

News and Views

From people supported by the National Autistic
Society Scotland and our volunteers
Winter 2019

Nicola Sturgeon joins MSPs in promoting Autism Hour

The First Minister of Scotland, Nicola Sturgeon, joined MSPs in pledging her support for our Autism Hour campaign at The Scottish Parliament on Thursday 10 October.

Running from 5 to 12 October, our campaign encouraged shops, visitor attractions, and other businesses across Scotland to set aside time to offer a more autism-friendly service to help support the estimated 58,000 autistic people in Scotland and their families.

The Scottish Parliament was one of 1,250 visitor attractions, shops and other organisations to take part in our campaign. It dimmed lights in the main hall and reduced noise across the building

to help create a more relaxing environment for autistic visitors and their families. Staff also received autism awareness training, and added a guide to their website to help autistic visitors.

First Minister of Scotland, Nicola Sturgeon, said: "The Autism Hour campaign is a fantastic way of raising awareness of

the challenges autistic people can face in day-to-day life.

"Encouraging organisations across the country to consider what more they can do to make their properties autism-friendly supports our work to help autistic people reach their full potential and live healthier lives."

Nick Ward, Director of National Autistic Society Scotland, said: "I'm so pleased the First Minister and other MSPs were able to join us and show their support for Autism Hour. It's fitting that the Scottish Parliament, being home to the policy and law makers, leads the way in helping to make Scotland a more autism-friendly nation."



The First Minister and MSPs at the Scottish Parliament

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FROM OUR EDITOR

I had an encounter with fake money at work a while ago - a customer had given me two £20 notes in the dark one night and I only noticed how fake they were when I was placing them into the safe.

These were not ordinary fake notes - they looked real at a quick glance (during the transaction) but when I took a moment to look at them properly afterwards, they were clearly fake.

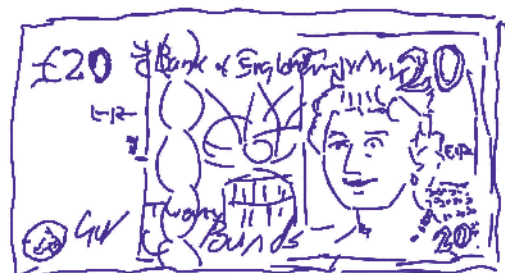
You may be thinking 'okay, so you got tricked by fake money. What is so special that you had to write about it here?'

Well here's the thing. If whoever made these notes wanted to pass them off as 'real money', they would have made them look as real as possible when examined closely, which these notes failed to do.

They only worked at a distance or a quick glance. Then it hit me (this was also confirmed when I read the small print on the notes) - they were prop notes. Fake notes made for use on film and TV sets in place of real money. The notes only had to look real in front of a camera.

Detail is pointless if the viewer is only going to see it for a short time.

Gordon Wallace
Editor



Gordon's illustration of the fake note

CELEBRATING 20 YEARS OF OUR EMPLOYMENT SERVICE

We celebrated the 20th anniversary of our Prospects employment service with a well-attended reception at Scottish Parliament.

MSPs joined representatives from our charity and young autistic people and their families to hear about the successes of the service that has helped support over 1,600 autistic people to prepare for work.

The celebratory event featured a sketch performed by a group of autistic young people supported by the service that highlighted the challenges autistic people can face at a job interview, as well as an art exhibition and live music.

Our Prospects employment service is currently in large part funded by CashBack for Communities, a Scottish Government initiative that takes money from the proceeds of crime and invests it in projects for disadvantaged young people.

To find out more about the service, please visit www.autism.org.uk/movingforward.

Our 20th anniversary event in full swing



update

FROM OUR DIRECTOR

Welcome to the winter edition of *News and Views*.

Autism Hour returned bigger and better than ever before this year – and I'm so pleased First Minister Nicola Sturgeon lent her support to our campaign. More than 1,250 shops and retailers across Scotland took part and made small adjustments during the week of 5 to 12 October to create an autism-friendly shopping experience for their customers. Turn to page four to find out more.

Do you remember reading about our super cyclist Neil Copeland and his 2,500km fundraising journey across France and Germany in the autumn edition of our newsletter? I am delighted to say Neil completed his journey in late August and has written about his experience on page six.

Finally, I want to update you on the progress we have made towards addressing the recommendations made as part of our *Not Included, Not Engaged, Not Involved* report, which revealed that autistic children in Scotland are not receiving an education that meets their needs.

One year on from publication of our report, autistic children are still being unlawfully excluded and the effect on families continues to be devastating. To find out about the progress we have made against the recommendations in our report, please visit www.notengaged.com.

As always, thank you for your continued support for our charity.



Nick Ward
Director, the National Autistic Society Scotland



NEWS FROM CATRINE BANK

By Donald Kirkland, Team Leader at
Catrine Bank

We recently organised a games day at our local community hall for the people we support.

In keeping with the theme, we arranged activities for the people we support to take part in - football proved to be a very popular choice as did the large bouncy castle and face painting with disco music!

Two members of our team got into the spirit too by dressing up as Big Bird and Elmo from *Sesame Street*, much to the delight of the people we support.

The event was a resounding success and nearly all of the people we support attended. It was a positive experience for everyone and it was great to see everyone out and about and having fun in the local community.

We have received great feedback from the people we support about their games day experience and we hope to hold another event in the very near future.



Face
painting fun

MSPs say the time is now for Autism Hour

More than 20 MSPs lent their support to our Autism Hour campaign and pledged to make Scotland a more autism-friendly nation at an event we held at Scottish Parliament.

MSPs including convener of the Cross-Party Group on Autism, Annie Wells MSP, called on shops and businesses in their local constituencies to turn down music, dim their lights, and provide staff with information about autism to enable them to help and understand autistic customers, during the week of Saturday 5 to 12 October.

We think it is important that decision-makers lead the way and are really pleased so many MSPs supported Autism Hour and encouraged local shops and retailers to get involved.



Annie Wells MSP, with Nick Ward, Director of National Autistic Society Scotland

The Scouts promise to help support autistic people

By Patsy Devlin, Senior Branch
Engagement Officer

We attended ScoutFest as part of our exciting three-year partnership with the Scouts.



We delivered a session about how to support autistic children and young people to more than 30 Scout leaders and had many people stop by our stand to try our virtual reality experience that recreates the sensory challenges many autistic people face.

Our charity is working with the Scouts in a project called A Million Hands that aims to get 500,000 Scouts from across the UK to take part in community action activities to raise awareness and change around social issues. We are one of eight charities taking part in the project and are leading on its Understanding Disability theme.



Angela Kennedy Social Groups volunteer

Interview and illustration
by Gordon Wallace

Q: **Who are you?**

My name is Angela Kennedy and I volunteer with National Autistic Society Scotland's Clydebank social group, which is funded by ScottishPower Foundation. I have been volunteering for more than two years and live with my husband and 19-year-old son.

Q: **Can you explain the social group programme to us?**

The National Autistic Society Scotland's programme of social groups provides an opportunity for autistic people to socialise and develop social skills, meet new people and build meaningful friendships. There are 83 groups across Scotland and members can participate in a variety of fun activities such as visits to the cinema, bowling, indoor climbing, crazy golf and lots more.

Q: **What made you volunteer?**

I started volunteering as my autistic son had been attending one of the social groups and I could see how much the group was helping him to become more independent. Thanks to the support of the group leaders and volunteers, he developed skills such as how to order food when out

and about and how to use public transport.

Another reason why I wanted to volunteer was so I could use my experience as the mother of an autistic child to help other people in similar situations. I also wanted to give back to the charity who had helped my son. I'm so glad I decided to volunteer as it has given me so much satisfaction, fun and enjoyment.

Q: **Have there been any challenging moments?**

Using public transport can be a bit nerve wracking sometimes when I am out and about with the group - especially at busy times of the day. We have lots of group members and sometimes, as much as I don't like to admit it, I struggle to remember everyone's name!

Q: **What can you tell us about yourself outside the groups? Do you have any hobbies and interests?**

In my spare time, I like to go running and on walks with my family. I also enjoy going to the cinema and music concerts.

VOLUNTEERING OPPORTUNITIES

Volunteering with the National Autistic Society Scotland is a great way to meet new people and learn new skills, while making a real difference to the lives of autistic people.

We are recruiting volunteer befrienders and mentors for our Person to Person service which supports autistic people aged 26 and over.

The project helps autistic people overcome challenges and meet goals, such as taking part in social activities, tackling problems at work, or dealing with complicated banking and housing issues.

As a volunteer befriender or mentor, you will provide support to autistic people in Glasgow and the surrounding areas face-to-face, by phone or by email.

To find out more, please visit www.autism.org.uk/volunteer.

News from Daldorch House School

Our gardening competition

By Jane Eaglesham, Depute
Head of Education at
Daldorch House School

Earlier this summer, we planned and organised a special project for the young people we support.

We asked our classes to take part in a competition to help develop our outdoor learning areas by thinking about eco-friendly ways that we could help wildlife to flourish. And all of our classes 'rose' to the challenge!

Plants were grown from seed, cuttings were taken, replanted and tended, and we supported our young people to help cut the grass. We also made a giant 'Kerplunk' from recycled chicken wire and sticks, and old car tyres were turned into number games.

One class collected items from the local community and designed nature-inspired art using sand and leaves.

Everyone thoroughly enjoyed getting involved in our project and each outdoor learning area has been beautifully enhanced.



Kiltwalk-ing to the finish line

We're so proud of the Recoveries and Litigation Team from Royal Bank of Scotland and KPMG staff who took part in the Edinburgh Kiltwalk, and collectively raised more than £10,000 for our charity.



The RBS team

We'd like to thank everyone who took part in this year's event and helped raise vital funds for our charity. We hope you got to put your feet up afterwards!

Co-op staff raise £11,500!



Thank you to everyone who took part in the Co-op's 10k in 10 days challenge. Staff raised £11,500 which will make a big difference to autistic people and their families in Scotland.

My tour de force is complete

My sister Laurie passed away in November last year. Laurie had been receiving long-term support from National Autistic Society Scotland. After she passed, I wanted to raise funds and help increase autism awareness. That is why I created my website, www.noththetour.com, and in July began a 2,500km fundraising cycle across the length and breadth of France, writing daily blog entries detailing my adventure.



Neil on his tour

Please take a look at my website to find out more about where I visited and my story. Thank you.

Football's coming home...to Dundee!

By Richie and
Glenda Anderson

We are Richie and Glenda Anderson and are committee members of National Autistic Society Scotland's Dundee and Angus Branch. We run the Dundee West National Autistic Society Scotland football team. It is attended by around 30 young autistic people every week from the age of seven to around 18.

There are two national tournaments that we compete in each year, run by Scottish Disability Sport and Scottish Football Association Para Football. The latest was the seven-a-side tournament in Toryglen, Glasgow on 18 September.

We travelled there with our Lead Coach, Keris Forsyth, and other coaches Tony Walker and Lindsay Fleming. The team were particularly excited to get an extra day off school as it was a Wednesday!

We discovered that we were competing alongside seven other teams, split into two leagues. We had to play three matches in our league and whoever won would be in the final with the other league winners. It was nail-biting!

We got off to a fantastic start by beating the predicted winners of our league 3-2. It was an exciting opening game and the win gave us a boost as we went straight into the next game - there was no break - and won 1-0!

The team were flying high with excitement afterwards. We had to keep the players focused as our next match was in an hour, so we had lunch to help preserve their energy.

Going into the final match of the league, everyone was bursting with enthusiasm knowing that if we won we would be in the final. I think the excitement carried us through and it was an easy 3-0 win in the end.

As irony would have it, we discovered the winners of the other league were a team from Glenrothes - a team we had played a few times before but had not yet beaten. We had to try to persuade the players that it was their time. They had played so well that they had as good a chance as the other team did to win.

After a short motivational talk by Keris, we finally got started. We could barely watch! The tension was so high that even the

official referee said he was glad he wasn't playing! It went 1-0 Glenrothes, then 1-1, then 2-1 then finally 2-2. The only way to settle the winner was to have a penalty shoot-out.

The team spirit was something else. The players were all so positive, encouraging each other, even if someone missed, or the goalkeeper didn't stop the goal. After a tense and nail-biting set of penalties, it ended 7-6 with us winning!

We are so proud of everyone. It was so good to see a team of players who are usually so quiet at school and sometimes struggle with social interactions, having fun and enjoying themselves. Normally some of our players don't like to have their photograph taken but not this time - everyone was beaming with huge smiles when we took these photographs immediately after the game ended. You can see what it means to them!





EMMA HILL

Programmes Manager

*Gordon's illustration
of Emma*

Q: What does your role involve?

I'm responsible for the development of National Autistic Society Scotland's charitable programmes. This includes our Autism Friendly Award, branches, social groups, Person to Person, Autism Resource Centre, Highland Information Centre, Ayrshire One Stop Shop and part of our befriending and mentoring service. We have a couple of other exciting programmes in the pipeline too!

I lead a team of wonderful managers and coordinators who are responsible for the day-to-day delivery of the services, support funding applications, monitor budgets as well as create and maintain partnerships with a variety of important stakeholders.

Q: How did you get this position?

I previously worked with Glasgow based charity, PEEK – Possibilities for Each and Every Kid as their Thrive Programme Manager. Prior to this, I worked with Enable Scotland as a Programme Coordinator where I supported autistic adults into employment.

Q: Describe a typical day.

There is no such thing as a typical day as no two are ever the same! I might check in with our programmes team who are dotted across Scotland – from Inverness to the Borders – to see how things are going before stopping by one of our social groups or coffee clubs to meet the people we support. I may also deliver volunteer training or the Autism Friendly Award to venues and organisations before working with our fundraising team to evaluate the impact of our services or write a report for our funders.

Q: What do you do to relax?

I enjoy exercising, reading and travelling whenever I can with my partner Steven. I also love going out with my friends and chilling with my cat, Flo.

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

Did you know...?

Are you a member of the National Autistic Society Scotland? If not, you can join our growing community of over 1,000 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 publications and events. To find out more, please call our Supporter Care team on **0808 800 1050**.

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 58,000 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 spectrum. With your help, we can make it happen.