

## New Three-Year Strategy Launched!

We've launched our new strategy 'From Vision to Reality' which will run until 2026. The Strategy builds upon our Moonshot Vision, which sets out what a society that works for autistic people and their families would look like.

The Moonshot Vision highlighted that a society that works for autistic people should value autistic

individuals, maximise autistic power, guarantee support, adapt public spaces and services, and be free from discrimination.

The Scotland strategy aims to work towards making this vision a reality for the 56,000 autistic people in Scotland and their families.

Three key themes of the Scotland strategy

are that we will: ensure that autistic people are at the heart of design, development, and delivery; empower autistic people and families through our support and amplify their voices; and collaborate wherever we can.

Adam McLeod, Highland Branch Volunteer, said: "We need to keep constantly advancing, improving,

and listening to the people we serve. I believe we have near-infinite potential to make autistic people's lives better."

Rob Holland, Director of the National Autistic Society Scotland, said: "I'm hugely proud of the strategy - not least with the steps we've taken to include autistic people, families, volunteers, professionals, and staff in its development. It is ambitious and ensures that we put the voices of autistic people firmly at the heart of what we're doing, whether that's designing and delivering our support through to our campaigning and influencing work.

We cannot deliver this strategy alone and so to be successful, we will collaborate and partner with others who share our vision and want to see it become a reality."

National Autistic Society Scotland

### From Vision to Reality

Strategy 2023-2026



Creating a  
society that  
works for  
autistic  
people

## CONTENTS

### PAGE 3

Update from our Director and our new Connections Project.

### PAGE 4

The latest from Autism Support Ayrshire, and our new Art Reimagined Project.

### PAGE 5

News from our services, including a new Highland autism eBook collection and the Scotland Branch Awards winners.

### PAGE 6

The latest from our services, including a Summer event at Catrine Bank, and the one year celebration of our Adult Mentoring Programme.

### PAGE 7

Fundraising, including an amazing Kiltwalk success and a northern soul themed event called *Mojo Talkin'*.

### PAGE 8

Meet our staff, including an interview from Jacqueline, a Senior Support Worker at one of our supported living services, and an introduction to Heather, our new Media and Communications Officer.

## FROM OUR EDITOR

The National Autistic Society Scotland has launched a new three-year strategy, entitled "From Vision to Reality." The goal is to "create a society that works for autistic people" by 2026.

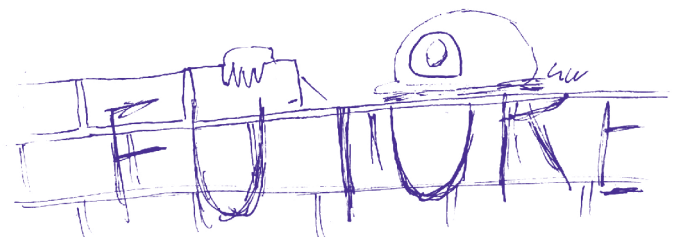
NAS Scotland is going to achieve this by building upon the success of the many support programmes they have previously set up for children, students, and adults. These programmes provide helpful resources such as post-diagnostic support, personally tailored mentoring, and safe spaces for socialising (or calming down after sensory overload).

Unfortunately, due to a lack of awareness, there are still people out there who could benefit from these resources who have not yet received any support. It's common for some people not to receive help for years, until finally hearing about NAS Scotland's various support programmes.

Still, we're moving in the right direction.

NAS Scotland cannot achieve their goal alone. It requires the help of many. But not just experts or sympathetic volunteers. It can only be achieved with the co-operation with the very people NAS Scotland sets to help - autistic people. Only their experience, in this world, can educate the rest of us in what needs to be done to make a society that works for autistic people.

**Gordon Wallace**  
Editor



*Gordon's illustration of Vision to Reality*

# 'CONNECTIONS' PROJECT TO TACKLE LONELINESS

Funded by the Social Isolation and Loneliness fund our new project, Connections, aims to reduce the harms associated with social isolation and loneliness. The programme will provide participants with opportunities for regular social interaction with autistic peers who are facing similar transitions, life stages, and challenges.

In Scotland, 67% of autistic people feel socially isolated, and they are four times more likely to experience chronic loneliness than the general population. Social communication can be challenging for many autistic people because of communication and sensory differences. Negative attitudes towards autistic people also contribute to isolation and loneliness.

Connections will involve three groups per year, which will meet fortnightly. Two of these groups will be open to autistic adults in Glasgow and the surrounding area, with one online group open to autistic women across Scotland.



For more information about Connections,  
please visit our webpage:  
[www.autism.org.uk/what-we-do/  
scotland/connections](http://www.autism.org.uk/what-we-do/scotland/connections)

# update

## FROM OUR DIRECTOR

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



I am delighted that we have published our new three-year strategy 'From Vision to Reality'!

It is ambitious and ensures that we put the voices of autistic people firmly at the heart of what we're doing, whether that's designing and delivering our support through to our campaigning and influencing work.

For more than 25 years, we have worked hard to deliver programmes of support for autistic people and families in Scotland, as well as campaign for change. There is much to be proud of and we have achieved a lot, but the reality is that multiple barriers still exist which prevent autistic people fulfilling their potential. We have to do more, and the strategy sets out what steps we will take to progress towards our vision of a society that works for autistic people.

But we cannot deliver this strategy alone and so to be successful, we will collaborate and partner with others who share our vision and want to see it become a reality.



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



## Autism Support Ayrshire

Our team in Ayrshire have been very busy over the Summer months, with several visits from MSP's. On the 29th of August, the team met with Kenneth Gibson and Ruth Maguire (SNP MSP's) to discuss the work of Autism Support Ayrshire, with Brian Whittle and Sharon Dowe (Scottish Conservative MSP's) visiting the following day.

The meetings went well, and many important topics were raised throughout both discussions, including diagnostic waiting times and the Learning Disability, Autism, and Neurodiversity Bill.



Brian Whittle and Sharon Dowe



Kenneth Gibson and Ruth Maguire

## Art Reimagined



Last month we launched Art Reimagined, an arts group where ten autistic young people will learn a variety of different art forms such as collage, illustration, printmaking, painting, and sculpting. Sessions take place fortnightly at the Project Ability art studios in Glasgow City Centre.

The project will run for one year, ending with an exhibition. There has been considerable interest in the project, and the team are excited to see how the project progresses over the next year. We are grateful to have received funding from the Youth Arts Open Fund to make this project possible.



Scottish Government  
Riaghaltas na h-Alba  
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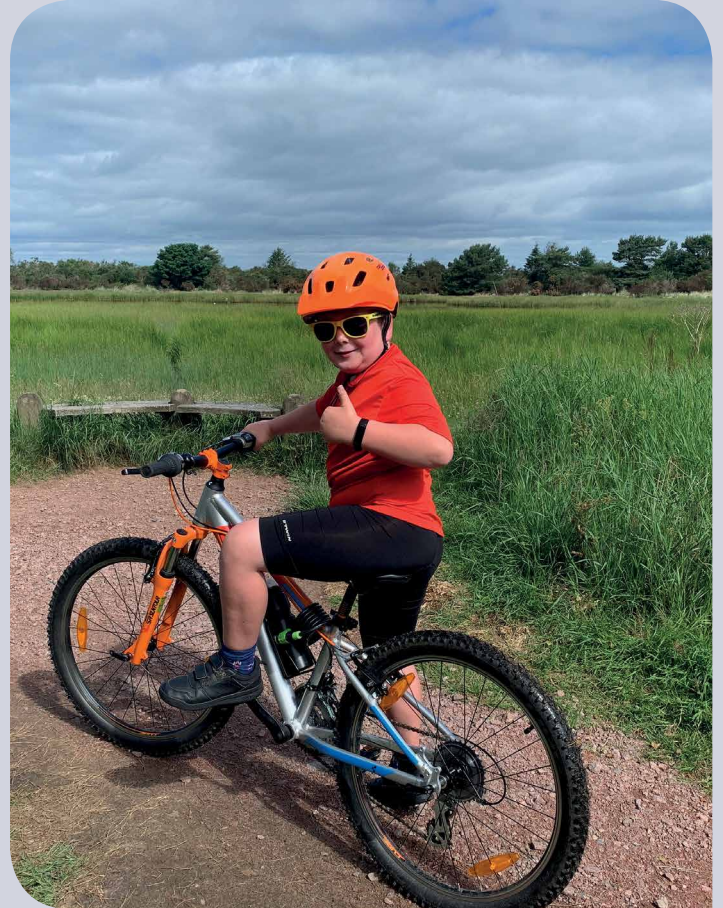
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## News from Highland

A new eBook collection focussed on autism and neurodivergence has been added to the High Life Highland Library thanks to Andrew Ochojna's fundraising efforts! Andrew raised over £2000 cycling the Dava Way when he was 9 years old; a 24-mile route connecting Forres and Granton-on-Spey.

Some of the money Andrew raised in 2020 was used to fund a new website for the Pines. The remainder of the money was used this year to purchase an eBook collection focussed on autism and neurodivergence.

Over 40 new titles about autism and neurodivergence have been added to the existing High Life Highland Libraries eBook collection. It includes best sellers *Odd Girl Out* by Laura James and *Un-typical* by Pete Wharmby, as well as books for children.



Andrew cycling the Dava Way in 2020

You can access the eBook collection at [www.highlifehighland.com/libraries/ebooks-3/](http://www.highlifehighland.com/libraries/ebooks-3/)

## News from Branches

### Congratulations to the Branch Awards winners in Scotland!

- Adam McLeod, Highland – Autistic Branch Volunteer of the Year
- Lucas Nicholson, North Lanarkshire – Young Branch Volunteer of the Year
- East Renfrewshire Branch – Outstanding Branch Community Impact

In addition to his success at the Branch Awards, Adam also got through the final of Channel 5 quiz show *Puzzling!* Adam told us that it's important to see autistic people on TV succeeding and thriving. Congratulations to Adam on making it to the final!

Finally, the Dundee and Angus Branch have started a new peer support group for autistic adults. The first meeting was a big success!

If you're interested, you can email the branch at [NASDundee&AngusBranch@nas.org.uk](mailto:NASDundee&AngusBranch@nas.org.uk)



## Music in the Meadow Event



*Music in the Meadow*

On the 17th of August, our services in Catrine Bank hosted the much anticipated 'Music in the Meadow' event. The event was a huge success, and the people we support, their families, and staff enjoyed a fun summer afternoon featuring live music, a bouncy castle, accessible pony rides, and a BBQ.

The day started at 11:30am and continued into the late afternoon with over 50 people in attendance. Among the attendees were Jim Todd, the provost of East Ayrshire, and Carol Mochan, MSP.

Jim Todd, the Provost of East Ayrshire said:

"I was delighted to visit 'Music in the Meadow', the residents had a great time listening to the music and interacting with family and staff. The burgers were great, the music was eclectic and a big massive thanks to all the carers and staff. The tireless work all through Covid was just part of the job for these wonderful folk. A massive thanks to them for the work they do and to see the smiles on the residents faces today was enough to warm the cockles of your heart. A big shout out to Daldorch House and Catrine Bank.

P.S. Even getting pelted with wet sponges didn't dampen my day!"

## One Year of Adult Mentoring

In August we celebrated one year of our Adult Mentoring Programme at the Hidden Gardens in Pollokshields!

It's been a fantastic first year with both autistic participants and volunteer mentors benefitting from their involvement. Thanks to everyone who came along, and a special thanks to our autistic participants and volunteer mentors for making the first year of the programme such a big success.

To mark the event one of the mentees, Shona Heaney, created a beautiful illustration. Shona is an illustrator and is working towards a goal of setting up a website.



*Illustration by Shona Heaney*



## Kiltwalk Success for the Haysie Hikers!



Strategy Kiltwalk Group

**The Haysie Hikers, a group of Early Years Practitioners, recently completed the Dundee Kiltwalk, raising over £1300 for the National Autistic Society!**

The Haysie Hikers work with autistic young people on a daily basis, and they strive to raise awareness of neurodivergence.

Megan Stewart, Haysie Hikers group member, said: 'We are all so passionate about what we do, and spreading awareness for neurodiversity is our ultimate goal!'

The group completed the Kiltwalk in 6 hours and 50 minutes, inspired by the stories of the young people they serve.

Find out more about the Kiltwalks here:  
[www.thekiltwalk.co.uk/events](http://www.thekiltwalk.co.uk/events)

## Huge Turnout for MoJo Talkin'

**200 people attended MoJo Talkin', a northern soul themed fundraising event organised by Paul Wilson!**

The day started with a 'ride out' where around 100 enthusiasts rode their bikes in convoy across Lanarkshire.

Attendees then enjoyed an afternoon of vintage stalls and a raffle, before dancing the night away to an impressive line-up of DJs.

We can't wait to find out how much Paul has raised!



Ride out for autism

## 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 Jacqueline McAnespie, Senior Support Worker at one of our supported living services, to find out what she loves most about her job.



**Q: Can you describe your job in three words?**

Satisfaction. Rewarding. Passion.

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

Watching the young autistic adults we support making progress on a daily basis.

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

Definitely! It is an amazing feeling going home every day knowing I have made a small difference to the young autistic adults we support.

You can hear more from Jacqueline and her colleagues on our YouTube channel:

[www.youtube.com/@nationalautisticsocietysco6298](https://www.youtube.com/@nationalautisticsocietysco6298)

We were delighted to welcome our new Media and Communications Officer in August, Heather Briglin!



**About Heather:** 'Hi everybody! My name is Heather, and I am absolutely over the moon to be the new Media and Communications Officer at the National Autistic Society Scotland.

I was officially diagnosed with autism at the end of last year, almost three years after finally making the realisation that I was on the spectrum. In these past few years, it became clear to me that I wanted a job where I could raise awareness and acceptance about autism, because a lack of knowledge and understanding is what led to myself, and so many others like me, being diagnosed later in life.

I really feel like I can make a difference in this position, and I'm so excited to get involved in the great work that our organisation is doing.'

**Welcome Heather!**

## 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.