

From people supported by The National Autistic Society Scotland and our volunteers
Spring 2018

Moving Forward celebrates double award triumph

Our CashBack for Communities funded Moving Forward project is celebrating after scooping two prestigious awards at The Scottish Mentoring Network's annual Recognition Awards.

The project has helped more than 50 autistic young people to develop skills for the workplace, gain social confidence and find employment. It aims to achieve this by matching young people with volunteer mentors.

The Scottish Mentoring Network awarded Moving Forward the 'Inclusion Project of the Year' with our Volunteer Mentor, Becky Preston, being recognised as a highly commended mentor at the glittering ceremony in Edinburgh, which was attended by more than 100 people.

We received £583,000 in funding for the project from CashBack for Communities, a unique Scottish Government initiative which takes money seized from criminals under the proceeds of crime legislation and invests it in projects for Scotland's most disadvantaged young people. Our goal over the next three years is to help 300 young people in West Central Scotland to develop skills for the workplace, gain social confidence and find employment.

If you, or someone you know, could benefit then please get in touch by phoning 0141 248 1725 or emailing moving.forward@nas.org.uk.



Callum McCrosson and Becky Preston at the ceremony in Edinburgh

Until everyone understands

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Welcome to News and **views**

Since the summer, I have been an informal art teacher.

It began during the summer holidays after the mother of one of the children at my nephew's swimming club asked me if I could be an art teacher for her children. She had heard about my talents and invited me to do some artistic activities with her children. Other children then began to hear about the art class and asked me if they could join too.

By September, I was regularly bringing art supplies and books to the side of the pool during my nephew's swimming club and teaching children how to draw.

Seeing them draw reminded me of how I started. I didn't have a teacher who taught me face-to-face, I started at pre-school by playing with chalk and a blackboard – and that was all.

I was self-taught, mostly, which is great if you desire a unique style but it's worth having peers that support you as well, like friends and family, for morale purposes.

They also provide challenges for your skills that can help push your development, like asking for a portrait of themselves and having it published in a nationwide newsletter, like this drawing of me by one of my pupils, Emma Tefer!

Gordon Wallace
Editor



A drawing of Gordon by Emma Tefer



Chief Executive's update

Welcome to the spring edition of *News and views*.

I hope 2018 is going well for you. I can't believe that this year's World Autism Awareness Week (WAAW) is just around the corner. During WAAW, which is taking place between Monday 26 March and Monday 2 April, our staff, people we support and the public get involved in fundraising for our charity. It's a great opportunity to come together and share the amazing work we do every day to build a world where autistic people are understood, supported and appreciated. Stories like nine-year-old Holly on page seven about her six-year-old brother, Rudy are at the heart of our work to raise awareness and better understanding of autism. To find out more about WAAW please turn to page six.

I wanted also to take this opportunity to let you know that Jenny Paterson, Director of the National Autistic Society Scotland, has left our organisation. After three years Jenny has moved on to become the new chief executive of a young person's charity called Breakthrough, which supports care experienced young people, in Dundee. I'd like to thank Jenny for her work at our charity and wish her all the very best for the future. I will be able to tell you more about our plans for Scotland in our Summer edition.

I hope you enjoy catching up with our latest news and, as always, if you have any story suggestions please don't hesitate to get in touch.

Best Wishes

Mark Lever

Sharing your views on Chris Packham's documentary

Chris, who presents the BAFTA award-winning series *Springwatch*, *Autumnwatch* and *Winterwatch* for the BBC, received a diagnosis of Asperger syndrome in 2005, when he was in his 40s.

Following the broadcast of his BBC Two documentary about his life, *Asperger's and Me*, a group of autistic people we support were invited by the long-running television series *Points of View* to share their thoughts on the programme. The show, which has been on BBC One since 1961, features the opinions of viewers offering praise, criticism and observations on recent BBC television programmes.

Connor McCann, Lewis McIlroy, Ross McIntosh, Richard Allison and Rachael Ross were filmed at BBC Scotland's headquarters at Pacific Quay in Glasgow, and their opinions and thoughts were broadcast across the UK when the programme aired two days later.



Connor, Lewis, Ross, Richard and Rachael at BBC Scotland's studios in Glasgow

Media, policy and campaigns update

Raising awareness at Eastgate Shopping Centre



Isla and other volunteers

Our fantastic volunteers hosted an information stand in the Eastgate Shopping Centre in Inverness and were run off their feet with questions and enquiries.

They were kept busy throughout the day and had a steady stream of shoppers lining up to try our unique VR headset, and experience first-hand what sensory overload feels like for a child in a busy shopping centre.

Isla McKenzie, age nine, might have been the youngest member of our team but she did a fantastic job fundraising and talking to shoppers.

Thank you to everyone who took the time to drop by our stand and donate to our charity.

Cross-Party Group on Autism at Scottish Parliament

In November, we held the first meeting of the proposed Cross-Party Group (CPG) on Autism at the Scottish Parliament. CPGs provide an opportunity for MSPs from all parties, outside organisations and members of the public to meet and discuss a shared interest in a particular cause or subject.

We believe that the CPG on Autism will act as a forum to raise awareness and promote the interests of autistic people, their families and carers, and act as an influencer of government policy.

Keep an eye out for more news on this in the next edition of *News and views*.



Our campaigns and policy team with MSPs at Scottish Parliament

News from Catrine Bank

By Clare Dykes, Registered Manager

Our garden area serves many purposes for the people we support. Some are really keen on gardening and grow their own produce, while others enjoy the experience of making planters and engaging in the woodwork elements. The people we support love sitting in the bothy area and enjoying the garden swing. The garden is surrounded by lots of lovely sensory noises such as birds singing, trees rustling and the sound of water from the nearby river.

We wanted to ensure that we were able to continue to provide opportunities like these for the

people we support. In December, we gave the garden a winter makeover with our residents and staff.

In preparation for spring, we helped individuals to sand down and repaint some of the large wooden planters. We also checked and filled the bird feeders with seeds for the abundance of birds we have in the garden.

We also had a massive clear up of the raised bed areas, which involved weeding out debris from the summer plants, as well as clearing the fish pond and bothy areas.



A resident helps in the garden

Everyone who helped had an enjoyable day and worked hard to transform the garden. Thanks to their efforts, the people we support can now enjoy the spring sunshine in our garden.

Meet the volunteer



Lizzie Barbour

Chair of The National
Autistic Society Scotland's
Largs Branch

Interview and illustration by Gordon Wallace

Q: Who are you and what do you do?

My name is Lizzy and I am a mum of three. I set up an informal local group which has now developed into the Largs Branch of The National Autistic Society Scotland. I am the Chair.

Q: I have been told that you did some fundraising and awareness raising recently. Can you tell me more?

Yes. I have taken part in lots of different fundraising activities including a tandem skydive which was an amazing experience, if somewhat daunting! Most recently I tackled Tough Mudder with my friend Sarah which was quite a challenge! As a group, we have also done street collections, and staffed information stalls to spread awareness during local events. Our branch is currently trying to raise awareness of addressing additional support needs within education through contact with local councillors and education services.

Q: What made you want to become a volunteer?

After my son was diagnosed, I felt very isolated as there were no local support groups. I was searching online and came across a post about a fundraiser which the South Lanarkshire Branch of The National Autistic Society Scotland were doing at Loch Lomond Sea Life Centre. They were spending the night in the shark tunnel to raise funds and I

applied to take part with my son.

It was a very positive experience and he even won a prize for being the top fundraiser. We also took a trip to Legoland with the branch and shortly afterwards, I decided to set up a local group to reach out to other families with the help of the Ayrshire based One Stop Shop. This group has now developed into the Largs Branch.

Q: What are the challenges of doing what you do in Largs?

One of the biggest challenges is our geographical location which can make it difficult to access, support or attend events. That's why I believe a branch in Largs is needed for people throughout the north coast of Ayrshire.

Q: What do you do to relax?

I love being outdoors especially walking up the hills and climbing. I do this whenever I can. I also like being out on the water in my kayak. I find the noise of the water very calming.

Q: What do you think is the best representation of autism in the media?

I recently enjoyed Chris Packham's *Asperger's and Me*. I thought it was a very honest documentary giving an insight into both the positive and negative aspects of life on the autistic spectrum.

Volunteering opportunities

Volunteering with The National Autistic Society Scotland is a great way to meet new people and learn new skills, whilst 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 adults aged 26 and over.

Our Person to Person project helps autistic people overcome challenges and meet goals, such as taking part in social activities, facing 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/get-involved/volunteer/opportunities.

Fundraising news

World Autism Awareness Week 2018 is on the way!



Get onboard for Onesie Wednesday

From Monday 26 March to Monday 2 April 2018, people across Scotland will be taking part in a number of activities to raise money for autism.

It's a great opportunity to come together and share the amazing work we do every day to build a world where autistic people are understood, supported and appreciated and we hope you'll join in!

Sign up and download our fundraising guide that's jam-packed with fun ideas and activities to help you get involved in raising public awareness and understanding of autism.

Our fundraising guides can be downloaded from www.autism.org.uk/waaw.

From Lochwinnoch to the Loch Ness marathon!



Ewan McIntyre in action during the Loch Ness marathon

Ewan McIntyre from Lochwinnoch raised more than £900 for our Renfrewshire Branch by taking on the challenge of Loch Ness for his first ever marathon!

His nephew Lewis, who has received support from the branch and utilised the many groups it offers, was his inspiration for taking part. The 26 mile route ended at Bught Park in Inverness.

Well done Ewan! We hope you put your feet up after crossing the finish line!

News from Daldorch House School

Michael shows his creative side!

By Michael Berrie and Christina Joint, Support Worker

One of Michael's favourite TV shows is *The Dreamstone*, a British animated television series in which the characters battle to control "the most precious and valuable object in the land, the Dreamstone". Watching it inspired him to create a real life throne, just like the one Zorodrak has on the show.

With the help of his friend and support worker, Peter Fleming, Michael started turning his idea into reality. Last September they began bringing Michael's idea together and have been steadily cutting polystyrene, gluing wood and painting ever since.

Together, they created blueprints of an eagle head for the top of the throne and two gargoyle heads for the arms. These were sent to an artist who made identical polystyrene sculptures.

Michael wants to keep making sculptures and we all believe that his next creation will be just as amazing as his first. He is very proud of the fact that he owns something completely unique that he has designed and built. Speaking of his creation, Michael said "This is what an autistic mind can do".



Michael on the throne he created

My autistic brother

By Holly Wilson, age nine

My brother Rudy is six and is autistic.

When Rudy was little we knew that there was something different about him. At first we thought that he had a problem with his hearing as he sometimes didn't answer us when we spoke to him. We had to take him to a few hospital appointments and eventually found out that he doesn't have a problem with his hearing, he is autistic.

"All autistic people are different.
I like to explain it that way"

Some people ask me what autism is. Just the other day my little cousin, aged five, asked me. I asked her what she is scared of and she said "vampires". I then said that Rudy is scared of busy places like shopping centres or parties, and that is what being autistic is to him.

All autistic people are different. I like to explain it that way. Some people think that autism is all about meltdowns and that these are tantrums but they are not. I don't like it when Rudy gets upset. When he does, we just try to remember the things he doesn't like, such as busy places, and try to avoid them.

I have learned a lot about Rudy. I have learned that it is best to speak to him by making things shorter. For example rather than saying "Rudy please stop that, I don't like it when you do that", I just say "stop!". He understands things better when you keep sentences short and is more likely to listen to you.

It makes me sad that we don't go to the same school but I know that the teachers at his school understand him so that makes me feel better. It would be good



Holly with her brother Rudy



Holly with her dad Paul, mum Alison and brother Rudy

if more people understood autism and that autistic people are born that way and that they can't do anything to change it.

I wouldn't change anything about Rudy. He gives the best cuddles in the world and he makes me laugh especially when he sings songs from TV shows or I hear him laughing at *Tom and Jerry*.

If you would like to contribute, please email scotlandnews@nas.org.uk.

Meet our team

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?

The National Autistic Society Scotland is currently recruiting support workers for our services in East Ayrshire and Glasgow. Full-time, part-time, zero hours and nightshift positions are available.

To find out about these roles and more opportunities with The National Autistic Society Scotland, please visit www.autism.org.uk/jobs or call 0141 221 8090 and ask to speak to our HR team.



Gordon's illustration of Cara

Cara Ritson

Employment Liaison and Events Assistant

Every issue, we meet a member of The National Autistic Society Scotland team. Here's what our editor Gordon Wallace found out about Cara Ritson, Employment Liaison and Events Assistant.

Q: Who are you and what do you do?

My name is Cara and I am the Employment Liaison and Events Assistant in the Prospects team. It's a long title but basically it means I promote our services around West and Central Scotland so that as many people as possible can hear about what we do! I also do a bit of business networking to try and find suitable employers to provide work placements for the people who take part in our CashBack for Communities funded Moving Forward Project.

Q: How long have you been in this role?

I began this position in July so I think I am the newest member of the team! So far it is has been one of the best places I have worked.

Q: Can you describe a typical day?

It's quite hard to describe a typical day as one day I can be visiting a

Jobcentre Plus and the next be at a business networking meeting! Today I was speaking to work coaches at a local Jobcentre Plus and advising on the challenges and strengths of autistic people when it comes to employment, as well as telling them about our Moving Forward project. After an awareness session, I normally come back to the office, check my emails and start arranging more sessions!

Q: What do you do to relax?

I love music, historical documentaries and swimming.

Q: What do you think is the best representation of autism in the media?

I absolutely loved reading *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*. It was the first time I had come across a main character who was autistic. I'm desperate to see the stage adaptation of it!

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 Magazine*, discounts on our publications and events, and low cost autism insurance. To find out more, please call our Supporter Care team on **0808 800 1050**.

Help us to reduce costs and protect the environment by receiving this newsletter by email. To change your preferences, please email scotlandnews@nas.org.uk.

We are Scotland's leading autism charity. Since we began over 20 years ago, we have been pioneering new ways to support people and understand autism. We continue to learn every day from the children and adults we support in our schools and care services.

Based on our experience, and with support from our members, donors and volunteers, we provide life-changing information and advice to millions of autistic people, their families and friends. And we support professionals, politicians and the public to understand autism better so that more autistic people of all ages can be understood, supported and appreciated for who they are.

Until everyone understands.