

News and Views

From the National Autistic Society
Scotland and our volunteers

Summer 2025

National Library of Scotland hosts Storytelling and Safe Spaces Event

We recently collaborated with the National Library of Scotland to organise 'Storytelling and Safe Spaces', an event where autistic authors shared their personal experiences of reading and writing.

The event took place at the National Library of Scotland on Thursday the 17th of April, with over fifty people in attendance. The panel consisted of two autistic authors, Elle McNicoll and Chris Carse Wilson, and was chaired by comedian and actor Ashley Storrie, who is also autistic.

Within the event, the authors discussed how real and imagined safe spaces played a role in their journeys to becoming authors. They also reflected on the representation of autism in storytelling today. After an initial panel discussion, the audience were invited to join a Question-and-Answer session, where several attendees spoke up to ask questions about writing, reading, libraries, and more.

Chris Carse Wilson, Author, said:

"It was a privilege and an honour to share a stage with Elle McNicoll and Ashley Storrie, who are both incredibly talented and very, very funny.

"Autism Acceptance Month is a really important time to share our experiences as autistic people. To work with the National Autistic Society and the National Library of Scotland to be part of an all-autistic panel was very special,

and to share our conversation with a sell-out audience was a joy.

"I never would have started down the road to my autism diagnosis had it not been for Chris Packham speaking so beautifully and frankly about his own diagnosis, so I feel strongly that events like this are crucial to raising awareness and acceptance, as well as showcasing the incredible creativity that autistic people are capable of."



Elle, Chris, and Ashley at the Event

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FROM OUR EDITOR

How important is it to be able to read and write?

Does being able to read and write benefit the brain?

Of course. It has been proven scientifically than the act of writing things down (not typing) improves memory and helps break down information to make it easier to learn.

But the real power of reading is that you have to use your mind to process the information actively. No passive absorption that can be misleading, like with pictures, sounds, and video. It makes the process of stepping into someone else's shoes more effective.

This is why it's a big deal that everyone has the chance to learn how to read.

For the autistic person, this is great. Unlike other media, books don't give you sounds or visuals to guide your imagination. You can control the imaginative world the book creates in your head, using trusted stimuli as a starting point towards new ideas. A genuine "safe space" to escape into.

But that can only happen if the reader finds a story worth reading. And having relatable characters in the story is one way to make it readable.

Gordon Wallace
Editor



Gordon's illustration of reading

MOVING FORWARD'S NEW LOGO

Our Moving Forward programme has its first ever logo!

Designed by Gallusness in partnership with Moving Forward's Youth Forum, the logo represents gradual positive change, and the many directions young people can move into after participating in the programme.

To celebrate the logo launch, our Youth Forum enjoyed a trip to Millport where the logo was recreated using rocks, seaweed and shells!

Thank you to all who were involved in this amazing process.

Hannah Inglis, Employment Support Coordinator, said:

'The opportunity to co-design the first-ever logo for Moving Forward was an exciting addition to the participatory work we engage in within our Youth Forum. Through fun activities, we were able to capture design ideas from a wide range of young people in order to develop a logo which is reflective of every young person's individual journey with Moving Forward. As one participant said, the logo "just looks class" and we hope all members can look back knowing they were a part of a positive development to our service provision. A massive thank you to Scott at Gallusness, the Youth Forum and all participants who voted on the final design!'



New Logo

Find out more here: www.autism.org.uk/what-we-do/scotland/moving-forward

update

FROM OUR DIRECTOR



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

It has been a busy Summer for the organisation so far. Our collaborative event with the National Library of Scotland was an incredible success, and I look forward to organising similar events in the future. It was great to hear from autistic authors about their experiences of reading and writing, and how stories can create important safe spaces for autistic people. Ashley Storrie was a fantastic and energetic chairperson, and it was great to meet her in person after hearing so many positive things from staff across the organisation about her new TV show, *Dinosaur*.

I am delighted to see that our Moving Forward+ programme finally has a logo! It was great to hear that the young people who take part in the programme were involved in the design of the logo, and to learn about the meaning behind it. It is also great to see that our Reimagining Art Project has received further funding, as this is a fantastic project which offers an inclusive space for autistic people to express their creativity.

Rob Holland

Director of National Autistic Society Scotland

Ten Year Anniversary of Access Film Club

To mark the 10 Year Anniversary of Access Film Club, Glasgow Film Theatre hosted a celebratory screening.

Access Film Club is a collaboration between Glasgow Film Theatre and the National Autistic Society Scotland. The film club takes place once per month, and provides a relaxed cinema experience to people aged 15 and over. There are no adverts or trailers before the film, sound levels are turned down, and LED stair lights remain on throughout, to ensure that the screenings feel as relaxed as possible. Every screening also includes a post-film discussion. Audience members can access a Quiet Room and Calm Kit, which includes a weighted blanket, fidget cubes, and stress balls.

To mark the occasion, a screening of the Scottish BAFTA Award-winning short film *Harmonic Spectrum* took place, which documents the journey of young musician Sean Logan as he uses his piano to navigate life as an autistic person. This was followed by a Q & A with Logan. The event concluded with a screening of Wes Anderson's delightful stop-motion animation *Fantastic Mr Fox*, selected by Access Film Club regulars through an audience vote.

Rob Holland, Director of the National Autistic Society Scotland went along to the screening and said:

'It was fantastic to be able to celebrate 10 years of Access Film Club during World Autism



Access Film Club 10 Year Anniversary

Acceptance Month! Autistic people still face so many barriers to participating in their communities and engaging in hobbies like going to the cinema, whether because of stigma and discrimination or inaccessible environments. Initiatives like Access Film Club are so important in promoting autism acceptance, so we'd like to take this opportunity to thank GFT and everyone involved making the club such a success.'

Exciting New Arts Project for Autistic Young People



Reimagining Art Group Member

We are thrilled to announce that we have received funding from the Youth Arts Open Fund to relaunch our exciting project 'Reimagining Art', a creative project for autistic young people aged 16 - 25 living in Glasgow and surrounding areas.

The project is delivered at Project Ability Art Studios, offering a safe, inclusive, and accessible space where young people can

explore and grow their artistic talents.

Through fortnightly sessions, participants will learn new art skills, including collage, printmaking, illustration, and sculpting, while building social connections with peers.

We can't wait to see the incredible creativity that will come from the young people.

An Update from our Student Support Service

The Student Support Service has grown again over the past academic year, both in terms of numbers of student referrals to the service and in terms of staff, with seven new mentors joining our team in September 2024 to bring the total number to 22.

From having around 80 students back in 2022, we are now working with over 280 students in universities and colleges across Scotland – mainly in the Glasgow area but also in the East and North of Scotland. The principal focus of the service is mentoring, although we can also provide in-class support and study skills. The growth of the service reflects the commitment, professionalism and expertise of our team.

We meet with students for mentoring sessions on a weekly basis (either in-person or online), throughout the academic year, and provide a safe, person-centred and non-judgemental space for students to discuss any issue or challenge relating to university/college and wider life. Mentors often meet with the same student throughout their degree, and sometimes the support continues to master's level or PhD. The consistency and long-term nature of mentoring ensures that trust is central to the relationship between the mentor and mentee.

For more information please visit:
NAS Scotland Student Support Service

Or contact Moya Flynn, Student Support Coordinator,
studentsupport.scotland@nas.org.uk

One student who used the service, said:

"Working with my NAS mentor has been essential to my university experience and well-being. They have consistently given me the utmost support around both my studies and my peer and familial relationships. I hope that NAS continues to support students such as myself with mentorship, as I have found it to be an extremely positive experience."

Student Support Update

Growing Up Event in Inverness

In June, we hosted an Information and Support event in Inverness for our Growing Up Project!

The event took place on the 18th of June and was an opportunity for parent carers to connect with each other. Several organisations attended the event, including the National Autistic Society Scotland, Carers Scotland, Connecting Carers, Thriving Families, and Autism & Neurodiversity (A-ND).

Attendees learned about the available local services and support, and refreshments and lunch were provided. The event was a great success, with over 20 people in attendance.

Adam Petrie, Project Manager, said:

"The Growing Up In-Person Information and Support session in Inverness was a fantastic success. It was so lovely to see so many parent carers come together. Massive thanks go to all of the wonderful organisations who came along and set up stalls, and to Sarah and Susannah who gave a wonderful talk on their experiences as Mother and Daughter."



Growing Up Event

Autistic Campaigners' Group Visits Parliament



Visit to Parliament

On the 1st of April, members of our Autistic Campaigners' Group took a trip to the Scottish Parliament to watch a live debate on a motion submitted by Daniel Johnson MSP.

The motion criticised the Scottish Government's decision to delay the Learning Disabilities, Autism and Neurodivergence Bill (LDAN) until after the 2026 Holyrood election, as well as the lack of clarity from the government on next steps for the Bill.

There was broad cross-party support for the motion and every contribution highlighted the urgent need for change in Scotland and the impact that an LDAN Bill could have.

Daniel Johnson MSP, who drafted the motion, also invited our Autistic Campaigners' Group to join him for an informal discussion on the Bill before the debate.

Foysoil Choudry MSP, Brian Whittle MSP, Karen Adam MSP, Paul O'Kane MSP, Michael Marra MSP, Finlay Carson MSP and Carol Mochan MSP all stopped by to greet the campaigners, and to learn more about why an LDAN Bill has the potential to be transformative for autistic people in Scotland.

For more information please visit:
www.autism.org.uk/what-we-do/scotland/growing-up

Sign up to the Edinburgh Marathon



Marathon

The Edinburgh Marathon and Half Marathon will take place on the 24th of May 2026. Registrations are available now, where runners can sign up to take part in the Marathon via our third-party platform, Run for Charity.

There is a £250 minimum sponsorship and a £15 registration fee for the half marathon, and a £450 minimum sponsorship and £25 registration fee for the marathon.

Half Marathon: <https://bit.ly/3IdYNUD>

Marathon: <https://bit.ly/4ny0jB2>

Fundraising Walk for 'The Three Stooges'

Later this year, a group called 'The Three Stooges,' will walk 120km to raise money for three different charities, including the National Autistic Society Scotland.

The group consists of a father and son, George (47) and Louis (15), alongside their family friend, Brian (32). Last year, they took on the challenge of walking 100km in one go to raise money for the Beatson Cancer Charity, raising over £1400 for the cause. This year, they are pushing themselves further to walk 120km in one go, to raise money for The National Autistic Society, Scottish Action for Mental Health (SAMH), and Beatson Cancer Charity.

The walk will begin in Glengarnock on the 20th of September, and the trio think that it will take around 26 hours to complete.



The Three Stooges

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 Lynsey McCabe, our Autism Support Ayrshire Administrator!



Q: Can you tell us a bit about yourself?

I am a mum of 2 and family means everything to me. I enjoy Northern Soul music and dance culture and often attend events in Blackpool in my spare time.

Q: Why did you join the National Autistic Society?

I joined to further develop my knowledge of autism to help others and my own family.

Q: Can you describe your job in three words?

Worthy, rewarding, inclusive.

Q: What do you enjoy most about your job?

Being part of the change that's happening and helping shift people's perspective.

Q: Would you recommend your job to other people and why?

Yes, absolutely it is very rewarding to know that we are helping individuals and families across Ayrshire.

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

Educate to create a greater knowledge and wider acceptance of autistic individuals and to create an inclusive environment for them.

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.

The National Autistic Society is a charity registered in England and Wales (269425) and in Scotland (SC039427) and a company limited by guarantee registered in England (No.1205298), registered office: Weston House, 42 Curtain Road, London EC2A 3NH.
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Volunteer Week Celebration

To mark Volunteer Week, we hosted a fun-filled bowling night at Bowlarama in honour of the incredible dedication and hard work of our amazing volunteers from across our social programmes and our mentoring project. The evening was a perfect mix of friendly competition and great company, complete with delicious food to keep the good vibes rolling. It was a fantastic way to say thank you and celebrate our amazing volunteers.



Bowling Night

