

Co-Op to Hold Channel Islands' First 'Quiet Hour'

On Monday 2nd October, the Channel Islands Co-operative Society will be the first business in Guernsey to hold a 'quiet hour' to support people on the autistic spectrum.

This initiative is a collaborative effort, with the Channel Islands Co-operative Society working closely with Autism Guernsey and the National Autistic Society Guernsey Branch (NAS).

The 'quiet hour', will see two shops take a few simple steps to make the shopping experience easier for adults and children on the autistic spectrum. As research by the NAS shows that 79 per cent of autistic people feel socially isolated and 64 per cent avoid going shopping.

Entering a busy shop where there is music playing, a lot of people and loud announcements can be a daunting prospect for those on the spectrum. They face the risk of experiencing the stress of sensory overload, which can leave them stressed, anxious and sometimes in physical pain.

The 'quiet hour', will be held at the St Martin's and St Sampson's Grand Marché branches from 3:00 pm till 4:00 pm. During which they will turn off the music, avoid making tannoy announcements and have an autism-friendly checkout which will have the volume set to the lowest setting. Autism-trained 'staff champions' will also be stationed around the shop to assist where needed.

'This is such a great initiative that will help us achieve our goal of supporting those with autism so that they can experience a more relaxed and comfortable shopping experience. I'm sure many people find shopping a little stressful at times, especially those with children, but for individuals with autism, it can be like that every time,' said Autism Services Manager, Julia Watts.

'To remove some of the stress is fantastic, and we are so grateful to the Co-operative for being so willing to help, offering two stores. We welcome the fact that the Society says that if the trial is successful, it's something that they could offer on a weekly basis.'

Mark Cox, chief operating officer of The Channel Islands Co-operative Society, said the company was very aware of the diverse needs of its customers.

'The Channel Islands Co-operative Society is leading the way in support of islanders with disabilities. Many of our stores now have mobility scooters, on-shelf magnifiers and hearing loops and earlier this year we purchased specialist trolleys to be used by children with additional needs in Guernsey,' he said.

'We didn't hesitate to say yes to this trial when approached by Autism Guernsey and hope that it will help those families affected by autism and highlight the challenges they face on a daily basis.'

If any more stores would like to organise a 'quiet hour', they are asked to contact Mandy Morris at Autism Guernsey, office@autismguernsey.org.gg

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Notes to editors

For interviews with Mark Cox, chief operating officer of The Channel Islands Co-operative Society, please contact Liquid on (01534) 488899.

For interviews with Julia Watts, Manager of Autism Guernsey, please contact Alisha Smith at Black Vanilla, alisha@black-vanilla.gg | 01481 729229

About the initiative.

The National Autistic Society's Autism Hour is the UK's first week-long event, launching 2 October 2017, where shops and services take 60 minutes to provide autistic people with a break from the overload of too much information. A recent survey by the National Autistic Society showed that 79% of autistic people feel socially isolated and 64% avoid going to the shops.

www.autism.org.uk/autismhour