

News and Views

From the National Autistic Society
Scotland and our volunteers

Spring 2025

World Autism Acceptance Month: 'It's How You Show Up'

This year, for World Autism Acceptance Month, we're launching a new campaign called 'It's How You Show Up'.

For every autistic person you meet, even the simplest day-to-day gesture of support can make a huge difference. Therefore, this campaign is about taking small steps to support autistic people, from learning about autistic experiences, to advocating alongside them. The aim is to bridge the gap between wanting to help autistic people and actually taking action.

The main feature of the campaign is our real-life film about an autistic father and daughter, Chris and Penny. The film is about the small things that have made their lives better, and Chris' hope for the future for his daughter.

Throughout April 2025, we will be spreading our campaign's positive message with adverts in shopping centres, bus stops

and billboards. We're also giving people the chance to share their experiences and real-life ways they have shown up for an autistic person through our online pledge wall.

We want to encourage more people to see what they can do for autistic people, and not continue to worry about getting it wrong. We hope people will see our campaign and think about the small things that they

can do to make the world a better place for autistic people. Because a world that works for autistic people will work better for everybody.

In the face of challenging times, this campaign is all about making a positive difference in the lives of autistic people, especially those closest to us.

It's how all of us show up that makes all the difference.



Chris, star of the campaign film

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FROM OUR EDITOR

It is that time of year again - World Autism Acceptance Month.

This year's motto is 'It's How You Show Up.'

This is to highlight those moments in life that others have helped us feel supported and included. This can be as simple as talking to someone. Just saying "hello." Or asking someone their opinion on something. Just doing that alone can make a HUGE difference.

There have been noted examples of people who were mentally in a bad place, being relieved from it by someone talking to them. Even just smiling to them, or acknowledging their existence.

Fundamentally, no one likes been ignored, no matter how annoying they are. We all deep down want to say "I am here! I exist in this world!" But some struggle to make that connection in the physical world. Its easy online, due to the electronic filter the internet enables. But in the real world, the filter is harder to implement, leading to exposure. Exposure to danger, like bullies and con-artists.

This is where YOU come in. This is "how you show up" - to help them when such a situation arrives.

Gordon Wallace
Editor

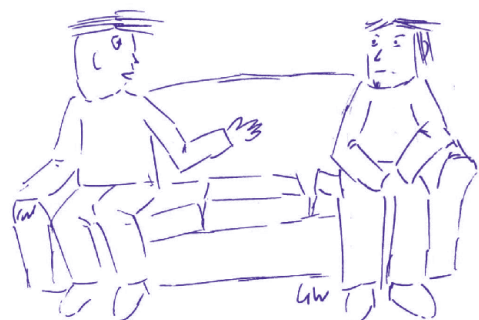


Illustration of 'Showing Up'

BECOME A PARENT- TO-PARENT VOLUNTEER!

Are you the parent or primary carer of an autistic person?

Become a Parent-to-Parent Volunteer and help other parents and primary carers of autistic children and adults when they need it most.

Our award-winning helpline offers emotional support, practical strategies, and a listening ear, all delivered by trained volunteers who are themselves the parents or primary carers of autistic people.

As a volunteer, you will:

- Be calling parents to provide emotional support and helpful strategies
- Use your lived experience to support others
- Join a compassionate, supportive team
- Gain valuable skills with expert training
- Volunteer from home with flexible hours
- Access 24/7 support through our Employee Assistance Programme

We welcome all parents and primary carers of autistic people.

Volunteer
and help us
create a society
that works for
autistic people



Volunteer with Us

Find out more here: <https://bit.ly/4i6FIR1>

update

FROM OUR DIRECTOR



Hello everyone, and welcome to the Spring edition of News and Views!

For this year's World Autism Acceptance Month, we have created a new campaign: 'It's How You Show Up'. The message of the campaign is very impactful, and it has been great to see all of the incredible content that has been shared for the campaign so far. It is so important that we show up for the autistic people in our lives, to ensure that they always feel included and accepted in our communities.

April has been a busy month for the organisation. Our Spectrum Colour Walk took place on the 5th of April, and it was a lovely day for all who attended. Spectrum Sessions Season 2 also launched this month, with a fantastic roster of guests. Finally, we will be hosting an exciting event at the National Library of Scotland on the 17th of April, where autistic authors will share their experiences of reading and writing. I look forward to attending this event, and I hope that we can be involved in more events like this in the future.



Rob Holland

Director of National Autistic Society Scotland

Our Moray, Nairn & Strathspey Branch Launch Event!

We recently held a launch event for our new Moray, Nairn, & Strathspey Branch!

The event was held at The Loft, Kinloss on Saturday, February 8th. More than 400 people attended the event, and over £700 was raised!

The event featured many different activities for attendees to take part in, including a face painter, sand art, nature-based activities, a scavenger hunt, virtual reality, crafts, and a bouncy castle! There was also a sensory friendly quiet space, for anyone who was looking to relax and recharge. In terms of

product stalls, there were lots of handmade items for sale by local crafters.

The branch offers a free drop-in for neurodivergent children and teenagers on one Saturday per month. Attendees must be accompanied by a parent/guardian, but siblings and friends are also welcome.

Sarah and Susannah Coulson, Co-Chairpersons for the branch, said:

'We are delighted that the event met and surpassed our aims. There were lots of neurodivergent families who had a wonderful



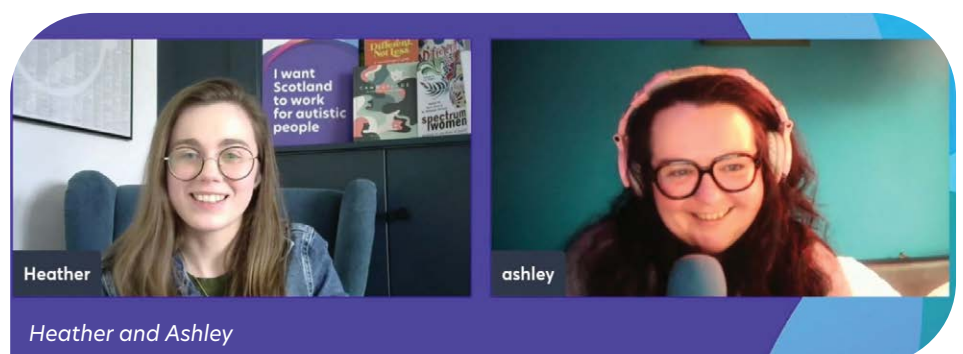
Young person enjoying the event

day, and they were so grateful to have an event they felt able to attend. Our community now knows that there's a new branch working to help them, and we made a healthy profit to facilitate the growth of our existing families' group.'

Season 2 of Spectrum Sessions out Now!

The second season of the National Autistic Society Scotland's new podcast, Spectrum Sessions, is out now on YouTube and Spotify.

Hosted by Heather Carson, our Media and Communications Officer, the podcast aims to platform unfiltered autistic voices, by providing a space for autistic people to share their stories. The first episode released on the 1st of April, and the final episode is due to release on the 6th of May. A video version of



the podcast can be viewed on YouTube, or the audio can be listened to without the video element on Spotify.

This season features six incredible guests, including Ashley Storrie (Comedian, Writer,

and Actress), Tom Urie (Actor & Musician), Judith Langlands-Scott (Historian & Writer), Sean Logan (Musician), Andy Smith (Founder of Spectrum Gaming), and Lorraine Gillies (Freelance Consultant and Founder).

Closure of our Highland Service

The National Autistic Society Scotland's Highland Information Service will sadly be closing in April.

The service has been supporting autistic children and young people, and their families across Highland for over 12 years. During that time, it has helped over 950 families, giving them invaluable advice, guidance and signposting information.

It also leaves an important legacy including a dedicated website for the Pines Neurodevelopmental Service, a multi-

disciplinary team supporting autistic children, young people and their families, and a library of over 1,000 books and sensory items which is available through the Pines.

We are disappointed that we are not able to continue to deliver our Highland Information Service. It has been operating with the same level of funding for 12 years, despite increasing demand and higher costs, and is no longer economically viable. We engaged with the funder, Highland Council, to keep the service

going, but ultimately no agreement was reached.

We are hopeful that funding may be available in the future to support families, and we will continue to engage with the Council and other partners. We would like to thank Highland Council for the funding of the service over the 12 years it has been hugely appreciated.

We would encourage autistic people and families in the Highland area who are looking for support to contact the **Pines Neurodevelopmental**

Service, Thriving Families and the **Just Ask** enquiry line.

The National Autistic Society Scotland will continue to have a footprint in Highland through its volunteer-led Highland Branch, which you can follow on social media. Our website also has lots of advice and guidance: <https://www.autism.org.uk/advice-and-guidance>.

Finally, thank you to everyone involved in the running and delivery of the Highland Information Service and in particular our staff and volunteers.

Update



An Update from the Moving Forward+ Team

Victoria, from our Moving Forward+ team, said:

'Our Moving Forward+ programme is proud to announce that we have exceeded our participation targets for 2024-25. This marks a successful second year of funding from CashBack for Communities' Phase 6. This achievement reflects the dedication and commitment of our team, as well as the continued hard work of our young people.'

As we celebrate this, we are excited to look ahead to year 3, with our focus remaining on delivering person-centred support to all of our young people, ensuring they all have access to opportunities to thrive. We are looking forward to continuing to build on this success, strengthening our connections, and making a positive, lasting impact on the lives of those we support. We are excited for the new opportunities and experiences that the coming year will bring to young people we support!'



Moving Forward+ Team

For more information please visit:
<https://www.autism.org.uk/what-we-do/scotland/moving-forward>

Our Fringe Event at the Scottish Labour Conference



Rob and Martin Whitfield MSP at the Scottish Labour Conference

We partnered with Scottish Autism and ENABLE to host a joint fringe event at the Scottish Labour Conference 2025!

The event was titled 'Closing the Accountability Gap' and featured both a panel discussion and a Question-and-Answer segment. The panel was chaired by Dr Joe Long, Director of Practice and Innovation at Scottish Autism, and he was joined by Jim Gault, Co-Chair of the LDAN Bill Lived Experience Advisory panel, Kirsty Kennedy-Hyman, Co-Chair of ENABLE's Self-Advocacy Forum, and Daniel Johnson MSP.

The panel explored the ever-growing accountability gap that means that autistic people and people with learning disabilities' rights are not upheld, and what needs to happen next to realise the ambition of the Learning Disabilities, Autism, and Neurodivergence Bill.

Following the event, we met with several MSP's throughout the day to discuss a variety of issues including education, diagnosis times, and delays to the LDAN Bill.

Our World Autism Acceptance Month Walk



The Walk

Staff, volunteers, and people supported by the National Autistic Society Scotland recently enjoyed a relaxed 5km walk in Glasgow Green to celebrate World Autism Acceptance Month.

We held the walk to increase awareness and acceptance of autism, by walking through in National Autistic Society clothing. Family and friends were encouraged to get involved in the walk, and dogs were invited to come along as well!

The walk took place on Saturday the 5th of April at 10:30am, and over 50 people took part. After the walk, those who attended were invited to the Project Ability building, where refreshments and entertainment were provided.

Some of our branches across Scotland decided to host their own walks. For example, our Dundee & Angus Branch walked through Monikie Park at the

same time as the Glasgow Walk. On this walk, attendees were encouraged to dress up or wear a wig if they wanted to.

The event was a great success! Thank you to all who attended.

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

Meet Our Staff

Meet Claire Dobson, our Student Specialist Mentor & Empower Up Volunteer



Q: Can you tell us a bit about yourself?

I'm Claire! Originally from Fife, I moved to Glasgow in 2012 to pursue a degree in History and have since had many jobs, including a 6-year career in Built Heritage. I live with the love of my life, my dog Starla... and my fiancé (haha). I'm a tattoo enthusiast and I love to crochet.

Q: Why did you join the National Autistic Society?

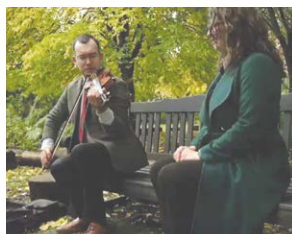
I accessed NAS's Student Mentoring Programme when I returned to university to do an MSc. This support was invaluable beyond words: I knew that I wanted to give back and work somewhere affirming and celebratory of neurodivergence like NAS. I am now a NAS Student Specialist Mentor, and I volunteer with our 'Empower Up!' program.

Q: What needs to change to make things better for autistic people?

So many things. I think outdated myths about autism unfortunately still permeate mass preconceptions and this is really damaging. Fern Brady talks about how, while it's a disability, autism is neither a tragedy nor a superpower: it just is. She explains this far better than I can here, but I think this is a great place to start that discussion.

Watch My Autistic Imagination on BBC iPlayer!

In March, a TV Show released on BBC Alba called: Mo Mhac-Meanmna Otasamach – My Autistic Imagination. In the show, autistic artist Eòghainn MacGregor meets other autistic people, where they discuss how creativity enriches their lives.



David and Eòghainn

The episode features several familiar faces, including David Nicholson, our General Administrator, and Nuala MacDonald, a guest on Season 1 of Spectrum Sessions.

Watch the documentary here:

BBC ALBA - Trusadh, Series 17, Mo Mhac-Meanmna Otasamach – My Autistic Imagination

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.