



Scottish Government  
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INSPIRING SCOTLAND

# Increasing Understanding of Autism Programme

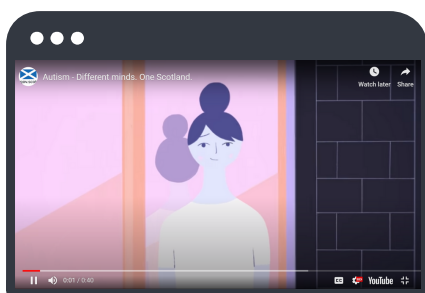
## PROGRESS REPORT

January - August 2020



# Key Numbers

## Campaign



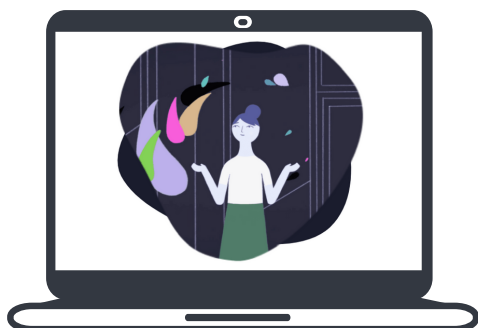
**164,259**

views TV ad on YouTube  
in one month.



**50+**

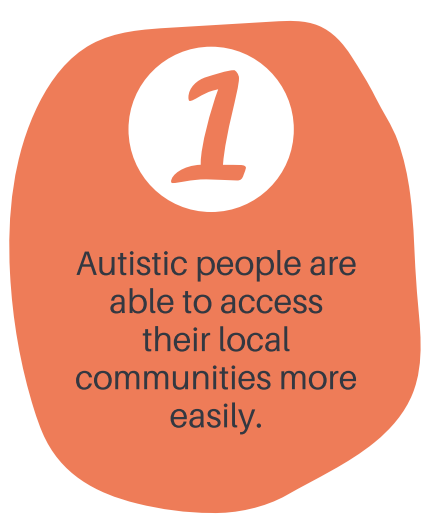
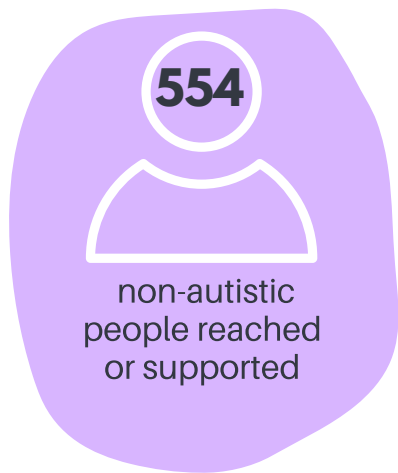
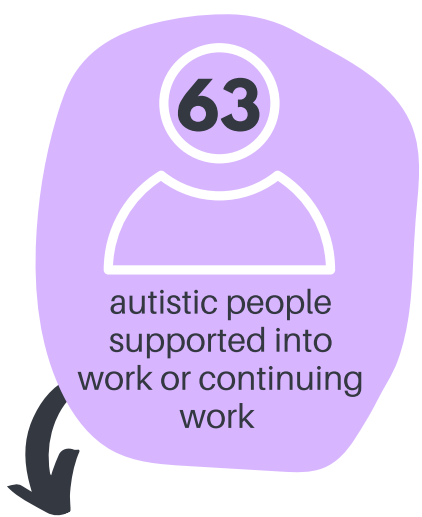
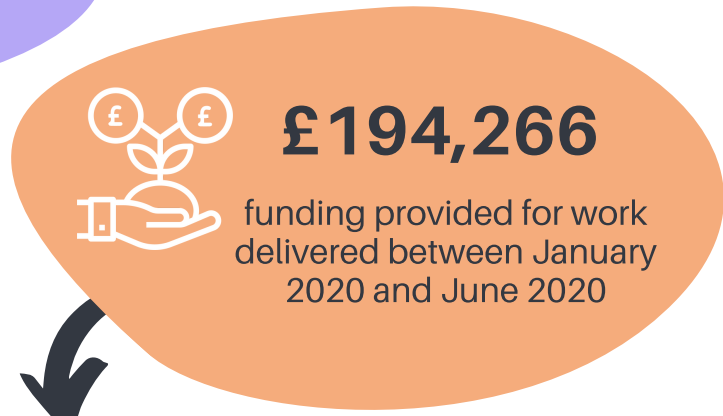
autistic people involved  
in the development of  
the campaign.



**78**

physical sites showing  
campaign across  
Scotland.

# Funded Charities



# Background to the Increasing Understanding of Autism Programme

This programme is a direct response to the Scottish Government’s 2017 Engagement Exercise, which emphasised the need to raise understanding of autism amongst the non-autistic population.

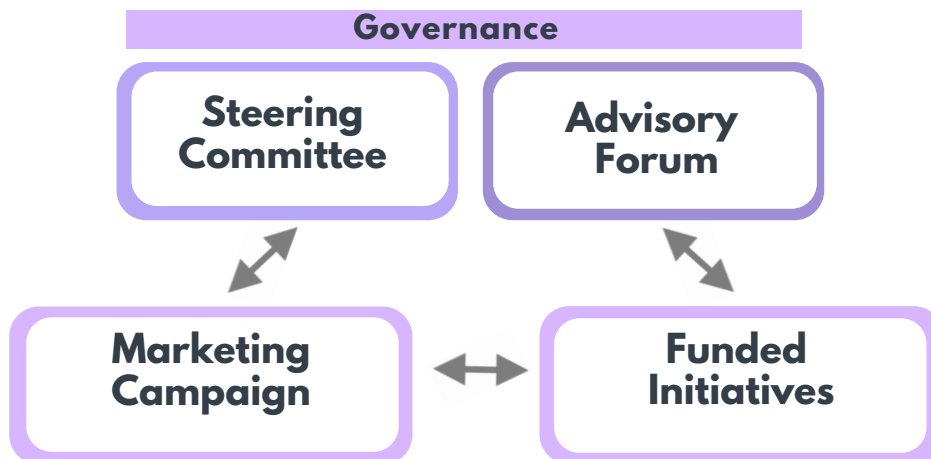
The consultation highlighted the importance of increasing understanding, awareness and acceptance of autism, reducing autism stereotypes and building a society which is accessible, inclusive and values neurodiversity.

Through the Programme, we are aiming to make Scotland a more accessible, inclusive, and understanding place for autistic people to learn, work and live.

The programme consists of a marketing campaign managed by the Scottish Government, and nine funded charity projects. The programme is governed by the Steering Committee which is supported by four Autistic Advisory Forums – see graphic below for more information.

## Programme Structure

The funded charities are also partners in this programme, helping to influence the direction of the national marketing campaign and promote the campaign at a local level.



## Steering Committee



Steering Committee oversees the whole programme. It has 6 voting members, three of whom are autistic, one employer, one academic and a member of Scottish Government.

## Advisory Forum

Advisory Forums put the autistic voice at the heart of the programme. Four regional Autism Advisory Forums were established to gather feedback from around 50 autistic individuals. These Forums have been facilitated by different Autistic People Led Organisations in Scotland. The forum feedback has then been shared with the Steering Committee to help shape the direction of the programme.

**'It's important to feel heard and seen in representations of autism and the forum has provided that space and been a respectful and inclusive environment.'**



Feedback from people who've attended the Advisory Forums

# Charity Initiatives

In partnership with the Scottish government we are distributing £400,000 of funding across nine charities in Scotland. The funding aims to make **employment** and **community participation** more accessible and to help autistic people live active and independent lives.

When we began this project in December 2019 none of us could have predicted the Covid-19 pandemic which reached Scotland just as the charities were beginning to start delivering their projects. This report provides a brief update on the **nine funded charity projects**, most of which have continued despite the impact of the crisis, providing much needed support at this time of uncertainty.

The nine charities in the programme received their funding in December 2019. Most started developing and shaping their projects from January 2020.

The majority of the charities were at the end of the planning phase and beginning to deliver when the restrictions were imposed around Covid-19. The impact of the restrictions on the charities to deliver their projects has been high, especially those who planned to deliver employment projects.

Despite the restrictions most charities have managed to pivot their projects and are still delivering against outcomes despite the restrictions.

**7 of the projects have continued to deliver during the lockdown & subsequent easing of restrictions.**

**2 of the employment projects Auticon and Enable Scotland paused their projects until August.**

## The Impact of the Pandemic

# Outcomes

In line with [Scottish Strategy for Autism](#) the programme has three main strategic outcomes which will improve the outcomes for autistic people living in Scotland.

## Independence

**Autistic people are able to live independently in the community with equal access to all aspects of society. Services have the capacity and awareness to ensure that people are met with recognition and understanding.**

All 7 charities (who continued to deliver during lockdown) reported that they had noted increased awareness of autism amongst the non-autistic people they are working with.

In addition, they worked closely with the autistic people involved in delivering their projects and helped them to upskill in online skills and confidence to deliver training.

*This included Triple A's working in partnership with NHS Grampian to develop a Covid19 card to allow autistic people the comfort and support to access the outside world during lockdown. The card was well-received by both autistic individuals and the public.*

## Choice and Control

**Autistic people are treated with dignity and respect and services are able to identify their needs and are responsive to meet those needs.**

8 of the 9 charities indicated that they have started to see raised understanding of autism amongst professionals and services that encounter or work with autistic people. This is an ongoing progress and further evaluation will be needed at the end of the programme.

*For example, Perth Autism Support have carried out a baseline survey with Co-op store managers to assess their current understanding of autism.*

**After receiving information on assisting autistic people into work and talks about autism, the Co-op has been inspired to formalise their procedures for supporting autistic people into work & using the input from the programme, The Co-op have reviewed their accessibility policies at a national level.**



Feedback from the Co-op

## Active Citizenship

**Autistic people are able to participate in all aspects of community and society by successfully transitioning from school into meaningful educational or employment opportunities.**

Whilst charities have reported progress against this outcome, it has been more limited. All the cultural venues have been closed since March and are only now reopening. This has greatly limited the work that Autism Atlas and Project Ability have been able to deliver.

The charities have though gone above and beyond to support autistic people during the previous few months. This has included videos being produced by both Project Ability and Autism Atlas helping provide guidance and advice about the rules being imposed and charting what lockdown has been like for autistic people.

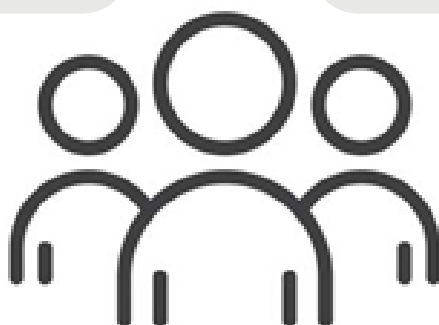
*Project Ability's Autistic Artists group produced 49 videos to date and increased their twitter following from 0 to over 200.*



Quotes from Autistic People involved in delivering the projects:

**It's good to feel you have been listened to about a subject many people don't want to talk about.**

**In 100 years', time, it will all be better for autistic people...Autism will be accepted as other conditions have been. It is a good time for pioneers and I always wanted to be a pioneer when I was growing up!**



**Inspiring Scotland's model allows for each charity to get support** from a dedicated Performance Advisor who nurtures collaboration and innovation to increase scale and impact. Performance Advisors are working intensively alongside the senior leadership and boards of each charity. Their purpose is to act as a 'critical friend' and focus their support on areas like strengthening financial management and strategic business planning.

**Non-financial Support**

Each Performance Advisor has access to Inspiring Scotland's Specialist Volunteer Network – over 400 professionals who offer their support and expertise for free. Inspiring Scotland matches the skills and requirements to each charity appropriately and to best effect.

Between January and September 2020 the portfolio has received **90 hours of specialist support** from this network. Including areas such as website development, sourcing new board members and HR support.

# The Portfolio

## Employment themed projects:

### Triple A's



Triple As is an autistic led peer support charity in **Aberdeen**. Despite lockdown they have continued to deliver their project and in addition provide general support to autistic individuals on areas other than just employment. They have developed an online information hub along with a toolkit designed to help employers support autistic people. They've also developed teacher pack for children returning to school after lockdown, a Covid-19 Autism Information Card and hosted virtual training sessions online for a variety of organisations.

### SWAN



Scottish Women's Autism Network (SWAN) offers autistic-led peer-support, in local groups and through online forums for autistic women in Scotland. Their project supports women who are struggling to stay in their jobs. They provide one to one support for these women and also work with their employer to create an inclusive working environment for the autistic employee. They are delivering in **Fife, Central, Highlands and Borders**.

### Auticon



Auticon is a social enterprise, which exclusively employs autistic adults as IT consultants. Due to lockdown they haven't been able to start their project but they aim to provide end to end support to increase understanding of autism. Auticon has autistic employees who will design and work with the employers. They plan to deliver **Fife, centrally and the Borders**.

## Inspired Community Enterprise Ltd (The Usual Place)



The Usual Place creates employability, training and wider citizenship opportunities for young adults with additional support needs in Dumfries and Galloway. During Lockdown, Young People were enabled to develop their I.T. Literacy skills which reduced digital exclusion and boosted their confidence in online learning. This has enabled them to be part of the online autism awareness training with employers. These sessions are due to start in November and Autistic young people will challenge misconceptions and negative attitudes through the sessions and help employers to be more autism aware.

## Into Work



Into Work help people with disabilities and long-term health conditions find, build and maintain jobs in Edinburgh and the Lothians. Their project is co-produced with autistic people and works with employers such as Lothian Buses, Capital City Partnership and City of Edinburgh Council to improve their understanding of autism and working environments for autistic people. Despite lockdown they've recruiting an Autism Engagement Worker & an Advisory Group of 6 autistic individuals and have co-produced (remotely) a one-day autism training course for employers using a co-production approach their autistic advisory group.

## Enable Scotland



Enable campaigns to improve the lives of people who live with learning disabilities across Scotland. Their employment themed project is working with employers to assess existing practices around recruitment and retention of autistic people. They have set up an autistic people's forum that helps to create the support for employers. While lockdown has been challenging for all employment themed projects Enable are hoping to deliver their training to some of the largest employers in Scotland.

## Community themed projects:

### Project Ability



Project Ability is a visual arts charity and gallery supporting people with learning disabilities and mental ill-health in the **Glasgow area**. They have set up the Autistic Artists Research Group (AARGH) which is a collective of autistic artists. AARGH initially planned to visit Glasgow Life museums and galleries in the city to assess what the experience was like for autistic adults. Using tablets and phones to make video and audio recordings to document these visits which would then be shared to effect change. While lockdown has prevented to group from visiting venues, they group have still managed to develop their video making skills making 49 videos charting their experiences through lockdown. They still hope to visit venues now that galleries and museums are beginning to open.

### Autism Atlas



Autism ATLAS aims to increase autism awareness and acceptance in local communities through the **central belt and Dundee**. They initially planned to deliver autism awareness training, drama presentations and Q&A sessions for up to 3,000 people. Will be delivering in the central belt and Dundee. They have diverted their focus to building up relationships with Police Scotland, local supermarkets, and Crown Prosecution service. All have agreed to receive training on autism which is autistic led. They have rewritten training scripts to allow it to be delivered virtually. They have also produced videos about lockdown.

### Perth Autism Support



The original goal of the project was to provide training and resources to 10 Asda stores. It was also to include instore community focus groups. This has had to be delayed due to the pandemic. Asda have rescheduled the work to start in Feb 2021. In the meantime Perth Autism Support have widened out delivery to include Co-op, carried out online surveys with staff and run a few community focus groups online. Their project is delivering in **Perth, Aberdeen, Angus and Highland**.

# Thank You

Thank you to all the strategic partners who have worked collaboratively to aid the development of the Increasing the Understanding of Autism Programme to date. Thank you equally for the continued support of the programme's on going work.

Compiled by Allison Crawford, Bee Vellacott & Albany Wallace-Martinez  
*Inspiring Scotland Autism Team*



**[Autism Fund Twitter](#)**



**[Inspiring Scotland Autism Fund](#)**



**[Different Minds](#)**



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