

*An introduction to the speakers*

*Lisa Roberts*

**1. Who are you and what do you do?**

My name is Lisa Roberts. I am the mum of 14 year-old twins – one boy and one girl - with autism, ADHD [attention deficit hyperactivity disorder] and PDA [pathological demand avoidance].

I run a support group for over 200 families in Shropshire where we offer a wide range of support and activities to reduce social isolation and create a caring community.

We are also at the centre of the redesign of Shropshire's CAMHS service into the Emotional, Behavioural and Welfare Service and are assisting in the setting up of Shropshire's first autism specific school.

I also run a not-for-profit business, making weighted blankets, vests and shoulder wraps for families and individuals around the UK at cost.



**2. How did you become interested in autism?**

The journey my children and our family have gone through, from diagnosis and even before then, has ignited a passion for me to want to change things due to the lack of support children like mine are given in mainstream school.

From the start, I have wanted to change the system to ensure that our children are supported before failure. So, I started by educating the educators. I went to schools and gave PowerPoint presentations and tried to get teaching staff to understand their impact on our children.

**3. What is the most rewarding project you have worked on?**

I have a few:

- The group I set up is having positive effects on families, reducing isolation and bringing them into a friendly, non-judgemental community.
- The response I have had from parents who have bought weighted blankets from me at cost price, and who have seen their teenagers sleep through the night for the first time.
- Getting my son in to a 52-week specialist provision fully funded by our LEA, meaning he is not in social services care. We won a landmark case and as far as I understand he is still the only child in the UK to not be in care and to be accessing a 52-week specialist school. He is now progressing fantastically well which is a testament to what can be achieved given the right support.

**4. What is your special interest?**

I love anything related to crafts, my pugs, and I get huge satisfaction in helping others and providing autism awareness wherever I can.

**5. What do you do to relax?**

I love to walk my pugs. As a family, we regularly meet up with the Pug Dog Welfare Rescue and Rehoming Association to take part in the walks and activities.

I have found pugs to be fantastic for my twins - my 2 pugs are nicknamed the "Hugpugs".



**6. What is your favourite food?**

CoOp's honeycomb ice-cream

**7. In no more than 10 words, can you tell us something about what you will be saying in your talk?**

PMA = Positive Mental Attitude is mine and my family's motto.

**8. What are you looking forward to at our conference?**

I'm looking forward to meeting lots of speakers and those coming to the conference. It's a fantastic opportunity for me to learn from others, which can only help my understanding, which I can then pass on to my group.

I also hope to see some parents that I have met at a number of Birmingham's fantastic support groups, who I have met through my weighted blankets.

**9. What one thing do you think makes a conference amazing?**

I would say cake.....but equally, to provide a variety of information, support and inclusion.

**To find out more about the conference, visit [shop.autismwestmidlands.org.uk/products/5th-annual-conference](http://shop.autismwestmidlands.org.uk/products/5th-annual-conference)**

