

News and Views

From the National Autistic Society
Scotland and our volunteers

Summer 2026

Moving Forward secures fourth round of CashBack funding

We're thrilled to share that our Moving Forward programme has been awarded funding through CashBack for Communities Phase 7. Our team of six look forward to creating impact over the next three years, supporting a total of 210 autistic young people between the ages of 10-25.

This programme will provide a safe, positive space for autistic young people to tackle isolation and loneliness, build confidence and discover their potential in progressing to positive opportunities. Where appropriate, support may be extended to family members of young people facing the greatest challenges. This marks our fourth successful application to CashBack, and we're excited to continue working with our fantastic partners – both longstanding and new.

Last year we supported 60 autistic young people. Our annual report shows that 73% of participants aged 10-15 reported an improved relationship with



Moving Forward team members

school, while 83% of those aged 16-25 secured positive destinations.

Participants progressed into a range of opportunities, gaining new qualifications, securing college and university places, moving into employment, training and volunteering, and

building the skills needed to move forward.

We would like to extend a special thank you to our Youth Forum, who provided invaluable insight and input to our funding application, your lived experience helped us shape something truly special!

Further information and eligibility criteria can be found on our website:

www.autism.org.uk/what-we-do/scotland/moving-forward

The full portfolio of CashBack Phase 7 Partners can be found here: cashbackforcommunities.org/partners/

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FROM OUR GUEST EDITOR – INESE VEREBE

Living as an undiagnosed autistic person, creative craft kept me grounded, whether that be music or visual arts. Being able to express myself allowed me to communicate internal struggles I cannot elaborate on using words.

Being a mentor for autistic art students and leading a 'Reimagining Art' group for young autistic adults means that, after putting creative projects on pause but always coming back to them, alongside managing autistic traits, I can now share my knowledge and give guidance to people with similar struggles as part of my job at the National Autistic Society.

Doing multiple roles within the National Autistic Society has given me fulfilment, as I am seeing progression in the people I work with – becoming bolder, trying new art techniques, and finding their way to learn about themselves and express their emotions.

Inese Verebe

Editor



Inese at our Reimagining Art exhibition

SIGN OUR PETITION

Our Act Now for Autistic Rights campaign has had a fantastic response so far, with supporters sending over 5,500 letters to party leaders, calling on their support for the Learning Disabilities, Autism and Neurodivergence (LDAN) Bill to the Scottish Parliament as soon as possible.

However, we need to keep pushing for the urgent change autistic people and their families need in order to access the rights, services and opportunities they are entitled to.

By signing and sharing this petition, you can call on the First Minister John Swinney to include the LDAN Bill in September's Programme for Government, which sets out the Scottish Government's key priorities and legislative programme over the next year.

Demand action by signing our petition.



Our campaigner Alan



**Demand change
and sign our petition**
bit.ly/sign-our-LDAN-petition

update

FROM OUR DIRECTOR



Hello everyone, and welcome to the Summer edition of *News and Views*!

Our Act Now for Autistic Rights campaign continues into the summer months, and I'm incredibly encouraged by the response so far. With over 5,500 letters sent to party leaders across Scotland, it's clear that together we are making a powerful case for the introduction of the Learning Disabilities, Autism and Neurodivergence (LDAN) Bill.

We now have an important opportunity to build on this progress. By signing and sharing our petition, you can call on the First Minister, John Swinney, to include the LDAN Bill in September's Programme for Government. This is a crucial moment to keep up the pressure and ensure autistic people and their families are heard.

As we move through the summer months, I hope you are able to take some time to relax, recharge and enjoy the longer days. Whether you're inspired by this edition to get creative, get involved in our campaign, or take part in activities in your local community, thank you for everything you do to support autistic people across Scotland.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rob Holland'.

Rob Holland

Director of National Autistic Society Scotland

Laurenson: Nicholson duo shine in Edinburgh performance



Laurenson:Nicholson duo at Usher Hall, Edinburgh

On the 27th of April 2026, our General Administrator in the Glasgow Office, David Nicholson, performed with pianist Amy Laurenson as part of the Laurenson:Nicholson duo at Usher Hall in Edinburgh. This concert was part of Live Music Now Scotland's Emerging Artists series. The concert featured a variety of traditional music from lively jigs and reels to very moving slow airs. David also gave a speech near the end of the concert, highlighting the importance of music in his life as an autistic individual and expressing his pride in being autistic and neurodivergent. The concert was very well received by the audience, and Amy and David give thanks to all those who gave such lovely comments regarding the performance.

Runayr runners go the distance for charity

We'd like to say a huge thank you to Runayr and all their runners for completing a remarkable 24-hour sponsored run 'The RUNAYR24 Challenge', raising over £11,000 for three wonderful charities. The National Autistic Society Scotland is delighted to have been selected as one of their chosen charities and truly appreciate Runayr's generous £3,500 donation. Patsy from our Autism Support Ayrshire service went along to Runayr to say thank you.

The money raised will go towards the continuation of delivering our social groups for autistic individuals in Scotland.

Runayr is a community-based running club in Ayr focused on creating an inclusive, ego-free environment for people of all ages and abilities.

For further information see their Instagram page: [@runayr_](https://www.instagram.com/runayr_)



Patsy at Runayr

Awards success for Largs Branch

The branch and Branch Chair were nominated and finalists in an annual Volunteer Recognition Awards event held by TACT (The Ayrshire Community Trust) across their local authority area of North Ayrshire.

The branch was in the 'Volunteer Charity of the Year' category and the Branch Chair in the 'Outstanding Volunteer' category. They were thrilled to have been nominated, never mind having made it through to the finals. At an award ceremony on 3rd of June both the branch and Branch Chair- Lizzy Barbour were announced as the runners up in each of their categories and were delighted.

The Largs Branch has also been nominated to the National Diversity Awards under their Community Organisation Award for Disability category. The National Diversity Awards is described as a prestigious black-tie event, which celebrates the excellent achievements of grass-root communities that tackle the issues in today's society, giving them recognition for their dedication and hard work.



Certificates awarded to Largs Branch and Lizzy Barbour, Branch Chair

Winners will be announced on the 18th of September at Liverpool's Anglican Cathedral.

You can see more about the branch's nomination here: bit.ly/awardsnominations-nas-largs-branch

Making travel more accessible

In conjunction with Rail 74 Community Rail Partnership, our NAS South Lanarkshire Branch are running a trial of new sensory travel bags.

Designed to reduce travel anxieties and make your journey calmer and more comfortable, these handy backpacks are filled with a variety of sensory resources, including fidget toys, a torch, and ear defenders.

Prior to the roll-out, the branch is recruiting people to trial the sensory bags. Participants will be able to keep the bag and its contents in return for feedback.

Whilst developing the new sensory travel bags, the branch became aware of a number of other train company resources and have shared these with their members, to help shape their travel plans.



You can follow our South Lanarkshire Branch here:
www.facebook.com/NASSouthLanarkshire/?ref=embed_page

An interview with Watters, Glasgow-based autistic artist

Watters' music aims to deliver an authentic representation.

Q: Can you tell us about yourself and your music, and how would you describe your sound?

I'm Jacob, the artist known as Watters. I make what you could call avant-garde music. It's a bit like Gorillaz, if they had more aggression, with a sprinkle of Radio-head and 1920's anti-art ethos. It sounds a lot like throwing a high-tech fridge on a motorway and seeing what happens.

Q: When did your musical journey begin, and when did you realise it was something you wanted to pursue?

I always wanted to make art. I had knowledge in film, but with music, I only knew that I liked it. I haven't taken it in school, so I never had the confidence to dip my toes in it until the pandemic. Then, I started to listen to a lot of experimental artists, like Death Grips and Daniel Johnston.

What cemented it was playing my first ever live show, and people coming up to me saying: 'I don't know what that was, but I want to hear more of it'.

What does your creative process look like?

After I made my first creative project, I was anxious about repeating myself. I came across the concept of *shoshin*: 'beginner's mind'. It's the idea

that no matter how good you are at something; forget all that and approach everything with a beginner's mind, it leads to interesting results.

I have a very deliberate process. I have to have certain pieces of literature around; I have things on TV; I don't listen to music when I'm making a project, outside

of reference tracks, as it risks influencing me too much. I'm at the point now where I've learnt a lot of musical rules that I can break them purposefully.

If I give myself a month to write a project, I'll procrastinate for two weeks, or I'll do it for hours and then nothing. So much stuff is done in the last week.



Watters

What inspires your music, and are there themes you return to?

I draw a lot of inspiration from experimental music and art. I'm obsessed with the concept of vigilantes, regular people going out and trying to make a change. Frank Miller's Daredevil had a huge influence on the last project and continues to do so. It was partly that, and MF Doom. He had a 'supervillain' stage persona and dressed up as Doctor Doom from Marvel Comics. I took that and adapted it with Daredevil as an homage to him. Daredevil being the first disabled superhero and what that character stands for is important to me.



Images: @christymcginley

Watters

What cemented it was playing my first ever live show, and people coming up to me saying: 'I don't know what that was, but I want to hear more of it'.

As a neurodivergent artist, how does that shape your music and your connection with your audience? What message do you hope people take from your work?

Neurodivergent people can be extreme, loud, bombastic and make weird stuff that you've never heard before.

Alexithymia, the project I just put out, was meant to be a symbol, not an inspiration or a

tragedy, it was just meant to be as it is. An experience confined within music and sound. Too many people, when they hear neurodivergent artist, instantly want to know, 'what are you going to inspire me with'. One of the biggest messages I have is that neurodivergent people don't owe people a message.

Neurodivergent people just want to exist and be listened to, and they can make really good art.

What do you wish the industry understood better about neurodivergent artists?

I wish the industry understood that most of us are very reasonable and are not going to get annoyed when you get things wrong. What will make us upset is if you don't try in

the first place, if you don't have conversations with us.

There is no action without inclusion. You can make things better for people if you bring them into the conversation.

What would you say to a young neurodivergent person wanting to make music?

Get started. You will probably suck at first, but if you can get past that, then the sky is the limit. Don't be afraid to take inspiration from elsewhere, go to museums, go outside, take inspiration from your life. If you're struggling with an idea for a song or a story, take a couple of months off, especially if you're young, and then come back. The best stuff comes from lived experience.

Find and support Watters on Instagram
@w.atters, with music available on all streaming platforms.

Meet our staff

Meet Hannah Inglis,
Employment Support
Coordinator



Q: Can you tell us a bit about yourself?

Hello! I'm Hannah, the Employment Support Coordinator for our Moving Forward with CashBack programme. I work with autistic 16-25-year-olds who aren't engaged in training, employment or education. In my personal life I love music, history and tending to my houseplant collection and garden!

Q: Why did you join the National Autistic Society?

I'm autistic (late-diagnosed aged 27) and super passionate about social justice and working to create a society where everyone is valued. I therefore couldn't turn down the opportunity to support autistic young people (often living in the most under-resourced areas of Scotland) to become confident in their own identity, and to discover their true potential.

Q: What do you enjoy most about your job?

In my position I am very privileged to witness each participants' journey; from being isolated or lacking in confidence, to completely blossoming, discovering who they really are and finding out which opportunities are out there for them.

Q: What's one change that would make the biggest difference for autistic people right now?

Improved access to opportunities which will benefit each individual, whether that's employment, education or even autism awareness (followed with action!) in areas such as healthcare or housing – all are essential to autistic peoples' livelihoods.

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?

To find out about our current vacancies and more opportunities with the National Autistic Society Scotland, please visit www.autism.org.uk/jobs

Are you a member of the National Autistic Society Scotland?

If not, you can join our growing community of over 1,200 people in Scotland and play a vital role in our charity's work. Our package of benefits includes our quarterly members' magazine, *Your Autism*, and discounts on our events. To find out more, please call our Supporter Care team on **0808 800 1050**.

About us

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

We transform lives by providing support, information and practical advice for the 56,000 autistic adults and children in Scotland, as well as their family members and carers.

Autistic people turn to us at key moments or challenging times in their lives, be it getting a diagnosis, going to school or finding work.

We change attitudes by improving public understanding of autism and the difficulties many autistic people face.

We also work closely with businesses, local authorities and government to help them provide more autism-friendly spaces, deliver better services and improve laws.

We have come a long way but it is not good enough.

There is still so much to do to increase opportunities, reduce social isolation and build a brighter future for people on the autism spectrum. With your help, we can make it happen.