

25 years of National Autistic Society Scotland!

Autistic people and staff at the National Autistic Society Scotland's services in Catrine celebrated 25 years of our existence in August by hosting a summer party and burying time capsules.

The event included live music, face painting, a barbecue and riding opportunities provided by Pony Access. Over 50 people attended the celebration, including the autistic people supported at the facilities, families, staff and trustees.

Three time capsules were buried to provide future generations with an insight into life at Catrine Bank and Daldorch supported living services, and our Outreach and Short Breaks services, in 2022. The capsules contained memories of

the people supported at the service as well as staff, featuring pictures, mementos and things that matter to them.

The 25th anniversary event was also organised to promote the support we have provided to hundreds of people over the years.

Peter Jung, Head of Adult Services (Scotland and Northern Ireland), said: "It was wonderful that so many of the people we support, their families and our staff were able to take part in this celebration. It has been a great day and folk seemed to thoroughly enjoy

themselves. I think the face painting, music, horse-riding and ice-cream van were the highlights! It was a great way for us to recognise the positive contribution our staff have made to the lives of autistic people across Scotland in the last 25 years."



Our staff and the people we support in Catrine had a brilliant time!

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FROM OUR EDITOR

It's been 25 years since the National Autistic Society Scotland started up - and nine years since I started writing this newsletter for them.

This newsletter was the first outlet to publish my words and pictures. I got this gig by chance back in 2013, when I was in the queue for a mentor from the Moving Forward+ scheme. I had graduated university a year earlier and I was clueless about what to do next. At university, I just concentrated on getting good marks in the subjects I was studying - almost ignoring the social side of academic life, like learning how to write a CV or pass a job interview. I knew they were important, but I just didn't have the confidence and experience to take that step into the work pool.

Someone in the Glasgow office, who was making a newsletter for volunteers, had heard of my skills in writing and graphic design and wanted help redesigning and editing the newsletter. That newsletter is the predecessor of this publication you're reading now.

If asked "what does the National Autistic Society mean to you?", it'll be my first true step into the adult pool.

Gordon Wallace
Editor



Gordon's Illustration of what the National Autistic Society Scotland means to him

About Us videos



As part of our 25th anniversary celebrations, we've created a series of videos from our volunteers, staff and the people we support about our amazing work!

The videos feature experiences of the positive impact of our services such as our social groups, Autism Support Ayrshire, Moving Forward+ and our branches.

You can view all our videos on our newly-created YouTube channel, at bit.ly/3XpidJd

Glasgow Branch launch

The latest addition to our charity's branches network, our Glasgow Branch, has recently been formed and will be launching in January 2023. The branch is run by volunteer committee members who want to make a difference to autistic people. The committee is made up of volunteers who are parents and carers of autistic children, all of whom bring a wealth of autism knowledge and experience. The branch plans to run parent support groups, as well as guest speaker evenings.

To find out more about the Glasgow Branch or any other branch in Scotland, email Patsy Devlin at patsy.devlin@nas.org.uk

update

FROM OUR DIRECTOR

Hello everyone, and welcome to this edition of *News and Views*!

It has been an extraordinary 25 years for us as a charity, with so many brilliant milestones along the way. We are so happy to be able to celebrate our staff, volunteers, families, partners and importantly, the people we support, through events such as our summer party in Catrine. It continues to be an incredible honour to work and campaign for Scotland's 56,000 autistic people and their families.

There have certainly been challenges, but these have been massively outweighed by the achievements and joyfulness that have been shared throughout the charity since we started. A massive thank you goes out to those who have supported our work throughout the years, for which we are deeply appreciative.

25 years ago, we were formed to help create a society that works for autistic people in Scotland. Thanks to everyone who has contributed to and supported our work, immense progress has been made, and we are eternally grateful for all your support. With your help, we are sure the next 25 years will be just as successful.



Rob Holland
Director of National Autistic Society Scotland



Our new Instagram page

We now have an Instagram page!

If you want to keep up to date with our services and the latest news about what we're doing for autistic people and their families in Scotland, follow us at [@autisticsocietyscotland](https://www.instagram.com/autisticsocietyscotland) or visit the link below:

www.instagram.com/autisticsocietyscotland

Now I Know campaign



Read Melissa's story of late diagnosis on our website

The National Autistic Society's *Now I Know* campaign features powerful photography and films of both autistic women and non-binary people from across the country, who share their experiences of late diagnosis of autism.

Six people were photographed in spaces that reflect their personalities and unique interests. The photoshoots were collaborative, with each person using a clicker to capture photos of themselves, allowing them to take control of their image.

For more information about the campaign, visit www.autism.org.uk/nowiknow

We're inviting both autistic women and non-binary people to join in with the campaign by sharing your story on social media using **#NowIKnow**.

Our work in Parliament



Some of our campaigners in action!

Starting in June, the National Autistic Society Scotland and Scottish Autism collected the views of autistic people, families and professionals on a new independently-appointed Commissioner to promote and protect the rights of autistic people.

The survey aimed to collect views on the challenges that autistic people and families face and what the priorities of a Commissioner should be, which will be compiled into a report and shared with Scottish Government.

The survey follows the successful *Our Voice Our Rights* campaign run in 2021 by our charity and Scottish Autism, alongside ENABLE Scotland. This resulted in a manifesto commitment to a Commissioner by the SNP and, following that, the Scottish Government in their Programme for Government.

The final report containing the survey findings and recommendations will be published in due course on our website.

Autism Support Ayrshire and NASplus+

Our Autism Support Ayrshire and NASplus+ programmes continue to run with great success, thanks to the help of our staff and the people we support.

Our NASplus+ Social Navigation programme for teenagers and young adults aged 14-24 living in Glasgow aims to build confidence and develop social navigation skills and strategies. It is open to those diagnosed as autistic, as well as people who are going through the process of diagnosis.

Participants meet online every week and get involved in fun activities created with shared interests in mind. Our online groups are welcoming and relaxed, with support from trained members of staff and volunteers.

In September, we had some amazing winners from our 25th Anniversary Bake Off! Well done to the young people from our Glasgow and Ayrshire Social Navigation Groups and our wonderful volunteers!

Lucas's tasty hedgehog won, with Holly's chocolate cake second and Megan's cupcakes third. Yum!



Lucas's winning entry for our Bake Off competition!

News from Highland



We are amazed to have had a 100% increase in people attending our Pines virtual events in the last year. These are run in partnership with the Highland Council Pines team and Thriving Families. Most events are filmed, so if you can't join live, you can watch afterwards. We have had parents, carers and professionals joining us from across the Highlands, so please book to join us at our next events by visiting www.thepineshighland.com/upcoming-events

The Pines website and YouTube channel also have fantastic resources for people in Highland, and we know they are also used in many other areas of Scotland.

The website has lots of materials to help understanding about neurodevelopmental differences and how to give the best support, and the YouTube channel now includes over 50 films.



Have a look at the resources available by visiting The Pines website or their YouTube channel:

www.thepineshighland.com
[www.youtube.com/channel/
UCCC6TUmK4xqyVbvPuaSJ-Kg](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCCC6TUmK4xqyVbvPuaSJ-Kg)

Post-Diagnostic Support Service

Our Post-Diagnostic Support Service continues to go from strength to strength! Delivered with other organisations as part of the Scottish Government's *Different Minds* campaign, the programme aims to empower young people to develop a sense of identity and belonging. At every session, participants discuss the topic of the day, then engage in a fun activity of their choice. Each programme runs for six weeks and covers topics such as understanding autism, managing anxiety, social communication and confidence.

The service is open to anyone living in Scotland aged 12-18 and with a recent diagnosis of autism.

The service can now also work with schools to support pupils. This is done remotely during school hours, either for a school which has enough pupils to form an individual group, or they will support several schools to join together for some online sessions.

This new service has already had great feedback, so if you work in a school and want to find out more, please get in touch with our Post-Diagnostic Support team below.



Social groups

Our social groups for young people have continued to thrive, with more than 150 autistic people being supported each week. We have a diverse range of groups covering lots of subjects including film and TV, gaming, travel, politics, general chat and loads more! We have groups covering different age ranges, genders and geographic areas, so why not get in touch to find out more?

For more info on either Post-Diagnostic Support or social groups, contact
ScotlandSocialGroups@nas.org.uk

Adult mentoring Glasgow

We're delighted to have been awarded three years of funding from the National Lottery's Improving Lives Fund to launch a new mentoring project to support autistic adults.

This project will work with up to 90 autistic adults living in the Glasgow City Council area, providing tailored, person-centred support to help improve individuals' wellbeing and reach their personal goals.

Individual support will be delivered by volunteer mentors, working towards empowering the participant to achieve personal goals. These could be finding a job, starting a business, improving money management, or more social aspirations, such as going out with friends. Goals will be entirely user-led and set by the people we support. The programme mentors will work closely to create an action plan to empower participants to achieve these goals themselves.

Each mentorship programme will take place over nine months, with a group celebration event after they have completed their sessions. Participants will also be offered access to weekly online social activities, which aim to tackle isolation and loneliness and provide peer-to-peer support.



For more information about this project, whether to register or enquire about volunteering, contact
adult.mentoring@nas.org.uk

Charity Heroes Glitz and Glam Lunch



Fiona and the Charity Heroes team

Big thanks to Fiona Irvine and the Charity Heroes team, who organised a glamorous fundraising lunch for us at the Radisson Blu Hotel in Glasgow!

The event took place on Saturday 12 November and was hosted by Gina McKie, with fabulous food, amazing shops, games, raffle prizes, live entertainment, as well as an after party which continued into the evening!

A great time was had by the 180 attendees, with plenty of sparkle and twinkle toes on display.

Our thanks also go to Abellio Shared Services, Eversholt Rail Group and Rainbow HR who sponsored the event.

All the money raised went towards our amazing social groups, who are very grateful for the wonderful support.

Fancy raising money for us?

We have a wide range of in-person and virtual events for you to take part in, and lots of fundraising ideas if you would like to do your own thing.

Visit our website to find out more
www.autism.org.uk/get-involved/raise-money

Nevermore's Halloween Spooktacular!

A huge shout out to Lisa and Laura from Tinkerbells Emporium and Nevermore Tattoo in Stirling, who have organised lots of exciting challenges to raise money for us! This included a spooky Halloween Street event in October, which featured creepy crafts, gruesome games, prizes for the best Halloween costumes and a Howl-O-Ween competition for the scariest looking pup!

Thank you so much Lisa and Laura for all your support, we really appreciate it!

To find out more about some of the amazing fundraising challenges that Lisa and Laura are doing, visit their JustGiving page: www.justgiving.com/fundraising/lisaandlaurafriarsst



NatWest charity concert

A special mention to NatWest staff who made some noise for a great cause, raising money for our social groups with a charity concert on Tuesday 29 November.

The concert took place at The Voodoo Rooms in Edinburgh, with the aim of raising £2,000!

To find out more about the event, visit bit.ly/NatWest-charity-concert

Meet our staff



EWAN RAE

New Registered Manager for Adult Services

A huge congratulations to Ewan Rae, our new Registered Manager for our Adult Services! Ewan ran the Great Scottish Run in October to raise funds for an adult swing for the Springburn Supported Living service. He managed to finish with a fab time of one hour 51 mins, and he raised a grand total of £655!

Well done Ewan!



SUZI MARTIN

New External Affairs Manager

We were delighted to welcome our new External Affairs Manager in August, Suzi Martin!

Suzi brings with her a wealth of experience from SAMH (Scottish Association for Mental Health) and has already been hard at work heading up our influencing work across the media and within Holyrood, including our ongoing work for a Commissioner.

Welcome Suzi!

Job opportunities

Do you...

- want a rewarding job that offers satisfaction, variety and flexibility?
- enjoy working with people and want to make a real difference?
- have excellent life skills that you can share?

To find out about our current vacancies and more opportunities with the National Autistic Society Scotland, please visit www.autism.org.uk/jobs or contact our HR team at scotlandHR@nas.org.uk

Are you a member of the National Autistic Society Scotland?

If not, you can join our growing community of over 1,200 people in Scotland and play a vital role in our charity's work. Our package of benefits includes our quarterly members' magazine, *Your Autism*, and discounts on our events. To find out more, please call our Supporter Care team on **0808 800 1050**.

About us

The National Autistic Society Scotland is here to transform lives, change attitudes and create a society that works for autistic people.

We transform lives by providing support, information and practical advice for the 56,000 autistic adults and children in Scotland, as well as their family members and carers.

Autistic people turn to us at key moments or challenging times in their lives, be it getting a diagnosis, going to school or finding work.

We change attitudes by improving public understanding of autism and the difficulties many autistic people face.

We also work closely with businesses, local authorities and government to help them provide more autism-friendly spaces, deliver better services and improve laws.

We have come a long way but it is not good enough.

There is still so much to do to increase opportunities, reduce social isolation and build a brighter future for people on the autism spectrum. With your help, we can make it happen.