

# Empowering the 'true' you

identity, self-care and resilience

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SWAN: Scottish Women's Autism Network

# Empowerment: identity and peer support



## Conditions of Engagement

**SWAN aims to**

**1 improve the lives of autistic girls and women.**

**2 provide peer-support for autistic women and girls.**

**3 actively seek and widely promote a greater understanding of the lived experiences of autistic girls and women by:**

i) challenging misconceptions and ignorance of the existence, prevalence and presentation of autism in females, through research, practice and the collecting and sharing of knowledge of lived experiences

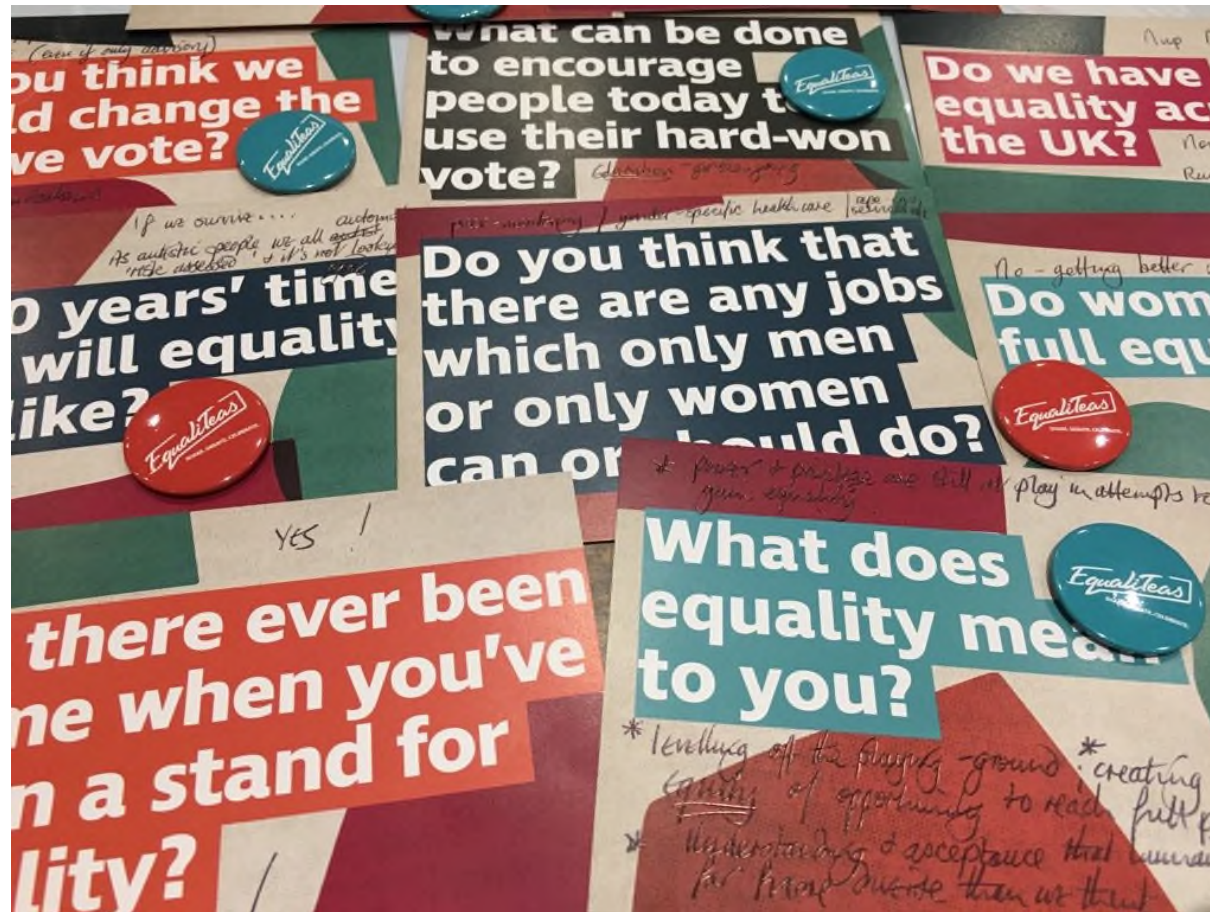
ii) working to dismantle unhelpful stereotypes and misunderstandings

iii) forming and developing working partnerships with professions, agencies and organisations

SWAN aims to build routes to practical support for autistic women and girls throughout the lifespan through peer-support, research and the sharing of knowledge and information. SWAN offers

signposting for potential solutions and support to individuals, families and professionals.

# Empowerment: identity and peer support



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We work for social movement through individual and collective self-knowledge, confidence and personal growth. We model a capacity- rather than deficit- led approach. Our model enables pro-active self-care and empowerment to the building of capacity and citizenship by focusing on identifying strengths as well as challenges, increasing confidence and maximising individual potential.

We work for social and legislative change through our presence at every opportunity for representation eg Cross Party Group for Autism, Independent Review of the Mental Health Act, Scottish Government Strategy reviews.

\* Also SIGN, NES etc. We offer training and consultancy.

# Empowerment: identity and peer support

SWAN: Scottish Women's Autism Network 2012  
in response to research study 2011

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Key drivers for qualitative methodology and innovative methods:

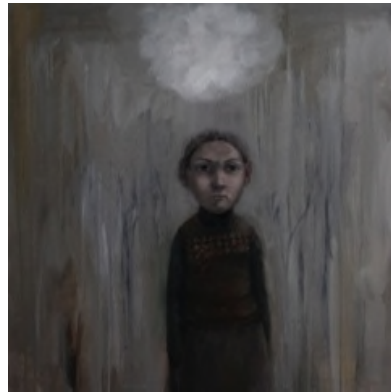
- facilitation of the authentic voices of autistic girls with anxiety
- lived experience narrative



# Empowerment: identity and peer support

Where can we be what we are?\*

Stewart C 2012 Where can we be what we are? Good Autism Practice 13 (1) May 2012 Birmingham: BILD



\*'Home' defined by Van Manen as 'where we can be what we are'

# Empowerment: identity and peer support

to evidence the benefits of peer-led mentoring  
for autistic women and girls



# Empowerment: identity and peer support

## SWAN: Participatory Action Research

- “community-based and co-operative enquiry, used for improving conditions and practices with...partnerships between researchers and participants” (Winter and Munn-Giddings 2001).
- focuses on social change that challenges inequality; often targeted on the needs of a particular group; is an iterative cycle of research, action and reflection; and often seeks to ‘liberate’ participants to have a greater awareness of their situation in order to take action.
- PAR uses a range of different methods, both quantitative, based on the NHS PICO framework, and qualitative.

# Empowerment: identity and peer support

## Under Our Wing

a response to glaring gaps identified in education and pastoral care of young autistic women, lifelong impact on individuals as they have to navigate their way into adulthood in a world that doesn't understand or accommodate them, often hampered by poor mental health, a poor sense of identity and without the necessary tools for positive self-care

# Empowerment: identity and peer support

Under Our Wing  
- game changer?

- evidencing the value of peer support for mental health and wellbeing
- designing, delivering and evaluating a route to peer-mentoring for autistic girls and women

# Empowerment: identity and peer support

## the programme

- design: conceptual, ethical, practical
- building a pathway for participation
- processes and protocols, risk, safeguarding
- content
- delivery

# Empowerment: identity and peer support

## the programme

- participatory action research
- co-production model
- mentoring training: Dinah Bennett OBE FRSA (ICE)
- autism training: autistic management team
- outdoors forestry bush craft, creativity, personal development, team building

# Empowerment: identity and peer support





# Empowerment: identity and peer support





# Empowerment: identity and peer support

the programme

key outcomes

- identity
- confidence
- capacity
- skills
- citizenship



# Empowerment: identity and peer support

## demographics

- women aged 15 - 60
- accessed through SWAN network and local school
- varied employment status
- varied school access status
- range of sexuality and gender ID including transgender and non-binary
- geographic: Central Belt

# Empowerment: identity and peer support evaluation

- Dr Yolanda Gibb SEIF Durham University
- reflective diaries
- qualitative evaluation with interviews at stages throughout programme
- entry interview - exit interview
- existing QOL tool
- building new QOL model specifically around the project

# Empowerment: identity and peer support

## evaluation

- will be completed August/Sept 2019
- participants have reported:
  - greater sense of identity
  - improved self confidence
  - skills learned
  - friendships



# Empowerment: identity and peer support

“...a day of crafting, bushcraft & team building activities. A big thank you to Craig, of Operation Play Outdoors, our trainer, and to Scottish Forestry for ongoing support.”

**our day was described by  
one of our group as  
"magical mentoring"**





# Empowerment: identity and peer support





# Empowerment: identity and peer support



**Rony Casement**  
February 18

The Mentor's Commandments:

1. Facilitate not clone.
2. Uniqueness is important.
3. Consistency is critical
4. Faking it is not making it. Provide honest feedback.
5. Empower rather than solve.
6. You are not responsible- you have shared responsibility.
7. Appreciate what you're giving.
8. It's not coaching; it's mentoring.
9. Honour your limits and boundaries.
10. Listening is hard but advice is easy. We could all use more listeners in the world

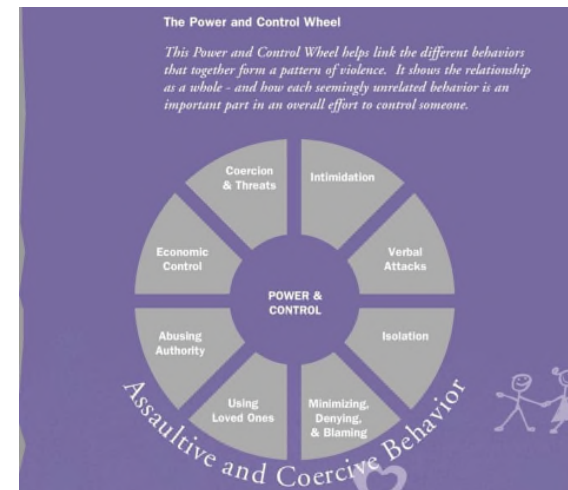
This was sent to me by Dinah 😊 (I'm not sure of source)



You and 1 other

Seen by everyone

WITHDRAWAL	DEPOSIT
- not sleeping (10)	- walking (20)
- school (90)	- reading (10)
- crowds (70)	- painting (30)
- noise (80)	- origami (50)
- brightest (50)	- solitude (80)
- shopping centre (50)	- cat litter (60)
- swimming pools (40)	- cat cuddler (20)
- hot days (50)	- cross stitch (20)
- rushing (90)	- chicken noise (50) (50)
- pain (90)	- time with mum
- change (90)	- rug rolling (10)
- screens (50)	- miss Dani (20)
- sport (70)	- demolishing fence
- social events (80)	- things (90)
- busyness (50)	- Lego alone (50)
- appointments (70)	- noise-cancelling
	- headphones (30)
	- tactical play (50)





# Empowerment: identity and peer support



# Empowering the 'true' you

thank you for listening



Scottish  
autism



Scottish  
Forestry

Coilltearachd  
na h-Alba

# Empowerment

of autistic women and girls



Scottish  
autism

SWAN is a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation SCO46946

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