

From people supported by the National Autistic Society Scotland and our volunteers  
Summer 2018

## Autism Friendly Award success for Glasgow Life

**Glasgow's community facilities and libraries are the very first in Scotland to be certified as autism-friendly after achieving the National Autistic Society's Autism Friendly Award.**

Staff from 53 Glasgow Life venues learned about autism and made adjustments to the way they work to ensure autistic visitors can access and enjoy the services they offer. This included carrying out a consultation with autistic customers to find out what they found challenging, and creating designated quiet spaces in each venue.

Glasgow Life have also created autism-friendly visitor guides to help autistic customers prepare for their visit to venues which include the city's iconic Mitchell Library.

Fiona McGrevey, Branches and Volunteering



(L to R) Fiona McGrevey, Branches and Volunteering Development Manager at the National Autistic Society Scotland and Chair of Glasgow Life and Depute Leader of Glasgow City Council, Councillor David McDonald

Development Manager, presented the award to Councillor David McDonald, Chair of Glasgow Life. She said: "I'm really impressed by the changes Glasgow Life have made to improve accessibility for autistic people and their families at their venues across the city."

"We know that 44% of autistic people and families in Scotland sometimes don't go out because

they're worried about how people will react to their autism.

"Our Autism Friendly Award encourages organisations to learn about autism and make the small adjustments that mean they are more welcoming for autistic people and their families."

Councillor David McDonald, Chair of Glasgow Life and Depute Leader of Glasgow City

Council said: "I'm delighted that Glasgow is the first city in Scotland to have its public libraries and community centres achieve the Autism Friendly Award. These venues join a number of other autism-friendly Glasgow Life facilities, including the Gallery of Modern Art and Riverside Museum, in helping to create a welcoming environment and making a difference to autistic people and their families."

Until everyone understands

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# Welcome to News and **views**

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**Last year was the 50th birthday of an iconic album – Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band – which was the eighth studio album by the Beatles. If you haven't heard of the name, or the music, you will have definitely seen the record cover.**

Last year was also my fifth year as a blogger and combining these two milestones seemed like a great way to celebrate. The result of which was an art project which took up much of my time in December.

It was a very ambitious piece of work. For weeks, any free time I had was spent with my sketchbook in hand. In total, over 100 drawings were penned, scanned and photoshopped into place.

When deciding who to put in my version of the cover, friends suggested featuring every person who was a 'fifth Beatle'. About one third of the cover is taken up by this idea, with the rest a mix of links to trivial facts about the album and personal choice.

A full-size colour version and list of who I've featured can be accessed by visiting [www.gordonwallaceart.blogspot.co.uk](http://www.gordonwallaceart.blogspot.co.uk).

I hope you will take a look.

**Gordon Wallace**  
Editor



Gordon's Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band record cover illustration



## An update

Welcome to the summer edition of *News and views*.

World Autism Awareness Week 2018 saw the launch of phase three of our award-winning *Too Much Information* campaign, which aims to increase public understanding of autism.

This year, we've launched a powerful new film called *Diverted*, which follows an autistic woman who is so anxious about her train journey to work that she feels unable to leave the house. She becomes completely overwhelmed as she imagines all the things that could go wrong: delays, diversions and cancellations, loud crowds and the tuts and stares that come when her discomfort becomes visible.

We're asking people in Scotland to learn about the small changes they can make to reduce the overload autistic people face, and how unexpected changes can leave autistic people feeling socially isolated. For instance, if you see someone having a hard time, just like the character in our film, you can help by understanding that the person could be autistic, giving them space and not staring.

We are also calling on transport organisations in Scotland to do their bit too, by finding out about the needs of autistic passengers or following in the footsteps of Edinburgh Airport by achieving our Autism Friendly Award.

Did you take part in a bucket collection, tackle our 7k for 700K challenge, or complete our Glasgow Night Walk in the snow? Turn to page six for a round-up of what our volunteers from across Scotland were doing to help us raise funds during World Autism Awareness Week 2018.

I hope you enjoy reading about our work across Scotland over the past few months.

Best wishes,

Fiona McGrevey  
The National Autistic Society Scotland

## Justice Secretary encourages autistic young people to take part in employment project

Justice Secretary, Michael Matheson, visited our offices to find out how we are helping autistic young people from across west central Scotland into work.

Our Moving Forward project aims to help young people to develop skills for the workplace, gain social confidence and find employment.

It is funded by CashBack for Communities, a Scottish Government initiative which takes money seized from criminals under the proceeds of crime legislation and invests it in projects for Scotland's most disadvantaged young people.

Mr Matheson said, "I was pleased to visit the National Autistic Society to meet young people and parents who have benefited from the CashBack-funded Moving Forward programme.

"It was fantastic to hear real stories that show the positive impact that this initiative has had on young people's lives. Since 2008 we have committed £92 million to CashBack and other community initiatives and I am keen to ensure that such opportunities continue to be provided to help young people develop skills for the workplace, gain social confidence and find employment."



Justice Secretary Michael Matheson with participants from the project

## Pop-up charity shop fun!

**Thank you to everyone who came along to our pop-up charity shop and helped raise over £2,500 for our branch in Dundee and Angus.**

Open for one week only, the pop-up shop was a must-visit, with items on sale including clothes, shoes, books and DVDs.

Martin Gordon, volunteer chair of the branch, said, "We're grateful to everyone who shopped with us. The money raised will help us to keep the activities and support groups our branch offers running."

Don't worry if you didn't manage to stop by – the branch is planning to do it all over again in September! Keep your eyes peeled for more information on our Facebook page in the near future.



*Volunteers at the pop-up charity shop*

## News from Catrine Bank

**By Carol Povey, Director**

Over the past 18 months, our adult services at Catrine Bank have been on a rapid and sustained quality improvement programme, resulting in a number of substantial changes designed to improve the lives of the people living there.

The latest stage of these changes has seen a new team structure proposed in which the service will be run as three separate – but interlinked – services. Each will have a Registered Service Manager responsible for running a cluster of flats. Previously separate day opportunities will now be integrated into the three services, ensuring everyone living in the services has a full developmental 24 hour curriculum, delivered by small teams of staff using person-centred approaches.

We will also be creating a new Quality Improvement Team working across Scotland. All adult services in Scotland will be led by a new Area Manager for Scotland who will be responsible for ensuring we provide high quality adult services.

These changes are very positive and are the next stage in our journey towards making sure the people we support at Catrine Bank and across Scotland are able to live the very best lives they can.

## Cross-Party Group on Autism at Scottish Parliament

At the end of March, the Cross-Party Group (CPG) on Autism met at the Scottish Parliament to discuss some of the issues that autistic people, their families and carers face around mental health.

We had four great speakers at the meeting who gave both informative and powerful presentations on the issue.

It was great that MSP members of the CPG were able to hear from many autistic people about what they think needs to be done to improve mental health services for autistic people in Scotland.

# Meet the volunteer



## Lee-Ann Mackenzie

Lead Community  
Engagement Volunteer  
for Inverness

Interview and illustration by Gordon Wallace

**Q: Who are you?**

I am Lee-Ann Mackenzie. I am a 37 years old full-time mum to two amazing girls, Isla is nine years old and Faith is seven years old. I am married to my lovely hubby Paul.

**Q: What made you decide to work with the National Autistic Society Scotland?**

I decided to volunteer after being a stay-at-home mum for eight years.

My daughter Isla is autistic and after her diagnosis, I attended several information sessions and events at The Pines in Inverness. The parent information programmes and coffee mornings were a lifeline – I met lovely parents and felt like I was a part of something.

So when I heard that the National Autistic Society Scotland was looking for a volunteer, I jumped at the chance! My role allows me to provide advice to local businesses on how best to help autistic people.

I've also been involved in fundraising which has been a fantastic experience. Isla came along to support us when we had an information stall at ASDA in Inverness. She was able to explain first-hand to staff and customers what it's like to be autistic.

**Q: Any challenges about working in Inverness?**

I feel that people are still a little unsure on how to approach the subject of autism – lots of people find it a taboo subject. That's why I want to encourage businesses to take part in initiatives such as Autism Hour, which can make a huge difference to autistic people and their families. I want Inverness to become autism-friendly and lead the way for other Scottish cities.

**Q: Can you tell us about yourself outside of your volunteering... do you have any hobbies or interests?**

I love to go for lunch dates or coffee dates with my friends. I also love going to see musicals.

## Volunteering opportunities

Volunteering with the National Autistic Society Scotland is a great way to meet new people and learn new skills, whilst making a real difference to the lives of autistic people.

We are recruiting volunteer befrienders and mentors for our Person to Person service, which supports adults aged 26 and over.

The project helps autistic people overcome challenges and meet goals, such as taking part in social activities, facing problems at work, or dealing with complicated banking and housing issues.

As a volunteer befriender or mentor, you will provide support to autistic people in Glasgow and the surrounding areas face-to-face, by phone or by email.

To find out more, please visit [www.autism.org.uk/volunteer](http://www.autism.org.uk/volunteer).

## Celebrating World Autism Awareness Week 2018!

Raising funds  
across Scotland!

Thank you to everyone who took part and helped us make World Autism Awareness Week 2018 the best yet!

- Celebrations kicked off with a photography exhibition at our Glasgow office. *Too Much Information: what autistic photographers want you to understand about autism* is a series of images, created by a group of autistic individuals as they learned about photography.
- Staff from Shell's offices in Aberdeen took part in an autism awareness session.
- Victoria Morris and Laura Anne Foley were joined by volunteers at Glasgow Central Station for a bucket collection.
- In Ardrossan, Jordan and Suzanne Fernando organised a coffee morning.



- Warren, a former participant on our CashBack for Communities – funded Moving Forward programme, gave a talk, and helped on our stand at The Scottish Strategy for Autism's annual conference in Edinburgh.
- Staff from the Scottish Qualifications Authority's office held an autism awareness day.
- Lee-Ann Mackenzie was joined

by daughters Isla and Faith who helped staff an information stand at The Eastgate Shopping Centre in Inverness.

- Cambuslang mums Louise Reilly and Caroline Shand took on our 7K for 700k challenge – while dressed up in onesies.



If you would like to support us by becoming a volunteer fundraiser, please email [karron.kent@nas.org.uk](mailto:karron.kent@nas.org.uk).

## TMI year three Unexpected changes leave autistic people feeling socially isolated

We want members of the public to understand that unexpected changes can leave autistic people feeling socially isolated.

Nine out of 10 autistic people we surveyed told us that unexpected changes on public transport can make them feel anxious, and 52 per cent said that a fear of experiencing unexpected changes has stopped them from going on a bus or train.

Christopher Miller, from Girvan, shared his story and spoke about the barriers he faces because of his

autism. He told us about a day trip to the Glasgow Botanic Gardens when he had to go on the subway and the noise and shaking affected him so much that he had to cover his ears and eyes. He wished the journey would end because he was so embarrassed and felt everyone was looking at him.

Through our *Too Much Information* campaign we want people to find out more about autism so they can recognise when someone might be feeling overwhelmed and what they can do to help.



Christopher on the train

Unexpected changes are a part of everyday life but we can all help by finding out more about autism and the small things we can all do to make Scotland more autism-friendly.

## I'm Moving Forward into employment thanks to CashBack for Communities

By Warren Deakin

**I never really considered myself to be different or thought that I might be autistic – it was my mum who fought for my diagnosis. She noticed that there was something different about me. I never played with the other children at school and I always preferred to spend time with adults. It was easier to be with adults than children my own age.**

Being autistic affects me in many different ways. I can find it hard to meet new people and changes in routine can be really difficult. My daily routine needs to be the same each day and I have this set out in great detail in my head. Changes cause me a lot of stress.

Preferring adult company to children my own age made growing up quite hard. At primary school, I worked on my own and found it hard to make friends. It wasn't until secondary school that I really started to grow in social confidence and found a good group of friends.

I am very passionate about the police and fun fairs, and have had some great volunteering opportunities. My favourite was volunteering at the Glasgow Commonwealth Games in 2014.

Although I had experience of volunteering, I was finding it hard

to get into employment. The style of recruitment used by many employers made me feel anxious so I was referred to the National Autistic Society Scotland's Moving Forward project, which aims to help young people to develop skills for the workplace, gain social confidence and find employment.

It is funded by CashBack for Communities, a Scottish Government initiative which takes money seized from criminals under the proceeds of crime legislation and invests it in projects for Scotland's most disadvantaged young people.

It was great to meet other autistic people in the same situation. It was interesting to see some of the things other people struggled with as these were actually really easy for me and vice versa! Taking part also helped improve my confidence, and I am delighted to say that I have



*Warren at The Scottish Strategy for Autism conference at the EICC in Edinburgh*

now secured part-time employment as an Admin Assistant within a primary school in Glasgow.

The future is looking bright!

If you would like to contribute, please email [scotlandnews@nas.org.uk](mailto:scotlandnews@nas.org.uk).

# Meet our team

## Job opportunities

### Do you...

- want a rewarding job that offers satisfaction, variety and flexibility?
- enjoy working with people and want to make a real difference?
- have excellent life skills that you can share?

The National Autistic Society Scotland is currently recruiting support workers for our services in East Ayrshire and Glasgow. Full-time, part-time, zero hours and nightshift positions are available.

To find out about these roles and more opportunities with the National Autistic Society Scotland, please visit [www.autism.org.uk/jobs](http://www.autism.org.uk/jobs) or call 0141 221 8090 and ask to speak to our HR team.



Gordon's illustration of Louise

## Louise Abernethy

### Person to Person Coordinator

In every issue, we meet a member of the National Autistic Society Scotland team. Here's what our editor Gordon Wallace found out about Louise Abernethy, Person to Person Coordinator.

#### Q: What made you decide to work with the National Autistic Society Scotland?

I had worked with autistic people before and had really enjoyed it. I also thought the Person to Person service was perfectly suited to me as it was similar to things that I had previously done. It seemed like a great service to be involved with.

#### Q: How does it feel to be Person to Person Coordinator?

I'm really enjoying my role so far – every day is different! I love meeting new people and being able to see the people we work with progress and reach their goals. Our Person to Person service is really great as we work with people who

might not be able to access any other services due to their age. We give them support and help them to try new things.

#### Q: Do you have any hobbies or interests outside of work?

I have a wide range of interests outside work. My new year's resolution was to read more books, so I've been doing a lot of reading recently. Crime thrillers, science fiction and fantasy books are my favourite. I am also really into make-up and doing my nails so I am always buying new products to try and planning what colour to paint my nails next! Spending time with my friends and family is also important so I try my best to see everyone regularly.

## Did you know...?

Are you a member of the National Autistic Society Scotland? If not, you can join our growing community of over 1,000 people in Scotland and play a vital role in our charity's work. Our package of benefits includes our quarterly members' magazine, *Your Autism Magazine*, discounts on our publications and events, and low cost autism insurance. To find out more, please call our Supporter Care team on **0808 800 1050**.

The National Autistic Society Scotland is here to transform lives, challenge attitudes and build a society that works for autistic people.

We transform lives by being a trusted source of practical support and advice for autistic children and adults, as well as their families and carers. We challenge attitudes by campaigning with our local branches and working with businesses and policymakers to change laws and deliver better services.

Since 1962, we have made a lot of progress, but we know there is much more to do, because the status quo isn't good enough for autistic people. With your support, we can change it.