



Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
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INSPIRING SCOTLAND

Increasing Understanding of Autism Programme

END OF PHASE 1 REPORT



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Key Impact

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:

40%

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

12%

of people remembered the myth busting film

84%

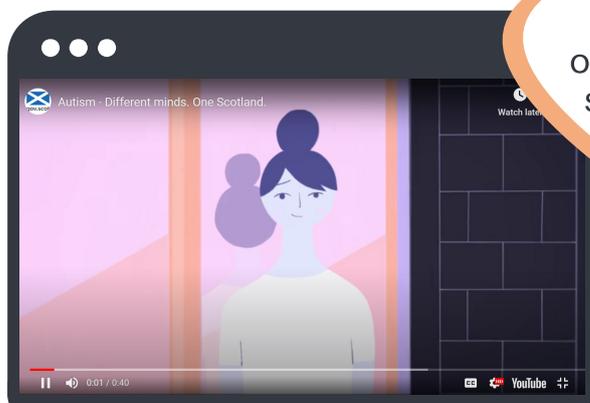
of our audience agreed that people thinking differently benefits society

29%

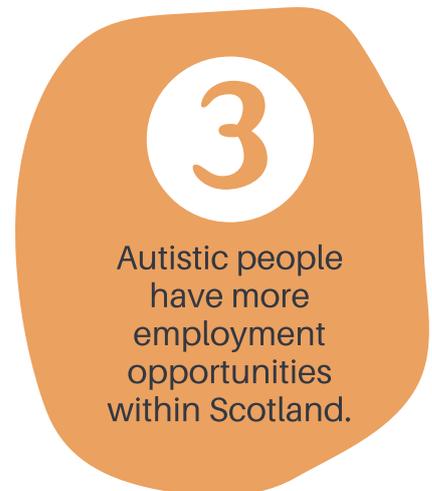
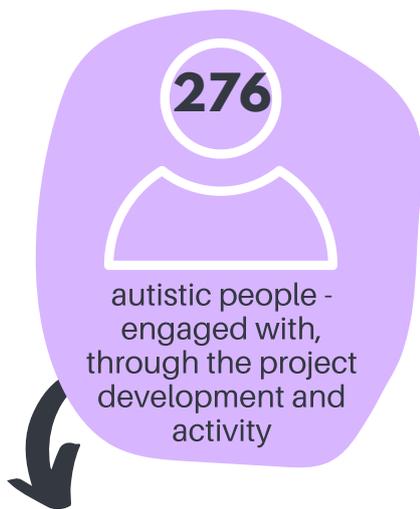
of people remembered seeing the campaign film

3%

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



Funded Charities



(* including a 6 month extension due to the impact of Covid-19)

How the Programme has worked

Key Learnings from Phase 1

- Putting the Autistic Voice at the heart of the programme has been vital to its success. We've learnt that the earlier autistic people can be brought into the process the better.
- Peer-to-peer learning and support is one of the most highly valued components for charities.
- Flexibility in approach supports organisations to leverage their strengths, especially during Covid-19.
- Charities have been true partners in the programme, helping to influence the direction of the campaign and share its messages on the ground.

Inspiring Scotland's Added Value Support

- 15 Portfolio workshops on topics such as; fundraising, Cost Benefit Analysis, Communicating Virtually, Non- Violent Communication, use of language in the autistic community
- One-to-one support and organisational Health Checks for the entire portfolio
- External evaluation of Phase 1 by Gap Communications

£92,200

of **Specialist Volunteer Network Support**

Support Areas Included:

- Governance and Board Support
- Legal
- HR
- Fundraising
- Sourcing and Securing new Trustees

The Autistic Voice

The Increasing Understanding of Autism Programme uses the Human Rights Based Approach, which aims to ensure that everyone has the right to participate in decisions that affect them. Wherever possible, the autistic voice has been embedded into the programme through our **Advisory Forum** and **Steering Committee**.

150+

Members of the Autism Advisory Forum from across Scotland



8

Members of the Website Advisory Group



24

Advisory Forum Meetings plus additional 1-2-1 meetings and surveys



9

Steering Committee Meetings

1

External Evaluation of the Autism Advisory Forum by Assenti Research



Introduction

The Increasing Understanding of Autism 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 engagement exercise 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.

One participant said that raising understanding of autism would contribute to the development of 'a culture of empathy and understanding' that will 'help to integrate and support autistic people to engage as more active citizens'. It is this culture of empathy and understanding which we sought to build through this programme.

The consultation feedback was also clear that we need to shift public perception away from seeing autism as a 'defect' to seeing it as a 'difference', otherwise exclusion will continue. One participant summed this up as encouraging non-autistic people to see an autistic person's 'skills as well as their difficulties' and to appreciate the 'huge benefit that people with ASD bring to society'.

The programme consists of the '**Different Minds. One Scotland.**' marketing campaign, which is managed by the Scottish Government, and nine funded charity projects. The programme is governed by the Steering Committee which is supported by the Autism Advisory Forum. 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.

Since 2019, Inspiring Scotland have been working with Scottish Government and partners across Scotland to build and deliver this new programme in three phases. Phase 1 of the Increasing Understanding of Autism Programme ran from December 2019 through to September 2021 and this report gives an overview of this Phase, and considerations as we move into Phase 2 and continue to aim to make Scotland a more accessible, inclusive, and understanding place for autistic people to learn, work and live.

Map of Investment

NATIONAL PROJECTS



• **ENABLE**



• **SWAN (Scottish Women's Autism Network)**



Auticon
Central Belt



Autism ATLAS
Glasgow City, Inverclyde, Renfrewshire



Project Ability
Glasgow City

Inspired Community Enterprise Trust (The Usual Place)
Dumfries and Galloway



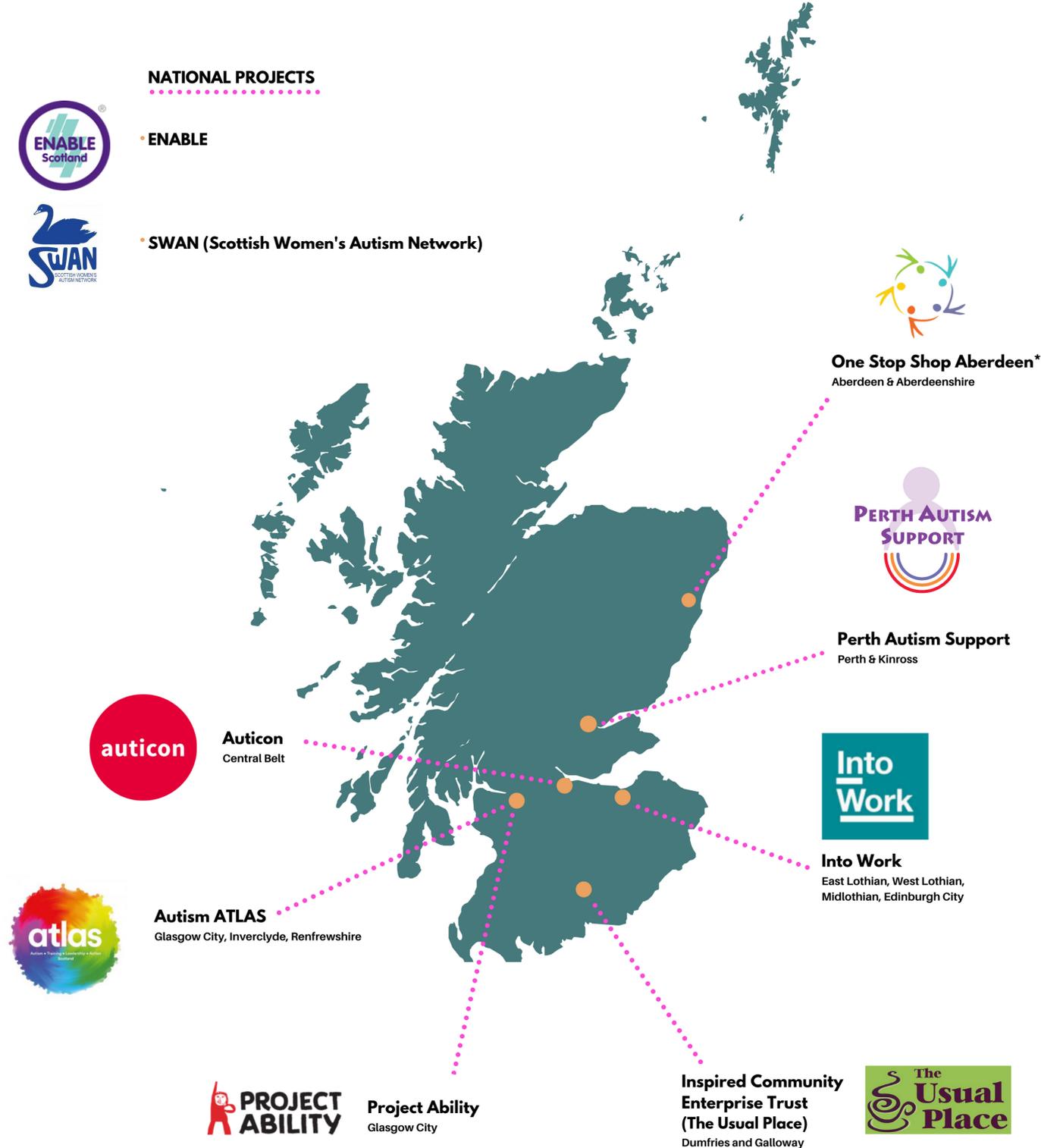
One Stop Shop Aberdeen*
Aberdeen & Aberdeenshire



Perth Autism Support
Perth & Kinross



Into Work
East Lothian, West Lothian, Midlothian, Edinburgh City



*One Stop Shop Aberdeen changed their name at the end of Phase 1 funding. The organisation is now called Autism Understanding Scotland.

Programme Structure

The structure of the programme was based on **See Me**, which is Scotland's national programme to end mental health stigma and discrimination. This flagship programme was guided and supported by people with lived experience, and was also broadly split into two parts: a Marketing Campaign and funded local projects.

The 9 funded charities have been key partners in the Increasing Understanding of Autism programme. Throughout Phase 1 they have helped influence the direction of the national marketing campaign and, conversely, the campaign has provided a backbone to the projects delivered on the ground.

The charities have also helped Inspiring Scotland to recruit more autistic people to join the Advisory Forum. SWAN and One Stop Shop Aberdeen have also helped to facilitate Advisory Forum meetings to discuss the marketing campaign.

The charities helpfully suggested that if they were provided with a small marketing budget they would be more able to get local PR and spread the campaign messages in their local area. This is something we plan to act on for Phase Two.

Inspiring Scotland's Approach and Ethos

Underlying Inspiring Scotland's model is the single focus on adding value to the organisations and people we fund and work with.

Over 13 years of working in partnership and providing tailored support, we know that we add value by:

- Strengthening organisations and communities
- Supporting, developing and connecting people
- Making money go further
- Encouraging new ideas
- Informing and Influencing

The support we have given to the nine funded charities in the Autism portfolio have centred around these five pillars. The majority of the charities funded in Phase One were relatively small in size (8 out of 9 income less than £1m and 3 charities had income of less than £100,000). This meant that many of the projects took advantage of the training, peer support and our Specialist Volunteer Network.

The Five Pillars



Encourage New Ideas

Advisory Forum

The Advisory Forum was set up to put the autistic voice at the heart of the programme. Since the beginning the Forums have generally been acknowledged as ground-breaking. They have grown from 50 to 150 autistic people across Scotland. The format has been successful and Scottish Government have asked the Advisory Forum to input into other policy they are working on e.g. The Towards Transformation Plan which sets out Scottish Government's plan for autistic people and people with intellectual disabilities as we come out of Covid-19.



Strengthen Organisations and Communities

Training

The portfolio met regularly across the funding period. There were 15 'formal' workshops which covered topics such as Using On-line Technology, Communicating Virtually, Workforce Wellbeing, Fundraising, Social media, non-violent communication and Cost Benefit Analysis.

Health Check

We conducted the Inspiring Scotland Health Check with interested funded organisations. This online tool helps the organisation understand where the gaps are in organisational development and what they can do to address them in an easy action plan format.



Make Money Go Further

Resource Email

A weekly newsletter highlighting useful resources, industry insights, funding opportunities, portfolio news and available events, training and recruitment opportunities was sent to all members of the Autism Portfolio.

Fundraising Support

Many organisations with the help of Inspiring Scotland also developed their income generation plan and had 1-2-1 support for specific funding applications. Many of which were successful and despite Covid organisations have diversified their income.



Inform and Influence

Different Minds Campaign Development

Charities and autistic people they worked with were key to developing many aspects of the campaign. The Different Minds website was written by members of the Advisory Forum, many of whom were supported by, or worked in, the funded charity projects. The Different Minds myth busting film also featured autistic people that were supported by many of the funded projects including SWAN, Auticon, The Usual Place and One Stop Shop Aberdeen.

Giving feedback on wider Policy Development

Charity projects also gave feedback which fed into the Independent Evaluation of the Scottish Government's Autism Strategy compiled by Blake Stevenson. They have also provided feedback to other pieces of work being developed by other policy areas within Scottish Government.



Support, Develop and Connect people

We put effort and care into creating a community for this fund. It was important to establish at the outset a sense of togetherness and trust, a sense of mutual respect and learning, of openness and sharing.

Most portfolio sessions had an element of peer support, where portfolio members ask for advice and share experiences with each other. Having projects that were delivered by autistic people also helped others in the portfolio learn from their lived experience.

Feedback has been that this peer community has been one of the most valuable aspects of the programme, building networks across geographies and project approaches and addressing some of the isolation that lockdown brought.

'Inspiring Scotland created a very strong learning environment and we think that added enormous depth to the overall project'.

Intensive Support from Inspiring Scotland's Specialist Volunteer Network

During Phase One, two funded organisations required intensive support from Inspiring Scotland. Through access to our model, resources and, in particular, Inspiring Scotland's Specialist Volunteer Network, both organisations are now on a more stable footing.

For these organisations, the extensive direct support from Inspiring Scotland included:

- Governance and Board Support
- Legal support
- HR support
- Trustee and Office Holder support
- Support to put new financial, operational and governance processes into place

During Phase One the portfolio used a collective 316 hours of Specialist Volunteer Network support which amounts to £62,800 of non-financial support. The Specialist Volunteer Network also recruited three trustees for various charities. The addition of their time amounts to a total of 365 hours of support and equates to £92,200 of added value, specialist volunteer support during the first phase.

Those projects which have used Inspiring Scotland's Specialist Volunteer Network have described the support given in glowing terms:

'We have nothing but praise for the volunteer scheme: it gave us access to high-level support when we needed it'

'It is the jewel in Inspiring Scotland's crown'

£92,200

Specialist
Volunteer
Support

+21%

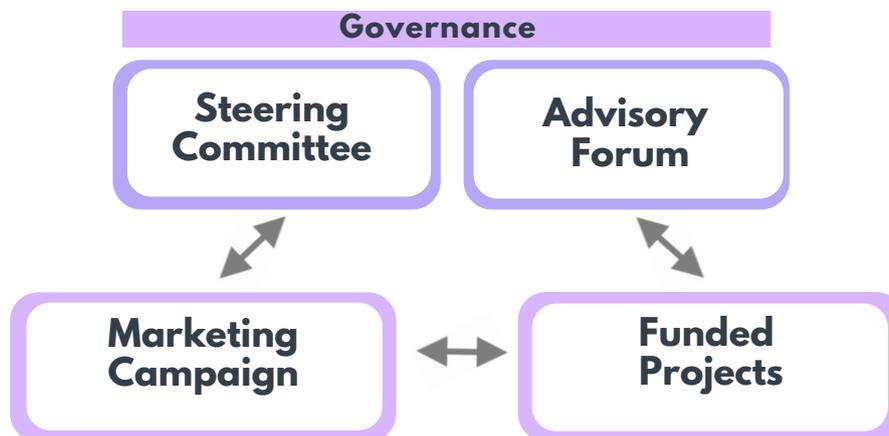
Added Value
Support across
Phase 1, in addition
to programme
funding.

The Autistic Voice

At the outset of the programme, it was acknowledged that if it was going to truly raise understanding of autism in Scotland, then autistic people needed to be closely involved in the design and delivery of the programme.

As Programme Managers, we have endeavoured to not just consult autistic people, but to involve autistic people in the design, steering and management of the programme.

To do this, we developed a two tier structure where regional Advisory Forums made up of autistic people across Scotland would feed into the Steering Committee which would have ultimate control over decision making as outlined in the diagram below.



The Steering Committee

The programme is led by the Steering Committee, who make the final decision on all aspects of the programme. The committee has 6 voting members, 50% of whom are autistic. There are two autistic representatives as well as one employer, one academic, one healthcare provider (who is autistic) and one member of Scottish Government. We also have observer seats for Autistic People Led Organisations (APO's) at Steering Committee meetings.

The Steering Committee have been instrumental in making decisions such as which charities would be funded as part of the programme and deciding large aspects of the campaign like the wording of the poem which featured in the TV Ad.

The Autism Advisory Forum

At the start of Phase 1, before the pandemic, there were 50 people in the Advisory Forum who were part of four regional meetings led by APO's in Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen and Inverness. When the pandemic hit, the meetings moved online and were widened out to allow people to sign up to meetings/topics they were interested in rather than having to attend a physical meeting. There are now over **150 members of the forum** from across Scotland and we are working on increasing the representation of diverse groups of autistic people within the forum too, particularly more men, LGBTQ+ people, people of colour and people with additional support needs.

In November 2020, Inspiring Scotland Commissioned Assenti Research to evaluate the Advisory Forum. As Programme Managers, we were keen to understand what motivated people to take part, whether their expectations had been met and what improvements they would like to see. Overall, participants felt that the Programme and Advisory Forum was worthwhile and they were valued for their contribution. Many felt that it was fundamentally different to what had gone before:

"While we weren't really running the campaigns we were there to say they had involved Autistic Adults. It was the least box ticking thing I've been involved in, we didn't have the power to stop them doing shit things but they seemed to be listening to us."

"It's tricky representing Autism in the media in the right way, typically it's a tragedy to garner sympathy and money. This is different, Scottish Government appreciate what Autistic people need is not being stigmatised or seen as deficient but looking at their strengths. Not denying Autistic people can often have a very disabling condition but to put something out there to reduce prejudice and make society open to support and accommodate people who are neurologically different."

Some highlighted the need for more time dedicated to discussion and being able to have a say in campaign development earlier on. Both of these points have informed the development of Phase Two of the Programme. Participants also noted that they would like to input in a range of ways in addition to face to face and online meetings, e.g. written responses, 1-2-1s and 'light touch' options, all of which are now offered to Forum members. We have also worked to improve the accessibility of the Forums, especially for those who also may have a learning disability, including ensuring that information is available in easy read format.

Challenges and Unexpected Benefits of Covid

For all of the projects, community and employer engagement dropped off when Covid-19 pandemic struck in March 2020. A national (UK) lockdown was imposed just as many of the projects were beginning to deliver activity, and some projects, such as ENABLE and Auticon, delayed their employer training programmes until Autumn 2020, when they were sure that employers would be able to engage with them.

Although time was lost due to the pandemic, as it wore on and businesses re-started, projects found that some employers were more willing to engage. Some projects reported that with staff on furlough, there was more time for employers to consider neurodiversity in the workforce and approaches from the projects were better received. Projects also found that smaller employers were much more willing to engage with them. This has led to a widening of opportunities for providing training in supporting neurodiversity, potential placements and permanent employment for autistic people.

Covid created an operational shift for many of the funded projects, and, for some, the changes forced by Covid had been in the pipeline anyway and Covid accelerated the change process - often for the better.

Projects such as The Usual Place spent time training autistic people, particularly young people, to use unfamiliar devices (PC's, laptops and tablets) and standard business & communications software packages (Zoom, Teams, Word, Outlook etc.). This training was regarded as a fundamental stepping stone to entering a workplace or education.

Although there were negative experiences, delivery postponements due to business shut-downs and rapid changes in the early stages of Covid, the majority of projects successfully adapted and pivoted their delivery. For some of the projects, the changes they needed to make to continue to deliver led to very positive experiences and a substantial widening of service delivery, including increased engagement with employers.

'We'd planned to change but it was one of those things that always got put off to deal with day-to-day running. Covid forced us to change. After some time, we realised our new way of working was much more efficient and we wished we'd done it earlier'

Project Summaries

Employment themed projects:

One Stop Shop Aberdeen



One Stop Shop Aberdeen is an autistic led peer support charity in Aberdeen. Despite the pandemic, they have continued to deliver their project and in addition have provided 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 packs 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 employers to create an inclusive working environment for the autistic employee. They delivered their project 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. Throughout their project they delivered training to 1176 employees. They delivered their project 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 back into work, and have 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 the pandemic, they recruited three Associate Trainers and an Advisory Group of 6 autistic individuals and have used a co-production approach to develop their project.

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 and throughout Phase 1 they engaged with 67 employers and 472 employees in total.

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. They refocused their efforts away from only working with national retailers and opened the project to include all sectors working within Perth & Kinross. They also supported young autistic people into work experience and employment as we emerge from the pandemic. Their project was delivered 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 acceptance 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 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. The pandemic prevented the group from visiting venues, and instead the group have developed their video making skills with an online course, making 49 videos charting their experiences through lockdown.

Project Stories

A key part of the Increasing Understanding of Autism Programme is the opportunity for collaboration between the funded projects. One example of this is the collaboration between The Usual Place and One Stop Shop Aberdeen, who **worked together to co-produce an easy read document about autism for a young person who has a learning disability**. The young person was able to feed into the development of the resource & test it to ensure it was accessible, and both of the organisations will continue to use the document going forward, helping to increase the understanding of autism among people with learning disabilities.

One of The Usual Place's trainees collaborated with their Autism Awareness Officer, who was directly funded through the Increasing Understanding of Autism Programme, to co-create and deliver a presentation to Inspiring Scotland, the other 8 Portfolio charities and members of the Scottish Government. The Usual Place's support enabled this young person to develop confidence and skills in public speaking and professionalism. It also benefitted the Increasing Understanding of Autism Programme as the other charities and the Scottish Government were able to learn from the trainee's lived experiences. The young person said after the presentation that:

'I have learned that I can do more than I think I can. I love doing challenges and pushing myself in the world.'

This trainee went on to participate in the Our Future Leaders resilience programme, and so was able to benefit from and contribute to the Increasing Understanding of Autism Programme in multiple ways.

Many of the funded charities ran employability projects, which aimed to improve autistic people's experiences in the workplace by educating employers. Into Work's 'Autism Works' training resulted in **the participants feeling over 50% more confident that they would be able to manage and support the development of any autistic members of staff**. A stand-out participant for Into Work was the Leonardo Group, who eagerly took up all of the spaces available to them at the training session, and are now working with Into Work **to create supported work placements available at their Edinburgh office** for Into Work's clients, and **to deliver autism understanding training to all of the division managers at Leonardo, as well as further deep-dive training on specific autism-related subjects**.

SWAN also delivered an employability project for autistic women and girls. One project participant they supported was able to successfully appeal to her workplace to have her hours reduced, which greatly improved her health and wellbeing. The participant stated,

'I am grateful to my work ... for allowing SWAN to attend the appeal meetings, but I am even more grateful to SWAN, as I honestly could not have achieved this without their help.'

SWAN's support enabled this participant to develop confidence and strongly advocate for herself, while also providing her with extra support when needed and being able to educate employers on the specific needs of autistic women and girls.

Outcomes

The two key objectives of the overarching Programme were:

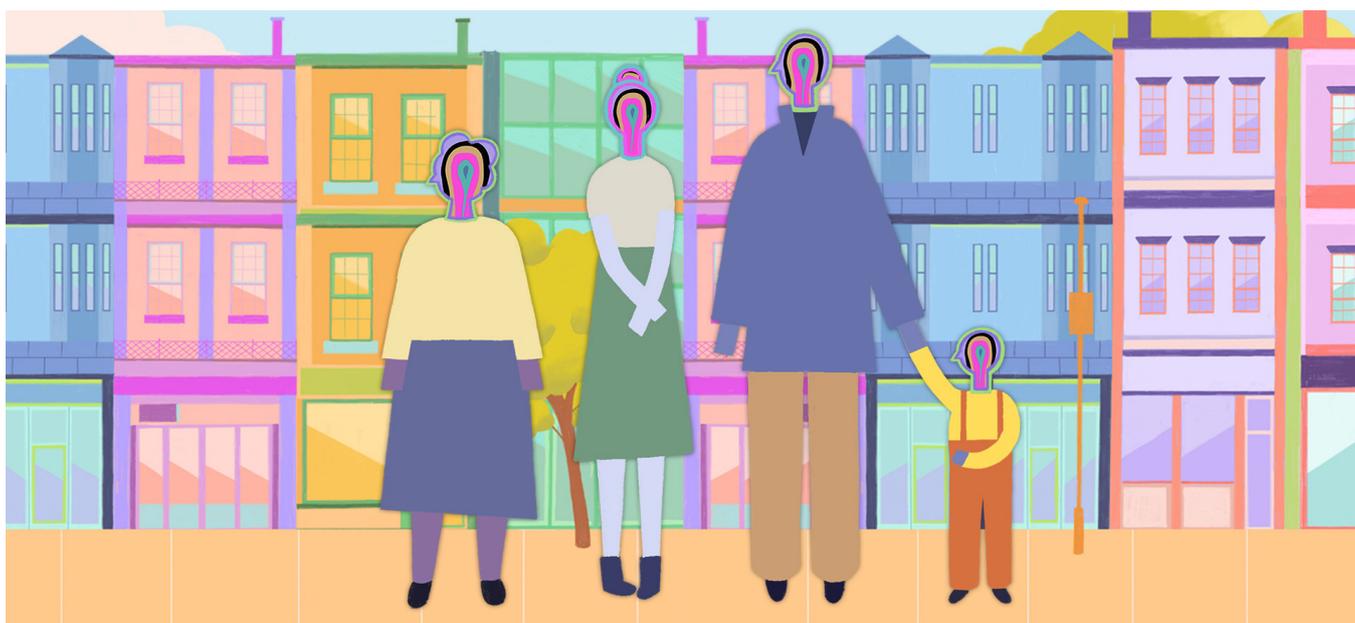
Increase the understanding of autism amongst those in the non-autistic community

and

Make employment and community participation more accessible so allowing autistic people to live active and independent lives.

Projects were able to select their own outcomes from the three outcomes listed:

- 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 and retain existing employment within Scotland.





Community Access

- Projects felt that there had been little improved in-person local community access for autistic people simply because so many in-person local community activities shut down for much of the Programme's lifespan.
- What the Programme did do, through swapping to digital delivery, was to widen an autistic person's 'local community' greatly – in some cases right across the world.
- The support that projects were able to give autistic people during a time of uncertainty and anxiety for autistic people was invaluable to many



Employment

Projects reported training for employers was well received, their evaluations of training showed training:

- Dispelled myths about autistic people in the workplace
- Increased the awareness of, and understanding, of autism in workforces
- Increased understanding of the strengths of autistic people in the workplace and how those strengths could assist an employer
- Increased the understanding of autism in line managements who might be working with autistic people
- Increased confidence in employers to recruit autistic people
 - Showed employers there was support available to make reasonable adjustments
 - Demonstrated what reasonable adjustments could be made for particular workplaces
 - Showed employers that reasonable adjustments could be simple and inexpensive

One organisation did deliver case work supporting autistic people to continue to work which was vital for those who received this support and were struggling to keep their jobs due to the impact of the pandemic.



Increasing Understanding of Autism

The bulk of work with non-autistic people was:

- General support for autistic people and families living with an autistic person during the Covid pandemic.
 - 1-1 support for some individuals
- The development of online resources for autistic people, supporters and professionals.
 - These resources were shared widely (nationally, internationally) with groups working with neurodiverse client bases
- Disseminating information on autism, in particular dispelling the myths about autism
- The development and provision of autistic-led training and webinars

Longer Term Impact



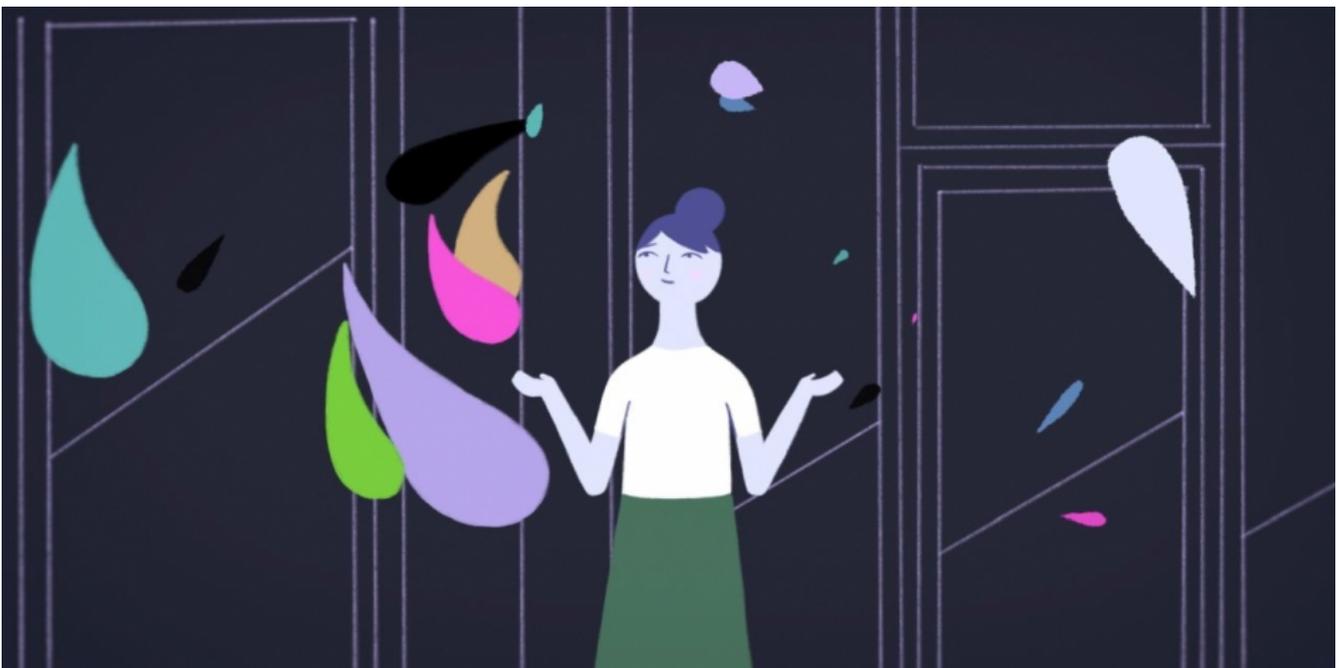
*'The Programme dropped a pebble in the pool.
The ripples are being felt very widely'*

The key long-term impacts from the Programme are:

- Increased understanding by employers of autistic abilities and strengths in the working environment
- A better understanding in employers of the adjustments needed in working environments to support autistic people
- A wider range of employers engaged with: the Programme funding allowed training and support to be offered free of charge, which brought in many smaller employers for whom fees had been a barrier
- A reduction of the 'fear factor' in employers when looking to employ a neurodiverse workforce.
 - This reduction in fear factor may have carried over to employing others with protected characteristics giving a wider benefit from the Programme

What We Have Learned

- Early and continuous involvement of people with lived experience of autism always leads to a better outcome
- The sector that supports autistic people in Scotland is fragile, and smaller organisations benefit from the support (sometimes intensive support) that Inspiring Scotland is able to provide
- COVID-19 has meant in some ways that projects reached more people
- The lack of understanding of autism is at the core of many problems that autistic people face daily
- The structure of the programme has meant that both components – funded charities and the marketing programme – have benefited from each other
- More investment is needed to increase understanding in BAME communities and other harder to reach communities in Scotland



Reflections & Thanks

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 intend 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.

I feel that Scotland has the passion and drive to make massive positive change for autistic people. I have been impressed and delighted to see the media work that has already happened, it clearly shows that autistic voices are being heard.

Advisory Forum Member

Compiled by Bee Vellacott & Chris Timmins
Inspiring Scotland Autism Team



[Autism Fund Twitter](#)



[Inspiring Scotland Autism Fund](#)



[Different Minds](#)



[Inspiring Scotland - Understanding Autism Programme Video](#)