



Annual review
2008/09

Accept difference.
Not indifference.

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Thank you to Rebecca, James, Keith, Rosie, Tomislav, Jamie and Chris for sharing their stories and to Darsham, Ben, Audrey, Nomoco, Michaela and Staffan for illustrating them.

If you have particular needs which make it difficult for you to read this, call **020 7903 3542** and we will try and find a more suitable format.

Welcome

Welcome to our review of the year – we're so proud of our achievements and those of the thousands of people living with autism we've had the privilege and pleasure to get to know and to work with during the year.

As a direct result of our and our supporters' campaigning energy and passion, the Government has appointed a senior autism advisor to the Department of Health, and work has started on an adult autism strategy. Published in early 2010, this will set out the national and local steps needed to tackle the isolation, discrimination and inequality routinely experienced by many adults with autism.

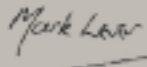
But it doesn't stop there: we brought together an alliance of other charities and worked with Cheryl Gillan MP to introduce a Private Members' Bill on autism, giving an unprecedented profile to autism in parliament. At the time of writing, this looks set to become the first-ever autism law – a groundbreaking achievement and one we couldn't have achieved without the collective force of our members and supporters.



The number of people we reach through our many specialist and expert services continues to rise. For example, a massive 52,000 people contacted our Autism Helpline during the year – highlighting the growing need for the support we provide and for the funding to deliver and expand this.

So, what's next? We want a world where everyone understands autism. Where everyone living with autism is treated as an equal citizen and given every chance to live the life they choose to live. Where everyone living with autism gets the support they need, when and where they need it. In short, we want a world that accepts difference, not indifference. This is a big ambition, with big plans to help us achieve it, but we won't settle for anything less. We hope you'll join us on this journey.

We asked six people living with autism what makes them happy and unhappy; what they like about their or their child's autism; what makes life difficult; what they would change about the world to make it a better place for them and other people with autism; and how we've made a difference to their lives. Read what they had to say inside.



Chief Executive



Chairman

Our year

42 million opportunities every month to see or hear something about us in print and broadcast media.

2,461,135 visitors to our website – *probably* the most comprehensive online autism resource in the world.

300,000 lives stand to be transformed by the Government's adult autism strategy, announced as a direct result of our *I Exist* campaign.

106,000 Thomas & Friends™ zip pulls sold, raising awareness of autism, much-needed funds, and a smile.

52,000 calls to our Autism Helpline – nothing short of a lifeline for those living with the day-to-day realities of autism.

18,440 members, who join because they share our passion, need our support, have had enough of feeling alone, and can achieve so much more collectively.

10,000 emails to MPs in support of – and 131 MPs voting in favour of – the Autism Bill, which looks set to become the first-ever single-disability law in England.

9,380 days' training for professionals who work with people living with autism, giving them more understanding of how the disability affects people and how they can help.



7,100 queries to our impartial and expert information team from people wanting to learn more about autism and the big puzzles and debates surrounding it.

4,000 emails to the Attorney General to demand that Gary McKinnon's diagnosis of Asperger syndrome be taken into account in his appeal against extradition to the US.

3,900 people discovering what their or their child's diagnosis means, and sharing with others doing the same, through our *help!* programme.

2,464 donations from people who have organised their own community fundraising events, from carol singing to cross-channel swimming.

2,455 families understanding their pre-school child's world, and how to reach them and help them flourish, through our EarlyBird programme.

2,000 people supported by our Education Advice Line and Tribunal Support Scheme to fight for the right education for their child.

1,200 calls to our Parent to Parent line from anxious and exhausted parents and carers who want to talk to someone who really understands what it's like.

826 runners raising an amazing £522,256 in events like the Flora London Marathon and Bupa Great North Run, and getting fit along the way.

826 enquiries to our welfare rights service from parents and people with autism who are struggling to navigate a benefits system that's not working for them.

600 postcards to the Northern Ireland Assembly to successfully demand that the needs of adults are included in the Assembly's ASD Strategic Action Plan.

600 people attending our International Conference to hear and talk about the latest developments in research and how these can make a tangible difference.

550 adults feeling a little less isolated through meeting others, doing things, and going places as a member of one of our 49 social groups.

525 people with autism who want to work, use their skills and be someone, supported in preparing for, finding and keeping a job.

519 adults living as independent, stable and fulfilling a life as possible through our specialist person-centred residential care or support in their own homes.

450 children and young people developing their confidence and social skills, making friends and having fun in play and out-of-school clubs.

443 children getting outstanding education, care and the best possible start in life, at one of our six autism-specific schools.

350 services for people with autism – from NHS Trusts to private companies – now accredited by the Autism Accreditation programme quality standard.

342 people making a donation to us instead of buying a birthday, wedding, anniversary or Christmas present.



223 adults at our day services – and many more through our network of resource centres – getting more out of life by learning new skills and trying new experiences.

213 adults with autism entering their inspiring and provocative work into our creativity competition, resulting in an exhibition at a central London art gallery.

170 guests entertained by HRH the Countess of Wessex, Jane Asher and tenor Alfie Boe at our Stars Shine for Autism gala evening, raising £106,000.

91 unique NAS branches, which are set up by volunteers – often parents – to share their experiences and challenges and campaign for changes locally.

89 young people, who would otherwise drop out of education, supported in further and higher education to achieve great things.

86 clinical professionals trained in our internationally respected and renowned DISCO – a holistic interview-based tool for diagnosing autism.

35 (and still counting) / *Exist* campaign launches by NAS branches that are angry about adults with autism in their local area being isolated and ignored.

5 places for adults with very complex needs in the first of four new state-of-the-art homes in Neath, offering independence, stability and exceptional care.

1 person in every hundred living with autism every single day.

1 senior autism advisor appointed to the Department of Health.



Rebecca

Seeing Tommy achieve every new little goal makes me happy, every first step.

I don't know what I would have done without the NAS EarlyBird course. I didn't know anything at all about autism. We weren't communicating; he is non-verbal. I couldn't get through to him. He was very frustrated and angry. We were living in two different worlds.

Autism isn't contagious but people's ignorance is. Because Tommy doesn't look different, people are very judgmental. If I could do one thing to change the world, I'd publicise the condition more, maybe on the telly, so that more people can understand it's out there; so people don't judge Tommy so immediately.

I organised a Train Walk because I wanted to do my bit to raise awareness – I was so clueless when Tommy was first diagnosed. I wanted to get out there and make a difference.

I've had an autism awareness ribbon tattooed on my wrist. It's got about 30 jigsaw pieces, in red, yellow, green and blue. It's a talking point!

Rebecca is a single mother of three children, living in Exeter. Her youngest child, Tommy, who is now three, was diagnosed with autism in January 2009. Rebecca organised a Train Walk in May, raising over £600 for the NAS.



James

The problem is not that people don't understand autism, it's that they just don't like difference. The general ignorant intolerance I have experienced from people who can't stand anyone who is different makes me unhappy.

My brain has to work much harder to make things happen. A neurotypical brain can cruise along on autopilot at 2,000 RPM, while mine has to work at 4,000 RPM to cope. It's exhausting.

It's ironic that neurotypical people often have a 'fear of commitment', when I would really like a long-term relationship but don't have the social skills to have one. They squander their skills.

Writing to Juliet Landau makes me happy. She plays Drusilla in Buffy the Vampire Slayer – a sort of modern-day Ophelia. I wrote a short story, Drusilla's Roses, which is Drusilla's story after the end of the TV series.

If it hadn't been for Jim [at the NAS employment service in Glasgow], I'd be an unemployment statistic and would have had a nervous breakdown. It was the NAS – and Drusilla – that rescued me.

James is in his early 40s and has Asperger syndrome. He's a client of our employment service in Glasgow and works as an NHS data assistant.



Keith

I could talk all day about what makes me happy about my daughter. What makes me happy is seeing her happy and content. She wasn't always that way. She breaks my heart but she makes me smile.

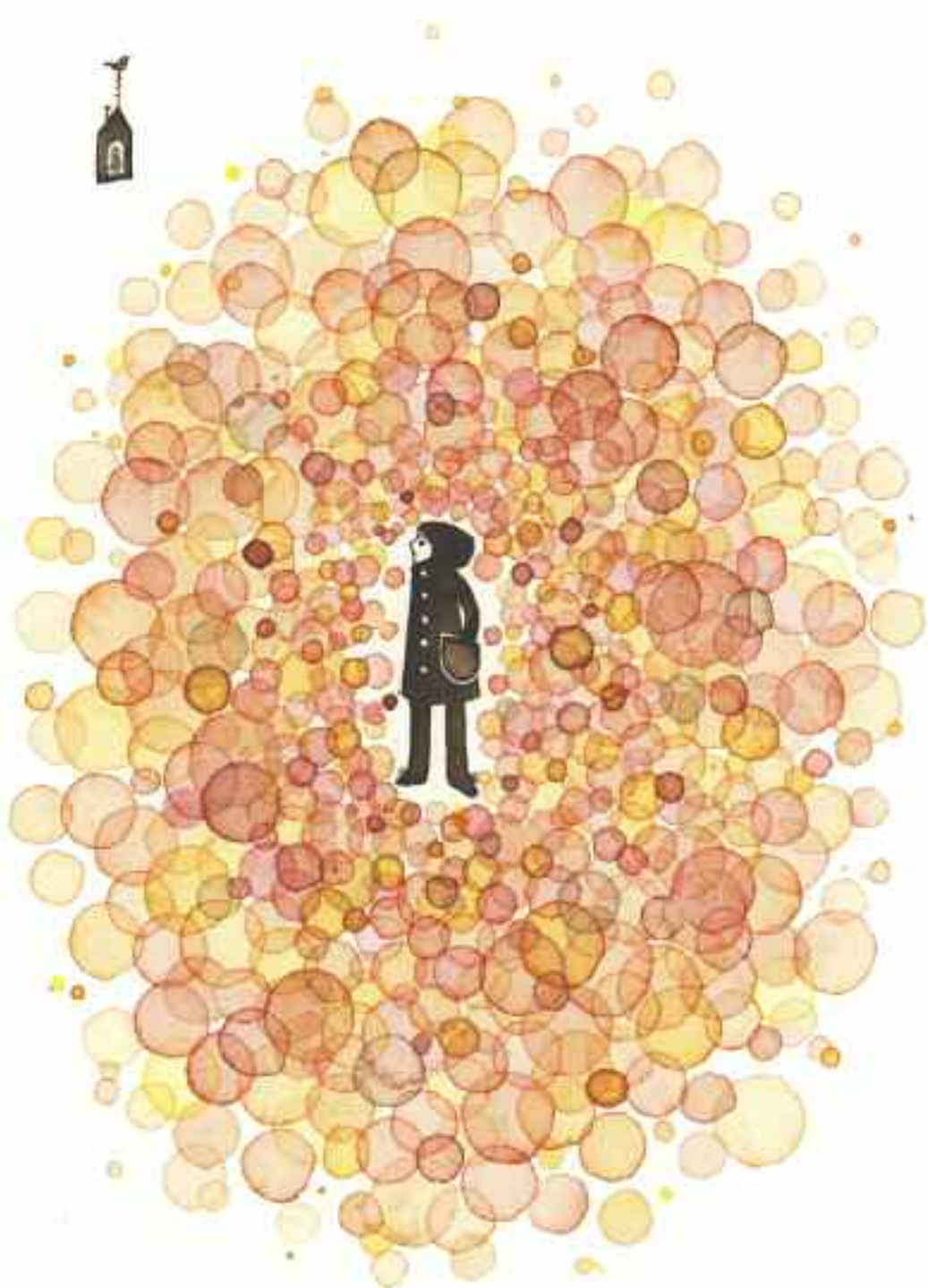
I like the fact that she doesn't understand nasty, greedy or mean. It would never, ever occur to her to be those things. I think that's beautiful.

I find it hard that she won't experience the things I'd love her to experience. I'd love her to have the same quality of life as typically-developing children. I find the realisation that she may not get a fair chance difficult.

They say that every child born in Ireland and the UK is entitled to a free education. I think that should read 'appropriate' education.

I wanted to make good use of my profile so I emailed the NAS to see what I could do. I ran the London Marathon earlier in the year. For three months after, I swore I'd never do it again but I may well do it again next year!

Keith Duffy of Boyzone and Coronation Street is dad to Jordan (14) and Mia (10), who has autism. He is a tireless campaigner and fundraiser for autism, both in Ireland and in the UK.



Rosie

I'm always on duty; always fire-fighting or refereeing between my children. There's always something I should have done; some form I should have filled in. I'd like to punch my time clock, now and again, and say 'that's me finished for the day'. Just to be me, Rosie John-Baptiste, for a while.

When Jerome was little, he started to keep his fist clenched all day at school. We asked him why and he said he was holding the kiss that I blew him and he'd catch in the mornings. From then on, he put it in his pocket and kept it there.

Yesterday, we were in a very serious meeting and he turned to me and said: "Mum, what's for dinner?!" I used up my embarrassment quota years ago.

Knowing that at each stage of his life there'd be recognition from statutory services that autism exists and that it's challenging, not only for the person with autism but for the people around them, would make all the difference. If the NAS doesn't do something about it, who will?

Rosie, NAS Senior Befriending Manager, lives in north London, with her triplets – 16-year-old boys, one of whom is Jerome, who is on the autism spectrum.



Tomislav

I like it when people believe in me and don't judge me, and when people speak to me clearly without jokes and metaphors that I can't understand or make sense of.

It makes me unhappy when people hurt me and when I can't sleep in the night and when I have a plan and something unexpected happens. It makes me scared when all the public are against me and when the public mock me. One bus driver said, "I don't give a damn about your autism", and told me to get off and I had to walk.

I like my difference; the way I'm very friendly and a bit kind. I like it when I inspire people. I like meeting people like myself who are very colourful and I know I'm not alone.

I wouldn't change it [having autism] for anything. For me, it's like having blonde hair and being called Tomislav.

I love the NAS. I want it to flourish and grow. I want each person with autism to have lifetime membership.

33-year-old Tomislav has an autism spectrum disorder and is a member of an NAS social group in West London.



Jamie and Chris

Jamie

Playing with my friends on my Xbox and online makes me happy. We play 'shoot 'em up' games. I hate exams and homework.

I get quite a lot of support. I'm quite organised – everything happens at a certain point each day. They [the NAS] helped my mum quite a lot when I was first diagnosed. That was when I was about eight, I think.

Jamie's mum, Chris

Homework has always been a massive issue. Jamie feels very strongly that school is school and home is home and he shouldn't have to do schoolwork at home.

The doctor who diagnosed him gave me a list of contacts and Helen (NAS Family Support Worker in Chepstow) came out to see me. She pointed me in the right direction of other families, which was a massive help. Jamie also went to the NAS Spectrum Youth Club which helped him with his social skills and also meant I could sit and have a coffee with other parents, which was great.

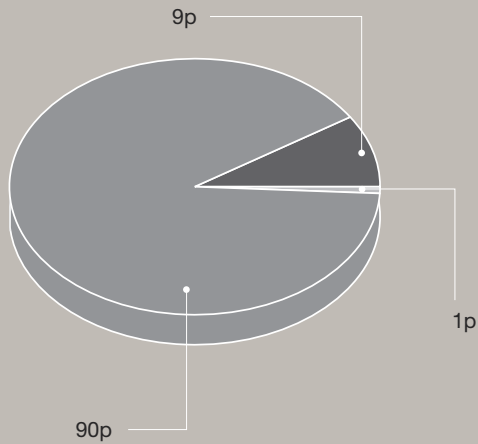
Jamie McGregor, 15, from Monmouthshire has Asperger syndrome. He is working towards taking his GCSE exams in summer 2010.

Support

Thank you to everyone who has supported us during the year – from members to government departments, charitable trusts and foundations, and companies. You have helped us to make a real, positive difference.

**Addleshaw Goddard, Assael Architecture,
Bankers Benevolent Fund, Barclays,
Barclays Capital, Big Lottery Fund,
Big Lottery Young People's Fund,
British Gas Business, Capita Trust,
The City Bridge Trust, Clifford Chance,
The Co-operative Bank,
Department for Children, School and Families,
Department of Health,
European Commission for Research,
Financial Services Authority,
The Freemasons' Grand Charity,
The Gannochy Trust, Goldman Sachs,
Harper MacLeod, Hesley Group,
HIT Entertainment, Legal & General, LEGO UK,
National Assembly for Wales, Norton Rose,
Parenting Fund, The Persula Foundation,
Priory Education Services,
Red Hill Charitable Trust, S J Berwin,
Three Guineas Trust, The Toy Trust,
Trafigura Foundation, Vodafone,
The Waterloo Foundation, Winton Capital**

Income

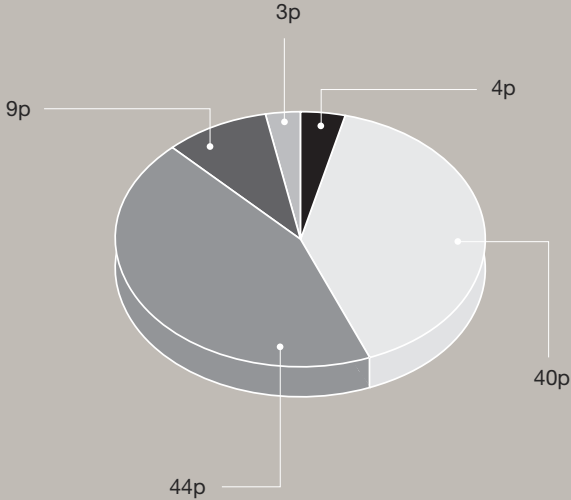


• Charitable activities	£76.3m
• Voluntary income and fundraising activity	£7.1m
• Interest and other	£1.1m
Total income	£84.5m

For every £ received...

• Charitable activities	90p
• Voluntary income and fundraising activity	9p
• Interest and other	1p

Expenditure



● Awareness	£3.0m
● Education	£34.4m
● Social support	£37.9m
● Information and research	£7.7m
● Fundraising and governance	£2.9m
Total expenditure	£85.9m

For every £ spent...

● Awareness	4p
● Education	40p
● Social support	44p
● Information and research	9p
● Fundraising and governance	3p

Report

Report by the Trustees on the summarised financial information

This summarised financial information is extracted from the full Trustees' annual report and accounts, which were approved by the Trustees and signed on their behalf on 16 July 2009. The statutory financial statements, on which the auditors Horwath Clark Whitehill LLP gave an unqualified audit report on 30 July 2009, were submitted to the Registrar of Companies and Charity Commission on 12 August 2009.

The auditors have confirmed with the Trustees that this summarised financial information is consistent with the statutory financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2009.

This summarised information may not contain sufficient information to gain a complete understanding of the financial affairs of the charity. The full Trustees' annual report and accounts and auditors' report may be obtained from the Company Secretary or the NAS website.

Colin Barrow CBE
Chairman
Signed on behalf of the Trustees

Who's who

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President

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Vice Presidents

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Professor Simon Baron-Cohen

Angela Browning MP

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Professor Patricia Howlin

Professor Rita Jordan OBE

Judy Lusty

Paul Shattock OBE

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Alison Halsey

John Kedar

Gordon Maxwell

Russell Stronach (until April 08)

Sara Truman (Regional Councillor, South East)

Karen Wooddissee (from Oct 08)

Chief Executive

Mark Lever

Company Secretary

Norman Green, Barrister

Strategic Management Group

Neil McConachie (Services)

Benet Middleton (Communications)

Nick Rogers (Resources)

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For information, advice and support, call our

Autism Helpline (10am-4pm, Mon-Fri) on 0845 070 4004.

A telephone interpretation service is available.

www.autism.org.uk



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