

## Anne Hegarty



Anne Solway Hegarty was born in London on 14 July 1958.

She started her journalistic career in the 1980's as a reporter and feature writer at the South Wales Argus before moving to Manchester.

She also worked as a ghost-writer and wrote two books for American children's author Richard Scarry, but she said that the books "were a bit rubbish and nobody bought them."

Anne was diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Condition in 2005 after seeing a TV programme about Autism. Prior to this she had been struggling with day-to-day life and debt. She says 'I'm autistic, so I find things like getting showered and dressed quite difficult and stressful'.

Rock bottom for Anne came some time in 2008. Her work – as a freelance copy editor and proof-reader – had dried up.

"I had become completely undependable, publishing books, you need people to hit the deadline. I wasn't doing that, so understandably people weren't giving me work anymore."

Anne was assigned a social worker. 'He was brilliant. He knew what to do, that the water company had a secret fund for people who can't pay the bill'.

He helped her to get back on disability benefit and housing benefit and open a bank account. She says "In particular, understanding and relating to other people, and taking part in everyday family, school, work and social life can be harder."

Some people may see a formal diagnosis as an unhelpful label, others appreciate the access to services and support a diagnosis can provide.

After getting back on her feet in the late 00s, Anne still wasn't doing a lot of socialising. She says 'I have always spent most of my time on my own'.

However, due to her love of quizzes and her involvement in the Mastermind Club (a group of former contestants of the BBC quiz show) she got involved in a national circuit that organised a big quiz once a month.

Then, at a World Quizzing Championship event in Shropshire, she met "the largest man I've ever seen in my life", who introduced himself as Mark Labbett. He told her about a new ITV quiz show on which he was appearing. He said she should watch it.

She did – and she liked it. When she heard they were hiring more quizzers, she applied. That is how Anne became the Governess on 'The Chase' (Labbett is the Beast).

The chasers' job is to try to prevent contestants from winning cash prizes.

Now, Anne, aka 'the Governess' is one of Britain's most famous quizzers and was also paid £95,000 to appear on I'm a Celebrity Get Me Out of Here!

On whether she'd ever leave the programme, Anne insisted: 'Not unless I get fired or they cancel it. In a sense, it's an easy job.'