer		
	Area Policy and Participation Officer		
	NAS Helpline	autismhelpine@nas.org.uk	0808 800 4104
	NAS Membership	supportercare@nas.org.uk	0808 800 1050

Who are these people?!

Branch Support Officer – They are your main link to the organisation, there to support you with the day to day running of the branch.

Branch Finance and Admin Officer – She can answer any financial questions you may have and will also arrange insurance and a mobile phone for the branch.

Branches Manager – She represents branches at management meetings, writes the policies and guidance related to branches and sends out the branches newsletter. If you have any questions that may affect all branches, have serious concerns or have feedback about your branch support officer, she is the person to talk to.

Area Development Officer – They will attend attending strategy groups/partnership boards with branches as well as link branches with other NAS services in the area.

Area Policy and Participation Officer – They are the contact point for branches who want to know about current national government policy or legislation, changes to benefits etc. They'll also support you with any campaigning activity you want to be involved with – please ensure you let them know before you start work on any campaign.

Templates, Guidance and Training from the Branches

Policies

Branch Driver and Vehicle Policy
Branch Expenses Policy
Branch IT Acceptable Use Policy
Branch Mobile Phone Policy
Branch Rules

Guidance

100 clubs
50th fundraising
Affiliate schemes and fundraising websites
Applying for funding
Branch AGMs
Branches and Gift Aid
Branch Helpline
Branch Websites
Electing committee members with an EGM
Equality Act 2010
Events and Conferences Planning
Finding and keeping volunteers
Fundraising
Gift Aid
Handbook
How to add someone to an email distribution list
How to clear your internet history
How to password protect documents
How to send an email using bcc
Keeping children and adults safe online
Lone working and personal safety
Photo / video use
Renting desk space
Representing the NAS
Running a branch library
Running a social group
Running a support group
Safeguarding
Setting up a Just Giving page
Setting up a PayPal account
Social media
Street collection licences
Taking minutes
Taking part in meetings
Teamwork and your branch
Using OWA
Working with the media

Templates

Agenda
Branch membership form
Branch merchandise order form
Budget for 1 day event
Code of conduct
Data Selection Requests form
Evaluation form
Gift Aid form
Registration form
Risk Assessment form
Role descriptions
Sponsorship form
Thank you to fundraisers

Branding templates (for different areas)
Leaflet
Letterhead
Logo
Poster
PowerPoint
Newsletter
Thank you certificate for donation

Training

Data protection
Food safety
Health and safety
Presentation skills
Risk assessments
Safeguarding
Helpline training

Thank you!

Thank you for taking the time to read through this induction pack, we hope it has been useful, remember if you have any additional questions please get in touch with your Branch Support Officer and they will do their best to help.

Once again, thank you for volunteering at your branch and welcome to the NAS.