

National  
Autistic  
Society  
Scotland



# Impact Report

Mentoring Autistic  
Adults Project  
Scotland 2022-25

December 2025

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# Foreword

**I am delighted to present this impact report for the Mentoring for Autistic Adults Project (MAAP) showcasing the successes of this work.**

Seeing the growth, confidence, and connections that have emerged between mentors and mentees has been wonderful and is a real testament to the commitment of staff, volunteers and participants. Each story of progress and each moment of impact has been a reminder of the power of mentoring, and of the difference that meaningful relationships can make in people's lives.

Our report reflects the journeys of mentees who gained confidence, skills, and new opportunities, and of mentors who found fulfilment in giving back. These stories and voices celebrate the impact of mentoring on individuals and the community.

We are proud of what has been accomplished and hope this report serves as a fitting legacy for funders, practitioners and policy makers when thinking about support for autistic adults.

Finally, we would like to thank our funders the National Lottery's Community Fund for their support over the lifetime of the programme and their enthusiasm and willingness to engage with us as MAAP evolved.



**Rob Holland, Director**  
National Autistic Society Scotland



## A snapshot of the project's impact:



**72 autistic people** received mentoring



**83 volunteers** enrolled as mentors



Over **1,000 hours** of mentoring delivered

**"This sort of person-centered approach for autistic adults is great. The individual nature means the support directly addresses their specific needs. Whether that is employment, social connection, independent living or managing the sensory input, you offer a bridge."**

Volunteer mentor

# About MAAP

**The Mentoring Autistic Adults Project (MAAP)** provided one-to-one support for autistic adults aged 21 and over in Glasgow from 2022 to 2025. Trained volunteers worked with mentees to identify strengths, set achievable goals, and take practical steps towards them. Special care was taken to match mentors and mentees, where possible, based on shared interests and life experiences. Mentoring was flexible, delivered both in-person and online, and tailored to each mentees' needs.

**“My primary motivation for the journey was a desire to give back to the community, to directly apply my empathy and problem solving skills in a meaningful way. I’ve always been interested in supportive roles and I have some personal experience with neurodiversity within the family, so the mission of supporting autistic adults really resonated with me. Part of me felt a responsibility to use my own life experience to help others, to make a difference in somebody’s life.”**

Volunteer mentor



# Summary of impact

Through a mixture of session reports, pre- and post- mentoring surveys and dedicated evaluation interviews, we gathered comprehensive data about the impact of the project on both mentors and mentees.



**1,008 hours**  
of direct mentor to  
mentee support

Across the lifetime of the project, we recorded 504 individual mentoring sessions with an estimated 1,008 hours of direct mentor to mentee support. The session records show a strong pattern of reliability and follow-through from both parties. In post-session feedback, mentors rated 89% of all sessions as Good or Excellent. The pattern of repeat attendance and the high proportion of positive session ratings reflect how pairs were able to build momentum over time, layer skills progressively and return to goals set in previous weeks.

**89%**  
of all sessions rated  
as Good or Excellent  
by mentors



Mentoring was predominantly delivered in face-to-face sessions (74%) which demonstrates the value of real-world practice and graded exposure to everyday environments. Online sessions were used to maintain continuity when travel or health made meeting difficult. There were also a small number of one-off social activities which allowed mentees to meet others on the programme.

The main things mentors gained from the project were satisfaction from helping others, enhanced understanding of autism, development of their professional communication skills and a connection to something bigger than them.

The main things mentees gained from their mentoring included greater self-acceptance, more readiness to try new things, improved social confidence, greater resilience, more kindness toward themselves, joy in connection with others, motivation to progress and the completion of many set goals.

The session records paint a picture of a project that is more than the sum of individual meetings. The programme has provided a safe, supportive space for both mentors and mentees to build confidence, understanding and resilience.



**A safe,  
supportive  
space  
for both mentors  
and mentees**

# Impact on mentees

## Growing confidence and self-acceptance

Some mentees wanted to grow their confidence in social interactions and found that the mentoring allowed them to more easily ask people questions about themselves, express their humorous side and spend time in group settings. Mentors frequently noted steady improvement in confidence, social communication, and self-expression.

Some of the things which helped them to do this were practicing conversations in sessions, discussing past interactions that they didn't understand and building a better understanding of themselves. Mentors also helped mentees to build socialising into their routines in small, structured ways. This planning often helped them to feel more confident about future interactions. For one mentee, who found conversations particularly difficult, it was playing an online game with the mentor that allowed them to become more comfortable to have similar causal interactions with new people.

**"I've noticed that from seeing the mentor there is a big difference in him. He seems more able to talk to different groups of people and just comes over and sits down. He's been a lot more open in communicating and speaking to other people. From meeting him initially, to now, you can definitely see his mindset has shifted. That's really down to the mentor and all the hard work she has done with him."**

Staff member





Growing in confidence also allowed mentees to better advocate for themselves, like when exploring support service options. For one mentee who was just beginning to understand their diagnosis, the mentoring provided a greater awareness of

their needs and an assurance that they could keep searching if the support they found wasn't right for them. In cases like these, the project has helped autistic people to connect themselves more efficiently with the support which will help them to thrive.

**"I got a bit more understanding of myself. I'm still early on with having a diagnosis and understanding myself so I feel that my mentor gave me support in general and with finding support that worked for me. I felt reassured that if the first thing I reached out for wasn't necessarily the best thing for me it wouldn't mean that I'm wrong or that I'm not part of a community."**

Autistic mentee

Mentees also gained confidence in navigating new places and going outside of their comfort zones, as mentors were able to meet them in different locations for each session where it benefited them. One mentee took pride in exploring different coffee shops with their mentor. What might seem like a small everyday activity became a way to build independence, practice ordering, manage sensory preferences and navigate a new environment.

This positive breaking of routine was a great catalyst for improving mentees' independence out of session, as they had seen that they could do new and hard things. It is with the support and care of the mentoring relationship that mentees could explore these new opportunities and grow confidence in these ways.

**"After his second meet up with the mentor he just got up one day and said he was going to the shopping centre. I thought he'd never be able to do this, travel independently. He said the mentor had told him if he felt anxious or worried he could leave whenever, come home or phone me. He had a brilliant day and came back with bags of things he'd bought. I cannot describe the difference, it was like something had lifted off him. He was so happy, we were happy. After about the third time he went off, I don't even think I checked my phone, because I knew 'he can do this!'"**

Parent of autistic mentee

The final prominent way in which mentees gained confidence was when searching for work. After months or years of rejection, some mentees felt hopeless about the prospect of finding a job, especially when they found interview conversations so challenging. Mentoring allowed them to receive direct feedback on their performance to gradually improve communication skills and confidence in interview environments. Some mentees also mentioned that their mentor gave them the confidence to apply to roles they wouldn't otherwise have considered, having not met all of the desired requirements or by undervaluing their own qualities.

**“Before I joined the programme, I'd been applying for jobs for last six months and having some issues with getting through the interviews. A lot of the feedback I got was about not expressing myself very well. In mentoring I improved a lot of my interview techniques and changed my mindset going into them.”**

Autistic mentee

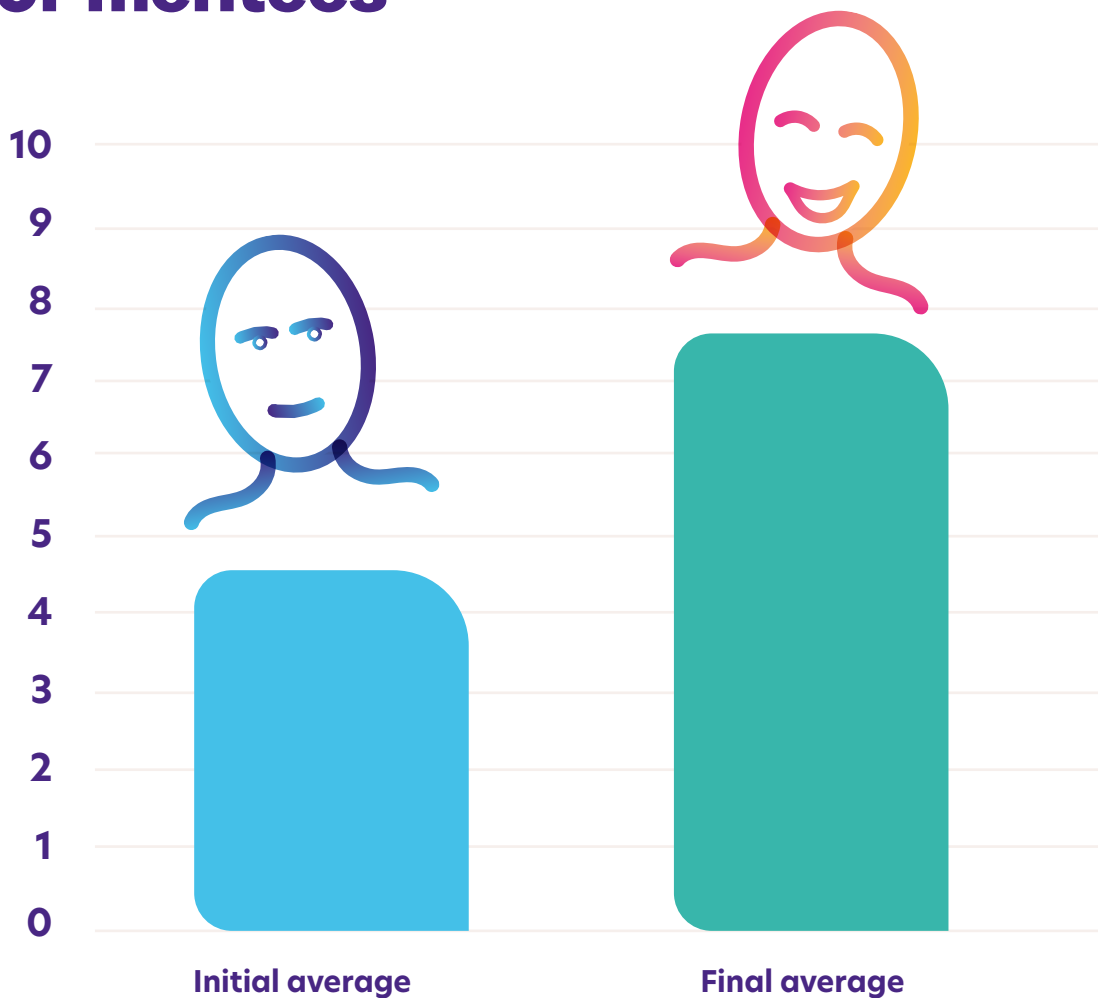
**“It was important to me to handle things sensitively and not tell him to become somebody he's not, when being authentic as an autistic person is already so difficult. It's about just giving him the confidence to be himself and see the many lovely qualities about him, and to let other people see that.”**

Autistic mentor

Mentors found it important to also help mentees prepare for other aspects of getting a job, such as moving somewhere new, dealing with travel and budgeting. Considering the full experiences associated with work helped to make mentees feel more confident about those eventualities and know that they are equipped for the future.

In the final year of the project (2024-25), new mentees rated their confidence levels prior to the start of mentoring and at the end of their involvement. On average, their confidence rose from 4.4 to 7.8 out of 10. For some mentees the increase was substantial (9 points in some cases). Some mentees individually improved by a staggering 9 points on the scale. The metrics show that all mentees showed a marked improvement in their confidence thanks to the support and guidance of their mentorship.

## Confidence rating of mentees



### Learning kindness for oneself

Some of the autistic people we supported felt shame for the ways they are different, and internalised criticism from others about their social performance. Others found it upsetting that they could not easily do all the things they wanted to, or that their peers were doing, and struggled with their self-worth.

Mental health problems can be a particular challenge for autistic people. While the project is not designed as a treatment method, we found that the encouragement and friendship formed through mentoring sometimes supported mentees to improve their self-image and contentedness with themselves.

**“When thinking about yourself or how you feel, it helps to have somebody else’s perspective. We’re all guilty of being own worst critic at times but having another’s perspective is an important part.”**

Autistic mentee



**“I really wanted to see some confidence in him and have him do a wee bit more for himself. His mental health was going downhill and I thought he was quite isolated. The mentoring has just changed my son’s whole life. He went from very, very, very low to somebody who knows his own worth. I don’t know where we would be today if it hadn’t been for this.”**

Parent of autistic mentee



Mentees who felt that they couldn’t communicate well often described high self-blame and fearfulness of doing the wrong thing in social situations. Through mentoring they were able to build self-confidence and self-acceptance.

This greater confidence allows them to now better advocate for their needs and reduces the blame they take on for moments of shared disconnection or misunderstanding.

**“Towards the end of the sessions he was saying to me that it was quite helpful to have that feedback that sometimes it was the other persons fault. Every time a social situation went badly he’s had a tendency to be like ‘It’s because I’m autistic and they’re allistic. I’m not communicating properly.’ It helped to realise that everyone’s going to have these issues sometimes and that sometimes it’s the other person’s fault for not accepting him the way he is.”**

Volunteer mentor

In the context of interviewing for work, learning to be kinder to oneself was the key for one mentee. Their mentor found that they'd been applying extra pressure on themselves before interviews, out of fear that they wouldn't succeed urgently. For many mentees, taking the time to calm themselves and be reminded of their qualities fostered a greater sense of acceptance of themselves and acceptance of the present state of being, to be able to focus on the task at hand.

**“My mentor identified that I was putting a lot of pressure on myself going into job interviews, with the mindset of, ‘I have to get the next one done correctly because I need a job as soon as possible.’ She told me to think of it as a chat because that would be less intimidating. Then, I would be less stressed and able to present myself a little bit better. I got a job at the end of this programme and in that interview there was a test that I was a bit stuck on. I was worried that I was not going to get through the interview but I remembered the techniques to calm myself down, stay focused, not panic.”**

Autistic mentee

## Increased resilience

Mentors often described their mentees as navigating difficult life circumstances where meeting up and being heard helped things to feel less heavy. As we've explored, some mentees were facing continued rejection in the job market, declining mental health and internalised shame. Others also struggled with conflicts in their relationships, professional redundancy, social isolation and many more.

The routine of meeting with someone, often out of their home, provided a comforting structure in which to organise their thoughts, hear a fresh perspective and begin to make progress. Little by little, mentors supported mentees to build resilience and motivation to keep going in difficult times. Most of all, mentees reflected that mentoring enabled them to see that everyone has struggles that we may not be aware of. Some mentees noted that knowing they weren't alone made them feel validated in their experiences and more hopeful about the future.



**“It’s a challenging market for work, but it helped that we were applying for things together and I had support when I was rejected. My mentor made me feel reassured that it wasn’t my fault, it’s just very difficult right now. The mentoring gives you that clarity and purpose to keep going, as well as motivation, energy and focus. Goals, like life, are always going to be ongoing. It makes you realise that nothing’s really straight forward, everyone’s got their own pace, each person is unique.”**

Autistic mentee



Many mentees described their mentors as great listeners and kind, reassuring people. Even when the challenges they were facing could not be overcome through their own actions, mentees found value in being able to talk and be validated, in the psychologically safe space of mentoring sessions. It was helpful too that the project matched pairs based on similar interests and experiences as it allowed some mentors to share what helped them in a similar situation, and to anticipate what mentees could need in future.

## Joy in connection

Every mentoring relationship was different, but a common thread throughout the project was the enjoyment gained from having shared experiences together. Some sessions involved looking for resources or helping with tasks such as job applications, while others featured informal visits to new cafés, spending time in nature, sharing a game or completing a themed quiz linked to a special interest. These shared moments complimented the interests of volunteers and mentees, helping them to build rapport and friendship.



**“I think the matching has been brilliant which makes it easier. There’s less likely to be difficulties when you’re matched well with mentees.”**

Volunteer mentor



Through the course of mentoring, many pairs reported that they became increasingly relaxed in each other's company. The 1-1 time together gave mentors the familiarity to better understand what their mentee might need and adapt their approach. Mentees gradually built trust in the relationship, making them more likely to confide in the mentor and try new things with their support. May noted that the patience of mentors was part of what allowed them to express their true selves and feel comfortable in mentoring.

**“It was rewarding working with someone who can be a little bit more reserved, when they do open up to you. Our personalities meshed well so I could relate to her in some aspects, understanding her and what would be beneficial for her.”**

Volunteer mentor



Mentees often spoke with fondness and appreciation about their mentors. They enjoyed the connection over shared interests and felt camaraderie with those who had been through similar experiences. Mentors also felt that these aspects complimented their mentoring and often expressed pride and joy over their mentee's achievements and qualities.

**“I can only describe the mentor as a pure guardian angel. I thought my son would have been this wee mouse but instead he rabbeted on and on. There was certainly a great connection between them straight away. The mentor just instantly understood everything that he was saying. He very much understood him as a person and I don't think my son was ever scared to tell him how he felt. I always felt the mentor gave me my place as well, as I attended sessions with them.”**

Parent of autistic mentee

One comment resonates across the records and interviews: It has been good to talk. Being part of flourishing mentoring relationships made both parties feel more connected and seen. Some connections have progressed beyond the project, with pairs wishing to keep in touch and continue enjoying shared time together.

## Accessibility and adaptability

Though the project team queried and met people's specific needs, the pro-gramme's accessibility went beyond this. Mentors complemented their mentees by giving a choice of activities, using a variety of locations, offering digital or in-person format and altering the schedule or frequency of meetings to fit in with mentees' changing lives. The attentiveness of mentors was imperative in ensuring the sessions were appropriately tailored to mentees' needs, and this was a quality that mentees frequently reported.

Mentees valued being able to contact their mentors between sessions and choose the elements that worked best for them. Some mentees appreciated online sessions to reduce travel, look at documents together, conserve energy after a difficult day or use the chat function when talking was difficult.



Many also enjoyed meeting their mentor in public places so they could communicate through body language, try new things together or enjoy the quiet of nature. By meeting each mentee 'where they are' the mentoring enabled them to be supported in environments they would normally have to tackle alone, such as learning to take the bus. The casual and sometimes familiar environments also provided a fantastic backdrop to build rapport without feeling buffeted by clinical environments.

**"I felt the thing I needed most was being outside and my mentor always let me choose where I wanted to sit or offer to move if more people came our way. Being outside for the mentoring was really great for me because that's where I prefer. I like nature and we met in a place I really like, so it helps me because I would have come here anyway on a usual Friday. We mostly stay outside, in a place further away from everybody."**

Autistic mentee





## A push in the right direction

As the mentoring was goal-driven, it was important for mentees to feel that progress was made towards their objective. Many mentees valued how their mentors broke down their problem into smaller goals and gave specific actions which they could take. Formulating their problem in a new way was one of the most valuable things mentees gained from mentoring. Many mentees achieved the goals they set out to tackle, but even those who didn't felt that they had still met a lot of the new objectives they made for themselves and had a greater sense of how they would get there in time.

**"It helped a great deal that my mentor broke it down and made it easier for me to process how I would eventually chase my goals. A lot of times I need that push and help breaking the steps down so that I can move through them. It's been great being mentored, it's been life changing."**

Autistic mentee

Some mentees noted that deadlines helped to motivate them to action, as well as a sense of accountability from having an upcoming session. Mentees talked about feeling energised to make progress because they could talk about it when they next saw their mentors. Mentors felt that the developing relationships also enabled them to feel confident being more direct and instructive with mentees, further informing and motivating them to move towards their goals.

**"My mentor had pretty much got the goals that I needed. He understood what I needed, was guiding me to that and helping me to get the most out of the meetings. He helped me to break down the steps in a plan, having smaller things to achieve with him being this accountability person. I knew I was going to do something because then I can get to Friday and talk to my mentor about it. If I had any doubts, I could bring that to the mentoring, and it just made me want to move because I knew I had that support behind me. And I knew I didn't have to do everything, If I didn't do something it wasn't the end of the world. We'd create a fake deadline before the official one which was very helpful, a good safety net."**

Autistic mentee

## Lasting changes

Mentees generally felt they progressed towards their goals, with most saying they had completed what they joined to do. Often, the benefits that mentees gained from the experience went far beyond what they anticipated at the beginning, demonstrating the power of the mentoring relationships.

Much of the value mentees gained from their mentorship extends past the project end. Some of the many amazing achievements of mentees which have been brought about by mentoring have set them on a new path and opened up opportunities that they could not access before. After mentoring, mentees also report feeling more able to independently plan towards the next things they want to achieve. In our feedback interviews, we heard from a selection of mentees about how they now do many things that they couldn't before, including:

- traveling independently
- ordering, shopping and paying by themselves
- knowing how to cook for independent living

- working at the job they wanted
- having new work experience from a placement
- considering a broader range of career options
- studying at the Open University
- feeling ready for interviews
- volunteering with a young people's theatre group
- volunteering with the National Autistic Society
- enrolling for specialised support
- planning new goals such as learning to drive
- having a new lease of life.

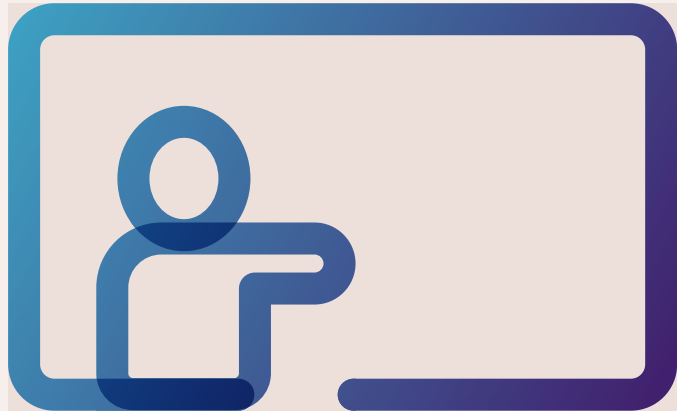
Mentoring has enabled many autistic people to progress in education, work, volunteering and independent living. They take the value gained from the project out into the community, becoming less isolated and more empowered. The consistent pattern of Good and Excellent sessions, the predominance of in person delivery, and the practical focus on everyday goals all point to durable change that can last beyond the formal life of the project.



# Impact on mentors

## Altruistic joy

Mentors gained a great sense of satisfaction from helping other people to achieve their goals. Many noted that they felt part of a solution to address a gap in need: providing practical support for autistic adults. They often felt a sense of purpose and fulfilment from making a difference in their mentees lives and from seeing them begin to thrive. Volunteers spoke fondly of those they supported and enjoyed connecting with people who they recognise many great qualities in.



**“Seeing different perspectives of how autistic people’s challenges has made me even more passionate about doing this type of work. It’s such a rewarding experience, you can really make a difference.”**

Volunteer mentor

**“I really enjoyed it. It was very fulfilling to work towards something every week, see progress and feel like I was helping someone. I felt like the goals were manageable, something small enough that I could handle and actually provide help with.”**

Volunteer mentor

## Deeper understanding of autistic people

Feedback from volunteers greatly emphasized how thorough and informative their training had been, with many describing it as an essential foundation to their work. Some noted that what they learned challenged their assumptions about autism, broke stigmas and taught them something new even if they had personal experiences of autism.

**“The training made me rethink a lot of assumptions I had, because most of my personal experience with autistic adults was based on this one family member I had. Society has a lot of stigma about what an autistic individual can and can’t do, and this kind of broke a lot of that.”**

Volunteer mentor

Mentors often continued their learning in the partnerships, developing an even deeper understanding of the things autistic people may struggle with and how it really affects them. They valued this broadened perspective and the new insight they could bring to advocating for autistic people professionally and in the public realm.

**“I’ve gained a deeper understanding of the diverse experiences of autistic adults and each challenge they have. I feel much more confident about advocating for them. It’s broadened my perspective significantly and my communication skills have improved, particularly in terms of clarity and patience. I’ve also learned more about being adaptable and flexible in my own approach.”**

Volunteer mentor



## Boosting interpersonal and organisational skills

While some volunteers beginning the process found mentoring natural and easy, others were nervous about how capable they would be to adequately support their mentees, or about how they themselves would perform in this new role. Progressing through mentoring allowed volunteers to prove to themselves that they were making valuable improvements in the lives of their mentees. Mentors gained a greater sense of professional confidence which helped them to better guide and identify with autistic mentees.

Mentors also reported improving other professional skills such as communicating with clarity and patience, active listening, summarising information in a helpful way and organising plans for each session. Many felt that their improvement in these qualities complimented their paid work or job preparedness.



**“I got to practice skills that I’m not usually using like summarising and explaining things, or giving advice in a way that’s helpful, which are good skills to have in life. I did an interview recently and I felt it had been helpful having that practice speaking one-on-one in a kind of professional environment.”**

Volunteer mentor

**“I saw it as an opportunity for personal growth. I wanted to step outside my comfort zone, improve my active listening communication strategies and build self-confidence, which I did.”**

Volunteer mentor

In adapting to the needs and quirks of those they worked with, mentors also developed their flexible thinking skills and got used to changes in their routine or normal ways of working. For one mentor, the need for deep focus to plan and examine the next steps towards his mentee’s goals provided him with a presence of mind.

**“On the days of meetings, I felt more focused, more organised myself. I was just keeping a presence of mind and thinking very carefully about how things needed to proceed**

Volunteer mentor

## Being part of something bigger

Mentors noted the novel approach of MAAP in focusing on autistic adults and in providing such tailored practical support. They greatly emphasized that they felt connected to the team and part of the same circle of care. They didn't feel isolated as volunteers but regarded as part of the charity.

Volunteers reported that they felt very supported by the project team once mentoring was initiated. Most did not need further aid but felt it would be available to them if they needed it. There was always someone they felt they could speak to if they were concerned or in doubt about anything. Help was provided in instances where mentors felt unsure about how to tackle their mentees goals or felt worried about know how to give constructive feedback compassionately. Some mentors also asked for a one-off companion in a session to give them a boost of confidence, offer a new perspective or help run a practice interview.

**"The project coordinators were excellent. They were always accessible for questions and check-ins. If I send an email, within minutes they reply and straight away I know what I'm supposed to do. That really helped me to start everything."**

Volunteer mentor

**"One of the team members Eilidh helped me with a lot of things. She helped me to find artistic venues that we could go to visit and sent me a list. I'd also flagged in one of my reports that it would be helpful to do a fake interview, and Eilidh booked it straight away for me and joined one of our early sessions to help with interview practice. She reassured me about the feedback I needed to give him because I was so scared of offending him, I didn't want him to feel like he couldn't be himself. I just asked for help and Eilidh was amazing."**

Volunteer mentor

# Mentee case studies

## Marcelo's story

**Marcelo approached MAAP while navigating diagnosis, looking for structured one-to-one support. They wanted help to understand what support is out there and reduce their reliance on Universal Credit after a period of poor mental health.**

They initially aimed to get a sense of structure, accountability and clarity about the kind of support they might need. From the planning conversations at the start of mentoring, they then identified a central goal to return to education.

Marcelo finds some indoor environments very overwhelming, so they benefitted from being able to have sessions outside in a familiar park, amongst nature and away from other people. They described their mentor as attentive, often offering to move on if other people arrived nearby, which helped to establish trust and a comfortable atmosphere.

Marcelo found it helpful that their mentor broke tasks down into smaller steps and created earlier deadlines between just them. Their mentor also helped them to plan for setbacks and acted as an accountability person in a non-pressured way, helping Marcelo to feel motivated to make progress.

Through 5 months of mentoring, Marcelo applied for and was accepted to the Open University and was referred to employment support to sustain momentum beyond MAAP.

**"I got a bit more understanding of myself. I'm still early on with having a diagnosis and understanding myself so I feel that my mentor gave me support in general and with finding support that worked for me."**

Marcelo

## Sam's story

**Sam joined MAAP to develop his independence and grow confidence in speaking to people. He came from a lengthy time in a previous service which he felt was not helping him to make progress. Sam wanted to be able to travel, order food and pay for things on his own.**

The hardest part was getting started and getting to the in-person meetings. He was determined and motivated by the positivity of his mentor. Sam's mother attended the mentoring sessions with him at first, to help with travel, facilitate conversation and provide a sense of safety. In time, Sam began to travel to his mentor alone, usually starting at a familiar café and then travelling together to build skills in real contexts.

Through six months of mentoring, Sam achieved every goal he set out to, astonishing his mother and gaining a new confidence in himself from being able to travel, order and shop on his own. His mother observed a marked change in his communication and confidence, noting that she wasn't sure he'd ever be able to travel on his own.

**"I made a lot of progress and now use the bus by myself. My mentor did more for me in those six months than a previous service did for the six years I was with them. I wouldn't be where I am now if it weren't for the mentoring."**

Sam





# Mentor case studies

## John's story

**John began mentoring in July 2023, having heard about the mentoring opportunity through NAS contacts. He volunteered to help autistic people and give something back after years of informal support from other services.**

John describes himself as not naturally confident and at first doubted if he would be able to do it. The brilliant mentor training changed that, and he quickly found himself bonding with his first mentee. He found the induction to the programme excellent, valuing early sessions about settling in with the mentee, setting objectives and building a rhythm.

A mentee that John supported said that he was brilliant, highlighting how John listened, reassured his fears and communicated changes in advance. He contrasted this with previous experiences where support staff failed to turn up without notice or didn't appear interested in the conversation.

John emphasised the importance of structure and patience in his mentor role, especially when a mentee was going through a difficult time. He paired steady listening with gradually introducing practical goals. It was key to show reliability and consistency as he views one-on-one time as uniquely valuable for autistic adults.

**"I hope the project gets up and running again. It strikes me that it'd be a shame if it just disappears. From my perspective there's really nothing else to help middle aged, older and elderly people on the spectrum. It's the system's fault, but they are more or less just abandoned."**

John

## Gopika's story

**Gopika moved to Glasgow and found out about MAAP through local volunteer and university channels. Motivated by neurodivergent family members and frontline support experience, she wanted to make a positive impact for people like them who struggled to fit in.**

Gopika found the two-day in-person training particularly amazing as it helped to dismantle her assumptions about autism. She initially struggled to know how to support a mentee with less tangible goals, as it was hard to make an action list. It helped her to reframe her role as providing emotional support, through which she would listen, validate and gently guide.

She got on better with her second match, having asked for support from the project team. Her next mentee had goals that translated into action and visible progress more clearly.

**"I think the mentoring helps autistic individuals a lot. This kind of support is not easy to find, where people can actually help them do what needs to be done, like sitting down with them and helping them apply for a job."**

Gopika

**"I have an autistic cousin and brother. Growing up I saw how much he struggled trying to fit into society, so I wanted to help people who were struggling in a similar manner. You get a lot of satisfaction out of a job when you can create a positive impact in somebody's life, that's what I wanted to get here."**

Gopika

Gopika provided help with job applications and joining social groups, feeling satisfied from the focus on practical differences they could make together.

While many services tell autistic people what they need to do, Gopika feels that MAAP is unique in helping people to go through the actual process of completing things. Her experience of mentoring changed her assumptions about what autistic adults can achieve.

# Acknowledgements

We would like to express our gratitude to our funders the National Lottery's Community Fund, partner organisations and the mentors and mentees who took part in the programme. We also give thanks to the project staff for their commitment and dedication.

**“Thank you for the way you accepted me for what I am and the way you trained me to be able to support the community and make a difference. I would encourage other people to do the same and come on board to help in the future.”**

Volunteer mentor

The National Autistic Society is the UK's leading charity for autistic people. In Scotland, we have fought alongside autistic people and their families for more than 25 years.

We work to change attitudes and transform lives by providing services, empowering professionals to provide better support and leading on advocacy for the rights of autistic people.

For more information on autism and getting help:

- Visit us at [autism.org.uk/scotland](https://autism.org.uk/scotland)
- Join our Online Community at [autism.org.uk/community](https://autism.org.uk/community)
- Become a National Autistic Society member at [autism.org.uk/membership](https://autism.org.uk/membership)
- Find a branch near you: [autism.org.uk/branches](https://autism.org.uk/branches)
- Find services near you: [autism.org.uk/autism-services-directory](https://autism.org.uk/autism-services-directory)