

## Spotlight on Autism in Parliament!

**'Hindsight', a moving and emotive theatrical performance about a young autistic girl's school experience, was performed in the Scottish Parliament on the 26th of March 2024. The performance was written by Jill Franklin and produced by the Fox and Hound Theatre company.**

The play follows the story of Laura, a 12-year-old undiagnosed autistic girl, as she navigates a world that does not make sense to her at all. With teachers who fail to understand her, and peers who do not accept her, Laura and her mother feel powerless, frustrated, and completely misunderstood.

The event was a huge success and it was followed by an engaging panel discussion on education, with Rob Holland (Director of the National Autistic Society Scotland), Jill Franklin (Playwright), Sam Fox (Actor and a neurodivergent young person), and Stephanie Callaghan MSP. The event was sponsored by Jeremy Balfour MSP.

Reflecting on the event, Jill Franklin (Playwright) stated:

'It was great to see the play performed in the Scottish Parliament, and I am really pleased with how the evening went. I wrote the play due to feeling frustrated about how autistic people are represented in the media, and I wanted to show the importance of autism acceptance and

understanding, particularly for undiagnosed children in the education system.'

Rob Holland, Director of the National Autistic Society Scotland, said:

'I was delighted to attend this hugely important theatrical performance of 'Hindsight'. Showcasing stories like Laura's are essential in promoting autism awareness and understanding, so that undiagnosed autistic children are no longer left to feel confused and misunderstood!'



*Performance of Hindsight with Laura (played by Sam Fox) and Mr Ford (played by Codge Crawford)*

Find out more here:

[www.autism.org.uk/what-we-do/news/award-winning-play-on-autism-and-education-perform](http://www.autism.org.uk/what-we-do/news/award-winning-play-on-autism-and-education-perform)

## CONTENTS

### PAGE 3

Update from our Director and the Kiltwalk 2024.

### PAGE 4

The latest from Autism Support Ayrshire, and the Embrace Autism Video Series.

### PAGE 5

News from our services, including Moving Forward's new Youth Advisory Group and an update from the Pines Highland.

### PAGE 6

An interview with the Chairperson of the Youth Steering Group, and an update on the Learning Disabilities, Autism, and Neurodivergence Bill!

### PAGE 7

Fundraising, including a story on inspiring fundraisers, Laura and Lisa.

### PAGE 8

Meet our staff, including an interview from Adam, Project Manager, and an introduction to Nausheen, Volunteer Development Coordinator.

## FROM OUR EDITOR

**"Acceptance is understanding. Understanding that the world isn't perfect." I said this last year for Autism Acceptance Week.**

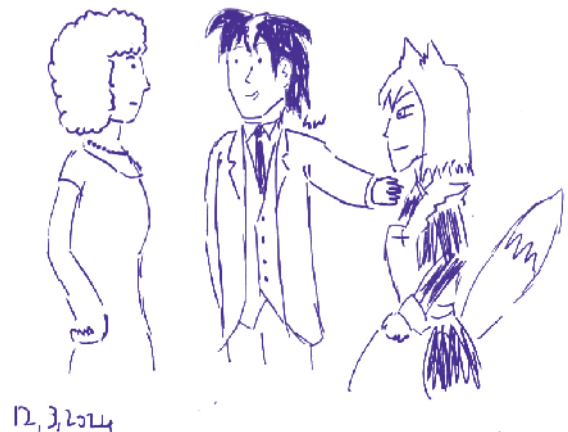
By accepting a non-perfect world, the world becomes a better place. And one aspect of this acceptance is that the best people for a task may not be good in anything else, like socialization.

Autism, being the spectrum of conditions that it is, creates such imperfection.

There are still many who have misconceptions about autism, which can prevent acceptance, therefore preventing autistic people from achieving their full potential in society. A lot of talented individuals need help to achieve their potential.

This is where the National Autistic Society comes in. By communicating the truth about autism and assisting those who need help, they are increasing acceptance in the world. By doing so, talented individuals who were once denied the chance to reach their true potential can finally do so. And when that happens, the world will be much different ... and better.

**Gordon Wallace**  
Editor



*Gordon's Illustration of acceptance of difference: Mr Collie advocating for Mrs Fox to get a job with Mrs Sheep*

## SIGN UP FOR THE KILTWALK!

**The Glasgow Kiltwalk may be sold out, but there are plenty more opportunities to take part in Scotland's biggest walking event!**

Set yourself a challenge this year and sign up to attend the Kiltwalk in Aberdeen (2nd June), Dundee (11th August) or Edinburgh (15th September) and raise money for the National Autistic Society Scotland.

If you're interested in participating in the Kiltwalk, you can choose between taking part in the Wee Wander (a 3-5 miles) or the Mighty Stride (18-21miles)!

All the money raised for us through the Kiltwalk comes directly to the National Autistic Society Scotland, and helps us to fund our much-needed programmes of support for autistic young people, adults and families.



Sign up to the Kiltwalk today:  
**The Kiltwalk 2024 ([autism.org.uk](https://autism.org.uk))**

# update

## FROM OUR DIRECTOR



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

It's World Autism Acceptance Week 2024 and I've found myself reflecting upon the role that our organisation plays in creating autism acceptance and understanding.

It is important to highlight the progress we have made since April 2023. We launched our new three-year strategy last September, which continues to keep us focused on our goal of transforming society by building understanding, acceptance, and respect for all autistic people. We are entirely committed to deepening public knowledge, sharing best practice, overcoming stereotypes, and ending stigma.

The publication of the Learning Disabilities, Autism, and Neurodivergence Bill Consultation is also very promising, as it includes proposals for autism strategies and training across various settings. Above all, the proposal of a commissioner could create real and lasting change by holding government to account.

However, although we have made incredible progress, the reality is that there is a lack of autism understanding and acceptance, and this continues to create barriers for autistic people. It is clear we need to do more to ensure that our vision of a society that works for autistic people becomes a reality.



**Rob Holland**

Director of National Autistic Society Scotland

## Autism Support Ayrshire Secures a Further Three Years of Funding

**We are delighted to announce that our Autism Support Ayrshire service has secured a further three years of funding from North, East and South Ayrshire Health & Social Care Partnerships.**

Autism Support Ayrshire provides free information, advice, and guidance to individuals, parents, carers, and professionals across Ayrshire with the service currently supporting over 500 people per year.

The service also provides workshops for parents and carers, signposting, online social activities for autistic young people and adults, and access to other National Autistic Society Scotland programmes.

Rob Holland, Director of the National Autistic Society Scotland, said: 'I am delighted that our Autism Support Ayrshire service has secured a further three years of funding and we thank the three Ayrshire Health & Social Care Partnerships for their continued commitment to support autistic people and families locally. The Ayrshire service plays an important role in providing much needed free to access information, advice, and guidance, and it is great to hear that the incredible work of the Ayrshire team will continue!'



*Georgia and Patsy representing World Autism Acceptance Week*

Read more about Autism Support Ayrshire: [www.autism.org.uk/what-we-do/support-in-the-community/social-groups/autism-support-ayrshire](http://www.autism.org.uk/what-we-do/support-in-the-community/social-groups/autism-support-ayrshire)

## Embrace Autism Videos Launched!

**Embrace  
Autism**

Explore your identity and discover  
your community as an autistic adult

As part of our Embrace Autism Project in partnership with Autistic Knowledge Development (AKD), a series of informational videos have been made available online. The videos cover topics that will support autistic adults' understanding of autism, with topics like Masking, Relationships, Employment, and more!

Embrace Autism is a programme of support aimed at autistic adults who are looking to explore their autistic identity and learn how to navigate life post diagnosis (formal or self-diagnosis).

Watch the Embrace Autism Videos here: [www.autism.org.uk/what-we-do/scotland/embrace-autism](http://www.autism.org.uk/what-we-do/scotland/embrace-autism)

## New Youth Advisory Group for Moving Forward

### The Moving Forward+ programme has set up a Youth Advisory Council!

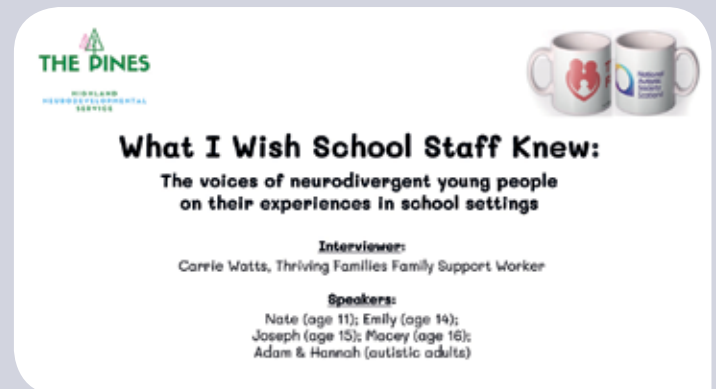
The Youth Advisory Council is made up of young people who have participated in the programme. Members of the Council will be able to share their views on decisions which may affect them and the other participants. The Council gives Moving Forward+ participants more agency and its goals and objectives will be set by the members.

Youth Advisory Council members can engage both face to face and from home, to ensure that anyone who would like to be involved can access the group. It will offer members the opportunity to meet with other autistic young people, to gain valuable experience for their CV, and to even gain a Youth Scotland Award!



Youth Advisory Council for Moving Forward+

## What I wish school staff knew...



**THE PINES**  
HIGHLAND NEURODEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES

**What I Wish School Staff Knew:**  
The voices of neurodivergent young people on their experiences in school settings

**Interviewer:**  
Carrie Watts, Thriving Families Family Support Worker

**Speakers:**  
Nate (age 11); Emily (age 14);  
Joseph (age 15); Macey (age 16);  
Adam & Hannah (autistic adults)

**The Pines Highland Neurodevelopmental Service, which includes the National Autistic Society Scotland, hosted a fantastic online event in March called 'What I wish school staff knew...!', where autistic young people shared their experiences of school.**

Four autistic young people shared their experiences of going to school in the Highlands via pre-recorded videos which were shown at the event. They also highlighted in their video what they wish school staff, and others, knew about their experiences.

Each of the autistic young people involved designed their own video, reflecting their individual communication preferences. For example, one of the young people wanted to write down their experience which was then put into a video with music, while another did an audio recording which was featured alongside images that they chose.

All four videos are now available to watch on The Pines YouTube channel:  
[youtube.com/@thepines-highland](https://youtube.com/@thepines-highland)



## The Learning Disabilities, Autism, and Neurodivergence Bill

The public consultation for the Learning Disabilities, Autism, and Neurodivergence Bill closes on the 21st of April. It is really important that autistic people and families respond to the consultation to make their views known and have their voices heard.

We continue to campaign for a commissioner to protect and promote the rights of autistic people and we're delighted proposals for a commissioner

are included in the public consultation. A commissioner could hold services and policy-makers to account, and deliver better outcomes for autistic people across Scotland.

Don't forget to tell the Scottish Government what you think, by responding to the Learning Disabilities, Autism, and Neurodivergence Bill!



Learn more about the Bill here: [www.gov.scot/publications/learning-disabilities-autism-neurodivergence-bill-consultation/pages/6/](http://www.gov.scot/publications/learning-disabilities-autism-neurodivergence-bill-consultation/pages/6/)

## Interview: Reece, Chairperson of the Youth Steering Group!

**Our Empower Up project supports autistic young people aged 12 to 19 living in Glasgow. A Youth Steering Group for the project allows participants to share their views, make their voices heard and help out. The Chairperson for the Group, Reece, told us why he joined.**

**Q: What made you decide to join the Youth Steering Group?**  
'NAS has helped me so much along the way since I started in 2021, so I knew that I wanted to be involved.'

**Q: What made you decide to be chairperson of the Youth Steering Group?**  
'My mentor told me to go for it, and I knew I could do it.'

**Q: What do you enjoy most about being part of the Youth Steering Group?**

'I get to socialise with other autistic people and make decisions about the Empower Up Group.'

**Q: What benefit is there to joining the Youth Steering Group?**

'You get to meet a great bunch of people, and plan for upcoming group sessions.'

**Q: In your opinion, how does the Empower Up project help autistic young people?**

'It helps with social skills, like going into shops and doing your own thing. The last couple of weeks I've been going to the shops on my own, which has been great.'

**Q: In your opinion, what needs to change to make things better for autistic people?**

'People need to have a better understanding. There are negative preconceptions of autism. It is quite difficult, honestly.'



Reece



Lisa doing the firewalk!

## The Magic of Fundraising!

Laura McClintock, owner of Nevermore Tattoo & Piercing, and Lisa Davidson, owner of Tinkerbell's Emporium, have been raising money for the National Autistic Society Scotland since 2021. Laura and Lisa's shops face each other on Friar's Street in Stirling and, through working together on a variety of events, they have raised over £11,000!

In 2024, Laura and Lisa have planned a year full of fundraising events, all leading up to a huge Machu Picchu challenge that they will be taking on in October.

On the 15th of March, the pair participated in a Firewalk, which was streamed online via Facebook.

The Firewalk was a big success, raising over £300 for the National Autistic Society Scotland. This Summer, Laura and Lisa are planning their third 'Fairytale Trail', a sponsored walk, and signups for the trail will open up after Easter.

When asked about what inspires Laura and Lisa to continue to fundraise, they said:

“Our ethos is that anything is possible. You shouldn't let anything hold you back. There isn't enough awareness out there, so we want to raise autism awareness and understanding.”

**Thank you, Laura and Lisa!**

## 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](http://www.autism.org.uk/get-involved/raise-money)

## Meet Our Staff

We interviewed Adam Petrie, Project Manager for Growing Up and our Mentoring Autistic Adults Programme



**Q: Can you tell us a bit about yourself?**

'I've worked in the Third Sector for three years, after working as a History Teacher for a short while. I love the outdoors. If I'm not working at my desk, I'll be out on a walk somewhere.'

**Q: Why did you join the National Autistic Society?**

'I was ready for the next step in my career, and having worked with a lot of autistic people through volunteering in the past, the role just seemed very worthwhile and fulfilling.'

**Q: What do you enjoy most about your job?**

'Knowing that the projects I'm working on are going to have a real impact on the people we support. I can see that Mentoring and Growing Up are really worthwhile projects, which gives me the most immense job satisfaction.'

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

'There is a general lack of understanding about what autism is and the autistic experience. There is a lot of misinformation out there, which can be incredibly damaging.'

Nausheen Butt: Volunteer Development Coordinator for our Mentoring Autistic Adults Programme



**'Hello everyone, I'm Nausheen.** For the last 10 years, I've been delivering Careers and Employment advice. I've really enjoyed this, as it allowed me to help and support people while also meeting and working with different types of people from all over the world.

'I volunteered with NAS during my Post-Grad 11 years ago, so when I saw some vacancies come up, I jumped at the chance. I have now been in my new role as Volunteer Development Coordinator for the MAAP Project for 8 weeks, and I have enjoyed it so far. I have learned a lot about autism in a short space of time. I am looking forward to seeing the project grow, so that I can continue to build on my knowledge and contribute to supporting autistic people to achieve their goals.'

## 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](http://www.autism.org.uk/jobs) or contact our HR team at [scotlandHR@nas.org.uk](mailto: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.