



Support to Work Success

Autism Initiatives' Support to Work Framework provides valuable work experience and bespoke training for people with autism. Our Social Enterprises provide work-placement opportunities supporting service users to develop skills for work, offer training and real experience in the work place - building confidence as valued colleagues. When planning each work placement, a personalised approach develops a unique work based programme for every individual.

At the WeGrow project and A Great Little Place in Southport, service users on the Support To Work Framework have been working hard and have been rewarded by gaining some great new qualifications.

Bill, currently on a placement with both WeGrow and A Great Little Place café in Southport, has passed his food safety qualification. John has also recently achieved his First Aid qualification through WeGrow. Tom, a student at Peterhouse F.E. department, has also just completed his work experience at A Great Little Place.



Richard, also on placement, has passed Food Safety, Health and Safety, Manual Handling and First Aid. Richard has also achieved the Royal Horticultural Society Level 2 in Outdoor Fruit and Vegetable production – a great addition to his work at WeGrow.

These fantastic achievements link into Autism Initiatives overall strategy to support individuals with autism to lead productive and fulfilling lives, developing real skills for work at the same time – well done John, Richard and Bill.

For more information on work placements and the Support to Work Framework, please contact Cairi McKenzie on **0151 330 9500**.



Sandwich Retailer of the year!

There were winners galore for Autism Initiatives at the recent British Sandwich Industry Awards. Ben Chew of 'A Great Little Place to Go', our social enterprise cafe/sandwich bar in Southport, was a regional winner and finalist in the 'Sandwich Designer of the Year Awards' - with Aldo Zilli claiming Ben's 'Lancashire Quesadilla' to be 'the best he had ever tasted'. The Sandwich Designer of the Year competition is a week of showcasing the new trends in sandwich design. The best of the industry were on show with artisan independents, bakers and suppliers all vying for a ticket to the final. A keenly fought contest, the level of creativity in this category was astounding – Ben's win is a fantastic achievement. 'A Great Little Place' also defeated high street giants like Costa Coffee, M & S, Pret and Greggs to win Platinum at the awards, and gain the title 'Coffee Bar Sandwich Retailer of the Year'. This award recognises the increasing importance that sandwiches are playing in the success and development of the café market. The judges were impressed with the refreshing approach at A Great Little Place, the excellent training of staff and the high quality of the sandwich offerings.

Adult Learners' Week Awards 2014 – Winners Announced!

On Thursday 5th June Health Education North West celebrated the national learning campaign - Adult Learners' Week in 2014 - through a series of prestigious health and social care awards. Hundreds of people came together at Manchester Museum to hear about the inspirational stories of adults who have been transformed by their learning experiences, and the impact this learning has had on others.

Adult Learners' Week is a national celebration of lifelong learning, encompassing the Adult Learners' Week awards, "have a go" taster events, parliamentary reception and other activities such as a national policy conference. The Week is now in its 23rd year and has inspired celebrations across the world.

We are delighted to announce winner Cait McDermott in the Supporting Learners in Practice, in the Health and Social Care category. Cait, part of the Learning and Development team based at our Liverpool Office, was nominated for her commitment to supporting others to achieve their goals.

"Cait is a woman dedicated to others. She is a committed, enthusiastic, focused and involved member of the Learning and Development Team. She has transformed the organisational support Autism Initiatives gives to service managers by providing and coordinating a comprehensive development programme based on national standards."



Having supported learners to complete their managers' programme, Cait has become adept at problem solving and overcoming issues for learners and herself. She takes great pleasure from watching learners grow in confidence and achieve what they at first never imagined would be possible.

Congratulations Cait on this fantastic achievement!



Autism Initiatives- Investors in People

We are delighted to announce that Autism Initiatives has once again achieved Investors In People accreditation.

For more than ten years Autism Initiatives has been successfully assessed and recognised as continually meeting the requirements of the Investor in People standard framework. At the heart of the Investors in People accreditation is the notion that good people make a great business. People's strengths, ambitions and ideas are the centre points of success for any business and as an organisation, we strive to keep these ideals central to the charity



Longnewton staff team win Crisis Award!

Back in February 2013, staff at our Longnewton service in Greenside found themselves dealing with quite a crisis. Following works by a local electrical contractor, a huge power surge cut supplies to the entire village late at night, damaging appliances as well as heating and lighting to homes in the area, including our own supported living service.

The staff responded quickly and calmly, in what was undoubtedly a difficult situation - not only supporting service users through the crisis, but dealing with repairs on site and replacement of essential appliances. The team had a strong emergency plan in place which came into action straight away – they've now been recognised for their hard work, winning the 'Responding to Crisis Award' at the Autism Initiatives Scotland Staff Awards. Manager Luan Easingwood, who nominated her team, is delighted their efforts were so greatly noticed.

"All electrical items broke down, and staff noticed smoke coming from the sockets in the wall. The business continuity plan was implemented and staff gathered torches, and gas safety heaters. In order to ensure tenants could still have hot drinks staff used a camping stove from the garage – they also were able to fill flasks of hot water. Staff supported tenants to understand what was happening with hand drawn social stories."

Tenants were kept safe and comfortable overnight then in the morning the damage was assessed. Emergency contractors advised repairs would take some time and it was agreed the house was not habitable. Within two hours two cottages were located fifty miles away. These had been used for tenants holiday before and were already risk assessed /suitable. Six staff volunteered to go away with no notice for four days – two of these staff came in off their own holidays to do this. Other staff stayed at the house and replaced every item, made the house safe, electricians tested all wiring, replaced many faults and the house was ready for tenants to return.

The whole team pulled together to ensure the tenants were supported and comfortable. At the time, a new tenant was due to move in. The family commented that although it was obvious the project was in crisis, they knew that this was the right team/ service for their son to move into as they could see how "staff were totally focused on supporting tenants and doing whatever it took to keep people safe and happy."

The emergency plan used at the service has since been used as a model for other services across the UK. Part of the prize for Longnewton included £50 cash which the team nominated to donate to the local animal rescue centre – well done everyone!"



All staff and volunteers shortlisted for Autism Champion Awards!

Our very own Rik Carranza and service user Viv were shortlisted recently for Autism Network Scotland's Autism Champion Award! In April, as part of World Autism Awareness Month, Autism Network Scotland at the University of Strathclyde launched a series of awards, which aimed to identify a range of Autism Champions across Scotland by spotlighting examples of best practice.

Funded by the Scottish Government and part of the implementation of the Scottish Strategy for Autism, Autism Network Scotland aims to be a hub of impartial and reliable information about autism services across Scotland and to support better communication between people with autism and local and central government.

Rik Carranza is a Senior Support Worker with Autism Initiatives. He has been setting up a vegetable garden which provides an opportunity for individuals to learn new skills and develop new interests.

"I initially got into support work after a friend suggested that it would be something that I would enjoy. Needless to say, just over 2 years on I have enjoyed every day and relish the challenges that present themselves every day."

I started with Autism Initiatives as a support worker in the Lothian Outreach Service, working with a wide range of individuals. I was given a lot of training and I got to work alongside some fantastic support workers who helped me find my feet at first.

What keeps me motivated is seeing the progress that people can make with the right support and seeing the confidence in themselves improve. I passionately believe in the work that AI does and our overall philosophy in that through working in partnership with people with an ASC, families and professionals, and focusing on improving self-esteem, people with autism will learn new skills and strategies, and will have continued success throughout their lives."

Viv volunteers in a number of roles with Autism Initiatives. She has also developed an interest in fundraising and has taken part in organising various events.

"When Number 6 relocated to the new premises in Hill Street they didn't have a paid receptionist and I heard they were offering positions for services users to volunteer their time so I decided to put my name forward. As I had not done much in the way of work I decided to start off with one day a week for 2 hours. Once I got into the routine I asked if I could do another day as well. The tasks I undertook were dealing with incoming /outgoing mail, making sure people signed the visitor's book, making sure visitors felt comfortable and basic admin duties."

From all the volunteering I have been undertaking, I have now become involved in organising fundraising events. The first event was a bake sale to raise money for a service user holiday and it was very successful and made me feel very proud of myself. I was shocked afterwards and couldn't actually believe what I had actually achieved; we raised over £150 in two hours.

I have more confidence now and I have met some wonderful people. I also just want to thank Autism Initiatives for letting me volunteer for them and I really enjoy it so much."

Viv recently organised a band night to raise money for Number 6 and for the Outreach service, which was a roaring success. **Well done Viv and Rik!**



Autism Initiatives Celebrates World Autism Awareness Day

Staff and service users had a fantastic time celebrating World Autism Awareness day 2014, with events taking place all over the UK. At Autism Initiatives we make it our business every day to make as many people as possible aware of this invisible condition – you can't see it and you can't hear it but without the right support it can have a devastating effect on people's lives. Autism Initiatives supported this special day, spreading the message with events at many of our services across the country.

In the north west, A Great Little Place café went festive with jam jars of flowers with blue ribbons on every table, along with a hand written card thanking our customers for supporting us and the charity. Cupcakes with special Autism Initiatives logos were baked on site for staff and service users to pass out at other events. Special fortune cookies were prepared to give to customers, along with thank you cards, a newsletter and a little about the organisation. The windows of the café were painted and included a poster with 'autism is our work every day' in the window. Service user Bill baked a stack of cupcakes, beautifully decorated with blue butter crème ready for the Flag Market in Preston, where Autism Initiatives held a stall.

In Scotland, 2nd April saw one of our Number 6 service users, Kieron, celebrating WAAD on a sponsored walk around Edinburgh. The walk was a huge success, starting at the Number 6 One Stop Shop at 7.30pm and finishing at Carlton Hill around 9pm, with £250 raised so far and more sponsorship to come in!

Kieron, our Number 6 service user and intern at the Edinburgh office, who organised the walk, said:

"I wanted to give people a challenge for this walk so that's why I included lots of different streets and used Carlton Hill to end the walk. I wanted to make the sponsored walk fun as possible so I decided to give people the option of decorating and wearing Masks or T-shirts, which definitely helped to raise more awareness of what we were doing."

I would like to say a massive thank you to all those who took part in the walk, as well as to those who helped me with all of the organisational aspects of the event, I'm deeply grateful for the support".

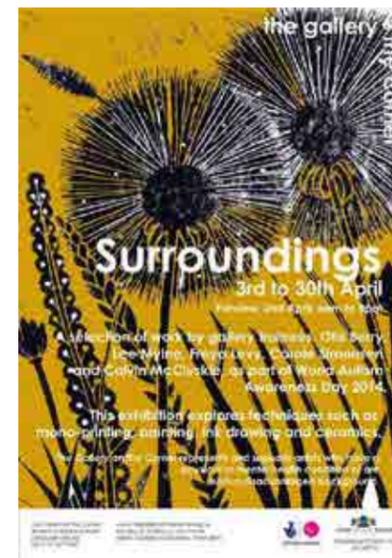


Gallery on the Corner stuns with latest trainee exhibition to celebrate World Autism Awareness Day

The Gallery on the Corner hosted yet another successful trainee exhibition in celebration of World Autism Awareness Day back in April. In order to mark this special occasion, many key figures were invited, including Councillor Henderson, who also made an opening speech. 'Surroundings' was the second major exhibition by the five current Gallery on the Corner Creative Trainees. The show featured a multi-disciplined collection of fine art works produced by the Gallery team that explores both urban and natural environments.

Councillor Henderson remarked, "I was delighted to be invited to such a great event. The Gallery on the Corner is a fantastic initiative enabling people with autism to develop artistic talent in a commercial environment".

One of the current Creative Trainees, Carole, talks about how she feel about the latest exhibition and her overall experience of being a part of the Gallery's traineeship programme, "Within this project I enjoyed the use of different mediums and the experimental nature of the work, under supervision from the gallery staff. I also liked the stages of building up the images, adding the colour and experimenting with a variety of techniques. This project has taught me how to work in a freer, more expressive manner and I would like to continue this, so as to allow me to work more quickly than I do now. I am looking forward to working as part of a team to make artwork and feel that it will help me to be more organised and disciplined in my work ethics. I hope that my traineeship will help me in future job opportunities."



Established in 2010, The Gallery provides a valuable platform for artists with ASC and other support needs to exhibit their artwork in a high profile location in the heart of Edinburgh's gallery district, creating employment and training opportunities for its trainees.

There have been a number of high profile trainee exhibits over the last 12 months, with The Gallery having trained and developed 18 individuals with ASC in retail and art. The skills trainees learn undoubtedly have an impact and help them into further training and employment after their work at The Gallery.

Recent trainee exhibitions have included ASC-Specific Creative Workshops, a Trainee celebration in October and the Winter exhibition in December 2013, which introduced new creative trainees, Lee, Otis, Carole, Freya and Calvin.

To date, The Gallery has worked with around 100 individual artists and 250 artists who have exhibited as part of a group. These artists have all had some sort of support need e.g. ASC, mental or physical health conditions or those from a disadvantaged background. The Gallery team has worked with these artists to organise around 40 exhibitions.

Petersfield News

Petersfield Day Resource Centre in Crosby are holding an opening evening on Thursday 25th September at 7 Chesterfield Road, Crosby. If you are considering the 'next move' to adult services and would like to find out about the variety of activities our service users get up to and some of their achievements, we would love you to pop in anytime between 4.30pm and 7 o'clock. Please do let us know if you plan to come and you can be certain of a very warm welcome.

For more information please contact Bee Murtagh, Petersfield Day Resource Manager, on **0151 330 9500**.

Flags Fly for World Autism Awareness Day

Staff and service users from both Mere Brow Resource Centre and the Pottery Studio attended the Autism Awareness day at Preston's Flag Market on World Autism Awareness Day in April, hosting a stall with information for visitors interested in the support Autism Initiatives has to offer.

Mere Brow Resource Centre Manager Andrea Brown told us all about it! "It was a really positive day for everyone. We spoke with many members of the public who had children with autism, or indeed had autism themselves. We networked with other providers and we also made some new contacts for activities we can access. Our stall looked amazing and we appeared to have a steady stream of people interested in the services we offer as a company. Many enquiries were around Peterhouse School, Outreach services and supported living."

Staff and service users handed out leaflets, brochures and previous newsletters with information for people to take home. Cakes were provided by our award winning Southport café A Great Little Place to Go. The organisers opened a comments board and everyone was asked to contribute towards it. Staff and service users were also asked to complete a jigsaw piece that makes up the autism awareness ribbon. Terry from the Autism Strategy Board attended on the day, discussing the original commissioning of Mere Brow and how much of a success it has become. Everyone involved would like to give a big thanks to the organisers, and to all the dedicated staff and services who came along on the day.

WeGrow is Buzzing!

At Radnor Drive in Southport things are beginning to buzz, in the shape of brand new hives of Buckfast bees.

In the early 20th century, bee populations were seriously reduced by Isle of Wight disease. This condition was killing off thousands of bee colonies in the UK. Buckfast bees were originally bred by Brother Adam at Buckfast Abbey, in an attempt to breed a strain that was disease resistant.

The Buckfast bee is a great honey producer and extremely gentle, making the hives a great addition to the site at Radnor Drive. Colin the beekeeper visits and checks the hives twice a week – all 50,000 bees are very calm and the queen is laying well!

Next year Radnor hopes to have more hives with our very own WeGrow honey and beeswax. The hives are part of the on-going creation of a wildlife garden at WeGrow to include a pond, bug houses, bird tables and a wildflower meadow.



Kings Seeds Donation at Radnor Drive

WeGrow were delighted recently to receive a fantastic donation of 130 packets of seeds from Kings Seeds, including both vegetables and flowers. The seeds will be used to increase the growing stock on site and were a welcome surprise!

Mere Brow links up with Wellbeing Farm!

Mere Brow Resource Centre has recently linked up with the Wellbeing Farm in Bolton, to begin two fantastic projects at the site. The farm is a truly unique venue which has been purposely designed with a background understanding of stress management – neutral colours and inspirational rustic décor with a farmhouse feel provide a calming environment.

Staff are supporting service users to paint and decorate a barn at the farm which will be used as a future wedding venue. Service users will also be helping to renovate the children's play area at the farm, assembling a natural play area made from tree trunks and branches. Work on the projects began in May and is an exciting opportunity to link in with such a unique setting, and for everyone to have a great time out in the sunshine!



WeGrow Veg Sales Thriving!

WeGrow continues to offer its very popular veg delivery service at Head Office Liverpool. This has expanded recently to a fortnightly veg sale at Birkdale Retirement Apartments. Manned by Support to Work service user Bill, with support from Radnor Drive Resource Centre staff, the stall offers access to fresh veg for residents who may otherwise find it difficult to get to town for fresh shopping. Customers can purchase any amount of produce they wish, from one egg to two carrots – offering a value for money service.



Richard from WeGrow selling veg at Head Office Liverpool Petersfield

If you would like to arrange a veg delivery from WeGrow, please contact Jon Gordon on **0151 330 9500**.

Petersfield News

Petersfield Resource Centre at Head Office Liverpool continues to go from strength to strength with Social Enterprise Blossomfields.

The service has recently been able to purchase an Xbox console and Kinect, along with a new TV, from profits of Blossomfields sales of jewellery and soaps.

Manager Bee Murtagh says, "This is a great example of how much can be achieved with the right support and ideas, and is a great opportunity to celebrate the hard work by staff member Margaret Fessey and service users working on Blossomfields items."

Information on the Blossomfields range can be found by contacting Margaret Fessey on **0151 330 9500**.

Petersfield in Summer Art Exhibition

Service users from Petersfield Resource Centre in Crosby took part in Old Christ Church's art exhibition in July.

This year's exhibition at Old Christ church in Waterloo had some colourful and dynamic works. The emphasis has been two fold - firstly, 'all about the person' with fabulous figurative self-portraits, 3D busts and largely independent self-expressive abstract pieces which represent colour choice, mark making and the reality of surface. Continuing the figurative aspect included animal heads mounted on shields and abstraction represented by animal prints.

Ian Pettifer from Petersfield tells us, "We have a new technique for using paper mache and have figurative and functional works made from this. There is a life size iron man - one of at least three that will wear the Autism Initiatives colours, and we hope will be displayed in various locations around Liverpool in 2015. We also have a five foot giraffe and a table made into the shape of a fox and two waste paper bins."

The jewellery makers were represented with a dynamic and varied range. Fragrant and colourful hand-made soaps and bath bombs, dream catchers proved to be a great attraction to visitors.

The art exhibition is now in its seventh year and more popular than ever!



Peterhouse School Turns 40!

2014 sees a host a of celebrations for Peterhouse Schools 40th Birthday, including a birthday party at Southport Masonic Hall in September and a celebration for past Head teachers in July. Staff and pupils are looking forward to a range of events to celebrate the school's long history.

The school was established in 1974 following an extensive fund-raising campaign led by the late Pat Minshull and supported by helpers and friends. Pat had a son, Peter, with autism and was concerned about the lack of specialised help available.

Peterhouse aims to provide 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 centred learning opportunities equipping them with the skills for life.

The original school was officially opened by Harold Wilson and a plaque commemorating this can be seen in the school.

The first Principal of the school was Dr Peter Whall, who was followed by Bob Thompson and Brenda Hatton. In September 1997, Beth Matthews became the Principal of Peterhouse until April 2003, when she was succeeded by Graham Birtwell who retired in July 2010. The current Principal is Janet Allan



In 1985, the Society further developed and funded a separate provision, Petersfield Autistic Community, as it was then named, in Crosby, catering for post-19 young adults.

Following Pat's death in 1987, the school continued to expand and moved to its present site in 1993, and has been considerably developed ever since.

The Crosby site, 'Pat Minshull House', is now Autism Initiatives Head Office.

Kaleidoscope Celebrates St. Patrick's Day

Kaleidoscope Community Resource Centre in Kensington celebrated St. Patricks Day in style in 2014, by inviting a traditional Irish band to play a session. The nearby St. Michaels Irish Centre was contacted via Facebook and they provided us with contact details for Jennie Nolan, a locally based traditional Irish musician. Jennie and three friends visited Kaleidoscope for an afternoon visit.

The four piece band, featuring a clarinet, fiddle, accordion and the bodhran, played a number of jigs and reels. For the final reels the service users and support staff joined in, accompanying the visitors on tambourine and bodhran. The band members were very impressed with service user James who managed to keep an excellent rhythm while playing the bodhran. A good afternoon was had by all and everybody enjoyed the experience.



Lord-Lieutenant of Merseyside Visits Kaleidoscope

On Monday 23rd of June we were honoured by a visit from our Patron, Dame Lorna Muirhead DBE, Lord-Lieutenant of Merseyside, at Kaleidoscope Resource Centre in Liverpool. Dame Lorna spent the morning chatting to service users and staff. She was especially interested in our service user activities, admiring their artwork and even sampling their baking skills.

Dame Lorna Muirhead was appointed Lord-Lieutenant of Merseyside in 2006 upon the retirement of Sir Alan Waterworth KCVO. The office of Lord-Lieutenant is military in origin and dates from the 1540s in the reign of Henry VIII, when its holder was made responsible for the maintenance of order and for all military measures necessary locally for defence.

Today the Lord-Lieutenant still performs a number of duties in respect of the armed forces, especially the reserve forces, all largely ceremonial.

Also present during the visit were Andrew Grainger our Chief Executive and Iain Mitchell, Area Manager - it was a great honour to receive such a grand visitor!



Middlesbrough Band Night Success

Recently our Middlesbrough service held an electrifying band night to raise money for a new and much needed sensory room for service users.

The night was a great success, not only including the band Four Letter Word playing, but a DJ, delicious nibbles and cupcakes, as well as an Easter themed quiz for the kids to do. Everyone thoroughly enjoyed themselves with £421 being raised from the event.

Manager of the Middlesbrough Service, Vicky Plowman Render, said, "All of those who attended had a fantastic time and asked when we were going to be doing another one! We are very keen to raise the money needed for our sensory room as soon as possible, so we are looking to hold a quiz night in May and a Summer Fayre."



Tesco Support for Autism Initiatives

The Laurels in Leyland has received a fantastic boost to their plans to convert a summer house into a sensory room, after a donation from staff at their local Tesco Express store.

Eleanor Hewitt, manager of The Laurels in Leyland, was the guest of honour when the new Tesco Express store opened on Finch Road.

As part of the opening celebrations, store manager Andrew Markillie and his team presented Eleanor with a £500 cheque. The store chose to donate to Autism Initiatives as part of its commitment to the local community.

Eleanor said: "We have a summer house in the back garden which we're looking at getting electrics put in, so we're going to spend the money on converting it into a small sensory room for all of our service users to benefit from. The £500 will get us well on the way to making it look fantastic. So a very big thank you to Tesco for helping us make this happen."

Andrew said: "My staff and I want to make this a local store for local people, and aim to give our customers fantastic service and prices."

Andrew added: "We have really enjoyed our store launch and I would like to thank Eleanor for joining us. We are delighted to support Autism Initiatives Laurels House with our £500 donation as they are a great charity which carries out such invaluable work in the Leyland community."

Tesco in Thornton, Sefton, also recently donated a fantastic £250 to Petersfield Resource Centre in Crosby. This donation has been used towards a brand new shed for staff and service users to store gardening tools – thanks to Tesco and all staff involved.



MeCycle

Social Enterprise manager Jon Gordon recently appeared in the Guardian article '50 voices: what does social enterprise mean to you?' Fifty people from a variety of backgrounds were asked their feelings about social enterprise, including our very own Jon Gordon who said:

"Social enterprise is a bridge which spans the gap between employers who are often unable to realistically support people with autism into employment and those traditional charities who provide care rather than support. For Autism Initiatives our MeCycle social enterprise means giving people a hand up rather than a hand out and putting them on to the first rung of the employment ladder. All of our social

enterprises provide vital training opportunities and real work experience for people with autism. We concentrate on what people can do rather than what they can't do. Together we develop skills and strategies for each individual to reach their own true potential at whatever level that may be. Our principle social objective is to work together to develop what they're good at into transferable employment skills, with lasting and tangible benefits all around."

MeCycle is a fantastic bike recycling enterprise operated by Autism Initiatives on Merseyside.

We receive donated, pre-loved bikes and:

- Refurbish, clean and service bikes for resale at affordable prices.

Claremont's Gardening Bounty for Ingot House

Money raised from a 60 mile bike-ride and the sale of more than 350 cakes and 700 raffle tickets will buy much-needed gardening equipment for Ingot House, our Community Resource Centre in Birchwood, Warrington.

Staff at Claremont Group Interiors have raised a total of £2631 after 12 months fundraising for Ingot House, which is located directly next door.

The money will be spent on gardening equipment and installing several raised flower beds so that service-users at Ingot House can make better use of the outdoor space.

As well as fundraising Claremont has also opened its doors to our twice-weekly tuck-trolley, which provides staff at Claremont with snacks and drinks in the afternoon.

Chris Rowles, manager at Ingot House said:

"This is the first time we've been a company's partner charity and we're absolutely delighted with the support they've given us. The money will make a real difference and allow us to get much better use from our outdoor space, but we shouldn't overlook the importance of the tuck-shop either. That's given our service users an opportunity to develop new skills and it's a real highlight of their time with us. You just can't put on a price on that."

Carole Warburton, one of Claremont's chief fundraisers said:

"Fundraising has always been a big part of Claremont life and we've really taken this cause to our hearts. It's been made all the more special by the fact they're our neighbours and we can't wait to see their new garden in full bloom."

Enormous thanks from all of us here to everyone at Claremont who has contributed to this fantastic amount of money – it really is hugely appreciated.

Amazing Supporter, Rob Oldfield, completes race 3 of unbelievable personal challenge to raise funds for AII

Back in April, Autism Initiatives supporter Rob Oldfield completed the Manchester Marathon, which was race 3 of his 8 race challenge to raise money for Autism Initiatives!

He has already run the 10k in Southport and the 21st Liverpool marathon, as well as the Manchester Marathon, the Seton Park 10K, and the Liverpool Mersey Tunnel 10k in June. New races coming up include the Warrington Half Marathon in September and the Nottingham Marathon also in September.

Rob had this to say about his phenomenal challenge, "I am running to raise awareness of Autism and support this charity. My son David has autism and Autism Initiatives provides great support to help people with autism. Funds are always needed to continue their work so I thought this challenge would be a great way to help them do that".

Rob would ideally like to reach his total of £250 as soon as he can and ideally before his last race in September and after doing so many runs, especially half marathons and marathons - we think Rob deserves as much sponsorship as possible! If you would like to help him along his way, you can find his fundraising page

<https://www.justgiving.com/robert-oldfield4/>.



Pottery Studio News

Students at the Pottery Studio in Fleetwood organised a fantastic Easter event to raise money for a social trip. Everyone was keen to get organising the stalls with the intention of raising money. This year's Easter open day involved lots of planning by the students themselves.

Service User Forum members Matthew and David decided that any money they raised should go towards the next social event - Matthew manned a chocolate stall whilst David ran a general knowledge quiz. Both were a great success. Matthew said "I am pleased we raised so much money for a trip out after work one evening. It was a good day."

On the day visitors to The Pottery enjoyed refreshments, scones, hot cross buns, cakes, and biscuits all prepared and served by students at the studio. The shop was open for Paint A Pot where Chris was ready to greet everyone. Nicky helped visitors select plants and hanging baskets for their gardens.

When all the visitors had gone and the cleaning up completed students and staff had time to reflect on the day. Everyone thought it had gone well. Simon said "I enjoyed it", Andrew said "I enjoyed socialising with Irene", and Sharon said "it was a good day I came with my friends from my house and I saw my dad here too"

Finally, Paul said "£93.23 is a lot of money to raise - I am proud of that."

Well done everyone!

The Pottery is also holding a summer open day on Friday 29th August, from 12.30-2.30pm, which will include Stalls, Raffle, Prize card, Quiz, and refreshments available on the day.

The Pottery recently received a fantastic donation from Redrow to their Friendship Appeal Gardening Project, based at Farmer Parr's Animal World. Redrow is one of the largest and most acclaimed house builders in the UK and were very keen to contribute to the Pottery Studio's new community gardening project. The donation of £300 will go a long way to help the garden area develop – both staff and service users are excited by the project, and thank Redrow for their generosity.

Service user Craig is currently volunteering on developing the garden, creating raised beds, grading soil and working on two sensory beds for the garden. Visitors will be able to see how Craig's work is progressing at the summer open day.

My Experience of Learning to Play the Bombay Drum

Service user Peter tells us about his fantastic drumming lessons:

"My experience of playing the Bombay drum happens between 1 pm and 2.45 pm and I play on Houghton Street at the Temperance Institute with about 6 other women; mostly middle aged women.

I was referred to the group by my Artisan teacher on Eastbank Street, Norrie. Some of the rhythms we used to play were rhythms such as 'I like playing on my Bombay drum' and another song rhythm called 'Paddington Station to Waterloo Road' in London. I paid £2.50 to Robert for the upkeep of the services and that paid for the classes and my teacher was a lady called Sarah Marks as recommended to me by my Artisan teacher, Norrie.

This experience gave me a lot of pleasure because it taught me to play another musical instrument which I felt was very rewarding and also it enabled me to make new friends."



- Strip bikes that are not suitable for refurbishment for their parts.
- Introduce the remainder of the bike into the recycling system thus avoiding landfill.

MeCycle offers a variety of guided rides, all starting from the shop site at 59 Station road Ainsdale. Bikes and helmets area available to borrow free of charge and a variety of bikes and accessories are on sale too.

- 9am Fridays Mums Rides
- 10am Fridays Cycle Back to Health (open to all)
- 10am Saturdays Family Ride
- 6pm Thursdays Long distance ladies ride

If you're interested in joining any of these rides, or would like to know more, give Ali a call at the shop (01704 579353).





Grontmij Group Edinburgh raise an incredible £3,300 for Autism Initiatives!

Staff at Grontmij Group Edinburgh have so far raised £3,300 for Autism Initiatives' Number 6 One Stop Shop in Edinburgh.

Since choosing Autism Initiatives as their charity of the year for 2014, they have undertaken many different fundraising activities, although their biggest event by far was 13 staff taking part in the Edinburgh Marathon Festival!

Grontmij provides consultancy, design & engineering and management services in a broad range of market sectors related to the built and natural environment. Lewis Barlow, Grontmij Group Edinburgh's Engineering Manager and Charity Coordinator said, "It has been an absolute pleasure and a lot of fun raising money for Autism Initiatives, in particular the Number 6 One Stop Shop. All of the staff here do a fantastic job and it is great to see the service supporting more adults than ever with autism in Edinburgh and the surrounding areas".

So far around £4,000 has been raised through the Edinburgh Marathon and we are still waiting for more to come in! A huge thank you again to all of our local supporters from company Grontmij, supporter Laura Macdonald and all staff and service users at Number 6 who ran and raised money for us.

If you are part of a local business or corporate looking for a charity to support this year or in the coming years, we would love to hear from you and your support would mean everything to us! Please contact Holly.Child@aiscotland.org.uk for more information.



Autism Initiatives Supporters run the Edinburgh Marathon

On a very wet morning on Sunday 25th May 2014, we had over 20 local supporters, staff and service users take part in the Edinburgh Marathon, half marathon and relay!

Those doing the half marathon started off first at 8am, closely followed by those doing the full marathon and relay at 10am. Despite a few knackered knees and sore legs, all of our participants made it to the finish line and thoroughly enjoyed themselves!

Matthew Day, Number 6 One Stop Shop Manager, said, "It was a great day and I know all of the staff and service users who took part relished the experience and some have even said that next year they will do longer legs of the relay and run further!"



Getting the Job Done

Staff member Jamie Hind shared some great news recently about work placements in Scotland.

Recently a job opportunity came up within Autism Initiatives Borders area office to do cleaning once a week. Steven, a tenant within our Borders services, currently enjoys cleaning the worktops, his own bathroom, hoovering and mopping the floors at his own house. As these are transferable skills we thought Steven may like to apply for this job given he already had the skills in place to do the job effectively.

At Steven's tenancy meeting the subject was raised with pictorial aids to support his full understanding of what was being asked. Steven appeared to be very excited at the prospect of holding down a job and getting paid for the skills he has built on.

Steven, in consultation with staff, then set about getting an online application. Steven was supported by two of his key team staff to fill this out. At all times when asking a question staff used pictures to ensure understanding.

After Steven completed the application, it was great news to hear he was successful in securing an interview with Alison Walker, Team Leader. Staff consulted with Steven around building a story board with the steps that we needed to take in preparation for the interview, making sure that Steven's expectations of the interview were met. Staff reassured Steven that this could happen - ensuring Steven felt as relaxed as possible.

During the week leading up to the interview, staff worked with Steven using the story board as a visual for what the day was going to look like, Steven was involved and consulted through all aspects of the process. By the end of the week Steven was able to tell staff the routine for the day ahead. At Steven's interview there were biscuits that Steven liked and a cup of tea for him whilst Alison had a chat with him about the role that he was being interviewed for.

Alison used the same pictures that staff used when talking to Steven when filling out the application form so that a consistent approach was given.

Steven was successful in securing his cleaning job and was supported to come to Ladhope Vale for an induction, where he was shown the equipment that was available to him.

Staff worked with Steven to come up with a routine to follow when he is cleaning. Steven attends every Friday, for one hour, carrying out his tasks with very little support and only minor prompting. Steven continues to progress in his tasks and is becoming a more confident individual.

Steven received his first pay slip this month and was so excited to share his news with everyone. Congratulations Steven on your new role!



Former Gallery Trainee becomes Countdown Star!

We were very excited to find out that our very own Douglas, who is a Number 6 service user and former Gallery on the Corner trainee, had been on Countdown!

Below is his inspirational story on how he plucked up the courage to audition and make one of his dreams come true.

"I decided to enter an application for the show, because Countdown was the first ever show I watched on TV and I have been watching it ever since I was 3 years old. I couldn't believe it when I got a phone audition in November as it made me realise that this was really happening and one of my dreams may come true!

I got a phone call in December asking if I could go down to Manchester on 14th January. I immediately accepted and was very excited as I knew this was a chance for me to meet Nick Hewer - I've been a big fan of his ever since the Apprentice came out on BBC 1 and Rachel Riley who appeared in Strictly Come Dancing. However, when I was told the special guest would be the triple jump world record holder Jonathan Edwards that made it even more special!

As I got to the studios I felt excited and nervous at the same time, but was really looking forward to filming my episode.

The experience was great and to be on one of the longest running shows ever was a fantastic privilege. It has made me realise if you feel you're clever at a show and it's been one of your dreams for many years then you should go for it, especially if you get a goody bag like I did!

It's so strange that people have been asking for my autograph, but I suppose that's what happens when you go on Countdown! My next ambition is to be on Pointless as I also watch that every weekday at 5:15 so to be on that would also be a fantastic experience!"

Douglas' story conveys how important it is to always follow our dreams and our ambitions in life, so well done Douglas!



Short Breaks Award for Number 6

Our very own Number 6 One Stop Shop has recently been awarded funding of £14,778 from the Better Breaks Programme, to support the One Stop Shop activity breaks in 2014.

Better Breaks is a funding programme to improve the provision of, and access to, quality short breaks for disabled children and their families, especially where children and young people have multiple support needs. Funded by the Scottish Government and divided into two grant making programmes - one administered by Shared Care Scotland and the other by the Family Fund, the purpose of Better Breaks is to develop responsive and creative short break opportunities for disabled children and young people, and their families.

Stewart Campbell from Number 6 tells us more:

"The Number 6 One Stop Shop received funding from the Short Breaks fund in 2013 to organise and run 3 Activity/Respite weekends for 30 of our service users who were living with parents or carers. The main aims of three breaks were to provide the opportunity for the participants to try out new activities, focus on the development of essential life skills in a supported environment as well as providing respite for parents and carers. The feedback we received from these weekends away has been fantastic and we have recently been awarded further funding to run an additional four trips during the financial year 2014/2015."

The Scottish Government is committed to working closely with stakeholders to deliver improved services for people with autism and their families through the implementation of the Recommendations of the Scottish Strategy for Autism. The strategy recognises the need to support the work of local projects in delivering outcomes for professionals, individuals on the spectrum, their families and carers. The work of Autism Initiatives continues to support the delivery of these recommendations and this award will help this continue.



New 'Highland Autism Improvement Group' Launched in Scotland

NHS Highland and partners including Highland Council, Autism Rights Group Highland (ARGH), the National Autistic Society Scotland (NAS), Autism Carers Groups, Autism Initiatives and employment services have recently got together to form the Highland Autism Improvement Group.

The Highland Autism Improvement Group (HAIG) is committed to enhancing the profile of autistic spectrum conditions, and, critically, to improving the support services provided to autistic adults and their parent/carers.

Many adults living in the Highlands have been the victims of lifelong bullying after late or misdiagnosis of being on the autistic spectrum. Years of living with this condition undiagnosed can lead to further mental health problems and a poor self-image.

At present the partners include NHS Highland, The Highland Council, Job Centre Plus, ARGH (Autism Rights Group Highland), the National Autistic Society Scotland (NAS), Autism Carers Groups and Autism Initiatives. The group held their first public event at Inshes Church in Inverness recently.

Among the guests was NHS Highland Chief Executive Elaine Mead who praised the work being undertaken in the area, but acknowledged there is more that can be done.

Gill MacLennan, team leader for Autism Initiatives, said: "NHS Highland have Faith Wilson, Diagnostician with the Highland Adult Autism Assessment, Diagnostic and Advisory Service (HAAADAS) based within the Highland One Stop Shop run by AI. Working together means that adults who are seeking a diagnosis are accessing this in the same building where they will be able to get support following their diagnosis. The Highland One Stop Shop offers both pre and post diagnosis support."

For more information on the work ARGH carries out in Highland, go to www.arghighland.co.uk or email infor@arghighland.co.uk.

Swing Into Spring!

In April this year, The Hermitage Golf Club held its much anticipated 'Swing into Spring' Family Day event. There were many activities on offer for the general public to come along and try, such as the crazy golf course, nearest to the pin and disc golf. Furthermore, the clubhouse café was open to all, with a small raffle inside.

The day was a huge success, raising nearly £1,000, with much fun had by all!

Clubhouse Café Manager Sabrina said, "This event was a great way to celebrate World Autism Awareness Month, as well as our new longer opening hours. It was nice to see such a buzz about the place and I know the kids thoroughly enjoyed the crazy golf course".

The Hermitage is a social enterprise run and managed by Autism Ventures Scotland. Set in 22 acres of the beautiful Braid Hills, The Hermitage is a peaceful place, boasting a 12 hole golf course. The clubhouse has a large cafe area, dance studio and therapy room which can be hired on a regular or "one off" basis.

Anyone can visit and enjoy The Hermitage. Play golf on our specially designed golf course, call into the cafe for breakfast, lunch or tea - or just have a fantastic cup of coffee and enjoy a walk on the beautiful Braid Hills.

If this has inspired you to want to undertake a challenge or organise an event next April in celebration of World Autism Awareness Month, then please contact Holly.Child@aiscotland.org.uk asap!



Scotland

Intern Experience

Number 6 service user Kieron tells us about his experiences as an intern at Autism Initiatives: "I found working as a World Autism Awareness Day as an Intern great fun - it opened my eyes to the world of fundraising, events organising and managing events. When I began to organise a Sponsored Walk I had found contacting places to ask if they would light the buildings up blue a little daunting as I had little experience calling places, but I wrote down what I would say and then I used it as my script.

When the walk took place I was stunned at the turnout for the walk when more than ten people turned up - after the walk the total raised was over £250.00.



After the Internship had ended I decided to apply to go to College and do HND Events Management. I had help applying and when I got an interview for the course I was happy - but I was nervous. When I went for the interview it was in a group setting and I brought my certificates just in case I needed them. I had to submit a report into an event I had helped organise or ran and I used the Sponsored Walk as my report.

Two weeks later I found out I had a place on the course and I was stunned and excited!

When I first started the course I knew that I had to be determined to do all the work and pass all outcomes to hopefully get on to the second year. At the moment I'm passing all the outcomes in each class.

This year I returned to do the World Autism Awareness Day Volunteer intern job for a second time and I organised a second Sponsored Walk. I feel I have come full circle and I have enjoyed every minute of this journey."

Congratulations Kieron and good luck from us all!

Number 3, Perth One Stop Shop turns one!

On Tuesday 20th May, Autism Initiatives' Number 3 Perth One Stop Shop celebrated its 1 year anniversary with speeches, video testimonials, displays, refreshments and a visit from Pete Wishart MP, which is great recognition of the work the service has achieved over the last year.

Jill Murdoch, Number 3 One Stop Shop Manager said,

"We are delighted to mark our first birthday this year after a fantastic first 12 months. This type of service allows us to support adults as and when they need it, in a safe and understanding environment. In our first year we have received such amazing support from adults with ASC, families, professionals and volunteers. We have also received donations from many local businesses and the Rotary Club of Perth Kinnoull, which we greatly appreciate. Over the last year, the team and I have provided over 7,500 hours of support".

However, Jill and the team at Number 3 recognise that the service would not be as successful as it was if it wasn't for the service users who have developed it into what it is today.

One of the One Stop Shop's regular service users, Neil, explains what Number 3 means to him,

"What I like best about Number 3 is everything! Doing things, the friendly and helpful staff, meeting other people and getting information. I have been helped to achieve more confidence and learning more team working skills through the employment group".

The day was a great success thoroughly enjoyed by those that attended, which included staff, service users, families and health professionals. The service also had a visit from STV News Dundee, as well as Pete Wishart, MP, to know more about the work done by Jill and the team.



Andrew and Elaine Run for Autism!

Andrew Openshaw (30) and Elaine Hutton (9) took part in the Bupa Junior Great North Run recently on a fabulous sunny day! Elaine really enjoyed the run - for a first timer she did amazingly well, although a carry from Andrew was definitely a bit of a bonus! Andrew and Elaine finished the 4k race in an amazing 39 minutes to raise money for young people at Autism Initiatives

It was all Elaine's idea and even at 9 years old it's something she feels passionate about. So far Andrew and Elaine have raised over £100 which is a great achievement. Donations can be made at Elaine and Andrew's JustGiving page www.justgiving.com/teamelaineandandy.



Our very own Gregor takes part in the Queens Baton Relay

Our No 6 service user, Gregor was a baton bearer for the Queens Baton Relay for the Glasgow Commonwealth Games as it passed through Edinburgh on Saturday 14th June. Gregor had this amazing honour as part of the build up to the start of the Commonwealth Games on 23rd July. He undertook his baton-bearer duties at 3.15pm and carried the baton between the cross roads at the top of Easter Road & No.3 Brunton Place.

Gregor was especially chosen to be a baton-bearer, because of the volunteer work he does in the local area at the Cyrenians, the Hibernian Community Foundation and The Yard Adventure Centre.

When asked about how Gregor felt about being specially chosen for this honour he said, "I was very excited about being chosen as a baton-bearer, but I also felt slightly overwhelmed. I felt privileged to be nominated and I want to thank all of the organisations that I am currently involved with as I couldn't have imagined doing this without their support".

Travelling through 400 towns, villages and cities over 40 days, The Queen's Baton Relay offered people across the nation the chance to be part of the countdown to Scotland's biggest ever sporting and cultural event - the Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games - and show their support for Team Scotland.



Life in Colour Returns

On World Autism Awareness Day 2013 people with autism across Scotland were invited to take two photographs or video clips that showed: "What's the best thing about today?" and "What's the worst thing about today?" to contribute to Autism: Life In Colour.

The exhibition of some of the best images submitted in 2013 has been touring Scotland. The closing event of the tour took place at Autism Initiatives Café on the Corner. The Gallery on the Corner, one of Autism Initiatives' three social enterprises in Scotland, was responsible for bringing this fantastic exhibition to so many of Scotland's cities for the public to enjoy.

Susie Anderson, Gallery Manager, remarked, "We are delighted to have had the opportunity to take this exhibition to so many cities across Scotland. It is great that so many people from across the country have been able to see the fantastic work that was produced back in April of this year. A huge thank you again to all the photographers that took part in the exhibition".

The Gallery received a grant from the Scottish Government to run the Autism: Life in Colour project again this year, following the success of 2013's project.

Autism: Life in Colour aims to capture the views of people with autism in Scotland by inviting them to submit a pair of images of everyday life with autism, in order to build an understanding of what everyday life is like for people with autism of all ages, throughout Scotland, through the eyes of people with autism. The new project was launched on 2nd April 2014, World Autism Awareness Day - images can be uploaded to the website until December 2014. In early 2015, the project website will show a gallery of as many of the images as possible, and the best 12 pairs of images will be selected to hold as an exhibition.

The Gallery on The Corner are also delighted to announce that funding has been awarded from the Equality Internship Programme for intern, Amy Pickles, who has been working hard to encourage participation in the project by people with autism of all ages across Scotland.

Check the project website for more details and a section of the submissions from 2013. www.autismlifeincolour.org.uk

Thanks go to those who have helped deliver the project including Autism Initiatives, Autism Network Scotland, the Gallery on the Corner and most importantly the people with autism and their families who have contributed.



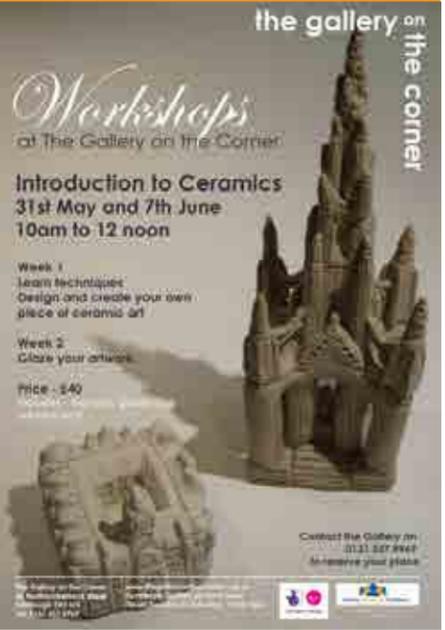
Gallery on the Corner triumphs again with second set of successful workshops!

March and June 2014 have seen two successful ceramic workshops at The Gallery. Attendees have ranged from a wide variety of backgrounds and levels of artistic experience, some being on the autistic spectrum attending with their support workers.

The group explored a host of techniques to turn their ideas into clay sculptures including pieces of ceramic art, bowls, small sculptures and pieces of jewellery.

Gallery Manager, Susie Anderson said, "Everyone who attended thoroughly enjoyed their time at The Gallery and making their pieces. These workshops are a great insight for the general public as to the work we do and the services we offer".

You can find more information on the Gallery on the Corner and involvement in future workshops by contacting Paul Penrice on 0131 557 8969 or by visiting the website at <http://www.thegalleryonthecorner.org.uk>.



Scotland

Mosaic produced by Gallery on the Corner trainee, Freya Levy, heads to Vatican!

The first Scot ever to be appointed a Major Canon of St Peter's Basilica in Rome is to be presented a mosaic created by one of The Gallery on the Corner trainees, Freya Levy.

Monsignor Charles Burns of Paisley Diocese is being given the work by Monsignor Michael Regan of St Mary's Roman Catholic Cathedral, Edinburgh. The mosaic depicts a cockerel, and in the Christian tradition, the cockerel is the symbol of St Peter, hence also of the Vatican Basilica of St Peter's in Rome, so the gift is extremely symbolic.

Freya Levy uses a range of different media in her art. She is particularly inspired by animals, which feature widely in her mosaic exhibition, shown in June this year at the Glass and Thompson Cafe in Edinburgh.

Monsignor Regan of St Mary's Cathedral, commenting on the work and Freya's exhibition, said of the current exhibition: "A delightful collection and a great destination for one piece."

Freya added: "I didn't have any biblical connotations in mind when I created this piece. I was simply inspired by the beauty and colours of cockerels. I am truly honoured and excited that it is destined for the Vatican."



Dare devil supporters, Craig and Ian, take on the Forth Rail Bridge Abseil!

On Sunday 8th June, supporters Craig and Ian abseiled off the Forth Rail Bridge to raise money for Autism Initiatives.

After some time spent organising their equipment and preparing their thoughts, they embarked on their nerve racking journey up the steps to the bridge, before walking along it and waiting for the instructors to allow them to make the crucial step off of the bridge before actually abseiling!

We are delighted to say that Craig and Ian successfully completed the challenge and will (after all their sponsorship is collected) have raised over £300!

Craig said, "This has been such a fantastic experience and I have thoroughly enjoyed doing this for Autism Initiatives. Thank you for the opportunity".

A huge thank you to both Craig and Ian for doing such an amazing job and thank you to all those that came along to cheer them on, a great day was had by all.

If this has inspired you to undertake a challenge for Autism Initiatives then contact Holly.Child@aiscotland.org.uk for more information!



Volunteering leads to paid work for Douglas

Intowork client Douglas, who has Asperger's, had been studying at Oatridge College and gained qualifications in Countryside Management, landscaping and gardening. He had started a small gardening business and was trying to build up clientele but work was becoming more and more sparse as the colder weather started to set in. His advisor at Intowork helped Douglas to begin volunteering at The Hermitage, a small golf course run by Autism Initiatives. A 16 hour per week paid opportunity became available in February 2013 at The Hermitage and Douglas was successful in his application for the job. He has been working at The Hermitage for the past 9 months and thoroughly enjoys it. He is now familiar with his daily duties and works with little supervision. Douglas now works 24 hours per week but this will be reviewed as he progresses.

Well done Douglas!

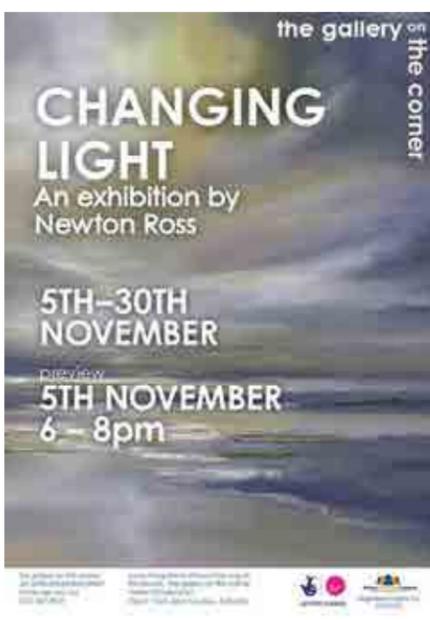
Intowork has proved to be an extremely successful programme, including 52 service users gaining new employment, 3 into self-employment, 45 into further education or training and 44 having made progress to employment through volunteering or short term supported work placements.



Gallery News

Edinburgh's Gallery on the Corner continues to thrive, with recent exhibitions including shows from Newton Ross, *Changing Light*, alongside new work by former gallery trainee, Alan Lucchesi. *Flora and Fauna*, an exhibition by the Artistocats, Midlothian's Community Access Team, and featured work produced over the last year exploring mark making and texture in painting and print, collages and cards. The *27/4* and *Postcards From* exhibitions in September, as part of the Scottish Mental Health Arts and Film Festival 2013, were also a great success. My *27/4* brought together six of The Gallery on the Corner's regular artists, all of whom have experience of mental health conditions.

The Gallery on the Corner has recently received an INAP nomination this year as part of the 5th World Autism Festival, running from 1-6th October in Edinburgh. The International Naturally Autistic People Awards recognises organisations who support the development & emergence of autistic people. We look forward to the results! More information about the festival can be found here <https://www.facebook.com/events/1389852841262968/>.



Opening of ASDI Art Exhibition with a Difference!

The ASDI first Art Exhibition came about because service user Dan had an idea that an Art Exhibition, if held in the County Hall, could be a good place to show off the work of individuals with autism and at the same time raise awareness of the contributions individuals with autism can make. He also felt it could raise funds to enable ASDI to provide extra support and programmes.

With the help and support of his support worker, his family, the staff of ASDI, Dun Laoghaire – Rathdown County Council and volunteers, Dan has seen his initiative become a reality. The exhibition provides a unique opportunity for the community to get to know and understand the individual with autism.

Young people with autism struggle with social and communication skills and often suffer with very poor self-esteem. Transition from school to adulthood is a particularly challenging time for them and their families, and it is vital that a support structure is in place to equip them with the tools they need to manage this transition well.

On behalf of all the staff and service users of Autism Initiatives in Ireland and the UK we would like to congratulate Dan, the artists and everyone who worked so hard to get this exhibition together. It has been a huge success so far and has the potential to be an annual event!

Milestones by Don Ledingham



Scott's High Scores at Special Olympics!

Since 2012 service user Scott has been training for the Special Olympics 2014. Scott attended the Special Olympics in Limerick on June 12th 2014 accompanied by staff member Colm Harty, competing in the badminton tournaments. In a fantastic result, Scott returned home on Sunday 15th with not one but two gold medals, one from the men's' singles games and one from the doubles games.



The mission of Special Olympics is to provide year-round sports training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports for children and adults with intellectual disabilities, giving them continuing opportunities to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, experience joy and participate in a sharing of gifts, skills and friendship with their families, other Special Olympics athletes and the community.

There will now be a draw in early August to determine which of the gold medallists will attend the World Games in Los Angeles in June 2015. Scott is delighted with his achievement.

ASDI Welcomes Amanda McDonald as new National Director for Ireland!

Our new National Director for Ireland! Amanda McDonald has been with Autism initiatives Ireland since its inception in 2005. She has taken the lead role in the area of transitions, setting up of services to include Residential, Respite, Day Services and Community Support Services.



Amanda has more than a decade of experience in the Health and Social Care Sector at Senior Management level and an in depth understanding of good governance in leading teams in person centred service delivery.

Welcome Amanda!

Work Experience at the Fire Station

On Thursday the 15th and Friday the 16th of May, Alex from the Harbour Day Service in Dun Laoghaire took part in some work experience at Tara Street fire station head-quarters. Before going to the fire station Alex wrote a CV as well as a letter requesting his own work experience and sent it to Tara Street fire station. All this was linked to the ASDAN module on Independent living.

On day one at the fire station Alex was given a tour of the station, he saw the equipment used, the different vehicles and the communication room. Alex also got to go in a crane which took him high above the city where he saw sights such as the Aviva Stadium, Croke Park, the Dublin Mountains and Trinity College.

On the second day Alex was taken to the offices and given lots of work to do including filing, hole punching, recycling, cleaning and sorting. Alex said his favourite part of working in the fire station was getting to go up in the crane.

Everyone at the fire station was very friendly. Alex got some cool fire fighter tee-shirts and badges, which he was delighted to receive. Alex hopes to try out more places for work experience, as he really enjoyed his time at the Fire station.

By Roxane Byrne



No 6 service user, Jen, goes to new lengths to fundraise for Autism Initiatives!

On Wednesday 18th June, one of our No 6 service users, Jen, was sponsored to cut off 11 inches of her long hair! Initially Jen had asked people to sponsor her to get 8 inches cut off the length of her hair, however on the day she was feeling brave and decided to get even more cut off!

So far Jen has raised well over £100, which is fantastic. When asked why she wanted to do this to raise money for Autism Initiatives she said, "At the beginning of May a group of us went on a service user trip to Aviemore. Not only did we have a great time, but we also learnt a lot of new skills and it is definitely something that we would all like to do again so quite a few of us are doing some fundraising activities to try to make this happen".

If this has inspired you to do something to raise funds for Autism Initiatives then please contact Holly.Child@aiscotland.org.uk asap!



The Harbour Sensory Garden

The Staff and students at The Harbour are starting a new project that will look at landscaping The Harbour's open space in to a Sensory Garden. The sensory garden will hopefully provide a variety of multi-sensory experiences; with sensory planting beds, water features, tactile spaces, and picnic areas all planned. This will also double up to provide an enhanced opportunity for strategic developmental, learning and educational outcomes.

The goal is for the Harbour to provide individual and combined sensory opportunities for the students, that they may not normally experience, whilst bringing a positive learning experience to all.

We look forward to seeing the transformation!



Big Lunch!

At their Easter Surf Programme at West Strand in Portrush, organised in partnership with the brilliant 'Alive Surf School', Autism Initiatives called for community spirited people to get together on June 1st and hold a Big Lunch in their own neighborhoods.

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.

The health benefits of taking part in such a wonderful sport are obvious but the friendships which many have developed have been just as rewarding. Many of our young people and adults have returned year after year and we hope to continue for many years to come.

We thought it would be a wonderful idea to cement these friendships with a Big Lunch at the end of the surf season in September. We will invite past participants of the programme and their friends and family to get together for a day of friendship and fun."

The next surf programme will run in July and Autism Initiatives NI will collaborate with Alive Surf School and 'Liquid Therapy', a charity that helps local young people facing a range of physical, mental, emotional and behavioral challenges through surfing.

Local Big Lunch representative, Grainne McCloskey said: "Programmes like these are immensely valuable to children with autism. It provides an opportunity for important social interaction and helps the children to develop and learn in a positive environment."



Autism Initiatives NI – Learn to Cycle Programme

Autism Initiatives NI have continued to develop Northern Ireland's first ever autism specific 'Learn to Cycle' programme.

The cycling programmes have been organised at venues around Northern Ireland and has increased participation and opportunity to as many people as possible. Health & Activity Coordinator, Pauline Graham, explains "The cycling classes have provided the opportunity for more than 100 children and their families to enjoy the excitement of cycling. 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."

Olympic Triathlete Aileen Reid visited the programme and commented "This is a fantastic programme and it's great to see the children having fun and parents experiencing the joys of their child reaching an important developmental milestone that most parents take for granted."

Autism Initiatives Northern Ireland Operational Director, Grainne Close, says, "This is a fantastic opportunity for people with autism to do something really exciting and new. We are delighted to be able to offer this programme and grateful to all the funders and the families who have supported us."

Autism Initiatives NI hope that their autism specific cycling programme will continue to expand in other areas and anyone looking to enquire about future programmes should contact Pauline Graham on **02890 699130** or email **Pauline.Graham@ai-ni.co.uk**



Active Belfast Initiative!

Active Belfast promotes 30 physical activities programmes and includes the Autism Initiatives Cycling Programme!

In her first engagement as Belfast's new Lord Mayor, Councillor Nichola Mallon, welcomed attendees and told of her support for the Active Belfast initiative. She said: "Active Belfast – under the Belfast Strategic Partnership – will work to continue to address the life inequalities which exist in this city. Walking and Cycling are the easiest form of activity to build into our daily lives and help us all get a little more active."

Cathy Brennan-Bradley whose son Rory (10) was a participant on the Autism Initiatives cycling programme spoke at the event and says: "Rory has benefited greatly from the cycling programme and enjoys cycling in the park which has improved Rory's confidence and independence. I was grateful to be asked to speak here and help promote a programme which will benefit so many more young people with autism / Asperger's."

Grainne Close, Autism Initiatives National Director, says: "The cycling programme is a good example of partnership work that promotes positive health initiatives that leads to good outcomes for our services users. AINI's Health and Activities coordinator, Pauline Graham is full of innovative ideas always looking to motivate and encourage many of our service users to try out new experiences. Listening to our parent's story and the positive impact our programmes are having really encourages staff knowing that we are making a real difference. One parent spoke about how life-changing our programmes have been."



Pictured at the third annual Active Belfast Workshop, launched by the Belfast Lord Mayor centre) is (L-R) Andrew Steenson, Active Belfast Senior Project Officer, Alison Robinson and Cathy Brennan-Bradley from Autism Initiatives NI, Kim Kensett, Active Belfast Senior Project Officer, Grainne Close, National Director, Autism Initiatives and Ben Harvey, Active Belfast Project Officer

him like hosting coffee mornings for Children in Need, arranging day trips and a recent holiday to the set of Coronation Street.

We have raised £600 and I would like to thank Karen, Claire, Grainne and Katie for being part of the relay team and to all those who sponsored us. And once again- thank you to all the staff at Autism Initiatives please know you are all so appreciated!



New Sensory Room for The Oaks

Autism Initiatives IOM is pleased to announce the completed renovation and relocation of the Sensory Room at The Oaks in Ramsey. Many people with an autism spectrum condition (ASC) have difficulty processing everyday sensory information such as sounds, sights and smells. This is usually referred to as having sensory integration difficulties, or sensory sensitivity and is something that can have a profound effect on a person's life. Multi-Sensory rooms can help to provide that stimulus to develop sensory tolerance, understanding and enjoyment. Multi-Sensory Rooms are designed to create a stimulating and yet calming atmosphere. They can be set up for children or adults of all ages and can be installed for therapy and education, or for recreation and leisure. In the



renovation and relocation of the sensory room, great thought was given by the management and staff members from the Outreach team, as to the contents of the room.

Some of the items now installed in the sensory room include vibrating cushions, fibre optics, mirror balls and bubble tubes. Equipment can be activated by switches, movement, sound or pressure so that people using the equipment can be taught to learn about cause and effect.

The original Sensory Room at The Oaks was introduced in 2007 and since then staff members from the Outreach team have developed a huge range of skills and knowledge in the use of the room and the equipment. Whilst always a popular activity for many of the people attending the day service, the relocation and refurbishment has ensured even greater use of the room.

The History of Multi-Sensory Rooms dates back to the late 1970's, when two Dutch psychologists developed the idea of Snoezelen Rooms. These were initially introduced as a therapy for those with learning disabilities. Over time this initial idea has merged with the use of a wide range of multi-sensory stimulation to provide special environments for people with a variety of disabilities, disorders and conditions including autism.

Whilst much of the relocation work was done by staff members in their own time they were also ably assisted in this by some of our service users who took an active part in helping with the repainting of the walls. The end result being something we are all very proud of. To complete the project we received a very kind donation of a brand new carpet from Autism in Mann which has really enhanced the look and feel of the sensory room.

Gardening at The Oaks

Service users and staff have spent many hours working in the garden at The Oaks, undertaking a complete rework of the garden area. Everyone has undertaken general maintenance, installed a new fence, cleaned up the pond and also renovated the bench. A number of sensory items are also to be added to the garden.



Susan Smyth And Friends Run The Belfast Marathon! Raised £600!

(Article by Susan Smyth)

We decided to run the Belfast Marathon Relay for Autism Initiatives to raise money and awareness for a wonderful charity! Katie also attracted much attention, including appearing on BBC Newsline and really boosting sponsorship by running in a wedding dress with Autism Initiative T shirt fashioned into a bolero.

My lovely brother Barry lives in one of Autism Initiatives supported living houses and we so appreciate the work of all the staff and the organisation in helping him to live independently, make choices and support him to do the things that are important to

Donation from Isle of Man Fire Service

Members of the Isle of Man Fire Service recently presented Autism Initiatives with the proceeds raised from a sponsored world record 24 hour ladder climb in Regent Street Douglas. The ladder climb was organised by Gary Kirby of Blue Watch and saw the local service impressively breaking a world record previously held by New Zealand fire fighters

The Fire Service's generous donation has been used to really good effect, enabling the organisation to purchase a large garden trampoline for the residents at one of our residential homes in the Glen Vine area.

Sensory activities often play a huge part in the activities of young people with autism and that our addition of a garden trampoline is a particularly popular pastime for our residents. The re-introduction of the trampoline, following storm damage, coupled with the good weather we have enjoyed in recent weeks, has already proved a highly popular activity for the residents and a useful addition to the house.



We would like to thank the Fire Service for their very kind donation

Cardiff One Stop Shop opens!

A new One Stop Shop has been developed in Cardiff based upon the model created by Autism Initiatives in Scotland.

The One Stop Shop and other related services are being established under the new charity Autism Spectrum Connections Cymru (ASCC). ASCC has been developed as a partnership between Autism Initiatives and Autism Cymru, who were driving forward developed the Autism Strategy in Wales.

The service will offer group and 1:1 support in a number of key areas including employment, benefits, thinking skills and post diagnostic advice. It will also be the base for a range of user led social groups. A group of local adults on the spectrum (The OSS 'think tank') have helped to guide this project from idea, through to delivery and will continue to offer support and guidance as the project develops further.

A further exciting project running from the OSS is a Welsh Government backed initiative to raise awareness of autism with the largest employers in Wales, who are known as the Anchor Companies. ASCC have secured the secondment of a senior member of staff from Admiral Insurance, Jane Wynn-Jones, who is acting as a link between the project and these companies. This will be the first time that employers have been engaged in this way, and we are delighted to be backing this whole project and its future development.



A Busy Summer at the Haven!

This year has seen Autism Initiatives acquire its second school, The Haven, a registered independent school based in Mold, Flintshire for pupils aged between 11 and 19 years.

Pupils may come to us after attending special, mainstream or alternative provision education. Some may have experienced difficulties coping with a traditional setting.

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-centred learning opportunities equipping them with the skills for life.

The school adopts a topic based approach to teaching to ensure learning can be generalised and independence maximised. Vocational and practical activities play a large part in motivating the pupils and ensuring that learning is fun! Whilst always meeting Estyn requirements we like to make the most of our beautiful location with a real focus on the outdoors, linking our activities with the local communities.



This summer the school staff and service users have been busy completing work in numeracy and literacy. Pupils now have individual working folders and can complete a range of exercises.

We have purchased some new PE / fitness equipment and have been working on hand/eye co-ordination by playing badminton, rounders and jumbo darts. Pupils have been learning how to box using our new punch bag and pads. Dumbbells are also available for the pupils to build up their core strength and fitness and arriving shortly is a multi-gym.

Staff and students have been to Chester Zoo, enjoying a fantastic day out and have now also joined the National Trust, so plans are afoot to visit some more places of interest.

For more information on the Haven, please contact Aled James on **01970 626264**.

Autism Initiatives becomes Approved Landlord in Wales!

Autism Initiatives has recently become an approved Landlord in Conwy, Wales – a gap in service provision for people with autism was identified, and we were approached and invited to become Approved Landlords. Following our successful application, we have recently been recruited and are now accredited on the scheme.

Aled James, Development Officer for Wales, has 18 years' experience in supporting people in services for children, vulnerable adults and older people, specialising in autism and learning difficulties. Over the last 8 years Aled's main role has been as Autism Initiatives Development Officer working with both residential and supported living services in Wales. This includes developing staff teams, and working alongside service users to achieve positive outcomes and increase independent living skills.

Speaking about the new partnership with the Approved Landlord Scheme Aled said, "We want to expand into further supported living projects in Wales not only to meet the demands of the local Authorities, but also to meet the needs of people with autism".

Kevin Wynne, Assistant Director, said "We are delighted to be part of working in partnership with supporting people in Conwy and it is part of our expansion of working throughout Wales".



Presenting the Certificate of Accreditation
Pictured (L-R) is Joe Lambe, Approved Landlord Manager with Aled James and Kevin Wynne of Autism Initiatives

A big thank you to everyone who has contributed to 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

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