

## **Romsey is the first 'Makaton Friendly Town' in the U.K!**

We are delighted to announce that Romsey is the first town in the UK (and the whole world) to have been awarded the status of a 'Makaton Friendly Town'. This means that there are over 30 organisations in Romsey who have learnt to use a sign language called Makaton. Makaton is based on British Sign Language (BSL) and natural gesture and is used with children and adults with lots of different communication difficulties in the UK.

### *So how did this happen?*

Speaking Space is an organisation in Romsey that supports children and adults with communication difficulties. Most have a learning disability or autism, and many of them struggle to be independent out in the community because of their communication needs. Last year Speaking Space started offering free Makaton training sessions to organisations in Romsey who were interested in improving their skills in talking to customers who have a communication disability. The response was overwhelming with 31 organisations becoming Makaton Friendly which meant that we could apply to be a Makaton Friendly Town – something no other town in the UK has achieved. These have included the Romsey fire fighters, the police, doctor's surgeries, pubs, tea rooms, shops, a building society and many more.

Alex Kelly, the managing director of Speaking Space, and a speech therapist who is known internationally for her work in social skills, said "at Speaking Space we are committed to improving the quality of lives of anyone who comes to us and we know that being able to express your needs and be understood is an essential part of this and of being independent. So we wanted to take what we do at Speaking Space and extend it into the community and we can't thank the people of Romsey enough for being so supportive and enthusiastic".

For more information please contact us at [office@alexkelly.biz](mailto:office@alexkelly.biz) or telephone us on 02380987134 or visit our website [www.alexkelly.biz](http://www.alexkelly.biz) or [www.speakingspace.co.uk](http://www.speakingspace.co.uk)

### ***Additional information***

- Speaking Space is part of Alex Kelly Ltd and is a family business that provides high quality services in the area of speech, language and social communication
- We run a day service for adults with a learning disability and autism

- We offer speech therapy to schools and individuals
- We run training courses in communication, social skills, Makaton and autism.
- Alex Kelly (a speech therapist) and her husband Brian Sains (a teacher) set the company up in 2009 and opened the day service in 2011
- We moved to Romsey in 2014
- We employ speech therapists, communication facilitators and Makaton Tutors (Hannah Anderson is one of our Makaton Tutors)
- Alex Kelly is a well-known author in the area of social skills and autism and lectures internationally.