



Scottish Government
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INSPIRING SCOTLAND

Increasing Understanding of Autism Programme

INTERIM FUND REPORT

June 2020 – January 2021



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Campaign

The **Different Minds. One Scotland** advertising campaign launched in October 2020.

The first phase of the campaign has been evaluated and overall results show that **for a new campaign it stood out and performed well.**

There are some early signs that the campaign is encouraging non-autistic people to consider their current behaviour with and around autistic people.

The target audience was 25 to 54 year olds in Scotland and the research was conducted with the same group:

Key Numbers from the evaluation

40%

of our target audience remembered having seen our advertising campaign when shown samples

12%

of people remembered the myth busting film

84%

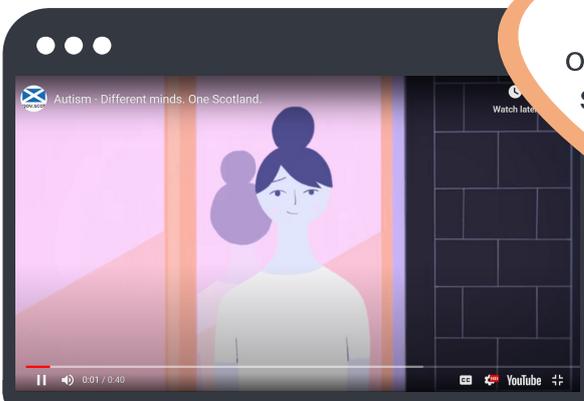
of our audience agreed that people thinking differently benefits society

29%

of people remembered seeing the campaign film

3%

remembered the fact that 1 in 100 people are autistic. There is further work needed here to help more people remember this



These numbers are just a snapshot of how the campaign performed. The full results have been shared with the Advisory Forums and if you would like to know more then please get in touch.

Funded Charities

9

Autism charities across Scotland



£295,451

funding provided for work delivered between December 2019 and December 2020

502

autistic people engaged with through the project development and activity

951

non-autistic people worked with either via meetings or training

150

employers engaged

1

Autistic people are able to access their local communities more easily.

2

Non-autistic people have a better understanding of autism.

3

Autistic people have more employment opportunities within Scotland.

Background to the Increasing Understanding of Autism Programme

This programme is a direct response to the Scottish Government’s 2017 Engagement Exercise, which emphasised the need to raise understanding of autism amongst the non-autistic population.

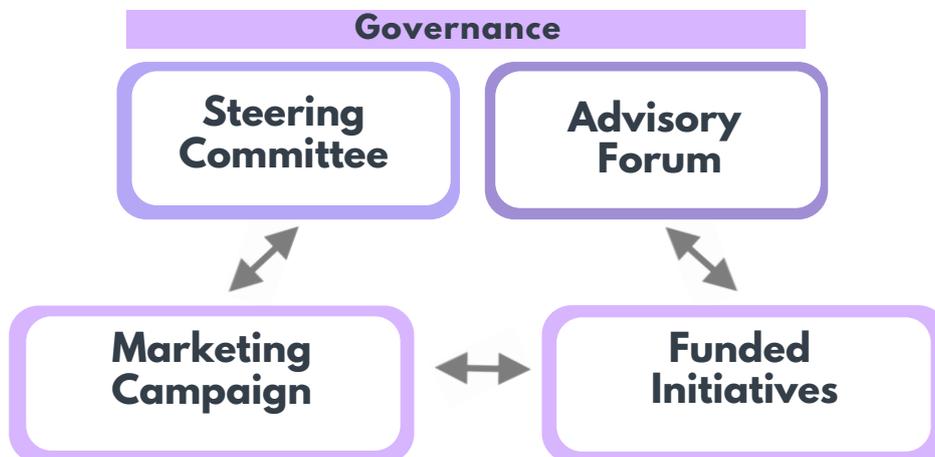
The consultation highlighted the importance of increasing understanding, awareness and acceptance of autism, reducing autism stereotypes and building a society which is accessible, inclusive and values neurodiversity.

Through the Programme, we are aiming to make Scotland a more accessible, inclusive, and understanding place for autistic people to learn, work and live.

The programme consists of a marketing campaign managed by the Scottish Government, and nine funded charity projects. The programme is governed by the Steering Committee which is supported by four Autistic Advisory Forums – see graphic below for more information.

Programme Structure

The funded charities are also partners in this programme, helping to influence the direction of the national marketing campaign and promote the campaign at a local level.



Steering Committee



Steering Committee oversees the whole programme. It has 6 voting members, three of whom are autistic, one employer, one academic and a member of Scottish Government.

Advisory Forum

Advisory Forums put the autistic voice at the heart of the programme. Four regional Autism Advisory Forums were established to gather feedback from around 50 autistic individuals. These Forums have been facilitated by different Autistic People Led Organisations in Scotland. The forum feedback has then been shared with the Steering Committee to help shape the direction of the programme.

The Advisory Forums were externally evaluated in November 2020 to help Inspiring Scotland develop and improve the groups going forwards. Overall, the feedback was positive and Inspiring Scotland is now working to develop the structure and format of the forums.

“I made this decision to use my diagnosis in a positive way. I wasn’t expecting anything from it but I’ve gained some confidence from it and a feeling that what we were doing was worthwhile and important.”

“Finding a way to express your views in a positive way that is actually valued. I have a lot of feelings and opinions around inclusion and what that means for my family, in day-to-day life the only way I can vent that is in school related to negative experiences that arise. To actually have an opportunity to do something positive has been great – I can’t think of another opportunity like that I’ve seen.”

“I know the people running the forums were genuinely interested and really pleased with what we were coming up with and they knew what we were doing was important and valuable.”

Feedback from people who’ve attended the Advisory Forums



Charity Initiatives

In partnership with the Scottish government we are distributing £400,000 of funding across nine charities in Scotland. The funding aims to make **employment** and **community participation** more accessible and to help autistic people live active and independent lives.

When we began this project in December 2019 none of us could have predicted the Covid-19 pandemic which reached Scotland just as the charities were beginning to start delivering their projects. This report provides a brief update on the **nine funded charity projects**, all of which are underway in some form despite the impact of the crisis, providing much needed support at this time of uncertainty.

In March 2021 the Steering Committee approved additional funding requests from **SWAN, Enable, Into Work, Perth Autism Support, The Usual Place** and **The Triple A's** to allow them to extend their projects over the summer period.

Auticon and **Autism Atlas** will be using underspend to extend their projects over the summer.

Project Ability have completed their project but there is the possibility of an extension if venues reopen and their original plans can go ahead.

Outcomes

In line with [Scottish Strategy for Autism](#) the programme has three main strategic outcomes which will improve the outcomes for autistic people living in Scotland.

Independence

Autistic people 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.

All 9 charities reported that they had noted increased awareness of autism amongst the non-autistic people they are working with.

All 7 charities who are delivering training as part of their projects have either worked with autistic people to develop the training or autistic people have developed it and are conducting the training themselves.

Into Work is a good example of this. They have successfully created an Autism Works Advisory Group, recruited three Autistic Associate Trainers and are now beginning to roll out their comprehensive training with excellent feedback.

"It was excellent and demonstrated how training can still be interactive when delivered online. I learned a great deal despite liking to think I had quite a lot of knowledge about autism and employment of autistic individuals prior to the 2 days. The presenters were all very knowledgeable and struck me as being very much in tune with the needs and realities of employers as well as those for autistic people."

Feedback on Into Work's training

Choice and Control

Autistic people are treated with dignity and respect and services are able to identify their needs and are responsive to meet those needs.

8 of the 9 charities indicated that they have started to see raised understanding of autism amongst professionals and services that encounter or work with autistic people.

SWAN's project is a good example of a scheme working intensively with autistic women to keep them in work and support those around them. Such as their line managers, union representatives, occupational health, human resources and support workers to increase their understanding of autism and put in place relevant workplace adjustments.

The non-autistic people we have worked with have gained knowledge on the experience of autistic women in the workplace, particularly with regard to sensory overwhelm, communication styles and the high levels of distress, stress and anxiety that can result from working environments which are not inclusive of autistic people.

They have learned what reasonable adjustments could be implemented to enable individuals to perform fully at work, how to seek financial support for those adjustments and how to create a more inclusive workplace culture which does not 'other' autistic employees (and other minority groups).

Lyndsay Macadam - Employment Liaison Lead, SWAN

Active Citizenship

Autistic people are able to participate in all aspects of community and society by successfully transitioning from school into meaningful educational or employment opportunities.

Some charities have reported progress against this outcome but given the ongoing restrictions this is the most challenging outcome to achieve. All the cultural venues have been closed since March and while they opened briefly, they are now closed for the foreseeable future.

Despite this many projects such as Triple A's, The Usual Place, SWAN, Project Ability & Autism Atlas have done laudable work to people and give peer support and information through this difficult time.

Triple A's pivoted their project at the start of COVID-19. They've delivered a series of successful webinars (often in partnership) to support autistic people, carers and professionals. Topics have included; Home-schooling, Returning to School, Intrinsic Motivation, What Autism is and What it is Not, Meltdowns Shutdowns & Elopements, Neurodiverse Networking & Festive Crisis Points.

We regularly see the same autistic adults coming back again and again who are using this information to support them in their employment, personal lives, relationships, giving them the tools to advocate for themselves, and with us as necessary.

Marion McLaughlin, One Stop Shop Manager - Triple A's

Inspiring Scotland's model allows for each charity to get support from a dedicated Performance Advisor who nurtures collaboration and innovation to increase scale and impact. Performance Advisors are working

intensively alongside the senior leadership and boards of each charity. Their purpose is to act as a 'critical friend' and focus their support on areas like strengthening financial management and strategic business planning.

Each Performance Advisor has access to Inspiring Scotland's Specialist Volunteer Network - over 400 professionals who offer their support and expertise for free. Inspiring Scotland matches the skills and requirements to each charity appropriately and to best effect.

Between January 2020 and January 2021 the portfolio has received **213 hours of support specialist support** from this network. Including areas such as sourcing new board members, accountancy and legal advice.



**Non-financial
Support**

Other successes in the portfolio

Triple A's - One Stop Shop was named Charity Champion in Aberdeen

"At a time of need these guys were there for us. Truly appreciative of their support & follow up. Break through experience for me discussing our situation with an adult autistic, who clearly 'gets it'. It was eye opening for me to hear advice from someone with first hand experience."

Parent supported by Triple A's during lockdown



<https://www.eveningexpress.co.uk/fp/aberdeens-champion-awards/triple-as-one-stop-shop-aberdeen-named-charity-champion/>

The Usual Place contributed to Education Scotland's publication 'What Scotland Learned, 100 stories from Lockdown'

"My confidence has got a lot stronger. I am much better at talking on the computer"

10 trainees at The Usual Place have now completed a Dynamic Youth Award based on their learning and development during lockdown.



https://education.gov.scot/media/z4elsjeo/what-scotland-learned_100stories.pdf

Perth Autism Support launched their new three-year strategy and their new website



<https://www.perthautismsupport.org.uk/>

The Portfolio

Employment themed projects:

Triple A's



Triple As is an autistic led peer support charity in Aberdeen. Despite lockdown they have continued to deliver their project and in addition provide general support to autistic individuals on areas other than just employment. They have developed an online information hub along with a toolkit to develop people's understanding of autism. They've also developed teacher pack for children returning to school after lockdown, a Covid-19 Autism Information Card and hosted virtual training sessions online for a variety of organisations.

SWAN



Scottish Women's Autism Network (SWAN) offers autistic-led peer-support, in local groups and through online forums for autistic women in Scotland. Their project supports women who are struggling to stay in their jobs. They provide one to one support for these women and also work with their employer to create an inclusive working environment for the autistic employee. They are delivering across Scotland.

Auticon



Auticon is a social enterprise, which exclusively employs autistic adults as IT consultants. Due to lockdown they delayed the start of their project until December 2020. They have recruited an Autism Advisor to deliver the project. They have delivered training to the following organisations; Nat West, HSBC, Glasgow Chamber of Commerce, Software Engineering Leaders Forum. As of February 2021 they had delivered training to 168 people. They are delivering in Fife, centrally and the Borders.

Inspired Community Enterprise Ltd (The Usual Place)



The Usual Place creates employability, training and wider citizenship opportunities for young adults with additional support needs in Dumfries and Galloway. Their employment project engages with local businesses through business seminars which has obviously been challenging during lockdown.

They have supported their Trainees through Lockdown & transitioning them back into work and promoted their achievements to the non-autistic population. The Usual Place have engaged with a variety of employers and stakeholders and have projects in the pipeline with several employers in the region across a wide range of sectors.

Into Work



Into Work help people with disabilities and long-term health conditions find, build and maintain jobs in Edinburgh and the Lothians. Their Autism Works project is co-produced with autistic people and works with employers such as National Library of Scotland, Franklin Templeton, Scottish Engineering, Leonardo, Midlothian Council and City of Edinburgh Council to improve their understanding of autism and working environments for autistic people. Despite lockdown they've recruited three Associate Trainers and an Advisory Group of 6 autistic individuals and have used a co-production approach to develop.

Enable Scotland



Enable campaigns to improve the lives of people who live with learning disabilities across Scotland. They established an Autism Advisory Group who were consulted throughout the training development process. Two individuals from the Advisory Group have also become co-trainers. They had a target of engaging with 65 employers and 250 people - as of February 2021 they've engaged with 67 employers and 432 people.

Perth Autism Support



The original goal of the project was to provide training and resources to 10 Asda stores. It was also to include instore community focus groups. This has had to be delayed due to the pandemic. While Asda did reschedule the work to start in Feb 2021 this has been postponed due to the recent lockdown. They are now refocusing their efforts away from working with national retailers and open the project to include all sectors working within Perth & Kinross. They are also supporting young autistic people into work experience and employment as we emerge from the pandemic. Their project is delivering in Perth and Kinross.

Community themed projects:

Autism Atlas



Autism ATLAS aims to increase autism awareness and acceptance in local communities through the central belt and Dundee. They initially planned to deliver autism awareness training, drama presentations and Q&A sessions for up to 3,000 people. They have diverted their focus to building up relationships with Police Scotland, local supermarkets, and Crown Prosecution service. All have agreed to receive training on autism which is autistic led. They have rewritten training scripts to allow it to be delivered virtually. They have also produced videos about lockdown and on various topics such as masking and sensory issues.

Project Ability



Project Ability is a visual arts charity and gallery supporting people with learning disabilities and mental ill-health in the Glasgow area. They have set up the Autistic Artists Research Group (AARGH) which is a collective of autistic artists. AARGH initially planned to visit Glasgow Life museums and galleries in the city to assess what the experience was like for autistic adults. Using tablets and phones to make video and audio recordings to document these visits which would then be shared to effect change. While lockdown has prevented to group from visiting venues, they group have still managed to develop their video making skills making 49 videos charting their experiences through lockdown.

Reflections & next steps

We could not have known when we launched the Programme, in December 2019, how the world would change almost overnight. The charity projects have had to stop, adapt, and pivot their projects as restrictions have fluctuated across the county. Despite lockdown all projects are now well underway, achieving outcomes and eight project will continue to deliver over the summer of 2021.

The success of the Different Minds campaign and the wider programme is a testament to the autistic people who've given their time and determined effort to make sure the programme is the best it can be.

As we develop phase two of the charity projects and the marketing campaign, we intent to build on the successful foundations that have been built in phase one and ensure that autistic people are ultimately at heart of the programme.

Compiled by Bee Vellacott & Albany Wallace-Martinez

Inspiring Scotland Autism Team



Autism Fund Twitter



Inspiring Scotland Autism Fund



Different Minds



Inspiring Scotland - Understanding Autism Programme Video