

From awareness to action: Act Now for Autistic Rights this World Autism Acceptance Month

World Autism Acceptance Month (WAAM) is a valuable opportunity to come together each year and raise understanding of autism.

This year, it coincides with our **Act Now for Autistic Rights** campaign, which calls for the introduction of the Learning Disabilities, Autism and Neurodivergence Bill (LDAN Bill) to Parliament ahead of the Scottish Parliament election next month.

As we raise awareness and fundraise throughout April, we must also continue pushing for meaningful change. Our campaign highlights the challenges autistic people in Scotland face across education, healthcare, diagnosis, support services, and within their communities.

Since launching in January, the campaign has gained strong momentum, with over 4,000 emails to political party leaders through our call to action. We attended party conferences with our campaigners in February, appeared on national television



Our staff ran a WAAM information stand at the Clockwise offices

to discuss issues relevant to the campaign, such as the need for mandatory autism training and on the challenges associated with access to autism assessment and diagnosis. We also co-hosted a joint hustings with Scottish Autism to give autistic people and their families the chance to ask candidates from each political party about issues that matter most to you.

While we celebrate WAAM, it is equally important to keep advocating for a society where

autistic people can thrive. The LDAN Bill has the potential to transform autistic people's lives by strengthening rights, improving access to support, and shaping services that reflect autistic people's needs.

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to our
campaign
website



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FROM OUR GUEST EDITOR - BECCA

Every autistic and neurodivergent person deserves to live freely with independent choice and enjoyment.

If you'd have told me even four years ago, I'd be A) at university, B) still here and C) actually enjoying it, I wouldn't have believed you.

It's the culmination of years of patience, hard work, fighting to have my autistic needs seen and validated and holding onto the hope there was a light at the end of the tunnel.

This is what the LDAN bill could do for others and why it could make such a big difference to so many lives.

Becca Galloway
Editor



Becca during the filming of our Act Now for Autistic Rights campaign videos

REIMAGINING ART: A NEW YEAR

We are delighted to receive further funding from the Youth Arts Open Fund for our *Reimagining Art* project.

This programme of support is aimed at autistic young people between the ages of 16 and 25 who are living in Glasgow (and surrounding areas). Participants will attend group sessions where they will learn a variety of different art forms such as collage, printmaking, illustration, painting, and sculpting.

Fortnightly sessions take place at the Project Ability art studios in Glasgow city centre. The project runs for one year, ending with an exhibition of the young people's artwork.

REIMAGINING ART

The National Autistic Society Scotland



Reimagining Art poster

For more information contact
Socialprogrammescotland@nas.org.uk

update

FROM OUR DIRECTOR



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

Our Act Now for Autistic Rights campaign has continued to gain momentum, and I'm delighted to see our e-action surpassing 4,000 emails to party leaders across Scotland calling for the introduction of the Learning Disabilities, Autism and Neurodivergence (LDAN) Bill as soon as possible after the election. This Bill would have a transformative impact for autistic people and their families so keep it up!

April is also World Autism Acceptance Month (WAAM). More than 150 people across Scotland took part in 5k Spectrum Colour Walks and we are hugely grateful for your fundraising efforts.

The election in May is an incredibly important opportunity for autistic people's voices to be heard and there's still lots of time to get involved in our campaign.

To our staff, our campaigners, our volunteers and everyone who has supported Act Now for Autistic Rights campaign so far or who has taken part in WAAM events: thank you!



Rob Holland

Director of National Autistic Society Scotland

Ayr Gaiety awarded Boshier Grant

We are delighted to share that one of this year's Boshier Grant recipients is Ayr Gaiety.

Ayr Gaiety will launch a new initiative supporting autistic children and their families through inclusive drama classes and a dedicated carers' support group. The project will transform an existing space into a safe, sensory-adaptable environment, featuring calming areas and sensory tools tailored to diverse needs.

Our charity launched the scheme in 2023, in partnership with Thea and Peter Boshier. Through their personal experiences and professional work, Thea and Peter have developed an understanding of autism and the challenges faced by autistic people and their families.

The scheme awards grants of up to £25,000 to registered charities across the UK which share our aim of creating a society that works for autistic people.

"The Gaiety are delighted to receive this support from the Boshier Grant Scheme, through the National Autistic Society.



Photo: Guy Hinks

It will help us transform our creative engagement hub into a calm and adaptable sensory space.

Gaiety Theatre interior

This funding is already enabling us to work closely with local schools, families and community groups to shape the development of our specialist drama sessions for autistic children and young people.

It will also help us transform our creative engagement hub, Gaiety 2, into a calm and adaptable sensory space that responds to a wide range of needs.

Through this pilot, we are learning how to adapt our wider programme to be more accessible and inclusive, and we will use these insights to explore long term provision for autistic led classes in the future."

The application period for the next funding cycle of the Boshier Grant Scheme is due to open in June.

Find out more about the Boshier Grant here:
www.autism.org.uk/what-we-do/the-boshier-grant-scheme

Our volunteer story

My experience of taking part in the Act Now for Autistic Rights campaign

Fiona, our campaigner, talks about her journey and experience of joining the Act Now for Autistic Rights campaign.

'As an autistic adult I am very passionate about contributing to things that can spread the autism message far and wide and put autism in the spotlight. When I heard that National Autistic Society Scotland were looking for autistic adults to take part in campaigning, I immediately said yes.

The first stage was an online meeting with Rob Holland who is the Director of National Autistic Society Scotland. With his help and support we did an email to all the party leaders about why the LDAN Bill is important. I added my personal experiences of why this Bill matters to autistic people and why the elected new party leaders should vote for the LDAN Bill to be passed.

The next stage was another Teams call with Alex West, the Policy and Public Affairs Officer and Morton Dunlop, the External Affairs Manager.

I explained about how having the right support has helped me a lot and how it has made me feel fully included and respected in the wider community and I also shared my personal journey of how moving into supported accommodation has benefited my life.

We ended the call by me saying why others might choose to support the campaign. I found this experience good and I found the support great. I feel proud to have shared my experiences and I hoped I have helped autistic and non-autistic people to see why they might want to get involved, and to have their say on what we need for autistic people across Scotland.

I am hoping that this will also reach out to all the newly elected MSPs so that they have that power to change things for the better for autistic people.



Our campaigner
Fiona

Earlier in the year I was nominated by my local councillor Catherine Victor and the rest of my community for all my work raising awareness across Scotland and Aberdeenshire. Although I did not win, I will get a lovely certificate to thank me for being involved.

I will carry on raising awareness of autism and I will continue to work with the communities and the councils and national organisations and local MSPs to get autism to be a positive experience.

My advice to others is to go and just dive in and try. You never know where the results will take you.'

There are many ways to get involved and support the Act Now for Autistic Rights campaign this World Autism Acceptance Month:

- Send a letter to political party leaders using our call-to-action
- Share our social media posts or use our social media toolkit to raise awareness online
- Use our campaigner calendar for weekly action planning
- Explore our webpage for resources, stories, and information to help you advocate
- Encourage your networks, community groups, workplaces, or local organisations to engage with the campaign

There is still time to make your voice heard before the election on **7th of May**.

Museum on the Mound's Autism Friendly Award

The Autism Friendly Award helps customer-facing organisations offer neurodivergent-friendly and inclusive service. Museum on the Mound shares how the award improved accessibility and understanding of autism.

Q: Why did you apply for the Autism Friendly Award?

Museum on the Mound is located in the historic Bank of Scotland Head Office in Edinburgh and is the corporate museum of Lloyds Banking Group.



Bank of Scotland Head Office

We have an ongoing commitment to making our environment, facilities and services as accessible and welcoming as possible.

We are passionate about inclusion and applied for the Autism Friendly Award to enable our team to make purposeful changes to develop more positive visitor experiences for autistic people.

Q: Please can you provide some examples of things you put in place as a result of using the autism friendly workbook?

We have created a sensory map of the museum, communication cards and visual stories. Sensory bags and a sensory garden trail are available to engage and calm visitors. Team members show visitors our quiet corner.

Workshops and tours are purposefully designed to be as sensory as possible. Participants are now told what to expect and given the choice of how they engage with artefacts.

We have also made a commitment to ongoing staff training and improved signage on what objects and interactives can be touched to make the experience of visiting us less stressful.

Q: Have you received any feedback from autistic people/families who have visited you since the award that you would be willing to share?

Since we began working towards the Autism Friendly Award, the visitor feedback we've received has been consistently positive (98% rated us as excellent and 2% as very good) and shows the need for and benefits of providing accessible services and environments.

Visitors have told us that our relaxed, sensory sessions are particularly meaningful as there are limited opportunities for them to engage in the community. The sessions provide support and help tackle isolation. The fact that they are free also makes them accessible to a wider audience.

Q: As a business how do you feel gaining the award will benefit you?

The changes we have made and additional services we now provide have resulted in an enhanced experience for all visitors and team members.

We hope that gaining the Autism Friendly Award will make autistic people feel welcome and that it will help to bring new visitors to the Museum.



Quiet area at the museum

You can read more about the award here:

www.autism.org.uk/learn/what-we-do/autism-accreditation/autism-friendly-award

World Autism Acceptance Month 2026: Ways you can get involved

World Autism Acceptance Month is a brilliant opportunity to get involved, raise awareness, and celebrate autism acceptance. From activities you can take part in at home to ways you can engage through work or school, there are plenty of ways to celebrate this month.

At home:

- Take part in Walk 5k This April or fundraise in your own way.
- Share your photos, stories and campaigning goals.
- Join our campaign on social media.



At work:

- Sign up for the Workplace 5k Challenge and rally colleagues for a fun virtual fitness boost.
- Use our free workplace resources to raise awareness and take meaningful action.



In school:

- Get teachers and pupils involved in activities like our Schools 5k, helping raise money and build more inclusive school environments.
- Use our free lesson plans and resources to help children and young people understand autism.
- Share our resources with parents and carers.



Ishan and his mum, Indu, did a 5k walk with his family and friends and raised an amazing £1,300 last year

**World Autism
Acceptance Month**

You can find out more and download all your free resources at: waam.autism.org.uk

Our new LinkedIn Page We're on LinkedIn!

If you want to keep up to date with our services and the latest news about what we're doing for autistic people and their families in Scotland, follow us at [@national-autistic-society-scotland](https://www.linkedin.com/company/national-autistic-society-scotland) or visit the link below:



www.linkedin.com/company/national-autistic-society-scotland

Meet our staff

Meet Emma Wilson, Social Group Leader



Q: Can you tell us a bit about yourself?

I moved primary schools in S5 to a school with around 40 people in it all together. I left school at 16 and went to college for an entry course to health and social care, at the same time is when I started volunteering with the National Autistic Society before becoming a social group leader.

I love to bake for people, I bake things like cakes, truffles, cheesecakes, biscuits and cookies. I also love to play video games and binge watch tv shows and movies.

Q: Why did you join the National Autistic Society?

I was diagnosed with autism at around the age of 8, growing up in high school the careers advisor would ask what do you want your job to be and every job that I wanted had to be accommodating. I had good support and wanted to give back to my community, when I found out who the National Autistic Society were I knew I had to be a part of it.

I am now proudly a member of staff for the National Autistic Society.

Q: What do you enjoy most about your job?

As part of social programmes, I mostly enjoy getting to know each individual and their stories and being able to help and support them.

Q: What needs to change to make things better for autistic people?

Growing up there wasn't enough knowledge about autism. Awareness and education about autism is needed everywhere, especially the education system.

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.