

# News and Views

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

## Stepping into World Autism Awareness Week

**Councillor Susan Aitken, Leader of Glasgow City Council, marked World Autism Awareness Week by opening our Spectrum Night Walk in Glasgow City Centre.**

Our charity's sponsored walk took place in five locations across the UK, raising more than £138,000 in vital funds.

More than 90 passionate walkers took part in our Glasgow event, gathering at the city's Hallmark Hotel to see Councillor Aitken cut the ribbon and officially open the walk.

They then followed a route that passed the Gallery of Modern Art, the twinkling lights of Royal Exchange Square, the Clyde Arc, the iconic Finnieston Crane, and Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum.

Cllr Susan Aitken said, "Glasgow has taken great strides in recent years to become a more autism-friendly city, where everyone feels comfortable using the services and attractions that make it such a great place to be.

"I'm immensely proud, for example, that Glasgow Film Theatre was the first cinema in the UK to achieve the National Autistic Society Scotland's Autism Friendly Award, and that the autism-friendly facility

at Ibrox Stadium has set the standard for similar facilities at stadiums throughout the UK.

"From hotels through to transport hubs and shopping centres, agencies and businesses across this city are becoming more aware of the needs of autistic citizens.

"I hope more attractions and public places will make adjustments in order to become more accessible to autistic

people and ensure our city is one where everyone feels comfortable, included and welcomed."

Our research found that although 99.5% of people have heard of autism, just 16% of autistic people think it is understood in a meaningful way. We want to close the gap between awareness and understanding so that Scotland can become a more autism-friendly nation.



## CONTENTS

### PAGE 3

News about our meeting with the Deputy First Minister, and an update from our Director, Nick Ward.

### PAGE 4

Read about what's been happening at Catrine Bank and an update from our Media, Campaigns and Policy team.

### PAGE 5

Get to know Lyndsey, a volunteer at our Ayrshire One Stop Shop.

### PAGE 6

The latest from Daldorch House School, our social groups and fundraising news.

### PAGE 7

It's over to Karen Anderson for a poem about her autism diagnosis experience.

### PAGE 8

Get to know Craig Garden, our new Autism-Friendly Coordinator, and find out how you could join our team!

## FROM OUR EDITOR

Early in my teens I did the following...

A friend left a £1 coin on a table and asked everyone in the room not to touch it while he left the room. While he was away, I blew on the coin. Why? Because I was bored and thought it was amusing to do so and he had instructed everyone not to touch it. He didn't say anything about blowing on it.

Recently, I found a term that describes what I did - malicious compliance. It means to follow the instructions of a person in a way that it is accurate in its wording, but not in a way the instructor intended. There are a lot of stories about it online - from retail and catering staff dealing with difficult customers to people finding ways around trivial laws, rules and regulations.

It reminds me of how computer programs work. They follow their programmed instructions to the letter with unintended consequences, like a robot walking straight through a wall and into the next-door swimming pool.

Autistic people are like computers in this way. We can take commands literally to the letter. So, be careful how you word your commands.

**Gordon Wallace**  
Editor



Gordon's friend walking away from the coin

## WE MEET THE DEPUTY FIRST MINISTER

We met with the Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills, John Swinney MSP, for a roundtable discussion on the findings of our *Not Included, Not Engaged, Not Involved* report with Children in Scotland and Scottish Autism.

It was attended by around 30 representatives from Scottish Government and organisations including the General Teaching Council of Scotland, Educational Institute of Scotland and the Scottish Council of Deans of Education. These are the organisations that have the power to create change within the education system.

We're really pleased that, as a result of the meeting, Mr Swinney has set up a working group to investigate the need for autism training for teachers. This group will report back to Mr Swinney over summer.

We hope this will result in high quality autism training becoming mandatory for all teachers - we'll keep you posted!

*We meet the Deputy First Minister*



# update

## FROM OUR DIRECTOR

Hello and welcome to the summer edition of *News and Views*.

It's been a very busy and exciting few months for us here at the National Autistic Society Scotland. In March, we added to our team with the appointment of Peter Jung to the role of Head of Adult Services Scotland. You can read more about the wealth of experience and knowledge Peter brings to the role on page four.



We also had a number of events which took place to celebrate World Autism Awareness Week between 1 and 7 April. Did you take part in a bucket collection or see Glasgow's iconic landmarks in a new light during our Spectrum Night Walk? I was pleased to see so many of our wonderful volunteers and supporters from across Scotland come together and help us raise funds to create a society that works for autistic people.

We know that delays in autism assessment and diagnosis can be extremely traumatic for patients and their families. Find out about how our charity is working in partnership with the Scottish Conservatives to campaign on waiting time targets for autism assessment on page four.

In keeping with the theme of diagnosis, you'll find a poem by Karen Anderson which tells the story of her experience on page seven. I'm sure many autistic people will be able to relate to the feelings Karen has so wonderfully captured.

Finally, 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,

**Nick Ward**  
Director, the National Autistic Society Scotland

## NEWS FROM CATRINE BANK

By Hannah Barnett, Director of Adult Services

We are delighted to have recently appointed Peter Jung to the role of Head of Adult Services Scotland.

Peter brings more than 30 years' experience and knowledge of managing and developing person-centred care with him, and has worked for a number of organisations including, most recently, Turning Point Scotland.

He is a qualified learning disability and mental health nurse and is an active participant in the National Involvement Network, which is part of ARC (Association for Real Change) - a charity that advances knowledge, practice and policy in health and social care for the benefit of people with learning disabilities or other support needs - such as autism, mental health problems, sensory and physical disabilities.

Peter will lead and develop our adult social care services in Scotland and ensure they are of the highest quality. He will form part of our leadership team alongside Nick Ward, our Director, and Bernadette Casey, Principal of Daldorch House School.



Peter Jung



## Waiting time targets

We are working in partnership with the Scottish Conservatives to campaign on waiting time targets for autism assessment.

In partnership with our charity, the Scottish Conservatives have published a plan to improve the provision and availability of autism services in Scotland. The plan calls on Scottish Government to:

- introduce a national waiting time target of three months from referral to first appointment for autism assessment for children and adults
- record, publish and monitor autism diagnosis waiting times in every area
- introduce a national audit looking at the benefits of faster diagnosis.

We will keep you updated as this work progresses.

## Cross-Party Group on Autism: an update

The first meeting this year of the Cross-Party Group (CPG) on Autism took place at Scottish Parliament in February.

The role of a CPG is to bring together members of political parties and members of the public to discuss a topic.

Future meetings will explore the Scottish Strategy for Autism to find out what has worked well with the strategy, and areas where the strategy needs to improve.

The next four CPG meetings will examine one of the strategic outcomes of the strategy. These outcomes are: A Healthy Life, Choice and Control, Independence, and Active Citizenship. The next meeting will take place on 28 May.

To join the mailing list for the CPG please email [campaign.scotland@nas.org.uk](mailto:campaign.scotland@nas.org.uk).



## Lyndsey Williamson Ayrshire One Stop Shop volunteer

Interview and illustration  
by Gordon Wallace

### Q: **Who are you?**

My name is Lyndsey Williamson. I am 34 years old and I live in Galston. I am supported by the One Stop Shop in Ayrshire. The support I receive means I am able to enjoy a relatively fulfilling life. I live at home with my mum and dad. We work as a team to support each other. My mum, Jan, is my main carer and she is my best friend - she says I am her best friend too.

### Q: **Can you describe how being autistic affects you?**

I can suffer from violent seizures if my stress levels rise and I don't understand a lot which means my mum has to repeat details, conversations and instructions. Communication is also really difficult and I never really know what to say. I also like routine because it helps me know what to expect, and I don't go out much as noises, bright lighting, crowds and the unknown frighten me.

### Q: **What is it like volunteering at the Ayrshire One Stop Shop?**

I have been a volunteer for four years. It has made a huge difference to me and my family. I

feel a lot happier especially as I am among people who understand autism and allow me to be myself. I feel valued and challenged - it is a good feeling.

### Q: **I hear you are talented at design. Can you tell me more?**

I have always loved design and with the support of the Ayrshire One Stop Shop, I have been able to develop my skills to a professional

standard. Around 18 months ago I was successful in securing part-time employment as a Kitchen Assistant at Daldorch House School and I've also

become competent at crafting and designing products like cards, invites and table placements.

### Q: **Do you have any other hobbies?**

I really enjoy cross-stitching and started doing simple designs when I was 14 years old. I am now able to do the most amazing technical pictures. People often ask me to make cross-stitch cards for special occasions or to make bigger projects to frame. Making these helps to build my confidence and encourage interaction with other people which makes me happy.

**I feel valued and challenged - it is a good feeling.**

## 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, 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/volunteer](http://www.autism.org.uk/volunteer).

## News from Daldorch House School

By **Dionne Lamont, Team Leader**

We are excited to be nearing completion of our new house in the community, Park View.

It is situated in the small town of Mauchline, which is a short five-minute drive from our school in Ayrshire, and three of the young people we support will move into the property once it is complete.

Living in the house will help people we support develop skills for their future and prepare them for life after they leave our school.

We invited local residents and businesses along to an open evening to learn about autism, in order to help ensure our young people have a smooth transition into their new home.

Our young people met their new neighbours, and the Depute Provost of East Ayrshire, Claire Leitch, came along too. We are looking forward to watching them grow and develop at Park View.



## Graeme's dry January fundraising success



We're really proud of Graeme Neil, a receptionist at our Glasgow Office, who took part in Dry January and raised more than £250 for our charity.

The money raised will go towards supporting our network of social groups that help autistic people try new activities and have fun in a supportive environment.

Well done Graeme!

## Celebrating International Women's Day

In celebration of International Women's Day, our Girls Group held an exhibition on suffrage, citizenship, equality and feminism at our Glasgow office.

The group was inspired by the Woman's Freedom League, and decided on the slogan 'Brave to be Yourself' for a banner which formed the centrepiece of the exhibition.

The message was based on the idea that all women are different and should not be confined by gender stereotypes. A rainbow was incorporated to represent the autism spectrum.



If you would like to find out more about our social groups, please email [Sandra.buckley@nas.org.uk](mailto:Sandra.buckley@nas.org.uk) or call **0141 221 8090**.

## The Letter by Karen Anderson

It lies between us like an innocent, a paper like others but revealing our truth.

He plays on, oblivious of the changes the letter has wrought on our lives.

At five, his life is no longer his own, our home no longer just ours. We will 'welcome' many people, be forced to listen to their facts forming towers.

Our boy is the same as he was yesterday, but we are the ones who must change.

Our thoughts and dreams are gone now. A new land lies in their place. They tell us we can build new dreams, give us an essay about going to Holland.

Apparently knowing that someone has written about this will help.

There are no crumples in the letter although many exist in our lives together.

It is smooth save for two crisp folds - demarcation lines between past and future.

Will we survive this, will he thrive, or will we all just muddle on, failing?

You reach for the letter and read it again, but the words are already burned on my mind.

You're not sure what to say to move on from this moment in a positive way.

I need to know we will be able to keep strong inside through all that is coming.

I want to scream and shout, but we have known for some time the letter would be

The end of this journey and the start of our remodelled future despite it.

Then guilt comes from the relief; we realise we can say that it's not our fault.

Five years of apologies on his behalf, when we couldn't prove what was up.

Years of people pointing out what he couldn't do that other kids could;

Years of feeling the hot stares of pity from heads leaning to the left.

Nobody wanted to acknowledge the genius inside as the story they told

Was of deficits and lack; no strengths recorded for our boy yet.

How could they be so cruel to us? To fail us so surely, as if they tried

To make sure we were humbled and saintly to fit their narrative?

He is one in a hundred it says. A statistic that is supposed to help.

'Special' in every way it is meant, but that only means he will stand out.

We are not, and yet we must be even more special than our boy

Because his life must be lived in bold, not faded. He will thrive.

We cling to the hope of the future ahead and look at the beauty of now.

Our five-year-old shadow with anxiety fluttering in his eyes

Looks to us for certainty, which we are fighting to find for him.

Scared of how we will fail him and wondering who will harm us.

But, the letter means this - we have the diagnosis - autism.





## CRAIG GARDEN

### Autism-Friendly Coordinator

*Gordon's illustration  
of Craig*

#### Q: Who are you?

My name is Craig and I'm our charity's new Autism-Friendly Coordinator.

#### Q: What is an autism-friendly coordinator?

I support businesses and organisations to gain our Autism Friendly Award. Recently I have been working with a few theatres to suggest ways in which performances can be adapted to make them accessible for autistic people and their families. As part of my role, I also deliver autism awareness talks to help increase understanding to help create a society that works for autistic people.

#### Q: How did you get this position?

I have always been interested in raising autism awareness and increasing understanding. Before I took on this role, I worked as a support worker at the National Autistic Society Scotland's supported living service, Catrine Bank, in Ayrshire.

#### Q: Can you describe a typical day?

I have found that there is no such thing as a typical day in this role! For example, I can be in Glasgow one day helping a theatre to make their show autism-friendly, and the next I can be in Aberdeen delivering an autism awareness training session to a local business.

#### Q: What do you do to relax?

I love playing video games - I am a big fan of Elder Scrolls games. I also like to walk my dogs, run and watch horror films. Singing and playing the piano are also activities I enjoy.

## 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)

## 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.