





Autism NI held their eighth
Glow Walk with local families at
Stormont in November 2025

GLOW
WALK

Glow Bright for AutismNI
Northern Ireland's Autism Charity

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Our Year in Numbers


1,434
members


Overall
98%
satisfaction on our
training courses


3,774
total sessions delivered
by our Projects and Early
Intervention Services


Over 7,000
Helpline calls

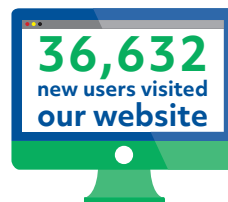

Over
37,000
'Followers'
on Facebook


5,355
participants
received training

399 Autism
Cards
Issued




190
Support Group
meetings


36,632
new users visited
our website


185
people achieved
AQA Unit Award
Accreditations in
Autism


20+ Family
support
groups
across NI

Chairperson's Report



David Heatley
Chairperson

The year 2025/26 has marked another significant period of growth, innovation, and continued commitment for Autism NI. As we celebrated our 35th anniversary, we reflected with pride on how far the Charity has come since becoming the first autism charity established in Northern Ireland in 1990, at a time when very little was known or understood about autism. Our work then was pioneering, with staff and families navigating systems that were not yet prepared to support the needs of autistic people. Today, our legacy of leading the way and driving positive change still runs through the heart of our work.

Throughout the year, our focus remained on expanding our reach, strengthening our services, and ensuring our autism community across Northern Ireland continues to feel seen, supported, and empowered. This year, our Helpline continued to be a vital resource, responding to over 7,000 calls from individuals, families, and

professionals seeking support, while we also welcomed nearly 500 new members to Autism NI.

We facilitated over 190 support group sessions across Northern Ireland, creating safe and supportive spaces for autistic people, parents, carers, and families to connect and share experiences. Common themes raised by attendees included mental health and wellbeing, education, autism assessments, parent and carer physical health, anxiety, and financial entitlements. The peer expertise and practical knowledge shared within these sessions not only provide vital support to families but also help to inform Autism NI's advocacy and policy work.

A standout event this year was our Glow Walk, which brought thousands of people together in a powerful celebration of our autism community and raised £37,689 in support of Autism NI's vital services. The event demonstrated the strength, passion, and generosity of our supporters

and the growing public awareness of autism across Northern Ireland.

I would like to extend my sincere thanks to everyone who continues to support the work of Autism NI. From our Board of Trustees and staff team to our volunteers, members, fundraisers, partners, and supporters, your dedication enables us to continue providing essential services, advocacy, and support to the autism community across Northern Ireland.

As we look ahead, Autism NI remains committed to driving forward meaningful change, amplifying autistic voices, and ensuring autistic people and their families can access the support, understanding, and opportunities they deserve. By working together, we can continue to create a more inclusive future for all.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Heatley". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped final letter.

Chief Executive's Remarks



Kerry Boyd
CEO

As I look back on the past year, I am incredibly proud of Autism NI's achievements and the positive impact our services and advocacy work continue to have on the lives of autistic people and their families across Northern Ireland.

This year, we were delighted to secure funding for our new PACE: Promoting Autistic Community Engagement project, enabling us to expand support for newly diagnosed autistic adults. Through PACE, we now offer three Autistic Adult Peer Support Networks: a network for autistic adults aged 18 and over, a dedicated group for those aged 30 and above, and an Autistic LGBTQIA+ Network. These groups provide welcoming and inclusive spaces where autistic adults can connect, share experiences, and build supportive relationships.

Alongside our services, Autism NI continues to play a leading role in shaping autism policy. As the leading lobbying body for autism services in

Northern Ireland, and secretariat for the All-Party Group on Autism since 2008, we remain committed to ensuring autistic people and their families have access to the support they need.

A major focus of our work this year has been improving mental health support for autistic people. Following two years of lobbying, a petition signed by more than 25,000 people, and extensive engagement with the Department of Health and the Minister for Health, important progress has been achieved. Commitments have been secured to develop autism-specific training for professionals within mental health services across Northern Ireland. While there is still more work to do, these developments represent a significant step forward.

Education also remains a key priority. During the year, we engaged with the Minister for Education to explore opportunities to strengthen support for autistic children and promote the

benefits of early intervention. We will continue to advocate for equitable access to support so that every autistic child can thrive and achieve their full potential.

I would like to acknowledge the dedication of our staff team, whose expertise and commitment ensure autistic people and their families remain at the heart of everything we do.

Finally, my sincere thanks go to our stakeholders, board members, volunteers, partners, and supporters. Your continued support enables Autism NI to deliver vital services, influence meaningful change, and build a more inclusive society for autistic people across Northern Ireland.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kerry Boyd". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Family Support

Our Family Support provision is one of Autism NI's longest standing and most highly valued services. Operating across communities throughout Northern Ireland, it delivers tailored support designed to meet the unique needs of autistic people and their families. We are proud of our neurodiverse Family Support team, whose professional expertise and lived experience are central to the strength of this provision. By actively listening to the autistic community, we deliver a wide range of services aimed at strengthening support networks, building confidence, promoting wellbeing, and fostering a strong sense of belonging for autistic children, adults, and their families. Inclusive participation remains at the heart of our approach and underpins all areas of our work. We are committed to developing and sustaining strong partnerships with community, voluntary, and statutory organisations to ensure that every family can access coordinated, responsive, and comprehensive support. Over the past year, we have experienced a significant increase in referrals for early support across

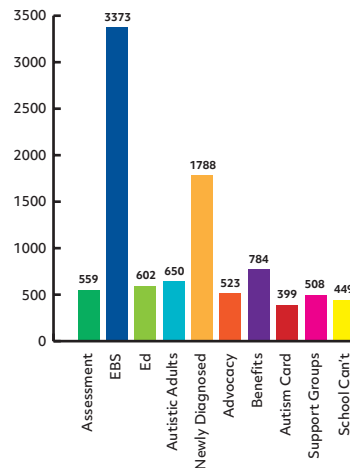
all areas of service delivery. As our team continues to grow, so too does our capacity to provide meaningful early intervention and timely support that makes a lasting difference to families across Northern Ireland.

Individual Support



For many autistic people, families, and professionals, our Helpline is the first point of contact both before and after diagnosis. It provides vital information, guidance, and reassurance throughout what can often be a complex and emotional journey. The service offers timely, accessible support tailored to individual circumstances, helping people before and after an autism diagnosis better understand and access appropriate support when it is needed most. Additionally, our

Family Support Manager, serves as Co-Chair of Helplines NI, further strengthening our commitment to collaborative support across the sector. During Helplines NI Awareness Day, she reflected "dedicated helpline teams across Northern Ireland work tirelessly to ensure that no one has to face their challenges alone. Their contribution is invaluable, yet too often overlooked, and we must do more to safeguard the future of these essential services."



Helpline

We regularly receive positive and meaningful feedback about our Helpline, highlighting the significant impact it has on autistic people and their families. These reflections reaffirm the vital role our support plays in helping people navigate periods of uncertainty and demonstrate the lasting difference our services make in the lives of those who access them.

"Just to say a massive thank you for all your understanding over the last few months, your patience, advice and life wisdom has meant a lot to me when days where my distress is intense and very real. You have a very calm ethos and approach which is always appreciated. Thanks for the reasonable adjustment's comments. Keep up the excellent work you do." Autistic Adult

"You have been so friendly and helpful. I feel so much more positive now. You have really helped our wee family. We really appreciate it."

Parent

Support Groups

Our Support Group Coordinator plays an instrumental role in bringing together and supporting a vibrant network of volunteers across Northern Ireland. Our volunteers are the backbone of Autism NI's community support, providing vital assistance and fostering meaningful connections at a local level. Each volunteer brings unique strengths and invaluable contributions to our work, supporting a wide range of initiatives and playing an essential role within the organisation. Their expertise, peer support, diverse skills, and lived experience complement the work of our Family Support Team, enabling us to deliver responsive and meaningful support to the autism community.



As demand for community-based connection and inclusion has continued to grow across all support groups, our volunteers have responded with dedication, compassion, and commitment. Over the past year, they facilitated 190 support group meetings across Northern Ireland, alongside a range of family fun days and activities, including CoderDojo sessions, bowling, Airtastic, cinema and sensory activities.

Common themes raised by attendees included mental health and wellbeing, education, autism assessments, parent and carer physical health, anxiety, and financial entitlements. The peer expertise and practical knowledge shared within these sessions not only provide vital support to families but also help inform Autism NI's

advocacy and policy work.

These gatherings have become safe and empowering spaces where individuals feel heard, supported, and connected, helping to foster resilience and strengthen community relationships. This collaborative approach has also led to active partnerships with a range of providers who delivered workshops focused on financial planning, self-esteem, and personal wellbeing.

The continued success and growth of this model is reflected in the strong levels of engagement and attendance recorded throughout the year.

Feedback received included:

"It feels good to come to the meetings and advocate for one another." Parent, South Belfast SG

"It was comforting to attend an inclusive event without worry or judgement and chatting to other parents is always helpful, Thank you!" Parent, Lisburn SG Summer family day

Autistic Adult Support

This initiative is designed to meet the unique needs of each autistic person by providing tailored guidance, empathetic support, and a safe space to be heard. Participation is entirely voluntary, with each individual offered up to three one-to-one sessions focused on improving outcomes in areas such as training, employment, relationships, and social engagement.

We take pride in our robust evaluation processes, using an outcomes-based model to measure the progress and impact of our support for autistic people. This approach ensures our services remain responsive, effective, and person-centred.

An impressive 95% of respondents rated the support they received as either "excellent" or "good".

Feedback received to date includes:

"Very helpful in getting me to understand my autism more and not see it as such a big barrier anymore."

"The Autistic Adults Support Officer was warm, friendly and put me at ease to discuss difficulties. Issues were addressed with helpful practical strategies and supportive conversations. She also advised of services I could access in future to give me some support in the longer term which I appreciated. Thank you!"



Additionally, we worked in partnership with participants to develop a successful funding application, enabling the launch of the Promoting Community Autistic Engagement (PACE). This initiative now provides support to newly diagnosed autistic adults across selected geographical areas within the Northern, Western, and South Eastern Trust areas. PACE has been developed in response to

identified need and aims to promote community connection, confidence, and meaningful engagement following diagnosis.

Autistic Adult Peer Networks

We offer three distinct online peer support networks for PACE participants: one for autistic adults aged 18 and over, a dedicated group for those aged 30 and above, and an Autistic LGBTQIA+ network. Each platform provides a welcoming, inclusive, and relaxed space for social interaction and connection.

Our approach is proactive and responsive - we listen closely to individual needs and continuously adapt our support to encourage participation and inclusion. All sessions include a text-based chat function to ensure accessibility for a range of communication preferences. To date, we have welcomed a growing number of autistic attendees, with some groups also initiating in-person meetups to further strengthen community connections.

We continue to provide our Autistic Adult Support Courses to provide a

supportive space that fosters peer learning around autistic strengths, challenges, and the broader concept of neurodiversity. Our courses empower autistic adults to deepen their self-awareness and gain practical strategies for enhancing their daily lives.



Members

Autism NI members play a vital role in strengthening support for autistic people and their families across Northern Ireland. Each member is committed to upholding the Charity's legal framework while embracing its Mission, Vision, Values, and Code of Conduct.



Membership offers a wide range of benefits, many of which extend to the wider family. These include access to family activity days, parent support programmes, and meaningful opportunities for involvement, enabling members to actively contribute to and help shape the Charity's ongoing impact within the autism community. We had 1,434 new members join us this year.

Home Support

Autism NI remains committed to fostering strong partnerships and continually strengthening collaboration with Autism Teams across the Belfast, Northern, South Eastern, and Western Trusts. This year, we were also pleased to extend the service into the Southern Trust (Newry) through a new partnership with Radius Housing and Arbour Housing. These trusted relationships have been instrumental in facilitating direct referrals to Autism NI Resource and Support Officers, who provide tailored support to families within their local communities.

With a well-established track record of evidencing outcomes, Autism NI is

committed to identifying, measuring, and reporting on the impact of our services, ensuring accountability, continuous improvement, and high-quality support for the families we serve.



Participation in our services continues to demonstrate the vital role they play in empowering autistic people and their families. These opportunities enable individuals to share their experiences, have their voices heard, and actively contribute to shaping both current services and future developments.

We remain firmly committed to this collaborative approach, working in partnership with families to support, develop, and implement meaningful change. Our early home support services are grounded in a strengths-based model, providing

personalised strategies tailored to the individual needs of each autistic child. These supports include the use of visual structures, the development of positive routines, the promotion of independence in daily living skills, and guidance on meaningful and engaging play activities.

Feedback included:

"I have learnt so much about autism that I did not know. The worker was brilliant and lovely. I am very grateful and have learnt so much."

"I just want to say thank you for your help last Tuesday, both with my child and talking things through... I went to bed feeling that for the first time in 9 years someone actually listened to what I was saying. So, thank you again, I now feel stronger to keep up the fight for getting some form of help."

Autism Card

During the 2025/26 year, we received 399 new requests for our Autism Card. Feedback from autistic cardholders consistently highlights the practical value of the card across many aspects of daily life, helping

to promote understanding, improve interactions, and increase confidence in public and social settings.



The Autism Card continues to provide reassurance and support to autistic people by helping others recognise and better understand their needs, contributing to more positive and inclusive experiences within the community.

Mental Health and Autism Project (MAP)

The Mental Health and Autism Project is a key element of our strengths-based approach, providing tailored one-to-one support for autistic young people aged 11–18 within the Belfast Trust area. Referrals are made

through the Child and Adolescent Autism Service, ensuring timely and appropriate access to support.

This holistic model addresses individual needs across home, school, and community settings through a programme of 8–12 sessions. Working in close partnership with each young person, we prioritise the areas they identify as most important, focusing on building confidence, self-esteem, resilience, and emotional wellbeing. By encouraging active involvement in shaping their own support, the project promotes meaningful participation and empowers young people to take ownership of their personal development journey.

An impressive 95% of autistic participants, alongside 98% of parents and carers, rated the service as either "excellent" or "good". Feedback from participants highlights the meaningful and lasting impact of the Mental Health and Autism Project in their own words:

"I really liked doing the sessions, I feel like I know some ways to help myself when I'm feeling anxious now and it makes me feel less stressed."

"It was a very good, it was good learning and being able to find solutions I didn't even know I could."



Autistic females

The Girls and Autism Project operates a strengths-based approach designed to empower autistic girls aged 11–18 within their home, school, and community environments. The project is dedicated to promoting achievement, enjoyment, and inclusion across the Northern Trust area.

During 2025/26, our GAP Life Skills Officer delivered 311 sessions, including both individual and family-focused support, ensuring tailored and meaningful support for each participant. In addition, the project facilitated small group

opportunities, providing safe and supportive spaces for social connection and peer engagement.



An outstanding 95% of autistic participants reported positive changes across two or more key outcome areas. Furthermore, 100% of participants rated the service as excellent. At Autism NI, we believe every voice matters, and autistic people remain at the heart of everything we do.



"Things used to trigger me and lead to eruptions. I huffed, would get angry, shout, swear and slam doors. With GAP I spent time looking at situations, removing myself and doing things that make me bloom. I have participated in groups, spoke to others and found it easier than I thought. I am now looking at joining a youth club." Autistic girl

"We cannot thank you enough. The change has been massive and we feel GAP has been a positive step in the right direction for all of us!" Parent

Early Intervention

Our ongoing Early Intervention service builds and strengthens relationships for families whose child has received a new diagnosis. These sessions provide family members with visual strategies and practical tools and support to manage behaviours, play and socialisation.

Last year our Early Intervention Team successfully provided 3,774 individual sessions. Feedback from our families stated that they had an 'enhanced understanding of their autistic child's needs, access to information on appropriate services and improved confidence that enabled opportunities.' Parental feedback was extremely positive with 97% of families stating that the benefits of the home visits were either 'excellent' or 'good'.

One parent wrote: "I experienced a high level of professionalism, empathy and expertise throughout the support sessions. I was listened to without judgement. The advice and strategies shared were both practical and impactful, tailored specifically to the need we have. The support not only enriched my ability

to assist my son but significantly improved my own confidence and wellbeing. I am deeply grateful for the positive difference Autism NI has made to our lives."

The results of our evaluations show that families experience an improvement in emotional wellbeing and in the child's behaviour.

Evidence also suggests parents see improvements in family routine and generally 'feeling better'. The families are also more aware of what their local community can offer, what is available from statutory services, and they also say they are more confident in reaching out for help.



Training

Autism NI's Training Department provides high quality, accredited training and support to a wide variety of parents, carers, professionals, schools and organisations. Our training is evidence based, practical, and is delivered to the highest standard of accuracy to ensure it is effective in supporting autistic people at home, in the community, in school or in a workplace. We deliver training across NI, Ireland, UK and Internationally.



Autism NI provides a range of training options including online delivery, in person courses and on-demand webinars. Our dynamic courses include interactive activities and group discussion, to enable groups to explore concepts in an engaging and practical way. In

2025/26, our training team delivered 273 training courses to 5,355 participants.

"Everything covered was brilliant and the trainer was fantastic! The confidence and knowledge I have gained is so valuable. It was interesting and informative, I would highly recommend it to anyone."
Professional Training Feedback

SPOTLIGHT: On Demand Webinars

This year, our Training Team have launched a new range of on-demand webinars and courses to ensure we provide a wide range of learning opportunities. These pre-recorded webinars provide the opportunity for people to learn more in an environment and at a time that suits their busy schedule.

We now have four on-demand webinars available for professionals, five on-demand support courses for parents/carers and two on-demand webinars for autistic adults. Overall, 1,248 people have accessed the on-demand packages, with an average 98% approval rating, demonstrating the positive impact these accessible webinars are providing. Autism NI

intends to continue to expand this training option in the next year to widen the support offered through this type of training.

"It was presented very well and easy to follow. It was useful to play it back to listen to again." On demand webinar feedback

Support Courses for Autistic Adults

In 2024/25, we delivered a pilot programme of seven training sessions to autistic adults, on the topic of 'Autism, Anxiety and Self Care'. This course was developed based on the needs identified across our adult population and explored the common experiences and triggers of anxiety for many autistic people. The course also discussed a range of strategies to help increase emotional understanding, emotional regulation and coping strategies, supporting individuals to effectively manage anxiety and engage in positive self-care.

The feedback from these small groups were very positive and we will use this learning to further develop resources and courses for autistic adults.

"Learning about how it's okay to have balance and take your time."

"I found this training to be very validating. Felt understood, included and respected." Autistic Adult Feedback

Skills for Staying Safe Youth Programme



This year, our Training Department has also delivered two Skills for Staying Safe youth programmes for young people involved in our MAP and Early Intervention Projects. This group facilitation created opportunities for adolescents to come together and explore relevant topics, while building confidence and positive group experiences. Topics covered in these sessions include relationships, emotional regulation, self-care and building positive autistic identity.

"Thank you for inviting me to the group. I had so much fun and enjoyed meeting the other kids." Young person feedback

AQA Accreditations

We provide AQA Unit Award Accreditations to our delegates, supporting them to demonstrate high-quality learning and professional development. In 2025/26, a total of 185 people achieved AQA Unit Award Accreditations.

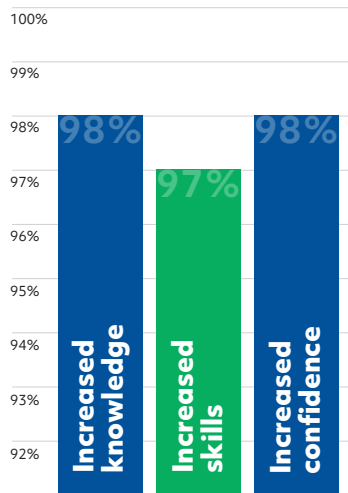
Our training is also CPD certified, demonstrating quality assurance and a structured approach to learning and development.



Evaluations

Evaluation scores for all our training courses remain consistently excellent, demonstrating the

expertise of our trainers and practicality of our courses. Overall, our courses are rated with 96% approval for the course content, materials, and communication of the trainer. The course evaluations also demonstrate the positive impact of the training on delegates, with delegates scoring the courses as improving their knowledge (98%), skills (97%) and confidence (98%).



Improvements based on course attendance

"I now have better understanding to support my current team and potential new team members. It was excellent, [trainer] was a fantastic trainer and very engaging."

Supporting autistic people in the workplace course feedback

Training for Professionals and Organisations

Our open training programmes are available to all practitioners and professionals who want to build their understanding of autism and their confidence to provide a neuro-inclusive service. We deliver a range of topics for professionals, including Keyhole Early Intervention Programme, supporting autistic colleagues and employees, understanding the needs of autistic patients, and understanding PDA. This open training provides the opportunity for individuals to build their skills in the topics and areas that are most relevant to their role.

Our Keyhole training includes extensive practical resources for early years professionals.

"Our tutor was amazing. Very knowledgeable, easy to understand

and created a very warm inviting atmosphere. I enjoyed the ability to have questions answered and discussion with other professionals."

Keyhole Feedback

Our commissioned training service facilitated a wide range of bespoke courses for organisations, community groups and staff teams. Our courses are tailored to each organisation based on their needs, and facilitated online or in person across NI. We work with organisations to provide knowledge on autism, introduce practical skills on how to support autistic people in the workplace and within their service, to build an inclusive environment. This year, training was delivered to various organisations, including Scout Foundation, Allstate, Leaf IT, Danske Bank, Royal Yacht Association, Abbeyfield and NICMA.

SPOTLIGHT: Building Resilience with the Keystone Fund.

Autism NI was delighted to receive funding from the Keystone Fund, to support the development of our new website functionality and improve our communication strategy across the organisation.

The funding was used to expand the reach and accessibility of our services through digital improvement. We focused on developing the website functionality, navigation and accessibility, to improve and streamline the user experience. Our redesigned website has improved accessibility, clearer navigation, and easier processes for downloading information and signing up to training and events.

This funding has enabled us to build our capacity and resilience as an organisation. By helping us to communicate our mission, our work and our services more clearly, this helps us to reach even more autistic people and their families, and promote autism acceptance across society. A sincere thank you to the Keystone Fund for their flexible support throughout this project.

Impact Award

Every organisation in Northern Ireland has a legal obligation to provide equity of access to services for autistic people. Furthermore, it makes great business sense to be accessible for neurodivergent customers, clients, service users

and employees. Autism NI's Impact Award is a training and support programme to help organisations understand the practical steps they can take to build a neuroinclusive approach across their organisation. The programme includes accredited training, follow up support to implement an individualised action plan and continued support for organisations who achieve the Impact Award Champion status.

In 2025/26, we had a further 24 organisations sign up to the Impact Award programme, bringing the overall number of organisations to 187. This includes private business, entertainment, leisure, arts and culture, retail, sports, youth, and health services - all playing their part in building a more inclusive society.



Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council achieve the Autism Impact Award across various venues

SPOTLIGHT: Belfast International Airport

Belfast International Airport, member of the VINCI Airports network, has received Autism NI's Impact Award, recognising the Airport's commitment to creating welcoming and accessible travel for neurodivergent passengers.



Belfast International Airport achieves the Autism Impact Award.

A range of frontline staff have received accredited training from Autism NI. As part of the Impact Award process, the Airport team has designed a tailored action plan to enhance facilities and foster a more inclusive environment. Alongside dedicated autism champions, handy new travel guides and video content have been developed to make

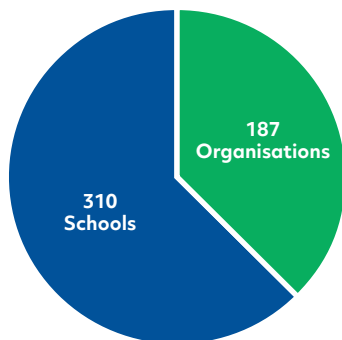
travelling less stressful and a more enjoyable experience.

Dan Owens, Chief Executive at Belfast International Airport said: "We are incredibly proud to have achieved this accreditation from Autism NI. This award is a testament to the dedication of our staff in making travel fully accessible for autistic and neurodivergent passengers. This specialist training was tailored to the needs of the Airport and has instilled confidence and increased key skills for team.

We are in the process of rolling out further updates across the Airport as we continue to work closely with Autism NI. We have already created a quiet space and are exploring sensory levels. We are also actively working to ensure noise levels can be reduced and lighting intensity can be adjusted as necessary so passengers can feel less anxious and more comfortable throughout their journey."

497

total Impact Awards



Impact Award in Education

In 2025/26, we continued to expand our Impact Award for Education Programme in schools, focusing on promoting a best practice approach to autism inclusion within education settings. Our Impact Award for Education framework provides staff training and awards organisations who implemented a bespoke action plan of supports for autistic pupils. This year, 88 new schools have signed up to the programme, bringing the

total number of schools to 310 since launch.

It is part of Autism NI's longstanding vision to ensure that we create an inclusive society where autistic children have the opportunity to thrive, and this all starts with ensuring that they have good educational outcomes. We want our children, parents and teachers to feel confident and happy within the school environment and therefore providing the right knowledge and resources to achieve this is vitally important.

This is the best autism training I've been to. Lots of examples. Clear explanations. Great opportunity for Q&A. Impact Award for Education feedback



Gilford Primary School achieve the Impact Award for Education

Support Courses for Parents and Carers

During 2025/26, we provided support courses and webinars to 1,790 parents/carers, autistic adults and autistic young people through youth programmes. A total of 51 courses were delivered on a range of topics related to autism, including school related anxiety, sleep, supporting your teen and autistic females.

"Hearing I am not alone and that a lot of parents are going through exactly the same, also gave me some confidence to talk to my son about his diagnosis." Parent/Carer Support Course feedback

Youth Programmes

This year, our Training Department has also delivered three Skills for Saying Safe youth programmes for young people involved in our family support and early intervention services. This group facilitation created opportunities for adolescents to come together and explore relevant topics, while building confidence and positive group experiences. Topics covered in

these sessions include relationships, emotional regulation, self-care and building positive autistic identity.

"The best one by far!! I loved it today." Young person feedback



'PositiviTREE' Art activity completed by young people to build self esteem, confidence and growth mindset.

Campaigning

Advocacy and lobbying remain at the heart of our work. As Northern Ireland's leading lobbying body for autism services, we continue to champion the rights and needs of autistic people and their families, ensuring their voices are heard by policymakers and decision-makers.

Since 2008, we have provided the secretariat for the All-Party Group on Autism at Stormont and have successfully led campaigns resulting in not one, but two pieces of autism-specific legislation. These landmark achievements represent some of the most comprehensive single-disability legislation in the world, and we are immensely proud of the impact they continue to have on the lives of autistic people across Northern Ireland.

One of our most significant recent lobbying priorities has focused on mental health. We know that autistic people experience higher levels of poor mental health, particularly during adolescence and early adulthood. With more than 35,000 autistic people living in Northern Ireland, we have been calling on the Department of Health to establish

a specialist autism mental health service.

Following two years of sustained lobbying, a public petition signed by more than 25,000 supporters, and numerous meetings with Department of Health officials and the Minister for Health, Mike Nesbitt, we have secured important progress. It has now been agreed that a dedicated training module will be developed for mental health professionals working with autistic children and adults. In addition, the Minister has committed to exploring the introduction of an Autism Champion model within each Health Trust's mental health services. These champions would help ensure training is completed while also serving as autism leads and sources of expertise within their services.

While this falls short of our goal of a specialist autism mental health service, it represents a significant improvement in the support available to autistic people accessing mental health services. This achievement demonstrates the tangible impact of our lobbying work and reinforces the importance of

continuing to work collaboratively with the Northern Ireland Executive, government departments, and key decision-makers.

Education remains another key area of focus. Throughout the year, our Chief Executive, Kerry Boyd, and the wider team have engaged with the Minister for Education, Paul Givan, to explore opportunities to strengthen support for autistic children and young people within schools. Discussions have focused

on the value of early intervention and the need to ensure that support is available at the earliest possible stage.

This work continues against a backdrop of significant change within the education sector. However, we remain committed to ensuring that every autistic child has equitable access to the support they need to thrive, succeed, and achieve their full potential throughout their educational journey.



Raising Autism Understanding and Acceptance

Be Kind To Different Minds

In celebration of World Autism Month in April 2025, autistic people, families, community groups, MLAs, local businesses, and schools supported our 'Be Kind To Different Mind's message.

We released a campaign video which also focused on organisations and clubs highlighting the importance of inclusivity and support for autistic people in the workplace and in the community.



Kerrie and her autistic daughter Aimee show support for Autism NI's 'Be Kind To Different Minds' campaign.



Family enjoying our Fun Day at W5, Belfast.

Family Fun Day

On Sunday 6th April 2025 the Charity welcomed hundreds of local autism families to celebrate World Autism Month at W5, Belfast. This

event brought families together as they all enjoyed the activities the venue had to offer, in an inclusive environment.

Online

Our website (www.autismni.org) is a vital online resource for autistic people, families and professionals and has a great range of information on services, research publications, fact sheets, visuals, social stories and resources. During 2025/26, our website has been an important online tool for many of our autism families and we seen 36,632 new users visit our website to access information, services and resources.



Our Early Intervention team wear our 'Be Kind To Different Minds' wristbands, which can be purchased on our website

Fundraising Events

Colour Run

In May 2025, Autism NI held their first sponsored Colour Run at Stormont Estate, Belfast. Our families came out in crowds to be splashed with colour whilst completing a 5K run around the grounds. Crowds got warmed up with a dance routine before embracing in the colour fun!



Ben Nevis

In September 2025, 50 people took on the highest mountain in the UK and conquered Ben Nevis. The team embraced the Scottish winds and sleet and took on one of our toughest treks we have held to date. Well done to everyone who took part and supported Autism NI.



Glow Walk

Thousands of families lit up the night and came together to attend our annual Glow Walk at Stormont in November 2025. Families got involved in fun and games from the U105 crew, and a dance warm up by Fitness Freddy before taking on a night walk at Stormont Estate. Participants were also entertained by 12 year old Isla McManus who took to the stage to sing before the walk. Our families really got behind the theme and Stormont Estate was glowing for Autism NI.



Sea Dip

Autism NI held their first ever Sea Dip at Crawfordsburn Beach in September 2025. Our dippers braved the cold waters of the Irish Sea as they took on this courageous challenge in aid of Autism NI.



Corporate and Community Partnerships

The Progressive Building Society

Progressive Building Society has continued to make an incredible impact through its five-year partnership with Autism NI, by generously donating £20,000 each year. Alongside this ongoing commitment, staff have gone above and beyond through fundraising challenges including climbing Ben Nevis, taking part in the Europa Abseil, supporting the Autism NI Golf Day, and running the Belfast Marathon. Their enthusiasm, dedication, and continued support have played a vital role in helping Autism NI deliver essential services and support across the community.



Radius Housing

Radius Housing announced its two-year Charity partnership with Autism NI in January 2026. The impactful collaboration will include a programme of fundraising and awareness-raising activities including celebrating its 50th anniversary in 2026. This marks 50 years of partnership with communities in Northern Ireland and provides housing, care and support to over 33,000 homes locally.

Kinecx Energy

Kinecx Energy selected Autism NI as their 2026 Charity partner. Launched during World Autism Month the team are proactively fundraising at every opportunity. They have also bravely taken on the Europa Abseil. The team are hosting a summer football tournament and will be skydiving in July, and they have also volunteered at our flagship Colour Run event.





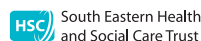
Superhero Day

Over 50 Nursery Schools across Northern Ireland got their masks and capes ready as they took part in Superhero Day, which was held on 26th February 2026. The Charity welcomes the amazing support from the schools, as our team continues to visit young people across Northern Ireland to raise autism awareness.



Partnerships

Autism NI continues to be a strong advocate of partnerships, and we recognise when another organisation's support and expertise is required. We are committed to further building on our engagement with a wide range of stakeholders within the statutory, community and voluntary sectors and continue to work with individuals and families to empower them.



Financial Performance

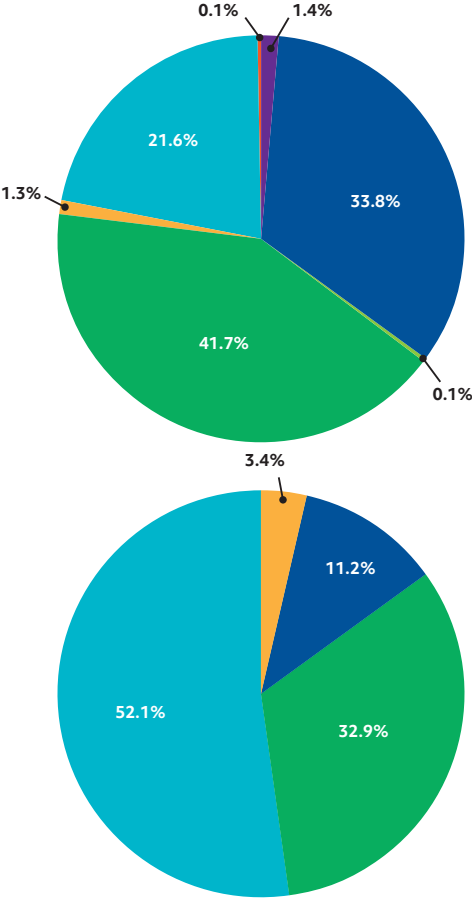
Autism NI is a trading name of Autism NI (PAPA) which is a company limited by guarantee (Company Number NI058548) and an Inland Revenue approved Charity (reference number XR22944).

Registered with the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland (NIC 100 240).

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BT11 9AB

For more information about our services or to support our work, call us on 028 9040 1729 or visit www.autismni.org



Incoming Resources 2025/26

- ◆ Restricted Funding: Grants (33.8%)
- ◆ Unrestricted Funding: Grants (0.1%)
- ◆ Donations and Fundraising (41.7%)
- ◆ Membership (1.3%)
- ◆ Autism Training and Conferences (21.6%)
- ◆ Sale of Merchandise (0.1%)
- ◆ Investment Interest Received (1.4%)

Resources Expended 2025/26

- ◆ Expenditure on Raising Funds (11.2%)
- ◆ Expenditure on Charitable Activities: Restricted (32.9%)
- ◆ Expenditure on Charitable Activities: Unrestricted (52.1%)
- ◆ Governance Costs (3.8%)

Presidents

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BSc MPhil AFBPsS CPsychol

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