

# IMPROVING PRACTICE, ENHANCING LIVES.

ANNUAL  
REVIEW  
2015



Scottish  
autism

[scottishautism.org](http://scottishautism.org)



# CONTENTS

## ANNUAL REVIEW 2015

About us	2	<b>ENHANCING LIVES</b>	<b>18</b>
Chairman's report	4	Day Opportunities	20
Chief Executive's report	5	Vocational	23
Timeline	6	Supported Living	24
		Outreach	25
<b>IMPROVING PRACTICE</b>	<b>8</b>	Education	26
Our Approach	10	Respite and Short Breaks	29
Improving	11	Transition	30
Learning	13	Fundraising	32
Progressing	14	Looking Back, Looking Forward	34
Sharing	17		
		<b>BOARD MEMBERS AND SENIOR MANAGEMENT</b>	<b>36</b>
		<b>CONTACTS</b>	<b>36</b>



# ABOUT US

Scottish Autism is dedicated to enriching the lives of people with autism.

Although we are principally a service provider, sharing our knowledge and experience with parents and professionals is a key part of our approach to the delivery of high quality services.

We do this through our Knowledge Share seminars across Scotland, our online support programme for parents and carers and a dedicated team of Autism Advisors who are on hand to provide emotional and practical support.

Our drive for continuous organisational improvement is underpinned by the adoption of the Public Service Improvement Framework (PSIF). Similarly, continuous improvement in our practice and service delivery is supported by the use of the Autism Practice Improvement Framework (APIF), a bespoke adaptation of the theory and methodology used in PSIF.

We are the largest provider of autism-specific services in Scotland and a leading authority and advocate for good autism practice. Collaborating effectively with the Scottish Government, local authorities and other charities, we help to inform practice, strategy and policy on autism in Scotland.

*“For more than 15 years I’ve been working with and on behalf of Scottish Autism and from the beginning I clicked with the people there. I appreciate Scottish Autism and its staff members for their high level of understanding of autism and their warm heartedness. But I like especially their brave heartedness, the typical Scottish stubbornness in their striving for a better world for people with autism.”*

**Peter Vermeulen,**  
Co-Director of Autisme Centraal, Belgium

# CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

This year sees the expiry of Scottish Autism's business plan, and as part of the normal cycle of business planning the Board met in December 2014 to review the organisation's high-level strategic direction. We are continuing with the strategic thrust of quality and innovation. This year saw the launch of our Centre for Practice Innovation, with distinguished Research and Practice Associates from the UK, Australia, Denmark, Belgium and the United States.

Scottish Autism together with the Scottish Government and Research Autism funded a series of four two-day seminars – Action on Autism Research in Scotland. These seminars attracted world class speakers in the field of autism research, as well as clearly establishing the range of research currently active here in Scotland. Our CEO, Alan Somerville was a member of the organising group for the seminars which focused on psychological, social and education research, interventions and impact. The seminars were very relevant to Scottish Autism's mission, as the process included defining 'impact', considering how evidence evaluates claims of impact, identifying gaps in research and working across disciplines to identify ways to maximise impact.

In-house, we are further strengthening our own research team and are actively engaged in the generation of practice-based evidence.

We have chosen the theme 'improving practice, enhancing lives' for this review. Scottish Autism is committed to improving its offering and generating solid evidence of the efficacy of that offering for those accessing our services.

In 2014-15, we continued working within the Public Service Improvement Framework (PSIF) with a view to gaining Quality Scotland's Recognised for Excellence award in 2015-16.

Fiona Greig left the Board after a long and distinguished service as Treasurer. We thank Fiona for her highly significant contribution to Scottish Autism's development. We have continued to strengthen the Board and are delighted to welcome Dr Sue Fletcher-Watson from the University of Edinburgh who is active in research into autism. We also welcome Lindsay Ebner and Alun Morgan, who bring strong business skills particularly in project management, IT and pensions.

The record this year shows substantial progress made towards our goals, and I commend this annual review to all of our stakeholders.



**Dr. Paul Prescott**  
Chairman

# CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT

The year began on a high with artist Peter Howson's fundraising walk from Aberdeen to Ayr. Peter's commitment – in Scottish weather – cannot be too highly praised, and he raised £109,056 for Scottish Autism. We are all immensely grateful for Peter's support.

New Struan School has faced significant challenges in recent years, mainly through local authorities internalising the provision of education for young people with additional support needs. A direct consequence of this has been a move in our average school roll towards supporting pupils with ever more complex and challenging learning needs. A common factor for such individuals is that transitions between home and school can be difficult, and consequently we restructured our staffing to allow for extended placements of up to 52 weeks in the year. This has been a challenging reorganisation for us, but now we are seeing 'green shoots' in increased interest in this new educational offering.

The pressure on our organisation caused by the ongoing freeze on local authority funding continues unabated. However, we did achieve growth in our services, which allows us to continue our programme of development in knowledge management, research and quality improvement as described in Paul Prescott's message.

Scottish Autism was commissioned to write an autism strategy for Argyll & Bute Council in their partnership with NHS Highland. This was completed and adopted by the partnership in the summer of 2014. Our association with Argyll & Bute was further strengthened when we received Big Lottery Funding for the Get Set 4 Autism project. This is a five-year programme that we

will deliver in partnership with Autism Argyll to promote a greater understanding of autism, improve communication between parents and professionals and provide post-diagnostic support for parents.

Our work in partnership with other charities also continues, and we are engaged in a number of collaborative projects with English colleagues in the Autism Alliance UK. This year also saw exploratory meetings with the Autism Society of America. Together with our existing partners in the Celtic Nations Autism Partnership and Autism Initiatives, this group may evolve into a new Atlantic Autism Alliance. Since these initial discussions, Canada has also expressed an interest in being involved.

As always there are far too many stories for me to comment on here and so, in conclusion, I would simply like to express my sincere thanks to all our staff for their hard work and dedication in continuing to improve the quality of the services we provide, supporting and enabling people living with autism in Scotland.



**Alan Somerville**  
Chief Executive Officer



# TIMELINE 2014 2015

## APRIL 2014

Peter Howson completes a fundraising walk across Scotland raising £109,056.

Knowledge Share seminars commence in Stirling, Dumfries and Hamilton.

Lothian outreach services achieve excellence in care inspection.

Autism Toolbox officially launches.

Edinburgh Airport launches a new initiative to support individuals with autism.

Understand Autism interactive animation launches.

Appointment of New Struan School Business and Development Manager.



## MAY 2014

Individuals at Gartinn Nursery receive awards from The Royal Caledonian Horticultural Society.

Pilot of the Autism Practice Improvement Framework (APIF) starts in our services.

Our Learning & Development Team present 'Supporting Individuals with Autism Through Change and Loss' at the BILD International Research and Practice Conference.



## JUNE 2014

Swim for Autism challenge begins.

Right Click is a finalist in the category of Innovative Family Support at the SSSC Care Accolades.

An article written by our Research Manager, Joseph Long 'We Need to Research Practical Knowledge About Autism - Not Just How It Affects The Brain' is published on the Guardian Social Care Network.

Staff travel to Denmark to learn more about the ATLASS programme.

## JULY 2014

Restructure takes place at New Struan School to enable extended packages of support for up to 52 weeks.

## AUGUST 2014

Kate Strohm from Siblings Australia delivers a seminar to parents and professionals.

Central Area Services outreach team achieves excellence in care inspection.

## SEPTEMBER 2014

We share knowledge and information at the Scottish Learning Festival.

Right Click wins the Talk Talk Digital Hero Award in the Sharing Skills category.

Our first attendance at the Kidz Scotland event.

## FEBRUARY 2015

We welcome Peter Vermeulen, Co-Director Autisme Centraal, to deliver a seminar on 'Autism and Relationships'.

We share knowledge and information at the Scottish Learning Festival in Aberdeen.

## JANUARY 2015

Charlene Tait and Joseph Long attend Meeting of Minds conference in Copenhagen.

## DECEMBER 2014

Alun Morgan and Lindsay Ebner join Board.

## NOVEMBER 2014

New Struan School hosts visitors from China Education Network.

Access Film Club launches at the Glasgow Film Theatre.

Alan Somerville presents at the Action on Autism Research Seminar.



## OCTOBER 2014

The Tree and The Abbey is performed in Glenrothes as part of the Scottish Mental Health Arts & Film Festival.

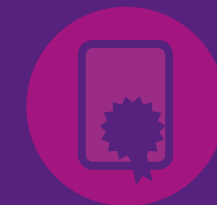
We receive Big Lottery Funding for the Get Set 4 Autism project.

Our Centre for Practice Innovation officially launches.

Sue Fletcher-Watson, University of Edinburgh, joins Board.

Jasmine Miller attends European School Heads Association Conference in Dubrovnik.

Fife One Stop Shop is awarded a certificate of achievement in Fife Business Diversity Awards.



## MARCH 2015

Gartinn Nature Group win National Autistic Society Award for Most Creative Community Project.

Individuals at Art Opportunities create a short film as part of 'Nothing About Us Without Us', a local arts project.

Pilot of the Autism Trainer Award takes place.

We welcome the assessment team from Quality Scotland as we work towards the Recognised for Excellence Award.

We receive funding from the Scottish Government for our One Stop Shops, to carry out an evaluation of Right Click and to develop an online support programme for women and girls.





# IMPROVING PRACTICE





# OUR APPROACH

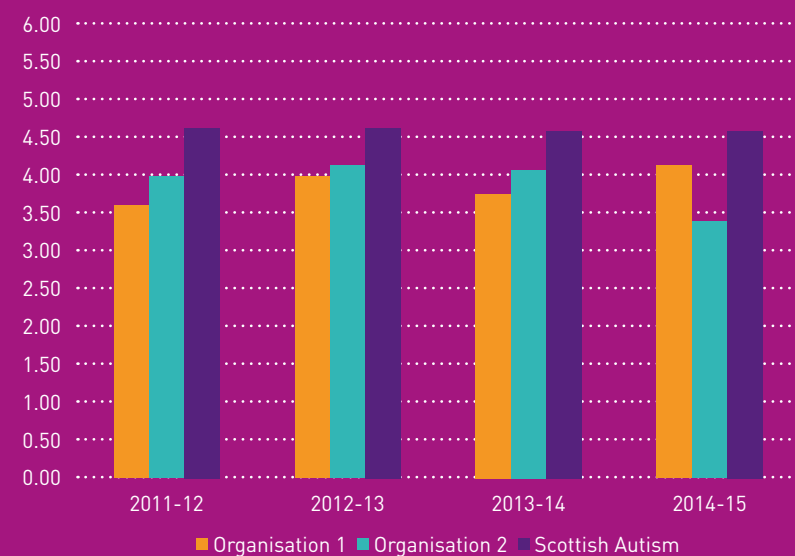
The quality of our services is underpinned by a number of factors which enable us to consistently achieve high grades in care inspections and positions us at the forefront of autism practice. Some of these factors are:

- Our highly personalised approach delivered by specially trained practitioners.
- Our dedication to continually assess and improve our own practice whilst contributing to autism research.
- Our commitment to sharing our knowledge and expertise so that it has maximum benefit for individuals with autism.

In order to provide the best care and support, we have a strong focus on the happiness and wellbeing of individuals with autism. This last year has seen our practitioners introduced to the ATCLASS programme (Autism Training with Low Arousal Support Services) which provides a wellbeing-based approach to supporting individuals with autism. Our commitment to practice-based evidence and research has led to the recent establishment of our Centre for Practice Innovation. It provides a focus for practitioners, researchers and organisations to collaborate in order to learn from each other and contribute to developing effective autism practice.

We continue to achieve the highest overall mean grades in our care inspections in comparison to two other national autism-specific service providers, corroborating the success of our approach.

CARE INSPECTION GRADES



# IMPROVING

## PUBLIC SERVICE IMPROVEMENT FRAMEWORK (PSIF)

A drive for continuous improvement is embedded in the culture at Scottish Autism as we strive for excellence both as an employer and in the services we provide. To direct us in this, in 2010 we adopted the Public Service Improvement Framework (PSIF) a performance improvement model using a self-assessment approach which enables us to conduct a comprehensive review of our own activities and results. It promotes a holistic approach to continuous improvement, and is mapped to a number of established organisational improvement tools:

- The EFQM Excellence Model.
- The Investors in People Standard.
- The new Customer Service Excellence Standard (formally Charter Mark Standard).
- Best Value principles.

By using PSIF, organisations are required to self-assess their work across a broad range of key areas, including leadership, service planning, human resources and customer relations. At the start of our journey, we did just this by conducting self-assessments which enabled us to look at the whole organisation, identify our strengths and areas for improvement. Since then we have been continuously working through our areas for improvement and communicating this back to the organisation. In 2013, we were delighted to receive the Committed to Excellence award which is the first level of excellence recognised by the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM).

At the start of March 2014, the PSIF team within our organisation began to work on the award at the next level, Recognised for Excellence. This award is also recognised by EFQM, however at a much higher level, and is a recognition scheme acknowledged all over Europe for organisations that demonstrate high levels of performance. We applied for the award in December 2014.

## AUTISM PRACTICE IMPROVEMENT FRAMEWORK (APIF)

The Autism Practice Improvement Framework (APIF) is a bespoke model developed by Scottish Autism. It uses a thematic and systematic approach. Each theme has a number of statements against which organisations, services and individual practitioners can self-assess. The process mirrors the highly effective model of self-assessment and implementation from PSIF. By using the same rigorous methodology as PSIF, the APIF framework will help us to deliver continuous improvement in our practice whilst generating evidence for our advancement through PSIF. We successfully piloted APIF in three of our service areas during May and June 2014. Staff teams are now working through their action plans to drive forward practice improvements. We will then roll-out APIF across Scottish Autism.

Vision workshop at our Staff Conference.



# LEARNING

## AUTISM TRAINING WITH LOW AROUSAL SUPPORT SERVICES (ATLASS)

We continue to embrace the ATLASS programme (Autism Training with Low Arousal Support Services) developed by an organisation called Studio 3. The programme looks at the complex and transactional nature of stress and how it may potentially impact on individuals with autism, their families and professional support staff. This approach enables our practitioners to take a more holistic approach to support as the focus shifts from behaviour to wellbeing and stress reduction. We are in the early stages of the full implementation, however, we are already accumulating many examples of positive outcomes.

## AUTISM TRAINER AWARD

Over the last few years, we have been developing an SQA customised Autism Trainer Award scheme with funding from the autism strategy development fund. This aims to raise the standards of content and delivery in autism training across Scotland by allowing existing autism trainers to review their approach to training and build new skills.

In March this year, we launched the pilot of the Autism Trainer Award and offered a free place for each local authority in Scotland. Of these, 23 local authorities took up a place. The first stage of the award started with a three-day training course that focused on the theories of adult learning that can inform good training practice. The second stage will take place later in 2015 and involves a practical unit with direct observation and assessment of the individuals training in practice. Together, these two units will provide opportunities for the trainers to develop their approach and obtain an SQA qualification.

Following the pilot, we hope to be able to offer this opportunity to more trainers and ultimately make a valuable contribution to raising the standards of the delivery of non-award bearing training across Scotland.

## STAFF CONFERENCE

Our annual staff conference provided a rich source of learning and development with staff delivering workshops on topics such as the benefits of creative writing, autism and sight loss and communication technology. This year we were delighted to welcome Peter Vermeulen who presented 'Autistic Thinking: Understanding Autism from Within' and 'Happiness and Autism'. These insightful presentations stressed the importance of understanding the autistic mind and strategies to improve emotional wellbeing in individuals with autism.



Delegates at the Autism Trainer Award three day course.



# PROGRESSING

## RESEARCH

In 2013, we employed our own Researcher in Residence, and we have since commenced a number of practitioner-led research studies and collaborative projects with other organisations and academic institutions. Through our Centre for Practice Innovation we plan to continue and expand this programme of work.

The launch of Scottish Autism's Centre for Practice Innovation in October 2014 has not only provided an opportunity to bring together our research and practice development initiatives within a single centre, but it has created a focal point for relationships with our peers and colleagues in the wider research world. Our Centre's Research and Practice Associates come from a range of universities and academic disciplines and between them have accumulated many years of expertise in autism research and practice. The Centre's 'Share' magazine, launched in Spring 2015, draws on that expertise and includes contributions from our associates and other research colleagues. The articles in 'Share' report on current autism research in a form that is accessible and useful to our practitioners and members of the autism community. Our associates will make a valuable contribution to shaping our research agenda as we build on the foundations laid over the past two years.



The first edition of Share magazine.

The work of our practitioner research projects – on voice and user participation, and friendships and social opportunities in autism services – as well as our collaboration with the Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB), were presented in three workshops at our staff conference in February. The occasion allowed our practitioner researchers to share their work with colleagues and to provide insights into practice development that are firmly based in evidence drawn from case studies, surveys, focus groups and interviews with individuals and families that we support. The team are grateful for the time so many members of our community have taken to participate in these research projects.

Several members of our staff took part in the Scotland wide Action on Autism Research seminars that were undertaken as part of the Scottish Strategy for Autism over the past year. Joe Long, now our Research Manager, presented on the work that Scottish Autism is doing, and the organisation's initiatives in bridging the gap between research and practice were warmly received. That Joe Long and Charlene Tait accepted invitations to become associate editors of the Good Autism Practice journal in 2014 is testament to our contribution to UK wide initiatives to link autism research and practice. The increased engagement with the research community and the relationships nurtured through the Centre for Practice Innovation are already opening up possibilities for exciting collaborative work, more of which we will report on next year.

## GLASGOW FILM THEATRE PARTNERSHIP WORK

In partnership with Glasgow Film Theatre, we launched Access Film Club in November 2014. The monthly film club was developed to provide a welcoming and accessible environment for individuals with autism aged 15 and over. The audience choose the film they would like to watch in advance and after the screening, one of our Autism Advisors hosts a post-film discussion. Feedback from the group has been very positive with comments including:

*"Helps with socialisation which has been really good for me."*

*"I have been wishing to go to the cinema all my life and this autism platform gives me the opportunity."*

*"It puts you in contact if you are isolated, with people with similar interests."*

## THE ONE STOP SHOPS

Our Scottish Government funded One Stop Shops in Lanarkshire and Fife have continued to go from strength to strength, providing much needed information and advice on autism within their local communities.

Now in their second year, the Lanarkshire One Stop Shop was accessed over 2200 times last year and our Fife One Stop Shop was accessed over 2600 times!



Peter Vermeulen speaking about 'Autism and Relationships'.

# SHARING

Between April 2014 and March 2015 we shared knowledge and experience via...

## KNOWLEDGE SHARE

We delivered our Knowledge Share seminars in three locations: Hamilton, Stirling and Dumfries, reaching over 400 parents, professionals and people with autism across these nine events.

## INTERNATIONAL SPEAKERS

Kate Strohm from Siblings Australia shared her knowledge and experience in a half-day seminar which highlighted the role and needs of siblings, the particular challenges they face, as well as practical ways to support them. Over 60 parents and professionals benefitted from listening to Kate and hearing about others' experiences.

Peter Vermeulen, Co-Director of Autisme Centraal in Belgium, delivered an inspiring full-day seminar on 'Autism and Relationships' to over 100 parents and professionals.

## RIGHT CLICK

**266** parents and carers accessed our Right Click online support programme.

## ONLINE PLATFORMS

On Facebook we had over **1,000** new likes.

On Twitter we attracted over **900** new followers.

There were **175,362** visits to our website.

**524** people signed up to receive our monthly e-news.

## OUR AUTISM SUPPORT TEAM

Carried out **37** assessments through the diagnostic service.

Continued to provide partnership support to our autism services including workshops, training, in-depth autism profiling and sleep counselling.

Delivered six 'Introduction to Autism' training courses to a total of **96** delegates.

Supported **956** people through our Autism Advice Line.



OVER  
**900**  
NEW  
FOLLOWERS.



OVER  
**1,000**  
NEW LIKES.



# ENHANCING LIVES





# DAY OPPORTUNITIES

Our day opportunities offer diverse experiences for individuals with autism. Individuals are supported by practitioners who take the time to understand their needs and focus on enabling them to enjoy new experiences.

## MEET ROBIN

Robin has been supported by Scottish Autism for 20 years this October. He originally lived in one of our group homes with four other individuals. He also attended day services in Cowdenbeath. In 2003 Robin moved into his own tenancy in Cowdenbeath where he continues to live supported by Scottish Autism. Robin now attends our day opportunity in Dunfermline four times a week.

Over the years Robin has been very frustrated with the fact that he has autism and would regularly ask people if they thought that there would ever be a cure. He would get quite despondent when the response was not what he wanted to hear. He suffered from mental health issues which had a big impact on his life. Robin often felt that he had very little control and this would cause him a lot of stress.

Recently staff worked with Robin to enable him to feel more empowered, and this has really improved his self-esteem. Robin put a lot of focus on when he would be able to go on holiday, but always felt very dependent on staff as to whether he could achieve this. He also had difficulty managing his weight, with a great fondness for sweet foods.

Both day service staff and home staff worked closely with Robin to give him more control of his life. Through discussion with staff, Robin set up a system where he independently saved money specifically for holidays.

Robin was then able to plan where to go and work out how much money he needed to save. This gave Robin great satisfaction as his holiday choices were not dictated by staff and arrangements were made dependent on his finances.

Staff also worked with Robin on his healthy eating plan. He really loved puddings and he was able to choose to have one every day and agree which sweet things he was happy to give up in return. Robin has now lost nearly a stone in weight and he is very proud of this achievement. These changes have had a huge impact on his mental health and Robin says that he is really happy with his life at the moment.

Within day services Robin is very sociable and enjoys the company of others. When asked why he continues to access the service after all these years, he says: "I get to meet up with my friends and have some fun."

Robin is part of a gardening squad who do gardening for our other units, when asked why he did this, he says: "I really like helping other people and the service users can enjoy the garden."

Robin also enjoys being part of our communication group and he said this group has allowed him to talk about his life and his feelings.

Overall this has been an excellent year for Robin. He has arranged three holidays: a week in Portugal, a camping trip and a trip to Centre Parcs with a friend and staff. These changes for Robin have been achieved through collaborative working with Robin's housing support staff and day service staff.

Robin has passed onto staff that he is very proud to have been chosen to feature in this Annual Review and that he feels very special.

Robin (right) has had a great year, thoroughly enjoying his holidays!





Scottish  
autism

Cafe Kudos

Joe getting to grips with  
the cash machine  
at Cafe Kudos.



# VOCATIONAL

Our vocational services offer adults with autism meaningful training opportunities and the chance to develop work skills in a safe environment. Learning valuable practical skills within this setting can enhance an individual's self-esteem as they can see first-hand the value in the work they carry out.

## MEET DONALD

Donald, a young man we support at New Ridgemark, our bespoke transition service, undertook a new venture last year which has seen him flourish in terms of his independence and confidence. He began working at our nearby vocational opportunity, Cafe Kudos in Carluke.

It was Donald who first communicated that he wanted to start working at Cafe Kudos and so he was introduced gradually to the service, beginning with one hour and building on that each week. A gradual approach was taken because Donald can become overwhelmed by new environments, new people and tasks.

On his first day, Donald was given a Social Story™ which explained to him each step of his day, from walking to the bus stop to what he would be doing when he got home after work. This gave Donald a good understanding of what was expected of him and how the day would progress, meaning there were no surprises. As a result, his first day went extremely smoothly, and he got involved in lots of different tasks within the cafe.

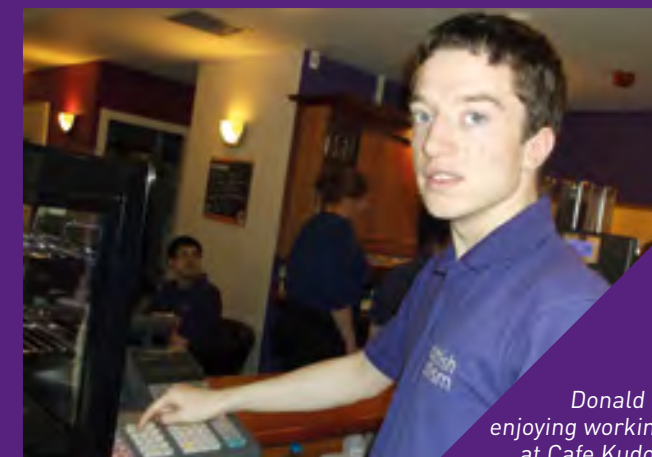
*"Our son is supported by Scottish Autism. The work of the staff there has enabled our son to cope with travelling to London by train for his twentieth birthday, with his dad and me, to stay overnight, sightsee and go on the Tube! We are so proud of what he has achieved and for the input of the staff in Lanark,"*

says Donald's mum, Lesley.

Over the course of a few months, Donald gradually built up the time that he spent in the cafe. In November last year he told his support staff how much he enjoyed working there.

Through taking on this new role, Donald has learned lots of new skills, such as using the coffee machine, operating the till with some verbal assistance and taking money and giving change. Although he does require some support, Donald has achieved a great level of understanding and independence, often using his own initiative to clear tables when customers leave, take dishes to the kitchen and load the dishwasher.

By challenging himself to take on this role, Donald has greatly increased his confidence. He loves showing everyone how much he enjoys his time at the cafe, using photographs to communicate this during a recent review meeting.



Donald is  
enjoying working  
at Cafe Kudos.

The terms 'Social Story' and 'Social Stories' are trademarks originated and owned by Carol Gray. All rights reserved.



# SUPPORTED LIVING

Across all of our supported living services, the emphasis is on the development of skills for independent living, recognising individual goals and aspirations and enabling people to be active participants in their local communities and beyond.

## MEET EMILY

Emily accesses our Supported Living service in Orkney. When she first came to our services, Emily struggled to communicate with staff, and she was reluctant to try new food and activities. She needed a lot of encouragement, support and prompts. However, over the last few months, Emily has made considerable progress.

When she moved into her house, Emily needed support to carry out routine tasks such as making breakfast in the morning. Initially staff would give her prompts on what to do and use a hand-over-hand technique to help her prepare the toast. Emily then progressed to using PECS (Picture Exchange Communication

System) whilst doing her toast routine but now she requires minimal input from staff, and she is very happy when making toast on her own.

Another big improvement is that Emily is now comfortable with staff doing her hair. She was always wary of people touching and brushing her hair. However, with a consistent approach from staff she soon became comfortable. Now, not only can staff brush her hair but Emily has seven different hair styles to pick from each morning, and will happily sit down to let them do it for her.

As well as these achievements, Emily has made huge progress in terms of being able to go shopping and use the self-scan check-out; putting on her seat belt in the car and washing her dishes. With some encouragement, Emily is even happy to try new activities. Thanks to a strong well-bonded team behind her who have been consistent in the way they support her, Emily has become a more confident and independent young woman.



Emily has made considerable progress over the last year.

*“Emily is a lovely, charming, happy and beautiful girl who is gaining more independence and confidence each day. She enjoys the little things in life like her DVDs and slinky, but when it comes to swimming and the play park, these are her favourite activities. The staff are confident that she will continue to go from strength to strength, and we all look forward to supporting her to achieve even more.”*

says Keira Nicol, Autism Practitioner.

# OUTREACH

Outreach support can be provided to access social and leisure activities or liaise with other agencies in relation to training, employment and social welfare support.

## MEET MICHAEL

Michael is a young man who is supported three days a week. Two days are spent at our vocational service, Art Opportunities in Alloa and on the third, Michael is supported on an outreach basis to access his local community. The purpose of Michael's outreach support is to source activities that he would enjoy. It became apparent however that Michael struggled with abstract decisions especially when they were presented verbally, which led to increasing frustration when he couldn't communicate what he would like to do.

Through consultation with Michael and his parents, a visual timetable was developed that could support Michael to make choices regarding his outreach support. Michael is in charge of selecting activities and sourcing images from the internet to represent what he would like to do. These images are then stored in a file that Michael can use when planning his day. Through this process Michael was able to communicate to us his desire to have a job, and staff soon set about sourcing suitable volunteer opportunities.

A placement with the Royal Voluntary Service at Falkirk Community Hospital was found. Michael became involved in their cafe and helping to maintain the community gardens. Through this opportunity, Michael has grown in confidence and his ability to make decisions in his day has improved considerably. He has also become more confident in communicating his wishes to staff. He still uses the visual timetable to plan his day and to support him with what is happening next. Michael's social skills have developed, and he has become a key part of the volunteer team, as well as his wider community.

“Michael has continued to grow in independence since attending Scottish Autism three years ago. He joined the Royal Voluntary Service last year with the support of Scottish Autism staff and he continues to receive rave reviews from the people he works with.

He works in the community hospital café and is a great asset to them. He was even invited to their annual dinner where he chatted amicably and animatedly to his peers the whole evening!

He is becoming a young man and more importantly is extremely proud of himself,” says Michael's Mum, Julie.



Michael enjoys his placement at Falkirk Community Hospital.



# EDUCATION

Anders is enjoying the new playground at New Struan School.

New Struan School is an independent residential and day school for young people with autism. We are here to provide the best possible education and continue to lead the way in our approach and understanding of how young people with autism learn and develop.

## MEET ANDERS

At New Struan School, staff have been working together to find new ways to support Anders. A few years ago, Anders started to show signs of distress which resulted in changes in his behaviour. Many reasons could have been underlying this change and like a lot of people on the autism spectrum the only way Anders can communicate and express how he is feeling is through his actions.

All those supporting Anders have been working closely with outside agencies, parents and external professionals to understand Anders better and to try and reduce his distress. A number of suggestions were made to improve his quality of life. Firstly Anders moved from the residencies he shared with three other pupils to a cottage where he was able to have his own space. Anders also moved to his own class, giving him more space and reduced sensory stimulation.

In addition, Anders received input from a Clinical Psychologist and our in-house Autism Support Team. Regular meetings were held, a detailed transition plan and a new positive behaviour support plan were developed, profiling sessions took place, and Anders accessed additional communication support. As a result, Anders has made significant progress in terms of his anxiety being reduced, and his confidence has increased. Recently he started walking to the school which is just one example of how he continues to progress.

With everyone's commitment and hard work, Anders has developed from an individual who was very much isolated and inactive to an individual who now accesses the community regularly. He has many positive interactions and participates in community-based outings such as swimming, walks, shopping, meals out and even visits to the library – trips that simply would not have been possible last year.

*"I have observed fantastic practice not only from the direct team (school and residence) but also staff supporting Anders over the holiday and weekend. Continuity of care is provided throughout his time at New Struan.*

*Although the advice that was given by external experts was invaluable, this change could not have happened without the staff directly supporting Anders over the 24-hour period. He is now a much more settled, happy and content person,"*

*says Eddie McInally, Senior Autism Practitioner.*







Clannalba is a converted country house with extensive gardens and grounds.

# RESPITE AND SHORT BREAKS

Our Respite and Short Breaks Service offers a safe and homely environment where children and young adults can come to learn and have fun, providing a positive experience for both the individual and their family.

## MEET NEIL AND TEAG

At Clannalba, we feel it is important for those who access our service to be involved in the recruitment and selection of staff. Two individuals, Teag from the transitional assessment service within Clannalba and Neil who accesses the service for respite, joined managers on an interview panel to recruit new staff for both services.

Teag and Neil worked together to compile a list of questions that were important to them and their peers to help gain insight into the personality, motivation and experience of the candidates. For example, they were

keen to know about their personal interests, what roles they had carried out previously that may help them in this post and how they would adapt their approach to support individuals with different needs. They then sat in on the interview panel and listened to the candidates being interviewed before asking questions.

The questions that Neil and Teag compiled were really well thought out and relevant to the qualities we strive for in support staff. Teag has also been involved in the recruitment of managers into the service, providing insightful feedback on how they may benefit and develop the service.

This has been a very positive experience with both Neil and Teag expressing how pleased they are to be involved in the process. It is an area that Clannalba would like to develop further and provide others with the opportunity to be involved in interviews and be part of an information session on compiling staff profile tools.

*“I have always wanted to take an active part in staff and client pairing, and after discussions, Kelly approached me and another service user and asked if we would like to be on the interview panel for some upcoming interviews. We both agreed immediately and began brainstorming appropriate questions to ask the potential staff members. I stayed until the end of each interview, asked my questions, and accepted answers given and answered any questions the interviewee had,”*

*says Teag.*

*“I have been coming to Clannalba for a few years now and I really enjoy my time there. I really liked being asked to help with interviews and enjoyed making up my questions with Teag. This was new to me but is something that I would like to do again,”*

*says Neil.*



# TRANSITION

Matthew is accessing the community again and loves to go swimming.

Scottish Autism provides an intensive and effective model for transition based at two of our residential services: New Ridgepark in Lanark and Clannalba near Biggar. It is here that we can offer individuals a sustained period of assessment and support in order to build a greater understanding of their autism and its impact on their life and, crucially, their future support needs.

## MEET MATTHEW

Last summer Matthew was going through a difficult period in his life. After leaving school, his stress levels were high and he expressed this through self-injurious behaviour and aggression towards his immediate support staff. Matthew was assessed and offered a placement on a 2:1 basis during the day, and 1:1 basis during the night. This would be a major change in Matthew's life but it was agreed that New Ridgepark would best meet his current needs. Matthew had lost a lot of his basic life skills and had not accessed the community for a long time.

Prior to moving in, a dedicated staff team with the best skills to support Matthew were identified. Regular meetings were held and a support plan and a stress reduction plan were developed. Matthew needed to have a highly-structured routine to allow environments

to be predictable and to build on feeling secure. A Now and Next communication board with symbols that were familiar to Matthew was used to help minimise his stress levels by pre-empting the day ahead. Matthew enjoyed touch and the presence of others but when he first arrived he required two staff to sit next to him at all times. His dependency on staff was gradually reduced with the introduction of 'weighted' sensory blankets allowing Matthew to become more independent.

Matthew has had access to a multi-disciplinary team which in turn has ensured a holistic and joint working approach in meeting his needs and improving his quality of life. Through the constant review of Matthew's care, he has gone from strength to strength. His stress levels have gradually decreased and he is able to cope well with new opportunities which are pre-planned and communicated to Matthew using his preferred communication method.

Matthew can now enjoy his favourite activities such as swimming, trampolining, walking and accessing the community. He is developing good independence skills ranging from making breakfast, making his mum tea, doing his own laundry and making snacks.

This is just the beginning of Matthew's journey.

*"Since Matthew has been at New Ridgepark they have worked with him in a completely autism-specific way and understand who he is as a person. They also support me as his mother very well. It is the hardest thing in the world to have to send my little son away from home but I am confident that Matthew is in the right place to help him overcome his crisis and continue to grow and learn. My clever boy can now vacuum a room, help do some cooking, make tea, wipe tables, do his laundry and clear his plate after he eats. It is lovely to see him taking part and being as independent as he is able to be,"*

*says Matthew's mum, Linda.*





# FUNDRAISING

## GETTING INVOLVED

We would like to say a big thank you to all the individuals, groups and organisations that get involved and raise funds for Scottish Autism. Generous donations and fundraising activities help us to reach and support more individuals and families living with autism in Scotland.

Our charitable activities include our Advice Line which receives almost 1,000 calls per year and Right Click our online support programme, which has supported over 500 families in Scotland and overseas since it was launched in 2013.

*"The Advice Line lets parents know they're not alone and shouldn't sit about the house getting frustrated and in some case isolated, which can often be the case when caring for someone on the spectrum."* Brian Curran, Parent

*"Right Click helped me to understand autism through my son's eyes."* Parent

Donations also help to enhance the lives of those in our services with the provision of sensory rooms and gardens, music therapy, social groups, creative pursuits and communication aids.

## INDIVIDUAL EFFORTS

Scottish artist, Peter Howson, walked 300 miles from Aberdeen to Ayr and raised a fantastic **£109,056**.



Peter Howson on his remarkable 300 mile walk.

*"I set out to raise the profile of autism and generate some money to support the work of Scottish Autism – I feel I have succeeded on both counts."* Peter Howson

Martin Lennox launched Lanarkshire's Strongest Man competition and raised **£1,861**.

*"We raised funds for Scottish Autism to show that strength comes in many forms."* Martin Lennox

## COMMUNITY DONATIONS

The Enchanted Forest in Pitlochry hosted a fundraising evening and raised **£2,500**.

*"We are proud to be giving Scottish Autism a helping hand."* Derek Allan, Producer of Enchanted Forest

Carnegie Judo Club raised **£3,438** from a sponsored throw event.

*"We were keen to raise money for Scottish Autism as we know the charity gives tremendous support to the families that need it, and judo is a great way to help them as individuals."* Moira Feenan, Secretary, Carnegie Judo Club

Bearsden Fiddlers raised **£2,000** through raffles and performances.

*"As musicians, we understand the therapeutic effects of music and we are so glad we could link up with a charity that provides music therapy."* Amelia Niven, Bearsden Fiddlers

## CORPORATE GIVING

Hub West Scotland employees chose Scottish Autism as their Charity of the Year and raised **£2,483** from a staff triathlon around Loch Morlich.

PETER HOWSON WALKED 300 MILES FROM ABERDEEN TO AYR AND RAISED...

**£109,056**



*"We are over the moon to have raised this amount of money for Scottish Autism. Scottish Autism provides vital support to many families in the West of Scotland and we wanted to do our bit to help."* Debbie McNamara, MD of Hub West Scotland

Plexus in Bathgate nominated Scottish Autism as their Charity of the Year and donated **£2,363** from staff fundraising.

*"We hope that this money will be helpful to your extremely worthwhile charity."* Caroline Mockus, Plexus

## LEGACIES

We are very grateful for donations from gifts in wills to support and develop our services for individuals and families living with autism.

## VOLUNTEERS

Thank you to all the volunteers across Scotland who get involved and raise money for Scottish Autism.

## THANK YOU TO THE FOLLOWING TRUSTS AND FOUNDATIONS FOR THEIR SUPPORT

Alexander Moncur Trust  
Andrew Paton's Charitable Trust  
Bank of Scotland Foundation  
Big Lottery (Get Set 4 Autism)  
Cruden Foundation Limited  
Dr Guthrie's Association  
Harold Merton Adams Trust  
James Wood Bequest Fund  
Kinburn St Andrews Charitable Trust  
Littleton Trust  
Miss A M Pilkington Charitable Trust  
Miss Agnes H Hunter's Trust  
Miss P M Ireland Charitable Trust  
Mrs Maxwell Stuart Charitable Trust

Northwood Charitable Trust  
PF Charitable Trust  
Reuben Foundation  
Talteg Ltd  
The Albert Hunt Trust  
The Appletree Trust  
The Astor of Hever Trust  
The Binks Trust  
The Brian Maguire Charitable Trust  
The Cotton Trust  
The Forbes Charitable Foundation  
The Gamma Trust  
The Gannochy Trust  
The Gordon Fraser Charitable Trust  
The Hospital Saturday Fund  
The Hugh Fraser Foundation  
The John Liston Scottish Charitable Trust  
The JTH Charitable Trust  
The Kate Mackaskill Foundation  
The Kintore Charitable Trust  
The M V Hillhouse Trust  
The MacLennan Trust  
The Margaret Murdoch Charitable Trust  
The Martin Connell Charitable Trust  
The Oliver Ford Charitable Trust  
The Orcome Trust  
The Peter Brough Bequest Fund  
The Ronald F Slater Charitable Trust  
The Ronald Miller Foundation  
The Row Fogo Charitable Trust  
The Sir Iain Stewart Foundation  
The Sir James Miller Edinburgh Trust  
The Souter Charitable Trust  
The W A Cargill Fund  
The W G Forsyth Fund  
The W M Mann Foundation  
Thistledown Trust  
Ward Family Charitable Trust



A challenger competes to be the Strongest Man in Lanarkshire.

**£1,861**



WAS RAISED BY MARTIN LENNOX TO FIND LANARKSHIRE'S STRONGEST MAN



# LOOKING BACK, LOOKING FORWARD

## LOOKING BACK

In 2014/15 income from fees from core charitable activities increased by 8.1% from £20,742,941 to £22,424,300. Overall this growth came from Autism Services. The decline in pupil numbers at New Struan School seen in 2013/14 stabilised this year. Grant-funded work under the Scottish Government's Strategy for Autism again continued to grow with activities undertaken on projects such as the One Stop Shops and the microsegmentation project.

Resources expended on charitable activities increased by 7.4% to £22,271,662 compared to £20,737,900. This was in line with growth in fee income and this growth allowed a cost of living award to be made to staff despite another year of absorbing cost inflation in an environment of frozen fee rates.

Fundraising income decreased by 28.1% from £473,446 to £340,257 with costs up 13.3% to £228,252 (£201,374), as staffing vacancies were filled. Legacy income was substantially down year-on-year.

## LOOKING FORWARD

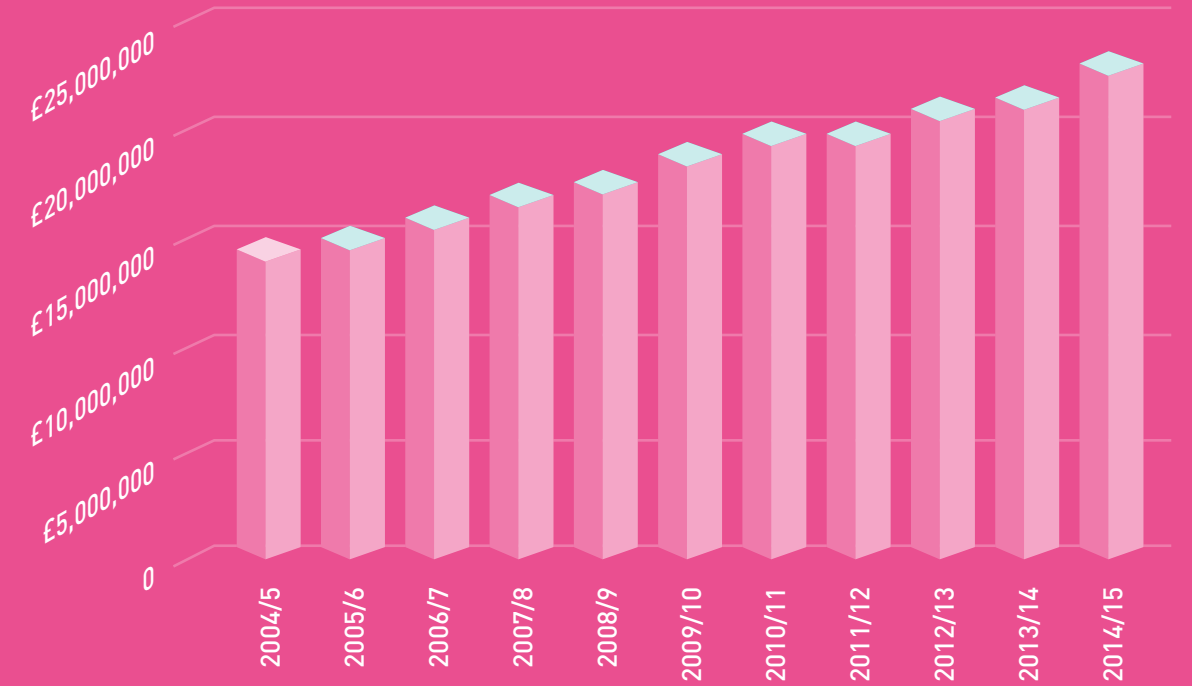
As we look towards 2015/16, we will continue to embrace PSIF and APIF, enabling us to evidence the quality of our organisation and services, and address any identified areas for improvement.

Our priority, as always, will be on achieving the highest quality of life for those in our services. The personalised support we deliver will continue to centre on happiness and wellbeing as more of our practitioners are trained in ATLASS.

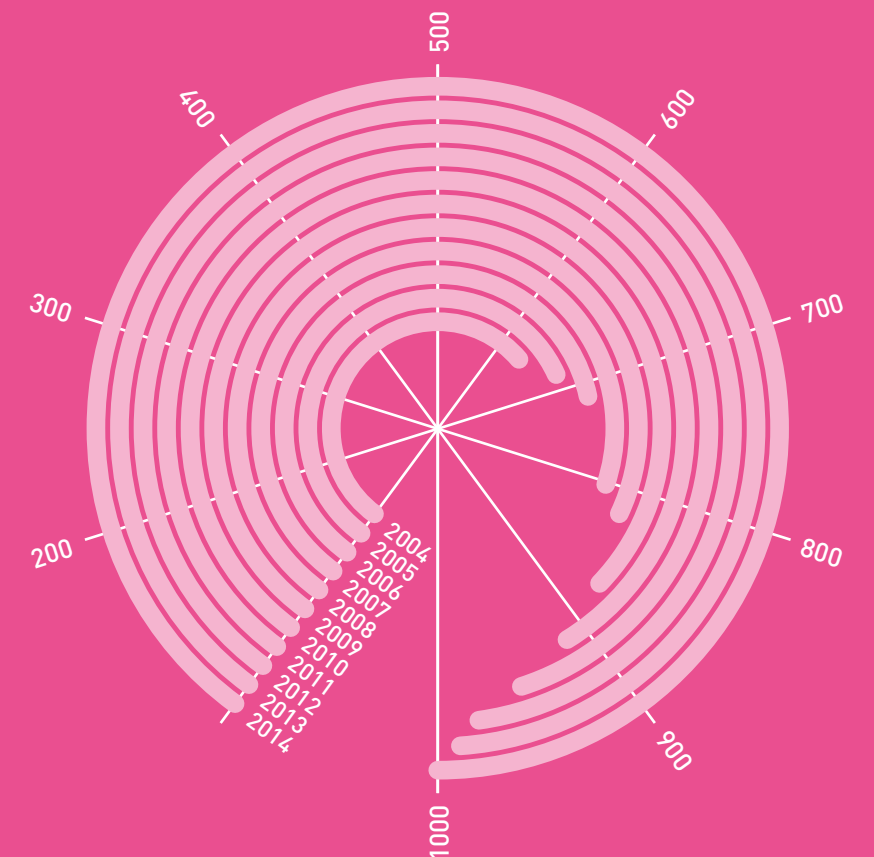
Progressing our practitioner led research studies and collaborative external projects through our Centre for Practice Innovation will also be an area of focus.

Furthermore, we plan to extend our offering to parents and carers through the development of an additional online support programme and Knowledge Share seminars delivered in new locations across Scotland.

INCOME – TEN YEAR TREND



STAFF GROWTH



# BOARD MEMBERS AND SENIOR MANAGEMENT

## OUR BOARD 2014-15

**Dr. Paul Prescott**  
**Alison Leask**  
**Susan Clark**  
**Ian McPhail**  
**Colette Robertson**  
**Cathy Scott**  
**Andrew Lester**  
**Kenneth Wardrop**  
**Sue Fletcher-Watson**  
**Lindsay Ebner**  
**Alun Morgan**

## SENIOR MANAGEMENT

**Alan Somerville**  
Chief Executive Officer  
**Gordon Laidlaw**  
Director of Finance and IT  
**Jackie Latto**  
Director of Autism Services  
**Sharon Stewart**  
Director of Human Resources  
**Charlene Tait**  
Director of Development  
**Jasmine Miller**  
Principal of New Struan School

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### New Ridgepark Transitional Assessment Service

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