



## New Resource Centre The Cedars opens on World Autism Awareness Day 2015!

World Autism Awareness day was extra special at Autism Initiatives this year, as we celebrated the opening of new Community Resource Centre, The Cedars. We were delighted that the launch was officiated by our Patron, Dame Lorna Muirhead - The Lord Lieutenant of Merseyside and Councillor Kevin Cluskey - the then Mayor of Sefton and his wife. Service users previously attending the old building in Seaforth moved across to the newly refurbished site in Bootle in February this year, with the official opening on 2nd April.

Staff and services celebrated a really successful transition between sites, with everyone enjoying the new facilities, including an amazing sensory room, outdoor gym and a superbly equipped kitchen and dining area.

Service users commented on the new site;

*"Quite nice, I like the computers, and laminating and printing"*  
Glynn

*"It's brilliant...and it'll suit the other service users better and there's lots of activities. We just need two goals and football in the garden. I'd like to start a five aside team."*  
Kevin

*"As we've moved building from Sandy Road to Bridle way I've got mixed feelings at the moment adjusting to the place...I like playing table tennis and going in the sensory room. I'm looking forward to the open day"*  
Chris

*"The things I like about the new building are that is so bright, as in colourful...There's plenty of rooms for us to go in and lots more recreation as in snooker, pool etc. The canteen is pleasant as it has a lot of light."*  
Alistair

Each of the 58 service users had an individual transition plan developed to ensure that the move to the new location would be as smooth as possible. Every plan took into account each person's level of understanding, their ability to think beyond the here and now, suitable methods of communication for that person and also sought to manage their expectations around the move.

Service users were directly consulted when it came to decisions about the new Centre such as purchasing equipment with each person's unique likes, dislikes, communication needs, sensory differences, aspirations and development opportunities were considered at each stage in the process.



## Mosaic unveiled!

The opening of the new Cedars Community Resource Centre also saw the unveiling of the fantastic mosaic, created by staff and service users to celebrate their move to the new site.

Service user Robin was closely involved and helped lead on the project with staff member Jo Griffin, from developing the initial ideas, creating a proposal, researching materials and ordering supplies. Once the project was ready to begin, service users were able to contribute as much or as little as they liked.



The final production process saw input from everyone at The Cedars – Jo, who leads the art class at the resource centre, tells us about the imagery used in the mosaic; 'The idea behind the final design was the sunset at the bottom of the piece that symbolised the old Cedar house and the sun at the top of the piece that symbolised the new resource centre. The whole project was so successful and so many service users got involved, some who don't usually access my art workshop so it was lovely!'

The mosaic itself is displayed in the reception area of The Cedars and was certainly a stunning attraction at the recent opening!



## Autism Initiatives DONATION REQUESTS

If you have any unwanted gifts, please consider donating these to Autism Initiatives so that these can be used for fundraising throughout our services. We are also looking for old mobile phone donations and of course any bikes for our MeCycle enterprise. Please contact Sue Murphy on **0151 330 9500** if you can help.

## A Message from Andrew Grainger CEO

Did you know that Autism Initiatives as a charity is governed by a Board of Trustees and that the majority of our trustees are parents whose children have autism?

Our Trustees are volunteers, and they hold a very responsible position, overseeing the activities of the organisation as well as safeguarding the mission and vision of the Charity.

We are looking towards growing our Board and are hoping to recruit people who will be passionate and enthusiastic about what we do and feel that they have something to offer to the governance of Autism Initiatives.

If you are interested in finding out more about governance and Autism Initiatives, please contact Annie Kevan on **0151 330 9500** or email on **annie.kevan@autisminitiatives.org**

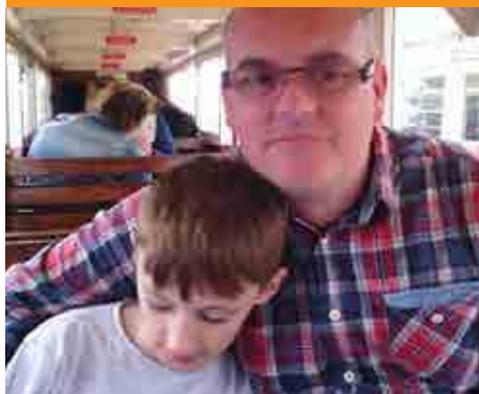


## Autism Initiatives Celebrates World Autism Awareness Day!

Staff and service users across the organisation celebrated World Autism Awareness Day 2015 in style, with unique fund raising and events to raise awareness.

## Dad Marks WAAD with Tattoo!

Glen Stafford, father of one of Peterhouse school's students decided to mark World Autism Awareness Day in a rather unusual way – by having a tattoo! Glen decided to have a tattoo on the back of his neck in the style of the Autism Ribbon. Glen hopes to raise some funds for Peterhouse for the fantastic work they do - if you would like to donate please contact Peterhouse School for further information. Glen has promised to show off his new addition soon!



## Pupils of Peterhouse School receive brand new Lord's Taverners minibus on World Autism Awareness Day!



On World Autism Awareness Day representatives from the Lord's Taverners presented the pupils of Peterhouse School with a brand new minibus.

The new 14-seat minibus from the Lord's Taverners, costing £48,000, will enable pupils to access a wide range of activities that cannot be provided at school, such as educational visits and sporting events. This will help extend their experiences and learning into the wider community.

The Lord's Taverners, the UK's leading youth cricket and disability sports charity, will donate over £3 million this year to help give disadvantaged and young people with disabilities a 'sporting chance' in life. The charity has put over 1,050 minibuses on the road since 1976, enabling over 20,000 young people with disabilities to enjoy new places and experiences every year.

Paul Robin, chief executive of the Lord's Taverners, said: *"The Lord's Taverners believes that sport and recreation are essential for all young people, regardless of ability or background. This minibus will help the Peterhouse pupils to get out and enjoy new places and experiences in Southport and beyond. We are proud to support the staff, parents and young people of Peterhouse School"*.

A huge thank you to the Lord's Taverners for their support to the pupils of Peterhouse School.



## We're Thinking Differently About Autism....Are You?

Northern Ireland thought differently about autism this World Autism Awareness Day with a fantastic social media campaign, by asking supporters to join in and share their thoughts on how you/or your organisation think differently about Autism. Staff and supporters were asked to fill in the blank 'Thinking Differently' poster, posting the image on Facebook and twitter. Support exceeded expectations - thanks to all who got involved!

#thinkingdifferently



## Autism: Life in Colour Returns for World Autism Awareness Day!

The Gallery on the Corner in Edinburgh hosted 2015's Autism: Life in Colour exhibition on World Autism Awareness Day on Thursday 2nd April. With funding from the Scottish Government, 'Autism: Life in Colour' is run by Autism Initiatives, with assistance from Autism Network Scotland. The starting point for every entry was the same, a pair of artworks from each participant to visually represent "The Best Thing about Today" and "The Worst Thing about Today". The project was open to anyone with autism living in Scotland and responds to a desire to understand what everyday life is like for people with autism of all ages, through their own eyes.



## Service user Kieron organises 80s Theme Night for World Autism Awareness Day

Last month, service user Kieron organised a 80s themed extravaganza in Edinburgh, raising over **£200** for AI.

Those who attended the event thoroughly enjoyed themselves and were certainly dressed for the occasion in their bright fluorescent colours dancing to the classics of Wham, Michael Jackson and Queen, to name a few!

Kieron said, "I think the night and this fundraiser has been an overwhelming success! Thank you to everyone that came along, as well as to those that helped me organise such a fun event".

A huge thank you to all of those who attended and to all the staff and DJ at the Shandon Pub for allowing Kieron to hold the event.

If this has inspired you to want to do something fun and creative to raise funds for Autism Initiatives then please contact [Holly.Child@aiscotland.org.uk](mailto:Holly.Child@aiscotland.org.uk) asap!



## Celebrations in Blackpool and Fleetwood!

Staff and service users from Autism Initiatives celebrated World Autism Day on 2nd April this year with some amazing celebrations. Fleetwood services including Collins Ave, All Hallows, Soroptomist and the Pottery Studio took part in a 'Wear Something Blue or Orange' for autism, enjoying coffee and cakes (all homemade!) and raising **£31** in the process.

The afternoon was very successful with a lovely atmosphere; family visitors were very complimentary about services and staff alike.

**Well done everyone!**



## Flags Fly for World Autism Awareness Day!

Staff and service users from Mere Brow Community Resource Centre attended the Autism Awareness Day at Preston's Flag Market on World Autism Awareness Day, hosting a stall with information for visitors interested in the support Autism Initiatives has to offer. Alongside 29 other autism information related stalls, the event looked to raise awareness of services available for people with autism. Staff met people with ASC and their families, with a great day being had by all. Everyone involved would like to give a big thank you to the organisers and to all the dedicated staff and services who came along on the day – looking forward to next year!



## Science Fiction Double Feature!

Another event in Scotland featured an evening of paranormal stand-up comedy in 'the most haunted pub in Edinburgh', featuring Des O'Gorman and Ross Hepburn – two quality shows back-to-back, and each comedian 'embracing the films of nostalgia, inspiration and devotion'. All proceeds went to Autism Initiatives and a great time was had by all!



## Scotland Celebrates!

Scotland marked World Autism Day with a variety of events, including a very special Edinburgh Reads - The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Nighttime Giant Book Group Event.

A panel of speakers, including Matthew Day from Autism Initiatives, discussed some of the challenges faced by people living with autism. A draw on the day also included two pairs of tickets to a performance of the stage version of the book kindly donated by The Festival Theatre. Cerin Richardson, from the Festival Theatre also shared some of what is involved in transforming 'the page to the stage.' Copies of books are available in libraries and there are limited numbers for book groups to reserve.

## A Great Little Experience! Work Experience Interview with Sean

Sean, a year 11 student at Peterhouse School, recently undertook a week of work experience as a Café Assistant at 'A Great Little Place to Go'.

Here is what he said about the experience!

### What jobs did you do?

'Well I did lots of different jobs to help out including drying dishes, giving cutlery to customers, serving food and drinks, cleaning inside the fridge, wiping tables .....

### What did you enjoy the most?

'I enjoyed serving food and drink best because you met lots of nice people. I like doing the jobs which kept me busy. It was like doing PE every day for a week!

### Was there anything you didn't enjoy?

'Washing the dishes as there seemed to be no end to them!

### What you have learnt about the world of work?

'It's a lot harder than it seems, and it gets harder as the day goes on! However, working as a team is brilliant and when you get the hang of it, it's easy!'

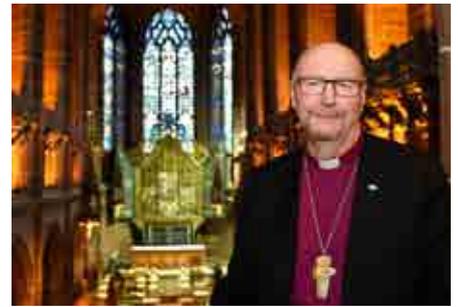
**Well done Sean!**



## New Bishop visits Peterhouse School

The Rt Rev Paul Bayes met staff and pupils at Peterhouse School recently during a visit to Southport ahead of his official installation as Bishop.

A spokesperson for the school said: "*Bishop Paul was keen to learn more about the school and what we do here and to observe Christians in the workplace. He was a lovely guy and very down to earth and it was wonderful to show him around the school.*"



Later on in the day, Bishop Paul visited Lakeside Christian Centre where he met volunteers working at the Southport Food Bank. Over 30 tons of food has been donated to the centre in its first 12 months.

Staff and students at our F.E. Resource Centre have recently organised a collection for Southport Food Bank. The Food Bank provides emergency support for people from all walks of life who are struggling in the current economic climate. The collection by students at the Further Education Resource Centre, part of Peterhouse School, was a great success.

### Taster Sessions!

This term, students from Peterhouse F.E Resource Centre will be attending Southport F.E College for a series of Taster Sessions. These cover a wide range of subjects such as Catering, Construction, Sports & Public Services, Art & Design, Hair & Beauty and Media & Games Design. Everyone's looking forward to trying out different areas of study!

## Duke of Edinburgh Award

Peterhouse are extremely proud of students Tom, Robbie and Oliver who have now received their Bronze Duke of Edinburgh Award certificates. The Duke of Edinburgh awards night took place at Peterhouse School in March and was a fantastic success!



## Food Enrichment Week and The Great Peterhouse Bake Off!

Peterhouse school held a Food Enrichment Week in February, giving pupils some great opportunities to take part in a wide range of food related activities, including the Great Peterhouse Bake-Off, a Master Chef Challenge, creating a recipe book and of course tasting lots of different foods! A delicious time was had by all!



## WeGrow Wildlife Development

Social enterprise WeGrow Co continues to expand with the development of its new wildlife garden. A new pond has been added as part of the garden's development, along with the building of a hibernaculum and two hedgehog houses. Tree planting continues following donations by the Woodland Trust. Various habitats are being created including bug houses and bird houses, and a new bee enclosure for our hives of Buckfast Bees. The garden will provide an educational wildlife trail. It will also support our natural vegetable growing in that it creates habitats for beneficial wildlife like frogs that eat slugs and pollinating insects.

WeGrow now also provides free range eggs with our new hens being a fantastic addition to the site!



## Poetry Publishing!

Service user Tim tells us about his wonderful poem, When I look at You, being published.



The origin of When I Look at You is a somewhat unremarkable tale. Sometimes I'll get an idea when I'm travelling on the bus, when I'm travelling on the train or when I'm just out and about walking an idea could just come to my mind and all I have to do is write it. Basically that's how this one came to me. It was a normal day. I had just been out and I was on my way back to the house.

There was this girl as there often is that had been an influence since day one. And then it was only a matter of writing the poem.

One day Kelly found something in the local paper regarding a poetry competition. There was a book that they were putting together. You could submit up to three short poems and if they liked one of them they would include it in their book. So I sent them three poems, one of which was When I Look at You. And now I have my published poem in a book that I can now show. And it is a poem that has served me well ever since.

*When I look at you*

*The world does not stop spinning*

*If anything, it speeds up*

*When I look at you*

*I can't think of a single song to sing, Because*

*they all come at once.*

*When I look at you*

*I see rainbows in my wine,*

*And it confuses my eyes.*

*Stars and butterflies intertwine*

Service user Sue has also written a wonderful poem all about her home town:

*St Helens*

*St Helens*

*A town*

*Red Brick Houses*

*People coming home,*

*A f\*\*\**

*goes up.*

*I laugh*

*I am home*

*We've got a meeting house.*

*It sits in Church St,*

*I go past on way home,*

*Church St, where people shop.*

*Having fun, going on ferris wheel.*

*Yes, St Helens,*

*I am home.*

## Visitors from Korea Join Autism Initiatives

In November last year we were contacted by an education consulting company based in Leeds, asking if we would host a visit for members of an association of social organisations from South Korea.

We were, of course, delighted to be asked and began planning for a group of 20 social workers working in an area called 'Kangwon' in South Korea.

The main purpose of their visit was to have an experience in social practices of the related organisations in UK and learn from their counterparts to help provide the local people where they work with better services when they go back to Korea.

Both Andy Grainger and Cairi Mackenzie gave insightful presentations with Cairi's power point presentation impressively translated into our visitor's mother tongue



## Sharing Good Practice in Central Lancashire ... and cake!

Staff and services users in the Blackpool and Fleetwood areas attended the Lancashire County Council Adult and Community Services Provider Celebration event 2015.

The event was opened by Steve Gross, the Executive Director of Adult Services, Health & Wellbeing, with the celebration taking place at the Gujarat Hindu Society Temple in Preston and now in its fourth year. The day is in recognition of the various groups and Social Care Providers, within Central Lancashire, who have achieved great success throughout the services they provide.

Activities through the day included a community choir and dance group, with providers able to visit other stalls to see what is available in the central Lancashire area. Providers were also asked to bake cakes for a completion to be judged on the day with the winning cake baked by our own All Hallows service users, winning some Waterstones vouchers. Well done everyone!



## Sefton Open Exhibition at the Atkinson Featuring Local Service User!

Service user Robin was delighted to be exhibiting at The Atkinson Gallery in Southport for their Sefton Open event. The Atkinson has hosted the Sefton Open Exhibition for a number of years and received a record number of submissions in 2014 with over 900 pieces entered. The exhibition gave visitors a chance to discover the wealth of artistic talent just in Sefton.

Exhibiting art work was one of Robin's goals last year and he certainly achieved this and has a lot to be proud of!



## Good News from our Head of Quality Assurance Yvonne O'Neill!

Great news to see some fantastically positive reports from the Care Quality Commission for some of our registered services. The CQC monitor, inspect and regulate services to make sure they meet fundamental standards of quality and safety.

Lethbridge Road in Southport received a glowing report in February this year, you can read some extracts from the report below;

We spoke with a visiting health care professional at the time of our inspection and another three professionals prior to our visit... *"They described a proactive service which identified any issues regarding people's health and ensured they received the right support and intervention. A nurse who visits told us, The staff and manager have good skills in terms of building relationships. They are able to support people with very complex care needs."*

*"We asked people who lived at the home how staff involved them in planning their care. Two of the people we spoke with told us they had regular meetings and were involved in planning their care..."*

*"We saw some relative and professional feedback survey forms provided to us by the manager. We also saw a collection of comments from visitors and relatives recorded on a 'compliments and suggestions record'. These were wholly positive and came from professional visitors and relatives of people living at the home."*

Barnsbury Road in Liverpool was visited in January this year, with the service graded good in all outcomes:

*"Relatives we spoke with worked with staff from the service to ensure information about people's preferences was understood and could be used to inform day to day decision making. Each of the three people using the service on the day of our visit had an advocate."*

One professional commented to us; *"The staff have done some amazing work over the years. I am very impressed by the quality of the care."*

We spoke with the person's social worker and they said; *"I am really impressed how the staff are helping turn his life around. It's also admirable that they have recruited staff members from his country of origin who can communicate with him in his first language and understand what he has been through."*

We received very positive comments about staff and the care that people received from relatives of people who had used the service. One person commented; *"They are a fantastic team"*. Another person we spoke with said; *"They have been incredible to us all, the whole family. I know we would be lost without them."*

**Well done to everyone at Lethbridge and Barnsbury for their hard work!**

## Daredevil supporter David Wilkinson completes epic skydive to raise funds for AI

Earlier this year, supporter David Wilkinson with his brother-in-law and another friend successfully completed their incredible challenge, raising over **£1,000** for AI!

This challenge is something that David has wanted to for a year or so. David told us that his nephew was his inspiration behind doing the skydive and he wanted to raise as much money as possible for Autism Initiatives' OSSME service, which supports his nephew and helps him to realise his potential.

With regards to the challenge itself, David said, *"The skydive was absolutely fantastic. I thought it was a great experience and I think everyone should try it! I'm delighted that Graeme, Mick and I have now raised over **£1,000** for Autism Initiatives"*.

If this has inspired you to want to undertake a once in a lifetime fundraising challenge contact **Holly.Child@aiscotland.org.uk** to find out what we have to offer!

## Cycle to Work Scheme Success!

Fundraiser Liz Thornber is proud to have been Autism Initiatives new Cycle to Work schemes very first customer. In partnership with the MeCycle social enterprise in Ainsdale, staff were offered a fantastic opportunity to save money on a brand new bike and spread the cost. Cycling to work helps everyone to stay fit and healthy, burns a lot of calories, and reduces the carbon footprint too.

*"Completing the Cycle to Work forms was really straight forward and it's saved me well over £100" says Liz. "MeCycle is a really friendly place – they took time to understand my needs and explain things clearly without jargon, making sure I got the right bike and accessories for me."*

*"My husband was so impressed with the service I received when his firm started a cycle to work scheme he was the first one through MeCycle's doors too. With MeCycle you even get a free check-up when you've had the bike a little while, I have my two year old on a special seat on mine and so that kind of peace of mind where safety is concerned is just brilliant."*

The cycle to work scheme encourages employees to cycle to work and allows employers to reap the benefits of a healthier workforce. If you would like more information on the scheme, check the website, or contact Jon Gordon **jon.gordon@autisminitiatives.org** - **http://www.cyclescheme.co.uk/getting-a-bike**



## National Citizen Service Supports Autism Initiative's

Under the expert guidance of Michaela Matthews and Peter Christian another great group of young people from Southport have been undertaking their National Citizen Service (NCS) Award. This great award scheme offers young people the opportunity of building upon their life skills and at the same time taking on new challenges and making new friends. The group had a cake sale and organised a sponsored cycle ride from Southport to our social enterprise in Ainsdale, MeCycle and raised over £700 for Peterhouse School – a big thank you from us!



## Johnson Group Cleaners Charity Helps Adults with Autism to Blossom

Autism Initiatives is delighted to have received £400 from the Johnson Group Cleaners Charity to support a project that helps adults with autism and additional learning difficulties develop skills and increase their self-esteem and confidence.

Blossomfields is an enterprising activity run by the Petersfield Community Resource Centre for adults with autism in Crosby, Liverpool. Petersfield currently supports 23 individuals with autism, all of whom have additional and complex care needs and many of whom require one to one support at all times.

Blossomfields began in 2011 with the aim of ensuring that the service users can achieve and flourish (as the name suggests). Blossomfields creates handmade soaps, bath bombs and jewellery, which are sold through community events, craft fairs and Autism Initiatives' offices. The small profits made go directly back to Petersfield, where the service users and their families are involved in choosing how it is spent. Thus far this has included a new TV for their lounge area, gaming system and games.

Yvonne Monaghan a Trustee of the Johnson Group Cleaners Charity said:  
*"We are delighted to be able to support the fantastic work undertaken by this Charity."*

Liz Thornber, Trust and Corporate Fundraiser for Autism Initiatives says, *"Some of those taking part in the Blossomfields project have already started to take more ownership of the jewellery design process, having input into the beads, colours and designs produced. The generous support of the Johnson Group Cleaners Charity will enable Blossomfields to upgrade equipment allowing for new designs and styles that require different techniques to be produced"*.

Blossomfields reputation in the local community for producing beautiful, low cost, handcrafted items is starting to grow and the project is delighted to have been given more opportunities to showcase its work in prestigious venues and through local retailers and events. This is a wonderful opportunity, not only for them to sell more products, but also to start to banish some of the myths that surround autism. The delicate beadwork and imaginative soap combinations demonstrate the creativity, imagination, skill, diligence and attention to detail of those involved with the project.



## Alex's Chinese New Year Facts

Chinese New Year was on February 19th this year; Alex from the Pottery Studio has all the facts!

- Chinese New Year is the longest and most important celebration in the Chinese calendar. It is a major 15-day celebration and public holiday.
- 2015 is Year of the Sheep.
- The Chinese year 4713 begins on 19th February 2015.
- Baby New Year symbolizes the birth of a new year.
- The Great Wall of China is so big it can actually be seen from space!
- Like Christmas, the Chinese New Year is a family festival. It starts on the eve of the New Year when Chinese families gather for an annual reunion dinner to mark the eve of the passing year with family.

Alex helped the celebrations for New Year at the Pottery Studio by dressing up as Grandpa Shifu Fortuna, an elderly Chinese man with a number 9 on his chest, and gave out fortune cookies.



## Sefton Area Social Group

Autism Initiatives Social Group, based at Head Office Liverpool, runs every Thursday (except the last Thursday of the Month) and is open to anyone with a learning disability or on the autism spectrum. At only £1 per week, the group runs some great activities including Bingo, quizzes, board games, bowling and sports nights.

Information on the social group is below:

Every Thursday except the last Thursday in the month

Cost £1.00 per week first week free

7pm – 9.30 pm meeting in the SGU building at Head Office Liverpool., moving onto the Nags Head 8.30-9.30pm

Parents are welcome to stay and socialise.

For more information, please contact Jan Balcombe [Janet.Balcombe@autisminitiatives.org](mailto:Janet.Balcombe@autisminitiatives.org)



## Kaleidoscope – Trip to the Boxing Gym is a Knockout!

As part of our commitment to providing new opportunities and experiences for our service users we arranged for everyone from Kaleidoscope Resource Centre in Liverpool to visit the Rotunda boxing gym.

Rotunda ABC is one of the most revered amateur boxing clubs in Great Britain. The club facilities are fully DDA compliant with excellent facilities for all abilities, age, gender and disability. The gym is one of the City of Liverpool Landmark Centre projects. Rotunda Boxing Club in Merseyside has been providing fun alternative activities for service users at Kaleidoscope, since 2012.

Rotunda Head Coach Mick McAllister said: *“We welcome all visitors to our gym during the day and do our best to include them to take part in activities in a very safe environment. The visitors from Kaleidoscope really enjoyed putting their gloves on and having fun on the bags. They also had a go on the bikes. It’s a great way to keep fit and be healthy and happy. Our doors will always be open to Kaleidoscope.”*

The visit was hosted by gym manager John, making everyone feel really welcome, with a tour of the gym and invites to try the equipment. Service users Katie and Gareth ventured into the boxing ring and were happy to pose for photographs

Joe Lawrenson, a support worker for Kaleidoscope, said: *“The service users at Kaleidoscope got involved in a variety of activities and have shown an interest in boxing. They enjoy exercise and getting out and about. The Rotunda is a great gym with a friendly staff that made us all very welcome.”*

The visitors had an opportunity to meet and pose for photos with local celebrity boxing brothers Liam, Callum and Paul Smith, as well as Jamie Carragher who trains at the gym.

Louis Loannou, Rotunda Club Treasurer said: *“When our visitors arrived they couldn’t wait to have a go on the bags and bikes. Kaleidoscope support worker, Joe Lawrenson, was absolutely brilliant with the service users as he showed them around the gym. Rotunda has a membership which respects and welcomes everyone, and Kaleidoscope is a great group of people who will always be welcome at the gym. It was a brilliant day, lots of fun and a great learning experience for everyone involved.”*

A big thank you to all at the Rotunda Club for their kind efforts and staff member Joe Lawrenson for organising the trip.



## Outreach Education Support at Autism Initiatives

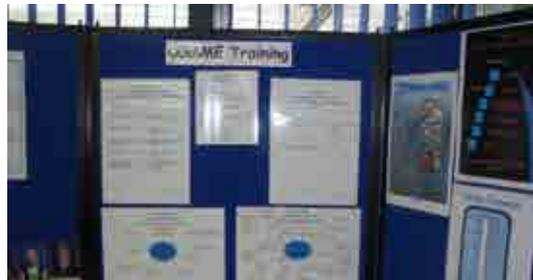
Autism Initiatives Outreach Support Service to Mainstream Education (OSSME) provides a unique service delivery system, which acts as a support framework for children and young people with Autism Spectrum Condition, their families, carers and the staff within the educational, work and other settings. OSSME’s innovative work is recognised locally, nationally and internationally. It’s work is characterised by highlighting good practice already in evidence; recommending, demonstrating and modelling practical strategies; engineering individualised resources; and offering various models of training.

OSSME continue to support over 200 children and young people with autism spectrum condition, their families and other professionals within an educational environment.

OSSME recently delivered ASC communication, sensory and puberty awareness training for parents. The training was well received with parents engaging in conversation with each other about their experiences with their children and seeking guidance regarding strategies from OSSME. Added to this, OSSME invited a guest speaker, a young man with ASC whom OSSME have supported previously, to speak to parents. This was received particularly well with the parents who enjoyed the opportunity to ask him questions about his experiences in school and at home.

OSSME is in the process of delivering a Parent Project in Birkdale to families whose children are not currently supported by Autism Initiatives. The project has aims to bring together families who have felt isolated and disempowered. Feedback so far has been very positive and they are enjoying sharing and learning new information which is enabling them to build upon their understanding of their children. The funding to deliver this project been raised by fundraisers who are families with young people with ASC. OSSME hope to offer a similar project in Southport and Netherton in the near future.

For more information, contact OSSME on **0151 924 5656**



## Helen wins Dressage Award!

Service user Helen currently attends Mere Brow Resource Centre, and has recently received her first award in Dressage at Beconsall Stables. Everyone is extremely proud of this fantastic achievement – next step the Olympics!



## Children in Need Fundraiser

Service user John turned into Superman to fund raise for Children in Need. John visited staff and services as part of his sponsored silence.

**Well done John!**



## Lothian Buses Employees' Charity Fund Supports No.6 One Stop Shop!



Scotland

Autism Initiatives are delighted to have received a donation of £600 from the Lothian Buses Employees' Charity Fund to support the vital work of its No.6 One Stop Shop, which provides support to young people and adults with high functioning autism and Asperger syndrome in Edinburgh.

The donation will help to fund No.6 social activities, build peer support networks and engage positively with the wider community in Edinburgh.

Matthew Day, Service Coordinator for No.6 said: *"The continued support from the Lothian Buses Employees' Charity Fund means so much to everyone here at No.6. We have to raise all the funds needed to provide this vital service to young people and adults with autism and without these kind of donations we simply couldn't support the hundreds of people who come to No.6 each year".*

Since it first opened its doors in 2005, No.6 has supported over 1,200 people with autism and their families and more than 500 people have used the service in the last year alone. Amongst many other things, No.6 provides vital support and training to those newly diagnosed; helps people develop essential skills for life and provides personal advice on housing, employment and benefits.

Autism Initiatives would like to thank Lothian Buses Employees' Charity Fund for this generous donation and their continued support to No 6.

## Race Night Fundraiser!

Our service in the Scottish Borders held a very successful race night fundraiser raising over **£800!**

The night was thoroughly enjoyed by all those who attended and the homemade stovies in the interval were a huge hit, particularly with the locals!

The staff team organised this event to raise further funds to buy more equipment to expand their sensory garden for service users.

Jamie Hind, Acting Team Leader for the Scottish Borders service, said *"We are delighted the event was such a success and that we are able to purchase even more equipment for our sensory garden. Our service users will be thrilled".*



## Giving Tuesday Success!

Staff celebrated #Giving Tuesday back in December with GivingTuesday's #UNselfie campaign.

After the sales of Black Friday and the online shopping boom on Cyber Monday, #GivingTuesday provides an opportunity to come together to show the world why it's good to give. The simple idea behind #GivingTuesday is to encourage people, charities and businesses to donate time, money or their voice to help a good cause.

All staff were asked to undertake the #UNselfie challenge, by taking a selfie with a piece of paper or card in front of you explaining why you are supporting Autism Initiatives (usually covering your face, but you can do this as creatively as you like).

The event was a great success and we look forward to taking part again next year!



## Gallery On the Corner News

The Gallery on the Corner in Edinburgh has hosted a number of successful exhibitions recently, showcasing different artists and styles.

Whale Arts Agency, a community arts organisation based in Wester Hailes in Edinburgh, recently presented an exhibition by smART CRAFT called Creative Release. For the members of smART CRAFT art is a special way of communicating, running as a fully inclusive group for adults with mental health issues, learning disabilities or complex or additional support needs, led by a professional artist. This small, yet thought provoking exhibition showed some beautiful items including acrylics, stunning clay tiles and even a pom pom rug.

## Garvald Edinburgh

April's exhibitions included After the War, a multi-media show by artists from Garvald Edinburgh. Garvald Edinburgh is a Scottish Charity offering creative opportunities and support for people with learning disabilities, operating in Edinburgh since 1969. This new exhibition featured the work of Garvald artists on paper, glass and clay, inspired by post-war popular culture



## Supporter Vishal Sahni takes on ultimate challenge of a lifetime to raise funds for AI!

Supporter Vishal Sahni, battled through the pain to successfully complete the London to Paris Cycle, raising over **£700** for AI!

Starting in the heart of London, Vishal, with around 100 other cyclists, took 5 days to make this incredible journey travelling initially to Calais and then along to Abbeville and Beauvais before finishing at the Eiffel Tower in Paris.



# Scotland

## Perth One Stop Shop holds popular fundraising quiz night for second year running, raising over £450!

Earlier this month, our Perth One Stop Shop (after popular demand) held its fundraising quiz night for a second year running!

Staff, service users, family, friends and supporters all packed into a very lively Kinnoull Bowling Club to put their knowledge to the test for a gruelling 7 rounds, followed by a raffle.

All those who attended thoroughly enjoyed themselves with over £450 being made from the event.

Jill Murdoch, Perth One Stop Shop Manager, said, "I know a great night was had by all and we are delighted with how much has been raised. A huge thank you to everyone at Kinnoull Bowling club for allowing us to run this event for a second consecutive year!"

If this has inspired you to want to undertake a fun community event then please contact our Community Fundraiser & PR Officer to see what you could get involved in!

[holly.child@aiscotland.org.uk](mailto:holly.child@aiscotland.org.uk)



## Number 6 service user, Ra, uses his incredible talent to create charity calendar!

Through the vision, hard work and dedication of one of our service users we are pleased to bring you the Number 6 2015 wall calendar. The concept, design and art work used in the calendar was developed and produced by Ra using his own hand drawn art work. All the art work included in the calendar originates from the strict use of straight lines only, a technique that Ra studied and mastered in the foothills of the Himalayas.

We have a limited stock of just 100 of these prestigious calendars, priced at £4.50, so don't delay, contact a member of staff at Number 6 (**0131 220 1075**) and reserve your Number 6 2015 wall calendar today.

All proceeds from the sale of the calendars will go directly to Number 6, which will help the service to fund part of their summer activities in 2015.



## Big thanks to Demys!

AI has a cracking start to the New Year after receiving a generous £500 donation from Demys Limited!

The donation is specifically for our Number 6 One Stop Service in Edinburgh and the funds will be used towards offering more activity and social days for service users.

Andrew Lothian (CEO, Demy's Limited) explains why the company wanted to support the Number 6 One Stop Shop: "We were delighted to make a contribution to Number 6 One Stop Shop as the work they do is invaluable to adults with High Functioning Autism (HFA) or Asperger Syndrome (AS). Available support can often peter out once a child reaches the age of 16 making this service of vital and significant importance".

A huge thank you to Andrew and all of the staff at Demy's Limited for their generous donation, which will enable staff at the Number 6 One Stop Shop to offer more activity days for service users.



## Edinburgh Night Ride Places Available!

Fancy doing something a little different to raise funds for Autism Initiatives this year that will also help you to get fit? Well, we have just the thing for you!

By taking part in the Edinburgh Night Ride you can see the nooks and crannies of Edinburgh like never before during this magical moonlit cycle ride of Scotland's capital. The ride takes place 20/21 June 2015.

For more information and to book your place today contact [Holly.Child@aiscotland.org.uk](mailto:Holly.Child@aiscotland.org.uk) now!



## Bank of Scotland Community Fund: Thank You For Your Votes!!

Our Number 6 One Stop Shop in Scotland was recently awarded a fantastic **£3,000** from the Bank of Scotland Community Fund. The Community Fund champions good causes with grants of up to **£3,000**.

Number 6 supports local people aged 16 and over who have autism. We provide them with social groups, activities, support sessions and respite breaks. Without this vital service, many could become isolated resulting in poorer mental health. The award will enable us to offer more much-needed respite trips.

In each community across Scotland votes were cast for the four good causes online by Twitter, SMS and in our branches. An amazing number of votes were cast for Autism Initiatives – thank you everyone!

 **BANK OF SCOTLAND** In Your Community

## Autism Initiatives receives £6,000 to deliver its Late Diagnosis Group Programme to remote areas in Scotland!

The Autism Professionals Awards are the only cross-discipline awards to recognise professionals. The Scottish Government has awarded Autism Initiatives £6,000 to deliver the LDG programme to people who are in hard-to-reach areas due to geographic isolation.

The Late Diagnosis Group (LDG) programme has been developed over recent years at Number 6 and more recently delivered through our other One Stop Shops in Highland and Perth. It's a 10 week, 2 hour programme, which supports small groups of adults who have been recently diagnosed with autism to learn about the condition and reflect on what the diagnosis means for them. Six people per programme will be given remote access to a LDG programme via a laptop and Skype or video conferencing.

National Director for Scotland, Richard Ibbotson, said, *"This programme can be accessed from any of the remote parts of Scotland where Autism Initiatives is working, including some of the most geographically isolated areas of the Scottish Borders, Perthshire and Highland Council areas. It is a small project, but an important one, as we recognise the additional challenge of living with autism at a distance from any support or advice service"*.

## Jeni Gets a Trim for AI

Highland One Stop Shop staff member, Jeni Miller, did a sponsored hair cut last month for World Autism Awareness day, raising nearly £300 for the service.

Just prior to World Autism Awareness Day, Jeni took the plunge and went into Ego Hair Design and allowed hairdresser Craig to take 28 inches off her hair!

Jeni said, *"I have been growing my hair for several years and decided that I wanted to get it cut to raise awareness of Autism Spectrum Conditions for World Autism Awareness Day, as well as to raise money for Autism Initiatives' Highland One Stop Shop in celebration of its 2nd year anniversary. By doing this I have also supported The Little Princess Trust as 1 or more wigs will be made using my hair for children who have lost their own hair through illnesses like cancer"*. If you would like to donate to Jeni's page you can still do so here.



A huge thank you to Jeni for undertaking such a fantastic sponsored event to raise money for the Highland One Stop Shop and to Ego Hair Design, Inverness, for not only allowing Jeni to do this, but for their extremely generous donation as well!

## Parent, Linda Archibald, raises incredible £1,050 for our Hermitage Garden service!

This February, parent Linda Archibald, held a very successful band night at her local bowling club, raising a staggering £1,050 for our Hermitage Garden service!

As well as a live band playing late into the night, there was also a raffle and a throwing coins into the bottle activity so it is fair to say much fun was had by all.

Linda Archibald, who organised the event to raise money for the service her son uses, said, *"This event was a fantastic success and I know that all those who attended thoroughly enjoyed themselves. I am overwhelmed by everyone's generosity and I am delighted that we have raised so much for the Hermitage Garden service. A huge thank you to all those involved and who attended the evening"*.

If Linda's success has inspired you to want to get involved in some fundraising for Autism Initiatives then please contact our Community Fundraiser and PR Officer Holly Child asap on [Holly.Child@autisminitiatives.org](mailto:Holly.Child@autisminitiatives.org).



## Further funding secured with Second Hand Ltd!

We are delighted to announce that Autism Initiatives will be supported by Second Hand LTD for yet another year!

Second-Hand Ltd is a sociable, fast developing and innovative family run textile recycling company, based in Scotland, devoted to increasing recycling rates for the environment we all live in by raising funds for our friends, partners and helping families in need

Last year, the company raised a staggering £12,000 on our behalf from all of your generous clothing donations.

We hope to raise at least the same for this forthcoming year, so please let us know if you receive a bag through your door and we would be extremely grateful for any clothes you can donate - thank you!

<http://www.second-hand-ltd.co.uk/>



## Asha's Autism Assistance Dog Fundraiser!

Parents, family and friends of a Peterhouse student have started fundraising for an Autism Assistance Dog to support pupil Asha, from Service Dogs Europe. These dogs have proven to be hugely beneficial to young people with autism.

Each service dog is fully certified, trained to the highest standard and receives highly skilled one to one training to help with the very specific needs of the child or adult handler.

Service Dogs Europe, Autism Service Dog Program focuses on improving the quality of life for families of children/adults living with Autism. These highly skilled Autism Service Dogs offer families three key advantages – safety, comfort and inclusion.

Please follow the link below to find out more, or to make a donation towards this great cause!

<https://www.facebook.com/AAADFUNDRAISER>



## Teen Girl Health Awareness Programme

The Teen Girl Health Awareness Programme continues to go from strength to strength in Northern Ireland, with new programmes starting, combining yoga sessions, drama, health and beauty and social outings in an informal setting and providing the opportunity to ask questions around being a healthy teenager.

For More information please contact Pauline Graham on [register@ai-ni.co.uk](mailto:register@ai-ni.co.uk)



**Autism Initiatives Northern Ireland**  
*not just the label, unique individual, positive outcomes.*

**Teen Girl Health Awareness Programme**  
 Starting Wed 4th February (8 Weeks)  
 6:45pm - 8:30pm

We are offering teenage girls aged 13 - 17 yrs and a selection of 15 places. For more information or to register please contact Pauline Graham on 07423 454127 / 02890 699130. The programme includes health awareness, self-esteem, drama, yoga, health and beauty, social outings, and more. Contact Pauline on [register@ai-ni.co.uk](mailto:register@ai-ni.co.uk) or 07423 454127 / 02890 699130. \*Registration Essential - 1st & 2nd Feb 2015. Contact: Pauline Graham, Health and Social Care Team, Belfast Health and Social Care Trust. Sessions held at ARI Community Services, Revival Road, Newtownards, Belfast.

## Autism Initiatives NI Working in Partnership with Rainbow Project

Autism Initiatives hosted a consultation evening with the Rainbow Project and the NOW Group to discuss the need for Autism Specific Support services for people who identify as LGBT and exploring their sexual orientation or gender identity. The evening was held in a new community space called 'The Hive' which is run by The Now Group and offered a relaxed space enabling everyone to discuss this issue as it relates specifically to them.

The evening was well attended and the group agreed to meet again several weeks later and included plans to run a similar consultation in our One Stop Shop – Derry in May 2015.

## Autism Initiatives Walking Group

The Autism Initiatives NI Walking Group, set up last November, is going from Strength to Strength! The plan was to set up a service user / volunteer led group which would be supported by Autism Initiatives, aimed at promoting community inclusion and encouraging Healthy Lifestyles. The Walking Group has so been to far to Belfast, Bangor, Delamont and Castlewellan.

Volunteer, Henry Bowman, describes how he got involved "I saw the advertisement for Volunteers and thought it would be an interesting thing to do, so I completed the registration forms and went along to meet Brian and Pauline. The process was straightforward and it has been loads of fun so far. Being a keen walker myself and with a diagnosis of Asperger's, I thought that the Walking Group created an excellent opportunity to meet others with an ASC and also to encourage others to enjoy an activity which has given me such pleasure."



Health and Activities Coordinator, Pauline Graham, says "Henry has been a wonderful asset to Autism Initiatives and the Walking Group would not be possible without him. We helped facilitate Walk Group Leader Training and Henry was also able to complete Autism Initiatives online training which has all helped to allow the group to run safely and professionally. The Walking Group develops community involvement and creates an opportunity for friendships to grow."

The Walking Group runs one walk per month and these take place in many of Northern Ireland's most scenic and beautiful walking routes. Registration is essential and if interested can email [register@ai-ni.co.uk](mailto:register@ai-ni.co.uk) or Tel: **02890 699130**.

## Surfs Up!

We continue to develop Northern Ireland's first Autism Specific Surf Programme in collaboration with the world famous Alive Surf School. The innovative Surfing Programme, which was the first autism specific programme in Northern Ireland, is now in its third year and has so far provided more than 70 surf class places, which run across six to eight week sessions.

Health and Activity Coordinator, Pauline Graham, said: "When we ran our pilot programme three years ago we were excited about the possibilities around a surfing programme. Surfing allows the participants to enjoy physical activity and social interactivity in the unique environment of the beautiful North Coast."

For more information on upcoming sessions please contact Pauline Graham:

[register@ai-ni.co.uk](mailto:register@ai-ni.co.uk) or Tel: **02890 699130 / 07423 454127**. All participants must have a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC) and must be able to swim 25 metres unaided.

Location: West Strand Beach, Portrush **\*\*Own Transport Required\*\***



## Volunteer Gardeners Wanted!

Autism Initiatives Northern Ireland is committed to supporting and developing a volunteer network. The organisation does not exist to provide volunteering opportunities for their own sake but rather volunteer participation is valued because it helps the organisation to accomplish its mission in the most cost effective and engaging manner.

We are recruiting volunteer gardeners for our community garden in Newcastle, Co.Down. An opportunity to share your love of gardening and knowledge with others and be involved with an innovative gardening

project supporting young people & adults with Autism Spectrum Condition. For further details & Registration Form please contact [Alexa Brown](mailto:alexa@ai-ni.co.uk) to register any interest in any of these opportunities. [alexa@ai-ni.co.uk](mailto:alexa@ai-ni.co.uk)

So if you are interested in giving up some of your time to aid AI NI in providing a quality service to young individuals with autism or if you want to develop your current knowledge and experience in the Health and Social Care field volunteer with us.

## Award Winning Balanceability - Learn to Cycle Scheme 2015

Autism Initiatives NI have continued to develop Northern Ireland's first ever autism specific 'Learn to Cycle' programme. The programme recently won the prestigious World Health Organisation Healthy Cities Award and continues to develop around Northern Ireland with more than 150 participants taking part in 2014.

Joan Devlin, Chief Executive of Belfast Healthy Cities, said they were delighted with the standard of award entries - *"It is important to acknowledge the work being done across Belfast to facilitate and promote wellbeing especially among groups of people who can feel excluded. These awards offer an encouragement to organisations and we are very pleased with the level of response we have had over the last two years."*

National Director, Gráinne Close says *"We are delighted to have received this award and it clearly demonstrates how important initiatives like these are to the community. Learn to Cycle Balanceability has helped teach lots of young people a life skill, tackling fundamental skills such as balance and coordination which many young people with an ASC struggle with."*

Health & Activity Coordinator, Pauline Graham, explains *"Our Balanceability programmes have focused on increasing physical activity, social inclusion & mental well-being. Children with a diagnosis of an ASC can have difficulty with balance and coordination and this programme helps develop these skills on and off the bike. This inspires confidence and provides the skills to achieve an important developmental milestone of childhood."*

Siobhan Slavin, ASC Coordinator for the South Eastern HSCT says, *"Individuals and their families affected by ASC can miss out on activities which other families take for granted. Helping to support the delivery of this 'Learn to Cycle' programme has been really worthwhile. The progression for all the children has been wonderful to see, the health benefits as well as the individual confidence building, is something we always try to promote."*

The response from families affected by an ASC has been fantastic and we will be delivering more Learn to Cycle Balanceability courses throughout 2015. For more information visit the website or email [register@ai-ni.co.uk](mailto:register@ai-ni.co.uk)



## Marie-Therese Fitzpatrick Runs The London Marathon!

Marie-Therese says *"It's often the little things in life that matter the most. Take riding a bike. Most parents take it for granted that they can teach their child to cycle. But what if your child is on the autistic spectrum? That challenge becomes far greater. For those with an ASC diagnosis, learning to cycle a bike will involve overcoming balance, sensory and coordination difficulties and it requires patient and expert instruction."*

*"Autism Initiatives N.I. runs Balanceability - Learn to Cycle programme to teach children with ASC to cycle. This is just one of the great courses it runs. The Surf Programme is another popular course which gives older children the chance to try out surfing. Not only are the kids being taught a new sport but they are learning to socialise in a safe and secure environment. This is so important for children who find themselves marginalised from mainstream sports. Autism Initiatives NI offers much more to families in Northern Ireland, including education, social enterprise, outreach services, supported and residential living but sometimes it's the little things in life that make the biggest difference.... like riding a bike."*

We would like to thank Marie Therese for helping to support our Health and Activities programmes and running the London Marathon! You can still sponsor Marie Therese on [www.justgiving.com/mt-fitzpatrick/](http://www.justgiving.com/mt-fitzpatrick/)



## Autism Initiatives NI launch Sports Booker!

Autism Initiatives NI have launched an online booking system which is made available to everyone who wishes to register their interest or participation in upcoming activities.

The system is easy to use and simply requires people to select the activity they are interested in, complete some personal details and if required make payment. The person automatically receives booking confirmation via email and also a quick reminder a couple of days prior to the event. After a successful test the system went live in March 2015 for participants in the cycling courses. The registration process has been entirely automated which has drastically reduced the administration time previously spent on registering participants for events / activities.

<https://aini.sports-booker.com/>

Book Online! **SPORTS BOOKER**  
[www.aini.sports-booker.com](http://www.aini.sports-booker.com)

## Better Together Video Competition

The Better Together Video Competition provides a platform for Irish charities, community groups, clubs and associations to showcase the work that they do; connect with members of the public; gain new supporters, fundraise and potentially win some great prizes

Autism Spectrum Disorder Initiatives (ASDI) provides autism-specific services to adults in the Republic of Ireland. Based in Co. Wicklow on the east coast of the country, ASDI provides residential, respite, training centres and community services to adults with a primary diagnosis of autism in the counties of Wicklow and Dublin.

ASDI has been developing a sensory garden for students, in order to provide a variety of multi-sensory experiences; with sensory planting beds, water features, tactile spaces and relaxation areas. To support this, Dublin Horizons entered the Better Together Video Competition to raise awareness for Autism Initiatives and ASC and to raise funds for the sensory garden project. The video was shortlisted in the top ten for ASDI's category, you can watch the video here - Thanks to everyone who voted for us!

<http://www.bettertogether.ie/video/autism-initiatives-group>



## Dublin Horizons News

In August 2013, ASDI opened a new training centre in Dublin, The Horizons, providing our students with a new day service facility. Within the training centre we create a unique approach for each individual person to enable them to have ownership of their own lives and future. This is through working in partnership with people with autism their families and careers and providing them with a service that is professional and innovative. The services provided by Autism Initiatives are significantly different from those provided by generic learning disability and mental health services in that our services are underpinned by a clear understanding of good autism practice, and a person centred approach to understanding the unique needs an individual may have in relation to their autism.

The development of the sensory garden at Dublin Horizons has meant some hard work by both staff and service users alike! The space, once complete, will provide a variety of multi-sensory experiences; with sensory planting beds, water features, tactile spaces and relaxation areas all planned. The project has been developing in several phases, with fundraising to buy equipment and receiving a donation from the Tesco Community fund

Work started on clearing out the over grown bushes and brambles, digging up the weeds and trimming trees. The patio area has begun to take shape, along with some lovely planting around the garden.

### Trips out

We are often seen in Stillorgan Leisureplex bowling on some of our may trips out. We also love going to the wax museum (see picture below) and posing with the figures or standing in front of the green screen to become our own band.

### Events in Dublin Horizons

When we can't go out on our fun trips we also love to stay in and watch a movie on our very own projector and screen, feels like you are at the movies with all the comforts of being in Dublin Horizons.



## Autism Initiatives Welcomes New Head of Service in Wales!

Autism Initiatives would like to extend a very warm welcome to Diane Hesketh, who has joined us as Head of Service in Wales. Diane says:

*"Hello, my name is Diane Hesketh. I am looking forward to helping to further the development of innovative, responsive, quality specialist autism services within Wales with the support of an amazing team... which is growing!*

*My previous experience within both the statutory and third sector has encompassed commissioning and contracts; community development;*

*managing various tackling poverty programmes; and proactive community engagement - all underpinned by extensive partnership working. I look forward to our paths crossing and learning from all the good practice that is currently taking place within Autism Initiatives."*



## The Hedley Foundation

The Hedley Foundation have generously donated £2,500 to help children with autism supported by The Haven specialist school in North Wales develop skills and support both vocational and classroom learning.

The Haven currently supports a small number of children with autism, all of whom have complex needs and require specialist support. The Haven aims to have a safe, secure and positive learning environment. One in which all young people within the autism spectrum are understood and valued and provided with person-centered learning opportunities, equipping them with the skills for life.

The Hedley Foundation's generous funding will enable us to purchase some essential equipment that the Haven needs in order to improve the imperative work it does, including a secure shed for bikes (so that students can learn about road safety; gain vital exercise and travel in the community, where public transport is limited); a greenhouse (so that students can grow vegetables and develop gardening skills as well as trying new foods by eating what they grow) and a washing machine (so that pupils can learn and understand vital independent living skills).

In addition to this equipment, The Haven is also in need of some additional audio-visual and IT equipment to assist with teaching. Visuals are very important to the learning process for many people with autism and being able to watch educational programmes and use specialist apps can have a great impact.

Liz Thornber, Trust and Corporate Fundraiser for Autism Initiatives, remarked, "We are very thankful to the Trustees of the Hedley Foundation as their support will have a very positive impact on the lives of current pupils at The Haven and create a legacy for future pupils to benefit from too".



## AI receives vital support from People's Postcode Trust!

AI has received a generous grant of £1,980 from People's Postcode Trust to provide more specialised support for children with autism outside of school hours in Wales through establishing the Saturday club project.

Our Play and Recreation Coordinator for the project said, "We are delighted to have gained the support of The People's Postcode Trust for this project. There is a great need for specialist support for children with autism outside of school time and this funding means we can start to meet that need. The project will have a big impact both on children and on families who will gain vital hours of respite safe in the knowledge their child is gaining expert, autism specific support."

A parent from Denbighshire also informed us that this project would be fantastic for her daughter, because, "...it would benefit my child to be around other children and doing activities to help her with her development."

People's Postcode Lottery is a charity lottery, where players play with their postcodes to win cash prizes while raising money for good causes. As a charity lottery, 50p from every £2 ticket goes to support charities and good causes across England, Scotland and Wales, including People's Postcode Trust. People's Postcode Lottery believes in supporting local communities so the money raised stays local to players.



A huge thank you to People's Postcode Trust and the players of People's Postcode Lottery for their support towards this vital project. You can find out more about how to get involved in People's Postcode Lottery here! [www.postcodelottery.co.uk](http://www.postcodelottery.co.uk)

## Cardiff One Stop Shop Opens!

The One Stop Shop in Cardiff, 21 High Street, was officially launched on the 28th January by Edwina Hart MBE CStJ AM, Minister for Economy, Science and Transport. Mrs Hart also announced Welsh Government funding to support Autism Spectrum Connections Cymru's innovative Anchor Companies Employment Programme working with the largest employers in Wales to raise awareness of autism within the workplace, and to create employment opportunities for people with autism within these businesses.

Two launches took place on the same day to accommodate the numbers of people wishing to attend. Short talks were given by Mrs Hart and Robert Lloyd-Griffiths, both from the Welsh Government, Trustee to Autism Initiatives Brian Williams, Richard Ibbotson Autism Initiatives National Director for Scotland, and people using the service. It was a really positive day with lots of great feedback.



## IOM Welcomes New Staff!

Following a lengthy recruitment process we are delighted to confirm that two new managers have been appointed in the Isle of Man – we're delighted to welcome Margie Quirk and Andrea Gaskell, both of whom are very experienced managers within a Social Care setting and will be adding strength and depth to our management structure on the island.

Assisting the Senior Management team in selecting the right staff for the post was Michele Mountjoy, an approved Social Worker in the Mental Health Team and service user Caroline. This is a role that has been provided by Caroline on a number of occasions now and she plays an important part in assessing whether the candidates displayed the right personality on the day, to be able to work with service users who are autistic or who may be non-verbal.



## Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme

Following much work by Dale Lowey a Support Worker on the Outreach Team in the Isle of Man, Autism Initiatives have recently registered to be a provider for the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme.

Dale, a qualified instructor in a variety of outdoor sports including mountain biking and abseiling, has always acknowledged the importance of people taking part in the Duke of Edinburgh schemes as a way of enhancing their physical and mental development and enhancing their social skills.

Dale was assisted in pulling this together by Alison Gawne from the Isle of Man Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, as well as Paul and Hilary Fletcher who have volunteered to be the specialised assessors.

The award scheme is open to all those under 25 years of age who access services with Autism Initiatives and will involve them showing a commitment to a series of events including:

- Physical activities
- Volunteer activities
- Learning a new skill
- Taking part in an Expedition
- Completing a Residential activity

For more information, please contact [Dale.Lowey@autisminitiatives.org](mailto:Dale.Lowey@autisminitiatives.org).



## Fresh Fruit Monday!

3FM hosts a weekly competition sponsored by Robinsons Fresh Fruit in which the winning group of work partners can win a hamper for their workplace.

Having been nominated by a colleague from the Outreach Team The Oaks service in the Isle Of Man received their prize which consisted of a large hamper filled with fresh fruit which was thoroughly enjoyed by all service users and staff.

**Thank you to 3FM and Robinsons!!**



## Thanks to our Mums!

Service users in the Outreach team Isle of Man chose to use The Arts & Crafts sessions at The Oaks to make their own special presents to give their mothers on Mothering Sunday.

Always inventive in their designs (led by Sarah Kinnin) they created quite unique gifts which were attractive to look at and some had the added bonus of being edible as well. As part of the social enterprise scheme, some of the service users capitalized on their artistic talents to good effect, and have created bespoke wine glasses, decorated with coloured hearts and with reference to Mother's Day. These glasses can be made to order and can be personalized for any occasion. If you wish to purchase them please contact Sarah Kinnin in the Outreach team. The glasses sell at the nominal cost of £3.00 each (or 6 for £15.00). They have the benefit of being coated so that they are dishwasher friendly.



Staff and service users decorated The Oaks in true romantic style, with homemade hearts and red balloons, to brighten up the windows and the walls – providing a fabulous backdrop or a really super valentine's celebratory party, which was well attended by members of the Social Group.

Homemade cupcakes were decorated by service users with love hearts and not only looked Scrumptious but tasted amazing!

Following a series of party games and treats, the members chose to have an evening centred on choosing and watching their favourite romantic films. Everyone who attended said that they had really enjoyed the night.

## Sarah's Challenge!

Could you give up alcohol for a whole year to fundraise for your favourite Charity? Sarah Pressley, Residential Service Manager in the Isle of Man, set herself this tough challenge and pledged to stop consuming alcohol for a whole year, starting on 1 January 2015!

Sarah has set herself a target of raising **£1,000** for Autism Initiatives. If you would like to help support and encourage her in this challenge you are invited to send a cheque payable to Autism Initiatives to:

Jo Jordan  
Autism Initiatives,  
The Oaks, May Hill,  
Ramsey, IM8 2HG  
Phone: 01624 814 801

**A big thank you to everyone who has contributed to the production of this newsletter and to everyone who supports our work. We hope that all of our achievements you have read about in this newsletter make you feel just as proud as we do – because we certainly could not do it without each and every one of you.**

If you would like to know more about these stories or have news to share for the next edition please contact Sue Murphy, Head of Fundraising and Media on **0151 932 2212** or by email on [susan.murphy@autisminitiatives.org](mailto:susan.murphy@autisminitiatives.org)

[www.autisminitiatives.org](http://www.autisminitiatives.org) Registered Charity Number: 702632

