

## Our Voice Our Rights campaign win!



**#OurVoiceOurRights**  
Time to make rights a reality for autistic  
people and people with a learning disability.

**In the last edition we celebrated the launch of the *Our Voice Our Rights* campaign with partners ENABLE Scotland and Scottish Autism.**

The campaign called on the political parties to commit to a Commissioner for autistic people and people with a learning disability ahead of the Scottish Parliamentary Elections in May 2021.

We were delighted that nearly all political parties supported the concept in their manifestos, with the SNP committing to introduce the Commissioner as part of an Autism, Learning Disability and Neurodiversity Bill.

This was all thanks to autistic people and families campaigning alongside us so thank you!

Nearly 8,000 emails were sent to Nicola Sturgeon and the other party leaders from campaigners calling for a Commissioner to protect and promote rights.

In addition, we supported people to campaign on social media, organised hustling style Q&A events with MSPs, and worked with the BBC and STV to get the message out there in the media.

Broadcaster Stuart Cosgrove is the father of an autistic son and supported the campaign.

"This campaign is all about positive change. As a family we've been lucky in that Jack got his autism diagnosis early on as a child but, like all parents, I worry about what happens when he grows up and leaves school.

"I believe by and large Scotland has a caring culture but establishing a Commissioner at a national level with a legal obligation to look into the different aspects of public life would make a huge difference. It would help Scotland lead the way to creating a society that fully includes and values autistic people."

However, the campaigning doesn't stop there! We need to make sure

the Government makes good on their commitment and that we get a Commissioner that truly makes a difference, not something that is tokenistic.

We want to see a real champion who will ensure that rights are upheld and people get the support they are entitled to, whether that's in education, care or employment.

Keep an eye out for updates!



Broadcaster Stuart Cosgrove supported the campaign

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## FROM OUR EDITOR

Humans are social animals. We need contact with others to function mentally okay and exercise our brain cells. Exactly how much contact a person needs varies from person to person.

Autistic people can struggle to get this exercise, due to their sensory overload limiting their ability to learn social skills, while most children seem to pick these up through osmosis. That sensory overload also limits how we can socialise. Apart from libraries, I can't think of any other "normal" social space where one can meet without distractions drowning out what the other person is saying or doing.

Last year, many neurotypical people were forced to endure some time without social contact. For those who preferred to spend their days in front of a computer than dancing in a noisy club, quarantine was nothing. But can one endure lack of social contact for long periods of time?

Answer. We do make social contact. It's just we do it electronically instead. No distractions to overload our senses and clothing and make-up is optional, as you can control if they can see you. The internet has helped level the barriers to socialisation for the overwhelmed.

**Gordon Wallace**  
Editor



Gordon's illustration of socialising online

## NEUROSTAGES festival announced



We have been supporting our partners, National Theatre Scotland (NTS), on NEUROSTAGES – a hybrid online and in-person festival celebrating and exploring neurodiverse artistic practice with a host of exciting artists.

Streamed from the Centre for Contemporary Art in Glasgow on 15 and 16 October, tickets are now on sale on a pay-what-you-can basis at [www.nationaltheatrescotland.com/events/neurostages](http://www.nationaltheatrescotland.com/events/neurostages)

The festival will feature in-person and streamed performances, film, workshops and discussions from a host of exciting autistic and other neurodiverse artists.

NEUROSTAGES marks the final phase of Limitless, a collaboration between ourselves, Royal Conservatoire of Scotland and NTS that explores the best ways to involve autistic people in creative activities – as artists, audience members, and participants.

## Lizzy wins Outstanding Parent award!

Congratulations to Lizzy Barbour, Chair of our Largs Branch, who won the Outstanding Parent Award at the Scottish Parent Awards back in June! Lizzy went above and beyond to support families locally during the pandemic and even found time to work with Calmac ferries on a sensory pack and raise £800 for the branch through the Kiltwalk. Well done Lizzy!

# update

## FROM OUR DIRECTOR

Hello everyone and welcome to this edition of *News and Views*.

The last 18 months have been incredibly challenging for everyone and we as a charity are no exception. Despite the challenges of COVID and having to deliver many of our services online, we have managed to run the successful *Our Voice Our Rights* campaign (P1) and grow our support, reaching more autistic people and their families than ever before.

Hundreds of young autistic people are now getting support through our programme of social groups and the new Post-Diagnostic Support Service, both of which have received incredibly positive feedback. We've also launched NASplus+ Glasgow focused on teenagers and young people in Glasgow which complements other support in the city.

Also important to acknowledge is how tough things have been for many of our wonderful volunteers, particularly those who lead our network of 15 branches across Scotland. Many are parents of autistic children or autistic adults and I wanted to pay tribute to their dedication and the support they offer locally. Even just being there as a friendly face for a chat is more important than ever.

Sadly, this is my last update as I will be moving on to be the CEO of Support in Mind Scotland. I want to take this opportunity to thank our incredible staff, volunteers, campaigners and everyone involved.

I believe the future is bright for the charity and for autistic people and their families in Scotland and we should all be proud of our hard work.



**Nick Ward**

Director of National Autistic Society Scotland



# We've moved!

In August we moved our headquarters to the Clockwise building in Glasgow. Our new office is modern, more accessible and comfortable for staff and visitors. It will also better suit our needs moving forward as we look to work in a more agile way through a mix of home and office-based working. Clockwise offers us great flexibility to do this together with all the amenities and transport links that central Glasgow has to offer. It will also bring down our overheads, meaning we can focus more resources on working with and supporting autistic people and their families.

The full address is:

The National Autistic Society Scotland  
Clockwise, 7th Floor  
77 Renfrew Street  
Glasgow, G2 3BZ



Modern office space at Clockwise

# our news

## Celebrating our partnership with Harper Macleod LLP



In May we celebrated 15 years of invaluable partnership with legal firm Harper Macleod. Over that time our Education Rights Service has provided detailed casework support to nearly 300 families in Scotland while Harper Macleod have provided thousands of hours of pro bono legal advice and represented 43 families at tribunal. Speaking at the event, one parent said: "Whether you know it or not, you empower us parents with your knowledge. It's what keeps us fighting on to get the needs of children met".

If you have a question about support in school, get in touch with the team here:  
[www.autism.org.uk/educationrights](http://www.autism.org.uk/educationrights)

## Our work in Parliament

Following May's elections, we have been busy with our influencing work in the Scottish Parliament. We have met with a number of MSPs (both newly and re-elected), responded to new consultations, and engaged with the new Committees.

We have also sent out an updated *Understanding Autism* guide to all MSPs and hosted a successful online event for newly elected members. This gave MSPs a basic understanding of autism and how to support autistic constituents, as well as information on our charity and recent work. It also gave our autistic volunteers, Jasmine and David, the opportunity to tell the MSPs about their lived experience.

The Cross-Party Group (CPG) on Autism is also going from strength to strength. We support the CPG, a forum where MSPs from different parties meet with organisations and autistic people and families to hear about the latest developments. At the last meeting on 20 September, the group looked at the Scottish Government's proposals for a new National Care Service.

Get in touch if you'd be interested in attending CPG meetings at: [cpg.scotland@nas.org.uk](mailto:cpg.scotland@nas.org.uk)

## Olympic Gold at our Adult Services

People we support at our adult service in Catrine Bank in Ayrshire have been celebrating the recent Olympics and Paralympics by holding their very own sporting event, complete with a medal ceremony.

The Olympic Games involved lots of different activities including speedwalking, basketball, hurdling, football, shot put (with bean bags) and bowling.

There are 19 autistic adults at the service, all of whom have substantial needs and require 24-hour care and support from a team of dedicated care workers.

Our Head of Services, Peter Jung, said: "It has been a challenging 18 months for us all. This is especially true for the people we support, some of whom have only just started to see their families again following COVID-19 restrictions. It was great to see people we support and staff enjoying the Olympic games and getting those all-important gold medals."

Recently, we have transformed our education provision at nearby Daldorch House School into a service for autistic adults, complementing the existing support in nearby Catrine Bank.

Peter added: "Despite these tough times, we are excited about the future of our service in Catrine, not least with the transition of Daldorch House School into a service for autistic adults. This will enable us to better meet the needs of people we support now and into the future."



Conor with his gold medal

## Autism Support Ayrshire

From a team of one to a team of four! Our support in Ayrshire just keeps on growing. The summer months have seen us busy with enquiries, chats, online social groups, EarlyBird and parent/carer workshops and much more. In addition, the team will soon be delivering Social Navigation in the coming weeks to autistic young people aged 12-18.

If you live in Ayrshire, get in touch to find out more: [AyrshireOss@nas.org.uk](mailto:AyrshireOss@nas.org.uk)

## News from Highland

It was great to see our Highland Information Service recognised for a Highland Partnership Award alongside the Pines neurodevelopmental support team in Inverness.

Working in partnership allows us to offer more support to parents and professionals across Highland, where many people live a long way from traditional support services. Parents and carers can feel isolated at the best of times so being able to get advice, or just have a chat, can be a big help. Questions to the service cover a range of topics, from advice on mental wellbeing and behaviour, to details of local support groups and activities.



Our Highland Information Officer, Alison, with her award!

Recently Alison has also been working with the local Starbucks and Eastgate Centre in Inverness to help them give better support to autistic customers and allow for quieter visiting times.

Contact:  
[highland.informationofficer@nas.org.uk](mailto:highland.informationofficer@nas.org.uk)

## Supporting young people post diagnosis

Our free Post-Diagnostic Support Service, delivered together with several other organisations as part of Scottish Government's *Different Minds* campaign, launched in December 2020. We are delighted to say we've received further funding and it will continue to run until the end of March 2022.

The programme aims to empower young people to develop a sense of identity and belonging. At every session, participants discuss the topic of the day, then engage in a fun activity of their choice. Each programme runs for six weeks and covers: understanding autism, managing anxiety, social communication and confidence. We have 20 groups going and have received great feedback. The service is open to anyone living in Scotland aged 12-18 with a recent autism diagnosis.

## Moving Forward+

We've finally had the chance to meet in person some of our amazing volunteers who've been supporting us over the last year or so and treat them to pizza!

Nayab, Magda, Oi Hang, Lorna and Lynsey are all volunteering with us on the Moving Forward+ programme. The programme is focused on supporting disadvantaged young autistic people in parts of Glasgow to move towards positive destinations, whether that be education, volunteering or employment.

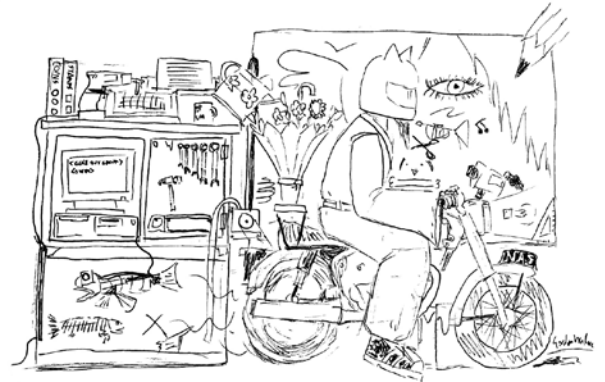
To find out more about the Moving Forward+ programme, which is funded by Cashback for Communities, visit our website.



Volunteers enjoying a pizza in Glasgow's Merchant City

## Social groups

Our online social groups continue to go from strength to strength with more than 200 autistic people being supported each week. We have a diverse range of groups covering lots of subjects including travel, quizzes, film and TV, gaming, LEGO, politics, general chat, craft and loads more. We have different groups covering different age ranges, genders and geographic areas so why not get in touch to find out more!



For more info on either Post-Diagnostic Support or social groups contact:  
[ScotlandSocialGroups@nas.org.uk](mailto:ScotlandSocialGroups@nas.org.uk)

## NASplus+ Glasgow launches!

Launched in September, this free 15-week social navigation programme is for teenagers and young adults in Glasgow. It aims to build confidence and develop social navigation skills and strategies.

Participants will meet online every week and get involved in fun activities created with shared interests in mind. Evening sessions are available, with groups covering different age ranges and interests.



Contact: [NASplusGlasgow@nas.org.uk](mailto:NASplusGlasgow@nas.org.uk)

## Kiltwalk success!

We've had some amazing fundraising efforts from folk both at the Virtual Kiltwalks and the in-person Glasgow Kiltwalk in September. Funds raised from the Kiltwalk get topped up by 50% from Sir Tom Hunter so it's a great way to see those pounds go further!

We were chuffed our friends at 'Melt the Fly' - the production team behind the film *Harmonic Spectrum* - donned their tartan and kiltwalked around Edinburgh, raising more than £1,300.



Melt the Fly team in Edinburgh

A special shout out to 19-year-old Olivia Robertson in the Borders who raised £1,000 as well. Olivia said: "I wanted to do this to give back to a charity that helps so many people just like me. Autism isn't a disability; it's a special ability and I want to speak the word so everyone

knows. We are just like other people, we just sometimes care a little more."

Thank you to all who kiltwalked and we hope to see lots more of you next year!



Olivia Robertson



Louisa outside Dunvegan Castle, Isle of Skye

## Meet the fundraiser

### Louisa Summer

I am an autistic adult in my 50s and I've supported the National Autistic Society for over five years, raising over £4,500 through cycle challenges.

I moved to Glasgow two years ago from Worcester and love living in Scotland. I was previously an active member of the Worcester Branch whom I am still in touch with.

Since moving to Scotland, I have been planning my latest fundraising challenge and am thrilled to finally complete it after delays due to the pandemic.

Castles and cycling are both passions of mine so I came up with the idea to combine them. I cycled all over Scotland visiting amazing castles and areas of historic interest. The challenge really pushed me to the limit - 300 miles over ten days - an average of 30 miles a day!

I decided to raise awareness, understanding and funds to help others like me who would struggle without the support and campaigning of the National Autistic Society.

Helping others and being involved with such a wonderful charity gives me a real purpose.

## Meet our staff



### JIM GARDINER

Support Worker at  
Catrine Bank Adult  
Services

#### Q: Who are you?

My name is Jim and I'm 70 years old. I love interacting with people, asking questions and constantly growing my knowledge. At the same time, I love sharing my ideas and experiences with others.

#### Q: How did you first get involved with us?

Back in 1999, Daldorch House School had just been established and was looking for support worker staff. I remember explaining in the interview I knew very little about autism but was keen and a good learner. I moved on to be a Curriculum Coordinator before changing to Adult Services.

#### Q: What does a regular day look like in your job?

My day-to-day activities centre around the needs of the person I'm supporting and vary a lot. Everyone has different vulnerabilities, meaning every day brings new challenges, but it also helps me to learn more about myself and the people around me.

#### Q: What do you enjoy about working for us?

I love my job and being a part of something larger that makes a difference. Everyone cares and you have flexibility when needed. Every day is different and I get to interact with such a variety of people which means I'm always learning. The fact I am still here, 22 years on, shows how much the job and the people mean to me.

#### Q: What do you do in your spare time?

I have a ton of hobbies including listening to music, baking and drawing. I also go to the gym with my son who is autistic - three times a week if possible. Being 70 I need to keep fit!

## 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 publications and 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.