

Autism Innovation and Development Fund

Progress Report
April – September 2016



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Cover photograph kindly provided by the A.H.A Futures Project. Additional photographs kindly provided by Perth Autism Support, Scottish Autism and CheckIn Works.

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Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to provide a six monthly progress report from Inspiring Scotland on the impact of the Autism Innovation and Development Portfolio activity during the period 1st April 2016 to 30th September 2016.

We have looked at what activities have been delivered and what impact this is having. It ties together information from progress reports submitted by the 43 projects in November. This report builds on the progress report submitted in September which covered the period to end March 2016.

The report will provide an update to Scottish Government on progress towards the stated aims of the grant letter which are noted as follows:

- Innovation and Development Fund projects are accountable, are able to deliver and evidence their intended social impact and can articulate the difference made to the lives of the people they support.
- Funded projects sustainability is increased through ability to describe impact to a wider funding base.
- Funded projects behave more collaboratively to the benefit of individuals they support

The format of this report has been altered to provide a more in-depth update at a portfolio level whilst still retaining an update on the individual charities' activities.

The Scottish Autism Strategy

The Scottish Strategy for Autism's stated vision is that individuals on the autism spectrum are respected, accepted and valued by their communities and have confidence in services to treat them fairly so that they are able to have meaningful and satisfying lives.

The Scottish Government provides strategic leadership on improving the lives of people affected by autism. It leads on creating a strategic vision for the development of services and support for people with autism, their families and carers.

The Autism Innovation and Development Fund April 2015 – March 2017 aims to support organisations who are delivering services to autistic individuals and their families. Their activities are improving the lives of people affected by autism. In addition to this, the Scottish Government secured the services of Inspiring Scotland to help develop the capacity of the providers.

Section 2: Fund activity

Highlights

Nearly 2000 service users have been helped in the period April to September 2016. This is almost double the numbers reported as supported up to March 2016. All projects are now up and running.

1,935
service users helped
Apr 2016 – Sep 2016

Activities reported by the charities

Over 80% of the projects reported that they had impacted positively on service users access to information and support.

This was followed closely by increased social confidence in the service user (78%). Nearly 67% of charities reported that through their activities, autistic individuals were now reporting an improved ability to build better relationships. Artlink in Edinburgh, amongst others, provided a case study showing how through their intervention a young autistic individual had been able to restart at college and was now doing well.

Over 70% of the charities reported that they had increased their partnership working. Evidence provided by the charities post the Portfolio Day in October suggests that this has improved even further since then.

The charities are reporting that they are sharing ideas and learnings on a variety of topics. This has included TCV promoting an outdoor event for autistic individuals they ran in October to the portfolio.

A number of organisations attended with their service users and are now looking to run similar events themselves. Artlink and Autism Initiatives

have collaborated on a variety of support projects (see Jordan's Story below).

One area that Inspiring Scotland will look to investigate further with the charities is the support during transition from school to either employment or further education.

Only 40% of charities reported that there had been an improvement in the transition from school for service users. Many of the charities' projects are focused on activities to improve transitions from school to employment and/or further education. Given that only 40% reported an improvement in this outcome, it would be

Case study: Jordan's story

Jordan left specialised education in 2016. His transition into higher education was challenging as his interests weren't met by existing education or day services and his support needs dictated the need for his own classroom. This pioneering project acknowledges Jordan's knowledge, designing an alternative developmental curriculum on his terms.

A completely bespoke further education programme for Jordan has been developed. The team comprises Jordan, his mum and dad, lecturer, adult support provider Autism Initiatives, his social worker and Artlink.

"Artlink's input with Jordan has been absolutely invaluable. They have been involved throughout his transition from school and their input has enabled Jordan to access a wide range of various art and creative activities within the community. Jordan now has a very active and busy timetable within the community, prior to Jordan's bespoke support package being set up, his daily life had been very restricted".

Percentage of portfolio charities delivering against each outcome

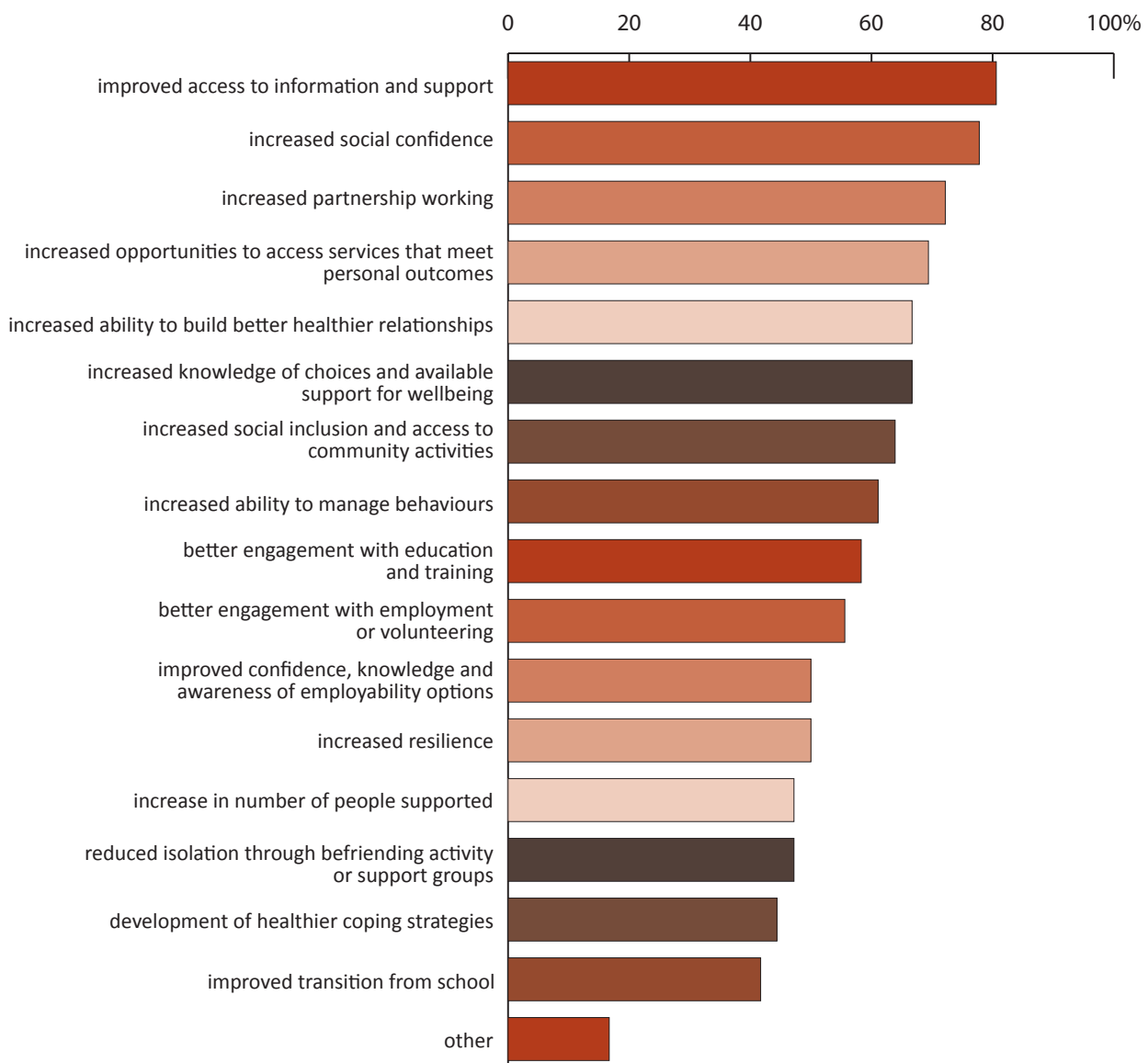


fig. 1

useful to understand more fully what is preventing the autistic young person making a successful transition.

Central Advocacy in Falkirk, who are supporting 23 young people as they transition from school to further education, referred in their report to the importance of early preparation and planning for the transition. If this doesn't happen, the likelihood of a successful transition will be diminished. Successful early planning is mentioned by several charities as critical.

Case study: Glasgow Carers Partnership

Glasgow Carers Partnership is a great example of collaborative working. The organisation has worked in close collaboration with the Autism Resource Centre to develop their training package for carers and built strong links across the NHS for referrals.

Thus, the parent or carer of every young person who receives a diagnosis of autism in Glasgow now receives this autism training, with 121 individuals attending the city-wide training courses in this reporting period.

The Glasgow Carers Partnership have also worked in partnership with the carers they support to adapt the training, this has resulted in the course being translated into Mandarin following 40 Mandarin families being identified as having an autism diagnosis.

The organisation is now linking with other Autism Innovation and Development Fund Projects to look at ways of dovetailing their work and combining resources with the objective of all autism charities taking responsibility for parent and carer education.



• Perth Autism Support Young Adult Project

Case Study: Perth Autism Support

A young autistic person secured full time employment with Perth & Kinross Council following a variety of activity including:

- a) sessions started at home with young person and their family
- b) Adult coordinator working with council to develop a support plan

Successes identified by charities

Across the board, the Innovation and Development Fund continues to make a difference in the lives of people with autism and their families and carers. Local promotion of the work is also helping to educate communities about autism.

There were a number of common areas of successes identified by the charities. These included:

- Building resilient teams across organisations (TCV, Scottish Autism, Perth Autism Support, Artlink, IWORK4ME, Into Work)
- Starting to identify ways to share learnings (Artlink, IWORK4ME, TCV, Scottish Autism, Disability Shetland)
- Improved Partnership Working (Barnardo's, IWORK4Me)
- Supporting families with improved services and information (Barnardo's, Artlink, Scottish Autism, Kindred, The Richmond Fellowship, Autism Network Scotland, Glasgow Carers Partnership)
- Improving choices and outcomes for service users (Barnardo's, Disability Shetland, Artlink, Perth Autism Support, TCV, Scottish Autism, Project Ability, Grampian Opportunities, Values Into Action)
- Use of creative activity or active play to improve the wellbeing of the service user (Teens +, Artlink, RSC, Indepen-dance, Highland Cycle Ability Centre, Aberdeen Play Forum)
- Enabling individuals on the autism spectrum to develop and increase skills (Clydesdale Community Initiatives, AHA Futures, Momentum, Realise)

- Individuals feel less social isolated and more valued in their communities (Clydesdale Community Initiatives, Grampian Opportunities, National Autistic Society, AHA Futures, Shirlie Project)

In addition, the Innovation and Development Fund has enabled non-specialist charities to increase their capacity to support and learn from working with autistic people.

One example is Indepen-dance, where the Innovation and Development funding has enabled breakthroughs in communication with several autistic young people. Indepen-dance specialises in Creative Dance classes for people of all levels of abilities and, with this funding, has set up specialised autism dance classes in Glasgow, Falkirk and Kilmarnock.

In this reporting period, 80 people have taken part in funded classes, seeing a marked difference in the individual's participation, wellbeing, confidence and creativity. The project has enabled the organisation to appropriately resource autism dance classes, increasing the team's capacity and ability to work 1:1 where required.

One participant, Kenny, attends the weekly creative movement class in Glasgow. Kenny had been in the 'young' class for two or three years but funding created an appropriate class with higher staff ratio for him to attend. Kenny is non-verbal and staff have had huge difficulties in engaging him. After years of sitting in the corner, Kenny is now spending the whole-time dancing. The teacher has never seen him smile so much and be so engaged and responsive. Kenny is receiving much more 1:1 support due to the higher staff ratio and is developing good relationships with staff. His family are delighted with his progress.

Geographic spread of projects

Projects look to have delivered in 27 of the 32 local authorities during this reporting period.

The Local Authority areas where there doesn't appear to be any activity or only limited activity are Borders, Dundee, Angus, Argyll & Bute and Inverclyde. In contrast, there are 8 projects located in Edinburgh and the Lothians and 6 in Glasgow and surrounding areas. Nearly 90% of the projects are based in the Central Belt of Scotland.

Two areas which have been highlighted as particularly challenging have been Aberdeenshire and the Highlands. In Aberdeenshire, the projects have commented that some local support organisations have closed-down and the 'One Stop Shop' withdrawn from Aberdeen. This has added additional pressure to projects such as Grampian Opportunities, which has now become an important local go to place.

In the Highlands, there continues to be pressure on local resources and the One Stop Shop, however projects operating in Fort William (AHA Futures), Inverness (The Shirlie Project) and Cantray (Watermill Foundation, Highland Cycle Ability Centre) continue to deliver against outcomes.

In Fort William, AHA Futures has shown that three organisations working in partnership can deliver a strong localised service, the Shirlie Project has now connected to every high school across Highlands to engage those who will transition out of school and the Watermill Foundation has exceeded targets with its highest year of autistic users and users overall of the Highland Cycle Ability Centre.

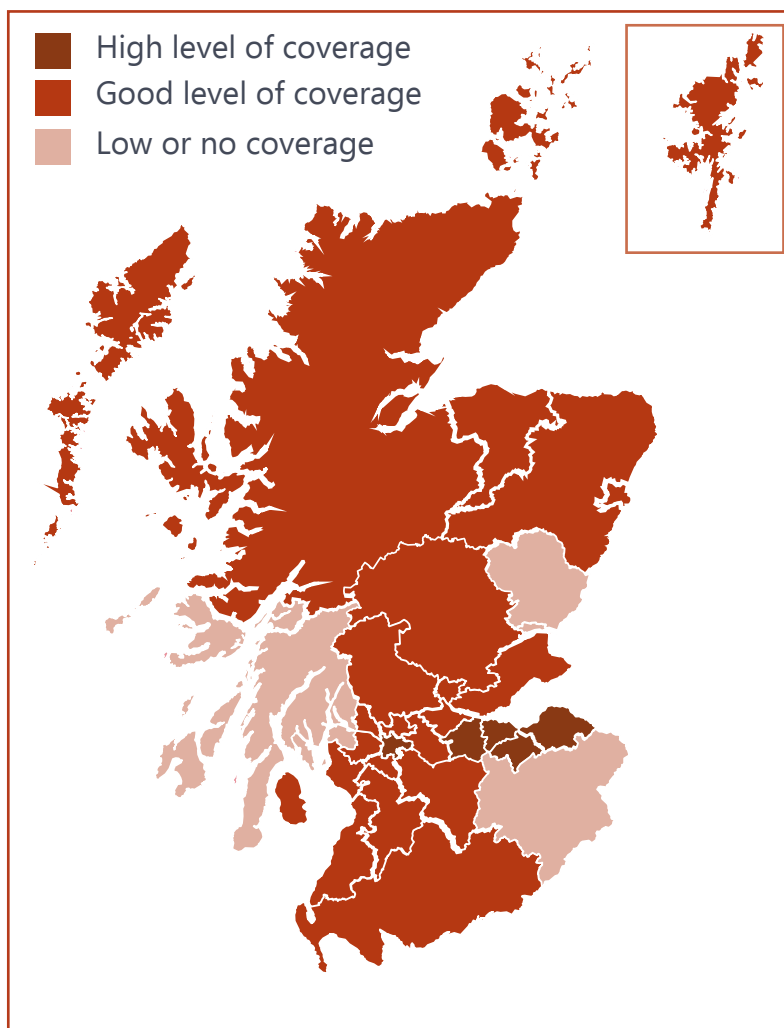


fig. 2

Section 3: Impact of projects on strategic outcomes

A Healthy Life People with Autism enjoy the highest attainable standard of living, health and family life and have timely access to diagnostic assessment and integrated support services.

Choice and Control People with Autism are treated with dignity and respect and services are able to identify their needs and are responsive to meet those needs.

Independence People with autism are able to live independently in the community with equal access to all aspects of society. Services have the capacity and awareness to ensure that people are met with recognition and understanding.

Active Citizenship People with autism are able to participate in all aspects of community and society by successfully transitioning from school into meaningful educational or employment opportunities.

20 charities are reporting that the main outcome they are delivering outcomes against is Active Citizenship.

In particular, they are highlighting the improvements in the transition from school to further education. However, it is not without its challenges in particular cross-agency working and lack of early preparation.

The use of creative activities or sport/active play is having a very positive impact. Project Ability, RCS, Independence, AHA Futures and Artlink are demonstrating good use of unlocking wellbeing through the creative arts, and both the Highland Cycle Ability Centre and Aberdeen Play Forum have shown traction in health and wellbeing through sport and active play.

As stated previously, 20 have shown evidence that they are actively supporting the Active Citizenship outcome. This is followed by 10 impacting positively on “A Healthy Life”.

Projects that are focussing on transitions are evidencing good work in supporting an

improvement in increased independence. For example, Central Advocacy has helped a number of service users to use public transport. Choice and Control is the lowest outcome impacted with only 4 charities listing it as their main outcome. However more than 20 charities list it as their secondary strategic outcome.

Strategic Outcomes Impacted

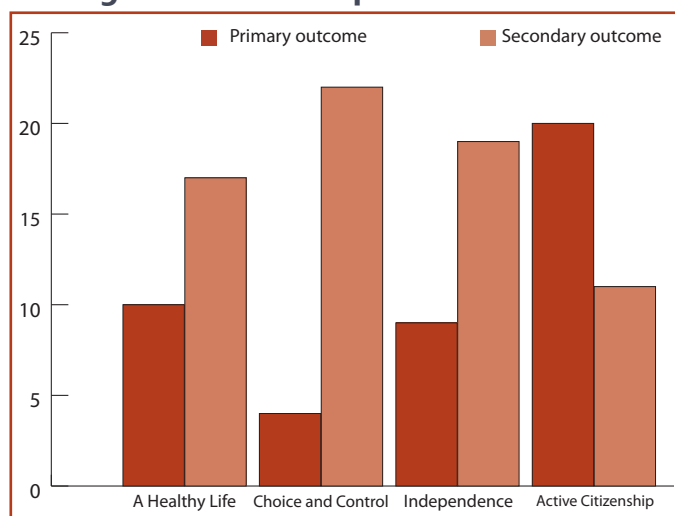


fig. 3

Section 4: Emerging themes

Key challenges that are surfacing through the charities' reporting are:

- **Lack of diagnosis for older adults**
There are a number of case studies which highlight an increasing group of adults in their 40's and older who have not been diagnosed until late in life. For many, there is limited support for them. They are often cared for by elderly parents and ongoing care is an issue.
- **Working with Local Authorities and the closure of services**
For many of the charities, the activity is delivered in conjunction with Local Authorities and other agencies, as we value the benefits partnership working brings. Partnership working is essential in getting the most out of organisations and whilst there are examples of good practice, there are also examples of challenges faced. It is inevitable that when organisations come together challenges can arise, this can include different processes and sometimes delays in projects starting, funding being cut and bureaucracy slowing activity down. However, when these are overcome, the benefits of partnership working leads to better outcomes for autistic people and the organisations involved.



- *Scottish Autism Women and Girls Project*
- **Support for Autistic Girls and Women**
There is increasing evidence that girls are masking their symptoms and not being diagnosed. There is currently only 1 project funded to support girls in the portfolio. Obviously, all the projects support both boys and girls however there could be a case made for supporting more projects aimed at tackling the specific issues girls face.
- **School Exclusions**
There is anecdotal evidence that autistic children in mainstream schools are more likely to be excluded. Currently only one project – Scottish Autism – is focused on school exclusions, working with 6 individuals in the Motherwell area.

Section 5: Inspiring Scotland activities

During this reporting period, Inspiring Scotland have delivered a range of activities. Since April 2016, we have been working with 43* projects in the Autism Portfolio. We support the organisations with:

- Performance management advice to ensure that projects are accountable and delivering to key metrics including financial, organisational and social impact.
- Monitoring and self-evaluation support to ensure intended outcomes and social impact is achieved, evidenced and can be communicated effectively.
- Formal reporting on a regular basis at both a portfolio and individual project level.
- Bespoke capacity building for grantees based on organisational development needs defined by review meetings and access to pro-bono volunteer network.
- To help develop more effective engagement across the portfolio to build partnerships and learnings.
- Adding value through delivering training and learning opportunities at a portfolio level, with special interest groups and small cohort groups. This is intended to engender a sharing and learning culture, to encourage high performance, stimulate new ideas and innovations in practice.



- *Maureen Watt MSP, Minister for Mental Health, at our Portfolio Day*

Within the Autism portfolio, the benefits of this activity with the organisations are becoming increasingly apparent. This has included a highly successful Portfolio Day with 100% of the attendees from the Autism Portfolio rating it as either meeting or exceeding expectations; 2 rounds of reporting completed which is starting to develop a picture of the social impact of the activity and to date, over 20% of organisations benefiting from Pro Bono support.

**A further 3 Autism charities receive a light touch intervention and access to portfolio events and training.*

Section 6: Conclusion

Across Scotland, the Autism Innovation and Development Fund continues to have an impact on the ground for autistic people and their families, carers and communities.

All projects are making progress with almost 2,000 individuals impacted in this reporting period alone. There has been strong evidence of outcomes provided by charities in the form of testimonials, case studies and quotes.

Engagement with Inspiring Scotland has increased over this reporting period, with productive conversations in project meetings and excellent participation and feedback from the first Portfolio Event.

In project meetings, funding continues to be a key topic. Charities have noted that having this contribution towards costs to deliver these services has been greatly received. However, there is no obvious replacement should funding no longer continue.

Inspiring Scotland continues to work with charities on sustainability and diversification of funding sources, including a 'Meet The Funders' session with Children In Need, Youth Link and the Big Lottery Fund on the 16th December.

In this reporting period, projects have indicated that without future funding, it is unlikely that many projects will continue in April 2017.



• Michael at CheckIn Works' Mill Street Cafe

Looking ahead, for the remainder of the Innovation and Development Fund, Inspiring Scotland will continue to work closely with the charities to build capacity and facilitate cross-project connections.

Across the board, charities continue to do excellent work, working towards the outcomes defined in the Scottish Autism Strategy.

The Autism Innovation and Development Fund is building capacity, enabling new connections and, most importantly, improving the lives of people with autism in Scotland.

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