AMBITIOUS ABOUT AUTISM

England & Wales · Charity number 1063184

Details

Other names	THE TREEHOUSE TRUST
Status	Registered
Legal form	Charitable company
Company number	03375255
Registered	1997-07-02
Register	View on the Charity Commission register

Contact

Address	Pears National Centre for Autism Woodside Avenue London N10 3JA
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Website	www.ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk

Activities

Objects: THE OBJECTS OF THE COMPANY ARE FOR THE PUBLIC BENEFIT TO PROMOTE, MAINTAIN, IMPROVE AND ADVANCE THE EDUCATION, HEALTH, WELFARE AND CARE OF PEOPLE WITH AUTISM AND/OR OTHER RELATED IMPAIRMENTS AND DISABILITIES.

Activities: AMBITIOUS ABOUT AUTISM IS THE NATIONAL CHARITY FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WITH AUTISM. WE PROVIDE INFORMATION, TRAINING AND SUPPORT, RUN A RANGE OF HIGH-QUALITY SERVICES INCLUDING THE PIONEERING TREEHOUSE SCHOOL, AND CAMPAIGN TO MAKE THE ORDINARY POSSIBLE FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WITH AUTISM.

Classification

- **How:** Provides Services, Provides Advocacy/advice/information, Sponsors Or Undertakes Research
- **What:** Education/training, Disability
- **Who:** Children/young People, People With Disabilities

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Geography

- Throughout England And Wales

Finances

Period end	Income	Expenditure	Assets	Employees
2024-08-31	£52,371,000	£40,326,000	£33,052,000	777
2023-08-31	£27,880,000	£27,098,000	£21,028,000	513
2022-08-31	£24,473,000	£23,423,000	£20,072,000	461
2021-08-31	£22,852,000	£21,584,000	£16,367,000	477
2020-08-31	£20,039,000	£19,239,000	£15,321,000	460

Trustees

Name	Role	Appointed
Andrew Forbes		2021-12-10
Anna Thatcher		2023-09-01
Eduardo Gutierrez-Garcia		2021-12-10
Ian Caplan		2023-12-08
Jack Welch		2021-12-10
Michael Clark		2022-07-22
Robert Bishop		2024-11-01

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AMBITIOUS ABOUT AUTISM

England & Wales - Charity number 1063184

Accounts

Ambitious about Autism

Annual report and accounts

2023–24

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Ambitious about Autism shares my belief that all autistic young people should have the chance to achieve their ambitions – whatever those might be – and be accepted for themselves. I'm very proud to support this charity."

Travis George, singer and actor.
Appointed Ambitious about Autism ambassador in February 2024.

Our purpose, vision, mission and values

Ambitious about Autism is the national charity standing with autistic children and young people.

We believe every autistic child and young person has the right to be themselves and realise their ambitions.

We started as one school and have become a movement for change. We champion rights, campaign for change and create opportunities.

Our purpose

We help autistic children and young people to be themselves.

Our vision

Our vision is for a future where every autistic child and young person can be themselves and realise their ambitions.

Our mission

We stand with autistic children and young people, champion their rights and create opportunities.

Our values

Autistic children and young people are at the heart of everything that we do.

We are ambitious

for autistic children and young people and our work.

We celebrate difference

creating a world where everyone belongs.

We love learning

and commit to learn from our successes and mistakes; sharing knowledge, expertise and resources.

We are open

to new approaches, in how we make decisions, and engage with our community.

We work together

with autistic children and young people, parents and carers, our partners and staff to maximise impact and reach.

Foreword: Welcome from the chair of trustees and chief executive

This report provides an opportunity to reflect on the incredible work that has taken place across our charity this year, enabling autistic children and young people to be themselves and realise their ambitions.

It also marks the third year of our Time for Ambition strategy and is testament to the achievements and progress we've made against our ambitious goals.

Sadly, autistic children and young people continue to face enormous barriers in their daily lives. Unfair treatment is becoming routine and invisible, and goes unchallenged. Our work aims to break down barriers to opportunity. We want to ensure that the right support is in place at the right time for every autistic child and young person.

This year we expanded our excellent education offer for more autistic children and young people across London and the South East. We opened Spring School in Kingston and completed our merger with St. John's College in Brighton. We also celebrated successful Ofsted results across our network of schools and colleges.

Our Youth Network continued to expand and we launched a national preventative mental health programme for autistic pupils called Autistic and OK, in partnership with Zurich and the Z Zurich Foundation. The programme, which received national media attention during its launch, has been accessed by more than 600 secondary schools across the UK.

As part of our Employ Autism programme, we developed a new Autism Confidence framework for employers. As we entered the fourth year of our award-winning partnership with Marsh McLennan, they became the first employer to receive Autism Confidence status.

In the run-up to the general election we empowered autistic young people to make their voice heard and register to vote. We worked to ensure ensure decision-makers continued to listen to autistic children, young people and their families to create a SEND system that provides positive outcomes in education and beyond.

It was another successful year for our fundraising events as we continued to raise the profile of our charity and work with supporters who share our vision and mission.

None of our achievements would have been possible without our dedicated staff, so we continued to invest in our people to make Ambitious about Autism a great place to work.

Our mission is to stand with autistic children and young people, champion their rights and create opportunities. We can only do this thanks to you: our wonderful children and young people, parents and carers, generous partners, supporters, staff and volunteers. Your continuing support helps autistic children and young people be themselves and realise their ambitions.

Bob Bishop
Chair of Trustees

Jolanta Lasota
Chief Executive

Foreword: Welcome from the chair of the youth council

I am very proud to be the Chair of Ambitious about Autism's Youth Council. My role is to help facilitate the Youth Council meetings and represent the views of the other Youth Council members. Being autistic is part of who I am, and I would not change it.

I first came across Ambitious about Autism after researching specialist schools on the internet, which was a specialist interest of mine at the time. It was the first time I had come across an autism charity which I thought represented all autistic children and young people.

I joined the Youth Network in May 2021 and after that became a member of the Youth Council.

Ambitious about Autism has given me so many opportunities. I've been able to attend weekly peer-support sessions, I've been part of the development of the Time for Ambition strategy, and I've shared my experiences in education with high-level decision-makers in government.

This has had a very positive impact on my life because it has given me a strong sense of belonging and enjoyment, and I don't feel as isolated or lonely anymore. It has given me the opportunity to share my passion about autism with others and to come across other young people with similar views and experiences to me. I feel like I'm able to be a voice for autistic children and young people.

Alice Willans
Chair of the Ambitious Youth Council

Our impact

Our key achievements this year

Over
4,000

autistic young people connected through the Ambitious Youth Network.

Nearly
4,000

active members found support through our online community, Talk about Autism.

Over
300

autistic people received tailored careers sessions and information through Employ Autism.

Nearly
450

pupils and learners were supported via our schools and colleges and we celebrated three successful Ofsted results.

Over
£3 million

funds raised to stand with autistic children and young people.

Over
600

secondary schools accessed our preventative mental health programme Autistic and OK.

Excellent education

We believe in the right of all autistic children and young people to have an excellent and inclusive education. We want them to learn, thrive, achieve and, ultimately, have a good quality of life.

Growing our reach and impact

This was an exciting year of growth as we expanded our high-quality educational offer to hundreds more autistic children and young people across London and the South East.

Our newest special free school, Spring School, opened to its first pupils on a temporary site in Kingston. Spring School initially supported 36 pupils, with the aim of accommodating 90 pupils by 2028–29.

At the start of the year, St. John's College officially joined the Ambitious about Autism group. Together, our aim is to provide high-quality education for more autistic young people through our specialist college and by sharing best practice and resources with others locally.

As a founding member of the Autism Education Trust, we continued to influence policy and practice nationally, delivering training this year to more schools and post-16 education professionals than ever before.

Celebrating successful Ofsted inspections

Three of our schools and colleges were visited by Ofsted during the summer term this year – TreeHouse School, St. John's College and The Rise School. TreeHouse School retained its 'outstanding' rating from Ofsted. St. John's College retained its 'good' rating and was also rated 'outstanding' in personal development. The Rise School also retained its 'good' rating and received 'outstanding' in personal development and sixth form provision.

Preparing for work: Sophie and Prince's stories

Ambitious College's supported internship programme continued to support young people to develop employability skills and secure jobs this year.

Sophie and Prince developed their workplace skills on the programme at the Whittington Hospital in North London. After graduating, they both secured their first jobs.

During her internship, Sophie worked on both a post-surgery ward and in the hospital's Play team, which supports children at the hospital, where she developed her care skills and completed support worker and care training.

Prince had two placements at the hospital, one with the Stores team, and another with the Pharmacy Distribution team. He also worked at the M&S Foodhall in Archway. Sophie secured a role as a nursery assistant and Prince secured a job in the Stores team at Barnet General Hospital.

Sophie said: "When I joined the supported internship programme last September, I was very nervous and didn't know what to expect. But within the first few weeks we did lots of team-building activities that helped us develop our friendships.

"The team also supported us with job applications and interview practice. This helped me get my new role at the nursery, which I'm really excited about!"

Prince said: "I've really enjoyed my time on the supported internship programme. I've made good friendships with the other interns and have enjoyed going to weekly socials.

"The programme has really helped to improve my confidence and my job skills, and I am proud to be joining the Stores team at Barnet General Hospital."

Sophie

Prince

National education campaigning

Our **Written Off?** campaign was launched in response to reforms proposed in the government's 'Special Educational Needs (SEND) and Alternative Provision (AP) Improvement Plan', published in March 2023. This included proposals that deeply worried many parents, who feared the erosion of rights they rely upon for the sake of their child's education.

At the same time, local authorities are struggling to fund SEND provision in their areas. To address these challenges, we need the government to step in and make children with SEND a priority.

Given the scale and urgency of the challenge, a core strand of the campaign this year has been working with campaigners and our coalition partners to shine a light on the problem in the media. This included securing national media coverage about the large numbers of autistic children who are absent from school.

Alongside this, we worked with supportive parliamentarians to make the case for government action both publicly and privately, as well as submitting evidence to various government consultations to shape policy formation. In the run-up to the general election we empowered autistic young people to make their voice heard and register to vote.

We're currently preparing the next phase of the Written Off? campaign, to influence the actions of the new government.

Ambitious Approach

The Ambitious Approach is our model of education practice used across our education settings to support autistic children and young people. Developed to put quality of life at the centre of all we do, it is based upon pupils' and learners' indisputable rights to be:

- treated with dignity and compassion
- valued
- listened to
- supported to have the best quality of life possible
- empowered to make choices and decide on how they want to live their life.

We constantly develop, search for and are open to new approaches that are ethical and have a robust evidence base. We share our experience and evidence with others to enhance knowledge and expertise in the field of autism education. We're undertaking a review of this framework to inform the next stage of our development to make sure we provide the best opportunities for our pupils and learners to enjoy their best quality of life.

Employment and enterprise

We want every autistic young person to have access to good careers education, including experience of work, relevant to their aspirations, strengths and abilities.

Our Employ Autism programme seeks to remove the barriers to employment that autistic young people face. We work closely with employers to connect them directly with a pool of uniquely talented autistic employees. We also provide training and support to young people, careers professionals and employers.

Our impact

133

young people had paid work experience via our trained employer partners, including 92 in our Civil Service summer internships programme.

76

employers undertook training on understanding autism in the workplace, with 46 going on to offer paid work experience to autistic young people.

312

careers and employability professionals attended training sessions to understand how to adapt their practices for their autistic clients, ensuring they get the best support on their pathway to employment.

Our team delivered

300

tailored careers, information advice and guidance sessions to young people.

Arber's story

This year, 92 interns took part in our long-standing Civil Service internship programme. The programme offers autistic people work placements in a range of government departments to help them gain valuable experience and prepare for employment.

Arber, 19, found out about the internship opportunity through an advertisement on LinkedIn. He had previously struggled to find work after completing a BTEC qualification in IT. Through the programme he completed a four-week placement with the Department for Transport.

During his internship, he benefitted from rest-breaks and access to a quiet space, which helped with his concentration and productivity. He said: "My placement in the Department for Transport was my first experience of an internship – and it was great! Everyone in the department was friendly and kind, and offered me support whenever I needed it."

He is now planning to look for an apprenticeship at a large company where he can work on big projects that make an impact.

Arber

Autism Confidence

We were delighted to announce Marsh McLennan as the first employer to achieve Autism Confidence this year. This has been made possible by the commitment and determination of Marsh McLennan colleagues, whose incredible efforts have raised awareness, helped shape recruitment practices and developed a workplace culture that both welcomes and celebrates autistic people.

The design of the Autism Confidence status for employers has enabled us to further develop our Employ Autism programme, which offers a structured approach to embedding inclusive practice right across an organisation. Enabling autistic young people to access paid work experience remains central to all we do. We continue to partner with employers of all sizes and sectors, right across the country, to source and shape those opportunities.

Careers Education Framework

This year we launched a series of free, online resources to help careers education leaders provide autistic young people with informed, tailored advice about their journey from education to employment. The autism-specific Careers Education Framework (CEF) has been designed to ensure that autistic young people in mainstream and specialist secondary schools and colleges have access to effective careers education.

Careers education in our schools and colleges

We want every autistic young person to have a good careers education at school and in further and higher education. Our focus this year was on increasing engagement with local employers to offer essential work experience opportunities for our pupils and learners.

National Careers Week took place during 4–8 March 2024. Each educational setting organised its own timetable of activities for the week, engaging over 180 pupils and learners and involving more than 14 employers.

David's story

David*, a learner at Ambitious College, has a passion to work in the retail industry but struggled to take part in work experience outside of college due to mental health challenges.

Recognising the need for a tailored approach, the team at Ambitious College organised for David to take part in internal work experience within his familiar college environment.

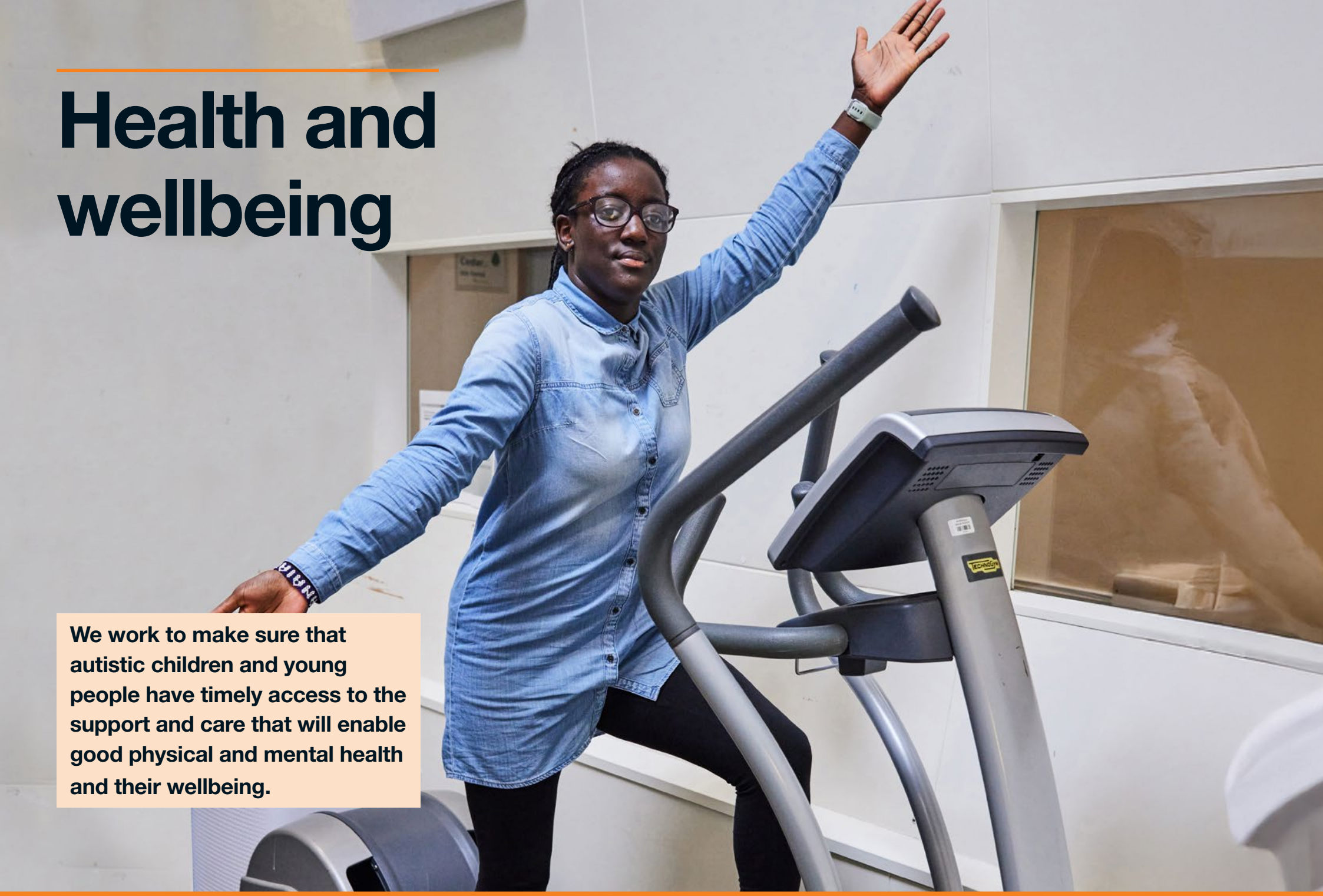
He took on the role of administrative assistant at the college, his duties including greeting visitors, maintaining records, managing petty cash and handling Oyster cards. He also answered phones in the office, enhancing his communication skills.

His manager said: "David was very engaged and listened attentively. He followed instructions to the letter, got out the pouches, counted the exact amount of money from the petty cash tin and then put it in their individual wallets. He has done a lovely job."

David's journey demonstrates the success of internal work experience in overcoming barriers.

*Name has been changed.

Health and wellbeing



We work to make sure that autistic children and young people have timely access to the support and care that will enable good physical and mental health and their wellbeing.

Autistic and OK

We created the Autistic and OK programme, in collaboration with Zurich and the Z Zurich Foundation, to empower autistic pupils to take control of their mental health and wellbeing, understand themselves and feel OK.

The programme received national media attention when it launched in February 2024 and has since been downloaded by over 3,000 individuals and from over 600 secondary schools.

> **It's more than a programme. It can have a really big, positive impact on an autistic pupil's experience of school and also on how they cope generally in life."**
>
> Lily, 18, an autistic youth advisor who helped to co-create the Autistic and OK programme.

Post-diagnostic support programme

Last year we launched Understanding You, Discovering You, a peer-support course to support autistic young people aged 16–25 in their transition to adulthood, post-diagnosis.

As we moved into year two of the project, we began a feasibility study with the National Institute of Health and Care Research (NIHR).

This year we also hosted a conference in London to explore autistic young people's experiences following diagnosis, bringing together autistic young people, researchers and sector experts.

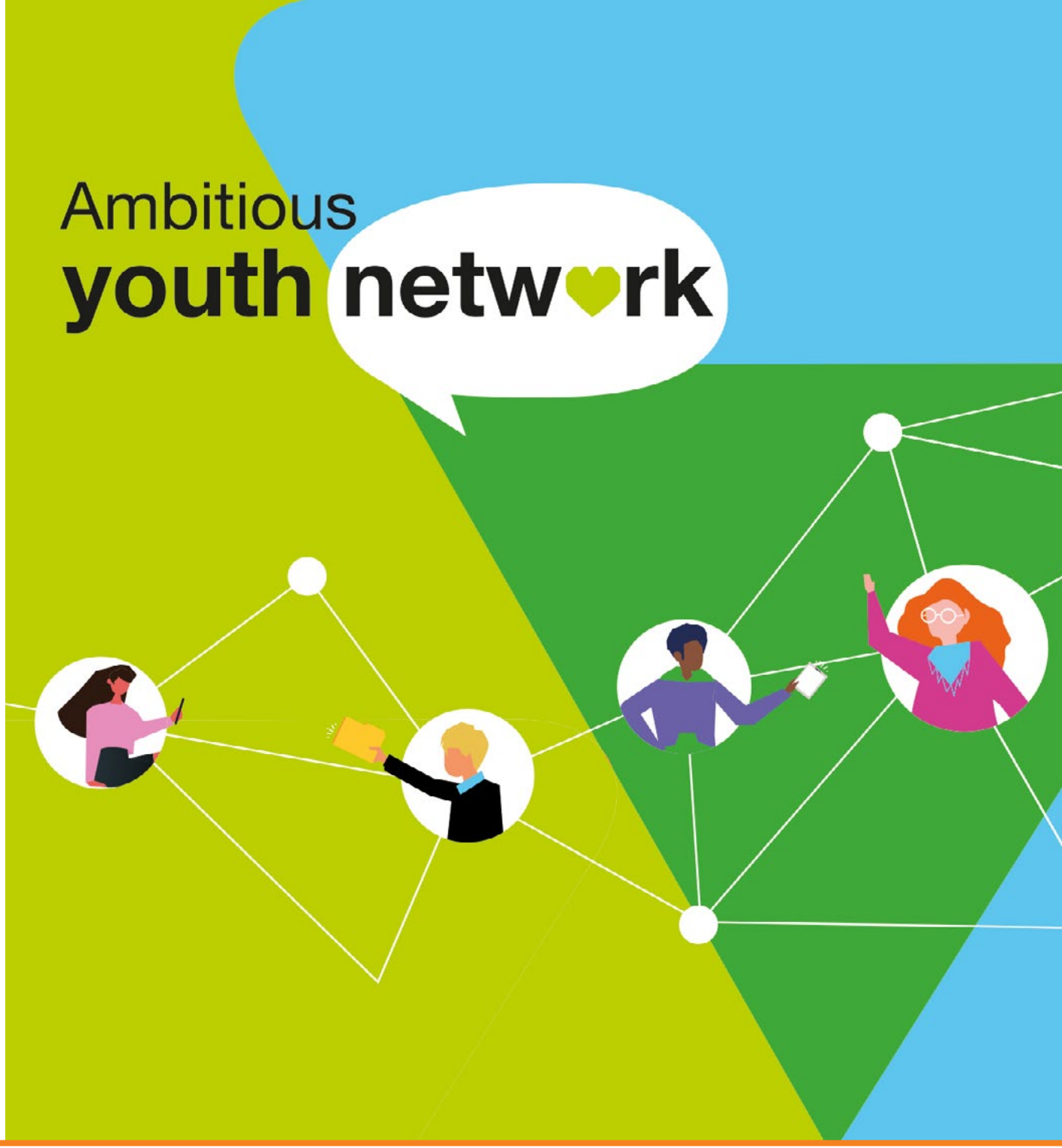
Active citizenship in the community

Autistic children and young people must be empowered to influence the decisions that affect their lives. We work to ensure this happens.

Ambitious Youth Network

Our UK-wide platform for autistic young people now has over 4,000 members. They can find opportunities and contribute to content, resources and groups designed to support their autistic peers. The network helps autistic young people understand their identity and feel they belong. They are empowered to influence the world around them, through media, campaigning and opportunities to influence policy.

> **Meeting other autistic young people through the network has been a relief. I've been able to listen to their stories and realise that there are other autistic young people like me going through similar things."**
>
> Harvey, a member of the Ambitious Youth Network.



Family and relationships

We want to make sure that families are fully informed and have the skills and confidence to support autistic children and young people.

Learner and family services

The Learner and Family Services team supports pupils, learners and families who attend our schools and colleges on their journey from admissions to transition to life beyond education. They ensure families have increased knowledge, skills and confidence by providing timely direct advice and support.

This year our Admissions team processed over 1,000 queries and applications across our education settings. The team also successfully helped 64 young people who were transitioning to new settings or into employment. They ran a monthly support group for parents and carers and provided support and advocacy on a range of complex welfare issues.

Talk about Autism

Talk about Autism is our online community for parents and carers of autistic children and young people. It is a place where they can connect with others and access informative resources such as webinars and blogs.

This year we hosted a range of informative webinars on topics such as supporting autistic children with anxiety, understanding the Mental Capacity Act and advice on wills and trusts.

> **We have had no support since my son's diagnosis and having resources like Talk about Autism helps make me feel less alone and more able to cope. It feels like someone cares."**
>
> Parent and Talk about Autism member.

Autism Central

NHS England's Workforce, Training and Education team commissioned Autism Central, which is being delivered nationally by nine founding charities including Ambitious about Autism. The service offers co-designed and co-delivered, high-quality and accessible autism information, education and coaching for families and carers.

Last year, we became a founding partner for a new free education programme, hosted through Autism Central, called Peer Educators. In partnership with the charity Contact, we promote sessions for the regional hubs in London and the Midlands. These sessions for parents and carers cover issues such as sensory processing, getting support at school, sleep and mental wellbeing.

Ruth's story

Ruth* is autistic and has a learning disability. As she entered her fourth and final year of study at St. John's College, it was identified that she would need a slow transition to her next placement, as she finds change extremely challenging.

Taking into account Ruth's interests and preferences, her family and professionals agreed that her social care needs would be met by her attendance at a day service placement.

The St. John's College team worked closely with her local authority social care team to ensure Ruth could have a smooth transition. They used a social story to help Ruth prepare for her journey from her home to her new setting and back again. She had regular visits to her new placement, and she travelled by bus to get there. She even attended their Christmas party in December.

*Name has been changed.

By Spring she started going to the local swimming pool, which is a regular activity of the day service users. St. John's College staff also worked closely with staff at the day service to help them develop a relationship with Ruth and ensure they understood her support needs.

In July, Ruth attended the day service for her first five-day week. Thanks to great teamwork and support, she has made a successful move out of education at St. John's College and now attends her day service full-time.

Our partners and supporters

In 2023–24, we once more achieved so much for autistic children and young people thanks to our amazing partners and supporters. We are grateful to them for enabling us to continue championing rights, campaigning for change and creating opportunities.

Thanks to the passion and commitment of partners and supporters, we are grateful to have celebrated many milestones and achievements this year, and have been able to grow our reach and impact.

In 2023–24, despite an ever-challenging fundraising environment, thanks to the generous support of members of the public, philanthropists, companies, trusts and foundations, we exceeded our target, raising £3m.

We're so grateful to all those who have joined or continue to stand alongside us, further amplifying our impact and supporting autistic children and young people to be themselves and realise their ambitions.

Events and fundraising challenges

This year, we were able to grow our presence and increase donations through fundraising events. We'd like to thank our partners and supporters for supporting these inspiring events.

Night of Ambition

In March, in partnership with TalkTalk and PXC, we hosted our 15th Night of Ambition fundraising gala. The event, held at The JW Marriot Grosvenor House, raised £380,000 through sponsorship, table sales, the live and silent auction, as well as generous donations from guests. We are hugely grateful to all of our sponsors, including our headline sponsor, CGI. Autistic singer Travis George provided the outstanding entertainment, making it a hugely memorable night for all our wonderful and generous guests.

Ambitious 220

This year's Manchester to London ride, in partnership with Rapha, was a huge success with the best rider feedback we've ever had for the event. On Sunday 22 June, led by Rapha founder and Ambitious about Autism Ambassador Simon Mottram, we raised £200,000.

London Marathon

This year our inspiring runners raised an incredible £100,000 in what has become the most successful and record-breaking London Marathon to date. One of our runners, Ben Walley, took part in eight marathons in eight days before he went on to complete the London Marathon as part of his ongoing support for Ambitious about Autism.

Community and challenge events

Thanks to our individual supporters, we raised over £90,000 through a wide range of activities. Live gaming streams, running, trekking and skydiving all featured in the different ways that people chose to stand with autistic children and young people. With special thanks to the Wilde Family and Warren Whitely for raising £5,000 with their workout event.

Our strategic partners

Pears Foundation

We are deeply grateful to everyone at the Pears Foundation for their exceptional partnership. Their long-standing support has been instrumental in the successful completion of our Employ Autism pilot, significantly enhancing the programme's credibility and its potential for expansion.

Moreover, the Foundation's commitment to our work over the years has been instrumental in making our schools and colleges a reality. Their philanthropic leadership supports us in so many ways, contributing towards our security and stability as an organisation, allowing us to continue making a profound difference.

Marsh McLennan

This has been a very successful year for our award-winning partnership with Marsh McLennan. The organisation has supported all aspects of our work while continuing to empower talent and unlock opportunities for autistic people within the company. Through the wonderful fundraising efforts of teams at Marsh McLennan, we raised over £259,000.

Demonstrating its commitment to encouraging inclusive workplace cultures, Marsh McLennan hosted 80 industry contacts and clients, sharing its phenomenal journey in becoming our first partner to achieve Autism Confidence.

During World Autism Acceptance Month, Marsh McLennan created 'Standing Together', a mosaic artwork made up of images of individuals who have advocated for our cause throughout our partnership.

TalkTalk, TalkTalk Business and PXC

We have proudly partnered with TalkTalk Group since 2006. Following the demerger of TalkTalk, we are happy to say that we have continued our relationships with all three branches of the newly devolved TalkTalk Group: TalkTalk, TalkTalk Business and PXC.

Having welcomed five autistic interns to its workforce, TalkTalk Group continues to be the generous key partner of Night of Ambition, a leading Employ Autism partner. The group also provides key pro-bono services that enable our organisation to stay connected and continues to support autistic young people in our educational settings.

Rapha

Thanks to the support of its founder and former chief executive, Simon Mottram, Rapha Racing Ltd has raised close to £2m since its first cycling challenge in aid of Ambitious about Autism in 2014.

Through its fantastic innovation, support and friendship, Rapha continues to stand with autistic children and young people through its commitment to delivering a first-class cycling challenge, raising much-needed funds.

Zurich UK and the Z Zurich Foundation

Following the pilot of the Autistic and OK programme in 2023, our continued partnership with Zurich UK and Z Zurich Foundation saw the successful roll-out of the programme in February 2024. It has been very well received, with a higher number of schools than anticipated downloading the programme materials, and a greater number of autistic young people being reached.

Our Employability and Training team has produced a series of e-learning modules for staff to complete to develop their autism-confident practice. These sessions are being promoted internally within Zurich.

Reckitt Benckiser UK

In the second year of our three-year partnership with its brand Vanish, Reckitt Benckiser UK committed to another collaboration around World Autism Acceptance Week. Through our campaign More than just clothes, this year's focus has been on highlighting the importance of clothing to the autistic community by telling two autistic young people's stories about how their clothing has impacted their lives.

This year, we invited viewers of the campaign to sign a pledge acknowledging that for many autistic people clothes are more than just clothes. With every pledge signed, Vanish will donate £10 to help support our work to create a world where autistic people are heard, included and supported.

Lead funding partners

Graham and Susan Tobbell OBE

We are immensely thankful to Graham and Susan for their unwavering support. Their involvement has been pivotal in providing greater employment opportunities for autistic young people, enabling them to be themselves.

Esmée Fairbairn Foundation

Esmée Fairbairn Foundation's multi-year support has enabled us to expand our Ambitious Youth Network nationally and build connections between autistic young people experiencing acute isolation and loneliness. The Foundation is a trusted partner, sharing insights on equity, diversity and inclusion, and providing access to training and resources. We are also extremely thankful to have been able to evaluate externally our programme's impact, thanks to their support.

City Bridge Foundation

City Bridge Foundation enables autistic young Londoners to access the support they need once they move on from Ambitious College. Our Learner and Family Services team work with the young person, their parents and carers, staff and the onward settings to ensure the transition is as smooth as possible. The Foundation's generosity helps autistic young people to get the support they need and pursue their dreams as they move into adulthood.

Constable Educational Trust

Through Ambitious Hubs, an innovative pilot project, Constable Educational Trust, a lead funder in the redevelopment of our playground and life skills kitchens at TreeHouse School, extended its support to include backing the work of our Youth Participation team. Ambitious Hubs allows us to take what we've learned from our youth network and from delivering peer support and apply it in school settings. We admire the Trust's shared commitment to providing an excellent education to all children, regardless of their needs or circumstances.

The Constable Trust

MariaMarina Foundation

Since 2016, MariaMarina Foundation has been a significant partner and ally of Ambitious about Autism. The Foundation was key to helping to realise our vision for Ambitious College and is now supporting the implementation of an employability strategy, successfully preparing hundreds of autistic young people for the workplace.

mariamarina FOUNDATION

National Lottery Community Fund

Thanks to their lead support, the National Lottery Community Fund enables us to make a meaningful difference to the lives of thousands of autistic young people through our Employ Autism programme. Over the past three years, the programme has helped autistic young people move from education into employment, careers professionals to deliver autism-aware careers guidance, and employers to create a more inclusive working world. The National Lottery Community Fund's support has been instrumental in making this happen.

COMMUNITY FUND

A huge thanks to our partners and supporters

Ambitious partners

Pears Foundation

Marsh McLennan

Rapha Racing Ltd

TalkTalk Consumer

TalkTalk Business

PXC

Z Zurich Foundation

Lead funding partners

Graham and Susan Tobbell OBE

Constable Educational Trust

City Bridge Foundation – London's biggest independent charity funder

Esmée Fairbairn Foundation

Joseph Levy Foundation

MariaMarina Foundation

National Lottery Community Fund

Reckitt Benckiser

Ambitious supporters

Aberdeen Asset Management

Ali MacCallum

Apply Recruitment

Bernard Sunley Foundation

Beatrice Laing Trust

Bob Bishop

Chapman Charitable Trust

Charlotte Warner and Bruno Paulson

Chartered Institute of Loss Adjusters

Chris Pond

Clarkson Foundation

Collaboration Company

Compass Wellbeing CIC

CIB

CSDS Foundation

Danuta Gray

Department for Education

Duke of Newcastle 1986 Charitable Trust

Ellandi

Health Education England

Henley Insights Group

Hornsey Parochial Charities

Hospital Saturday Fund

Hounslow Educational Partnership

Jean Levenant

Jean Carter*

Joanna Healey

John and Clare Coombe-Tennant

Jonathan Andrews

Ian Karten Charitable Trust

Inspire Hounslow

Ketchum

Kusuma Trust UK

Laurie Edmans CBE

Lesley Longstone

Legend Holidays & Events

Lloyds of London

LNER

The Lord Tim Clement-Jones CBE

Lucy Nutt

M/Six

Magnus Schoeman

Mark Naughton

Martyn Craddock

Matt Davis and Eliza Mishcon

Matt Hutnell

Michael Clark

The Mulberry Trust

Neil Goulden

Nick and Pippa Medd

Nick Hornby

Paul Disley-Tindell

Phil Haslam

Philippa Stobbs

PIMCO Foundation

Red Brick Road

Sally Cairns

Salt

Simon Clements

Simon Hillson

Simon and Lucy Mottram

Snowbility

Sue Adkins

Teneo UK

The Harebell Centenary Fund

The Thompson Family Charitable Trust

Tim Barber

Tottenham Grammar School Foundation

Tristia Harrison

Variety Children's Charity

Dr Virginia Bovell OBE

Wooden Spoon Society

YouGarden

And all our other supporters, including those who have chosen to remain anonymous.

*Signifies a legacy gift.

Our fundraising approach

Fundraising practices

We adhere to the highest fundraising standards, which we recognise to be essential in retaining the trust and support of our much-valued donors.

We pay the voluntary levy to register with the Fundraising Regulator and ensure that our practices comply with the Code of Fundraising Practice and the Fundraising Promise. We are also a member of the Chartered Institute of Fundraising.

We maintain up-to-date policies for: our fundraising code of conduct; fundraising ethics; compliments and complaints; and whistleblowing. We ensure that all team members understand and comply with these policies.

Our Board of Trustees reviews these policies annually, alongside our compliance with fundraising regulations.

Our privacy policy recognises recent changes and continues to comply with data protection legislation and regulation and is accessible to all on our websites.

We also ensure that we are compliant with the UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), the EU GDPR, the Data Protection Act 2018 and Privacy and Electronic Communications Regulations (PECR).

In the year under review, there have been no known instances of non-compliance with the requirements of the Code of Fundraising Practice (2022-23: 0). We received no fundraising related complaints.

We echo organisational values in our fundraising practice. Through our close adherence to fundraising regulations, scrutiny by the Executive Leadership team and transparency with supporters, we ensure that we: do not unreasonably intrude on a person's privacy; are not unreasonably persistent; and do not place undue pressure on any person to give money or other property.

We also value difference, continually seek to increase the diversity of our supporters and demonstrate inclusivity in all we do. Our fundraising committees proudly include many autistic and neurodiverse members, alongside those with lived experience.

Our fundraising work

Most of our fundraised income is generated through partnerships with trusts, foundations and corporate partners, as well as individuals who have an interest in our cause.

We have also benefited from the generosity of community members and individuals participating in online and in-person events and challenges.

We use third parties to support our fundraising when specific digital platforms are required for fundraising events, e.g. JustGiving, Funraising and Givergy.

We do not engage in face-to-face or telephone direct marketing. Our regular giving programme is conducted primarily with our close community. We do not conduct street or public site collections, nor do we have any mass participation activities in place.

Our people

We are committed to making Ambitious about Autism a great place to work by creating an inclusive, high-performance culture where our people can feel proud.

Equity, diversity and inclusion

One of our core values is that we celebrate difference. We strive to live by this value every day in all that we do. We want autistic children and young people, our staff, volunteers and supporters to feel they belong and can bring their whole professional selves to Ambitious about Autism.

This year we refreshed our equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) strategy and made progress in our four key areas of focus:

Courageous governance and leadership

We reviewed the skills and diversity of our Board of Trustees and governing bodies and recruited new members with a broader range of backgrounds and experiences. Members of our Board of Trustees and governing bodies have received training and development opportunities around EDI and we've increased the number of EDI trustee leads on committees. All leaders have had training in EDI and the members of our Executive Leadership team sponsor our EDI networks.

Building an inclusive workplace

We have three well-established staff networks, championing ethnic diversity, LGBTQ+ rights and disability. The networks lead activities and sponsor a range of external speakers. Our EDI Committee meets regularly to monitor the organisation's progress and EDI is embedded in our induction programme and management training offer. We gather and analyse staff EDI data and review our recruitment processes to ensure they are accessible.

High-quality and inclusive education and services

Within our schools and colleges, we continue to develop our curriculums to ensure they reflect the diverse interests, needs and experiences of the autistic children and young people we support. Our Learner and Family Services team runs a programme of workshops for parents and carers to support those who need additional help.

Influencing national work

Through national media and influencing work we continue to highlight the experience of autistic children and young people, and the need for greater inclusivity in education and employment. A particular highlight has been our Employ Autism programme, which has continued to expand and diversify. Alongside using our evaluation findings to influence policy and practice, the work of the programme has been recognised in external awards.

Staff engagement

Listening to our colleagues and gathering their views is key to helping us improve their experiences.

A wide-ranging staff survey in July had a response rate of 87%. It was positive to see that the majority of staff feel the work they do gives them a sense of achievement and that they have a strong sense of pride and enjoyment in working for Ambitious about Autism. There's a very high understanding of our vision, mission and values as an organisation, a strong team spirit and a shared drive towards achieving these goals.

Communication and engagement

In response to feedback in the staff survey, we strengthened our communication and engagement with colleagues by investing in an internal communications advisor role, enabling us to keep our very busy staff informed and engaged with what's happening across Ambitious about Autism.

Our Staff Council continued to represent the views of staff throughout the year and led on the selection of winners for our Staff Awards ceremony in July.

Staff recruitment

Recruitment and retention during the year has been a challenge across our sector and continues to be one of our key priorities. We closed out the year with a low vacancy rate in preparation for the new 2024–25 academic year. We continued to progress with our 'welcome bonus' programme and have expanded our overseas sponsorship certifications to help attract and secure critical Allied Health professionals, such as occupational and speech and language therapists.

Staff wellbeing

Through our wellbeing strategy we provide a range of support to staff. Our online wellbeing hub provided tools and resources to support mental health and wellbeing, and our popular cross-organisational, four-week 'Big Team Challenge' encouraged teams of staff to work together to stay active and motivated.

Learning and development

We continue to invest in learning and development to help staff grow and improve their skills. This year we took the opportunity to refresh our management programme to ensure we can develop managers within a busy working environment. The Ambitious Managers programme is accredited by the Institute of Leadership and Management and is the first step on a leadership development programme for all our aspiring leaders.

Looking to the future

Our three-year Time for Ambition strategy was launched in September 2021, reflecting input from a wide range of internal and external stakeholders, including autistic young people and their families and carers.

Time for Ambition

As we approached the end of this strategy cycle, we reflected on the strategic progress made against the objectives we set at that time. While we can see that a lot has been achieved, there is still more to be done in each area.

On that basis, we've extended the strategy for a further two years, 2024–26. This will enable us to grow our impact, reach more autistic children and young people, their families and carers, and build our evidence base to influence positive change.

This strategy extension is built on thorough internal and external analysis, considering the views of autistic young people, their families and carers, our partners and other key stakeholders.

Our strategy at a glance

Excellent education

We will make sure all autistic children and young people have an excellent and inclusive education, and improve policy and practice nationally by:

- expanding our specialist schools and colleges
- developing a plan to launch our Ambitious Academy to support workforce development and share best practice with others.

Employment and enterprise

We'll ensure more autistic young people can benefit from inclusive workplaces by:

- developing new online careers information and guidance and creating internship opportunities reaching 5,000 autistic young people
- launching a new e-learning offer for employers on understanding autism and creating more inclusive workplaces.

Health and wellbeing

We'll ensure autistic children and young people have improved physical and mental health by:

- refreshing and relaunching our Know Your Normal resource, in partnership with key mental health charities
- completing the pilot of our post-diagnostic programme Understanding You, Discovering You, with the NIHR – and sharing the findings to inform wider policy and practice.

Active citizenship in the community

We will make sure autistic young people feel less isolated and more empowered by:

- continuing to expand our Ambitious Youth Network to reach 5,000 autistic young people
- creating opportunities for autistic young people's voices and experiences to be heard by decision-makers at the highest levels.

Family and relationships

We will help families feel more confident, empowered and less isolated by:

- providing families and the children and young people in our schools and colleges with specialist support, guidance and advocacy, during their education and beyond
- launching a new national digital information service to support struggling families, providing advice on topics such as benefits.

Influencing policy and practice nationally

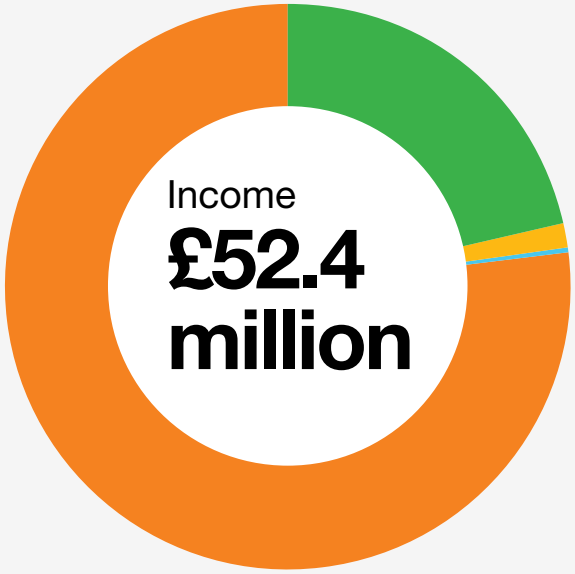
We're passionate about making a difference to the lives of autistic children and young people. We will improve policy and practice nationally by drawing on our experience within our schools and colleges and across our national networks.
We'll develop campaigns based on the priorities of autistic children and young people and their families and make pragmatic decisions about the areas in which we can make the most difference.

Strong foundations

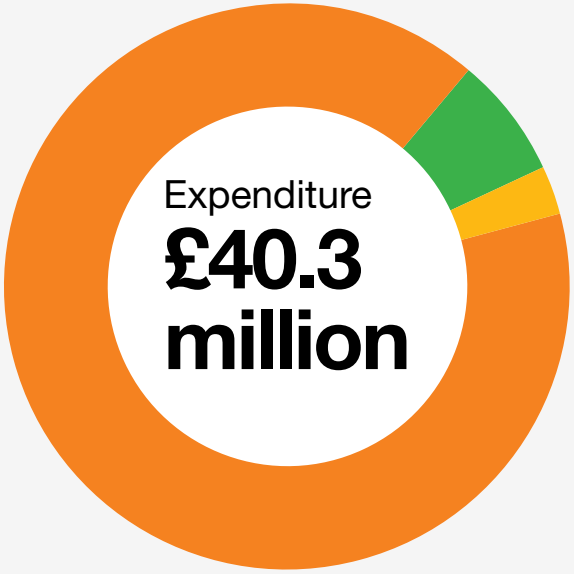
Achieving our objectives would not be possible without the strong foundations that underpin our strategic plan. We'll develop and align our governance, leadership, people, culture, fundraising, infrastructure, systems and processes to support the implementation of our strategy.

Financial review

Our total income for the year was £52.4m and our overall expenditure £40.3m. Our net assets are £33.1m, compared with net assets of £21.0m at 31 August 2023.



- **£36.6m** charitable activities: education services
- **£15.0m** gifts and donated service (this includes £12m from St. John's College)
- **£0.6m** trading income
- **£0.2m** investments and other income



- **£36.4m** charitable activities: education services
- **£2.7m** charitable activities: external affairs
- **£1.2m** raising funds

Financial performance

The 2023–24 year showed strong financial performance, with income increasing to £52.4m from £27.9m in 2023, reflecting growth in the services provided to autistic children and young people, primarily from the opening of Spring School (currently based in Norbiton, South London), and the transfer in of St. John's College, Brighton.

As part of the merger with St. John's College a one-off donation of £11.9 million was received, representing the net assets of St. John's College at the time of transfer to Ambitious about Autism. From the point of the transfer onwards, all income and expenditure relating to St. John's College will be reflected within the Ambitious about Autism statement of financial activities and no further donations of this nature will be recognised in relation to St John's College.

Total expenditure for the year also grew to £40.3m, an increase of £13.2m (2023: £27.1m), reflecting the same key growth factors.

Free reserves increased to £3.1m (2023: £2.8m), which is within the reserves target range of £2.4m–£3.5m. These funds are available for future development in line with the Time for Ambition strategy, while also providing resilience against financial pressures.

During the year, the charity invested £0.5m in freehold and leasehold improvements, £0.6m on furniture and equipment, £0.1m on vehicles and £0.6m on computer equipment and software.

Ambitious about Autism is using an interest rate cap to manage its exposure to interest rate movements, with the interest rate fixed at 4% for the NatWest Loan of £1.1m. Our investment portfolio was valued at £1.8m, a £0.1m increase compared to 31 August 2023, despite challenging market conditions.

Investment policy

The charity's investment policy was approved by the Board of Trustees in July 2024. It aims to produce the best financial return at an acceptable level of risk. The risk profile is agreed with the investment manager and is regarded as medium. The policy is reviewed at least once a year. The trustees have set a target to grow the portfolio by inflation +3% per annum (after fees) over the long term. This was achieved in the year.

The trustees have stated within the investment policy their commitment to responsible investing, and aim to make a positive difference on society through the charity's investment holdings. Over the last three years, investments have decreased from £1,878k to £1,833k, which is a reduction of 2.5% driven by movements in the valuation of investment holdings and reflective of wider investment markets. However, an in year gain of £140k was achieved.

Investment risk management

The investment portfolio is diversified across a range of instruments to reduce the risk of overexposure to one type of asset. We hold the following instruments: fixed interest, direct UK and overseas equities, cash, alternatives including property, and managed funds. Note 12 (see page 86) provides further analysis of these assets.

The investments are managed by investment managers appointed by the charity, currently Rathbones Group Plc. The risk profile is agreed with the investment manager and is regarded as medium risk.

Risk management practices

Members of the investment committee meet the investment manager twice a year to review performance and discuss market risks. The investment committee reports to the trustees on the risk profile, selection of investment managers and returns achieved.

Reserves policy and going concern

Free reserves exclude restricted funds and designated funds. At Ambitious about Autism, we hold free reserves to mitigate against risks resulting from unexpected drops in fundraising or fee income, a downturn in pupil/learner numbers or unexpected short-term increases in expenditure.

Our reserves policy is reviewed by the trustees annually and was last reviewed in December 2024. Based upon an evaluation of income and expenditure risks and working capital requirements, the trustees have agreed that free reserves should be in the range of £2.4m–£3.5m for 2024–25. As at 31 August 2024, free reserves were £3.1m, which falls within the free reserves range. The 2024–25 budget shows a year end free reserves position that is within the agreed range. The trustees will continue to monitor the reserves position closely throughout the year.

In addition to the free reserves, Ambitious about Autism has a number of designated funds totalling £17.4m as at 31 August 2024.

These are:

- Fixed assets, valued at £11.4m. Depreciation expenditure will be funded from this fund on an annual basis.
- Buildings maintenance and development fund, which is based on projected 30-year life cycle costs and was established for major repairs to our group and other premises. As at 31 August 2024, there was £0.9m in this fund.
- Service development fund, with a balance of £4.9m, which will be used to support the future growth and development of activities across the organisation, in alignment with the Time for Ambition strategy.
- Covid recovery fund – a fund established in 2020 to provide a contingency against future risks as a result of the coronavirus pandemic and support recovery, including additional costs or losses in income. The balance remaining at the end of the year is £0.2m.

The following designated funds were closed in the year, with remaining balances transferred into the Service development fund to simplify reserves management:

- School development fund – a designated fund was created in 2013 for broader school development. £5k was transferred at the end of the year.
- Transformation fund – a fund established in 2020 to support our Time for Ambition strategy. £0.8m was transferred at the end of the year.

The policy of the Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust is to hold sufficient reserves to provide a working balance to mitigate the impact of uneven cash flows; provide a contingency in respect of unexpected events; and plan for potential major items of expenditure, including continued expansion.

Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust funds balance as at 31 August 2024 totalled £11.1m. This comprised nil unrestricted funds, £4.7m of restricted funds and £6.4m of restricted fixed asset funds. The funds balance at 31 August 2023 was £10.9m. The actuarial reports received in relation to the two Local Government Pension Schemes showed a total net asset of £340k in 2023–24 (£31k in 2022-23), as a result of unrealised gains in the underlying assets. Due to the risk of these gains reversing in the future, the balance of the pension asset within the accounts has been restricted to nil, on the basis that there is no recoverable asset to the Trust.

In accordance with the arrangements for a multi-academy trust, any deficit relating to the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) is underwritten by the Department for Education.

After making appropriate enquiries, the trustees have a reasonable expectation that the charity has adequate resources to continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future. For this reason, it continues to adopt the going concern basis in preparing the financial statements. Further details regarding the adoption of the going concern basis can be found in the Statement of Accounting Policies.

Risks and uncertainties

Risks are managed in accordance with the risk policy approved by the Board of Trustees.

The aim of the policy is to:

- understand as fully as possible the risks being faced
- take appropriate action to manage those risks
- minimise the risk of new initiatives adversely affecting existing work
- accept a higher level of uncertainty, if appropriate, when taking advantage of new opportunities.

Ambitious about Autism has a risk register, which is reviewed on a termly basis by the Finance and Resources Committee and the Board of Trustees. Risks are scored according to likelihood and impact. The changes to risks are reviewed termly by the Finance and Resources Committee and Board, alongside the actions being taken or proposed to mitigate the risks.

The table on the next page identifies the four key strategic risks that have been identified by the Board of Trustees and explains how these risks are being managed.

	Risk	Mitigation
Pupil and learner numbers	Within an uncertain policy environment in times of austerity, there is an increased risk to pupil and learner numbers in our education services, and this uncertainty impacts our ability to plan.	To manage the risk, we monitor pupil and learner numbers so that we can carefully manage admissions and increase our admission numbers as required. We maintain good relationships with commissioners, ensuring timely assessment dates to enable a fast turnaround of consultations, and support parents and carers through the admissions process.
Recruitment and retention	The failure to recruit and retain the quantity and quality of specialist staff required poses a significant risk to services operating as planned.	Recruiting and retaining skilled and committed staff is fundamental to the quality of support provided by Ambitious about Autism and our Schools Trust. We have devised our People Strategy and have several key projects focused on creating a compelling offer to work at Ambitious about Autism, improving our reward offer, supporting our career and developmental pathways for staff as well as maintaining ongoing recruitment to ensure pipelines of talent.
Financial risk	The financial impact of an uncertain economic outlook, and high-cost inflation, may negatively affect the financial position.	Regular management reporting and financial re-forecasting is undertaken to understand an up-to-date picture of the group's financial outlook and is available to senior management and trustees. Cash flow forecasting is prepared to assess the organisation's ability to meet financial obligations. Reserves balances are maintained to support financial sustainability.
Pupil and learner related fee income	Fee negotiations with local authorities placing pupils and learners could cause cash flow issues and/or have a negative impact on financial sustainability.	Annual fee uplifts are communicated to Local Authorities in March each year, enabling fee related discussions to take place over the 5 months prior to the start of the academic year to which they relate. An internal fee and debt working group meets regularly to maintain focus on fees and move forward discussions. Meetings with Local Authority contacts are scheduled to discuss queries in a timely manner. Additional information requested by Local Authorities is provided promptly with clear explanations.

Legal structures and governance

Governance

Ambitious about Autism (the Charity) is a charitable company limited by guarantee, incorporated on 23 May 1997 per Companies House (company number 03375255) and registered as a charity on 2 July 1997 (charity number 1063184). The Charity was established under a memorandum of association, which established the objects and powers of the charitable company and is governed under its articles of association.

Ambitious about Autism is governed by a Board of Trustees who also act as the directors of the Charity for the purposes of company law.

Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust (the Trust) is a multi-academy trust, a company limited by guarantee and an exempt charity. It was founded and incorporated on 18 December 2012 (company number 08335297) to support the development and running of The Rise School and further free schools. In September 2023, a second free school, Spring School, opened within the Trust.

The memorandum and articles of association are the primary governing documents of the Trust. The Trust is governed by a Board of Trustees who also act as the directors of the charitable company for the purposes of company law, and it has members whose duty is to ensure that the board is effectively discharging its responsibilities.

Ambitious about Autism is the sole corporate member of the Trust along with three individual members.

A formal governance review was conducted in 2019 supported by an external facilitator with a focus on streamlining and strengthening governance arrangements across the group. The board, committee structure and membership, articles of association, members' agreements, scheme of reservation and delegation, and terms of references were all updated and are now reviewed annually. All changes in relation to the Trust were approved by the Department for Education.

The trustees of Ambitious about Autism and the trustees of Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust are all members of the Joint Group Board Committee. The respective Ambitious about Autism and Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust boards retain responsibility for all matters and delegate a number of appropriate decisions to the Joint Group Board Committee and its subcommittees. This maximises efficiency and impact between the two boards. For example, where joint policies exist, they are reviewed and approved, where appropriate, by the Joint Group Board Committee. Clear schemes of reservation and delegation are in place for both boards.

Both Boards of Trustees follow a regular cycle of termly meetings and have at least one away day with the Executive Leadership team each year, as well as holding additional meetings when required.

The boards are supported by several joint subcommittees as set out below:

- The Nominations and Remuneration Committee oversees governance planning and policy, including trustee recruitment, support and review. It also reviews and agrees remuneration and terms and conditions of employment for the Executive Leadership team and staff across the Company and the Trust. It meets termly in advance of board meetings.
- The Finance and Resources Committee meets termly in advance of board meetings and is responsible for the general oversight and scrutiny of systems, planning, financial and resource management, and reviewing internal controls and risk management for the charity and the Trust.
- The Education and Care Committee meets termly and is responsible for oversight of education services. It also oversees the governing bodies and Quality sub-committees in each service for both the charity and the Trust.
- The Investment Committee, an Ambitious about Autism committee, reports to the Finance and Resources Committee, monitoring the performance of the charity's investment portfolio. It meets twice a year.
- The Trust Audit Committee meets termly to oversee the annual report and accounts, the audit, the programme of internal scrutiny and compliance with Department for Education legislation for the Trust.

All matters related to the educational performance of TreeHouse School, The Rise School, Spring School, Ambitious College and St. John's College are examined by their governing bodies. Safeguarding is discussed and considered at every level of our governance.

Management of the Charity and the Trust is delegated to the chief executive, who is also the accounting officer for the Trust, and the Executive Leadership team, whose members attend board and subcommittee meetings.

The Ambitious about Autism Youth Council comprised 14 autistic young people aged 16–25 as of 31 August 2024. Members of the Youth Council are encouraged to shape and influence our work and make presentations to the Board of Trustees. Two Youth Council Link Trustees have been appointed to ensure a strong link exists between the board and the Youth Council.

Trustee recruitment, induction and training

The aim of the Charity and the Trust is to build a diverse board that has the optimum range of skills, experience and perspectives to ensure that we have the appropriate level of support, scrutiny and oversight.

People with lived experience of autism are involved in the governance and decision-making of the charity and the Trust, including on the Board of Trustees, the governing bodies and advisory groups.

The recruitment and induction policy works to promote this goal. New trustees are recruited openly through a variety of channels, including search, advertising and through networks.

Once recruited, trustees are supported with an induction programme and handbook in the first few months. As part of the induction process, trustees receive training on issues such as safeguarding, health and safety, and data protection.

The Charity also runs a termly training programme for trustees, covering topics such as understanding autism, equity, diversity and exclusion.

The recruitment, induction and appraisal of trustees is overseen by the Nominations and Remuneration Committee. All trustees give their time voluntarily and receive no benefits from the charity or the Trust. Any expenses reclaimed are set out in note 6 to the accounts (see page 81).

Charity Governance Code

The principles and recommended practice set out in the Charity Governance Code are regularly discussed by the trustees. Areas of focus in 2023–24 were:

Equity, diversity and inclusion

The board believes a balance of experience, skills, knowledge and backgrounds is crucial in the composition of the members to provide a variety of perspectives in discussions and enhance decision-making.

We believe that including people with lived experience of autism in our governance and decision-making, and on the Board of Trustees, is of benefit to the charity and the Trust.

The board is committed to investing in its diversity. When recruiting new trustees in the year, a key consideration was the impact on the diversity of the board – with reference to a skills and diversity audit undertaken in February 2024. This audit showed a diverse board with a good range and depth of relevant knowledge and experience, and recruitment of new trustees aims to enhance this further.

Integrity

The board reviewed the principles of integrity included in the Charity Governance Code from December 2020 and confirmed that it was adhering to the new principles.

In particular, the trustees' annual review of the safeguarding policies and confirmation of understanding of the Keeping Children Safe in Education requirements, as well as regular reviews of the risk register and incidents, ensure that the board continually reflects on its responsibilities and those of the organisation.

Engagement with suppliers, customers and others in a business relationship

We have a strong commitment to paying all suppliers within agreed terms.

Our Executive Leadership team prioritises achieving the best possible outcomes for our pupils, learners and stakeholders. Open engagement with parents, guardians and our local communities is vital to building successful and long-term relationships.

We continue to work closely and collaboratively with local authorities to ensure that outcomes are mutually beneficial, with our pupils, learners and stakeholders continuing to be our core focus. We work hard to establish and maintain good relationships with our wider stakeholders, including our funders and supporters.

S172 statement

The board has identified the following key stakeholders based on the nature of their interactions with the charity and with reference to the charitable objectives:

- the autistic children and young people who attend education settings run by Ambitious about Autism, and their parents and carers
- the autistic young people who access the national programmes of activities run by Ambitious about Autism, and their parents and carers
- funders, supporters and partners of Ambitious about Autism's national programmes of activities
- current and potential employers of autistic young people
- professionals working in the field of autism
- Ambitious about Autism employees
- suppliers and contractors
- decision and policy-makers.

The Executive Leadership team and the board make assessments and decisions in good faith, considering the potential consequence on stakeholders. In addition, they consider the expected outcomes most likely to promote the success of Ambitious about Autism. The benefits to our pupils, learners and stakeholders are always paramount.

The Executive Leadership team and the board consider the following:

- The consequences of any decision in the long term, including a regular review of our risk register, departmental operational plans and overall strategic plan.
- The interests of our employees, through regular feedback from all-staff meetings, team meetings and individual monthly supervisions.
- The need to foster business relationships with suppliers, customers and others, through prompt supplier payments, regular meetings and communication with local authorities, including weekly updates to local authorities with respect to our pupils and learners.
- The impact of the operations of the Charity and the Trust on the community and the environment. We have a community representative on all our governing bodies and continue to review our fleet management to achieve further cost savings in terms of running costs and our impact on the environment.
- The desirability of the Charity and the Trust in maintaining a reputation for high standards of business conduct. We lead by example and build a culture of excellence through good recruitment choices and practices, and excellent training.
- The need to act fairly as members of the charity and the Trust. We have combined most of our policies across the group.
- Board oversight and challenge – the Board of Trustees receives regular updates on stakeholder engagement at its termly meetings through the management reporting pack developed by the Senior Management Team. For example, recent/planned engagement moments with employees are outlined in the termly and annual People report and KPIs, and recent/planned engagement moments with funders are outlined in the termly and annual fundraising reports. The board engages directly with autistic young people through the Youth Council, who are represented at board meetings either in person or through pre-recorded messages. The trustees are encouraged to question and challenge the Senior Management Team to ensure the input of key stakeholders is taken into account when developing organisational strategy.
- Board training – the Board of Trustees receives regular training on a range of subjects, including compliance matters related to safeguarding and governance, and on topics more widely related to the areas in which the charity operates. Bi-annual Seminars are held to focus on areas of current interest for the trustees, including topics relevant to stakeholder engagement. Trustees are also regularly invited to attend events with external stakeholders, and to visit the educational settings, in order to gain first-hand insight into the needs and interests of key stakeholder groups.

Within the 2023–24 year, a key engagement activity with the staff of the charity and the Trust was through the development of a two-year extension of the Time for Ambition strategy. Engagement sessions were run at each of the education settings and with the central support teams, highlighting key internal and external considerations, and inviting feedback to proposed strategy objectives for the periods 2024–25 and 2025–26.

During the year, our Service Development team met with a number of key external stakeholders, including the Department for Education and a range of local authorities, to explore options for the further growth and development of the organisation. There was also a high level of engagement with key government policymakers (see page 13).

The Youth Council is an important group of volunteers, providing a link between the Board of Trustees and autistic young people to ensure their voice is heard and reflected at a strategic level. See page 7 for an update from the Chair of the Youth Council.

Remuneration policy for key management personnel

The Board of Trustees of Ambitious about Autism and the Trust is responsible for defining the executive pay policy. This includes deciding on the salaries of the chief executive and the Executive Leadership team. The board delegates this responsibility to the Nominations and Remuneration Committee. The committee reviews executive pay and our total reward strategy for staff.

The committee meets each term and makes recommendations to the Board of Trustees for approval. We have an executive pay policy that sets out our approach to pay for our Executive Leadership team, how pay is determined and reviewed, and the relative impact on pay across the organisation.

Our approach to pay is underpinned by our principle to:

"Pay a fair salary and reward package to attract and retain skilled and expert senior leaders for Ambitious about Autism and Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust. Salaries and benefits should be competitive within the charity, education and public sectors, proportionate to the complexity of each role and responsibility, and in line with our objectives and affordable."

The executive pay policy aims to follow a robust, evidence-based process to achieve this principle:

- Take account of pay in similar organisations in the UK charity and public sector markets, but do not compete with salaries in the private sector.
- Monitor salary trends in the charity sector through surveys produced by providers such as XpertHR, Croner and ACEVO, as well as the Education and Skills Funding Agency's financial benchmarking reports for academy schools and, where necessary, commission external benchmarking exercises.

- Ensure performance is reviewed and reported to the Nominations and Remuneration Committee on an annual basis. Apply performance-related pay elements only where required by the relevant market sector.
- Mirror the national standards for professional groups, such as headteachers.
- Take account of the Academy Trust Handbook.
- Take account of the difference between Executive Leadership team pay and the lowest-paid roles, and median and average pay across the organisation.

Our approach to safeguarding

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility within the Charity and the Trust. This means our trustees, employees and volunteers are required to ensure that Ambitious about Autism is a safe space.

Our policy and procedures also apply to extended and off-site activities, managed by the charity and the Trust, such as community access programmes, residential visits and work experience placements.

All staff members undertake safeguarding and adult protection training during induction, including whistleblowing procedures, to ensure they understand our safeguarding systems and their responsibilities.

This training is regularly updated, at least annually, and is in line with advice from our local safeguarding adult partnerships.
All staff receive training on the government's anti-radicalisation strategy, PREVENT, to enable them to identify young people at risk of being drawn into terrorism and to challenge extremist ideas.

Staff also receive regular safeguarding and adult protection updates (for example, through emails, newsletters and staff meetings) as required, but at least annually.

All trustees and governors receive regular training about safeguarding, to make sure they have the knowledge and information needed to perform their functions and understand their strategic responsibilities as outlined in Part 2 of the Department for Education's statutory safeguarding guidance, Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023. (KCSiE). Safeguarding is embedded in our recruitment processes, with at least one person on any interview/ appointment panel for a post at the charity or the Trust required to have completed Safer Recruitment in Education training.

All staff who have contact with young people and families have regular supervisions, and access to external clinical supervisions. These provide staff with support, coaching, and training, promote the interests of young people and allow for confidential discussions of sensitive issues.

Streamlined Energy and Carbon Reporting (SECR)

Energy and carbon consumption

SECR is a legislative reporting requirement that took effect on 1 April 2019. It mandates that all companies that meet the thresholds must report on their operational energy consumption and associated emissions. The high-level breakdown is as follows:

		kWh	Mileage	tCO2e
Gas	2023–24	1,197,769	n/a	219
	2022–23	402,764	n/a	74
Electricity	2023–24	1,074,348	n/a	223
	2022–23	503,858	n/a	104
Transport	2023–24	118,748	31,501	28
	2022–23	24,427	25,461	6
Total	2023–24	2,390,865	31,501	470
	2022–23	931,049	25,461	184

Intensity metric

An intensity metric gives us an indicator of carbon performance based on an operational figure of the number of service users (pupils and learners), with 441 users emitting on average 0.75kg CO2e each. This is measured annually and compared with previous years to show progress in reducing our carbon intensity.

	2023–24	2022–23
Number of service users	441	324
tCO2e	470	184
Average	1.07	0.57

Sustainability action plan

At Ambitious about Autism, we understand the important role that we play in responding to climate change. We are committed to reducing our carbon emissions and have already made excellent progress on our sustainability action plan. Through our three-year strategy, we are raising better awareness, reshaping our activities and developing solutions to ensure that our organisation is environmentally, economically and socially sustainable.

Our achievements in 2023–24 include:

- the purchase of new electric fleet vehicles, which are now in place at TreeHouse School, Ambitious College's West Thames campus and St. John's College in Brighton
- installation of electric vehicle charging points at TreeHouse School, Ambitious College's West Thames campus and St. John's College to support the new electric fleet and encourage the use of greener transport
- dual waste and recycling facilities now in place at all settings, resulting in a reduction of general waste and disposal cost
- new electricity supply contracts secured for TreeHouse School and The Rise School, providing 100% green renewable energy to our settings
- LED lighting upgrades completed at Ambitious College's West Thames campus and the Pears National Centre for Autism Education

- development of a new environmental awareness eLearning course, which is available through our Ambitious Learning platform
- a Sustainability Committee established to gather views on sustainability from a wide range of stakeholders, with responsibility for monitoring the strategy and action plan
- completion of a feasibility study and exploration of options for renewable energy generation via solar photovoltaic panels at the Pears National Centre for Autism Education
- the establishment of a carbon footprint baseline, in partnership with Acclaro Consult.

We're really proud of our journey so far and, despite the economic challenges, there have been some substantive and impactful achievements. As we move into the fourth year of our extended strategy, we'll continue to review and further develop our plans, while also exploring new opportunities that contribute to a sustainable future.

The following figures were used to convert energy (kWh) to tCO2e figures:

	Litre		CO2e	
	2023–24	2022–23	2023–24	2022–23
Gas	n/a	n/a	0.18293 tonnes per MWh	0.18293 tonnes per MWh
Electricity	n/a	n/a	0.2071 tonnes per MWh	0.2071 tonnes per MWh
Fuel	Petrol: 9.5kWh per litre Diesel: 10.5kWh per litre	Petrol: 9.5kWh per litre Diesel: 10.5kWh per litre	Petrol: 0.22013 tonnes per MWh Diesel: 0.23902 tonnes per MWh	Petrol: 0.22166 tonnes per MWh Diesel: 0.23908 tonnes per MWh

Keeping data safe

We're fully committed to protecting the details of all the people we work with and who support us. We continue to make sure we're always thinking about privacy and how to keep data safe and secure. Staff are required to stay up to date and informed through regular training. We never stop working on this.

Public benefit

Ambitious about Autism works to support autistic children and young people and their families nationwide:

- TreeHouse School supports pupils aged 4–19.
- The Rise School supports pupils aged 4–19.
- Spring School supports pupils aged 4–19.
- Ambitious College and St. John's College both support learners aged 16–25, based on their needs.

Placements for pupils and learners are funded by a combination of funding from the Education and Skills Funding Agency and local authorities. Other activities are funded through voluntary income or fees earned from providing a service, e.g. providing specialist training or support to parents, teachers and other professionals.

In overseeing the provision of education and the support of children, young people and their families, the trustees of Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust have complied with their duty regarding the guidance on public benefit published by the Charity Commission in exercising their powers and duties.

The trustees have referred to the guidance contained in the Charity Commission's general guidance on public benefit when reviewing the aims and objectives of the charity and in planning its future activities.

Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust's principal object is to advance, for the public benefit, education in the UK by developing schools to make special educational provisions for pupils with special educational needs, or 16–19 academies offering curricula appropriate to the needs of their students.

In particular, the trustees consider how planned activities will contribute to the aims and objectives set, and are committed to NCVO's ethical principles.

Connected organisations

Ambitious about Autism is an active member of Autism Central, the Autism Education Trust, Autism Alliance, Confederation of School Trusts, British Institute of Learning Disabilities (BILD), Council for Disabled Children, Disabled Children's Partnership, National Governance Association (NGA), National Association for Non-Maintained and Independent Special Schools (NASS), Natspec, the Special Educational Consortium and the Digital Services Consortium.

Our education provisions are co-located at Springwest Academy (part of the Tudor Park Education Trust), West Thames College, The College of Haringey, Enfield and North East London and Whittington Hospital.

Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust

The Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust is a separate exempt charity.

Ambitious about Autism is the sole corporate member of the Trust. Therefore, the results of Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust are consolidated into these group financial statements.

The Trust is actively seeking further partnerships to develop more special schools to address a growing need for more specialist education provision for autistic children and young people.

Trustees, advisers and senior staff

Our leadership team and advisers

The trustees of Ambitious about Autism are directors and members of the charitable company. They each guarantee to contribute an amount not exceeding £1 to the assets of the charitable company in the event of winding up.

The total number of such guarantees on 31 August 2024 was seven. The trustees have no beneficial interest in the charitable company.

Trustees of Ambitious about Autism

Neil Goulden
(Chair, resigned as of 13 December 2024)

Bob Bishop
(Chair from 13 December 2024)

Ian Caplan (from 8 December 2023)

Michael Clark
(Chair of the Nominations and Remuneration Committee, Vice Chair of the Board of Trustees)

Andy Forbes
(Chair of the Education and Care Committee)

Eduardo Gutierrez-Garcia
(Treasurer, Chair of the Finance and Resources Committee and Chair of the Investment Committee)

Anna Thatcher (from 1 September 2023)

Jack Welch

Trustees of Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust

Neil Goulden
(Chair, resigned as of 13 December 2024)

Bob Bishop
(Chair from 13 December 2024)

Angela Buxton (from 8 December 2023)

Michael Clark
(Vice Chair, Chair of the Nominations and Remuneration Committee, Vice Chair of the Board of Trustees)

Mary Fawcett (from 1 September 2023)

Andy Forbes (from 19 July 2024)
(Chair of the Education and Care Committee)

Eduardo Gutierrez-Garcia
(Treasurer and Chair of the Finance and Resources Committee)

Trustees of Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust cont'd

Joanna Healey (to 13 December 2024)

Helen Jeffries

Anastasia Klein (from 22 March 2024)

Lucy Nutt (to 19 July 2024)

Mark O'Kelly
(Chair of the Trust Audit Committee)

Laura Palmer

Members of Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust

Ambitious about Autism

Martyn Craddock

Andy Forbes (to 19 July 2024)

Jack Welch

Ian Caplan (from 19 July 2024)

Elizabeth Stanton (from 3 May 2024)

The trustees are supported in their work by the president and vice presidents, who all support the work of our charity.

President

The Lord Tim Clement-Jones CBE

Vice presidents

Nick Baldwin CBE

Virginia Bovell CBE

Peter Carroll

John Constantine

Katharine Doré OBE

Karen Edwards OBE

Dame Tristia Harrison DBE

Alex Hatter

Richard Hatter

Nick Hornby

Bruno Paulson

Sir Trevor Pears CMG

Matthew Punshon

Susan Tobbell OBE

Graham Tobbell

Charlotte Warner

Sid Wells

Expert advisers

Our team of expert advisers are leading academics, clinicians, lawyers and communications professionals, all with an interest in autism and a passion to raise awareness and understanding. They provide advice and guidance on specific projects and campaigns, all as volunteers. We are honoured to be able to draw on the expertise of:

Judith Barnard

Steve Broach

Leo Capella

Prof Tony Charman

Prof Richard Hastings

Prof Patricia Howlin

Expert advisers continued

Jonathan Meth

Dr Emran Mian OBE

David Nicholson

Nick Peacey

Mark Schmid

Dr Rowie Shaw OBE

Fiona Slomovic

Su Thomas

Richard Townley

Gaby Zein

Ambassadors

Our ambassadors come from all walks of life, but all share an interest in autism and a passion to raise awareness and understanding. Our ambassadors are:

Jon Snow

Sam Holness

Travis George

David Mitchell

Kathy Lette

Jules Robertson

Lucy Mottram

Simon Mottram

Hayley Ronson

Luke Treadaway

Niamh Cusack

Parent patrons

Our team of parent patrons are all people whose lives have been touched by autism:

Nicky Clark

Clare Coombe-Tennant

John Coombe-Tennant

Matt Davis

Eliza Mishcon

Keith Duffy

Charlotte Moore

Claire Ryan

Sophie Walker

Employ Autism development board

The Lord Tim Clement Jones CBE (Chair)

Sue Adkins

Sally Cairns

Laurie Edmans CBE

Danuta Gray

Matt Hutnell

Alistair MacCallum

Nick Medd

Chris Pond

Katie Vanneck-Smith

Executive Leadership team

The trustees delegate day-to-day management of the charity to the Executive Leadership team:

Jolanta Lasota
Chief Executive and Accounting Officer

Vivienne Berkeley
Director of Education (to 31 July 2024)

Paul Breckell
Deputy Chief Executive

Louise Honeysett
Director of Finance and Planning, and Company Secretary (to 14 March 2025)

Kate Jenkins
Interim Director of People and Culture (to 28 September 2023)

Danae Leaman-Hill
Director of External Affairs and Development

Michael Michaelides
Director of Property and IT (from 2 October 2023)

Mark Ospedale
Director of People and Culture (from 18 September 2023)

Helen Spice
Interim Director of Finance and Planning (from 3 March 2025)

Claire Thomson
Interim Director of National Services (to 25 January 2024)

Paul Van Walwyk
Director of Education (from 1 August 2024)

Independent auditor

Crowe LLP
St James House, St James Square, Cheltenham, GL50 3PR.

Bankers

National Westminster Bank Plc
13 Market Place, Reading RG1 2EP

Nationwide Building Society
Nationwide House, Pipers Way, Swindon SN38 1NW

CAF Bank Limited
25 Kings Hill Avenue, Kings Hill, West Malling ME19 4JQ

Barclays Bank Plc
1 Churchill Place, London E14 5HP

Solicitors

Stone King LLP
13 Queen Square, Bath BA1 2HJ

Farrer & Co LLP
66 Lincoln's Inn Fields, Holborn, London WC2A 3LH

Investment managers

Rathbone Brothers Public Limited Company
8 Finsbury Circus, London EC2M 7AZ

The statement of trustees' responsibilities

The trustees (who are also directors of Ambitious about Autism for the purposes of company law) are responsible for preparing the Trustees' Annual Report, including the strategic report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

Company law requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year, which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company and group as at the balance sheet date, and of the incoming resources and application of resources, including the income and expenditure, of the group for that period. In preparing these financial statements, the trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently
- observe the methods and principles in the Charities Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP)
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent
- state whether applicable UK Accounting Standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements and prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in operation.

The trustees are responsible for maintaining proper accounting records that disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charitable company and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006.

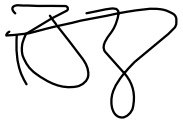
Statement as to disclosure of information to auditor

In so far as the trustees are aware:

- there is no relevant audit information of which the charitable company's auditor is unaware
- the trustees have taken all steps that they ought to have taken to make themselves aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the auditor is aware of that information.

The trustees are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charitable company and the group, and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities. The trustees are responsible for the maintenance and integrity of the corporate and financial information on the charitable company's website. Legislation in the UK governing the preparation and dissemination of financial statements may differ from legislation in other jurisdictions.

The Trustees' Annual Report is approved by order of the Board of Trustees and the Strategic Report and the Directors' Report required by company law (included therein) are approved by the Board of Trustees in their capacity as the directors at a meeting on 13 May 2025 and signed on their behalf by:



Bob Bishop
Chair of the Board of Trustees

Independent auditor's report to the members of Ambitious about Autism

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of Ambitious About Autism ('the charitable company') and its subsidiaries ('the group') for the year ended 31 August 2024 which comprise the Consolidated statement of financial activities, Balance sheets, Consolidated statement of cash flows and notes to the financial statements, including significant accounting policies. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards, including Financial Reporting Standard 102 'The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland' (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

In our opinion the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the group's and the charitable company's affairs as at 31 August 2024 and of the group's income and expenditure, for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice; and
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006.

Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)) and applicable law. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of our report. We are independent of the group in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in the UK, including the FRC's Ethical Standard, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Conclusions relating to going concern

In auditing the financial statements, we have concluded that the use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate. Based on the work we have performed, we have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the charitable company's or the group's ability to continue as a going concern for a period of at least twelve months from when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

Our responsibilities and the responsibilities of the Trustees' with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this report.

Other information

The Trustees' are responsible for the other information contained within the annual report. The other information comprises the information included in the annual report, other than the financial statements and our auditor's report thereon. Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in our report, we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

Our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or our knowledge obtained in the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If we identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, we are required to determine whether this gives rise to a material misstatement in the financial statements themselves. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact.

We have nothing to report in this regard.

Opinions on other matters prescribed by the Companies Act 2006

In our opinion based on the work undertaken in the course of our audit:

- the information given in the Trustees' report, which includes the directors' report and the strategic report prepared for the purposes of company law, for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements; and
- the strategic report and the directors' report included within the Trustees' report have been prepared in accordance with applicable legal requirements.

Matters on which we are required to report by exception

In light of the knowledge and understanding of the group and charitable company and their environment obtained in the course of the audit, we have not identified material misstatements in the strategic report or the directors' report included within the Trustees" report.

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters in relation to which the Companies Act 2006 requires us to report to you if, in our opinion:

- adequate and proper accounting records have not been kept; or
- the financial statements are not in agreement with the accounting records and returns; or
- certain disclosures of Trustees' remuneration specified by law are not made; or
- we have not received all the information and explanations we require for our audit.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

Details of the extent to which the audit was considered capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud and non-compliance with laws and regulations are set out below.

A further description of our responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements is located on the Financial Reporting Council's website at: **www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities**. This description forms part of our auditor's report.

Extent to which the audit was considered capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud

Irregularities, including fraud, are instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations. We identified and assessed the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements from irregularities, whether due to fraud or error, and discussed these between our audit team members. We then designed and performed audit procedures responsive to those risks, including obtaining audit evidence sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

We obtained an understanding of the legal and regulatory frameworks within which the charitable company and group operates, focusing on those laws and regulations that have a direct effect on the determination of material amounts and disclosures in the financial statements. The laws and regulations we considered in this context were the Companies Act 2006, taxation legislation, employment legislation, together with the Charities SORP (FRS 102). We assessed the required compliance with these laws and regulations as part of our audit procedures on the related financial statement items.

In addition, we considered provisions of other laws and regulations that do not have a direct effect on the financial statements but compliance with which might be fundamental to the charitable company's and the group's ability to operate or to avoid a material penalty. We also considered the opportunities and incentives that may exist within the charitable company and the group for fraud. The laws and regulations we considered in this context were Ofsted.

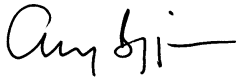
Auditing standards limit the required audit procedures to identify non-compliance with these laws and regulations to enquiry of the Trustees' and other management and inspection of regulatory and legal correspondence, if any.

We identified the greatest risk of material impact on the financial statements from irregularities, including fraud, to be within grant income and the override of controls by management. Our audit procedures to respond to these risks included enquiries of management, and the Finance and Resources Committee about their own identification and assessment of the risks of irregularities, sample testing on the posting of journals, designing audit procedures over grant income, reviewing accounting estimates for biases, reviewing regulatory correspondence with the Charity Commission, Ofsted and reading minutes of meetings of those charged with governance.

Owing to the inherent limitations of an audit, there is an unavoidable risk that we may not have detected some material misstatements in the financial statements, even though we have properly planned and performed our audit in accordance with auditing standards. For example, the further removed non-compliance with laws and regulations (irregularities) is from the events and transactions reflected in the financial statements, the less likely the inherently limited procedures required by auditing standards would identify it. In addition, as with any audit, there remained a higher risk of non-detection of irregularities, as these may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal controls. We are not responsible for preventing noncompliance and cannot be expected to detect non-compliance with all laws and regulations.

Use of our report

This report is made solely to the charitable company's members, as a body, in accordance with Chapter 3 of Part 16 of the Companies Act 2006. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the charitable company's members those matters we are required to state to them in an auditor's report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the charitable company and the charitable company's members as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.



Guy Biggin
Senior Statutory Auditor

For and on behalf of
Crowe U.K. LLP
Statutory Auditor

Date: 14 May 2025

Consolidated statement of financial activities

(incorporating an income and expenditure account)

For the year ended 31 August 2024

	Note	Ambitious about Autism Unrestricted £'000	Ambitious about Autism Restricted £'000	Ambitious about Autism Subtotal £'000	Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust Restricted £'000	**Total £'000**	**For the year ended 31 August 2023 Total £'000**
Income from:							
Donations and legacies:							
Gifts and donated services	2	1,559	1,375	2,934	105	**3,039**	3,177
St. John's donation		11,949	37	11,986	-	**11,986**	-
Charitable activities:							
Educational services	3	28,107	275	28,382	8,148	**36,530**	23,831
External Affairs and Development	3	-	40	40	-	**40**	63
Other income							
Trading income		282	93	375	143	**518**	605
Investment income		207	-	207	-	**207**	204
Other income		-	-	-	51	**51**	-
Total income		**42,104**	**1,820**	**43,924**	**8,447**	**52,371**	**27,880**
Expenditure on:							
Raising funds							
Fundraising activities		1,194	-	1,194	-	**1,194**	1,062
Investment management costs		13	-	13	-	**13**	12
		1,207	-	1,207	-	**1,207**	1,074
Charitable activities:							
Educational services		28,712	614	29,326	7,066	**36,392**	23,054
External Affairs and Development		1,781	946	2,727	-	**2,727**	2,970
Total expenditure	**4**	**31,700**	**1,560**	**33,260**	**7,066**	**40,326**	**27,098**
Net income before other gains/(losses)		10,404	260	10,664	1,381	**12,045**	782
Net gains/(losses) on investments		137	-	137	-	**137**	(137)
Net gains/(losses) on pension deficit		-	-	-	(158)	**(158)**	311
Net income		**10,541**	**260**	**10,801**	**1,223**	**12,024**	**956**
Transfers between funds	19	1,250	(251)	999	(999)	**0**	-
Net movement in funds		**11,791**	**9**	**11,800**	**224**	**12,024**	**956**
Reconciliation of funds:							
Total funds brought forward	19	8,666	1,470	10,136	10,892	**21,028**	20,072
Total funds carried forward	**19**	**20,457**	**1,479**	**21,936**	**11,116**	**33,052**	**21,028**

Balance sheets

As at 31 August 2024

Company number: 03375255

		Group		Ambitious about Autism	
	Note	**31 August 2024 £'000**	31 August 2023 £'000	**31 August 2024 £'000**	31 August 2023 £'000
Fixed assets:					
Tangible assets	10	**19,421**	16,181	**13,156**	10,079
Investments	12	**1,833**	1,693	**1,833**	1,693
Intangible assets	11	**216**	116	**198**	109
		21,470	17,990	**15,187**	11,881
Current assets:					
Debtors	13	**13,553**	8,646	**9,462**	6,340
Assets held for sale	13a	**5,420**	-	**5,420**	-
Cash at bank and in hand		**5,004**	5,696	**4,272**	1,809
Short-term deposits		**5,603**	2,013	**2,064**	1,008
		29,580	16,355	**21,218**	9,157
Liabilities:					
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	14,15	**(14,225)**	(9,191)	**(10,696)**	**(6,745)**
Net current assets		**15,355**	7,164	**10,522**	2,412
Total assets less current liabilities		**36,825**	25,154	**25,709**	14,293
Creditors: amounts falling due after one year	16	**(3,773)**	(4,157)	**(3,773)**	**(4,157)**
Defined benefit pension scheme asset/(liability)	17	**-**	31	**-**	**-**
Total net assets	**18**	**33,052**	**21,028**	**21,936**	**10,136**

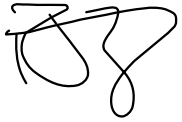
Balance sheets

As at 31 August 2024

Company number: 03375255

		Group		Ambitious about Autism	
	Note	**31 August 2024 £'000**	31 August 2023 £'000	**31 August 2024 £'000**	31 August 2023 £'000
Funds					
Restricted funds:					
Ambitious about Autism		**1,479**	1,470	**1,479**	1,470
Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust		**11,116**	10,892	**-**	-
Total restricted funds		**12,595**	**12,362**	**1,479**	**1,470**
Unrestricted funds:					
Designated funds		**17,371**	5,890	**17,371**	5,890
General funds		**3,086**	2,776	**3,086**	2,776
Total unrestricted funds		**20,457**	**8,666**	**20,457**	**8,666**
Total funds	**19**	**33,052**	**21,028**	**21,936**	**10,136**

The financial statements on pages 70 to 73 were approved and authorised for issue by the trustees on 13 May 2025 and signed on their behalf by



Bob Bishop
Chair of the Board of Trustees

The notes on pages 74 to 101 form an integral part of these financial statements.

Consolidated statement of cash flows

For the year ended 31 August 2024

	Note	For the year ended 31 August 2024 £'000		For the year ended 31 August 2023 £'000	
Cash flows from operating activities					
Net cash used in operating activities	20		**5,008**		**(219)**
Cash flows from investing activities					
Dividends and interest from investments		**207**		204	
Interest payable		**(305)**		(235)	
Purchase of tangible and intangible fixed assets		**(1,771)**		(696)	
Proceed from sale of tangible fixed asset		**975**		6	
Proceeds from the sale of investments		**389**		482	
Change on cash held for investment		**(52)**		(12)	
Purchase of investments		**(436)**		(538)	
Net cash (used in) investing activities			**(993)**		(789)
Cash flows from financing activities					
Repayment of St. John's Loans		**(733)**		-	
Repayments of borrowing		**(384)**		(544)	
Net cash (used in) financing activities			**(1,117)**		(544)
Change in cash and cash equivalents			**2,898**		(1,552)
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the year			**7,709**		9,261
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the year			**10,607**		7,709
Cash and cash equivalents consists of:					
Cash at bank and in hand			**5,004**		5,696
Short-term deposits			**5,603**		2,013
			10,607		**7,709**

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 August 2024

1. Accounting policies

Ambitious about Autism is a charitable group limited by guarantee and is incorporated in England and Wales. The registered office address is Woodside Avenue, London, N10 3JA.

a. Basis of preparation

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) – (Charities SORP FRS 102), the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (March 2018) the Companies Act 2006 and the Charities Act 2011.

The financial statements are presented in Sterling (£) which is also the functional currency of the group.

The accounts are rounded to the nearest thousand (£'000).

Assets and liabilities are initially recognised at historical cost or transaction value unless otherwise stated in the relevant accounting policy or note.

b. Basis of consolidation

Ambitious about Autism is the sole corporate member of AaAST. Therefore the consolidated financial statements of the charity incorporate the financial statements of the trust, a UK company limited by guarantee (company registration number 8335297) that is also an exempt charity. Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust's results and net assets at 31 August 2024 are consolidated within these accounts on a line by line basis. Intercompany transactions and balances between charitable companies are eliminated. Consistent accounting policies have been adopted across the group.

Net income of £12,024,000 (2023: 956,000) was attributable to the charity for the year. The charity has also taken advantage of the exemption available to a qualifying entity in FRS 102 from the requirement to present a charity only Statement of Cash Flows and certain disclosures about the charity's Financial instruments within the consolidated financial statements.

No separate Statement of Financial Activities (''SOFA'') has been prepared for the charity alone as permitted by Section 408 of the Companies Act 2006.

c. Public benefit entity

The charitable company meets the definition of a public benefit entity under FRS 102.

d. Going concern

The trustees consider that there are no material uncertainties about the charitable company's ability to continue as a going concern. A 12-month detailed budget is prepared from year-end as well as a higher level five-year finance model. The trustees have a reasonable expectation that Ambitious about Autism and the Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust has available cash to settle liabilities as they fall due and has adequate resources to continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future.

The Trustees do not consider that there are any sources of estimation uncertainty at the reporting date that have a significant risk of causing a material adjustment to the carrying amounts of assets and liabilities for a period of at least 12 months from sign off.

e. Income

Income is recognised when the group has entitlement to the funds, any performance conditions attached to the income have been met, it is probable that the income will be received and that the amount can be measured reliably.

Income from government and other grants, whether 'capital' grants or 'revenue' grants, is recognised when the group has entitlement to the funds, any performance conditions attached to the grants have been met, it is probable that the income will be received and the amount can be measured reliably and is not deferred. Fees are recognised as soon as services are rendered and Ambitious about Autism defers any income until the criteria has been met.

School and college fee income received in advance of the provision of a specified service is deferred until the criteria for income recognition are met.

f. Donations of gifts, services and facilities

Donated professional services and donated facilities are recognised as income when the group has control over the item or received the service, any conditions associated with the donation have been met, the receipt of economic benefit from the use by the group of the item is probable and that the economic benefit can be measured reliably.

On receipt, donated gifts, professional services and donated facilities are recognised on the basis of the value of the gift to the group, which is the amount the group would have been willing to pay to obtain services or facilities of equivalent economic benefit on the open market; a corresponding amount is then recognised in the expenditure in the period of receipt.

g. Interest receivable

Interest on funds held on deposit is included when receivable and the amount can be measured reliably by the group; this is normally upon notification of the interest paid or payable by the bank.

h. Fund accounting

Restricted funds are to be used for specific purposes as laid down by the donor. Expenditure which meets these criteria is charged to the fund.

Unrestricted funds are donations and other income received or generated for the charitable purposes.

Designated funds are unrestricted funds earmarked by the Trustees for particular purposes.

i. Expenditure and irrecoverable VAT

Expenditure is recognised once there is a legal or constructive obligation to make a payment to a third party, it is probable that settlement will be required and the amount of the obligation can be measured reliably. Expenditure is classified under the following activity headings:

- Costs of raising funds relate to the costs incurred by the charitable company in inducing third parties to make voluntary contributions to it, as well as the cost of any activities with a fundraising purpose.
- Expenditure on charitable activities includes the costs of delivering services and other educational activities undertaken to further the purposes of the group, and their associated support costs as well as investment fees.

Ambitious about Autism is VAT registered. As the charity provides a mixture of taxable and exempt supplies, VAT on expenditure that cannot be directly attributed to either type of supply is partially recovered.

Irrecoverable VAT is charged as a cost against the activity for which the expenditure was incurred.

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 August 2024

j. Allocation of support costs

Resources are expended and allocated to the particular activity where the cost relates directly to that activity. However, the cost of overall direction and administration of each activity, comprising the salary and the overhead costs of the central function, is apportioned on the following bases which are estimates, based on staff time, of the amount attributable to each activity.

Central function	Main basis for allocation
Leadership	Time spent
Finance	Staff head count
Human resources	Staff head count
IT	Staff head count
Facilities management	Area occupied
General administration	Staff head count
Premises and office costs	Area occupied

Where information about the aims, objectives and projects of the group is provided to potential beneficiaries, the costs associated with this are allocated to charitable expenditure.

Governance costs are the costs associated with the governance arrangements of the group. These costs are associated with constitutional and statutory requirements and include any costs associated with the strategic management of the group's activities.

The management charge for the Ambitious about Autism support provided to Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust is eliminated on consolidation of the group accounts.

k. Operating leases

Rental charges are charged on a straight line basis over the term of the lease.

l. Tangible fixed assets

Items of equipment or groups of items are capitalised where the purchase price exceeds £5,000. Depreciation costs are allocated to activities on the basis of the use of the related assets in those activities. Assets are reviewed for impairment if circumstances indicate their carrying value may exceed their net realisable value and value in use. Both land and assets under construction are not depreciated.

Depreciation is provided at rates calculated to write down the cost of each asset except freehold land to its estimated residual value over its expected useful life. The useful lives are as follows:

Freehold land building at Woodside Avenue	10-50 years
Long leasehold	50 years
Short and long leasehold improvements	over the lease term
Computer equipment	3 years
Educational, office furniture and equipment	3-10 years
Motor vehicles	5 years

m. Intangible fixed assets

Intangible assets are measured at cost less accumulated amortisation and any accumulated impairment losses.

Software development costs are recognised as an intangible asset when all of the following criteria are demonstrated:

- the technical feasibility of completing the software so that it will be available for use or sale
- the intention to complete the software and use or sell it
- the ability to use the software or to sell it
- how the software will generate probable future economic benefits
- the availability of adequate technical, financial and other resources to complete the development and to use or sell the software
- the ability to measure reliably the expenditure attributable to the software during its development
- the ability to measure reliably the expenditure attributable to the software during its development.

Amortisation is charged so as to allocate the cost of intangibles less their residual values over their estimated useful lives, using the straight-line method. The intangible assets are amortised over the following useful economic lives:

Software development costs	3 years

n. Listed investments

Investments are a form of basic financial instrument and are initially recognised at their transaction value and subsequently measured at their fair value as at the balance sheet date using the closing quoted market price. Any change in fair value will be recognised in the statement of financial activities. Investment gains and losses, whether realised or unrealised, are combined and shown in the heading 'Net gains/(losses) on investments' in the statement of financial activities.

o. Debtors

Trade and other debtors are recognised at the settlement amount due after any trade discount offered. Prepayments are valued at the amount prepaid net of any trade discounts due.

p. Cash and cash equivalents

Cash and cash equivalents includes cash and short term highly liquid investments with a short maturity of three months or less from the date of acquisition or opening of the deposit or similar account.

q. Short-term deposits

Short-term deposits include liquid investments with a maturity of three to 12 months from the date of acquisition or opening of the deposit or similar account.

r. Creditors and provisions

Creditors and provisions are recognised where the group has a present obligation resulting from a past event that will probably result in the transfer of funds to a third party and the amount due to settle the obligation can be measured or estimated reliably. Creditors and provisions are normally recognised at their settlement amount after allowing for any trade discounts due.

s. Financial instruments

The group has elected to apply the provisions of Section 11 'Basic Financial Instruments' and Section 12 'other Financial Instruments Issues' of FRS 102 in full to all of its financial instruments. Basic financial instruments are initially recognised at their transaction value and subsequently measured at their settlement value. Other financial instruments are recognised at fair value with the change in fair value recognised as a gain or loss in the statement of financial activities.

Ambitious about Autism holds a derivative in the form of an interest rate cap which provides protection against rising interest rates. This cap which is set at 4% requires an upfront premium payment, which is paid quarterly. Derivatives are initially recognised at fair value on the date a derivative contract is entered into and are subsequently re-measured to fair value, at each reporting date. Fair value gains and losses are recognised in profit or loss. This has been recognised as expenditure under finance costs.

Borrowings are initially recognised at the transaction price, including transaction costs and subsequently measured at amortised cost using the effective interest method. Interest expense is recognised on the basis of the effective interest method and is included in interest payable and other similar expenses.

A financial asset is derecognised only when the contractual rights to cash flows expire or are settled, or substantially all the risks and rewards of ownership are transferred to another party, or if some (but not substantially all) risks and rewards of ownership are retained but control of the asset has transferred to another party that is able to sell the asset in its entirety to an unrelated third party. A financial liability (or part thereof) is derecognised when the obligation specified in the contract is discharged, cancelled or expires.

t. Pensions

Ambitious about Autism has a defined contribution pension scheme available to all staff.

On 1 July 2014, and in compliance with Government legislation on Auto Enrolment, a defined contribution group personal pension scheme was opened. Employees were able to join on inception or under the rules of auto enrolment with a deferred period of three months.

Ambitious about Autism also contributes to the Teachers' Pension Scheme. The pension available to teaching staff is a defined benefit, multi employer scheme and the assets and liabilities of the scheme cannot be split out for individual employers. Further information is given in note 17.

The pension costs charged in the statement of financial activities represent the contributions payable by the group in the year to all pension schemes.

Retirement benefits to employees of the Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust are provided by the Teachers' Pension Scheme ('TPS') and the Local Government Pension Scheme ('LGPS'). These are defined benefit schemes.
The TPS is an unfunded scheme and contributions are calculated so as to spread the cost of pensions over employees' working lives with the trust in such a way that the pension cost is a substantially level percentage of current and future pensionable payroll.
The contributions are determined by the Government Actuary on the basis of quadrennial valuations using a prospective unit credit method. TPS is a multi-employer scheme and there is insufficient information available to use defined benefit accounting. The TPS is therefore treated as a defined contribution scheme for accounting purposes and the contributions recognised in the period to which they relate.

The LGPS is a funded scheme and the assets are held separately from those of Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust in separate trustee-administered funds. Pension scheme assets are measured at fair value and liabilities are measured on an actuarial basis using the projected unit credit method and discounted at a rate equivalent to the current rate of return on a high-quality corporate bond of equivalent term and currency to the liabilities. The actuarial valuations are obtained at least triennially and are updated at each balance sheet date. The amounts charged to operating surplus are the current service costs and the costs of scheme introductions, benefit changes, settlements and curtailments. They are included as part of staff costs as incurred. Net interest on the net defined benefit liability is also recognised in the Statement of Financial Activities and comprises the interest cost on the defined benefit obligation and interest income on the scheme assets, calculated by multiplying the fair value of the scheme assets at the beginning of the period by the rate used to discount the benefit obligations. The difference between the interest income on the scheme assets and the actual return on the scheme assets is recognised in other recognised gains and losses. Actuarial gains and losses are recognised immediately in other recognised gains and losses.

u. Redundancy payments

Redundancy payments are accounted for in the period in which they become an obilgation on the Charity or Group.

v. Judgements and key sources of estimation uncertainty

In the application of the group's accounting policies, the directors are required to make judgements, estimates and assumptions about the carrying amount of assets and liabilities that are not readily apparent from other sources. The estimates and associated assumptions are based on historical experience and other factors that are considered to be relevant. Actual results may differ from these estimates.

The estimates and underlying assumptions are reviewed on an ongoing basis. Revisions to accounting estimates are recognised in the period in which the estimate is revised where the revision affects only that period, or in the period of the revision and future periods where the revision affects both current and future periods.

Key sources of estimation uncertainty

The estimates and assumptions which have a significant risk of impairment to assets and liabilities are as follows:

- **Depreciation:** fixed assets are depreciated over the assets, expected useful life.
- **Pensions:** the pension liability is sensitive to movements in actuarial assumptions such as discount rate, mortality and inflation. Further details are set out in Note 17.
- **Interest Rate Cap:** the financial impact on Ambitious about Autism varies with market volatility.

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 August 2024

2. Income from donations and legacies

	For the year ended 31 August 2024				
	Ambitious about Autism			Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust	
	Unrestricted £'000	Restricted £'000	Subtotal £'000	Restricted £'000	**Total £'000**
Gifts	1,503	1,375	2,878	105	**2,983**
Donated services	56	-	56	-	**56**
	1,559	**1,375**	**2,934**	**105**	**3,039**

	For the year ended 31 August 2023				
	Ambitious about Autism			Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust	
	Unrestricted £'000	Restricted £'000	Subtotal £'000	Restricted £'000	**Total £'000**
Gifts	1,144	1,583	2,727	108	**2,835**
Donated services	342	-	342	-	**342**
	1,486	**1,583**	**3,069**	**108**	**3,177**

3. Income from charitable activities

For the year ended 31 August 2024

	Ambitious about Autism			Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust	
	Unrestricted £'000	Restricted £'000	Subtotal £'000	Restricted £'000	**Total £'000**
Local authorities	24,575	-	24,575	5,944	**30,519**
Education Skills Funding Agency	3,532	275	3,807	2,204	**6,011**
Sub-total for educational services	**28,107**	**275**	**28,382**	**8,148**	**36,530**
Autism Education Trust	-	40	40	-	**40**
Sub-total for External Affairs and Development	**-**	**40**	**40**	**-**	**40**
Total income from charitable activities	**28,107**	**315**	**28,422**	**8,148**	**36,570**

For the year ended 31 August 2023

	Ambitious about Autism			Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust	
	Unrestricted £'000	Restricted £'000	Subtotal £'000	Restricted £'000	**Total £'000**
Local authorities	14,197	-	14,197	4,560	**18,757**
Education Skills Funding Agency	2,512	516	3,028	2,046	**5,074**
Sub-total for educational services	**16,709**	**516**	**17,225**	**6,606**	**23,831**
Autism Education Trust	-	63	63	-	**63**
Sub-total for External Affairs and Development	**-**	**63**	**63**	**-**	**63**
Total income from charitable activities	**16,709**	**579**	**17,288**	**6,606**	**23,894**

4. Analysis of expenditure

	Staff costs (note 6) £'000	Direct costs £'000	Finance (incl loan interest) £'000	Human resources £'000	Information technology £'000	Premises and office costs £'000	Leadership £'000	Support costs £'000	Governance costs £'000	For the year ended 31 August 2024 £'000
Ambitious about Autism:										
Cost of generating funds	641	370	-	-	-	30	-	135	18	**1,194**
Educational services	17,132	1,969	152	-	116	1,282	-	8,175	513	**29,339**
External affairs	1,740	431	3	-	-	58	-	440	55	**2,727**
Ambitious about Autism	**19,513**	**2,770**	**155**	**-**	**116**	**1,370**	**-**	**8,750**	**586**	**33,260**
Support costs	3,530	926	1,084	907	366	1,902	35	(8,750)	-	**-**
Governance costs	447	73	-	-	-	-	66	-	(586)	**-**
Allocated costs	**3,977**	**999**	**1,084**	**907**	**366**	**1,902**	**101**	**(8,750)**	**(586)**	**-**
Ambitious about Autism sub-total	**23,490**	**3,769**	**1,239**	**907**	**482**	**3,272**	**101**	**-**	**-**	**33,260**
Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust	5,402	939		-	-	725	-	-	-	**7,066**
Total expenditure 2024	**28,892**	**4,708**	**1,239**	**907**	**482**	**3,997**	**101**	**-**	**-**	**40,326**

Expenditure is allocated to the particular activity where the cost relates directly to that activity. However, the cost of overall direction and administration of each activity, comprising the salary and the overhead costs of the central function, is apportioned based on staff time, of the amount attributable to each activity.

All Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust support costs are paid through management fees, which are eliminated on consolidation, any other costs are allocated directly to Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust.

5. Net income for the year

This is stated after charging:

	For the year ended 31 August 2024 £'000	For the year ended 31 August 2023 £'000
Depreciation	**1,134**	847
Amortisation	**61**	54
Derivative Liability	**-**	-
Interest payable	**305**	235
Auditor's remuneration:		
Ambitious about Autism	**38**	58
Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust	**25**	23
Ambitious about Autism Teachers Pension audit	**7**	1
Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust Annual accounts return	**-**	2
Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust Teachers Pension audit	**6**	1
Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust other services	**-**	3
Ambitious about Autism other services	**3**	5
Payments under operating leases:		
Property	**142**	137
Equipment	**18**	22

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 August 2024

6. Analysis of group staff costs, trustee remuneration and expenses, and the costs of key management personnel

Staff costs were as follows:

	For the year ended 31 August 2024 £'000	For the year ended 31 August 2023 £'000
Salaries and wages	**24,590**	16,137
Social security costs	**2,356**	1,605
Employer's contribution to defined benefit pension schemes	**1,395**	1,029
Employer's contribution to defined contribution pension schemes	**551**	350
	28,892	**19,121**

The 2024 figures for AaAST include all costs of the defined benefit pension scheme in pension costs, not just employer contributions.

Redundancy and termination costs (including payment in lieu of notice) of £84k were paid in the year (2023: £86k).

The following number of employees received employee benefits (excluding employer pension and National Insurance costs) during the year to 31 August 2024, between:

	For the year ended 31 August 2024 £'000	For the year ended 31 August 2023 £'000
£60,000–£69,999	**9**	11
£70,000–£79,999	**8**	6
£80,000–£89,999	**3**	3
£90,000–£99,999	**6**	3
£100,000–£109,999	**2**	0
£110,000–£119,999	**2**	2
£120,000–£129,999	**1**	0
£130,000–£139,999	**0**	1

The total employee benefits including Employer pension and national insurance contributions of the key management personnel were £1,069k for the 12 month period to 31 August 2024 (2023: £915k). Please see page 63 for key management personnel.

Jolanta Lasota, Chief Executive of Ambitious about Autism, was paid an annual salary of £99k to 31 August 2024 (2023: £119k).

The charity trustees were not paid and did not receive any other benefits from employment with the charity in the year (2024: £nil). No charity trustee received any payment for professional or other services supplied to the charity (2023: £nil).

A trustee made an expense claim of £2,627 for accommodation costs in 2024 (2023: £499).

7. Staff numbers

The average number of employees (headcount based on number of staff employed) during the year was as follows:

	For the year ended 31 August 2024 No.	For the year ended 31 August 2023 No.
Raising funds	**12**	7
Educational services	**639**	405
External affairs	**42**	37
Support	**84**	64
	777	**513**

The increase of staff numbers is due to the planned growth across educational services.

The full time equivalent of staff employed during the year was as follows:

	For the year ended 31 August 2024 No.	For the year ended 31 August 2023 No.
Raising funds	**11**	7
Educational services	**574**	372
External affairs	**40**	34
Support	**71**	58
	696	**471**

8. Related party transactions

During the year trustees either personally donated or donated through entities where they have significant control a total of £18,038 (2023: £18,488) to the charity. Of these, no gifts (2023: nil) were restricted donations.

Services were provided to AaAST at a cost of £999k from September 2023 to August 2024 (2023: £910k). These services include Governance, Finance, Education, HR, Communications, Facilities and IT support. These are provided at cost and would otherwise need to be procured commercially. The increase is due to the growth in the Spring School. At year end £39k (2023: £194k) was reported under amounts owed by group undertakings (debtors).

9. Taxation

The group is exempt from corporation tax as all its income is charitable and is applied for charitable purposes.

10. Tangible fixed assets

Group	Freehold land and buildings £'000	Long leasehold £'000	Leasehold improvements £'000	Educational, office furniture and equipment £'000	Computer equipment £'000	Motor vehicles £'000	Total £'000
Cost							
At the start of the year	11,966	6,727	1,738	1,519	1,526	269	**23,745**
Transfer in	3,631	-	-	-	105	178	**3,914**
Additions	171	171	205	580	424	59	**1,610**
Disposals	(951)	-	-	-	-	(24)	**(975)**
At the end of the year	14,817	6,898	1,943	2,099	2,055	482	**28,294**
Depreciation							
At the start of the year	3,532	993	1,112	668	1,146	113	**7,564**
Transfer in	-	-	-	-	73	126	**199**
Charge	294	143	211	153	257	76	**1,134**
Disposals	-	-	-	-	-	(24)	**(24)**
At the end of the year	3,826	1,136	1,323	821	1,476	291	**8,873**
Net book value	10,991	5,762	620	1,278	579	191	**19,421**
At the end of the year	**10,991**	**5,762**	**620**	**1,278**	**579**	**191**	**19,421**
At the start of the year	**8,434**	**5,734**	**626**	**851**	**380**	**156**	**16,181**

10. Tangible fixed assets (continued)

Ambitious about Autism	Freehold land and buildings £'000	Leasehold improvements £'000	Educational, office furniture and equipment £'000	Computer equipment £'000	Motor vehicles £'000	Total £'000
Cost						
At the start of the year	11,966	1,590	1,257	1,144	269	**16,226**
Transfer in	3,631	-	-	105	178	**3,914**
Additions	171	205	521	262	-	**1,159**
Disposals	(951)	-	-	-	(24)	**(975)**
At the end of the year	14,817	1,795	1,778	1,511	423	**20,324**
Depreciation						
At the start of the year	3,532	1,052	530	920	113	**6,147**
Transfer in	-	-	-	73	126	**199**
Charge	294	197	121	158	76	**846**
Disposals	-	-	-	-	(24)	(24)
At the end of the year	3,826	1,249	651	1,151	291	**7,168**
Net book value	10,991	546	1,127	360	132	**13,156**
At the end of the year	**10,991**	**546**	**1,127**	**360**	**132**	**13,156**
At the start of the year	**8,434**	**538**	**727**	**224**	**156**	**10,079**

The long leasehold (125 years) refers to The Rise School building.

All of the above assets are used for charitable purposes.

11. Intangible fixed assets

Group	Computer software £'000	Assets under construction £'000	Total £'000
Cost			
At the start of the period	256	18	**274**
Transfer	18	(18)	**-**
Additions in the period	51	110	**161**
At the end of the period	325	110	**435**
Amortisation			
At the start of the period	158	-	**158**
Transfer	-	-	**-**
Charge for the period	61	-	**61**
At the end of the period	219	-	**219**
Net book value	106	110	**216**
At the end of the period	106	110	**216**
At the start of the period	98	18	**116**

Ambitious about Autism	Computer software £'000	Assets under construction £'000	Total £'000
Cost			
At the start of the period	246	18	**264**
Transfer	18	(18)	**-**
Additions in the period	30	110	**140**
At the end of the period	294	110	**404**
Amortisation			
At the start of the period	155	-	**155**
Transfer	-	-	**-**
Charge for the period	51	-	**51**
At the end of the period	206	-	**206**
Net book value	88	110	**198**
At the end of the period	88	110	**198**
At the start of the period	91	18	**109**

Amortisation charge is reflected in the SOFA.

12. Investments

Group and Ambitious about Autism	31 August 2024 £'000	31 August 2023 £'000
Market value at the start of the year	**1,608**	1,689
Additions at cost	**444**	538
Disposal proceeds	**(389)**	(482)
Net gain / (loss) on change in fair value	**137**	(137)
Market value at the end of the year	**1,800**	1,608
Cash held in investments	**33**	85
Total investments held	**1,833**	**1,693**

Investments comprise	31 August 2024 £'000	31 August 2023 £'000
Listed securities		
Fixed interest	**284**	281
Direct UK equities	**439**	553
Direct overseas equities	**874**	530
Alternatives - property and managed funds	**203**	244
Cash held for re-investment	**26**	79
Cash	**7**	6
Market value at the end of the year	**1,833**	**1,693**

The historical cost of investments is £1642k (2023: £1,652k).

13. Debtors

	Group		Ambitious about Autism	
	31 August 2024 £'000	31 August 2023 £'000	31 August 2024 £'000	31 August 2023 £'000
Trade debtors	**11,507**	7,346	**8,434**	5,315
Amounts owed by group undertakings	**-**	-	**-**	194
Other debtors	**950**	381	**101**	87
Prepayments	**354**	607	**332**	432
Accrued income	**742**	312	**595**	312
	13,553	**8,646**	**9,462**	**6,340**

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 August 2024

13a. Assets Held for Sale	Group		Ambitious about Autism	
	31 August 2024 £'000	31 August 2023 £'000	31 August 2024 £'000	31 August 2023 £'000
Framfield Old	**817**	-	**817**	-
Framfield New	**103**	-	**103**	-
Seaford	**4500**	-	**4500**	-
	5,420	**-**	**5,420**	**-**

14. Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	Group		Ambitious about Autism	
	31 August 2024 £'000	31 August 2023 £'000	31 August 2024 £'000	31 August 2023 £'000
Bank loans	**409**	391	**409**	391
Amounts owed to group undertakings	**-**	-	**39**	-
Trade creditors	**737**	506	**343**	391
Taxation and social security	**617**	481	**531**	389
Other creditors	**933**	189	**926**	111
Accruals	**897**	683	**760**	487
Deferred income (note 15)	**10,632**	6,941	**7,688**	4,976
	14,225	**9,191**	**10,696**	**6,745**

15. Deferred income	Group		Ambitious about Autism	
	31 August 2024 £'000	31 August 2023 £'000	31 August 2024 £'000	31 August 2023 £'000
Balance at the beginning of the year	**6,941**	1,602	**4,976**	1,401
Amount released to income in the year	**(6,941)**	(1,602)	**(4,976)**	(1,401)
Amount deferred in the year	**10,632**	6,941	**7,688**	4,976
Balance at the end of the year	**10,632**	**6,941**	**7,688**	**4,976**

Deferred income as at 31 August 2024 relates to autumn 2024 term fees that were invoiced in advance of the new academic year.

16. Creditors: amounts falling due after one period

Group and Ambitious about Autism	31 August 2024 £'000	31 August 2023 £'000
Loans to finance the freehold property	**2,790**	3,102
Loan to finance Ambitious College	**909**	1,006
Derivative Liability	**74**	49
Balance at the end of the year	**3,773**	**4,157**

The charity has a loan from Social Investment Business which commenced in October 2008 and is repayable over 25 years. Interest is chargeable at 1.25% above the BoE base rate. The loan is secured over the freehold land and buildings at Woodside Avenue.

The charity also has a loan from NatWest, in tranches of £1.1m and £1.9m, which commenced in November 2008 and April 2012 respectively. Interest is chargeable at 0.75% above LIBOR and 1.25% above LIBOR respectively until 31st January 2022. From 1st February 2022, both loans are moved to the SONIA rate. One tranche of the loan (£1.1m) is capped at an interest rate of 4%. The loan is repayable from November 2013 over 22 years. The loan is secured over the freehold land and buildings at Woodside Avenue.

Two new loans were acquired in August 2020, £500k from Rathbones and the other £500k from NatWest with both loans charging interest of 2.5% over base rate. The NatWest loan is repayable over 20 years and the Rathbones loan is repayable in 5 years. The Nat West loan is secured over the freehold land and buildings at Woodside Avenue. The Rathbones loan is secured over the investments.

The charity is using an interest rate cap option to manage its exposure to interest rate movements on its £1.1m bank loan with NatWest. The agreement was entered into a variable to fixed interest rate cap in February 2011. The option caps the variable rate of interest at a rate of 4% per annum for the period up to August 2033.

The capital amounts repayable under each loan are:	Within 1 year £'000	2–5 years £'000	Over 5 years £'000
Futurebuilders	244	835	892
NatWest £1.1m tranche	57	245	344
NatWest £1.9m tranche	97	403	506
NatWest £500k	11	51	373
Rathbones £500k	-	50	-
	409	**1,584**	**2,115**

17. Pension schemes

Ambitious about Autism makes contributions to the Aegon Pension Scheme, NEST, The People's Pension and into one employee's private pension scheme. Both Ambitious about Autism and Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust pay into the Teachers' Pension Scheme. Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust also make contributions to the Local Government Pension Scheme.

Contributions to these schemes were £1,946k (2023: £1,379k).

Defined Contribution Schemes

The assets of the schemes are held separately from those of Ambitious about Autism. Pension costs charged in the statement of financial activities represent the contributions payable by Ambitious about Autism for the year.

Teachers' Pension Scheme

Introduction

The Teachers' Pension Scheme (TPS) is a statutory, contributory, defined benefit scheme, governed by the Teachers' Pensions Regulations (2010) and, from 1 April 2014, by the Teachers' Pension Scheme Regulations 2014. Membership is automatic for full-time teachers in academies and, from 1 January 2007, automatic for teachers in part-time employment following appointment or a change of contract, although they are able to opt out.

The TPS is an unfunded scheme and members contribute on a 'pay as you go' basis - these contributions along with those made by employers are credited to the Exchequer. Retirement and other pension benefits are paid by public funds provided by Parliament.

Valuation of the Teachers' Pension Scheme

The Government Actuary, using normal actuarial principles, conducts a formal actuarial review of the TPS in accordance with the Public Service Pensions (Valuations and Employer Cost Cap) Directions 2023 published by HM Treasury every 4 years. The aim of the review is to specify the level of future contributions. Actuarial scheme valuations are dependent on assumptions about the value of future costs, design of benefits and many other factors. The latest actuarial valuation of the TPS was carried out as at 31 March 2020. The 2020 valuation report was published by the Teachers Pension on 26 October 2023. The key elements of the valuation are:

- employer contribution rates set at 28.6% of pensionable pay from 1 April 2024
- total scheme liabilities (pensions currently in payment and the estimated cost of future benefits) for service to the effective date of £262,000 million and notional assets (estimated future contributions together with the notional investments held at the valuation date) of £222,200 million, giving a notional past service deficit of £39,800 million.

A copy of the valuation report and supporting documentation is on the Teachers' Pensions website.

Under the definitions set out in FRS 102, the TPS is a multi-employer pension scheme. The group is unable to quantify its share of liabilities under the scheme and therefore, in accordance with FRS 102 has accounted for its contributions to the scheme as if it were a defined contribution scheme. The group has set out above the information available on the scheme.

The employer's pension costs paid to TPS by AaA in the year amounted to £469k (2023: £350k).

The employer's pension costs paid to TPS by AaAST in the year amounted to £467k (2023: £254k).

60 AaA employees were members of the scheme at 31 August 2024 (2023: 21).

31 AST employees were members of the scheme at 31 August 2024 (2023: 26).

Local Government Pension Scheme

The LGPS is a funded defined benefit pension scheme, with the assets held in separate Trustee-administered funds. The total contributions made for the year ended 31 August 2024 were £574k (2023: £412k), of which employer's contributions totalled £443k (2023: £334k) and employees' contributions totalled £131k (2023: £78k). Contribution rates for employees increase with salary and during the year ended 31 August 2024, the average employer contribution rate was 22.1% (2023 : 22.1%) for the Rise School and 21.0% for Spring School, and for employees a minimum of 5.5% to a maximum of 12.5% of pensionable salary. During the year ended 31 August 2024 no employees took advantage of the 50/50 option, where employees can pay 50% of normal contributions to build up half the normal pension.

Parliament has agreed, at the request of the Secretary of State for Education, to a guarantee that, in the event of academy closure, outstanding Local Government Pension Scheme liabilities would be met by the Department for Education. The guarantee came into force on 18 July 2013.

98 employees were members of the scheme at 31 August 2024 (2023: 64), for both schools.

The following information is based upon a full actuarial valuation of the fund at 31 March 2019 updated to 31 August 2024 by a qualified independent actuary, for the Rise School only (this analysis is not available for Spring School).

Principal actuarial assumptions	**At 31 August 2024**	At 31 August 2023
Rate of increase in salaries	**3.80%**	3.90%
Rate of increase for pensions in payment/ inflation	**2.80%**	2.90%
Discount rate for scheme liabilities	**5.15%**	5.25%
Inflation assumption (CPI)	**2.80%**	2.90%
Commutation of pensions to lump sums	**50.00%**	50.00%

17. Pension schemes (continued)

Sensitivity analysis	£'000	£'000	£'000
Adjustment to discount rate	**+0.1%**	**0.0%**	**-0.1%**
Present value of total obligation	2,273	2,344	2,418
Projected service cost	196	205	214
Adjustment to long term salary increase	**+0.1%**	**0.0%**	**-0.1%**
Present value of total obligation	2,345	2,344	2,343
Projected service cost	205	205	205
Adjustment to pension increases and deferred revaluation	**+0.1%**	**0.0%**	**-0.1%**
Present value of total obligation	2,418	2,344	2,272
Projected service cost	215	205	196
Adjustment to life expectancy assumptions	**+ 1 Year**	**None**	**- 1 Year**
Present value of total obligation	2,405	2,344	2,285
Projected service cost	213	205	198

The current mortality assumptions include sufficient allowance for future improvements in mortality rates. The assumed life expectations on retirement age 65 are:

	At 31 August 2024 £'000	At 31 August 2023 £'000
Retiring today		
Males	**20.7**	20.7
Females	**23.3**	23.2
Retiring in 20 years		
Males	**22.0**	22.0
Females	**24.7**	24.6

17. Pension schemes (continued)

The estimated asset allocation for the Rise School as at 31 August 2024 is as follows:

Employer asset share – bid value	At 31 August 2024 £'000	%	At 31 August 2023 £'000	%
Equities	**1,693**	**63%**	1,288	64%
Fixed income	**745**	**28%**	518	26%
Infrastructure	**51**	**2%**	34	2%
Property	**101**	**4%**	85	4%
Cash	**91**	**3%**	77	4%
Total market value of assets	**2,681**	**100%**	**2,002**	100%
Present value of scheme liabilities - funded	**(2,344)**		(1,971)	
Restrictions on recoverable surplus	**(337)**		-	
Asset/(deficit) in the scheme	**-**		**31**	

The Trust's share of the assets of the fund is less than 1%.

Amounts recognised in the statement of financial activities	31 August 2024 £'000	31 August 2023 £'000
Current service cost (including employee contributions)	**(205)**	(322)
Net interest cost	**11**	(5)
Administration	**(3)**	(3)
Total operating charge	**(197)**	**(330)**

17. Pension schemes (continued)

Changes in the present value of defined benefit obligations were as follows:	2024 £'000	2023 £'000
At 1 September	**1,971**	2,094
Current service cost	**205**	322
Interest cost	**105**	90
Actuarial (gain)	**(14)**	(653)
Benefits paid	**(16)**	29
Employee contributions	**93**	89
At 31 August	**2,344**	1,971

Changes in the fair value of the academy's share of scheme assets:	2024 £'000	2023 £'000
At 1 September	**2,002**	1,810
Interest on assets	**116**	85
Return on plan assets (excluding net interest on the defined pension liability)	**161**	(59)
Other actuarial losses	**-**	(283)
Employer contributions	**328**	334
Employee contributions	**93**	89
Administration expenses	**(3)**	(3)
Benefits paid	**(16)**	29
At 31 August	**2,681**	2,002

18. Analysis of net assets between funds

Fund balances as at 31 August 2024 are represented by:

	Ambitious about Autism			Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust	
Group	General unrestricted £'000	Designated £'000	Restricted £'000	Restricted £'000	**Total funds £'000**
Tangible fixed assets	-	13,156	-	6,265	**19,421**
Investments	1,833	-	-	-	**1,833**
Intangible fixed assets	-	198	-	18	**216**
Net current assets	1,253	7,790	1,479	4,833	**15,355**
Long term liabilities	-	(3,773)	-	-	**(3,773)**
	3,086	**17,371**	**1,479**	**11,116**	**33,052**

Ambitious about Autism	General unrestricted £'000	Designated £'000	Restricted £'000	**Total funds £'000**
Tangible fixed assets	-	13,156	-	**13,156**
Investments	1,833	-	-	**1,833**
Intangible fixed assets	-	198	-	**198**
Net current assets	1,253	7,790	1,479	**10,522**
Long term liabilities	-	(3,773)	-	**(3,773)**
	3,086	**17,371**	**1,479**	**21,936**

18. Analysis of net assets between funds (continued)

Fund balances as at 31 August 2023 are represented by:

	Ambitious about Autism			Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust	
Group	General unrestricted £'000	Designated £'000	Restricted £'000	Restricted £'000	**Total funds £'000**
Tangible fixed assets	-	10,079	-	6,102	**16,181**
Investments	1,693	-	-	-	**1,693**
Intangible fixed assets	-	109	-	7	**116**
Net current assets	1,083	(141)	1,470	4,752	**7,164**
Long term liabilities	-	(4,157)	-	31	**(4,126)**
	2,776	**5,890**	**1,470**	**10,892**	**21,028**

Ambitious about Autism	General unrestricted £'000	Designated £'000	Restricted £'000	**Total funds £'000**
Tangible fixed assets	-	10,079	-	**10,079**
Investments	1,693	-	-	**1,693**
Intangible fixed assets	-	109	-	**109**
Net current assets	1,083	(141)	1,470	**2,412**
Long term liabilities	-	(4,157)	-	**(4,157)**
	2,776	**5,890**	**1,470**	**10,136**

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 August 2024

19a. Movement in funds

For the year ended 31 August 2024:	At the start of the year £'000	Incoming resources and gains £'000	Outgoing resources and losses £'000	Transfers £'000	At the end of the year £'000
Restricted funds:					
a) Ambitious about Autism					
Ambitious College	353	278	(247)	(175)	**209**
St. John's	0	89	(14)	0	**75**
Education Services projects	331	749	(459)	(57)	**564**
Autism Exchange	130	0	0	0	**130**
Family Support	204	81	(146)	0	**139**
Participation	155	359	(442)	0	**72**
TreeHouse School	109	235	(147)	(19)	**178**
Online Youth Support	98	12	(86)	0	**24**
IT Equipment	28	18	(20)	0	**26**
Other	62	0	0	0	**62**
Total Ambitious about Autism restricted funds	**1,470**	**1,821**	**(1,561)**	**(251)**	**1,479**
b) Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust	10,892	8,447	(7,224)	(999)	**11,116**
Total group restricted funds	**12,362**	**10,268**	**(8,785)**	**(1,250)**	**12,595**
Ambitious about Autism unrestricted funds:					
Designated funds					
Fixed assets	3,683	4,060	(683)	4,306	**11,366**
School development	5	0	0	(5)	**0**
Transformation fund	885	0	(60)	(825)	(0)
Covid Recovery fund	483	0	0	(298)	**185**
Service Development	78	0	0	4,836	**4,914**
St. John's Designated Fund	0	145	0	(145)	**0**
Buildings Maintenance and Development fund	756	0	0	150	**906**
Total designated funds	**5,890**	**4,205**	(743)	**8,019**	**17,371**
General funds	2,776	38,036	(30,957)	(6,769)	**3,086**
Total Ambitious about Autism unrestricted funds	**8,666**	**42,241**	(31,700)	**1,250**	**20,457**
Total group funds	**21,028**	**52,509**	(40,485)	**0**	**33,052**

Transfers
£1.3k has been designated to the Fixed Asset funds to cover the depreciation of fixed assets acquired during the year. This includes £194k of fixed assets funded from restricted income, £87k funded from the Transformation fund and £1.017k of fixed assets funded from unrestricted funds. A further £3m has been transferred to the Fixed Asset fund to support the depreciation of fixed assets in the future.

£4.8m has been designated to the Service Development fund to consolidate designated funds to support known development.

£150k has been designated from unrestricted funds to the Buildings Maintenance and Development fund.

£999k was transferred from AaAST to general funds to reflect the intercompany management charge.

The charity is using an interest rate cap to manage its exposure to interest rate movements on its £1.1m bank loan with NatWest. The agreement was entered into a variable to fixed interest rate cap in February 2011. The option replaces the variable rate of interest for a fixed rate of 4% per annum for the period up to August 2033 with a fair value gain of £13k recognised in the year.

19a. Movement in funds (continued)

For the year ended 31 August 2023:	At the start of the year £'000	Incoming resources and gains £'000	Outgoing resources and losses £'000	Transfers £'000	At the end of the year £'000
Restricted funds:					
a) Ambitious about Autism					
Ambitious College	75	498	(220)	0	**353**
Education Services projects	348	619	(585)	(51)	**331**
Autism Exchange	147	-	(17)	0	**130**
Family Support	248	112	(156)	0	**204**
Participation	48	428	(321)	0	**155**
TreeHouse School	54	382	(187)	(140)	**109**
Online Information Support	84	100	(86)	0	**98**
Online Youth Support	69	15	(51)	(5)	**28**
IT Equipment	13	49	-	0	**62**
Total Ambitious About Autism restricted funds	**1,086**	**2,203**	**(1,623)**	**(196)**	**1,470**
b) Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust	9,862	6,738	(4,798)	(910)	**10,892**
Total group restricted funds	**10,948**	**8,941**	**(6,421)**	**(1,106)**	**12,362**
Ambitious about Autism unrestricted funds:					
Designated funds:					
Fixed assets	3,857	-	(657)	483	**3,683**
School development	5	-	-	0	**5**
Transformation fund	1,102	-	(217)	0	**885**
Covid Recovery fund	492	-	(9)	0	**483**
Service Development	199	-	(121)	0	**78**
Buildings Maintenance and Development fund	606	-	-	150	**756**
Total designated funds	**6,261**	**-**	**(1,004)**	**633**	**5,890**
General funds	2,863	18,939	(19,499)	473	**2,776**
Total Ambitious about Autism unrestricted funds	**9,124**	**18,939**	**(20,503)**	**1,106**	**8,666**
Total group funds	**20,072**	**27,880**	**(26,924)**	**0**	**21,028**

19b. Summary movement in funds

Purpose of restricted funds:

Ambitious College	The charity continues its work to develop Ambitious College, London's first specialist day college for autistic young people aged 16–25 including those with learning disabilities. Ambitious College has three campuses co-located within the College of Haringey, Enfield and North East London, West Thames College and Supported Internship based at Whittington Hospital.
Education Services projects	This fund includes developing and embedding a competency framework for the Ambitious Approach. The Ambitious Approach is our model of education practice, which was designed to be used in our education settings to support autistic children and young people. At its heart, the approach is centred around improving the quality of life of autistic young people while they are in education and ensuring this quality of life continues into adulthood. The framework is being embedded in the charity, and in partner schools and colleges, and includes audit tools, implementation guidance, evaluation protocols, parent toolkits and training materials.
Employ Autism and Autism Exchange	Employ Autism's mission is to ensure that more autistic young people can become part of the workforce. The programme acts as a bridge to employment for autistic people by working with employers and careers and employability professionals to increase confidence in autism and neurodiversity, and as a result create opportunities in the workplace. We deliver training, resources and ongoing mentorship to a wide network of partners across the UK and together drive a collective movement for change. The programme comprises the Employ Autism network, the Employ Autism Higher Education network and Autism Exchange.
Learner and Family Support	Our specialist Learner and Family Support team helps the parents and carers of autistic children and young people attending our educational settings throughout their journey with us. We ensure that families have increased knowledge, skills and confidence to support autistic children and young people in their care by providing timely direct advice and support. This includes support at times of transition such as from school to further education, training or other placement, and to adulthood; and advocacy for families to try and secure statutory services such as respite care or social care support.
Youth participation	Young people are at the heart of everything we do. We listen to them to ensure our work reflects their views and needs. We stand with them and ensure their voices are heard and considered by policymakers and decision-makers, the media and the general public. Through our Ambitious Youth Network, online peer support and project work we bring autistic young people together to tackle isolation and loneliness, understand their autistic identity and have their voices heard.
TreeHouse School	Funding provided to support a range of specific activities across the school.
Online Information Support	A project to provide vital information online for parents and carers, and empowerment to connect and support each other.
Online Youth Support	A project to provide vital information online for autistic young people, including through a new online community platform for the Ambitious Youth Network.
IT Equipment	This fund supports additional IT equipment and resources for autistic children and young people in our schools and college, so they can access education and support.
Other	Other funds represent a number of small funds.

Purpose of designated funds:

Fixed Assets	This fund represents the net book value of the fixed assets, net of the loans used to purchase them, which are not, by the nature of fixed assets, readily available for other purposes.
Schools development	This fund was established to fund school development.
Transformation fund	This fund was established to support the organisation's previous strategy.
Buildings maintenance and development fund	The fund has been allocated to provide for any repairs to and development of the building based on 30-year life cycle costings prepared by external consultants.
Covid Recovery fund	This fund has been established to support the organisation in managing the risks and impact of the coronavirus pandemic.
Service development	This fund has been established to support the growth of existing and new services.

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 August 2024

20. Net cash (used in)/provided by group operating activities

	2024 £'000	2023 £'000
Net income	**12,024**	956
Less St John's Donation	**(7,317)**	-
St John Cash	**1,292**	-
Depreciation and amortisation charges	**1,195**	901
(Gains)/losses on investments	**(137)**	137
(Gain) on sale of fixed assets	**-**	(6)
(Gain) on Current assets	**(4,060)**	-
Dividends, interest and rent from investments	**(207)**	(181)
Interest payable	**305**	235
(Increase) in debtors	**(4,907)**	(7,433)
St John Debtors as at 2023	**5,267**	-
(Decrease) in derivative liability	**25**	(25)
Increase/(decrease) in creditors	**5,016**	5,512
St John Creditors as at 2023	**(3,645)**	-
(Increase) / Decrease in pension fund	**158**	(315)
Net cash provided by operating activities	**5,008**	**(219)**

21. Operating lease commitments

The group's total future minimum lease payments under non-cancellable operating leases is as follows for each of the following periods:

	Property		Equipment	
	2024 £'000	2023 £'000	**2024 £'000**	2023 £'000
Less than one year	**143**	142	**10**	21
One to five years	**317**	412	**4**	11
Over five years	**-**	42	**-**	-
	460	**596**	**14**	**32**

22. St. John's School and College Merger

On 1 September 2023 St. John's School and College, Brighton (registered charity number 1061001) joined the Ambitious about Autism group as a wholly owned subsidiary of the Charity, and on 1 October the net assets and operations of St. John's School and College were transferred in full to the Ambitious about Autism charity. Reflected in the accounts are net assets of £12m (being the value of the donated assets). Trading results for the twelve months from 1 September 2023 have also been reflected in the overall income and expenditure categories. St. John's School and College was dissolved on 31 December 2024.

23. Legal status of the charity

The charity is a company limited by guarantee and has no share capital. The liability of each member in the event of winding up is £1.

24. Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust

On 1 April 2017, Ambitious about Autism became the sole member of Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust, a company limited by guarantee and an exempt charity (company number 08335297).

Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust operates independently from Ambitious about Autism and as such Ambitious about Autism has no right or access to the assets (cash and non-cash) of Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust. In the group accounts all income and reserves of Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust are treated as restricted. While both entities operate independently the accounts are consolidated on the basis that Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust is the sole corporate member of Ambitious about Autism.

Balance sheet	2024 £'000	2023 £'000
Fixed Assets		
Tangible assets	**6,265**	6,102
Intangible assets	**18**	**7**
Current Assets		
Debtors	**4,130**	2,500
Cash at bank and in hand	**3,539**	1,005
Short-term deposit	**732**	3,887
	8,401	**7,392**
Liabilities		
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	**(3,568)**	**(2,640)**
Net current assets	**4,833**	**4,752**
Net assets excluding pension liability	**11,116**	**10,861**
Defined benefit pension scheme liability	**-**	**31**
Total net assets	**11,116**	**10,892**
Funds of the Academy Trust:		
Restricted funds		
Fixed asset fund	**6,449**	6,263
Restricted income fund	**4,667**	4,598
Pension Reserve	**-**	**31**
Total restricted funds	**11,116**	**10,892**
Unrestricted income funds	**-**	**-**
Total funds	**11,116**	**10,892**

24. Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust (continued)

A summarised extract of Ambitious about Autism Schools SoFA for the year:	Unrestricted Funds £'000	Restricted Funds £'000	Restricted Fixed Asset Fund £'000	**Total £'000**
Income from:				
Donations and capital grants	-	47	58	**105**
Charitable activities	-	7,999	149	**8,148**
Other income	-	194	-	**194**
	-	**8,240**	**207**	**8,447**
Expenditure on:				
Charitable activities	-	(7,767)	(298)	**(8,065)**
Net surplus/(deficit)	-	473	(91)	**382**
Transfer Between Funds	-	(277)	277	**-**
Actuarial gains on defined benefit pension schemes	-	(158)	-	**(158)**
Net movement in funds	-	38	186	**224**
Funds brought forward	**-**	**4,629**	**6,263**	**10,892**
Funds carried forward	**-**	**4,667**	**6,449**	**11,116**

25. Consolidated statement of financial activities
(incorporating an income and expenditure account)

		For the year ended 31 August 2023				
			Ambitious about Autism		Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust	
	Note	Unrestricted £'000	Restricted £'000	Subtotal £'000	Restricted £'000	**Total £'000**
Income from:						
Donations and legacies:						
Gifts and donated services	2	1,486	1,583	3,069	108	**3,177**
Charitable activities:						
Educational services	3	16,709	516	17,225	6,606	**23,831**
External affairs	3	-	63	63	-	**63**
Other income						
Trading income		540	41	581	24	**605**
Investment income		204	-	204	-	**204**
Total income		**18,939**	**2,203**	**21,142**	**6,738**	**27,880**
Expenditure on:						
Raising funds						
Fundraising activities		1,062	-	1,062	-	**1,062**
Investment management costs		12	-	12	-	**12**
		1,074	**-**	**1,074**	**-**	**1,074**
Charitable activities:						
Educational services		17,276	669	17,945	5,109	**23,054**
External affairs		2,016	954	2,970	-	**2,970**
Total expenditure	**4**	**20,366**	**1,623**	**21,989**	**5,109**	**27,098**
Net (expenditure)/income before other gains/(losses)		**(1,427)**	**580**	**(847)**	**1,629**	**782**
Net gains on investments		(137)	-	**(137)**	-	**(137)**
Net losses on pension deficit		-	-	-	**311**	**311**
Net (expenditure)/income		**(1,564)**	**580**	**(984)**	**1,940**	**956**
Transfers between funds	19	1,106	**(196)**	910	**(910)**	**-**
Net movement in funds		**(458)**	**384**	**(74)**	**1,030**	**956**
Reconciliation of funds:						
Total funds brought forward	19	9,124	1,086	10,210	9,862	**20,072**
Total funds carried forward	**19**	**8,666**	**1,470**	**10,136**	**10,892**	**21,028**

We are Ambitious about Autism

Ambitious about Autism is the national charity standing with autistic children and young people.

We believe every autistic child and young person has the right to be themselves and realise their ambitions.

We started as one school and have become a movement for change. We champion rights, campaign for change and create opportunities.

Ambitious about Autism

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Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust is an exempt charity in England and Wales and a registered company: 08335297.

Published – April 2025

AMBITIOUS ABOUT AUTISM

England & Wales - Charity number 1063184

Accounts

Ambitious about Autism

Annual report and accounts

2022–23

Annual report and accounts 2022–23

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Our purpose, vision, mission and values

Ambitious about Autism is the national charity standing with autistic children and young people.

We believe every autistic child and young person has the right to be themselves and realise their ambitions.

We started as one school and have become a movement for change. We champion rights, campaign for change and create opportunities.

Our purpose

We help autistic children and young people to be themselves.

Our vision

Our vision is for a future where every autistic child and young person can be themselves and realise their ambitions.

Our mission

We stand with autistic children and young people, champion their rights and create opportunities.

Our values

Autistic children and young people are at the heart of everything that we do.

We are ambitious
for autistic children and young people and our work.

We celebrate difference
creating a world where everyone belongs.

We love learning
and commit to learn from our successes and mistakes; sharing knowledge, expertise and resources.

We are open
to new approaches, in how we make decisions, and engage with our community.

We work together
with autistic children and young people, parents and carers, our partners and staff to maximise impact and reach.

Foreword: Welcome from the chair of trustees and chief executive

This has been an exciting year of growth and development for Ambitious about Autism, enabling us to stand with even more autistic children and young people and help them realise their ambitions.

In the second year of our **Time for Ambition** strategy we laid the groundwork to expand our educational offer. We spent the year preparing for the opening of Spring School in Kingston and completed plans for the merger of Ambitious about Autism with St. John's School and College in Brighton. Both opportunities allow us to share learnings, expand our expertise and offer more for autistic children and young people.

During World Autism Acceptance Week we continued to raise raise acceptance of autism, taking part with Vanish in an influential and award-winning advertising campaign that sought to increase public understanding of autistic girls and women. This year we also appointed well-known public figure, television presenter Gregg Wallace MBE, as our new ambassador.

As the government moved forward with plans to reform the special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) system, we launched our national campaign, Written Off?, to ensure decision-makers listen to autistic children, young people and their families.

Through Employ Autism we continue to expand our partnerships with national employers to create meaningful employment experiences for more autistic young people.

We thank our long-standing integral partner Pears Foundation for their continuous support. We also thank Marsh McLennan, our four-year strategic partner.

This year was also another successful year for our challenge events, with dozens of participants taking part in the London Marathon and Rapha's Manchester to London ride, raising vital funds to support our work. Meanwhile, our growing list of corporate partners also achieved amazing success this year, raising funds and awareness through a range of activities.

None of our achievements would have been possible without our dedicated staff, so we continued to invest in our people to make Ambitious about Autism a great place to work.

Our mission is to stand with autistic children and young people, champion their rights and create opportunities. We can only do this thanks to you: our wonderful children and young people, parents and carers, generous partners, supporters and staff. Your continuing support helps autistic children and young people be themselves and realise their ambitions.

Neil Goulden
Chair of Trustees

Jolanta Lasota
Chief Executive

Our impact this year

Over
£3 million
funds raised to support autistic children and young people.

800
autistic young people connected with others through the Ambitious Youth Network.

More
than 1,500
active members found support through our online community Talk about Autism.

751
young people receive tailored careers information and employability sessions.

164
autistic people accessed a paid experience of work via our trained employer partners.

327
pupils and learners were supported across our schools and colleges.

60
autistic young people took part in the pilot of our new post-diagnosis support online course.

72
pupils and learners from our schools and college were supported to move into employment or a new setting.

Excellent education

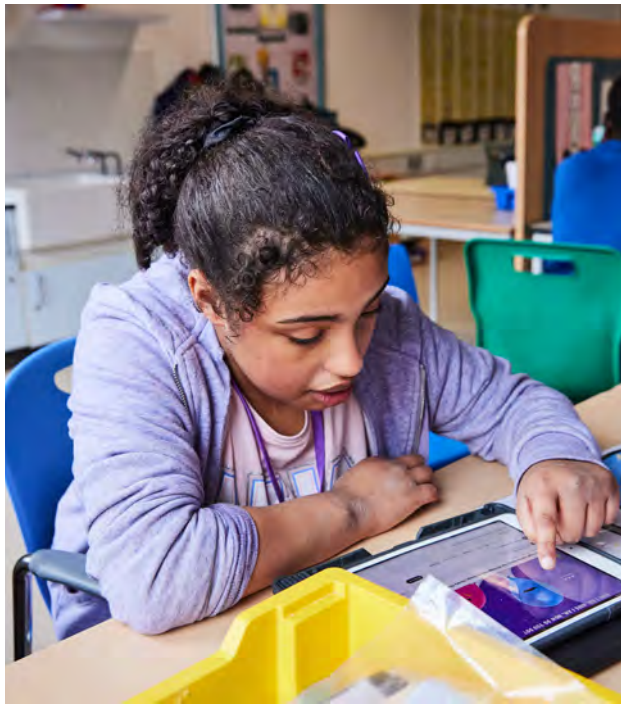
Our belief is unshakeable: all autistic children and young people have the right to an excellent and inclusive education. We continue to think and act innovatively to provide the best possible outcomes for autistic children and young people in our education settings.

This year we expanded our schools and college network with the addition of St. John's College in Brighton, while we continued to develop our existing settings to maintain the high educational quality we are known for. We also supported pupils and learners in their career education and campaigned for system-wide improvements in response to proposed government reforms.

Spring School

As we progressed towards a September 2023 opening, we were delighted that our community engagement work was nominated for an award by the Multi-Academy Trust Association (MATA), recognising our collaborative work with parents, carers, education providers and residents.

Spring School



The Rise School

Year 7 pupils settled in very quickly as the new term began. Year 12 pupils also made a seamless transition into the Rise Sixth Form and have made an excellent start to their courses.

Year 11 pupils took their first IGCSE English exam, working very hard and showing real resilience.

In Autumn term, members of the School Council organised a huge amount of food to be collected and delivered to a local food bank, to celebrate the Harvest Festival.

The Rise School

The Rise Sixth Form

The Rise Sixth Form pupils achieved some very positive outcomes this year. Eight young people secured offers from their first choice of university, one took on an apprenticeship and one secured full-time employment.

The Rise Sixth Form

Pupil and learner numbers at the end of July 2023.

TreeHouse School

99 pupils

Ambitious College

94 learners

The Rise School

135 pupils

TreeHouse School

TreeHouse School became the first special school in the UK to invest in innovative personal sensory regulation software, Cubbie, providing pupils with a much-needed space to regulate their senses and relax outside lessons.

TreeHouse School

Ambitious College

Zubair's story

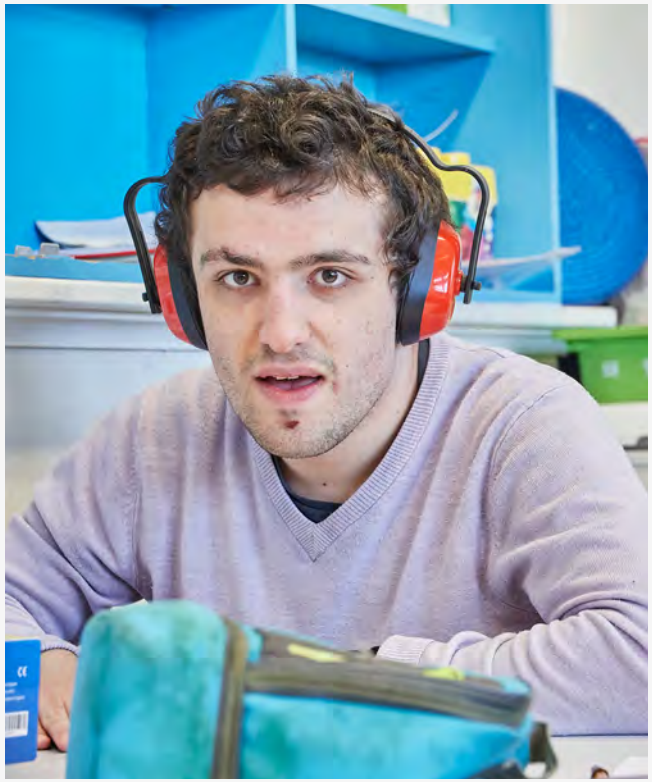
Autistic young people and their families have benefitted from assistive technology and support at Ambitious College, helping them develop their IT and communication skills.

Among those to experience this new technology is 23-year-old Zubair, who is non-speaking and attends Ambitious College's north London Pears campus.

Zubair's mum Sameena said: "**Zubair has always been keen to communicate his needs to us and this scheme has provided him with an incredible opportunity to communicate independently, thanks to the support of his dedicated IT teacher.**

"He is now able to type out certain sentences on his own and can also communicate his wants and needs

Ambitious College



when using the keyboard at home. Zubair couldn't have received this level of innovative support from any other placement, and we are deeply grateful to Ambitious College for always providing him with the highest level of education and support to fulfil his potential as a young autistic adult."

Supported internships

This year, autistic young people, aged 19–25, took up a supported internship at the Whittington Hospital. They took on a variety of roles in fields such as maintenance, pharmacy distribution and administration.

On graduating, four interns were offered employment. Prayer secured a role at a nursery where she has learned sign language to support a deaf child, while Taylor now works full-time at the Whittington Hospital as a porter. Adam has been offered a job working with the pharmacy distribution team at the hospital and Samuel* is working for a company that makes bespoke light fittings.

*name has been changed

St. John's School and College

In April 2023, the Boards of Trustees of Ambitious about Autism and St. John's School and College in Brighton announced the merger of the two charities.

St. John's College, a residential independent specialist college, supports autistic young people aged 16–25 with broader special educational needs. The college offers day and residential places.

Each learner's individual strengths, interests and ambitions shape their curriculum. Learners access a wider range of learning, employability and social opportunities through partnership working across the city and beyond.

In June 2023, before the merger took effect, the Board of Trustees of St. John's School and College made the difficult decision to close St. John's School at the end of the summer term of 2023, leaving St. John's College to join the Ambitious family in September.

On 1 September, the St. John's School and College charity joined the Ambitious about Autism group as a wholly owned subsidiary,

with Trustees in common. On 1 October 2023, the assets and operations of St. John's transferred to the Ambitious about Autism charity in full. Employment of the staff at St. John's School and College also transferred to Ambitious about Autism.

This merger reflects the shared values of both organisations and our joint commitment to supporting autistic children and young people to achieve positive outcomes. By bringing the two charities together, we aim to provide high-quality education for more autistic children and young people, and to share best practice and resources.

Written Off? campaign

Our Written Off? campaign is a response to the reforms proposed in the government's **'Special Educational Needs (SEND) and Alternative Provision (AP) Improvement Plan'**.

In November 2022, with the publication of our 'Written Off?' report, we launched the campaign, calling on decision-makers to protect SEND funding and families' legal rights to support.

The report sets out our policy recommendations in detail and reflects the views of 2,000 autistic young people, parents and carers, who have all told us the same thing: the system is broken.

The **Written Off?** petition has attracted thousands of signatures.

The SEND and AP Improvement Plan includes proposals that deeply worry many parents and carers – such as tailored lists, national funding bands and mandatory mediation. We are keeping a close eye on the trials of these policies to ensure they do not lead to an undermining of families' rights.

Also this year, members of our Ambitious Youth Network met with Robin Walker MP, the Chair of the Parliamentary Education Select Committee, while at one of the committee's hearings our Chief Executive, Jolanta Lasota, gave evidence that was later included in the committee's recently published report on childcare in the early years.

Ambitious about Autism continues to be an active member of the Autism Education Trust.

Ambitious Approach

The Ambitious Approach is our educational approach, developed to put quality of life at the centre of all we do. It is based upon a learner's indisputable rights to be:

- treated with dignity and compassion
- valued
- listened to
- supported to have the best quality of life possible
- empowered to make choices and decide on how they want to live their life.

Our initial evaluation of the impact of our Ambitious Approach is showing positive outcomes for pupils and learners, parents and carers and staff.

Quality of life

Our data suggests that the quality of life of pupils and learners improved over the course of the year, as endorsed by 75% of parents and carers we surveyed.

Classroom environment

Environmental assessments showed that our classrooms were more enabling at the end of the academic year than at the beginning.

Access to debriefing

We have developed a more proactive and preventative approach to supporting pupils.

Understanding of the Ambitious Approach

The majority of staff surveyed across all settings reported that they 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that they have the competence needed to effectively implement the Ambitious Approach, indicating that development work in this area has had a positive impact.

Employment and enterprise

We want every autistic young person to have access to good careers education, including experience of work, relevant to their aspirations, strengths and abilities. Working alongside autistic young people, we equip them to progress to employment and develop transferable life skills.

Our employability programme seeks to remove the barriers to employment that autistic young people face. We work closely with employers to enable them to access a pool of uniquely talented autistic employees, providing training and support to those organisations to increase their confidence in autism and neurodiversity in the workplace.

Our impact:

- 164 young people accessed paid work experience via our trained employer partners, including 87 in our Civil Service summer internships programme.
- 751 young people received tailored careers information and employability sessions.
- 330 careers and employability professionals attended training sessions to understand how to adapt their practices for their autistic clients, ensuring they get the best support on their pathway to employment.
- 91 employers undertook training on understanding autism in the workplace, with 51 going on to offer paid work experience to autistic young people.
- We delivered presentations at 16 events and conferences to over 1800 delegates.

Bruno's story

"I took part in an Employ Autism programme at the Civil Service and my role was based in the digital markets team.

"During this internship I learned so much about how the Civil Service works and worked with some amazing colleagues who supported me throughout. The most interesting part for me was finding out how important policy decisions are made in this country.

"I believe the Employ Autism programme is very important because it gives autistic young people, such as myself, an experience of what it is like working in an important institution like the Civil Service.

"I think that for autistic people the paths to employment can sometimes be quite daunting and overwhelming, so interacting with people who had their own unique paths was eye-opening as well as motivating. It also gave my colleagues the chance to experience working with an autistic person and gain an understanding of how their autistic colleagues can be supported.

"It was a very positive and enjoyable experience that benefited me, and I would recommend the Employ Autism programme to other autistic young people."

Employ Autism

Despite the continuing challenges of an unstable external environment, the Employ Autism programme goes from strength to strength.

We successfully expanded partnerships with both national and smaller employers across the country. In March, we launched the Ambitious about Autism Covenant for Employers (ACE), an initiative created in partnership with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to establish inclusive and supportive workplaces for autistic people.

Summer parliamentary reception

In July, our president, Lord Tim Clement-Jones CBE, hosted a parliamentary reception at the House of Lords to highlight the power of autism inclusion in the workplace. The event was an opportunity for autistic young people, parents and carers, funders, employability professionals and employers to celebrate the progress of Employ Autism to date and meet with government officials from all sides of the political spectrum.

We presented early findings from our independent evaluation, revealing that over 80% of young people who have taken part in the programme have been offered a contract extension or permanent role.

We were joined at the event by Minister of State for Disabled People, Tom Pursglove MP, and Sir Robert Buckland KBE KC MP, who is leading the government's review designed to boost employment opportunities for autistic people.

"We all realise that the figure of less than three in ten autistic people in work is completely unacceptable. I couldn't be clearer that this shouldn't be a barrier to employment, and we need to be ambitious about this and work together in a spirit of partnership to improve outcomes and opportunities."

Tom Pursglove MP

Careers education in our settings

We want every autistic young person to have a good careers education at school, and in further and higher education.

In September 2022, Ambitious College and TreeHouse School gained the Skills Builder Bronze Award for their work in careers education, putting them in a select group of schools and colleges that have demonstrated a commitment to building students' essential skills.

National Careers Week took place during 6–10 March 2023. Each educational setting organised its own timetable of activities for the week, engaging a total of 206 learners. More than 20 employers also got involved. One learner from Ambitious College visited an RSPCA clothes store to help sort and label books, resulting in an offer of long-term work experience.

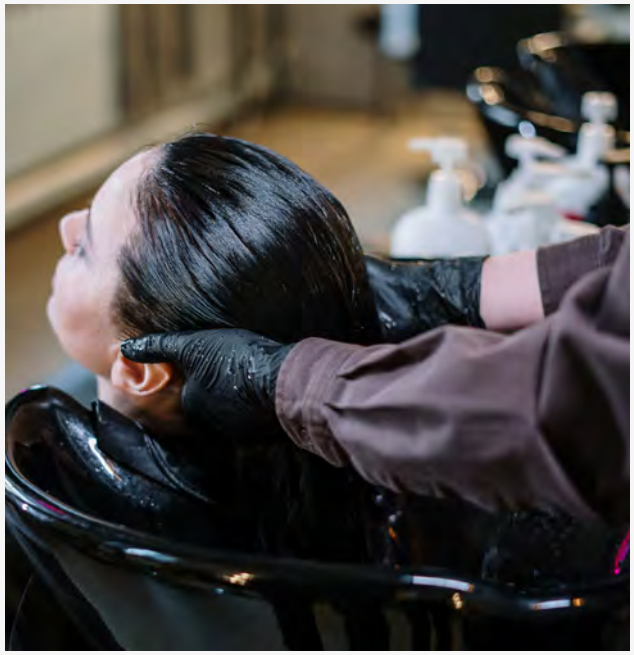
Halima's story

Halima* is a learner at Ambitious College who studies the 'Preparing for Employment' curriculum course. Before joining, Halima had no previous experience of employment but she expressed her desire to work in a hair salon.

Having always enjoyed styling her own hair, her class teacher and the college employment specialist saw this passion as a vehicle for Halima to develop and progress multiple skills. This started with Halima exploring the role of a hairdresser and improving her understanding of the role's various responsibilities.

After learning about the role of a hairdresser, Halima washed and styled staff members' hair during enrichment sessions. She learnt the appropriate steps by reviewing job descriptions and task breakdowns with the employment specialist, leading to Halima installing hair extensions for staff members at college. She also delivered a session on Afro hairstyles for Black History Month.

*Name has been changed.



After continuing to build on her skills in college, Halima completed external work experience with a hair salon in London. She applied the skills learnt in college and acquired new skills using professional hair equipment.

Halima's journey is a testament to the importance of allowing young people to follow their passions in a way that supports their growth and development.

Family and relationships

We want to make sure that families are fully informed and have the skills and confidence to support autistic children and young people. We are a trusted source of support, providing families with high-quality, relevant, accurate and accessible information and support.

Learner and family services

The Learner and Family Services team supports autistic children and young people on their journey into school or college and all the way through to the next stage in their life.

Queries and applications across our education settings grow year on year. This year, our Admissions team processed a total of 880. The team organises visits to our settings and supports the smooth and efficient running of the admissions process – ensuring all decisions are robust and lawful. The team has also successfully helped 72 young people move on from our settings into education, employment, training or community settings.

Arran's story

Arran* had been a pupil at TreeHouse School for more than 10 years. During the last two years of his schooling, the complexity and impact of his obsessive-compulsive disorder became more heightened.

Although Arran enjoyed school and learning, he became more rigid about how he should travel to and enter school, where items were to be placed, and how others would sit or stand – becoming upset if these patterns were not followed. His day became focused on ensuring that the correct pattern of events was followed. Any changes to his expected routine led to him becoming anxious and visibly upset.

Through discussions with Arran and his parents, we were able to develop a behaviour support plan that would break down the individual components of the challenges he faced into smaller parts that he could manage. Our initial focus was on helping Arran finish a routine with fewer repetitions.

*Name has been changed.

We also encouraged language and communication to help him tell others when he needed more time or if he was ready to listen. We gradually increased expectations in line with what Arran was able to manage.

Arran's hard work and our consistent approach meant that he was gradually able to complete routines in a more flexible manner, sometimes skipping them altogether. He was able to visit locations he previously enjoyed, such as the local park.

This meant that a successful college transition was initiated before the end of his school term and continued into the first half term of college. Arran is now successfully attending college every day with the support of his tutor.

Talk about Autism

Talk about Autism is the online community for parents and carers of autistic children and young people. It's a place where parents and carers can be themselves and connect with others who share their joys and understand their worries as a parent or carer of an autistic child.

In May, we launched our new webinar series, 'Talking Tuesdays', providing attendees with autism-specific advice from experts, parent advocates and a range of contributors with a professional interest in, and lived experience of, autism.

Webinar topics this year have included: mental capacity, understanding autism, supporting neurotypical siblings, and securing your child's future with wills and trusts.

"I just wanted to say how utterly wonderful the talk about sibling support from Joss Lambert was. He was so honest and truthful, yet quite obviously so caring and understanding of his brother. Thanks for what you do."

Talk about Autism community member

Autism Central

This year we became a partner for a new free education programme called Autism Central. The service offers co-designed and co-delivered, high-quality and accessible autism information, education and coaching for families and carers. Autism Central has been commissioned by NHS England's Workforce, Training and Education team, and is being delivered nationally by nine not-for-profit organisations. In partnership with the charity Contact, we manage regional hubs for London and the Midlands.

Autistic and OK

We also announced a new partnership with Zurich UK and the Z Zurich Foundation to develop a groundbreaking mental health programme in mainstream secondary schools.

We know that getting the right help early is vital to ensuring young people can achieve their potential. The Autistic and OK programme has been created to empower autistic young people to take control of their own mental wellbeing, understand themselves and feel OK.

The sessions – on understanding and managing OCD, anxiety, depression and bullying – will equip autistic young people with the knowledge and self-awareness to look after their mental wellbeing. They will also learn the tools and techniques to manage their mental health.

We developed the resources with a group of autistic youth advisors from our Ambitious Youth Network and a panel of experts, including a clinical psychologist, a training consultant and a special educational needs coordinator (SENCo).

The toolkit will be piloted in 20 secondary schools from September 2023, with the aim of rolling out the programme nationally in 2024.

Post-diagnosis support programme

We worked with 10 autistic young people from the Ambitious Youth Network to establish what support they would have wanted and used these experiences to form a six-week online intervention. The young people named the online course ‘Understanding you, Discovering You’ to reflect their post-diagnosis journey.

The online course supports autistic young people to explore what autism is and develop a positive autistic identity, and equips them with practical skills, with the aim of improving their mental health.

We also commissioned a team of researchers, led by University College London’s Centre for Research in Autism in Education (CRAE), to help collate evidence linking autistic identity and wellbeing, investigate inequalities in accessing post-diagnostic support, and lead an evaluation of the co-production and initial pilot of the online course. Autistic young people contributed to the research and the findings were due in October 2023.

To support the programme, we also formed an expert reference group, made up of sector experts, such as autistic people, Autistica, the National Autistic Society, leading clinical psychologists and academics, to help scrutinise and challenge the programme, and disseminate the online course.

The programme has been a valuable experience and we thank all reference group members for their time and guidance.

The programme aims to create an evidence base to influence policy and practice around post-diagnosis support.

“I really liked the supportive and judgement-free environment we created.”

Autistic participant of the ‘Understanding You, Discovering You’ online course.

Active citizenship in the community

Autistic children and young people are at the heart of everything that we do. Co-production is a vital part of our work, in our schools and colleges, and in the national support we offer to autistic young people.

Ambitious Youth Network

Our UK-wide platform for autistic young people now has over 800 members. Over the past year, the Participation team has been working to make the platform more accessible through easy-read versions of documents and videos explaining how to use the platform.

“The Ambitious Youth Network has been a lifeline for many people, including me. Ambitious about Autism is the only place with a youth network of its kind and I am simply a by-product of an excellent service made by people who saw the difficulties young autistic people were having and decided to create a safe place.”

Harvey, a member of the Ambitious Youth Network

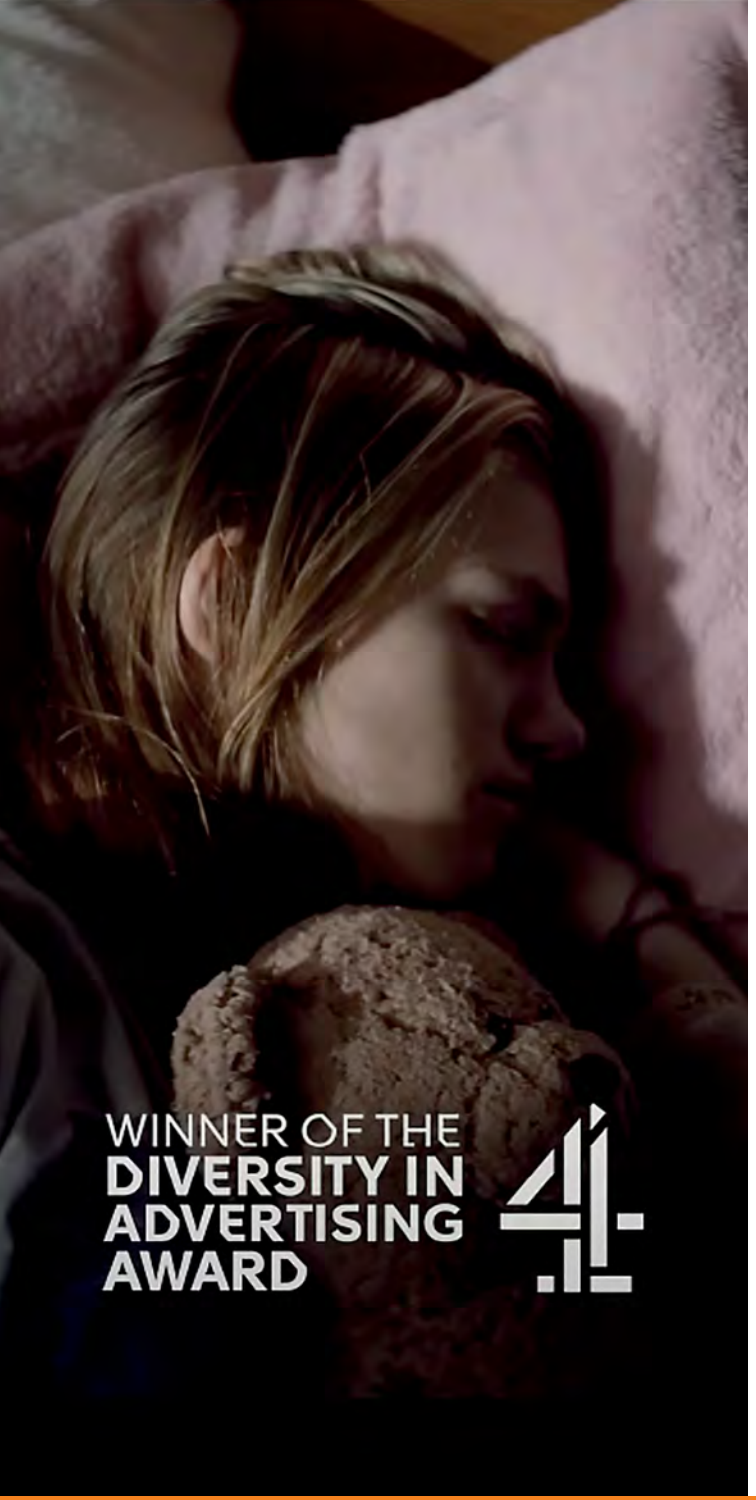
Youth Council

Our Youth Council is a group of autistic young people aged 16–25 who make sure that all our work reflects the views and needs of autistic children and young people. They report to our Board of Trustees.

The Youth Council met in March and provided insight and feedback into the National Services strategy. This was then presented at the March Board meeting where Youth Council members recorded video updates.

13–15 hubs

We have secured funding to pilot a hubs programme in local authorities and schools. The aim of this programme is to create resources and information for hubs to deliver peer sessions to autistic young people in their local areas.



World Autism Acceptance Week 2023

We partnered with Vanish to give a voice to the experiences of autistic girls in a high-profile, national advertising campaign. The **Me, My Autism & I** campaign, which was awarded a £1 million airtime prize by Channel 4, aimed to help autistic girls be seen, heard and supported. Members of our Ambitious Youth Network played a key role in the campaign's development.

The campaign featured an award-winning short television film, webpage and exhibition, and was supported by model and autism campaigner Christine McGuinness. Together with Vanish, we also published new research highlighting the gender gap in autism diagnosis.

Ambitious about Autism featured in a short film on Channel 4, directed by Oscar-winning director Tom Hooper. The film focused on a 15-year-old autistic girl called Ash (portrayed by an autistic actor and her real family) and her special connection to a treasured hoodie.

The film ultimately went on to win a prestigious Gold Lion at the Cannes Lions Festival.

We also took part in an exhibition at a gallery on the Southbank that showcased the stories of 12 young autistic girls and the clothing items that help make their world more comfortable. The exhibition included the story of a member of the Ambitious Youth Network.

Find out more about the **Me, My Autism & I** campaign

Our partners and supporters

We have achieved a great deal thanks to our amazing partners and supporters, who enable us to champion rights, campaign for change and create opportunities.

Thanks to the kindness and dedication of the public, philanthropists, companies, trusts and foundations, we raised £3,177k in 2022–23.

We are grateful to all the partners and supporters who have stood by us. Their continuing commitment gives us stability and allows us to expand our work in response to an ever-growing need. We are also pleased to have new partners join our Ambitious about Ambitious family, and we look forward to all that we will achieve together, as we enter the final year of our Time for Ambition strategy.

Philanthropy, trusts and foundations

The support received from philanthropists, trusts and foundations is essential to the growth and diversification of our services, and plays a significant role in making our mission and vision a reality. During this cost-of-living crisis, we are grateful to have received dedicated grants from foundations, helping us to minimise risks and build capacity at a time of increased uncertainty.

Corporate partnerships

Our ever-expanding list of corporate partners achieved amazing success, raising vital funds through a range of activities this year, all while championing autism in the workplace. We are particularly thrilled to have welcomed on board new partners, resulting in the launch of new projects that have brought about transformational change for the organisation and autistic children and young people.

Legacy gifts

We are grateful to those who chose to leave a gift to Ambitious about Autism in their will and have been lucky recipients of generous donations. Our legators are helping to ensure that we can continue to stand with autistic children and young people well into the future.

Events and fundraising challenges

This year we were able to grow our presence and increase donations through fundraising events. We'd like to thank our partners and supporters for supporting these inspiring events.

Ambitious 220

This year's Rapha Manchester to London ride was a record breaker. Taking place in June, we welcomed 160 riders taking part in the 220-mile ride. Led by Rapha founder and Ambitious about Autism Ambassador Simon Mottram, we raised £250,000. Our star fundraisers were Graham Cuninghame and Patrick Limpus, who raised £15,000.

Rapha

London Marathon

In April, 27 supporters took part in the iconic London Marathon and together they raised £85,000 for autistic children and young people. One runner, Paul Evans, set a new world record by becoming the fastest man to complete the London Marathon dressed as a knight.

Night of Ambition

In October, we hosted our gala fundraising event, Night of Ambition, in partnership with TalkTalk. The event raised £401,000 through ticket sales, live auction prizes and generous donations from guests.

Thank you to our host, Gregg Wallace MBE, and everyone who came together to stand with autistic children and young people to raise vital money and support our work.

Our strategic partners

Pears Foundation

Pears Foundation has been an integral partner to our work for nearly two decades. As the founding partner of new programmes and education services, such as Employ Autism and Ambitious College, the foundation helped us create positive, long-lasting change for autistic children and young people. Its unwavering commitment is remarkable, and the support for our core foundations demonstrates philanthropic leadership and enables us to maintain stability, innovate and grow.

Pears Foundation

Marsh McLennan

Marsh McLennan is our four-year strategic partner with a goal to create brighter futures by empowering talent and unlocking opportunities.

As well as fundraising, colleagues have volunteered their time and expertise to support many aspects of Ambitious about Autism's work, including pro bono support for strategic projects.

Through Marsh McLennan, our Employability and Training team has piloted an 'autism confident' employer framework. As part of this process, over 1,000 people have attended awareness sessions on autism, over 100 managers have attended Employ Autism training, we have reviewed policies and workplace practices, and 20 autistic young people have undertaken work-experience placements.

We also ran the 'Mentoring Talent' programme at Marsh McLennan for the second year, giving employees the opportunity to mentor autistic jobseekers around their career goals. All mentors receive two full days of training to be able to properly support their mentees. In the 2023 cohort there are 18 mentoring pairs. By developing these programmes, we've been able to find out what works and so create a blueprint for working with other employers in the future.

Together, we can create brighter futures, and Marsh McLennan is setting a high standard for all other major employers.

MarshMcLennan

TalkTalk

We have proudly partnered with TalkTalk since 2006. In addition to its generous sponsorship of Night of Ambition, TalkTalk is a leading Employ Autism partner and welcomed five young autistic interns to its workforce in 2022–23.

Rapha

Thanks to the support of its founder and former chief executive, Simon Mottram, Rapha Racing Ltd has raised more than £1.75m since its first cycling challenge in aid of Ambitious about Autism in 2014.

Through its fantastic innovation, support and friendship, Rapha continues to stand with autistic children and young people through its commitment to delivering a first-class cycling challenge, raising much-needed funds.

Zurich UK and the Z Zurich Foundation

As highlighted earlier in the report, through our exciting new partnership with Zurich UK and the Z Zurich Foundation, we're developing a programme to change thousands of young lives.

The Z Zurich Foundation grant is funding a national programme to support the mental wellbeing of autistic pupils in mainstream secondary schools.

The programme aims to reach thousands of autistic young people in the UK and will also provide support and guidance to thousands of parents and caregivers to help them care proactively for their mental wellbeing.

Our employability and training team is currently working with Zurich to produce a series of e-learning modules for staff to complete to develop their autism-confident practice.

Reckitt Benckiser UK

Through our partnership with its brand Vanish, Reckitt Benckiser UK has committed to three years of activity for World Autism Acceptance Week, including our national Me, My Autism & I campaign, which launched this year. Through on-pack promotion, Vanish is raising funds to help create a world where autistic girls and young people are heard, included and supported.

We are also working with Reckitt Benckiser UK to provide autism in the workplace training to the organisation's Employees and Talent and Acquisition to establish more inclusive hiring policies. We have also supported the creation of an internal neurodiversity handbook.

Lead funding partners

Bally's Foundation

We are delighted to have partnered with Bally's Foundation, whose funding has enabled us to pilot a new programme focused on post-diagnosis support. Through a six-week online course we help autistic young people to meet their peers, learn about autism and explore what their diagnosis means for them.

We are proud that everything we have done this year has been co-produced and co-researched with autistic young people. Their input has been invaluable. Bally's Foundation's gift will enable us to refine this programme and reach 5,000 autistic young people.

City Bridge Foundation

City Bridge Foundation's grant is enabling us to make sure autistic young Londoners make a positive transition to a place of their choosing when they leave Ambitious College. This takes a tremendous amount of expertise and planning from our dedicated Learner and Family Services team. City Bridge Foundation's multi-year grant enables us to plan with confidence and means we can continue to be there for our learners when they need us most. We were particularly grateful for the additional grant payment this year, in recognition of the financial impact of the cost-of-living crisis.

Constable Educational Trust

We are delighted to have received the support of the Constable Educational Trust once again. They were a significant partner in enhancing facilities at our founding TreeHouse School. Today, they continue to stand with autistic young people, enabling us to expand our reach through the Ambitious Youth Network, ensuring autistic young people can access peer support and connect with others going through similar experiences.

Esmée Fairbairn Foundation

Esmée Fairbairn Foundation's multi-year support underpins the work of our dynamic youth participation programme. We are delighted to have worked with the Foundation over the past year on several initiatives, and thanks to the Foundation's support, we can externally evaluate the programme's impact. We were particularly grateful that the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation recognised the impact of the cost-of-living crisis, awarding us an additional grant.

Graham and Susan Tobbell

Graham and Susan are deeply loyal partners of Ambitious about Autism. Thanks to their support, we have been able to diversify opportunities for autistic young people. This simply would not have been possible without Graham and Susan's commitment to delivering better outcomes for autistic young people, providing them with a chance to shine.

Joseph Levy Foundation

The Joseph Levy Foundation has played a key role in the development of our charity over the past few years. It has singlehandedly enabled us to develop and embed our Ambitious Approach to education within our settings, and to share this externally to reach many thousands of families and professionals.

The foundation has also funded our Learner and Family Services team to ensure the families in our settings are supported during times of need. We are deeply grateful to the Joseph Levy Foundation for its friendship and continuing support.

MariaMarina Foundation

We are grateful for the long-standing support and dedication shown by the MariaMarina Foundation since 2016. A committed funder of Ambitious College for the last six years, MariaMarina Foundation has continued to be instrumental in the expansion of the College, allowing us to implement an ambitious employability strategy that spans all our educational settings, building pathways to employment for autistic young people. We were particularly grateful that the MariaMarina Foundation recognised the impact of the cost-of-living crisis and awarded us an additional grant.

National Lottery Community Fund

Over the past two years, the National Lottery Community Fund has continued its support for our Employ Autism programme throughout this second year of a three-year grant. With this lead grant we've been able to help hundreds of autistic young people across the country to improve their employability skills and work towards a more independent future. It's also helped us to support thousands of family members, careers guidance professionals and employers to create a more inclusive working world.

We were especially grateful that the National Lottery Community Fund recognised the impact of the cost-of-living crisis this year and awarded us an uplift on our grant. We are so grateful for its continuing support and friendship.

COMMUNITY FUND

The Clothworkers' Foundation

As a long-standing friend of Ambitious about Autism, the Clothworkers' Foundation has been involved in developing many strategic projects since 2006, transforming the lives of hundreds of autistic children and young people. During our partnership, the Foundation made a significant contribution to the original construction of TreeHouse School, supported the school's renovations in 2021 and has been a committed supporter of our family support provision at Ambitious College.

THE CLOTHWORKERS' FOUNDATION

A huge thanks to our partners and supporters

Gregg Wallace MBE, television presenter. Appointed Ambitious about Autism ambassador in May 2023.

Ambitious partners

Pears Foundation
Marsh McLennan
Rapha Racing Ltd
TalkTalk Group plc
Z Zurich Foundation

Lead funding partners

Graham and Susan Tobbell
Bally's Foundation
Constable Educational Trust
The Clothworkers' Foundation
City Bridge Foundation
Esmée Fairbairn Foundation
Joseph Levy Foundation
MariaMarina Foundation
National Lottery Community Fund
Reckitt Benckiser

Ambitious supporters

Aberdeen Asset Management
Ali MacCallum
Apply Recruitment
BBC Children in Need
Bernard Sunley Foundation
Beatrice Laing Trust
Bradbury Foundation
Carlyle Group
Chapman Charitable Trust
Charlotte Warner and Bruno Paulson
Chris Pond
Collaboration Company
CIB
Danuta Gray
Duke of Newcastle 1986 Charitable Trust
Eduardo Guttierez-Garcia
Ellandi
Elizabeth Stanton
Sir Harvey McGrath
Health Education England
Hornsey Parochial Charities
Hospital Saturday Fund
Jean Levenant
Jean Carter *
John and Clare Coombe-Tennant
Ketchum
Koral Anderson
Kumar Tangri
Kusuma Trust UK
Laurie Edmans CBE
Lesley Longstone
Lloyds of London
LNER
The Lord Tim Clement-Jones CBE
Lucy Nutt
M/Six
Magnus Schoeman
Mark Naughton
Martyn Craddock
Masonic Charitable Foundation

*signifies a legacy gift.

Matt Davis and Eliza Mishcon
Matt Hutnell
Michael Clark
The Mulberry Trust
Neil Goulden
Nick and Pippa Medd
Nick Hornby
Paul Disley-Tindell
Phil Haslam
Philippa Stobbs
PIMCO Foundation
Prospero World
Red Brick Road
Sally Cairns
Salt
Simon Clements
Simon Hillson
Simon and Lucy Mottram
Snowbility
Sue Adkins
The Harebell Centenary Fund
The Thompson Family Charitable Trust
The&Partnership
Tim Barber
Tottenham Grammar School Foundation
Tristia Harrison CBE
Dr Virginia Bovell OBE

And all our other supporters, including those who have chosen to remain anonymous.

Our fundraising approach

Fundraising practices

We adhere to the highest fundraising standards, which we recognise to be essential in retaining the trust and support of our much-valued donors.

We pay the voluntary levy to register with the Fundraising Regulator and ensure that our practices comply with the Code of Fundraising Practice and the Fundraising Promise. We are also a member of the Chartered Institute of Fundraising.

We maintain up-to-date policies for: our fundraising code of conduct; fundraising ethics; compliments and complaints; and whistleblowing. We ensure that all team members understand and comply with these policies.

Our Board of Trustees reviews these policies annually, alongside our compliance with fundraising regulations.

Our privacy policy recognises recent changes and continues to comply with data protection legislation and regulation and is accessible to all on our websites.

We also ensure that we are compliant with the UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), the EU GDPR, the Data Protection Act 2018 and Privacy and Electronic Communications Regulations (PECR).

In the year under review, there have been no known formal complaints regarding the organisation's fundraising practices. This is in line with the previous year of 2021–22, in which there were also no complaints.

We echo organisational values in our fundraising practice. Through our close adherence to fundraising regulations, scrutiny by the executive leadership team and transparency with supporters, we ensure that we do not unreasonably intrude on a person's privacy; are not unreasonably persistent; and do not place undue pressure on any person to give money or other property.

We also value difference, continually seek to increase the diversity of our supporters and demonstrate inclusivity in all we do. Our fundraising committees proudly include many autistic and neurodiverse members, alongside those with lived experience.

Our fundraising work

Most of our fundraised income is generated through partnerships with trusts, foundations and corporate partners, as well as individuals who have an interest in our cause.

We have also benefited from the generosity of community members and individuals participating in online and in-person events and challenges.

We use third parties to support our fundraising when specific digital platforms are required for fundraising events, e.g. JustGiving, Funraising and Givergy.

We do not engage in face-to-face or telephone direct marketing. Our regular giving programme is conducted primarily with our close community. We do not conduct street or public site collections, nor do we have any mass participation activities in place.

Our people

We are so proud of our people and are committed to making Ambitious about Autism a great place to work. Our colleagues do extraordinary work that transforms the lives of autistic children and young people, and we are passionate about supporting them and developing their potential.

Equity, diversity and inclusion

We want our organisation to be a place that embraces, enables and champions equity, diversity and inclusion. We want autistic children and young people, our staff, volunteers, supporters and, in fact, anyone who comes into contact with us to feel they belong and can bring their whole professional selves to Ambitious about Autism.

This year we entered the second year of our equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) strategy and made progress on four key areas of focus:

Courageous governance and leadership

Following an inclusive recruitment process, our Board of Trustees has a broader range of backgrounds and perspectives. We also appointed an EDI trustee lead, Laura Palmer, to further embed EDI at board level. We recruited a diverse group of autistic young people to our Youth Council, which has high-level oversight of our organisation's work, alongside our Board of Trustees.

Building an inclusive workplace

This year we continued to develop and grow our three staff networks – safe spaces where people can come together to share ideas, support and learn from one another, raise awareness of challenges and channel their authentic voice.

Our staff networks led lots of cross-organisational activities this year, such as an online event to mark World AIDS Day in December and an internal campaign to drive awareness of the use of gender pronouns. This year we also gathered better data about our staff through our 'Tell us about you' survey.

High-quality and inclusive education and services

Within our education directorate, our aim across the three years of our EDI strategy is to reach and support diverse communities in a way that is enabling and appropriate to ambitions, interests, experiences and needs. Each setting has an accessibility policy and, with input from learners and pupils, we've created an easy-read version of our safeguarding policies. Our schools and Ambitious College have built EDI into their curriculum and activities, and we've also set up parent/carer groups across all settings.

Influencing national work

At a national level we have stood with autistic children and young people from diverse backgrounds nationally. Through our World Autism Acceptance Week 2023 campaign, we championed the voices of autistic young people of colour and LGBTQ+ young people. Working with University College London, we also commissioned research into inequalities in post-diagnostic support for autistic young people.

Next steps

A lot has been achieved in the first year of our EDI strategy. We have laid good foundations to support our future development in EDI. We now want to focus on embedding these good foundations consistently and strategically progressing the work that will make the most difference to autistic children and young people and our whole community.

Staff engagement

Listening to our colleagues and gathering their views is key to helping us improve their experiences. A wide-ranging staff survey in October 2022 had a response rate of nearly 90%.

It was really positive to see from the results that colleagues have a strong sense of pride and enjoyment in working for Ambitious about Autism. There's a very high understanding of our vision, mission and values as an organisation, a strong team spirit and a shared drive towards achieving these goals.

Many felt they were treated with fairness and respect and could bring their whole selves to work. Colleagues had trust and respect for their managers and organisational leaders. Results in areas such as safeguarding and safety also scored very highly.

Communication and engagement

In response to feedback in the staff survey, we strengthened our communication and engagement with colleagues by investing in additional people resource and starting up a printed staff newsletter that was distributed each term across our settings, beginning in spring 2023, as a way of keeping busy staff members up to date with what's happening across the charity.

Recruitment

Recruitment and retention is a challenge in all industries and continues to be a key priority and focus for us. We introduced a pilot 'Welcome Bonus' programme in February 2023 to help attract and secure critical Allied Health professionals such as occupational and speech and language therapists.

Hybrid working

Following the pandemic, hybrid working arrangements have been in place for many members of our central teams. In 2022, we carried out a survey to gather staff views about their hybrid working experiences. We were pleased that 97% of staff surveyed felt they were productive and had good support from their manager when working remotely.

Wellbeing

We continued to provide signposting and support to colleagues through our wellbeing hub on our staff intranet, with tools and resources to support mental health and wellbeing. Our popular cross-organisational step challenge also returned this year. The four-week 'Big Team Challenge' encouraged teams of staff to work together to stay active and motivated.

Ambitious Leaders

We are committed to nurturing and developing talent within our organisation through our learning and development programme, ‘Ambitious Leaders’.

The programme was created to support leaders across our organisation and set up in collaboration with staff from across Ambitious about Autism. It has also been accredited by the Institute of Leadership and Management (InstLM), which means that all participants who successfully complete the programme will become Associate Members of the Institute of Leadership and Management.

Looking to the year ahead

Over the final year of our Time for Ambition strategy, we will continue to build on our core expertise in education and employability. We will also engage, more than ever before, in other areas essential to autistic children and young people leading fulfilling lives. These include having supportive families and relationships, enjoying good health and wellbeing, and being active citizens in their communities.

We always adapt to make sure we are supporting autistic young people and their families in the right way and at the right time, while always prioritising what matters most to them.

The cost-of-living crisis

The cost-of-living crisis has had a huge impact on autistic children and young people and their families, who face even more challenging hardships. In 2021–22 and 2022–23, the number of complex welfare cases requiring support from the Learner and Family Services team increased by a third.

We know this demand will only grow and so continue to do all we can to support vulnerable families, often in low-income households, some of whom are facing homelessness. Through all our work, we also want to make sure we are supporting all those who need our help and will be exploring how best to access marginalised communities.

Reaching more autistic children, young people and their families

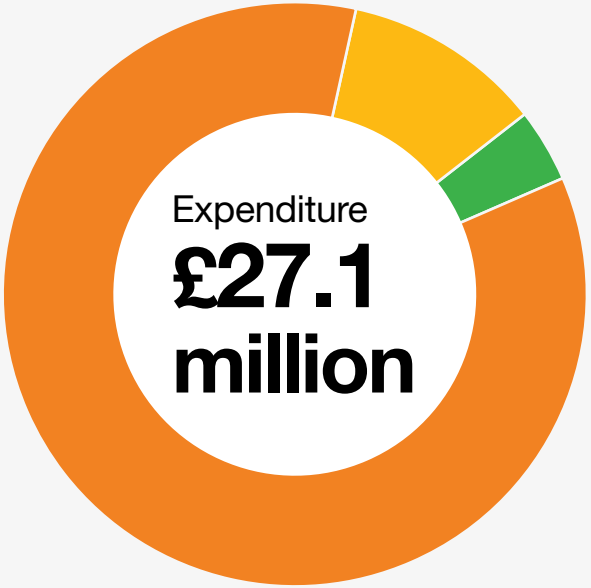
Looking ahead, we are excited to be growing our programmes to support more autistic young people and their families than ever before. In particular, we will:

- continue to develop and grow our education services to respond to growing and changing need. This includes supporting our new Spring School into its permanent building and integrating St. John's College into our charity.
- launch the evaluation results for Employ Autism, a unique piece of research and a landmark study in improving autistic young people's employability skills and creating more welcoming and inclusive workplaces; we are also creating a self-sustainable model to expand the reach of critical service
- continue campaigning for better rights and funding in education for autistic children and young people through Written Off?
- expand our ground-breaking assistive technology programme at Ambitious College, which is improving autistic young people's access to learning, independence and participation through technology

- continue to grow membership of our accessible online platforms for autistic young people and parents, allowing them to connect with others in similar situations, develop friendships, feel supported and enjoy better wellbeing
- grow our service and resources
- build on the success of new projects, such as our Autistic and OK schools, Employ Autism programme and our post-diagnostic support programme
- shape the next phase in our organisational strategy, Time for Ambition.

Financial review

Our total income for the year was £27.9m and our overall expenditure £27.1m. Our net assets are £21.0m, compared with net assets of £20.1m at 31 August 2023.



Income:

- **£23.9m**
  charitable activities: education services
- **£3.2m**
  gifts and donated service
- **£0.6m**
  trading income
- **£0.2m**
  investments and other income

How our money was spent:

- **£3m**
  charitable activities: external affairs
- **£23m**
  charitable activities: education services
- **£1.1m**
  raising funds

Financial performance

The 2022–23 year showed strong financial performance, with income increasing to £27.9m from £24.5m in 2022, reflecting growth in the services provided to autistic children and young people. Total expenditure for the year also grew to £27.1m, an increase of £3.7m (2022: £23.4m).

Despite the positive financial performance, free reserves decreased to £2.8m (2022: £2.9m), which is within the reserves target range of £1.7m–£2.8m These funds are available for future development in line with the Time for Ambition strategy, as well as providing resilience against financial pressures.

During the year, the charity invested £0.1m in freehold and leasehold improvements, £0.2m on furniture and equipment, £0.1m on vehicles and £0.3m on computer equipment and software.

Ambitious about Autism is using an interest rate swap to manage its exposure to interest rate movements with the interest rate fixed at 4% for the NatWest Loan of £1.1m.

Our investment portfolio was valued at £1.7m, a £0.1m reduction compared to 31 August 2022, reflecting challenging market conditions.

Investment policy

The charity's investment policy was approved by the Board of Trustees in July 2023. It aims to produce the best financial return at an acceptable level of risk. The risk profile is agreed with the investment manager and is regarded as medium. The policy is reviewed at least once a year. The trustees have set a target to grow the portfolio by inflation + 3% per annum (after fees) over the long term. This was not achieved in the year due to market conditions.

The trustees have stated within the investment policy their commitment to responsible investing, and aim to make a positive difference on society through the charity's investment holdings. Over the last three years, investments have increased from £1,644k to £1,693k, which is a gain of 3%.

Investment risk management

The investment portfolio is diversified across a range of instruments to reduce the risk of overexposure to one type of asset. We hold the following instruments: fixed interest, direct UK and overseas equities, cash and property, and managed funds. Note 12 provides further analysis of these assets.

The investments are managed by investment managers appointed by the charity, currently Rathbones Group Plc, which is a reputable FTSE 250 company with net income of £49m in 2022. The risk profile is agreed with the investment manager and is regarded as medium risk. Risk management practices Members of the investment committee meet the investment manager twice a year to review performance and discuss market risks. The investment committee reports to the trustees on the risk profile, selection of investment managers and returns achieved.

Reserves policy and going concern

Free reserves exclude restricted funds and designated funds. At Ambitious about Autism, we hold free reserves to mitigate against risks resulting from unexpected drops in fundraising income, a downturn in learner numbers or unexpected short-term increases in expenditure. Our reserves policy is reviewed by the trustees annually and was last reviewed in December 2023. Based upon an evaluation of income and expenditure risks and working capital requirements, the trustees have agreed that free reserves should be in the range of £1.8m–£2.8m for 2023–24, based on our risk profile. As at 31 August 2023, free reserves were £2.8m, which are within the free reserves range, £1.7m–£2.8m, for 2022–23. The additional free reserves will be carried forward to the next financial year, when they will be utilised to support core activities as well as the implementation of the Time for Ambition strategy. The 2023–24 budget shows a year end free reserves position that is within the agreed range. The trustees will continue to monitor the reserves position closely throughout the year.

In addition to the free reserves, Ambitious about Autism has a number of designated funds totalling £5.9m as at 31 August 2023. These are:

- Fixed assets, valued at £3.7m. Depreciation expenditure will be funded from this fund on an annual basis.
- Buildings maintenance and development fund, which is based on projected 30-year life cycle costs and was established for major repairs to our group and other premises. As at 31 August 2023, there was £0.8m in this fund.
- School development fund – a designated fund was created in 2013 for broader school development. The fund had a balance of £5k as at 31 August 2023.
- Covid recovery fund – a fund established in 2020 to provide a contingency against future risks as a result of the coronavirus pandemic and support recovery, including additional costs or losses in income.

The fund had a balance of £0.5m as at 31 August 2023.

- Transformation fund – a fund totalling £0.9m at 31 August 2023, which was established in 2020 to support our Time for Ambition strategy.

The policy of the Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust is to hold sufficient reserves to provide a working balance to mitigate the impact of uneven cash flows; provide a contingency in respect of unexpected events; and plan for potential major items of expenditure, including continued expansion. Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust funds balances as at 31 August 2023 totalled £10.9m. This comprised nil unrestricted funds, £4.6m of restricted funds and £6.3m of restricted fixed asset funds. The funds balance at 31 August 2022 was £9.9m. The pension deficit reported in 2021–22 has swung to a net asset of £31k in 2022–23, resulting in year-on-year unrealised gains, which is at risk of reversing in the future. As this is within the limit of the net asset ceiling, the £31k is recognised in the accounts.

In accordance with the arrangements for a multi-academy trust, any deficit relating to the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) is underwritten by the Department for Education.

After making appropriate enquiries, the trustees have a reasonable expectation that the charity has adequate resources to continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future. For this reason, it continues to adopt the going concern basis in preparing the financial statements. Further details regarding the adoption of the going concern basis can be found in the Statement of Accounting Policies.

Risks and uncertainties

Risks are managed in accordance with the risk policy approved by the Board of Trustees. The aim of the policy is to:

- understand as fully as possible the risks being faced
- take appropriate action to manage those risks
- minimise the risk of new initiatives adversely affecting existing work
- accept a higher level of uncertainty, if appropriate, when taking advantage of new opportunities.

Ambitious about Autism has a risk register, which is reviewed annually by the Finance and Resources Committee and the Board of Trustees. Risks are scored according to likelihood and impact. The changes to risks are reviewed termly by the Finance and Resources Committee and Board, alongside the actions being taken or proposed to mitigate the risks.

The table on the next page identifies the four key strategic risks that have been identified by the Board of Trustees and explains how these risks are being managed.

	Risk	Mitigation
Pupil numbers	Within an uncertain policy environment in times of austerity, there is an increased risk to pupil and learner numbers in our education services, and this uncertainty impacts our ability to plan.	To manage the risk, we monitor pupil and learner numbers so that we can carefully manage admissions and increase our admission numbers as required. We maintain good relationships with commissioners, ensuring timely assessment dates to enable a fast turnaround of consultations, and support parents and carers through the admissions process.
Recruitment and retention	The failure to recruit and retain the quantity and quality of specialist staff required poses a significant risk to services operating as planned.	High-quality staff are critical to Ambitious about Autism. We are building our recruitment pipeline, diversifying our approach to recruitment and building relationships with training schools to attract applicants in hard-to-recruit professions. We have several initiatives in place to ensure that our terms and conditions are competitive in a challenging market.
Financial risk	The financial impact of an uncertain economic outlook, and high-cost inflation, may negatively affect the financial position.	Regular management reporting and financial re-forecasting is undertaken to understand an up-to-date picture of the group's financial outlook and is available to senior management and trustees. Cash flow forecasting is prepared to assess the organisation's ability to meet financial obligations. Reserves balances are maintained to support financial sustainability.
Learner related fee income	Fee negotiations with local authorities placing learners could cause cash flow issues and/or have a negative impact on financial sustainability.	Forecasting is undertaken to understand an up-to-date picture of the group's financial outlook and is available to senior management and trustees. Cash flow forecasting is prepared to assess the organisation's ability to meet financial obligations. Reserves balances are maintained to support financial sustainability.

Legal structures and governance

Governance

Ambitious about Autism (the Company) is a charitable company limited by guarantee, incorporated on 23 May 1997 per Companies House (company number 03375255) and registered as a charity on 2 July 1997 (charity number 1063184). The Company was established under a memorandum of association, which established the objects and powers of the charitable company and is governed under its articles of association.

Ambitious about Autism is governed by a Board of Trustees who also act as the directors of the Company for the purposes of company law.

Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust (the Trust) is a multi-academy trust, a company limited by guarantee and an exempt charity. It was founded and incorporated on 18 December 2012 (company number 08335297) to support the development and running of The Rise School and further free schools. In September 2023 a second free school, Spring School, opened within the Trust.

The charitable company's memorandum and articles of association are the primary governing documents of the Trust. The Trust is governed by a Board of Trustees who also act as the directors of the charitable company for the purposes of company law, and it has members whose duty is to ensure that the board is effectively discharging its responsibilities. Ambitious about Autism is the sole corporate member of the Trust along with three individual members.

A formal governance review was conducted in 2019 supported by an external facilitator with a focus on streamlining and strengthening governance arrangements across the group. The board, committee structure and membership, articles of association, members agreements, scheme of reservation and delegation, and terms of references were all updated and are now reviewed annually. All changes in relation to the Trust were approved by the Department for Education.

The trustees of Ambitious about Autism and the trustees of Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust are all members of the Joint Group Board Committee. The respective Ambitious about Autism and Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust boards retain responsibility for all matters and delegate a number of appropriate decisions to the Joint Group Board Committee and its subcommittees. This maximises efficiency and impact between the two boards. For example, where joint policies exist, they are reviewed and approved, where appropriate,

by the Joint Group Board Committee. Clear schemes of reservation and delegation are in place for both boards.

Both boards of trustees follow a regular cycle of termly meetings and have at least one away day with the executive leadership team each year, as well as holding additional meetings when required.

The boards are supported by several joint subcommittees as set out below:

- The Nominations and Remuneration Committee oversees governance planning and policy, including trustee recruitment, support and review. It also reviews and agrees remuneration and terms and conditions of employment for the Executive Leadership team and staff across the Company and the Trust. It meets termly in advance of board meetings.
- The Finance and Resources Committee meets termly in advance of board meetings and is responsible for the general oversight and scrutiny of systems, planning, financial and resource management, and reviewing internal controls and risk management for the charity and the Trust.
- The Education Committee meets termly and is responsible for oversight of education services. It also oversees the governing bodies and advisory groups in each service for both the charity and the Trust.
- The Investment Committee, an Ambitious about Autism committee, reports to the Finance and Resources Committee, monitoring the performance of the charity's investment portfolio. It meets twice a year.
- The Trust Audit Committee meets termly to oversee the annual report and accounts, the audit, the programme of internal scrutiny and compliance with Department for Education legislation for the Trust.

All matters related to the educational performance of TreeHouse School, The Rise School and Ambitious College are examined by their governing bodies. This is also the case for the new Spring School since its opening in September 2023. Safeguarding is discussed and considered at every level of our governance.

Management of the charity and the Trust is delegated to the chief executive, who is also the accounting officer for the Trust, and the Executive Leadership team, whose members attend board and subcommittee meetings.

The Ambitious about Autism Youth Council comprised 14 autistic young people aged 16–25 as of 31 August 2023. Members of the Youth Council are encouraged to shape and influence our work and make presentations to the Board of Trustees. Two Youth Council Link Trustees have been appointed to ensure a strong link exists between the board and the Youth Council.

Trustee recruitment, induction and training

The aim of the charity and the Trust is to build a diverse board that has the optimum range of skills, experience and perspectives to ensure that we have the appropriate level of support, scrutiny and oversight.

People with lived experience of autism are involved in the governance and decision-making of the charity and the Trust, including on the Board of Trustees, the governing bodies and advisory groups.

The recruitment and induction policy works to promote this goal. New trustees are recruited openly through a variety of channels, including search, advertising and through networks. Once recruited, trustees are supported with an induction programme and handbook in the first few months. As part of the induction process, trustees receive training on issues such as safeguarding, health and safety, and data protection.

The charity also runs a termly training programme for trustees, covering topics such as equity, diversity and inclusion, exclusions and unconscious bias.

The recruitment, induction and appraisal of trustees is overseen by the Nominations and Remuneration Committee. All trustees give their time voluntarily and receive no benefits from the charity or the Trust. Any expenses reclaimed are set out in note 6 to the accounts (**see p84**).

Charity Governance Code

The principles and recommended practice set out in the Charity Governance Code are regularly discussed by the trustees.

Areas of focus in 2022–23 were:

Equity, diversity and inclusion

The board believes a balance of experience, skills, knowledge and backgrounds is crucial in the composition of the members to provide a variety of perspectives in discussions and enhance decision-making.

We believe that including people with lived experience of autism in our governance and decision-making and on the Board of Trustees is of benefit to the charity and the Trust.

The board is committed to investing in its diversity. When recruiting new Trustees in the year, the impact on the diversity of the board – with reference to a skills and diversity audit undertaken in July 2022 – was a key consideration. This audit showed a diverse board with a good range and depth of relevant knowledge and experience, and recruitment of new trustees aims to further enhance this.

Integrity

The board reviewed the new principles of integrity included in the Charity Governance Code from December 2020 and confirmed that it was adhering to the new principles. A further review took place post year end.

In particular, the annual review of the safeguarding policies and confirmation of understanding of the Keeping Children Safe in Education requirements by trustees as well as regular reviews of the risk register and incidents ensures that the board continually reflects on its responsibilities and those of the organisation.

Engagement with suppliers, customers and others in a business relationship

We have a strong commitment to paying all suppliers within agreed terms.

Our executive leadership team prioritises achieving the best possible outcomes for our pupils, learners and stakeholders.

Open engagement with parents, guardians and our local communities is vital to building successful and long-term relationships.

We continue to work closely and collaboratively with local authorities to ensure that outcomes are mutually beneficial, with our pupils, learners and stakeholders continuing to be our core focus. We work hard to establish and maintain good relationships with our wider stakeholders, including our funders and supporters.

S172 statement

The Board have identified the following key stakeholders based on the nature of their interactions with the charity and with reference to the charitable objectives:

- The autistic children and young people who attend education settings run by Ambitious about Autism, and their parents and carers.
- The autistic young people who access the national programmes of activities run by Ambitious about Autism, and their parents and carers.
- Funders, supporters and partners of Ambitious about Autism's national programmes of activities.
- Current and potential employers of autistic young people.
- Professionals working in the field of autism education.
- Ambitious about Autism employees.
- Suppliers and contractors.

The executive leadership team and board make assessments and decisions in good faith, considering the potential consequence on stakeholders. In addition, they consider the expected outcomes most likely to promote the success of Ambitious about Autism. The benefit of our pupils, learners and stakeholders is always paramount.

The executive leadership team and the board consider the following:

- The consequences of any decision in the long term. This includes a regular review of our risk register, departmental operational plans and overall strategic plan.
- The interests of our employees, through regular feedback from all-staff meetings, team meetings and individual monthly supervisions.
- The need to foster business relationships with suppliers, customers and others, ranging from prompt supplier payments to regular meetings and communication with local authorities. This includes weekly updates to local authorities with respect to our pupils and learners.
- The impact of the operations of the charity and the Trust on the community and the environment. We have a community representative on all our governing bodies and continue to review our fleet management to achieve further cost savings in terms of running costs and our impact on the environment.
- The desirability of the charity and the Trust in maintaining a reputation for high standards of business conduct. We lead by example and build a culture of excellence through good recruitment choices and practices, and excellent training.
- The need to act fairly as members of the charity and the Trust. We have combined most of our policies across the group.
- Board oversight and challenge – the Board of Trustees receive regular updates on stakeholder engagement at their termly meetings through the management reporting pack developed by the senior

management team. For example, recent/planned engagement moments with employees are outlined in the termly and annual 'People' report and KPIs, and recent/planned engagement moments with funders are outlined in the termly and annual Fundraising reports. The Board engages directly with autistic young people through the Youth Council, who are represented at Board meetings either in person or through pre-recorded messages. The Trustees are encouraged to question and challenge the senior management team to ensure the input of key stakeholders is taken into account when developing organisational strategy.

- Board training – the Board of Trustees receive regular training on a range of subjects, including compliance matters related to safeguarding and governance, and on topics more widely related to the areas in which the charity operate. Bi-annual seminars are held to focus on areas of current interest for the Trustees, including topics relevant to stakeholder engagement. Trustees are also regularly invited to attend events with external stakeholders, and to visit the educational settings, in order to gain a firsthand insight into the needs and interests of key stakeholder groups.

Within the 2022–23 year a key engagement activity with the staff of the Charity and the Trust was through an organisation-wide staff survey. This sought the views of colleagues on a range of topics, to understand their experience of working for Ambitious about Autism and to identify areas of improvement for future focus (**see page 40**). The findings from the survey were explored in detail by the Senior Management Team, the Staff Council and the Senior Leadership Teams of each of the education settings. Results were also shared with and discussed in depth by the Trustees.

During the year our Service Development team met with a number of key external stakeholders including the Department for Education and a range of local authorities, to explore options for the further growth and development of the organisation. There was also a high level of engagement with key government policymakers (**see page 11**).

The Youth Council is an important group of volunteers, providing a link between the Board of Trustees and autistic young people to ensure their voice is heard and reflected at a strategic level. **See page 23** for more information about the Youth Council's activities during 2022–23.

Remuneration policy for key management personnel

The Board of Trustees of Ambitious about Autism and the Trust is responsible for defining the executive pay policy. This includes deciding on the salaries of the chief executive and the executive leadership team. The board delegates this responsibility to the Nominations and Remuneration Committee. The committee reviews executive pay and our total reward strategy for staff.

The committee meets each term and makes recommendations to the Board of Trustees for approval. We have an executive pay policy that sets out our approach to pay for our Executive Leadership team, how pay is determined and reviewed, and the relative impact on pay across the organisation.

Our approach to pay is underpinned by our principle to:

"Pay a fair salary and reward package to attract and retain skilled and expert senior leaders for Ambitious about Autism and Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust. Salaries and benefits should be competitive within the charity, education and public

sectors, proportionate to the complexity of each role and responsibility, and in line with our objectives and affordable."

The executive pay policy aims to follow a robust, evidence-based process to achieve this principle:

- Take account of pay in similar organisations in the UK charity and public sector markets, but do not compete with salaries in the private sector.
- Monitor salary trends in the charity sector through surveys produced by providers such as XpertHR, Croner and ACEVO, as well as Education and Skills Funding Agency academy schools financial benchmarking reports and, where necessary, commission external benchmarking exercises.
- Ensure performance is reviewed and reported to the Nominations and Remuneration Committee on an annual basis. Apply performance-related pay elements only where required by the relevant market sector.
- Mirror the national standards for professional groups, such as headteachers.
- Take account of the Academy Trust Handbook.
- Take account of the difference between Executive Leadership team pay and the lowest-paid roles, and median and average pay across the organisation.

Our approach to safeguarding

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility within the charity and the Trust. This means our trustees, employees and volunteers are required to ensure that Ambitious about Autism is a safe space.

Our policy and procedures also apply to extended and off-site activities, managed by the charity and the Trust, such as community access programmes, residential visits and work experience placements.

All staff members undertake safeguarding and adult protection training during induction, including whistleblowing procedures, to ensure they understand our safeguarding systems and their responsibilities.

This training is regularly updated, at least annually, and is in line with advice from our local safeguarding adult partnership, Haringey Safeguarding Adults. All staff receive training on the government's anti-radicalisation strategy, PREVENT, to enable them to identify young people at risk of being drawn into terrorism and to challenge extremist ideas.

Staff also receive regular safeguarding and adult protection updates (for example, through emails, newsletters, and staff meetings) as required, but at least annually.

All trustees and governors receive annual training about safeguarding, to make sure they have the knowledge and information needed to perform their functions and understand their strategic responsibilities as outlined in part 2 of the Department for Education's statutory safeguarding guidance, Keeping Children Safe in Education 2022 (KCSiE).

Safeguarding is embedded in our recruitment processes, with at least one person on any interview/appointment panel for a post at the charity or the Trust required to have completed Safer Recruitment in Education training.

All staff who have contact with young people and families have regular supervisions, and access to external clinical supervisions. These provide staff with support, coaching,

and training, promote the interests of young people and allow for confidential discussions of sensitive issues.

Streamlined Energy and Carbon Reporting (SECR)

SECR is a legislative reporting requirement commenced on 1 April 2019. It mandates that all companies that meet the thresholds must report on their operational energy consumption and associated emissions The high-level breakdown is as follows:

		kWh	Mileage	tCO2e
Gas	**2022-23**	402,764	n/a	74
	2021-22	407,071	n/a	75
Electricity	**2022-23**	503,858	n/a	104
	2021-22	715,755	n/a	139
Transport	**2022-23**	24,427	25,461	6
	2021-22	20,624	21,192	5
Total	**2022-23**	931,049	25,461	184
	2021-22	1,143,450	21,192	219

Intensity metric

An intensity metric gives us an indicator of carbon performance based on an operational figure of the number of service users (pupils and learners), with 324 users emitting on average 0.57kg CO2e each. This is measured annually and compared with previous years to show progress in reducing our carbon intensity.

	2022-23	2021-22
Number of service users	324	312
tCO2e	184	219
	0.57	0.70

Sustainability action plan

At Ambitious about Autism, we understand the important role that we play in responding to climate change. We are committed to reducing our carbon emissions and have already made excellent progress on our sustainability action plan. Through our three-year strategy, we are raising better awareness, reshaping our activities and developing solutions to ensure that our organisation is environmentally, economically and socially sustainable.

Our achievements in 2022–23 include:

- The purchase of new electric fleet vehicles, which are now in place at TreeHouse School, Ambitious College's West Thames campus and St. John's College in Brighton.
- Installation of electric vehicle charging points at TreeHouse School, Ambitious College's West Thames campus and St. John's College to support the new electric fleet and to encourage the use of greener transport.
- Dual waste and recycling facilities are now in place at all settings, resulting in a reduction of general waste and disposal cost.
- New electricity supply contracts have been secured for TreeHouse School and The Rise School, which provide 100% green renewable energy to our settings.
- LED lighting upgrades have been completed at Ambitious College's West Thames campus and the Pears National Centre for Autism Education.
- Development of a new environmental awareness eLearning course, which is available through our Ambitious Learning platform.

- A Sustainability Committee has been established to gather views on sustainability from a wide range of stakeholders and is responsible for monitoring the strategy and action plan.
- Completion of a feasibility study and exploration of options for renewable energy generation via solar photovoltaic panels at the Pears National Centre for Autism Education.
- The establishment of a carbon footprint, working with our external partner Acclaro Consulting, has allowed us to produce a carbon reduction strategy for the next three years.

We are really proud of our journey so far and, despite the economic challenges, there have been some substantive and impactful achievements. As we move into the third year of our strategy, we will continue to review and further develop our plans, whilst also exploring new opportunities that contribute to a sustainable future.

The following figures were used to convert energy (kWh) to tCO2e figures:

	Litre		CO2e	
	2022-23	2021-22	2022-23	2021-22
Gas	n/a	n/a	0.18293 tonnes per MWh	0.18254 tonnes per MWh
Electricity	n/a	n/a	0.2071 tonnes per MWh	0.19338 tonnes per MWh
Fuel	Petrol: 9.5kWh per litre Diesel: 10.5kWh per litre	Petrol: 10.6kWh per litre Diesel: 9.5kWh per litre	Petrol: 0.22166 tonnes per MWh Diesel: 0.23908 tonnes per MWh	Petrol: 0.22719 tonnes per MWh Diesel: 0.24115 tonnes per MWh

Keeping data safe

We are fully committed to protecting the details of all the people we work with and who support us. We continue to make sure we're always thinking about privacy and how to keep data safe and secure. Staff are required to stay up to date and informed through regular training. We never stop working on this.

Public benefit

Ambitious about Autism works to support autistic children and young people and their families throughout the UK. TreeHouse School supports pupils aged 4–19, The Rise School supports pupils aged 4–18 and Ambitious College supports learners aged 16–25, based on their needs.

Placements of learners are funded by a combination of funding from the Education and Skills Funding Agency and local authorities. Other activities are funded through voluntary income or fees earned from providing a service, for example, providing specialist training or support to parents, teachers and other professionals.

In overseeing the provision of education and the support of children, young people and their families, the trustees of Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust have complied with their duty regarding the guidance on public benefit published by the Charity Commission in exercising their powers and duties.

The trustees have referred to the guidance contained in the Charity Commission's general guidance on public benefit when reviewing the aims and objectives of the charity and in planning its future activities.

Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust's principal object is to advance, for the public benefit, education in the UK by developing schools to make special educational provisions for pupils with special educational needs, or 16–19 academies offering curricula appropriate to the needs of their students.

The Trust opened its first school, The Rise School, in September 2014. In particular, the trustees consider how planned activities will contribute to the aims and objectives set and are committed to NCVO's ethical principles.

Connected organisations

Ambitious about Autism is an active member of the Autism Education Trust, Autism Alliance, British Institute of Learning Disabilities (BILD), Council for Disabled Children, Disabled Children's Partnership, National Association for Non-Maintained and Independent Special Schools (NASS), Natspec, Positive Behaviour Support Alliance and the Special Educational Consortium.

Our education provisions are co-located at Springwest Academy (part of the Tudor Park Education Trust), West Thames College, The College of Haringey, Enfield and North East London and Whittington Hospital.

Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust

The Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust is a separate exempt charity.

Ambitious about Autism is the sole corporate member of the Trust. Therefore, the results of Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust are consolidated into these group financial statements.

The Trust is actively seeking further partnerships to develop more special schools to address a growing need for more specialist education provision for autistic children and young people.

Trustees, advisers and senior staff

Our leadership team and advisers

The trustees of Ambitious about Autism are directors and members of the charitable company. They each guarantee to contribute an amount not exceeding £1 to the assets of the charitable company in the event of winding up.

The total number of such guarantees on 31 August 2023 was six. The trustees have no beneficial interest in the charitable company.

Trustees of Ambitious about Autism

Neil Goulden
(Chair)

Lesley Longstone
(Vice Chair of the Board of Trustees and Chair of the Education Committee, resigned 21 July 2023)

Michael Clark
(Chair of the Nominations and Remuneration Committee, Vice Chair of the Board of Trustees, appointed 21 July 2023)

Elizabeth Stanton
(Treasurer, Chair of the Finance and Resources Committee and Chair of the Investment Committee, resigned 1 September 2023)

Eduardo Gutierrez-Garcia
(Treasurer, Chair of the the Finance and Resources Committee and Chair of the Investment Committee, appointed 21 July 2023)

Andy Forbes
(Chair of the Education Committee, appointed July 2023)

Jack Welch

Anna Thatcher
(appointed 1 September 2023)

Ian Caplan
(appointed 8 December 2023)

Trustees of Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust

Neil Goulden
(Chair)

Lesley Longstone
(Vice Chair, resigned 21 July 2023)

Michael Clark
(Vice Chair, appointed 21 July 2023)

Elizabeth Stanton
(Treasurer and Chair of the Finance and Resources Committee, resigned 1 September 2023)

Eduardo Gutierrez-Garcia
(Treasurer and Chair of the the Finance and Resources Committee, appointed 21 July 2023)

Joanna Healey

Lucy Nutt

Laura Palmer

Kumar Tangri
(resigned as a Trustee on 24 March 2023)

Helen Jeffries
(appointed 9 December 2022)

Mark O'Kelly
(Chair of the Trust Audit Committee, appointed 2 June 2023)

Mary Fawcett
(appointed 1 September 2023)

Angela Buxton
(appointed 8 December 2023)

Members of Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust

Ambitious about Autism

Martyn Craddock

Andy Forbes

Eduardo Gutierrez-Garcia
(resigned 21 July 2023)

Jack Welch
(appointed 21 July 2023)

The trustees are supported in their work by the president and vice presidents, who all support the work of our charity.

President

The Lord Tim Clement-Jones CBE

Vice presidents

Nick Baldwin CBE

Virginia Bovell CBE

Peter Carroll

John Constantine

Katharine Doré OBE

Karen Edwards OBE

Tristia Harrison

Alex Hatter

Richard Hatter

Nick Hornby

Bruno Paulson

Sir Trevor Pears CMG

Matthew Punshon

Charlotte Warner

Sid Wells

Expert advisers

Our team of expert advisers are leading academics, clinicians, lawyers and communications professionals, all with an interest in autism and a passion to raise awareness and understanding. They provide advice and guidance on specific projects and campaigns, all as volunteers. We are honoured to be able to draw on the expertise of:

Judith Barnard

Steve Broach

Leo Capella

Prof Tony Charman

Prof Richard Hastings

Prof Patricia Howlin

Jonathan Meth

Dr Emran Mian OBE

David Nicholson

Nick Peacey

Mark Schmid

Dr Rowie Shaw OBE

Fiona Slomovic

Su Thomas

Richard Townley

Gaby Zein

Ambassadors

Our ambassadors come from all walks of life, but all share an interest in autism and a passion to raise awareness and understanding. Our ambassadors are:

Gregg Wallace

Niamh Cusack

Kathy Lette

David Mitchell

Sam Holness

Lucy Mottram

Simon Mottram

Jules Robertson

Hayley Ronson

Jon Snow

Luke Treadaway

Parent patrons

Our team of parent patrons are all people whose lives have been touched by autism:

Nicky Clark

Clare Coombe-Tennant

John Coombe-Tennant

Matt Davis

Eliza Mishcon

Keith Duffy

Charlotte Moore

Claire Ryan

Sophie Walker

Employ Autism development board

The Lord Tim Clement Jones CBE
(Chair)

Laurie Edmans CBE

Chris Pond

Tristia Harrison

Alistair MacCallum

Koral Anderson

Sue Adkins

Matt Hutnell

Katie Vanneck-Smith

Danuta Gray

Sally Cairns

Nick Medd

Business ambassador group

Simon Clements
(Chair)

Jean Lavenant

Tim Barber

Matt Davis

Marilyn Swinney

Jim Berrisford

Mark Edwards

Ruth Kennedy

Nathan Ott

Dom Hilleard

Neil Patel

Harriet Forrest

Ian Iceton

Paul Cunningham

Magnus Schoeman

Nick Medd

Andrew Mercer

Dan Snape

Richard Jones

Nigel Moralee

Gina Connell

Tracey Dawes

Tom Marchant

Steven Ingram

Gina Connell

Jack Biddulph

Joanne Smith

Michael Korn

Pia Wilkes

Rob Ford

Executive leadership team

The trustees delegate day-to-day management of the charity to the executive leadership team:

Jolanta Lasota
Chief Executive

Vivienne Berkeley
Director of Education

Paul Breckell
Deputy Chief Executive

Louise Honeysett
Director of Finance and Planning, and Company Secretary

Danae Leaman-Hill
Director of Fundraising and Development (resigned 28 October 2022), Director of External Affairs and Development (appointed 31 October 2022)

Zoe Weaver
Director of People (resigned 12 May 2023)

Kate Jenkins
Interim Director of People and Culture (appointed 24 April 2023, resigned 28 September 2023)

Mark Ospedale
Director of People and Culture (appointed 18 September 2023)

Alison Worsley
Director of External Affairs (resigned 21 October 2022)

Claire Thomson
Interim Director of National Services (appointed 31 October 2022)

Michael Michaelides
Director of Property and IT (appointed 2 October 2023)

Independent auditor

RSM UK Audit LLP
25 Farringdon Street, London EC4A 4AB

Bankers

National Westminster Bank Plc
13 Market Place, Reading RG1 2EP

Nationwide Building Society, Nationwide House
Pipers Way, Swindon SN38 1NW

CAF Bank Limited
25 Kings Hill Avenue, Kings Hill, West Malling ME19 4JQ

Solicitors

Stone King LLP
13 Queen Square, Bath BA1 2HJ

Farrer & Co LLP
66 Lincoln's Inn Fields, Holborn, London WC2A 3LH

Investment managers

Rathbone Brothers Public Limited Company
8 Finsbury Circus, London EC2M 7AZ

The statement of trustees' responsibilities

The trustees (who are also directors of Ambitious about Autism for the purposes of company law) are responsible for preparing the Trustees' Annual Report, including the strategic report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

Company law requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year, which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company and group as at the balance sheet date, and of the incoming resources and application of resources, including the income and expenditure, of the group for that period.

In preparing these financial statements, the trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently
- observe the methods and principles in the Charities Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP)
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent
- state whether applicable UK Accounting Standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in operation.

The trustees are responsible for maintaining proper accounting records that disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charitable company and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006.

Statement as to disclosure of information to auditor

In so far as the trustees are aware:

- there is no relevant audit information of which the charitable company's auditor is unaware
- the trustees have taken all steps that they ought to have taken to make themselves aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the auditor is aware of that information.

The trustees are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charitable company and the group, and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities. The trustees are responsible for the maintenance and integrity of the corporate and financial information on the charitable company's website. Legislation in the UK governing the preparation and dissemination of financial statements may differ from legislation in other jurisdictions.

The Trustees' Annual Report is approved by order of the Board of Trustees and the Strategic Report and the Directors' Report required by company law (included therein) are approved by the Board of Trustees in their capacity as the directors at a meeting on 22 March 2024 and signed on their behalf by:

Neil Goulden
Chair of the Board of Trustees

Independent auditor's report to the members of Ambitious about Autism

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of Ambitious about Autism (the 'parent charitable company') and its subsidiaries (the 'group') for the year ended 31 August 2023 which comprise the Consolidated Statement of Financial Activities incorporating an Income and Expenditure Account, the Group and Company Balance Sheets, the Group Cash Flow Statement and notes to the financial statements, including significant accounting policies. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards, including FRS 102 "The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland" (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

In our opinion the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the group's and the parent charitable company's affairs as at 31 August 2023 and of the group's incoming resources and application of resources, including its income and expenditure, for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice; and
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006.

Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)) and applicable law. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of our report. We are independent of the group and parent charitable company in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in the UK, including the FRC's Ethical Standard and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Conclusions relating to going concern

In auditing the financial statements, we have concluded that the trustees' use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.

Based on the work we have performed, we have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the group's or parent charitable company's ability to continue as a going concern for a period of at least twelve months from when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

Our responsibilities and the responsibilities of the trustees with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this report.

Other information

The other information comprises the information included in the Annual Report other than the financial statements and our auditor's report thereon. The trustees are responsible for the other information contained within the Annual Report. Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in our report, we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

Our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or our knowledge obtained in the course of the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If we identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, we are required to determine whether this gives rise to a material misstatement in the financial statements themselves. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact.

We have nothing to report in this regard.

Opinions on other matters prescribed by the Companies Act 2006

In our opinion, based on the work undertaken in the course of the audit:

- the information given in the Trustees' Report, which includes the Directors' Report and the Strategic Report prepared for the purposes of company law, for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements; and
- the Directors' Report and the Strategic Report included within the Trustees' Report have been prepared in accordance with applicable legal requirements.

Matters on which we are required to report by exception

In the light of the knowledge and understanding of the group and the parent charitable company and their environment obtained in the course of the audit, we have not identified material misstatements in the Directors' Report or the Strategic Report included within the Trustees'/Directors' Report.

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters where the Companies Act 2006 requires us to report to you if, in our opinion:

- adequate accounting records have not been kept by the parent charitable company, or returns adequate for our audit have not been received from branches not visited by us; or
- the parent charitable company financial statements are not in agreement with the accounting records and returns; or
- certain disclosures of trustees' remuneration specified by law are not made; or
- we have not received all the information and explanations we require for our audit.

Responsibilities of trustees

As explained more fully in the Statement of Trustees' responsibilities set out on **page 65**, the trustees (who are also the directors of the charitable company for the purposes of company law) are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view, and for such internal control as the trustees determine is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the trustees are responsible for assessing the group's and parent charitable company's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the trustees either intend to liquidate the group or parent charitable company or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

The extent to which the audit was considered capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud

Irregularities are instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations. The objectives of our audit are to obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence regarding compliance with

laws and regulations that have a direct effect on the determination of material amounts and disclosures in the financial statements, to perform audit procedures to help identify instances of non-compliance with other laws and regulations that may have a material effect on the financial statements, and to respond appropriately to identified or suspected non-compliance with laws and regulations identified during the audit.

In relation to fraud, the objectives of our audit are to identify and assess the risk of material misstatement of the financial statements due to fraud, to obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence regarding the assessed risks of material misstatement due to fraud through designing and implementing appropriate responses and to respond appropriately to fraud or suspected fraud identified during the audit.

However, it is the primary responsibility of management, with the oversight of those charged with governance, to ensure that the entity's operations are conducted in accordance with the provisions of laws and regulations and for the prevention and detection of fraud.

In identifying and assessing risks of material misstatement in respect of irregularities, including fraud, the group audit engagement team:

- obtained an understanding of the nature of the sector, including the legal and regulatory framework that the group and parent charitable company operates in and how the group and parent charitable company are complying with the legal and regulatory framework;
- inquired of management, and those charged with governance, about their own identification and assessment of the risks of irregularities, including any known actual, suspected or alleged instances of fraud;
- discussed matters about non-compliance with laws and regulations and how fraud might occur, including assessment of how and where the financial statements may be susceptible to fraud.

As a result of these procedures we consider the most significant laws and regulations that have a direct impact on the financial statements are FRS 102, Charities SORP (FRS 102), Companies Act 2006, Charities Act 2011, the parent charitable company's governing document, tax legislation and Charities (Protection and Social Investment) Act 2016. We performed audit procedures to detect non-compliances which may have a material impact on the financial statements which included reviewing the financial statements including the Trustees' Report, remaining alert to new or unusual transactions which may not be in accordance with the governing documents, inspecting correspondence with tax authorities and evaluating advice received from internal/ external advisors.

The most significant laws and regulations that have an indirect impact on the financial statements are those in relation to the Keeping Children Safe in Education under section 175 of the Education Act 2002, and the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR). We performed audit procedures to inquire of management and those charged with governance whether the group is in compliance with these law and regulations and inspected correspondence with regulatory authorities.

The group audit engagement team identified the risk of management override of controls as the area where the financial statements were most susceptible to material misstatement due to fraud. Audit procedures performed included but were not limited to testing manual journal entries and other adjustments, evaluating the business rationale in relation to significant, unusual transactions and transactions entered into outside the normal course of business and challenging judgments and estimates.

A further description of our responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements is provided on the Financial Reporting Council's website at **www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities**. This description forms part of our auditor's report.

Use of our report

This report is made solely to the charitable company's members, as a body, in accordance with Chapter 3 of Part 16 of the Companies Act 2006. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the charitable company's members those matters we are required to state to them in an auditor's report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the charitable company and the charitable company's members as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

HCatchpool

Hannah Catchpool
Senior Statutory Auditor

For and on behalf of
RSM UK AUDIT LLP
Statutory Auditor
Chartered Accountants
25 Farringdon Street
London
EC4A 4AB

Date: 26 March 2024

Consolidated statement of financial activities

(incorporating an income and expenditure account)

For the year ended 31 August 2023

		For the year ended 31 August 2023					For the year ended 31 August 2022
			Ambitious about Autism		Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust		
	Note	Unrestricted £'000	Restricted £'000	Subtotal £'000	Restricted £'000	**Total £'000**	**Total £'000**
Income from:							
Donations and legacies:							
Gifts and donated services	2	1,486	1,583	3,069	108	**3,177**	2,094
Charitable activities:							
Educational services	3	16,709	516	17,225	6,606	**23,831**	21,788
External affairs	3	-	63	63	-	**63**	29
Other income							
Trading income		540	41	581	24	**605**	393
Investment income		204	-	204	-	**204**	169
Total income		**18,939**	**2,203**	**21,142**	**6,738**	**27,880**	**24,473**
Expenditure on:							
Raising funds							
Fundraising activities		1,062	-	1,062	-	**1,062**	750
Investment management costs		12	-	12	-	**12**	13
		1,074	-	1,074	-	**1,074**	763
Charitable activities:							
Educational services		17,276	669	17,945	5,109	**23,054**	20,678
External affairs		2,016	954	2,970	-	**2,970**	1,982
Total expenditure	**4**	**20,366**	**1,623**	**21,989**	**5,109**	**27,098**	**23,423**
Net (expenditure)/income before other gains/(losses)		**(1,427)**	580	**(847)**	**1,629**	**782**	**1,050**
Net (losses) on investments		(137)	-	(137)	-	**(137)**	**(159)**
Net losses on pension deficit		-	-	-	311	311	2,814
Net (expenditure)/income		**(1,564)**	**580**	**(984)**	**1,940**	**956**	**3,705**
Transfers between funds	19	1,106	(196)	910	(910)	**-**	-
Net movement in funds		**(458)**	**384**	**(74)**	**1,030**	**956**	**3,705**
Reconciliation of funds:							
Total funds brought forward	19	9,124	1,086	10,210	9,862	**20,072**	16,367
Total funds carried forward	**19**	**8,666**	**1,470**	**10,136**	**10,892**	**21,028**	**20,072**

Balance sheets

As at 31 August 2023

Company number: 03375255

		Group		Ambitious about Autism	
	Note	**31 August 2023 £'000**	31 August 2022 £'000	**31 August 2023 £'000**	31 August 2022 £'000
Fixed assets:					
Tangible assets	10	**16,181**	16,399	**10,079**	10,267
Intangible assets	11	**116**	123	**109**	113
Investments	12	**1,693**	1,762	**1,693**	1,762
		17,990	18,284	**11,881**	12,142
Current assets:					
Debtors	13	**8,646**	1,213	**6,340**	1,145
Cash at bank and in hand		**5,696**	9,248	**1,809**	4,687
Short-term deposits		**2,013**	13	**1,008**	8
		16,355	10,474	**9,157**	5,840
Liabilities:					
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	14, 15	**(9,191)**	**(3,712)**	**(6,745)**	**(3,082)**
Net current assets		**7,164**	**6,762**	**2,412**	**2,758**
Total assets less current liabilities		**25,154**	**25,046**	**14,293**	**14,900**
Creditors: amounts falling due after one year	16	**(4,157)**	**(4,690)**	**(4,157)**	**(4,690)**
Defined benefit pension scheme asset/(liability)	17	**31**	**(284)**	**-**	**-**
Total net assets	**18**	**21,028**	**20,072**	**10,136**	**10,210**

As at 31 August 2023

Company number: 03375255

		Group		Ambitious about Autism	
	Note	**31 August 2023 £'000**	31 August 2022 £'000	**31 August 2023 £'000**	31 August 2022 £'000
Funds					
Restricted funds:					
Ambitious about Autism		1,470	1,086	1,470	1,086
Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust		10,892	9,862	-	-
Total restricted funds		**12,362**	**10,948**	**1,470**	**1,086**
Unrestricted funds:					
Designated funds		5,890	6,261	5,890	6,261
General funds		2,776	2,863	2,776	2,863
Total unrestricted funds		**8,666**	**9,124**	**8,666**	**9,124**
Total funds	**19**	**21,028**	**20,072**	**10,136**	**10,210**

The financial statements on pages 72 to 76 were approved and authorised for issue by the trustees on 22 March 2024 and signed on their behalf by

Neil Goulden
Chair of the Board of Trustees

The notes on pages 77 to 106 form an integral part of these financial statements.

Consolidated statement of cash flows

For the year ended 31 August 2023

	Note	For the year ended 31 August 2023 £'000		For the year ended 31 August 2022 £'000	
Cash flows from operating activities					
Net cash provided by operating activities	20		**(219)**		**2,051**
Cash flows from investing activities					
Dividends and interest from investments		**204**		103	
Interest payable		**(235)**		(120)	
Purchase of tangible and intangible fixed assets		**(696)**		(698)	
Proceed from sale of tangible fixed asset		**6**		-	
Proceeds from the sale of investments		**482**		352	
Change on cash held for investment		**(12)**		(45)	
Purchase of investments		**(538)**		(350)	
Net cash (used in) investing activities			**(789)**		(758)
Cash flows from financing activities					
Repayments of borrowing		**(544)**		(723)	
Net cash (used in) financing activities			**(544)**		(723)
Change in cash and cash equivalents			**(1,552)**		570
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the year			**9,261**		8,691
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the year			**7,709**		9,261
Cash and cash equivalents consists of:					
Cash at bank and in hand			**5,696**		9,248
Short-term deposits			**2,013**		13
			7,709		**9,261**

Consolidated statement of cash flows (continued)

For the year ended 31 August 2023

Net debt reconciliation	At the start of the year	Cash flows	Other non-cash changes	At end of year
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Cash	9,248	(3,552)	-	5,696
Cash equivalents	13	2,000	-	2,013
Loans falling due within one year	(424)	424	(391)	**(391)**
Loans falling due after more than one year	(4,616)	117	391	**(4,108)**
Total	**4,221**	**(1,011)**	**-**	**3,210**

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 August 2023

1. Accounting policies

Ambitious about Autism is a charitable group limited by guarantee and is incorporated in England and Wales. The registered office address is Woodside Avenue, London, N10 3JA.

a. Basis of preparation

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) – (Charities SORP FRS 102), the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (March 2018) and the Companies Act 2006.

The financial statements are presented in Sterling (£) which is also the functional currency of the group.

The accounts are rounded to the nearest thousand (£'000).

Assets and liabilities are initially recognised at historical cost or transaction value unless otherwise stated in the relevant accounting policy or note.

b. Basis of consolidation

Ambitious about Autism is the sole corporate member of Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust. Therefore the consolidated financial statements of the charity incorporate the financial statements of the trust, a UK company limited by guarantee (company registration number 8335297) that is also an exempt charity. Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust's results and net assets at 31 August 2023 are consolidated within these accounts on a line by line basis. Intercompany transactions and balances between charitable companies are eliminated. Consistent accounting policies have been adopted across the group.

c. Public benefit entity

The charitable company meets the definition of a public benefit entity under FRS 102.

d. Going concern

The trustees consider that there are no material uncertainties about the charitable company's ability to continue as a going concern. A 12-month detailed budget is prepared from year-end as well as a higher level five-year finance model. The trustees have a reasonable expectation that Ambitious about Autism and the Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust has available cash to settle liabilities as they fall due and has adequate resources to continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future.

A Covid fund of £0.6m was established in 2020 to provide a contingency against future risks as a result of Coronavirus, including additional costs or losses in income. The financial forecast and assumptions for the financial year 2022-23 have taken into account some of the macro economic factors including the higher inflationary environment.

The Trustees do not consider that there are any sources of estimation uncertainty at the reporting date that have a significant risk of causing a material adjustment to the carrying amounts of assets and liabilities for a period of at least 12 months from sign off.

e. Income

Income is recognised when the group has entitlement to the funds, any performance conditions attached to the income have been met, it is probable that the income will be received and that the amount can be measured reliably.

Income from government and other grants, whether 'capital' grants or 'revenue' grants, is recognised when the group has entitlement to the funds, any performance conditions attached to the grants have been met, it is probable that the income will be received and the amount can be measured reliably and is not deferred. Fees are recognised as services are rendered, deferring until criteria are met.

School and college fee income received in advance of the provision of a specified service is deferred until the criteria for income recognition are met.

f. Donations of gifts, services and facilities

Donated professional services and donated facilities are recognised as income when the group has control over the item or received the service, any conditions associated with the donation have been met, the receipt of economic benefit from the use by the group of the item is probable and that the economic benefit can be measured reliably.

On receipt, donated gifts, professional services and donated facilities are recognised on the basis of the value of the gift to the group, which is the amount the group would have been willing to pay to obtain services or facilities of equivalent economic benefit on the open market; a corresponding amount is then recognised in the expenditure in the period of receipt.

g. Interest receivable

Interest on funds held on deposit is included when receivable and the amount can be measured reliably by the group; this is normally upon notification of the interest paid or payable by the bank.

h. Fund accounting

Restricted funds are to be used for specific purposes as laid down by the donor. Expenditure which meets these criteria is charged to the fund.

Unrestricted funds are donations and other incoming resources received or generated for the charitable purposes.

Designated funds are unrestricted funds earmarked by the Trustees for particular purposes.

i. Expenditure and irrecoverable VAT

Expenditure is recognised once there is a legal or constructive obligation to make a payment to a third party, it is probable that settlement will be required and the amount of the obligation can be measured reliably. Expenditure is classified under the following activity headings:

- Costs of raising funds relate to the costs incurred by the charitable company in inducing third parties to make voluntary contributions to it, as well as the cost of any activities with a fundraising purpose.
- Expenditure on charitable activities includes the costs of delivering services and other educational activities undertaken to further the purposes of the group, and their associated support costs.

Ambitious about Autism is VAT registered. As the charity provides a mixture of taxable and exempt supplies, VAT on expenditure that cannot be directly attributed to either type of supply is partially recovered.

Irrecoverable VAT is charged as a cost against the activity for which the expenditure was incurred.

j. Allocation of support costs

Resources are expended and allocated to the particular activity where the cost relates directly to that activity. However, the cost of overall direction and administration of each activity, comprising the salary and the overhead costs of the central function, is apportioned on the following bases which are estimates, based on staff time, of the amount attributable to each activity.

Central function	Main basis for allocation
Leadership	Time spent
Finance	Staff head count
Human resources	Staff head count
IT	Staff head count
Facilities management	Area occupied
General administration	Staff head count
Premises and office costs	Area occupied

Where information about the aims, objectives and projects of the group is provided to potential beneficiaries, the costs associated with this are allocated to charitable expenditure.

Governance costs are the costs associated with the governance arrangements of the group. These costs are associated with constitutional and statutory requirements and include any costs associated with the strategic management of the group's activities.

The management charge for the Ambitious about Autism support provided to Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust is eliminated on consolidation of the group accounts.

k. Operating leases

Rental charges are charged on a straight line basis over the term of the lease.

l. Tangible fixed assets

Items of equipment or groups of items are capitalised where the purchase price exceeds £5,000. Depreciation costs are allocated to activities on the basis of the use of the related assets in those activities. Assets are reviewed for impairment if circumstances indicate their carrying value may exceed their net realisable value and value in use.

Depreciation is provided at rates calculated to write down the cost of each asset except freehold land to its estimated residual value over its expected useful life. The useful lives are as follows:

Freehold land building at Woodside Avenue	50 years
Long leasehold	50 years
Short and long leasehold improvements	over the lease term
Computer equipment	3 years
Educational, office furniture and equipment	3-10 years
Motor vehicles	5 years

m. Intangible fixed assets

Intangible assets are measured at cost less accumulated amortisation and any accumulated impairment losses.

Software development costs are recognised as an intangible asset when all of the following criteria are demonstrated:

- the technical feasibility of completing the software so that it will be available for use or sale
- the intention to complete the software and use or sell it
- the ability to use the software or to sell it
- how the software will generate probable future economic benefits
- the availability of adequate technical, financial and other resources to complete the development and to use or sell the software
- the ability to measure reliably the expenditure attributable to the software during its development.

Amortisation is charged so as to allocate the cost of intangibles less their residual values over their estimated useful lives, using the straight-line method. The intangible assets are amortised over the following useful economic lives:

Software development costs	3 years

n. Listed investments

Investments are a form of basic financial instrument and are initially recognised at their transaction value and subsequently measured at their fair value as at the balance sheet date using the closing quoted market price. Any change in fair value will be recognised in the statement of financial activities. Investment gains and losses, whether realised or unrealised, are combined and shown in the heading 'Net gains/(losses) on investments' in the statement of financial activities.

o. Debtors

Trade and other debtors are recognised at the settlement amount due after any trade discount offered. Prepayments are valued at the amount prepaid net of any trade discounts due.

p. Cash and cash equivalents

Cash and cash equivalents includes cash and short term highly liquid investments with a short maturity of three months or less from the date of acquisition or opening of the deposit or similar account.

q. Short-term deposits

Short-term deposits include liquid investments with a maturity of three to 12 months from the date of acquisition or opening of the deposit or similar account.

r. Creditors and provisions

Creditors and provisions are recognised where the group has a present obligation resulting from a past event that will probably result in the transfer of funds to a third party and the amount due to settle the obligation can be measured or estimated reliably. Creditors and provisions are normally recognised at their settlement amount after allowing for any trade discounts due.

s. Financial instruments

The group has elected to apply the provisions of Section 11 'Basic Financial Instruments' and Section 12 'other Financial Instruments Issues' of FRS 102 in full to all of its financial instruments. Basic financial instruments are initially recognised at their transaction value and subsequently measured at their settlement value. Other financial instruments are recognised at fair value with the change in fair value recognised as a gain or loss in the statement of financial activities.

Derivatives are initially recognised at fair value on the date a derivative contract is entered into and are subsequently re-measured to fair value, at each reporting date. Fair value gains and losses are recognised in profit or loss. This has been recognised as expenditure under finance costs.

Borrowings are initially recognised at the transaction price, including transaction costs and subsequently measured at amortised cost using
the effective interest method. Interest expense is recognised on the basis of the effective interest method and is included in interest payable and other similar expenses.

A financial asset is derecognised only when the contractual rights to cash flows expire or are settled, or substantially all the risks and rewards of ownership are transferred to another party, or if some (but not substantially all) risks and rewards of ownership are retained but control of the asset has transferred to another party that is able to sell the asset in its entirety to an unrelated third party. A financial liability (or part thereof) is derecognised when the obligation specified in the contract is discharged, cancelled or expires.

t. Pensions

Ambitious about Autism has a defined contribution pension scheme available to all staff.

On 1 July 2014, and in compliance with Government legislation on Auto Enrolment, a defined contribution group personal pension scheme was opened. Employees were able to join on inception or under the rules of auto enrolment with a deferred period of three months.

Ambitious about Autism also contributes to the Teachers' Pension Scheme. The pension available to teaching staff is a defined benefit, multi employer scheme and the assets and liabilities of the scheme cannot be split out for individual employers. Further information is given in note 17.

The pension costs charged in the statement of financial activities represent the contributions payable by the group in the year to all pension schemes.

Retirement benefits to employees of the Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust are provided by the Teachers' Pension Scheme ('TPS') and the Local Government Pension Scheme ('LGPS'). These are defined benefit schemes.

The TPS is an unfunded scheme and contributions are calculated so as to spread the cost of pensions over employees' working lives with the trust in such a way that the pension cost is a substantially level percentage of current and future pensionable payroll. The contributions are determined by the Government Actuary on the basis of quadrennial valuations using a prospective unit credit method. TPS is a multi-employer scheme and there is insufficient information available to use defined benefit accounting. The TPS is therefore treated as a defined contribution scheme for accounting purposes and the contributions recognised in the period to which they relate.

The LGPS is a funded scheme and the assets are held separately from those of Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust in separate trustee-administered funds. Pension scheme assets are measured at fair value and liabilities are measured on an actuarial basis using the projected unit credit method and discounted at a rate equivalent to the current rate of return on a high-quality corporate bond of equivalent term and currency to the liabilities. The actuarial valuations are obtained at least triennially and are updated at each balance sheet date. The amounts charged to operating surplus are the current service costs and the costs of scheme introductions, benefit changes, settlements and curtailments. They are included as part of staff costs as incurred. Net interest on the net defined benefit liability is also recognised in the Statement of Financial Activities and comprises the interest cost on the defined benefit obligation and interest income on the scheme assets, calculated by multiplying the fair value of the scheme assets at the beginning of the period by the rate used to discount the benefit obligations. The difference between the interest income on the scheme assets and the actual return on the scheme assets is recognised in other recognised gains and losses. Actuarial gains and losses are recognised immediately in other recognised gains and losses.

u. Redundancy payments

Redundancy payments are accounted for in the period in which they become an obligation on the charity and/or group.

v. Judgements and key sources of estimation uncertainty

In the application of the group's accounting policies, the directors are required to make judgements, estimates and assumptions about the carrying amount of assets and liabilities that are not readily apparent from other sources. The estimates and associated assumptions are based on historical experience and other factors that are considered to be relevant. Actual results may differ from these estimates.

The estimates and underlying assumptions are reviewed on an ongoing basis. Revisions to accounting estimates are recognised in the period in which the estimate is revised where the revision affects only that period, or in the period of the revision and future periods where the revision affects both current and future periods

Key sources of estimation uncertainty

The estimates and assumptions which have a significant risk of causing a material adjustment to the carrying amounts of assets and liabilities are as follows:

- **Depreciation:** fixed assets are depreciated over the assets, expected useful life.
- **Pensions:** the pension liability is sensitive to movements in actuarial assumptions such as discount rate, mortality and inflation. Further details are set out in Note 17.

2. Income from donations and legacies

For the year ended 31 August 2023

	Ambitious about Autism			Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust	
	Unrestricted £'000	Restricted £'000	Subtotal £'000	Restricted £'000	**Total £'000**
Gifts	1,144	1,583	2,727	108	**2,835**
Donated services	342	-	342	-	**342**
	1,486	**1,583**	**3,069**	**108**	**3,177**

For the year ended 31 August 2022

	Ambitious about Autism			Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust	
	Unrestricted £'000	Restricted £'000	Subtotal £'000	Restricted £'000	**Total £'000**
Gifts	403	1,545	1,948	96	**2,044**
Donated services	50	-	50	-	**50**
	453	**1,545**	**1,998**	**96**	**2,094**

3. Income from charitable activities

For the year ended 31 August 2023

	Ambitious about Autism			Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust	
	Unrestricted £'000	Restricted £'000	Subtotal £'000	Restricted £'000	**Total £'000**
Local authorities	14,197	-	14,197	4,560	**18,757**
Education Skills Funding Agency	2,512	516	3,028	2,046	**5,074**
Sub-total for educational services	**16,709**	**516**	**17,225**	**6,606**	**23,831**
Autism Education Trust	-	63	63	-	**63**
Sub-total for external affairs	**-**	**63**	**63**	**-**	**63**
Total income from charitable activities	**16,709**	**579**	**17,288**	**6,606**	**23,894**

For the year ended 31 August 2022

	Ambitious about Autism			Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust	
	Unrestricted £'000	Restricted £'000	Subtotal £'000	Restricted £'000	**Total £'000**
Local authorities	13,685	-	13,685	4,208	**17,893**
Education Skills Funding Agency	2,229	189	2,418	1,477	**3,895**
Sub-total for educational services	**15,914**	**189**	**16,103**	**5,685**	**21,788**
Autism Education Trust	-	29	29	-	**29**
Sub-total for external affairs	**-**	**29**	**29**	**-**	**29**
Total income from charitable activities	**15,914**	**218**	**16,132**	**5,685**	**21,817**

4. Analysis of expenditure

	Staff costs (note 6) £'000	Direct costs £'000	Finance (incl loan interest) £'000	Human resources £'000	Information technology £'000	Premises and office costs £'000	Leadership £'000	Support costs £'000	Governance costs £'000	For the year ended 31 August 2023 £'000
Ambitious about Autism:										
Cost of generating funds	522	430	-	-	-	13	-	84	12	**1,061**
Educational services	10,820	1,157	-	-	31	758	-	4,748	442	**17,956**
External affairs	1,534	888	-	-	-	103	-	395	50	**2,970**
Ambitious about Autism	**12,876**	**2,475**	**-**	**-**	**31**	**874**	**-**	**5,227**	**504**	**21,987**
Support costs	2,147	520	825	795	132	738	70	(5,227)	-	**-**
Governance costs	405	69	-	-	-	-	30	-	(504)	**-**
Allocated costs	2,552	589	825	795	132	738	100	(5,227)	(504)	**-**
Ambitious about Autism sub-total	**15,428**	**3,064**	**825**	**795**	**163**	**1,612**	**100**	**-**	**-**	**21,987**
Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust	3,699	840	-	-	-	570	-	-	-	**5,109**
Total expenditure 2023	**19,127**	**3,904**	**825**	**795**	**163**	**2,182**	**100**	**-**	**-**	**27,096**

Resources expended are allocated to the particular activity where the cost relates directly to that activity. However, the cost of overall direction and administration of each activity, comprising the salary and the overhead costs of the central function, is apportioned based on staff time, of the amount attributable to each activity.

All Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust support costs are paid through management fees, which are eliminated on consolidation, any other costs are allocated directly to Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust.

5. Net income for the year

This is stated after charging:	For the year ended 31 August 2023 £'000	For the year ended 31 August 2022 £'000
Depreciation	**847**	864
Amortisation	**54**	49
Derivative Liability	**-**	-
Interest payable	**235**	120
Auditor's remuneration:		
Ambitious about Autism	**58**	25
Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust	**23**	19
Ambitious about Autism Teachers Pension audit	**1**	1
Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust Annual accounts return	**2**	2
Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust Teachers Pension audit	**1**	1
Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust other services	**3**	2
Ambitious about Autism other services	**5**	4
Payments under operating leases:		
Property	**137**	102
Equipment	**22**	8

6. Analysis of group staff costs, Trustee remuneration and expenses, and the costs of key management personnel

Staff costs were as follows:

	For the year ended 31 August 2023 £'000	For the year ended 31 August 2022 £'000
Salaries and wages	**16,137**	14,035
Social security costs	**1,605**	1,402
Employer's contribution to defined benefit pension schemes	**1,029**	1,586
Employer's contribution to defined contribution pension schemes	**350**	315
	19,121	**17,338**

The 2023 figures for Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust include all costs of the defined benefit pension scheme in pension costs, not just employer contributions.

Redundancy and termination costs (including payment in lieu of notice) of £86k were paid in the year (2022: £21k).

The following number of employees received employee benefits (excluding employer pension and National Insurance costs) during the year to 31 August 2023, between:

	For the year ended 31 August 2023 £'000	For the year ended 31 August 2022 £'000
£60,000-£69,999	**11**	5
£70,000-£79,999	**6**	4
£80,000-£89,999	**3**	3
£90,000-£99,999	**3**	1
£100,000-£109,999	**0**	1
£110,000-£119,999	**2**	1
£120,000-£129,999	**0**	1
£130,000-£139,999	**1**	0

The total employee benefits including Employer pension and national insurance contributions of the key management personnel were £915k for the 12 month period to 31 August 2023 (2022: £831k).

Jolanta Lasota, Chief Executive of Ambitious About Autism, was paid an annual salary of £119k to 31 August 2023 (2022: £119k).

The charity Trustees were not paid and did not receive any other benefits from employment with the charity in the year (2022: £nil). No charity Trustee received any payment for professional or other services supplied to the charity (2022: £nil).

A Trustee made an expense claim of £499 for accommodation costs in 2023 (2022: £nil).

7. Staff numbers

The average number of employees (headcount based on number of staff employed) during the year was as follows:

	For the year ended 31 August 2023 No	For the year ended 31 August 2022 No
Raising funds	**7**	8
Educational services	**405**	374
External affairs	**37**	26
Support	**64**	53
	513	**461**

The increase of staff numbers is due to the planned growth across educational services.

The full time equivalent of staff employed during the year was as follows:

	For the year ended 31 August 2023 No	For the year ended 31 August 2022 No
Raising funds	**7**	8
Educational services	**372**	341
External affairs	**34**	25
Support	**58**	49
	471	**423**

8. Related party transactions

During the year 5 trustees either personally donated or donated through entities where they have a significant control a total of £18,488 (2022: £789 donated by 6 trustees). Of these, no gifts (2022: nil) were restricted donations.

Paul Breckell is an unpaid trustee of NCVO and NCVO Trading Ltd. Ambitious about Autism has booked rooms at The Society Building which is run by NCVO (via NCVO Trading Limited). During the year payments to NCVO were £5,384 (2022: £19,224). At the year end, there was a £316 creditor balance with NCVO (2022: £265). Services were provided to Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust at a cost of £910k from September 2022 to August 2023 (2022: £697k). These services include Finance, Education, HR, Communications, Facilities and IT support. These are provided at cost and would otherwise need to be procured commercially. The increase is due to the growth in the Spring School. At year end £194k (2022: £238k) was reported under amounts owed by group undertakings (debtors).

9. Taxation

The group is exempt from corporation tax as all its income is charitable and is applied for charitable purposes.

10. Tangible fixed assets

Group	Freehold land and buildings £'000	Long leasehold £'000	Leasehold improvements £'000	Educational, office furniture and equipment £'000	Computer equipment £'000	Motor vehicles £'000	Total £'000
Cost							
At the start of the year	11,923	6,727	1,738	1,307	1,256	218	**23,169**
Additions	63	-	-	212	270	104	**649**
Disposals	(20)	-	-	-	-	(53)	**(73)**
At the end of the year	11,966	6,727	1,738	1,519	1,526	269	**23,745**
Depreciation							
At the start of the year	3,291	851	929	570	988	141	**6,770**
Charge	241	142	183	98	158	25	**847**
Disposals	-	-	-	-	-	(53)	**(53)**
At the end of the year	3,532	993	1,112	668	1,146	113	**7,564**
Net book value	8,434	5,734	626	851	380	156	**16,181**
At the end of the year	**8,434**	**5,734**	**626**	**851**	**380**	**156**	**16,181**
At the start of the year	**8,632**	**5,876**	**809**	**737**	**268**	**77**	**16,399**

10. Tangible fixed assets (continued)

Ambitious about Autism	Freehold land and buildings £'000	Leasehold improvements £'000	Educational, office furniture and equipment £'000	Computer equipment £'000	Motor vehicles £'000	Total £'000
Cost						
At the start of the year	11,923	1,590	1,158	975	218	**15,864**
Additions	63	-	99	169	104	**435**
Disposals	(20)	-	-	-	(53)	**(73)**
At the end of the year	11,966	1,590	1,257	1,144	269	**16,226**
Depreciation						
At the start of the year	3,291	884	452	829	141	**5,597**
Charge	241	168	78	91	25	**603**
Disposals	-	-	-	-	(53)	(53)
At the end of the year	3,532	1,052	530	920	113	**6,147**
Net book value	8,434	538	727	224	156	**10,079**
At the end of the year	**8,434**	**538**	**727**	**224**	**156**	**10,079**
At the start of the year	**8,632**	**706**	**706**	**146**	**77**	**10,267**

Land (AaA) with a cost of £834,000 (2022: £834,000) is included within freehold property and is not depreciated.
The long leasehold (125 years) refers to The Rise School building.

All of the above assets are used for charitable purposes.

11. Intangible fixed assets

Group	Computer software £'000	Assets under construction £'000	Total £'000
Cost			
At the start of the period	219	8	**227**
Additions in the period	37	10	**47**
At the end of the period	256	18	**274**
Amortisation			
At the start of the period	104	-	**104**
Charge for the period	54	-	**54**
At the end of the period	158	-	**158**
Net book value	98	18	**116**
At the end of the period	98	18	**116**
At the start of the period	115	8	**123**

Amortisation charge is reflected in the SOFA.

Ambitious about Autism	Computer software £'000	Assets under construction £'000	Total £'000
Cost			
At the start of the period	209	8	**217**
Additions in the period	37	10	**47**
At the end of the period	246	18	**264**
Amortisation			
At the start of the period	104	-	**104**
Charge for the period	51	-	**51**
At the end of the period	155	-	**155**
Net book value	91	18	**109**
At the end of the period	91	18	**109**
At the start of the period	105	8	**113**

12. Investments

Group and Ambitious about Autism	31 August 2023 £'000	31 August 2022 £'000
Market value at the start of the year	**1,689**	1,850
Additions at cost	**538**	350
Disposal proceeds	**(482)**	(352)
Net (loss) on change in fair value	**(137)**	(159)
Market value at the end of the year	**1,608**	1,689
Cash held in investments	**85**	73
Total investments held	**1,693**	**1,762**

Investments comprise	31 August 2023 £'000	31 August 2022 £'000
Listed securities		
Fixed interest	**281**	183
Direct UK equities	**553**	607
Direct overseas equities	**530**	628
Alternatives - property and managed funds	**244**	271
Cash held for re-investment	**79**	65
Cash	**6**	8
Market value at the end of the year	**1,693**	**1,762**

The historical cost of investments is £1,652k (2022: £1,575k).

13. Debtors

	Group		Ambitious about Autism	
	31 August 2023 £'000	31 August 2022 £'000	**31 August 2023 £'000**	31 August 2022 £'000
Trade debtors	**7,346**	352	**5,315**	320
Amounts owed by group undertakings	**-**	-	**194**	238
Other debtors	**381**	287	**87**	34
Prepayments	**607**	276	**432**	255
Accrued income	**312**	298	**312**	298
	8,646	**1,213**	**6,340**	**1,145**

14. Creditors: amounts falling due within one year

	Group		Ambitious about Autism	
	31 August 2023 £'000	31 August 2022 £'000	**31 August 2023 £'000**	31 August 2022 £'000
Bank loans	**391**	424	**391**	424
Amounts owed to group undertakings	**-**	-	**-**	-
Trade creditors	**506**	344	**391**	162
Taxation and social security	**481**	385	**389**	325
Other creditors	**189**	55	**111**	53
Accruals	**683**	902	**487**	717
Deferred income (note 15)	**6,941**	1,602	**4,976**	1,401
	9,191	**3,712**	**6,745**	**3,082**

15. Deferred income

	Group		Ambitious about Autism	
	31 August 2023 £'000	31 August 2022 £'000	**31 August 2023 £'000**	31 August 2022 £'000
Balance at the beginning of the year	**1,602**	1,762	**1,401**	1,169
Amount released to income in the year	**(1,602)**	(1,762)	**(1,401)**	(1,169)
Amount deferred in the year	**6,941**	1,602	**4,976**	1,401
Balance at the end of the year	**6,941**	**1,602**	**4,976**	**1,401**

Deferred income as at 31 August 2023 relates to autumn 2023 term fees that were invoiced in advance of the new academic year.

16. Creditors: amounts falling due after one period

Group and Ambitious about Autism	31 August 2023 £'000	31 August 2022 £'000
Loans to finance the freehold property	**3,102**	3,515
Loan to finance Ambitious College	**1,006**	1,101
Derivative Liability	**49**	74
Balance at the end of the year	**4,157**	**4,690**

The charity has a loan from Futurebuilders which commenced in October 2008 and is repayable over 25 years.

Interest is chargeable at 1.25% above the BoE base rate. The loan is secured over the freehold land and buildings at Woodside Avenue.

The charity also has a loan from NatWest, in tranches of £1.1m and £1.9m, which commenced in November 2008 and April 2012 respectively. Interest is chargeable at 0.75% above LIBOR and 1.25% above LIBOR respectively until 31st January 2022. From 1st February 2022, both loans are moved to the SONIA rate. One tranche of the loan (£1.1m) is capped at an interest rate of 4%. The loan is repayable from November 2013 over 22 years. The loan is secured over the freehold land and buildings at Woodside Avenue.

Two new loans were acquired in August 2020, £500k from Rathbones and the other £500k from NatWest with both loans charging interest of 2.5% over base rate. The NatWest loan is repayable over 20 years and the Rathbones loan is repayable in 5 years.

The charity is using an interest rate swap option to manage its exposure to interest rate movements on its £1.1m bank loan with NatWest. The agreement was entered into a variable to fixed interest rate swap in February 2011. The option swaps the variable rate of interest for a fixed rate of 4% per annum for the period up to August 2033 with a fair value gain of £13k recognised in the year.

The capital amounts repayable under each loan are:	Within 1 year £'000	2–5 years £'000	Over 5 years £'000
Futurebuilders	229	1,079	892
NatWest £1.1m tranche	54	245	401
NatWest £1.9m tranche	95	403	603
NatWest £500k	13	62	373
Rathbones £500k	-	50	-
	391	**1,839**	**2,269**

17. Pension schemes

Ambitious about Autism makes contributions to the Aegon Pension Scheme, The People's Pension and into one employee's private pension scheme. Both Ambitious about Autism and Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust pay into the Teachers' Pension Scheme. Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust also make contributions to the Local Government Pension Scheme.

Contributions to these schemes were £1,379k (2022: £1,275k).

Defined Contribution Schemes

The assets of the schemes are held separately from those of Ambitious about Autism. Pension costs charged in the statement of financial activities represent the contributions payable by Ambitious about Autism for the year.

Teachers' Pension Scheme

Introduction

The Teachers' Pension Scheme (TPS) is a statutory, contributory, defined benefit scheme, governed by the Teachers' Pensions Regulations (2010) and, from 1 April 2014, by the Teachers' Pension Scheme Regulations 2014. Membership is automatic for full-time teachers in academies and, from 1 January 2007, automatic for teachers in part-time employment following appointment or a change of contract, although they are able to opt out.

The TPS is an unfunded scheme and members contribute on a 'pay as you go' basis - these contributions along with those made by employers are credited to the Exchequer. Retirement and other pension benefits are paid by public funds provided by Parliament.

Valuation of the Teachers' Pension Scheme

The Government Actuary, using normal actuarial principles, conducts a formal actuarial review of the TPS in accordance with the Public Service Pensions (Valuations and Employer Cost Cap) Directions 2023 published by HM Treasury every 4 years. The aim of the review is to specify the level of future contributions. Actuarial scheme valuations are dependent on assumptions about the value of future costs, design of benefits and many other factors. The latest actuarial valuation of the TPS was carried out as at 31 March 2020. The 2020 valuation report was published by the Teachers Pension on 26 October 2023. The key elements of the valuation are:

- employer contribution rates set at 28.6% of pensionable pay from 1 April 2024
- total scheme liabilities (pensions currently in payment and the estimated cost of future benefits) for service to the effective date of £262,000 million and notional assets (estimated future contributions together with the notional investments held at the valuation date) of £222,200 million, giving a notional past service deficit of £39,800 million.

A copy of the valuation report and supporting documentation is on the Teachers' Pensions website.

Under the definitions set out in FRS 102, the TPS is a multi-employer pension scheme. The group is unable to quantify its share of liabilities under the scheme and therefore, in accordance with FRS 102 has accounted for its contributions to the scheme as if it were a defined contribution scheme. The group has set out above the information available on the scheme.

The employer's pension costs paid to TPS by Ambitious about Autism in the year amounted to £350k (2022: £315k).

The employer's pension costs paid to TPS by Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust in the year amounted to £254k (2022: £198k).

21 Ambitious about Autism employees were members of the scheme at 31 August 2023 (2022: 27).

26 Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust employees were members of the scheme at 31 August 2023 (2022: 22).

Local Government Pension Scheme

The LGPS is a funded defined benefit pension scheme, with the assets held in separate Trustee-administered funds. The total contributions made for the year ended 31 August 2023 were £379k (2022: £420k), of which employer's contributions totalled £334k (2022: £340k) and employees' contributions totalled £89k (2022: £80k). Contribution rates for employees increase with salary and during the year ended 31 August 2023, the average employer contribution rate was 22.1%, and for employees a minimum of 5.5% to a maximum of 12.5% of pensionable salary. During the year ended 31 August 2023 no employees took advantage of the 50/50 option, where employees can pay 50% of normal contributions to build up half the normal pension.

Parliament has agreed, at the request of the Secretary of State for Education, to a guarantee that, in the event of academy closure, outstanding Local Government Pension Scheme liabilities would be met by the Department for Education. The guarantee came into force on 18 July 2013 and on 21 July 2022 the Department for Education reaffirmed its commitment to the guarantee, with a parliamentary minutes published on gov.uk.

At 31 August 2023, 64 employees were members of the scheme (2022: 64).

The following information is based upon a full actuarial valuation of the fund at 31 March 2019 updated to 31 August 2023 by a qualified independent actuary.

Principal actuarial assumptions	**At 31 August 2023 £'000**	At 31 August 2022 £'000
Rate of increase in salaries	**3.90%**	3.90%
Rate of increase for pensions in payment/ inflation	**2.90%**	2.90%
Discount rate for scheme liabilities	**5.25%**	4.20%
Inflation assumption (CPI)	**2.90%**	2.90%
Commutation of pensions to lump sums	**50.00%**	50.00%

17. Pension schemes (continued)

Sensitivity analysis	£'000	£'000	£'000
Adjustment to discount rate	**+0.1%**	**0.0%**	**-0.1%**
Present value of total obligation	1,911	1,971	2,033
Projected service cost	194	203	212
Adjustment to long term salary increase	**+0.1%**	**0.0%**	**-0.1%**
Present value of total obligation	1,972	1,971	1,970
Projected service cost	203	203	203
Adjustment to pension increases and deferred revaluation	**+0.1%**	**0.0%**	**-0.1%**
Present value of total obligation	2,033	1,971	1,911
Projected service cost	212	203	194
Adjustment to life expectancy assumptions	**+ 1 Year**	**None**	**- 1 Year**
Present value of total obligation	2,022	1,971	1,921
Projected service cost	211	203	196

The current mortality assumptions include sufficient allowance for future improvements in mortality rates. The assumed life expectations on retirement age 65 are:

	At 31 August 2023 £'000	At 31 August 2022 £'000
Retiring today		
Males	**20.7**	21.0
Females	**23.2**	23.5
Retiring in 20 years		
Males	**22.0**	22.3
Females	**24.6**	24.9

17. Pension schemes (continued)

The estimated asset allocation for the Rise School as at 31 August 2023 is as follows:

Employer asset share – bid value	At 31 August 2023 £'000	%	At 31 August 2022 £'000	%
Equities	**1,288**	**64%**	1,166	64%
Gilts	**96**	**5%**	89	5%
Other bonds	**422**	**21%**	437	24%
Property	**85**	**4%**	93	5%
Cash	**77**	**4%**	9	1%
Infrastructure	**34**	**2%**	16	1%
Total market value of assets	**2,002**	**100%**	**1,810**	100%
Present value of scheme liabilities - funded	**(1,971)**		(2,094)	
Asset/(deficit) in the scheme	**31**		**(284)**	

The Trust's share of the assets of the fund is less than 1%.

Amounts recognised in the statement of financial activities	31 August 2023 £'000	31 August 2022 £'000
Current service cost (including employee contributions)	**(322)**	(933)
Net interest cost	**(5)**	(39)
Administration	**(3)**	(1)
Total operating charge	**(330)**	**(973)**

17. Pension schemes (continued)

Changes in the present value of defined benefit obligations were as follows:	2023 £'000	2022 £'000
At 1 September	**2,094**	3,957
Current service cost	**322**	933
Interest cost	**90**	68
Actuarial (gain)	**(653)**	(2,954)
Benefits paid	**29**	10
Employee contributions	**89**	80
At 31 August	**1,971**	2,094

Changes in the fair value of the academy's share of scheme assets:	2023 £'000	2022 £'000
At 1 September	**1,810**	1,492
Interest on assets	**85**	29
Return on plan assets (excluding net interest on the defined pension liability)	**(59)**	(140)
Other actuarial losses	**(283)**	-
Employer contributions	**334**	340
Employee contributions	**89**	80
Administration expenses	**(3)**	(1)
Benefits paid	**29**	10
At 31 August	**2,002**	1,810

18. Analysis of net assets between funds

Fund balances as at 31 August 2023 are represented by:

	Ambitious about Autism			Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust	
Group	General unrestricted £'000	Designated £'000	Restricted £'000	Restricted £'000	**Total funds £'000**
Tangible fixed assets	-	10,079	-	6,102	**16,181**
Investments	1,693	-	-	-	**1,693**
Intangible fixed assets	-	109	-	7	**116**
Net current assets	1,083	(141)	1,470	4,752	**7,164**
Long term liabilities	-	(4,157)	-	31	**(4,126)**
	2,776	**5,890**	**1,470**	**10,892**	**21,028**

Ambitious about Autism	General unrestricted £'000	Designated £'000	Restricted £'000	**Total funds £'000**
Tangible fixed assets	-	10,079	-	**10,079**
Investments	1,693	-	-	**1,693**
Intangible fixed assets	-	109	-	**109**
Net current assets	1,083	(141)	1,470	**2,412**
Long term liabilities	-	(4,157)	-	**(4,157)**
	2,776	**5,890**	**1,470**	**10,136**

18. Analysis of net assets between funds (continued)

Fund balances as at 31 August 2022 are represented by:

	Ambitious about Autism			Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust	
Group	General unrestricted £'000	Designated £'000	Restricted £'000	Restricted £'000	**Total funds £'000**
Tangible fixed assets	-	10,267	-	6,132	**16,399**
Investments	1,762	-	-	-	**1,762**
Intangible fixed assets	-	113	-	10	**123**
Net current assets	1,101	571	1,086	4,004	**6,762**
Long term liabilities	-	(4,690)	-	(284)	**(4,974)**
	2,863	**6,261**	**1,086**	**9,862**	**20,072**

Ambitious about Autism	General unrestricted £'000	Designated £'000	Restricted £'000	**Total funds £'000**
Tangible fixed assets	-	10,267	-	**10,267**
Investments	1,762	-	-	**1,762**
Intangible fixed assets	-	113	-	**113**
Net current assets	1,101	571	1,086	**2,758**
Long term liabilities	-	(4,690)	-	**(4,690)**
	2,863	**6,261**	**1,086**	**10,210**

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 August 2023

19a. Movement in funds

For the year ended 31 August 2023:	At the start of the year £'000	Incoming resources and gains £'000	Outgoing resources and losses £'000	Transfers £'000	At the end of the year £'000
Restricted funds:					
a) Ambitious about Autism					
Ambitious College	75	498	(220)	-	**353**
Education Services projects	348	619	(585)	(51)	**331**
Autism Exchange	147	-	(17)	-	**130**
Family Support	248	112	(156)	-	**204**
Participation	48	428	(321)	-	**155**
TreeHouse School	54	382	(187)	(140)	**109**
Online Youth Support	84	100	(86)	-	**98**
IT Equipment	69	15	(51)	(5)	**28**
Other	13	49	-	-	**62**
Total Ambitious about Autism restricted funds	**1,086**	**2,203**	**(1,623)**	**(196)**	**1,470**
b) Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust	9,862	6,738	(4,798)	(910)	**10,892**
Total group restricted funds	**10,948**	**8,941**	**(6,421)**	**(1,106)**	**12,362**
Ambitious about Autism unrestricted funds:					
Designated funds					
Fixed assets	3,857	-	(657)	483	**3,683**
School development	5	-	-	-	**5**
Transformation fund	1,102	-	(217)	-	**885**
Covid Recovery fund	492	-	(9)	-	**483**
Service Development	199	-	(121)	-	**78**
Buildings Maintenance and Development fund	606	-	-	150	**756**
Total designated funds	**6,261**	**-**	**(1,004)**	**633**	**5,890**
General funds	2,863	18,939	(19,499)	473	**2,776**
Total Ambitious about Autism unrestricted funds	**9,124**	**18,939**	**(20,503)**	**1,106**	**8,666**
Total group funds	**20,072**	**27,880**	**(26,924)**	**0**	**21,028**

Transfers

£483k has been designated to the Fixed Asset funds to cover the depreciation of fixed assets acquired during the year. This includes £145k of fixed assets funded from restricted income, and £338k of fixed assets funded from unrestricted funds.

£150k has been designated from unrestricted funds to the Buildings Maintenance and Development fund.

£910k was transferred from Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust to general funds to reflect the intercompany management charge.

The charity is using an interest rate swap option to manage its exposure to interest rate movements on its £1.1m bank loan with NatWest. The agreement was entered into a variable to fixed interest rate swap in February 2011. The option swaps the variable rate of interest for a fixed rate of 4% per annum for the period up to August 2033 with a fair value gain of £13k recognised in the year.

19a. Movement in funds (continued)

For the year ended 31 August 2022:	At the start of the year £'000	Incoming resources and gains £'000	Outgoing resources and losses £'000	Transfers £'000	At the end of the year £'000
Restricted funds:					
a) Ambitious about Autism					
Ambitious College	-	292	(217)	-	**75**
Education Services projects	100	709	(461)	-	**348**
Autism Exchange	151	25	(29)	-	**147**
Family Support	29	343	(124)	-	**248**
Participation	50	156	(158)	-	**48**
TreeHouse School	182	158	(138)	(148)	**54**
Online Information Support	10	-	(10)	-	**-**
Online Youth Support	8	100	(24)	-	**84**
IT Equipment	77	22	(18)	(12)	**69**
Other	15	-	(2)	-	**13**
Total Ambitious About Autism restricted funds	**622**	**1,805**	**(1,181)**	**(160)**	**1,086**
b) Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust	6,778	5,790	(2,009)	(697)	**9,862**
Total group restricted funds	**7,400**	**7,595**	**(3,190)**	**(857)**	**10,948**
Ambitious about Autism unrestricted funds:					
Designated funds:					
Fixed assets	4,014	-	(682)	525	**3,857**
School development	5	-	-	-	**5**
Transformation fund	1,182	-	(80)	-	**1,102**
Covid Recovery fund	668	-	(176)	-	**492**
Service Development	-	-	(8)	207	**199**
Buildings Maintenance and Development fund	684	-	-	(78)	**606**
Total designated funds	**6,553**	**-**	**(946)**	**654**	**6,261**
General funds	2,414	16,878	(16,632)	203	**2,863**
Total Ambitious about Autism unrestricted funds	**8,967**	**16,878**	**(17,578)**	**857**	**9,124**
Total group funds	**16,367**	**24,473**	**(20,768)**	**-**	**20,072**

Transfers

£525k has been designated to the Fixed Asset funds to cover the depreciation of fixed assets acquired during the year. This includes £160k of fixed assets funded from restricted income, and £178k of fixed assets funded from the designated repairs and maintenance fund.

£95k has been designated from the Cyclical Maintenance fund to provide for restoration work on the TreeHouse toilets.

£544k has been designated from unrestricted funds to the Covid fund to provide a contingency against future risks as a result of Coronavirus, including additional costs or losses in income.

£100k has been designated from unrestricted funds to the Transformation fund to support our new strategy work.

£451k was transferred from Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust to general funds to reflect the intercompany management charge and salaries recharged to Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust.

£100k has been designated from the Buildings Maintenance and Development fund to provide major refurbishment works at TreeHouse School.

£207k has been designated from unrestricted funds to the service development fund.

£697k was transferred from Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust to general funds to reflect the intercompany management charge.

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 August 2023

19b. Summary movement in funds

Purpose of restricted funds:

Ambitious College	The charity continues its work to develop Ambitious College, London's first specialist day college for autistic young people aged 16–25 including those with learning disabilities. Ambitious College has two campuses co-located within the College of Haringey, Enfield and North East London and West Thames College.
Education Services projects	This fund includes developing and embedding a competency framework for the Ambitious Approach. The Ambitious Approach is our model of education practice, which was designed to be used in our education settings to support autistic children and young people. At its heart, the approach is centred around improving the quality of life of autistic young people while they are in education and ensuring this quality of life continues into adulthood. The framework is being embedded in the charity, and in partner schools and colleges, and includes audit tools, implementation guidance, evaluation protocols, parent toolkits and training materials.
Employ Autism and Autism Exchange	Employ Autism's mission is to ensure that more autistic people can become part of the workforce. The programme acts as a bridge to employment for autistic people by working with employers and careers and employability professionals to increase confidence in autism and neurodiversity, and as a result create opportunities in the workplace. We deliver training, resources and ongoing mentorship to a wide network of partners across the UK and together drive a collective movement for change. The programme comprises the Employ Autism network, the Employ Autism Higher Education network and Autism Exchange.
Learner and Family Support	Our specialist Learner and Family Support team helps the parents and carers of autistic children and young people attending our educational settings throughout their journey with us. We ensure that families have increased knowledge, skills and confidence to support autistic children and young people in their care by providing timely direct advice and support. This includes support at times of transition such as from school to further education, training or other placement, and to adulthood; and advocacy for families to try and secure statutory services such as respite care or social care support.
Participation	Young people are at the heart of everything we do. We listen to them to ensure our work reflects their views and needs. We stand with them and ensure their voices are heard and considered by policymakers and decision-makers, the media and the general public. Through our Ambitious Youth Network, online peer support and project work we bring autistic young people together to tackle isolation and loneliness, understand their autistic identity and have their voices heard.

Purpose of restricted funds: (continued)

Treehouse School	Funding provided to support a range of specific activities across the school.
Online Information Support	A project to provide vital information online for parents and carers, and empowerment to connect and support each other.
Online Youth Support	A project to provide vital information online for autistic young people, including through a new online community platform for the Ambitious Youth Network.
IT Equipment	This fund supports additional IT equipment and resources for 300 autistic children and young people in our schools and college, so they can access education and support.
Other	Other funds represent a number of small funds.

Purpose of designated funds:

Fixed Assets	This fund represents the net book value of the fixed assets, net of the loans used to purchase them, which are not, by the nature of fixed assets, readily available for other purposes.
Schools development	The school fund has been established to fund school development.
Transformation fund	This fund has been established to support the organisation's new strategy.
Buildings maintenance and development fund	The fund has been allocated to provide for any repairs to and development of the building based on 30-year life cycle costings prepared by external consultants.
Covid Recovery fund	This fund has been established to support the organisation in managing the risks and impact of the coronavirus pandemic.
Service development	This fund has been established to support the growth of existing and new services.

20. Net cash (used in)/provided by group operating activities

	2023 £'000	2022 £'000
Net income	**956**	3,705
Depreciation and amortisation charges	**901**	913
Losses on investments	**137**	159
(Gain) on sale of fixed assets	**(6)**	-
Dividends, interest and rent from investments	**(181)**	(119)
Interest payable	**235**	120
(Increase) in debtors	**(7,433)**	(389)
(Decrease) in derivative liability	**(25)**	(50)
Increase/(decrease) in creditors	**5,512**	(107)
(Decrease) in pension deficit	**(315)**	(2,181)
Net cash (used in)/provided by operating activities	**(219)**	**2,051**

21. Operating lease commitments

The group's total future minimum lease payments under non-cancellable operating leases is as follows for each of the following periods:

	Property		Equipment	
	2023 £'000	2022 (restated) £'000	**2023 £'000**	2022 £'000
Less than one year	**142**	145	**21**	8
One to five years	**412**	511	**11**	7
Over five years	**42**	75	**-**	-
	596	**731**	**32**	**15**

22. Post balance sheet event

On 1 September 2023 St John's School and College, Brighton (registered charity number 1061001) joined the Ambitious about Autism group as a wholly owned subsidiary of the Charity. The majority of the St John's Board of Trustees stepped down and were replaced by members of the Ambitious about Autism Board of Trustees, with one existing Trustee remaining in place to ensure some continuity of governance.

On 30 September 2023 the net assets and operations of St. John's School and College were transferred in full to Ambitious about Autism. All staff employed at that date were transferred to the employment of Ambitious about Autism in accordance with TUPE requirements.

The net assets of St John's School and College were £7,246k, for which all these were acquired for consideration of £nil on 30 September 2023.

23. Legal status of the charity

The charity is a company limited by guarantee and has no share capital. The liability of each member in the event of winding up is £1.

24. Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust

On 1 April 2017, Ambitious about Autism became the sole member of Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust, a company limited by guarantee and an exempt charity (company number 08335297).

Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust operates independently from Ambitious about Autism and as such Ambitious about Autism has no right or access to the assets (cash and non-cash) of Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust. In the group accounts all income and reserves of Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust are treated as restricted. While both entities operate independently the accounts are consolidated on the basis that Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust is the sole corporate member of Ambitious about Autism.

Balance sheet	2023 £'000	2022 £'000
Fixed Assets		
Tangible assets	**6,102**	6,132
Intangible assets	**7**	**10**
Current Assets		
Debtors	**2,500**	306
Cash at bank and in hand	**1,005**	5
Short-term deposit	**3,887**	4,560
	7,392	**4,871**
Liabilities		
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	**(2,640)**	**(867)**
Net current assets	**4,752**	**4,004**
Net assets excluding pension liability	**10,861**	**10,136**
Defined benefit pension scheme liability	**31**	**(284)**
Total net assets	**10,892**	**9,852**
Funds of the Academy Trust:		
Restricted funds		
Fixed asset fund	**6,263**	6,206
Restricted income fund	**4,598**	3,940
Pension Reserve	**31**	**(284)**
Total restricted funds	**10,892**	**9,862**
Unrestricted income funds	**-**	**-**
Total funds	**10,892**	**9,862**

24. Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust (continued)

A summarised extract of Ambitious about Autism Schools SoFA for the year:	Unrestricted Funds £'000	Restricted Funds £'000	Restricted Fixed Asset Fund £'000	**Total £'000**
Income from:				
Donations and capital grants	-	18	90	**108**
Charitable activities	-	6,606	-	**6,606**
Other income	-	24	-	**24**
	-	**6,648**	**90**	**6,738**
Expenditure on:				
Charitable activities	-	(5,772)	(247)	**(6,019)**
Net surplus/(deficit)	-	876	(157)	**719**
Transfer Between Funds	-	(214)	214	**-**
Other recognised (losses)	-	311	-	**311**
Net movement in funds	-	973	57	**1,030**
Funds brought forward	**-**	**3,656**	**6,206**	**9,862**
Funds carried forward	**-**	**4,629**	**6,263**	**10,892**

The charity is using an interest rate swap to manage its exposure to interest rate movements on its £1.1m bank loan with NatWest. The agreement was entered into a variable to fixed interest rate swap with Natwest in February 2011. The contract swaps the variable rate of interest for a fixed rate of 4% per annum for the period up to August 2033 and with a fair value loss of £136k recognised in the year.

25. Consolidated statement of financial activities
(incorporating an income and expenditure account)

For the year ended 31 August 2022

	Note	Ambitious about Autism Unrestricted £'000	Ambitious about Autism Restricted £'000	Ambitious about Autism Subtotal £'000	Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust Restricted £'000	**Total £'000**
Income from:						
Donations and legacies:						
Gifts and donated services	2	453	1,545	1,998	96	**2,094**
Charitable activities:						
Educational services	3	15,914	189	16,103	5,685	**21,788**
External affairs	3	-	29	29	-	**29**
Other income						
Trading income		342	42	384	9	**393**
Investment income		169	-	169	-	**169**
Total income		**16,878**	**1,805**	**18,683**	**5,790**	**24,473**
Expenditure on:						
Raising funds						
Fundraising activities		750	-	750	-	**750**
Investment management costs		13	-	13	-	**13**
		763	**-**	**763**	**-**	**763**
Charitable activities:						
Educational services		15,300	555	15,855	4,823	**20,678**
External affairs		1,356	626	1,982	-	**1,982**
Total expenditure	**4**	**17,419**	**1,181**	**18,600**	**4,823**	**23,423**
Net (expenditure)/income before other gains/(losses)		**(541)**	**624**	**83**	**967**	**1,050**
Net gains on investments		(159)	-	**(159)**	-	**(159)**
Net losses on pension deficit		-	-	-	**2,814**	**2,814**
Net (expenditure)/income		**(700)**	**624**	**(76)**	**3,781**	**3,705**
Transfers between funds	19	857	**(160)**	697	**(697)**	**-**
Net movement in funds		**157**	**464**	**621**	**3,084**	**3,705**
Reconciliation of funds:						
Total funds brought forward	19	8,967	622	9,589	6,778	**16,367**
Total funds carried forward	**19**	**9,124**	**1,086**	**10,210**	**9,862**	**20,072**

We are Ambitious about Autism

Ambitious about Autism is the national charity standing with autistic children and young people.

We believe every autistic child and young person has the right to be themselves and realise their ambitions.

We started as one school and have become a movement for change. We champion rights, campaign for change and create opportunities.

Ambitious about Autism

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Follow us

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Ambitious about Autism is a registered charity in England and Wales: 1063184 and a registered company: 03375255.

Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust is an exempt charity in England and Wales and a registered company: 08335297.

Published – April 2024

AMBITIOUS ABOUT AUTISM

England & Wales - Charity number 1063184

Accounts

Ambitious about Autism

Annual report and accounts

2021–22

Standing with autistic children and young people

Welcome to Ambitious about Autism's annual report and accounts 2021–22

This annual report and accounts tells our story of 2021–22. It provides an overview of our successes as we embarked upon the first year of our **Time for Ambition** strategy.

We're proud to share our stories and ambitious moments, and we hope you enjoy reading them.

You can also learn how we raise and spend money each year to ensure every autistic child and young person can be themselves and realise their ambitions.

You may choose to read the report from start to finish, or you can head straight to the section that interests you the most.

We're grateful to everyone who has assisted in the production of this report – autistic children and young people, parents and carers, and colleagues.

How you can get involved

The generosity of our supporters and partners helps us stand with autistic children and young people. Find out how you can get involved.

Sign up to receive our supporter newsletter for updates on our work with autistic children and young people, and how you can support us to champion rights, campaign for change and create opportunities.

Work with us

Autistic children and young people are at the heart of all that we do. **Join our inclusive team** and make a real difference.

Fundraising

There are plenty of ways to be part of Team Ambitious. In a group, on your own, online or in person, you can raise money and make memories along the way.

Volunteering

Showing your support for our work doesn't have to be financial: donating your time and talents is equally valuable. Volunteering is an incredible way to show your support, from lending your skills on a pro bono project to tending our school gardens or joining our network of business ambassadors.

Welcome to Ambitious about Autism's annual report and accounts 2021–22

continued

Leave a gift in your will

By leaving a legacy, you can ensure support for the next generation of autistic children and young people. These funds will help us to achieve our vision for a future where every autistic child and young person can be themselves and achieve their ambitions.

Corporate partnerships

By becoming an Ambitious about Autism partner, you can demonstrate your company's commitment to promoting and championing autism in the workplace. There are many ways you can support us. From cause-related marketing and sponsorship opportunities to staff donations, or pro bono work, your company can join us to stand with autistic children and young people.

Philanthropy

Nothing we do would be possible without the support we receive from our generous partners, made up of individuals, trusts and foundations. For those who want to connect closely with a project, service or the strong foundations that underpin everything we do, there are many ways to partner with us.

Donate today

Donate online via our website and support us to champion rights, campaign for change and create opportunities for autistic children and young people.

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Jon Snow, Ambitious about Autism ambassador

“Ambitious about Autism stands alongside autistic children and young people to build a better future in a world that is more accepting of difference. I’m very proud to support its vital and life-changing work work.”

Our purpose, vision, mission and values

Ambitious about Autism is the national charity standing with autistic children and young people.

We believe every autistic child and young person has the right to be themselves and realise their ambitions.

We started as one school and have become a movement for change. We champion rights, campaign for change and create opportunities.

Our purpose

We help autistic children and young people to be themselves.

Our vision

Our vision is for a future where every autistic child and young person can be themselves and realise their ambitions.

Our mission

We stand with autistic children and young people, champion their rights and create opportunities.

Our values

Children and young people are at the heart of everything that we do.

We are ambitious
for autistic children and young people and our work.

We celebrate difference
creating a world where everyone belongs.

We love learning
and commit to learn from our successes and mistakes; sharing knowledge, expertise and resources.

We are open
to new approaches, in how we make decisions, and engage with our community.

We work together
with autistic children and young people, parents and carers, our partners and staff to maximise impact and reach.

Foreword:
Welcome from the chair of trustees and chief executive

This year, as we gradually emerged from the coronavirus pandemic, we were determined to focus our efforts on building a better future for autistic children and young people, to help them recover from the turmoil of the last few years.

Together with autistic children and young people, our staff and supporters, we developed and launched Time for Ambition, our three-year strategy setting out our bold new vision and mission.

Our vision is for a future where every autistic child and young person can be themselves and realise their ambitions. Our mission is to stand with autistic children and young people, champion their rights and create opportunities.

We refreshed our values to reflect our desire to be a great place to work and champions in our sector. Our plans encompass the work we have already undertaken and our ambitions to increase our reach and impact by 2024.

In the first year of our new strategy, we continued to provide direct support and specialist education to hundreds of autistic children and young people through TreeHouse School, The Rise School and Ambitious College. There was also exciting progress on the development of our new specialist provision, Spring School.

Nationally, we launched our Ambitious Youth Network, a new UK-wide online platform helping hundreds of autistic young people to build connections and access opportunities.

Our employment programme, Employ Autism, continued to reach new employers and more young people. We also launched an exciting new project to develop a post-diagnosis support programme for autistic young people.

This year there were significant developments in the Government's strategy on the special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) system, with the publication of its long-awaited SEND Review.We submitted a comprehensive response to influence future policy implementation, using evidence and expertise from our settings, as well as the views of nearly 2,000 young people, and parents and carers.

Following the disruption caused by the coronavirus pandemic, we were also delighted to see the return of our fundraising events. These included Ambitious 220 – our Manchester to London ride with longstanding partner Rapha. Meanwhile, our strategic charity partnership with Marsh McLennan continued to grow in reach and impact.

None of our achievements would have been possible without our dedicated staff, so we continued to invest in our people to make Ambitious about Autism a great place to work.

Our thanks go to you, our wonderful children and young people, parents and carers, generous partners, supporters and staff. Your ongoing support helps autistic children and young people be themselves and realise their ambitions.

Neil Goulden
Chair of Trustees

Jolanta Lasota
Chief Executive

Foreword: Welcome from the Ambitious Youth Council

Autistic children and young people are at the heart of everything we do. That's why our Youth Council and Ambitious Youth Network play a vital role informing our work. From educating people across different sectors to advising our Board of Trustees, Ambitious about Autism would not be the same without them.

It's important to us that our opinions and views are heard and understood, and the Youth Council and Ambitious Youth Network has given us a safe place to do that. The network enables us to share our experiences and the needs, worries and hopes of autistic children and young people.

We started the year by presenting to staff at The Birmingham Women and Children's Hospital about how to make healthcare more accessible for autistic people. It meant a lot to be able to educate frontline staff on why healthcare should be inclusive for everyone. For some of us, it was the first time we'd given a speech to a large audience, and we were very proud of what we achieved.

We want autistic children and young people to feel included in all aspects of their life, from education to extracurricular clubs. At the start of 2022, we presented 'Include Autism' to a group of Girlguiding volunteers explaining how to make their group accessible to autistic young people. These opportunities are always so exciting, as we know the impact we can have.

This year, the Youth Council has been invited to discuss topics to be presented to the Board of Trustees. At our first Youth Council meeting of the year, we discussed the government's SEND Review, giving our views and opinions on the government's proposals. This meant a lot to us because, even though we all have different experiences and learning needs, we were able to say how it has been a constant battle for all of us to receive the right SEND support.

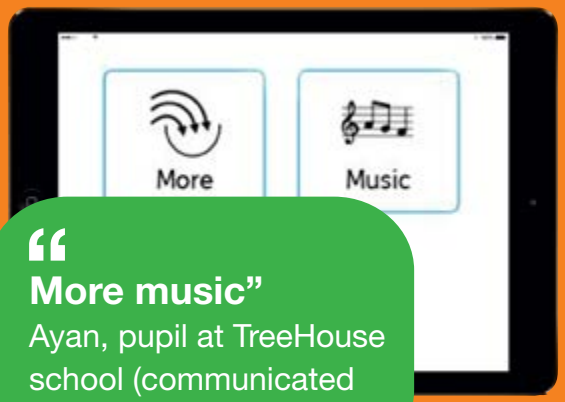
In the summer, we took part in an anti-bullying workshop. We worked with the Anti-Bullying Alliance to provide insight into what can be done to help stop the bullying of autistic children and young people. We also supported the development of **friendship resources** for the website, to help autistic young people make and maintain friendships.

It's been an exciting year and Ambitious about Autism has been a source of support and understanding for us all. We're grateful to them for always standing with autistic children and young people.

The Ambitious Youth Council, 2021–22

Pupil and learner voices

As part of our Ambitious Approach to education, we involve pupils and learners in decisions about their learning, support and future, and value their voices and opinions. For many pupils, communication can be difficult, so we invest in skills and resources to enable their participation in a variety of ways. Here are a few responses from pupils and learners about their experience during 2021–22.



“More music”
Ayan, pupil at TreeHouse school (communicated using PECS board)

“I have better support and the staff understand autistic people and their needs.”
Joe, pupil at The Rise School

“The Rise has helped me to improve as an individual, to become more resilient, and to help me take that next step onto university.”
Arun, learner at The Rise School Sixth Form

“I love piano. I’m good at piano and love playing Christmas songs with my teacher.”
David, pupil at TreeHouse School

“In the future I will be able to talk to more people and have more communication so I can have a job.”
Bradley, learner at Ambitious College

“This year I have been to a lot of places like CONEL, Costa Coffee and B&Q. I had fun on my trips on to the different places. Next year I would like to learn to travel to places on my own.”
Gopal, learner at Ambitious College

Why we're needed

Autistic children and young people continue to be disadvantaged by system failures and lack of understanding and acceptance.

Nearly **90%** of under-18s are waiting longer than the NHS 13-week deadline for an autism diagnosis.[1]

4 out of 5 young autistic people have mental health conditions.[2]

Autistic pupils are **twice as likely** to be regularly, and unlawfully, excluded from school as their peers.[3]

Just **29%** of autistic people are in full-time or part-time employment, the lowest rate of all disabled groups.[4]

70% of autistic young people fear discrimination if they disclose to employers that they are autistic.[5]

79% of autistic people say they are socially isolated because of a lack of understanding.[6]

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[1] NHS Digital. **Autism Waiting Times statistics**. Published December 2021

[2] Ambitious about Autism. **Know Your Normal Research Findings**. Published June 2017

[3] University of Birmingham Autism Centre for Education and Research. **Investigation of the causes and implications of exclusion for autistic children and young people**. Published April 2022

[4] Office for National Statistics. **Outcomes for disabled people in the UK: 2021**. Published February 2022

[5] **Survey by Ambitious about Autism** of over 500 autistic young people and their parents and carers. 2021

[6] National Autistic Society. **Too Much Information**. Published 2016

[7] Office for National Statistics. **Outcomes for Disabled People in the UK: 2021**. Published February 2022

Time for Ambition strategy 2021–24

We started as one school and have become a movement for change. Progress towards equality for autistic children and young people has been made and we're proud of our role in this.

But that progress now hangs in the balance. A perfect storm of the Covid-19 pandemic, economic uncertainty, reduced resources and an ongoing lack of understanding of autism means the next three years are critical.

The systems meant to provide support have never been so unforgiving of difference. Despite the best efforts of individuals, unfair treatment of autistic children and young people is becoming routine and invisible, and goes unchallenged. Parents are anxious and losing hope.

We see the unnecessary barriers autistic children and young people face. The closing doors, the opportunities out of reach, the devastating consequences of being pushed to the margins.

It doesn't need to be this way.

We see a world where autistic children and young people can be themselves and realise their ambitions.

Understanding, flexibility, the right support at the right time. That's all we ask.

Now is the time for change. Now, is the time for ambition.

It's in this context that we embarked upon the first year of our **Time for Ambition strategy**.

Time for Ambition: Introduction

We stand with autistic children and young people, champion their rights and create opportunities.

We take a person-centred approach, focused on individuals' quality of life, which we call the Ambitious Approach.

The next three years are critical if we are to work with autistic children, young people and their families to overcome the enormous challenges they face as a result of the lack of understanding of their needs.

We will continue to build on our core expertise in education and employability while engaging more than ever before in the other areas essential to autistic children and young people leading fulfilling lives.

This report outlines our progress towards achieving our strategic objectives and outcomes during 2021–22, the first year of Time for Ambition.

Excellent education

Our overarching aim is that all autistic children and young people have an excellent and inclusive education that enables them to learn, thrive and achieve. Ultimately, this will support them to have a good quality of life, including the realistic prospect of living and working as part of their communities.

Our education settings remained open throughout the coronavirus pandemic. So, after 18 months of virtual, home-based learning, and social distancing, we were delighted to return to face-to-face learning for all pupils at TreeHouse School and The Rise School and learners at Ambitious College. But the pandemic had not gone away and continued to disrupt the lives of autistic children and young people.

Despite this challenge, our education settings continued thanks to the resilience and agility of our staff, pupils, learners and their families. We are committed to providing ongoing support in the aftermath of, and recovery from, the pandemic.

In this first year of our Time for Ambition strategy we made progress against the following objectives:

- We will continue to embed, evaluate and refine our Ambitious Approach, use it to improve our careers education practice, and support meaningful transitions and progress for autistic children and young people.
- We will share our model and expertise in autism education nationally through our policy and influencing, information, training, consultancy and national partnership work.
- Our priority is to support autistic children and young people in our education settings to live through and recover from the coronavirus pandemic. We will enable them to achieve positive outcomes through careers education and support, and progress to education, employment or training.
- We will develop new education settings, including a free school in Kingston, and consider further opportunities for new services and partnerships with aligned education providers. Our guiding principle will be to ensure any new settings provide an excellent and inclusive education.

Getting the SEND system right for autistic children and young people

This year was dominated by the Government's publication of the long-awaited review of the special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) system.

Commissioned by the Treasury from the Department for Education in 2019, the SEND Review picked up momentum in early 2022.

We know that it's critical to get the review of the SEND system right for autistic children and young people. Autism is the most prevalent primary need among children with an Education, Health and Care plan. A significant proportion of children receiving SEN support will be autistic.

In January 2022, we published our **five asks for the SEND Review** based on the views of autistic children, young people and their families.

When the review was published for consultation at the end of March, **our first response** was featured in the Guardian and on Channel 5 news.

During the consultation period, we held meetings for groups of parents with officials from the Department for Education. Five autistic young people met the then Children's Minister, Will Quince MP.

We presented at a meeting of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Autism, which gave us another opportunity to share our views with the minister. We also spoke at sector events and conferences.

Our website and social media amplified autistic young people's voices, as we shared videos of their experiences and recommendations.

During May and June, we surveyed autistic young people and their parents and carers to inform our evidence in response to the review. We received detailed responses from almost 2,000 people about their experiences. We submitted our comprehensive consultation response to the government in July and expect it to publish its next steps for implementation in 2023.

The SEND review:
Alice's story

"Despite having an Education, Health and Care plan, I really struggled in mainstream schools. I couldn't access the curriculum and struggled academically and socially. I had no one to relate to and knew no one with the same interests as me. I was behind my age group academically too.

Despite all this, my mum was told I needed to stay in mainstream school, which was very frustrating. I think this was because, despite an early diagnosis, I had coped so far by masking my autism. Also, I didn't have any particular behaviour problems that disrupted learning in the classroom. I existed but I didn't thrive.

Eventually, when things came to a head and I was struggling emotionally and academically, I started spending one afternoon a week at a local special school. I loved the school, my lessons and the people I met there. The school was smaller and I felt understood. I felt I belonged. I became an independent learner and felt just like everyone else. For me, this was inclusion.

It was finally agreed I could move to the special school. This was life-changing – being in the right environment for me has been incredible. I have now developed social skills, learned more about myself, grown in confidence, found a love of sports and been able to progress educationally. I am now studying in college and am confident and ambitious about what I want to achieve in life.

If I had been in the right environment earlier, I wouldn't have had to do so much catching up. If I had stayed in mainstream, I would not have ended up with the qualifications and life skills I have or met my peer group, who I value. I feel sure my mental health would have been adversely affected.

It is so important there are enough places for children in specialist schools and that they are considered a viable option for autistic children and young people. They should not be considered as a last resort."

Alice is a member of the Ambitious Youth Network.

We are calling for:

- children's and families' rights to be protected
- a transparent, sufficient and responsive funding system
- improvements to support in universal services through national inclusion standards
- an enforceable system of accountability
- a long-term plan for a sufficient and capable workforce
- parity of rights across education, health and social care
- improved support to move from education into employment and independence.

Influencing policy and practice nationally

We work with autistic young people and their families to influence policy and practice nationally to improve their access to excellent education, quality health support and fulfilling careers.

We prioritise our influencing and campaigning activities to reflect the changes autistic children and young people and their parents or carers want, and to focus where we believe we can make a difference. In 2021–22, we focused on getting the SEND Review right for autistic children and young people.

We develop campaigns jointly with the autistic young people we work with, through our Ambitious Youth Network.

Our partnership with the Autism Education Trust

We are proud to be a founding partner of the Autism Education Trust, supported by the Department for Education. Together, we strive to ensure that all autistic children and young people receive the education they deserve.

A panel of Autistic Young Experts aged 16–25, supports the work of the Autism Education Trust working in collaboration with Ambitious about Autism. The panel is made up of 19 autistic young people from across England. This year, we recruited 11 new members to the panel.

The panel provides feedback on a range of topics from exclusions to exam accommodations and speaks at events and in videos about their experiences as autistic young people.

Autism Education Trust Youth Panel:
Jessica's story

"I am part of Ambitious about Autism's Ambitious Youth Network, where I enjoy attending weekly peer support sessions. I'm also on the Autism Education Trust's Young Experts Panel, where I hope I can make those in education more autism aware.

I feel privileged to be part of such an amazing initiative to improve the understanding of autism in schools, with the aim of making education more inclusive for young people with autism.

I am hopeful that, in the future, being able to access the right support will become easier and the metaphorical 'gold standard' in education.

I would love to see schools make significant improvements to support those with autism who may be more academically able and independent, and not just those with an Education, Health and Care plan and/or learning disability."

Jessica is a member of the Autism Education Trust Youth Panel. The panel, supported by Ambitious about Autism, provides feedback on several topics, from exclusions to exam accommodations, and speaks at events and in videos about their experiences as autistic young people. You can read more about our role in the Autism Education Trust on **page 19**.

Ambitious Approach

The Ambitious Approach is the educational approach we have developed and adopted to put quality of life at the centre of all we do. It is based upon a learner's indisputable rights to be:

- treated with dignity and compassion
- valued
- listened to
- supported to have the best quality of life possible
- empowered to make choices and decide on how they want to live their life.

The Ambitious Approach has three areas of focus.

- **The curriculum:** In our education settings, the curriculum focuses on on equipping learners with the knowledge and skills they need for quality of life. Learning is tailored to support autistic children and young people to live the life they want to lead.
- **Curriculum delivery:** We recruit and train staff in our settings to provide high-quality teaching. This includes having a deep knowledge of the subjects they teach, specialist knowledge of how autistic children and young people learn best and creating environments that support and nurture physical and psychological needs.
- **Collaboration:** To afford dignity, respect and compassion, young people are placed at the core of a setting so their voices are heard and we can support them in what is important to them. Staff in the settings work closely together, sharing their expertise, to address barriers to learning and support the best possible outcomes.

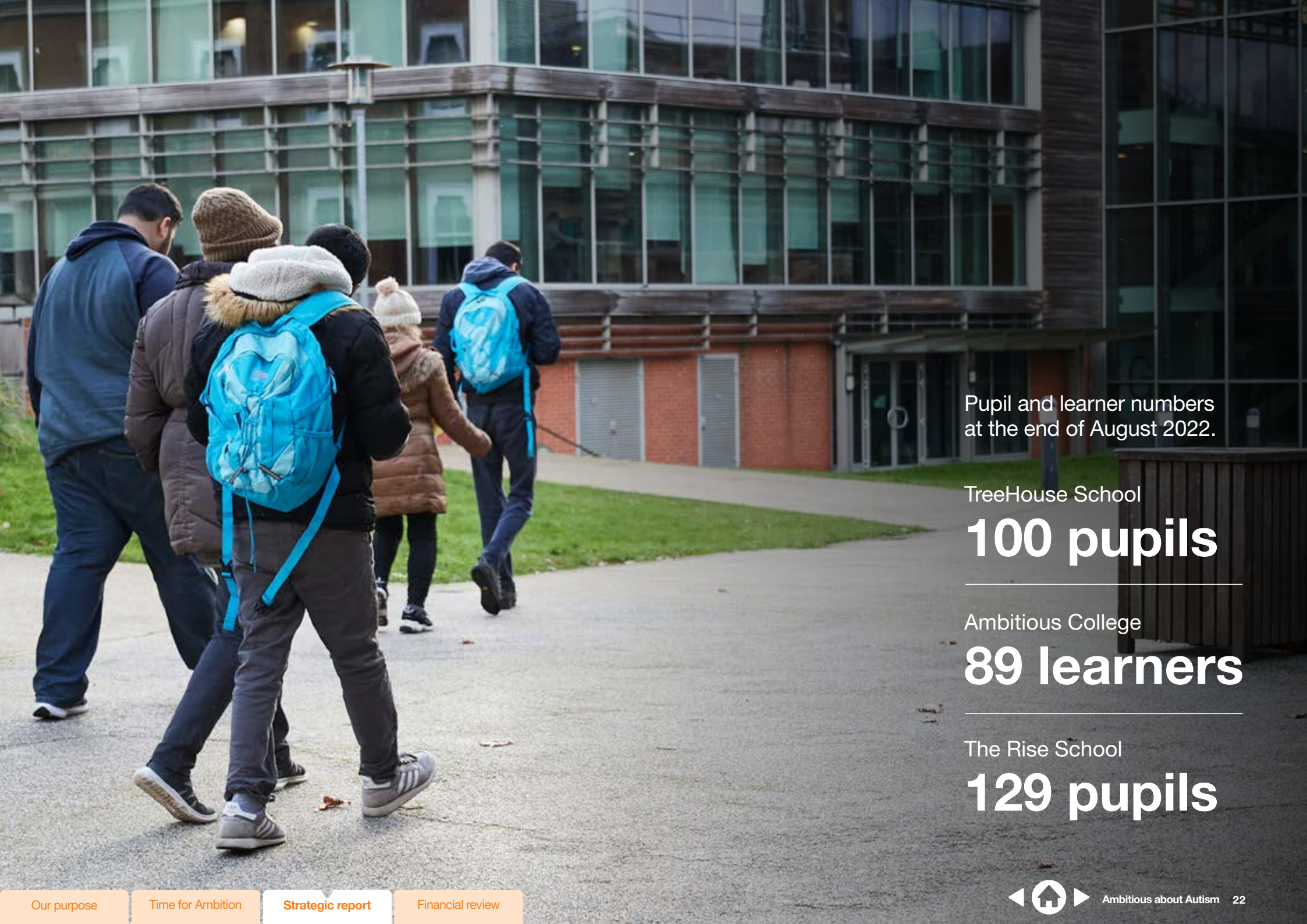
Competency framework and evaluation

We have an Ambitious Approach competency framework that details the skills and knowledge that staff need to have or acquire. We have a comprehensive learning and development programme to support them with this. All staff must attain a standard level of competence to pass their probation when joining the settings.

This year, training and development work to support colleagues in embedding the Ambitious Approach continued to progress well.

We launched a new virtual learning platform, which included a new animated film and content from subject experts about the Ambitious Approach. **(You can read more about staff learning and development at Ambitious about Autism on page 62.)**

The Ambitious Approach evaluation cycle involves collecting data at the start and end of each academic year. This data is used at an individual level, to celebrate positive changes for children and young people and to identify areas for development. The data is also used at a setting-wide level to celebrate progress and development in our education offer and to identify where and how to improve. Each setting has an Ambitious Approach Implementation Team who use this data for their action planning.



Pupil and learner numbers at the end of August 2022.

TreeHouse School

100 pupils

Ambitious College

89 learners

The Rise School

129 pupils

The Rise School

Head of School: **Helen Ralston**

The Rise School is a vibrant learning community that equips young people with qualifications as well as communication, social, emotional and employability skills.

Year 11 pupils at The Rise School celebrated excellent exam results this year, thanks to the hard work of pupils and staff. Nine pupils gained five or more GCSEs at grade 4 or above, while one pupil achieved seven GCSEs. Another pupil received the school's first ever GCSE computer science award, a hugely successful grade 8.

This year, all of The Rise Sixth Form students attended vocational courses and followed an ambitious wrap-around curriculum to achieve additional qualifications such as BTEC (Business and Technology Education Council) WorkSkills, BTEC Personal Growth and Wellbeing, and LiBF (The London Institute of Banking & Finance) Finance.

At the end of the year, nine learners left The Rise Sixth Form to transition to a variety of destinations, including employment, a supported internship at pharmaceutical company GSK, apprenticeships and university courses at SOAS, Ravensbourne and Brunel.

The Rise School is rated Good following its last Ofsted inspection.

Dean's story

In January 2022, a crew from Channel 5 News visited The Rise School for a report on the special educational needs system. They spoke to Dean, a sixth-form student who shared his experience of being excluded from primary school.

Dean explained how he felt that many of the teachers and other pupils didn't understand autism or how to support him at school. He went on to praise The Rise School for welcoming and supporting him.

Thanks to The Rise School's help, Dean was able to get good qualifications and go on to do his music course at sixth form.

Spring School

Head of School: **Andy Nowak**

Spring School is set to open in September 2023 in Kingston. The Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust has been working with the Department for Education, Kingston Council and Achieving for Children since 2019 to develop Spring School, which will support up to 90 autistic pupils aged 4–19.

In February 2022, we announced the name of our new school for autistic children and young people. Ambitious about Autism worked with community champions in Kingston and Richmond to create a shortlist of three names that were put to the public. All three had connections to Chessington's local surrounds, its nature and history.

The consultation was promoted in local libraries, shops and newsletters, as well as among hundreds of residents, including local councillors and pupils, who all had their say.

In May 2022, planning permission for the site on the Moor Lane Centre in Chessington was granted and construction got underway. There will be places for up to 36 pupils in the first academic year (2023–24).

Working in partnership with young people, parents and carers, the London Borough of Kingston, local schools, colleges and the wider community, Spring School will create opportunities for autistic young people to develop the academic, vocational and social skills to enable them to transition successfully to adult life as part of their communities.

Spring School

"Supporting children and young people to have the best possible start in life is a top priority for us at Kingston Council… We have long hoped to have an autism-specialist school within our borough."
Steph Archer, Kingston Councillor.

Feedback on Spring School's name from members of the public.

"It sounds positive and bright, not too serious. I feel parents of autistic children already have such a serious world with big words, this brings light and ease."

"I love the connection that spring has to new beginnings, new opportunities and new life being nurtured. I feel this fits well with what the school represents."

"My daughter is autistic and when I read the names out, she said she liked the name Spring School, as she likes springtime."

TreeHouse School

Head of School: **Joanna Dziopa**

TreeHouse School is a non-maintained special school that was set up in 1997. Based in the Pears National Centre for Autism Education in the heart of a thriving community, it educates autistic pupils aged 3–19 from across London and the Home Counties.

Using the Ambitious Approach to education, pupils receive specialist and personalised support through a dedicated transdisciplinary team of qualified teachers, speech therapists, occupational therapists and behaviour specialists.

TreeHouse School works hand in hand with parents and carers, local schools, community groups and employers to maximise opportunities for pupils to enjoy school, succeed in their learning and transition to a fulfilling and rewarding adult life.

TreeHouse School is rated Outstanding following its last Ofsted inspection.

TreeHouse School

Pupils at TreeHouse School enjoy a five-day residential trip to the New Forest

This year, pupils from TreeHouse School went on a five-day residential trip to Avon Tyrell Activity Centre in the New Forest.

The pupils who attended all engaged in a range of physical and creative activities provided by both Avon Tyrrell and TreeHouse School staff. These included archery, canoeing, climbing, night walks, electric biking, t-shirt dyeing, an Easter egg hunt and a disco.

The pupils also had down time in their lodges, which enabled them to engage in a variety of leisure activities and general independence activities such as making snacks, washing up and housekeeping and self care.

There were so many wonderful moments on the trip. The disco was a firm favourite for pupils and staff alike. There were a lot of spontaneous requests for songs, and all the pupils spent a long time dancing together, enjoying this unusual opportunity for lots of social interaction.

Climbing was another highlight, with all pupils getting involved and enjoying racing their teachers up the climbing wall. One pupil had his first spontaneous communication of the trip to request more turns climbing.

Many pupils on the trip came back wanting more experiences of this kind. Staff, having spent more time with pupils than usual, came away with a better rapport with them. The trip helped pupils build self-esteem because they achieved so much during their time away.

A parent of a pupil on the trip said: **“This trip has been very important for my son, especially for his mental wellbeing. It has given him the opportunity to try out the skills and transfer his learning into real world situations.”**

Ambitious College

Head of College: **Linda Looney**

Ambitious College is a specialist day college for autistic young people aged 16–25.

The college has two Pears campuses co-located within mainstream colleges in north and west London. At each campus, there is a team of dedicated and passionate professionals, including teachers, occupational therapists, speech and language therapists, employment specialists, behaviour specialists and specialist support staff.

Using the Ambitious Approach to education, they work together to come up with learning and support approaches tailored to individuals.

Through a range of partnerships with local businesses, community groups and mainstream partners, the college also offers opportunities to learn in the community.

Ambitious College

This combined approach – personalised education, positive support and real work experience – gets results. It enables young people to achieve their goals, fulfil their potential and go on to lead active lives in their community.

Ambitious College is registered as a specialist day college and rated by Ofsted as Good.

Ambitious College celebrates another Natspec Award

In May 2021, Ambitious College was awarded the prestigious Natspec Award in the category of home learning.

The award highlighted the college's innovative and combined approach to home teaching, which ensured students were still engaged with daily learning during the pandemic.

The judges were particularly impressed with the college's personalised approach for each individual learner.

Supported internships

Ambitious College offers supported internships for young people who want to enter employment. In 2022, five autistic young people with learning difficulties secured jobs after taking part in our programme at the Whittington Hospital.

Kelton, Jake, Paige, Michael, Liam* and Daniel gained valuable skills and experience working in various support roles at the north London hospital.

Kelton's dream job has always been to work in hospitality. After gaining confidence during his internship, he applied for a full-time catering assistant job with John Lewis. Kelton attended a work trial and interview at John Lewis Oxford Circus and was successful in securing the role, which started in July 2022.

Jake also secured a catering assistant role in the Whittington Hospital's health records department following his internship.

Three other young people who took part in the programme went on to secure apprenticeships. Paige will take part in a Level 3 Childcare Apprenticeship in a nursery.

Two other interns, Michael and Liam*, secured full-time apprenticeships at the medical equipment firm Medequip.

Meanwhile, Daniel will return to complete two further work rotations at the Whittington Hospital next year as part of the supported internship programme.

Gemma Mullan, who runs our **supported internship programme**, said: **"We are enormously proud of the achievements of our graduating interns, who are now taking their next steps into employment. From securing dream jobs to gaining more practical experience through apprenticeships, our interns are building on the skills they have developed and are ready to thrive and achieve in the workplace."**

*name has been changed

"During my work trial, I cleaned the tables, collected the plates and cups when customers had finished and took them to the dishwasher room. The team at John Lewis were really friendly. I am very happy I got the job."

Kelton, Ambitious College supported intern

Employment and enterprise

Too few autistic young people move successfully from education to employment. Only 29% of autistic people are in full-time or part-time employment, the lowest of all disabled groups.[7]

We want every autistic young person to have a good careers education, relevant to their aspirations and strengths. Working alongside them, we equip autistic young people to progress to employment and develop transferable life skills.

Our employability programmes offer autistic people the chance to gain valuable skills and prove themselves in the workplace. We offer employment advice and opportunities to pupils and learners attending our education settings. Our national Employ Autism programme enables paid work experience opportunities for autistic young people aged 18 and over.

In this first year of our Time for Ambition strategy we have made progress against the following objectives:

- Through the Employ Autism programme, we will pilot a model that will facilitate 'experiences of work' for autistic young people and support employers to be more autism confident.
- Through evidence gathered from our Employ Autism programme and implementation across our education settings, we will develop a framework of careers education adapted for autistic young people, rolled out nationally to improve practice and policy.

Employ Autism

Our impact:

- 165 young people accessed work experience via network partners, including 79 as part of the Civil Service summer internships programme
- 556 young people received tailored careers information and employability sessions, face to face and online, to prepare them for work
- 40 employer partners offered work experience
- 75 employers received training and mentoring to offer work experience to autistic young people.

The Employ Autism programme in 2021–22 can best be summarised as a year of partnership working – a time of expansion where we have seen the consolidation of our networks.

An important theme was the increased breadth of our offer to autistic young people, not only in the roles available, but also in the opportunities that arose from a wider variety of national strategic partnerships.

The Employ Autism programme comprises internships, training and a careers guidance offer for autistic young people. Our vision for Employ Autism, now in its third year, remains the same: to build a collaborative, nationwide network that collectively has the power to remove the barriers that prevent autistic young people from transitioning from education to employment.

Underpinning our strategy is a commitment to standing with autistic young people and adapting to reflect their needs and the ever-changing external environment.

Our employer partners represent a range of industries including financial services, hospitality, recruitment, transport, housing, charity, health, local government, technology, media, PR and marketing.

Last year, we also reached an additional 10 employer partners through our Higher Education network. We are proud that Employ Autism is now widely recognised across national education and employability networks.

Despite our achievements, the impact of the pandemic continued to be felt, especially in the recruitment of young people. Many returned to education last year, fearing they would not be able to secure a job. However, for other young people, new opportunities arose, with a greater number of Employ Autism participants benefiting from flexible and hybrid job roles.

Some of the programme's most significant strategic partnerships have been facilitated by the Employ Autism Development Board. This is a committed group of sector leaders, passionate about driving a wholesale commitment to neurodiverse workplaces. Alongside this, our Business Ambassador group has maintained a membership of 32 individuals, some of whom have committed to offering internships. New members of the group in 2021–22 included representatives from Capita, Kroll, BP Collins and QBE. The diversity of our membership has increased the expertise offered by the group. (See **page 84** for a full list of Employ Autism Development Board members and Business Ambassadors.)

Employ Autism:
Lily-Rose's story

"I am Lily-Rose (she/her), and I was lucky enough to be the first person to intern with JLL on the Meta London account.

The support of Ambitious about Autism was essential in making me feel able to apply for the internship at JLL in the first place. I had previously applied for roles that didn't make any adjustments for autistic people, and I'd found it very disheartening how difficult and exclusive the traditional interview process can be.

I started to think that perhaps I would never be able to gain meaningful experience or get a job because of this. Knowing that the JLL team had received training on how to be inclusive of autistic people, and the adjustments that were made for me, made all the difference.

During my time at JLL, I grew in leaps and bounds. I helped with operations, events, mailroom processes, and as part of the moves and changes team. I gained so much experience, not only in facilities work, but also in social interaction, sustainability projects and presenting.

My proudest moment was presenting to the JLL and Meta team about my internship and all I got from the opportunity.

The team at JLL took me on a journey, from initially being rather terrified about what the world of work meant for someone like me (autistic and queer), to quickly finding so much value and joy in a workplace that saw me for who I am. The team went out of their way to learn how to better accommodate people like me, and we had some excellent external speakers present to the team.

I am overjoyed at how much I have learnt over my internship. My hope going into it was to gain inspiration personally and professionally, to strive to advance my employment skills and know that inclusive workplaces are real.

With the team's help, I not only accomplished all of this, but also gained new dreams, eternal friendships and a renewed sense of joy. I am so excited that other autistic people will get to experience this opportunity as well."

Careers education in our settings

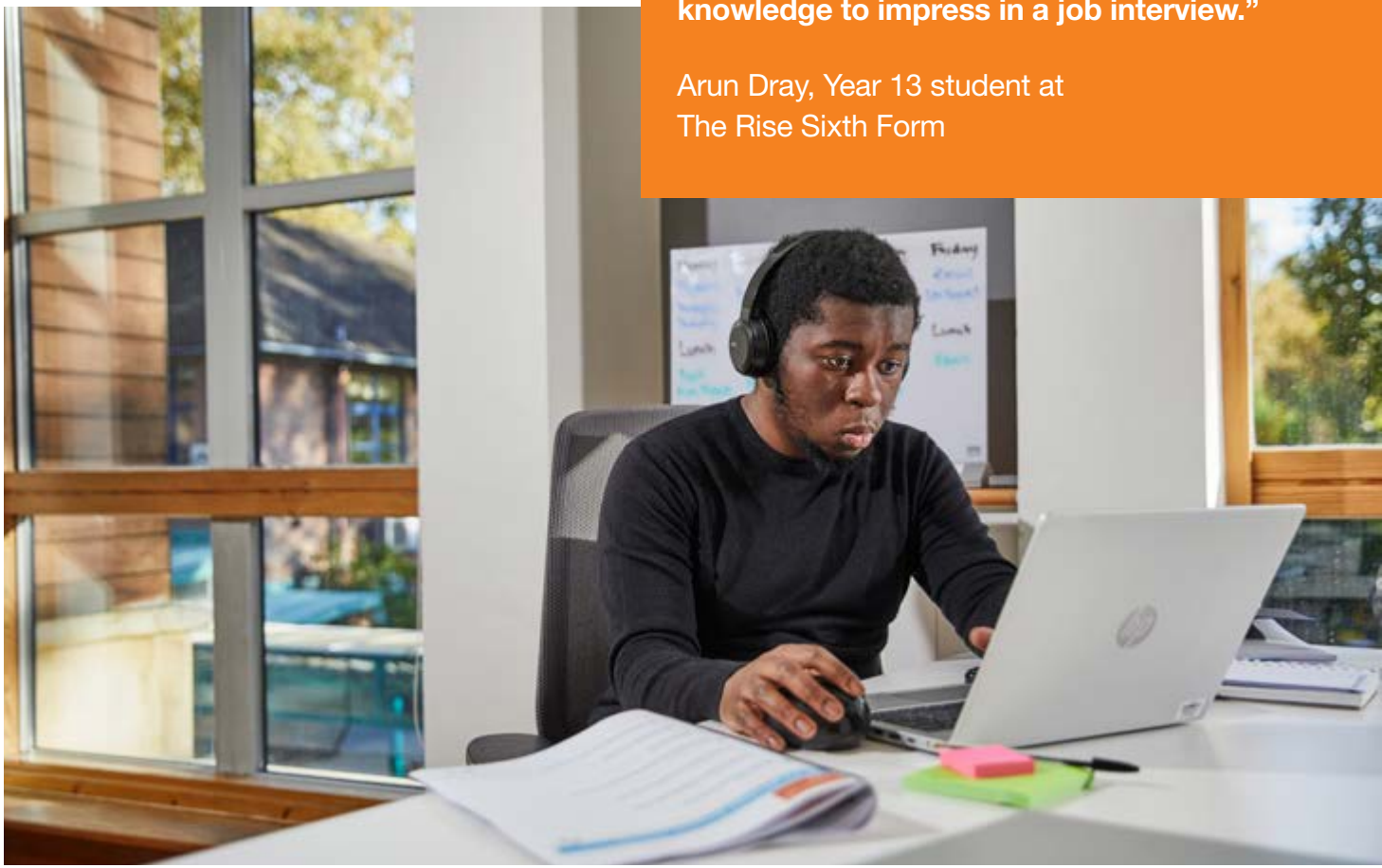
The guiding principle behind our employment and enterprise strategic aim is that we want every autistic young person to have a good careers education at school, and in further and higher education. This includes experiences of work that will equip them to progress to employment and instil transferable life skills.

Across our education settings, we offer careers advice and employability opportunities to pupils and learners. We actively encourage pupils and learners to understand the working world.

For example, learners at Ambitious College can take a 'Preparing for Employment' course to help boost their confidence ahead of work placements.

Last year, pupils at The Rise Sixth Form learned more about how businesses operate and launched a hypothetical phone app, delivering a sales pitch to 'investors' across Ambitious about Autism.

Staff also work closely with pupils and learners to understand their interests and find appropriate work experience placements that suit their needs.



"The investors said they would invest in my app and thought it had the correct features to be a force in the market, which I was really pleased with.

I think [the employability course] has definitely improved my chances of getting a job, as I feel I have obtained the required knowledge to impress in a job interview."

Arun Dray, Year 13 student at The Rise Sixth Form

Ambitious College learner:
Izzy's story

Izzy, a learner at Ambitious College, was interested in various work experience opportunities, such as jobs working with children, in a bar or restaurant, or in a salon.

Working with Izzy, the team at the college discussed what work experience might look like and located a suitable nursery near Izzy's home for her to complete a placement.

Initially, Izzy found the placement difficult because of the noise the children made and felt anxious about not fully knowing what she had to do. However, Izzy remained resilient and on her own initiative started to write down her weekly reflections, noting things that had gone well and things that hadn't gone so well.

Through this process, Izzy realised that she found it hard to talk to her manager without a prompt from familiar staff. It was also difficult for her to figure out on her own what she needed to do next. Izzy discussed this with her manager and chose strategies that she could use to ask for support.

For example, she explained to her manager that she had finished a task and was ready for a new one. Izzy established her own goal to ask independently for help or for a new task. She did this in week three but still needed a bit of reassurance. By week four, Izzy was independently asking her manager for more tasks and work.

At the end of the placement, Ambitious College staff met with Izzy, her manager and parents. Her manager noted that as Izzy's confidence increased, her independence improved. By the end of the placement, Izzy did not rely on other staff and completed tasks independently.

Family and relationships

Being connected to others is vital. But, during the pandemic, the support autistic young people and their families received reduced substantially or stopped altogether, leaving many feeling even more vulnerable and isolated than ever before.

Autistic young people and their families have told us they want peer networks alongside uplifting but realistic information tailored to their needs.

In this first year of our Time for Ambition strategy, we made progress in launching an information and support service that will provide tiered support to autistic children and young people, their parents and carers. This included:

- a universal offer of high-quality, relevant, accurate and accessible information and guidance
- targeted support via online communities, co-produced by and for autistic young people, their parents and carers, to access peer support and build connections
- a specialist learner and family support service for autistic children and young people attending our education settings, as well as for their parents and carers.

Information and support

Accessibility is also vital. This year, we continued to add to our expanding bank of resources to support autistic young people and their families.

Our website can be customised to users' preferences, using the Recite Me accessibility tool. We also produced easy-read guides and visual stories alongside practical tips and techniques, toolkits and videos.

In the past year, our website had more than one million unique page views, and our top three resources together were downloaded 56,000 times:

- **Right from the Start toolkit** for parents and carers of young children
- **Transition to employment** toolkit
- Coronavirus resources including guides on getting vaccinated, testing and managing change.

After visiting our website, 84% of parents and carers felt they had better knowledge and skills to support their autistic child or young person, while 83% felt more confident supporting their autistic child or young person.

These figures are consistent with the previous year and an important measure of how parents and carers value and trust our high-quality information.

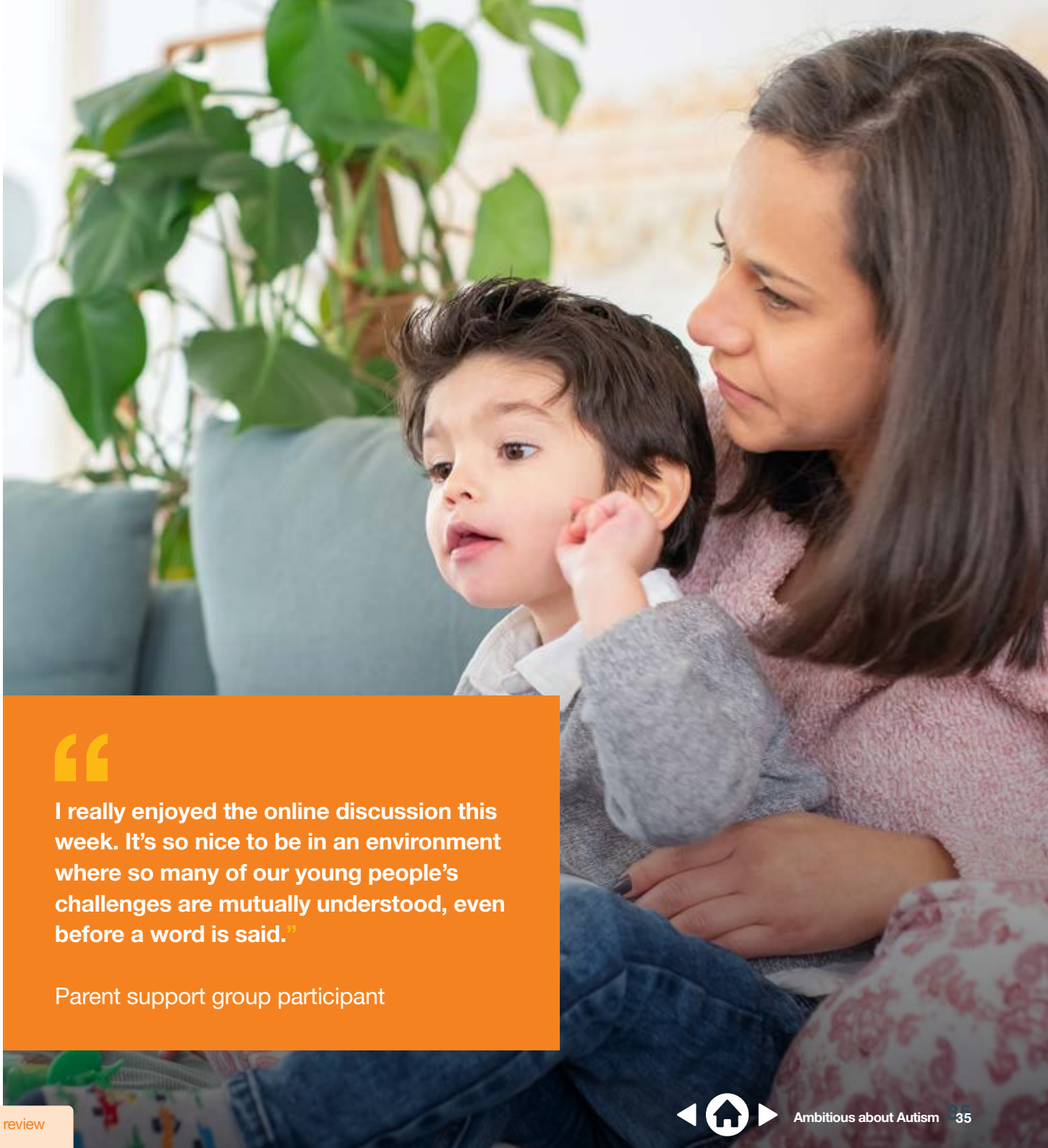
Learner and family support

Our learner and family support team helps the parents and carers of autistic children and young people attending our education settings throughout their journey with us. Over the past year, they have supported 68 young people to transition from our settings to other education, training, employment or other community opportunities.

We provided pupils, learners and their families with bespoke advice, support and guidance to help learners move into higher and further education, complete a supported internship, obtain an apprenticeship or access a meaningful social care placement.

The team also provided welfare support to parents and carers when they need it. In the past year, they have worked on 54 cases involving support, dealing with issues such as homelessness and securing urgent respite care.

The team set up a group that supports parents and carers across our education settings. It is hosted via our Talk about Autism online community. The sessions provide parents and carers with a chance to chat and receive guidance and support.



> **"I really enjoyed the online discussion this week. It's so nice to be in an environment where so many of our young people's challenges are mutually understood, even before a word is said."**
>
> Parent support group participant

Learner and family support:
Arran's story

The learner family support team supported Arran* in his transition from TreeHouse School to further education. Arran is very keen to learn, but occasionally needs additional support to help him achieve his goals.

The learner family support team found a suitable college placement for Arran, but the local authority refused to fund it. They insisted that Arran should settle for a social care package which would have involved carers coming into the family home – something his parents were not comfortable with. The learner family support team worked with Arran's teaching and therapeutic staff and gathered all the data on what he had learnt at school, what he was hoping to learn at his new placement and how a place at college would enable this to happen.

The local authority did not agree with this; however, they did offer to send in an educational psychologist to assess Arran. The assessment took place but there were concerns over the inaccuracy and independence of the report provided by the psychologist.

The learner family support team challenged the parts of the report that were inaccurate and made further representations to correct the report.

The local authority finally agreed to fund Arran's placement at college and a transition plan was agreed with staff at TreeHouse School to ensure new staff could work successfully with Arran.

Arran is now attending college and has enjoyed many of the new activities in his curriculum.

*name has been changed

Talk about Autism online community

Talk about Autism provides a safe online space where parents and carers can speak, without judgement, with like-minded people about their parenting journey.

Talk about Autism moved to a new platform in June 2022 to allow us to grow the community and introduce new features that meet the needs of parents and carers.

Working closely with parents and carers over the past year, we developed a new community platform that supports engagement so parents and carers can be themselves, connect with others, access tailored information and get the latest news that affects their autistic child.

Over the next year (2022–23), we look forward to expanding the Talk about Autism community and launching an exclusive information webinar series that will provide autism-specific advice from experts, parent advocates, and a range of contributors with a professional interest in, and lived experience of, autism.

“Talk about Autism is very easy to use and is ideal for me right now, as my son begins his journey to getting an autism diagnosis.”

Parent on the Talk about Autism community

Supporting autistic young people to make friends

After hearing feedback from autistic young people and analysing data from our website, we developed new resources on making and maintaining friendships as an autistic young person.

The resources were co-created with the Ambitious Youth Network, drawing on their own experiences and expertise to create content that really met the needs of young people who might struggle to make friends.

Content included ideas on where to meet new people who share similar interests and tips for conversation starters. We launched the resources in time for World Friendship Day, 30 July 2022.

The resources have been invaluable to autistic young people and were viewed 1,113 times between 1 July and 31 August 2022.

LGBTQ+ resources

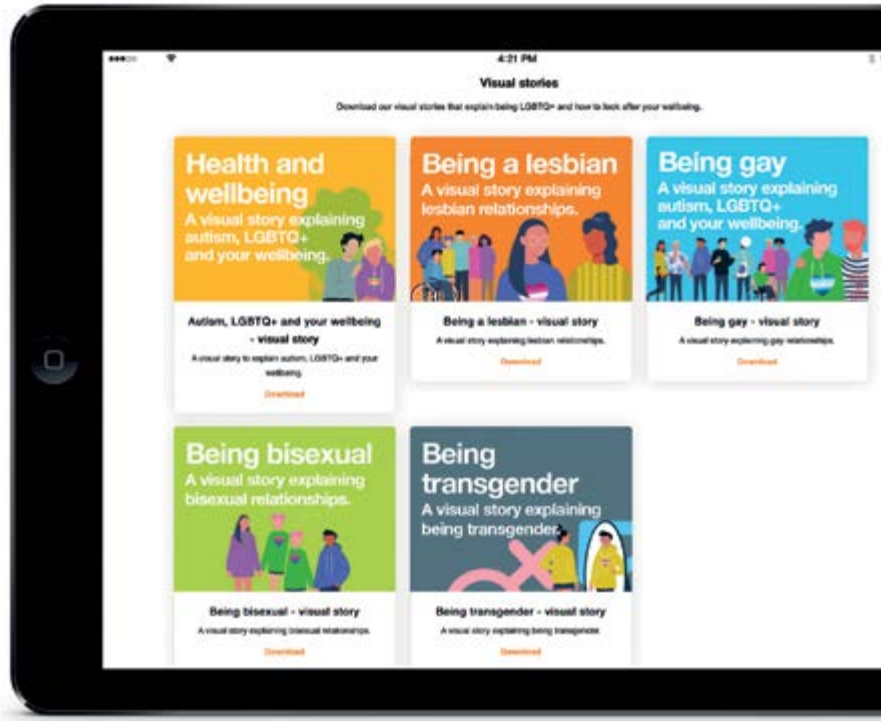
In February 2022, we launched our LGBTQ+ resources for autistic young people and their families as part of LGBTQ+ History Month. While there's a spotlight on the LGBTQ+ community during February, we know the importance of highlighting these resources all year round, which we have continued to do.

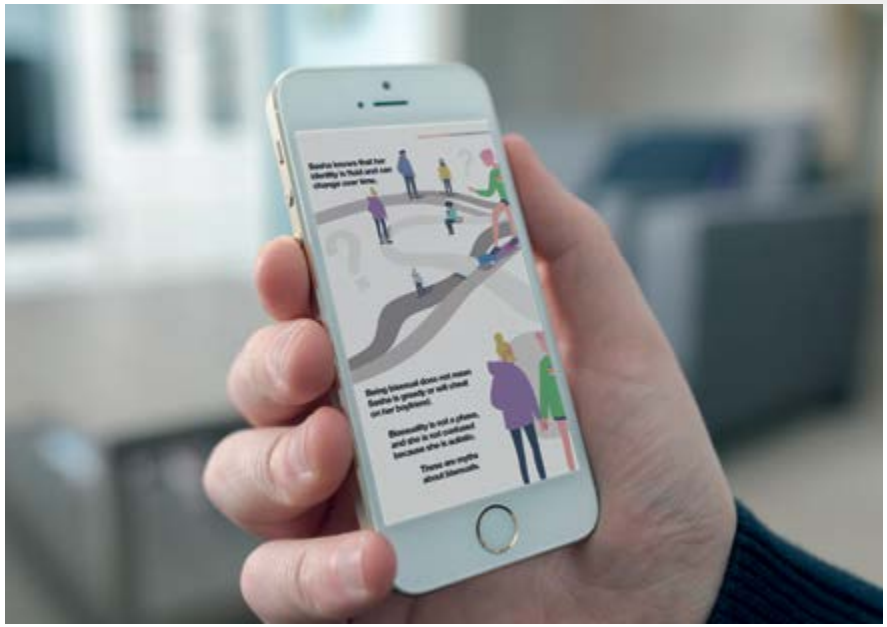
We worked closely with LGBTQ+ autistic young people to create the resources, listening to their experiences and using their insight to guide the project's content.

Since the content's launch, 75.8% of autistic young people who accessed the content said that the resources were extremely useful. The resources were viewed 5,183 times between 1 February and 31 August 2022.

We received positive feedback from autistic young people and stakeholders alike.

"AaA has published some new LGBTQ+ resources. It's a great showcase for intersectionality and neurodiverse LGBTQ+ people, with a great focus on young people."





"I love your new LGBTQ+ resources!"

Ambitious about Autism returns to the Autism Show

Following a two-year hiatus due to the pandemic, we were able to return to the Autism Show 2022, the largest event in the country dedicated to the autism community.

In June, a team of colleagues from Ambitious about Autism hosted a stand at the ExCeL Centre in London, where they met hundreds of autistic people, their friends, families and carers.

We produced a suite of new resources to showcase our work at the event, including leaflets on our education settings, employment programme and youth network.

Health and wellbeing

Good physical and mental health and wellbeing are essential for an autistic child or young person to thrive. Right from the start, timely diagnosis followed by post-diagnostic support lays the foundations for understanding autism and how to access the right healthcare and support.

Autistic people also need services that support good mental health by reducing isolation and early intervention through signposting to specialist support.

In this first year of our Time for Ambition strategy we have made progress against our objective to pilot a post-diagnostic support service so that all autistic young people can access support to improve their wellbeing during and after diagnosis.

Post-diagnosis support pilot programme

The post-diagnostic support programme was made possible thanks to the generosity of the Bally's Foundation.

The programme aims to improve the wellbeing of autistic young people by increasing understanding and acceptance of their autistic identity.

In the first year of our project, we benefitted from an unexpected research grant from the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR). The grant will enable a world-class team to evaluate the programme and provide an evidence-based approach to determine whether it helps autistic young people.

We hope the research will provide compelling evidence of the project's effectiveness and help influence NHS England to support and commission the model.

In the next phase of the pilot, we will recruit autistic young people to co-produce the online course, establish a reference group of expert partners who can influence change in national government policy and practice, and begin research led by UCL's Centre for Research in Autism and Education, to investigate inequalities in access to post-diagnostic support.

Together, we will develop resources and produce online courses that will be freely available to healthcare professionals and autistic young people, ensuring they get the right support at the right time.

Hospital accessibility

Our longstanding partnership with the Whittington Health NHS Trust has continued to improve the experience of autistic patients and those with learning disabilities visiting hospital for appointments or in emergencies.

As part of a year-long project for the Whittington Health NHS Trust, Ambitious about Autism supported three north London patient groups – Mencap Islington Me Time, The Elfrida Society and Centre 404 – to create new resources for autistic patients and people with learning disabilities.

I want healthcare staff to know who I am. I've had an appointment cancelled nine times. Healthcare staff tried to be honest with me. I hope this project will change things for the better."

Martin, member of patient involvement group

Through joint working with patient groups, we examined the challenges that autistic patients and people with learning disabilities face when visiting hospital for appointments or in emergencies.

Patients told us that they found it difficult to understand some of the unfamiliar medical language used during appointments. They also said they needed enough time to process information during appointments and wanted to feel that healthcare professionals understood their needs.

We launched the new resources during Learning Disabilities Week (20–26 June). These were published on Whittington Health's website and distributed in the hospital and across the community.

Resources included easy-read guides on:

- what happens when you visit the emergency department
- going for a routine operation
- making a complaint or giving a compliment.

Working on this project, together with Ambitious about Autism, has been a fantastic opportunity to improve the experience of accessing healthcare for people with a learning disability. By working together and really listening to people, we have a better understanding of what we were not getting right – we can now change that and ensure everyone has a good experience when they come to our hospital or community sites."

Varda Lassman, Islington Borough and Nurses Lead for Adult Community Health Services at Whittington Health NHS Trust

We also produced an easy-read form for medical staff to fill in and give to the patient when they leave, explaining the treatment they've received.

There are also resources for healthcare staff to help them improve their understanding of autism and the different types of learning disabilities, so they can better interact with patients during visits and appointments.

Active citizenship in the community

Autistic children and young people are at the heart of everything that we do. Inclusion is a cornerstone of our Ambitious Approach and just as important in the community as it is in education or employment.

In this first year of our Time for Ambition strategy we have made progress against our objective to further develop and expand our Ambitious Youth Network nationally to empower autistic young people to connect with one another and influence societal change.

Ambitious Youth Network

In March 2022, we launched the **Ambitious Youth Network**, a new UK-wide online platform for autistic young people. Autistic young people were involved in every stage of the network's development, including user testing and design.

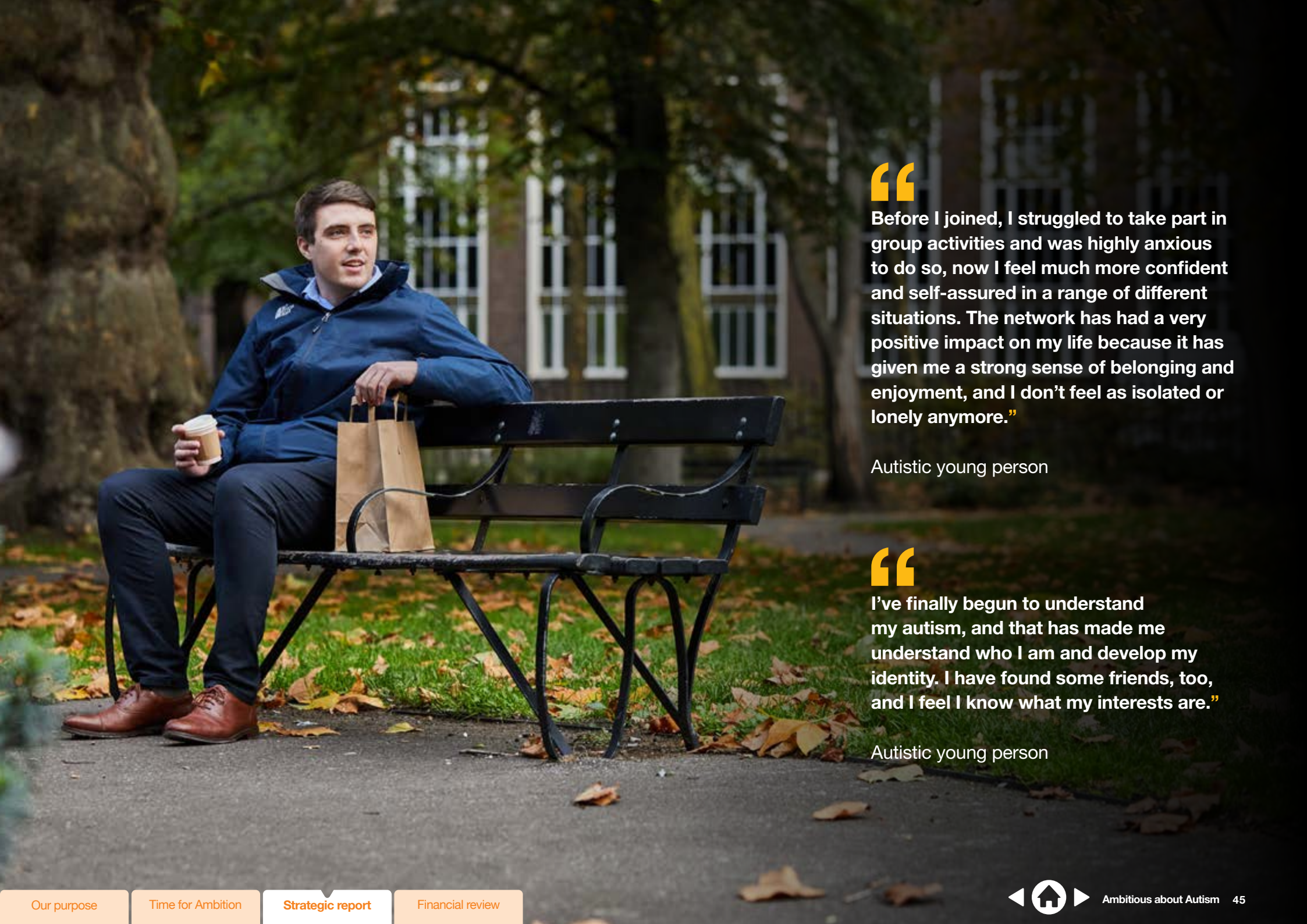
The Ambitious Youth Network offers autistic young people, aged 16–25, a safe and moderated online space to help them understand their autistic identity and reduce the isolation and loneliness that many feel.

Young people can take part in peer support sessions, share experiences, find employment opportunities through Employ Autism, and participate in the work of the charity. There are also opportunities for them to work together and campaign for change.

The online network evolved from the work of our award-winning Youth Council – 14 dynamic young autistic volunteers who have led impactful and award-winning campaigns, including mental health campaign **Know Your Normal**.

Their work and positive example started a ripple effect, leading to an ever-increasing number of young people wanting to get involved.

Demand surged during the pandemic, with the number of young people registering for support increasing from around 50 to 450.

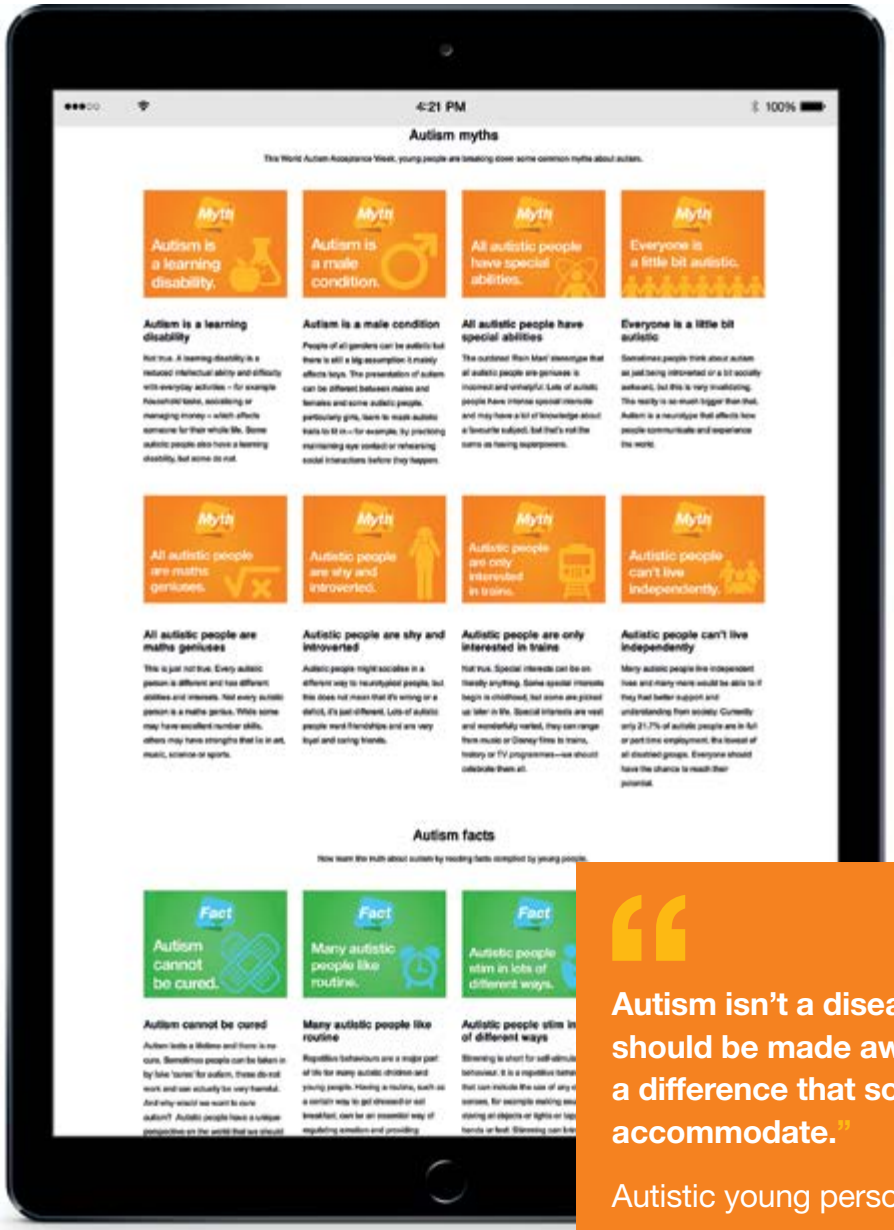


“Before I joined, I struggled to take part in group activities and was highly anxious to do so, now I feel much more confident and self-assured in a range of different situations. The network has had a very positive impact on my life because it has given me a strong sense of belonging and enjoyment, and I don’t feel as isolated or lonely anymore.”

Autistic young person

“I’ve finally begun to understand my autism, and that has made me understand who I am and develop my identity. I have found some friends, too, and I feel I know what my interests are.”

Autistic young person



Autism isn't a disease that people should be made aware of – it's a difference that society should accommodate."

Autistic young person

World Autism Acceptance Week 2022

We co-created our 2022 World Autism Acceptance Week campaign with members of our Ambitious Youth Network.

Autistic young people told us they want to be more accepted by society, which is why in 2022 we focused on autism 'acceptance' rather than 'awareness'.

Throughout World Autism Acceptance Week, across our social media platforms, young people shared common myths about autism to break down misconceptions. They also shared autism facts to increase understanding and acceptance.

Autistic young people also took part in media interviews during World Autism Acceptance Week, including a BBC Radio 1Xtra special about autism.

Ambitious about Autism
TATA CONSULTANCY SERVICES
#WeRunTogether
7940
WAVE 6
LORRY 4

Our partners and supporters

We have achieved a great deal thanks to our amazing partners and supporters, who continue to enable us to champion rights, campaign for change and create opportunities.

During 2021–22 the coronavirus pandemic continued to cause upheaval and instability, leading to the postponement or cancellation of fundraising events, which are our largest source of unrestricted income.

But thanks to the generosity and dedication of the public, our partners, companies, trusts and other funders, we raised £2,068,000 in 2021–22.

The donations we received funded specific projects and services, as well as our central services, including governance and leadership, people and culture, finance, fundraising, marketing and communications, research and evaluation, digital and IT, and property. These functions provide the strong foundations that enable us to provide projects and services, and fulfill stand with autistic children and young people.

We are grateful to all our supporters, especially those who have partnered with us over many years. This ongoing support provides us with stability and the means to expand and diversify our work in response to an ever-growing need for support. And we are pleased to have welcomed new supporters and look forward to turning their gifts into a meaningful impact for autistic children and young people.

Philanthropy, trusts and foundations

We are grateful to all the philanthropists who support our work, many of whom have made unrestricted donations. These form the bedrock of our organisation, ensuring we can continue to stand proudly with autistic children and young people, champion their rights and create opportunities, while also providing flexibility to adapt in continually changing and uncertain times.

We rely on the commitment, support and partnership of trusts and foundations, as well as philanthropists, who play a meaningful and strategically significant role in making our mission and vision a reality.

This year, we were fortunate to receive generous donations from leading partners, including Pears Foundation, the City Bridge Trust, BBC Children in Need, Joseph Levy Foundation and the Clothworkers' Foundation.

Together, they have ensured the continued existence and growth of our learner and family support service, a vital programme that is solely reliant on voluntary income.

James' story

James (pictured) left Ambitious College in July 2022 to move into social care, but no specialist support was offered. Knowing his need for this, the learner and family support team submitted professional evidence and held meetings with social services to advocate for James and ensure his needs were going to be met.

This resulted in securing the necessary specialist support for James so that he can go into the community, which is something he loves doing.

Corporate partnerships

Our ever-expanding list of corporate partners achieved amazing success, raising vital funds through a range of activities this year. These included sponsorships, staff fundraising, volunteering, pro bono work and support, all while championing neurodiversity within the workplace.

A huge thank you to everyone who got involved.

Legacy gifts

We are grateful to those who chose to leave a gift to Ambitious about Autism in their will and have been lucky recipients of transformative donations. Our generous legators are helping to ensure that we can continue to stand with autistic children and young people well into the future.

Taking on fundraising challenges

Ambitious 220

The Rapha Manchester to London ride took place on Sunday, 19 June 2022. We welcomed 58 riders, some of whom had come from as far as the US and Switzerland to take part in the 220-mile ride.

Led by Rapha founder and Ambitious about Autism supporter Simon Mottram, we raised more than £81,000. Our star fundraiser was Rob Challice from Wasserman Music, who raised over £4,000.

Rapha

London Marathon

After the Covid-related hiatus, it was wonderful to see Team Ambitious runners pounding the streets again at the London Marathon. A highlight was Digby Walker, running in a team of six dressed as Colin the Caterpillar, and breaking a world record in the process. Digby went on to run the Marathon Des Sables, raising a staggering £15k overall – a true Ambitious hero.

Our strategic partners

Pears Foundation

Pears Foundation has been a tremendous supporter of our work and key strategic partner since the early days of our journey. Their commitment and dedication enabled us to develop new services and create opportunities to support more autistic children and young people.

As a founding partner of Employ Autism, the Foundation is helping us build a bridge from education to employment for autistic young people everywhere.

Pears Foundation is also enabling Ambitious about Autism to build organisational resilience through the provision of professional development support, alongside much valued core funding support. Their support for our core foundations demonstrates philanthropic leadership and enables us to maintain stability, innovate and grow.

Pears Foundation

Marsh McLennan

Marsh McLennan became our three-year strategic partner in February 2021 with a goal to create brighter futures by empowering talent and unlocking opportunities. We are proud of the collaboration as Marsh McLennan's UK strategic charity partner for 2021–23. In the year ending 31 August 2022 Marsh McLennan has galvanized its UK workforce of more than 14,000 people to raise £200,000 through colleague fundraising, directly supporting Ambitious about Autism's Employ Autism programme.

Colleagues have also volunteered their time and expertise to support many aspects of Ambitious about Autism's work, including pro bono support for strategic projects.

Through the partnership, Marsh McLennan has committed to becoming a more autism-confident employer and industry leader by promoting and championing neurodiversity in the workplace.

With support from Ambitious about Autism's consultancy team, Marsh McLennan is developing its own inclusive practices, policies and adaptations to the workplace environment.

Together, we can create brighter futures, and Marsh McLennan is setting a high standard for all other major employers.

MarshMcLennan

TalkTalk

We have proudly partnered with TalkTalk since 2006. They are a leading Employ Autism partner and will welcome five young autistic interns to their workforce in 2022–23.

In spite of the Covid-enforced postponement of the Night of Ambition gala, we continued to benefit from TalkTalk's support to raise acceptance of autism, support campaign development, and broadband connectivity.

In 2021–22, TalkTalk colleagues supported us through staff fundraising – taking part in World Autism Acceptance Week, 220 Your Way and quiz nights. Talk Talk generously partnered with us in October 2022 to host another exciting Night of Ambition.

TalkTalk Group

Rapha

Thanks to the support of its founder and former chief executive, Simon Mottram, Rapha Racing Ltd has raised more than £1.5m since its first cycling challenge in aid of Ambitious about Autism in 2014.

Through their fantastic innovation, support and friendship, Rapha continues to stand with autistic children and young people through their commitment to delivering a first-class cycling challenge, raising much needed funds.

Rapha

Lead funding partners

Graham and Susan Tobbell

We are delighted to have Graham and Susan Tobbell as dear friends and partners of Ambitious about Autism. Since their first gift in 2016, Graham and Susan have made significant donations towards our work, enabling us to continue growing and diversifying support for autistic young people so they can achieve their ambitions.

Esmée Fairbairn Foundation

Esmée Fairbairn Foundation's multi-year support underpins the work of our dynamic youth participation programme, which develops a co-produced national programme for autistic young people to influence change.

Achievements this year included the launch of our online Ambitious Youth Network, online peer support, partnerships and consultancy, campaigns and resources.

Bally's Foundation

This year, we commenced an exciting new pilot programme focused on post-diagnostic support for newly diagnosed autistic young people. This is thanks exclusively to a two-year grant from Bally's Foundation, which will enable us to develop and evaluate a model of peer support, as well as online resources that will be freely available online.

City Bridge Trust

This year, City Bridge Trust committed a lead multi-year grant to support autistic learners at Ambitious College to move to a positive destination once their time with us comes to an end.

The team's support is absolutely vital to our learners' wellbeing, and we are thrilled to partner with the City Bridge Trust on our joint commitment to support young, disadvantaged Londoners to make positive transitions.

The Clothworkers' Foundation

As a long-standing friend of Ambitious about Autism, the Clothworkers' Foundation has been involved in developing many strategic projects with us since 2006 and transforming the lives of hundreds of autistic children and young people.

During our partnership, the Foundation contributed as lead funder in the original construction of TreeHouse School, to our school renovations in 2021 and as a committed supporter of our family and learner support service at Ambitious College.

Joseph Levy Foundation

We continued developing our Ambitious Approach thanks to the ongoing support of the Joseph Levy Foundation. We embedded our approach across all our education settings and launched the first in a suite of online resources that will share the Ambitious Framework as widely as possible.

This programme brings us ever closer to our goal of having all professionals put autistic children and young people's dignity and wellbeing at the very centre of the support they provide. We could not have achieved this without the Foundation's most generous support and friendship.

MariaMarina Foundation

A committed funder of Ambitious College for the last six years, MariaMarina Foundation has been instrumental in the expansion of the college and has been the lead funder since 2019.

The Foundation's current grant is enabling us to implement an ambitious employability strategy across both campuses, building pathways to employment for autistic young people.

The National Lottery Community Fund

We are humbled by the continuing support of the National Lottery Community Fund. Following their tremendous support for our Covid-19 appeal, this year they committed a further lead grant over three years, this time for our Employ Autism network programme. Their support will enable us to reach many thousands of autistic young people across the country to improve their employability skills.

Santander Universities UK

Santander Universities UK coordinated a £1 million investment in our ground-breaking employability initiative, the Employ Autism Higher Education Network. Just under half of these funds support Ambitious about Autism's work, including the provision of training, research and evaluation, while the rest was used directly by universities to provide paid internships for more than 150 autistic students and graduates, alongside wider careers support.

Smurfit Kappa Foundation

The Smurfit Kappa Foundation has generously supported Ambitious about Autism again as a founding funder of Spring School. Our priority remains the provision of expert autism education to more than 300 children and young people across London and the Home Counties, guided by our proven model of education practice, the Ambitious Approach.

Smurfit Kappa's generous donation will make a real difference to the lives of autistic children and young people by providing the IT equipment needed for digital skills development and playground development within our new school setting.

A huge thanks
to our partners and supporters

Ambitious partners

Pears Foundation
Marsh McLennan
Rapha Racing Ltd
TalkTalk Group plc

Lead funding partners

Graham and Susan Tobbell
Bally's Foundations
The Clothworkers' Foundation
City Bridge Trust, the funding arm of The City of London Corporation's charity, Bridge House Estates (1035628)
Esmée Fairbairn Foundation
Joseph Levy Foundation
MariaMarina Foundation
National Lottery Community Fund
Santander Universities UK
Smurfit Kappa Foundation

Ambitious supporters

Aberdeen Asset Management
Ali MacCallum
Apply Recruitment
Atos
BBC Children in Need
Carlyle Group
Chapman Charitable Trust
Charity Extra
Charlotte Warner and Bruno Paulson
Christopher Burt*
Chris Pond
Collaboration Company
Crédit Agricole
CSDS Foundation
CIB
David Astor
Department for Education
Department of Health and Social Care
Elizabeth Stanton
Foyle Foundation
Gavin Sumner
Hornsey Parochial Charities
Hospital Saturday Fund
Jean Levenant
Joanna Healey
John and Clare Coombe-Tennant
Jonathan Andrews
Ketchum
Koral Anderson
Kusuma Trust UK
Laurie Edmans CBE
Lesley Longstone
Lloyds of London
Lucy Nutt
M/Six
Magnus Schoeman

Mark Naughton
Martyn Craddock
Masonic Charitable Foundation
Matt Davis and Eliza Mischon
Matt Hutnell
Michael Clark
The Mulberry Trust
Neil Goulden
Nick Hornby
Paul Disley-Tindell
PF Charitable Trust
Phil Haslam
Philip Noblet
Philippa Stobbs
PIMCO Foundation
Red Brick Road
Richard Hill
Ruth Kennedy
Sarah Gentleman
Simon Clements
Simon Hillson
Simon and Lucy Mottram
Snowbility

Sue Adkins
Tanith Dodge
The Annette Duvollet Trust
The Edward Gostling Foundation
The Forest Hill Charitable Trust
The Harebell Centenary Fund
The Health Foundation (PPP)
The Lawson Trust
The St James's Place Charitable Foundation
The Story of Christmas
The Thompson Family Charitable Trust
The&Partnership
Tim Barber
Tottenham Grammar School Foundation
Tristia Harrison
Dr Virginia Bovell OBE

And all our other supporters, including those who have chosen to remain anonymous.

*signifies a legacy gift

Our approach to fundraising

Fundraising practices

We adhere to the highest fundraising standards, which we recognise to be essential in retaining the trust and support of our much-valued donors.

We pay the voluntary levy to register with the Fundraising Regulator and ensure that our practices comply with the Code of Fundraising Practice and the Fundraising Promise. We are also a member of the Chartered Institute of Fundraising.

We maintain up-to-date policies for: our fundraising code of conduct; fundraising ethics; compliments and complaints; and whistleblowing. We ensure that all team members understand and comply with these policies.

Our Board of Trustees reviews these policies annually, alongside our compliance with fundraising regulations.

Our privacy policy recognises the recent changes and continues to comply with data protection legislation and regulation, and is accessible to all on our websites.

We also ensure that we are compliant with the UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), the EU GDPR, the Data Protection Act 2018 and Privacy and Electronic Communications Regulations (PECR).

In the year under review, there have been no known instances of non-compliance with the requirements of the Code of Fundraising Practice (0:2020–21).

We echo organisational values in our fundraising practice. Through our close adherence to fundraising regulations, scrutiny by the executive leadership team and transparency with supporters, we ensure that we do not unreasonably intrude on a person's privacy; are not unreasonably persistent; and do not place undue pressure on any person to give money or other property.

We also value difference, continually seek to increase the diversity of our supporters and demonstrate inclusivity in all we do. Our fundraising committees proudly include many autistic and neurodiverse members, alongside those with lived experience.

Our fundraising work

Most of our fundraised income is generated through partnerships with individuals who have an interest in our cause, as well as trusts, foundations and corporate partners.

We have also benefited from the generosity of community members and individuals participating in online and in-person events and challenges.

We use third parties to support our fundraising when specific digital platforms are required for fundraising events, for example JustGiving and Givergy.

We do not engage in face-to-face or telephone direct marketing. Our regular giving programme is conducted primarily with our close community. We do not conduct street or public site collections, nor do we have any mass participation activities in place.

about Autism
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Our people

We are ambitious

We are incredibly proud of our people. They do extraordinary work that transforms the lives of autistic children and young people. This year, thanks to the incredible resilience and agility of colleagues across the organisation, we have helped autistic children and young people and their families to start to recover from the pandemic and plan for their futures.

During 2021, the new Covid-19 Omicron variant and changing government rules continued to have an impact on staff providing support to pupils and learners in our education settings. We provided ongoing support and communication to help our education settings colleagues during this challenging period. In spring, as coronavirus restrictions began to relax, we invited our central services teams, who had been largely working at home during the pandemic, to return to use our office spaces.

Although working life has evolved, the after-effects of the pandemic and increases in the cost of living mean that recruitment and retention have become a challenge for us, like they have for many organisations. Being able to recruit and retain the best staff, particularly in our education settings, is critical and therefore this is a priority for us as an organisation.

We are passionate about supporting and developing our staff. In light of this, we have developed a number of new initiatives and support measures for colleagues over the last year, so that we can continue to say with confidence that Ambitious about Autism is a great place to work.

We are open

We developed a pilot hybrid working policy and put together a comprehensive guide for staff, which provided information about what to expect when working in our offices and working at home. This was particularly important for those who joined us remotely during the pandemic. In autumn 2022, we reviewed staff satisfaction with our hybrid working arrangements with a view to continue to embed this way of working.

The past year has been financially challenging for many with rising inflation and a squeeze on living standards. Following the cost of living pay increase for staff in September 2021, in April 2022, we provided staff with a one-off bonus of £400 in recognition of external financial pressures and to celebrate their hard work and commitment throughout the pandemic.

In August 2022, we also appointed a new Head of Rewards to continue developing our rewards strategy as an organisation.

We work together

Wellbeing
We continued to provide a programme of events and activities to boost staff morale and wellbeing. Auditors, Scrutton Bland, carried out carried out an internal audit in May 2022 on our wellbeing offer. They considered the actions taken to support staff mental health and wellbeing represented best practice when compared to other education clients.

In October 2021, our People team developed and launched a new wellbeing hub on our staff intranet to provide tools and resources to support mental health and wellbeing following the challenges of the pandemic. The hub contains sections for each of our education settings and central services team, with information ranging from employee benefits and financial wellbeing to physical and mental health.

The People team hosted demo sessions to help staff learn how to navigate the hub and also used our internal communication channel Yammer to set up a wellbeing group for colleagues to chat and share tips, resources and sources of support.

Our popular cross-organisational step challenge also returned this year. The four-week 'Big Team Challenge' encouraged teams of staff to work together to stay active and motivated.

In July, we were delighted to bring all our staff together for our annual Staff Awards, which took place in person following our virtual event in 2021. Ahead of the awards, we received a record-breaking 747 nominations from staff members keen to recognise their colleagues' exceptional achievements.

We love learning

Ambitious Leaders
We are committed to nurturing and developing talent within our organisation. Last year, we launched our new learning and development programme, Ambitious Leaders.

The programme was created to support leaders across our organisation and was set up in collaboration with staff from across Ambitious about Autism. It has also been accredited by the Institute of Leadership and Management (InstLM), which means that all participants who successfully complete the programme will become Associate Members of the Institute of Leadership and Management.

This year, 17 colleagues from our pilot cohort and two subsequent cohorts completed the Ambitious Leaders programme. Additional members of these groups have partially completed and are due to pass in the next academic year. We celebrated the successes of our first graduates at our Staff Awards ceremony in July.

Ambitious Learning
We love learning and, this year, as part of our ongoing work to take our staff learning and development to the next level, we launched a new online learning management system called Ambitious Learning.

This modern and engaging learning platform enables staff to access their learning in one place. It includes clear pathways for induction and compliance, as well as a range of learning topics for staff to access easily. We plan further content for the platform next year.

We have also developed a comprehensive learning and development programme for colleagues to develop the skills and knowledge they require to apply the Ambitious Approach to education. (You can read more about this in the update on **our Ambitious Approach on page 21**.)

We celebrate difference

Equity, diversity and inclusion
We value and embrace difference. We aim and work hard to ensure that our work is inclusive and that we champion diversity. We understand that to achieve meaningful and lasting change around equity, diversity and inclusion, we need a proactive and comprehensive approach.

This year, we published our Equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) strategy, setting out the high-level action we will take to make our organisation the best it can be. Inclusion is also at the heart of our Time for Ambition strategy, and it is being driven by our board and leadership team.

Our strategy was informed by an independent audit of our our organisation's EDI work by diversity consultants EW Group. This included input from focus groups with staff. The audit and feedback we received helped us to develop four priorities and overarching goals, which are set out in our EDI strategy.

These are:

Courageous governance and leadership
A key reflection from our audit was the need for courageous governance and leadership that demonstrably and actively leads on EDI. Our chief executive became our charity's overall EDI champion and has set pledges to champion inclusion which have been shared with the whole organisation. To ensure EDI is further embedded at Board level, Laura Palmer was appointed as the EDI trustee lead.

Inclusive workplace
We are committed to ensuring Ambitious about Autism is a place where people feel a strong sense of belonging and can bring their whole selves to work. In May 2022, we launched three Ambitious staff networks, run by colleagues, for colleagues.

Our staff networks are safe spaces where people can come together to share ideas, support and learn from one another, raise awareness of challenges and channel their authentic voice. They are organised primarily around a special characteristic, shared heritage or life experience. Our first three networks focus on:

- race and ethnicity
- LGBTQ+
- disabilities, neurodivergence and health conditions.

All groups are open and welcoming to everybody, including allies. They were developed by a steering group led by staff members.

This year we also increased our demographic database from 51% to 81% of staff and continued to strengthen our cross-organisational EDI committee.

High-quality and inclusive education and services

We continued to ensure the curriculum and content within our education settings reflects the diverse histories, interests and experiences of the communities we serve. We also continued to work to ensure all our plans, processes, policies and systems for our services take a holistic approach to EDI.

Influencing national work

We continue to stand with autistic children and young people from diverse communities, on a national scale. This includes researching and highlighting the views and experiences of autistic young people and investigating the barriers they face.

We supported young autistic Black people to share their views and experiences on a BBC 1Xtra radio programme about autism.

Monitoring, evaluating and reporting

We continue to monitor, evaluate and report our progress against our aims.

Looking to the future

Over the next two years of our strategy, we will continue to build on our core expertise in education and employability. We will also engage more than ever before in the other areas that are essential for autistic children and young people to lead fulfilling lives, such as having supportive families and relationships, good health and wellbeing, and being active citizens in their communities.

Excellent education

Our overarching aim is that all autistic children and young people have an excellent and inclusive education that enables them to learn, thrive and achieve. Ultimately, this will support them to have a good quality of life, including the realistic prospect of living and working as part of their communities.

Strategic priorities:

- Continue to embed, evaluate and refine our Ambitious Approach, evaluating the programme pilot and publishing the impact and outcomes.
- Continue to develop each of our education settings to meet the evolving needs of our learners, ensuring development plans are in place.
- Further develop our careers education practice and support meaningful transitions and progression for pupils and learners.
- Pursue opportunities to grow the primary provision at The Rise School.
- Consider options with a view to implementing a primary provision growth programme at TreeHouse School.
- Conduct analysis to inform a long-term plan to diversify our offer across both campuses of Ambitious College.
- Open Spring School, our newest purpose-built school, in Chessington, Kingston for autistic pupils aged 4–19 years old.
- Continue to nurture and operate strategic partnerships with the local community of Kingston.
- Assess opportunities in future rounds of applications for free schools with SEND provision and bid where appropriate to the Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust.

Employment and enterprise

Our guiding principle is that we want every autistic young person to have good career education at school and in further and higher education, including experience of work. This will equip them to progress to employment and instil transferable life skills.

Strategic priorities:

- Complete year three of the Employ Autism careers support and work experience pilot programme during 2022–23, with a view to implementing a sustainable offer by 2023–24.
- Implement and evaluate the Employ Autism Ambassadors' Programme.
- Evaluate the Employ Autism pilot programme through research with DARE UK (Data and Analytics Research Environments UK) and University of Bath partnerships.
- Pilot a careers education framework in our education settings during 2022–23 with a view to finalising and launching by 2023–24.

Health and wellbeing

Good physical and mental health and wellbeing are essential components of ensuring that an autistic child or young person can thrive. We know that access to the right support at the right time is essential.

Strategic priorities:

- Launch and evaluate a pilot post-diagnostic support service for autistic young people.
- Develop health and wellbeing content for autistic young people.

Active citizenship in the community

Inclusion is a cornerstone of our Ambitious Approach and is just as important in the community as it is in education or employment. We want autistic young people to be empowered to connect with one another and to influence societal change.

Strategic priorities:

- Continue to develop, grow and evaluate the Ambitious Youth Network online community.
- Launch 'Autistic and OK', our youth participation programme for mainstream schools.

Family and relationships

Being connected to others is vital, and autistic young people and their families have told us they want peer networks alongside uplifting but realistic information tailored to them and their lived experiences.

Strategic priorities:

- Develop and expand our information service and the Talk about Autism online community for parents and carers of autistic children and young people.
- Continue to provide specialist Learner and Family support to our pupils and learners, and their families.

Influencing policy and practice

We will support autistic young people and their families to influence policy and practice nationally, to improve their access to excellent education, quality health support and fulfilling careers. We will use our experience from direct work with autistic young people and families, and work with partners, to maximise impact.

Strategic priorities:

- Conduct influencing work in response to the SEND Green Paper and Schools White Paper.
- Influence practice nationally as partners of the Autism Education Trust (AET).
- Continue to develop and offer a training and consultancy service to external education, employment and health partners.

Strong foundations

Achieving our objectives would not be possible without the strong foundations that underpin our strategic plan.
Our governance and leadership, people and culture, fundraising and finances, marketing and communications, research and evaluation, and digital and information technology will align to support the implementation of our strategy.

S172 statement

The executive leadership team and board make assessments and decisions in good faith, considering the potential consequence on stakeholders. In addition, they consider the expected outcomes most likely to promote the success of Ambitious about Autism. The benefit of our pupils, learners and stakeholders is always paramount.

The executive leadership team and the board consider the following:

- The consequences of any decision in the long term. This includes a regular review of our risk register, departmental operational plans and overall strategic plan.
- The interests of our employees, through regular feedback from all-staff meetings, team meetings and individual monthly supervisions.
- The need to foster business relationships with suppliers, customers and others, ranging from prompt supplier payments to regular meetings and communication with local authorities. This includes weekly updates to local authorities with respect to our pupils and learners.
- The impact of the operations of the charity and the Trust on the community and the environment. We have a community representative on all our governing bodies and continue to review our fleet management to achieve further cost savings in terms of running costs and our impact on the environment.
- The desirability of the charity and the Trust in maintaining a reputation for high standards of business conduct. We lead by example and build a culture of excellence through good recruitment choices and practices, and excellent training.
- The need to act fairly as members of the charity and the Trust. We have combined most of our policies across the group.

Streamlined Energy and Carbon Reporting

Energy and carbon consumption

Streamlined Energy and Carbon Reporting (SECR) is a legislative reporting requirement introduced in 1 April 2019. It mandates that all companies that meet the thresholds must report on their operational energy consumption and associated emissions. The high-level breakdown for the group is as follows:

		kWh	Mileage	tCO2e
Gas	**2021-22**	407,071	n/a	75
	2020-21	546,995	n/a	100
Electricity	**2021-22**	715,755	n/a	139
	2020-21	482,779	n/a	103
Transport	**2021-22**	20,624	21,192	5
	2020-21	16,488	17,974	6
Total	**2021-22**	1,143,450	21,192	219
	2020-21	1,046,262	17,974	208

Intensity metric

An intensity metric gives us an indicator of carbon performance based on an operational figure of the number service users (pupils and learners), with 312 users emitting on average 0.70 kgCO2e each. This is measured annually and compared against previous years to show progress in reducing our carbon intensity.

	2021-22	2020-21
Number of service users	312	291
tCO2e	219	208
	0.70	0.72

Ambitious about Autism initiatives

This section highlights energy and carbon improvement projects undertaken during the year or those that are currently underway. Monitoring mileage underpins good fleet management and should be more than a data collection exercise. Reducing mileage reduces costs and emissions, and technology solutions will make the process easier and more accurate. We're replacing older vehicles with more energy-efficient vehicles to achieve further cost savings in terms of running costs. We continue to focus on our fleet management.

We have engaged an external consultant to undertake a Net Zero carbon roadmap audit, which will be completed in 2023.

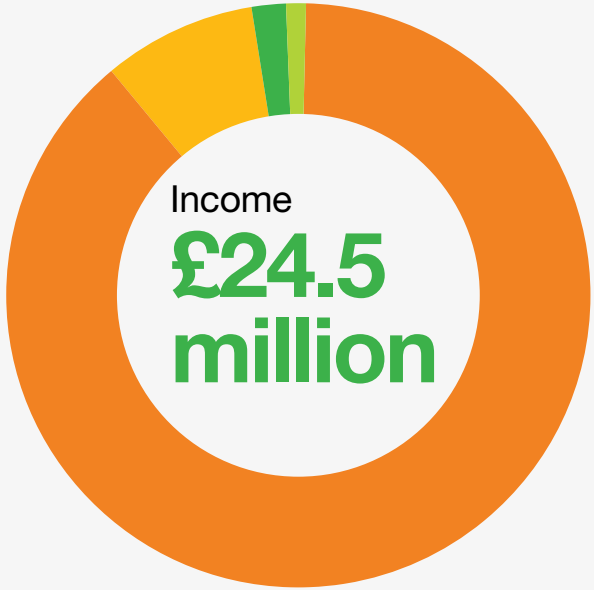
Calculations

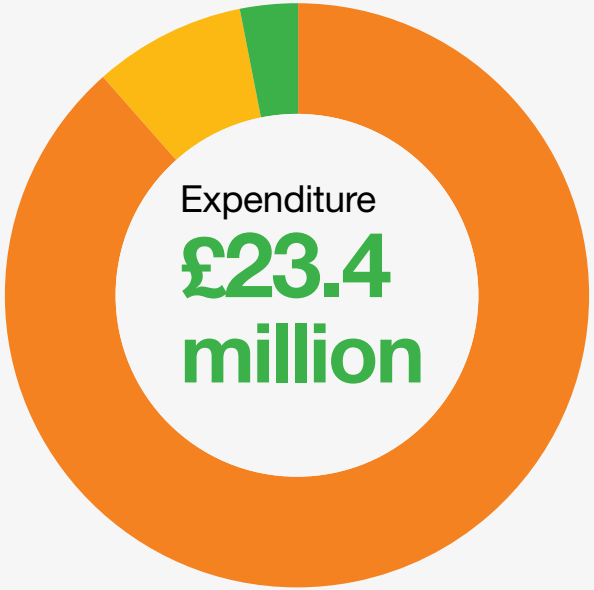
The following figures were used to convert energy to CO2 figures:

	Litre		CO2e	
	2021-22	2020-21	2021-22	2020-21
Gas	n/a	n/a	0.18254 tonnes per MWh	0.18316 tonnes per MWh
Electricity	n/a	n/a	0.19338 tonnes per MWh	0.21233 tonnes per MWh
Fuel	Petrol: 10.6kWh per litre Diesel: 9.5kWh per litre	9.1kWh per litre	Petrol: 0.22719 tonnes per MWh Diesel: 0.24115 tonnes per MWh	0.31349 tonnes per MWh

Financial review

Our total income for the year was £24.5m and our overall expenditure £23.4m. Our net assets are £20m, compared with net assets of £16.4m at 31 August 2022.





Income:

- **£21.8m** charitable activities education services
- **£2.1m** gifts and donated service
- **£0.4m** trading income
- **£0.2m** investments and other income

How our money was spent:

- **£20.7m** charitable activities education services
- **£2m** charitable activities external affairs
- **£0.7m** raising funds

Financial performance

The 2021-22 year, showed strong financial performance, with income increasing to £24.5m from £22.9m in 2021, reflecting growth in the services provided to autistic children and young people. Total expenditure for the year also grew to £23.4m, an increase of £1.8m (2021: £21.6m).

In line with this positive financial performance, free reserves increased to £2.9m (2021: £2.4m), which is slightly above the reserves target range of £1.7m - £2.5m These funds are available for future development in line with the Time for Ambition strategy, as well as providing resilience against financial pressures. During the year, the charity invested £0.1m in freehold and leasehold improvements, £0.3m on furniture and equipment and £0.2m on computer equipment.

Ambitious about Autism is using an interest rate swap to manage its exposure to interest rate movements with the interest rate fixed at 4% for the NatWest Loan of £1.1m.

Our investment portfolio was valued at £1.8m, a £0.1m reduction compared to 31 August 2021 reflecting challenging market conditions.

Investment policy

The charity's investment policy was approved by the Board of Trustees in July 2022. It aims to produce the best financial return at an acceptable level of risk. The risk profile is agreed with the investment manager and is regarded as medium. The policy is reviewed at least once a year. The trustees have set a target to grow the portfolio by inflation + 3% per annum (after fees) over the long term. This was not achieved in the year due to market conditions.

The trustees have stated within the investment policy their commitment to responsible investing, and aim to make a positive difference on society through the charity's investment holdings.

Over the last three years, investments have increased from £1,750k to £1,762k, which is a gain of 1%.

Investment risk management

The investment portfolio is diversified across a range of instruments to reduce the risk of overexposure to one type of asset. We hold the following instruments: fixed interest, direct UK and overseas equities, cash and property, and managed funds. Note 12 provides further analysis of these assets.

The investments are managed by investment managers appointed by the charity, currently Rathbones Group Plc, which is a reputable FTSE 250 company with net income of £75m in 2021. The risk profile is agreed with the investment manager and is regarded as medium risk.

Risk management practices

Members of the investment committee meet the investment manager twice a year to review performance and discuss market risks. The investment committee reports to the trustees on the risk profile, selection of investment managers and returns achieved.

Reserves policy and going concern

Free reserves exclude restricted funds and designated funds. At Ambitious about Autism, we hold free reserves to mitigate against risks resulting from unexpected drops in fundraising income, a downturn in learner numbers or unexpected short-term increases in expenditure. Our reserves policy is reviewed by the trustees annually and was last reviewed in December 2022.

Based upon an evaluation of income and expenditure risks and working capital requirements, the trustees have agreed that free reserves should be in the range of £1.7m–£2.8m. As at 31 August 2022, free reserves were £2.9m. The additional free reserves will be carried forward to the next financial year, where they will be utilised to support core activities as well as the implementation of the Time for Ambition strategy. The 2022--23 budget shows a year end free reserves position that is within the agreed range. The trustees will continue to monitor the reserves position closely throughout the year.

In addition to the free reserves, Ambitious about Autism has a number of designated funds totalling £6.3m as at 31 August 2022.

These are:

- Fixed assets, valued at £3.9m. Depreciation expenditure will be funded from this fund on an annual basis.
- Buildings maintenance and development fund, which is based on projected 30-year life cycle costs and was established for major repairs to the Pears National Centre for Autism Education. As at 31 August 2022, there was £0.6m in this fund.
- School development fund – a designated fund was created in 2013 for broader school development. The fund had a balance of £5k as at 31 August 2022.
- Covid recovery fund – a fund established in 2020 to provide a contingency against future risks as a result of the coronavirus pandemic, including additional costs or losses in income. The fund had a balance of £0.5m as at 31 August 2022.
- Transformation fund – a fund totalling £1.1m at 31 August 2022, which was established in 2020 to support our Time for Ambition strategy.

The policy of the Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust is to hold sufficient reserves to provide a working balance to mitigate the impact of uneven cash flows; provide a contingency in respect of unexpected events; and plan for potential major items of expenditure, including continued expansion.

Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust funds balances as at 31 August 2022 totalled £9.9m. This comprised nil unrestricted funds, £3.7m of restricted funds (including a £0.3m pension deficit) and £6.2m of restricted fixed asset funds. The funds balance at 31 August 2021 was £9.2m, excluding the £2.5m pension deficit.

The pension deficit has decreased in the year to £0.3m, resulting in year-on-year unrealised gains, which is at risk of reversing in the future. In accordance with the arrangements for a multi-academy trust, the deficit relating

to the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) is underwritten by the Department for Education.

After making appropriate enquiries, the trustees have a reasonable expectation that the trust has adequate resources to continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future. For this reason, it continues to adopt the going concern basis in preparing the financial statements. Further details regarding the adoption of the going concern basis can be found in the Statement of Accounting Policies.

Risks and uncertainties

Risks are managed in accordance with the risk policy approved by the Board of Trustees.

The aim of the policy is to:

- understand as fully as possible the risks being faced
- take appropriate action to manage those risks
- minimise the risk of new initiatives adversely affecting existing work
- accept a higher level of uncertainty, if appropriate, when taking advantage of new opportunities.

Ambitious about Autism has a risk register, which is reviewed annually by the Finance and Resources Committee and the Board of Trustees. Risks are scored according to likelihood and impact. The changes to risks are reviewed termly by the Finance and Resources Committee and Board, alongside the actions being taken or proposed to mitigate the risks.

The table on the next page identifies the five key strategic risks that have been identified by the Board of Trustees and explains how these risks are being managed.

	Risk	Mitigation
1 **Pupil numbers**	Within an uncertain policy environment in times of austerity, there is an increased risk to pupil and learner numbers in our education services, and this uncertainty impacts on our ability to plan.	To manage the risk, we monitor pupil and learner numbers so that we can carefully manage admissions and increase our admission numbers as required. We maintain good relationships with commissioners, ensuring timely assessment dates to enable a fast turnaround of consultations, and support parents and carers through the admissions process.
2 **Recruitment and retention**	The failure to recruit and retain the quantity and quality of specialist staff poses a significant risk to services operating as planned.	High-quality staff are critical to Ambitious about Autism. We are building our recruitment pipeline, diversifying our approach to recruitment and building relationships with training schools to attract applicants in hard-to-recruit professions. We have several initiatives in place to ensure that our terms and conditions are competitive in a challenging market.
3 **Financial risk**	The risk that the financial impact of an uncertain economic outlook, and high-cost inflation, impacts negatively on the Trust's financial position.	Regular management reporting and financial re-forecasting is undertaken to understand an up-to-date picture of the Trust's financial outlook and is available to senior management and trustees. Cash flow forecasting is prepared to assess the organisation's ability to meet financial obligations. Reserves balances are maintained to support financial sustainability.
4 **Learner related fee income**	The risk that fee negotiations with Local Authorities placing learners with the Trust cause cash flow issues and/or have a negative impact on financial sustainability.	Annual fee letters are sent to Local Authorities ahead of the March deadline. Conversations with LAs are held proactively, and any requests for additional information dealt with promptly and openly. Legal advice is sought in a timely manner when debt recovery issues are experienced.
5 **Covid-19**	That the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic adversely effects our operations and negatively impacts on our financial position including cash-flow.	The organisational response to the Covid-19 pandemic continued to be carefully managed throughout the year, in response to changing government guidelines. The Executive Leadership Team discuss response measures on a regular basis, taking prompt action when needed to minimise the negative impact on the charity.

Legal structures and governance

Governance

Ambitious about Autism (the Company) is a charitable company limited by guarantee, incorporated on 23 May 1997 per Companies House (company number 03375255) and registered as a charity on 2 July 1997 (charity number 1063184). The Company was established under a memorandum of association, which established the objects and powers of the charitable company and is governed under its articles of association.

Ambitious about Autism is governed by a Board of Trustees who also act as the directors of the Company for the purposes of company law.

Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust (the Trust) is a multi-academy trust, a company limited by guarantee and an exempt charity. It was founded and incorporated on 18 December 2012 (company number 08335297) to support the development and running of The Rise School, and further free schools.

The charitable company's memorandum and articles of association are the primary governing documents of the Trust. The Trust is governed by a board of trustees who also act as the directors of the charitable company for the purposes of company law, and it has members whose duty is to ensure that the board is effectively discharging its responsibilities. Ambitious about Autism is the sole corporate member of the Trust along with four individual members.

A formal governance review was conducted in 2019 supported by an external facilitator with a focus on streamlining and strengthening governance arrangements across the group. The board and committee structure and membership, articles of association, members agreements, scheme of reservation and delegation, and terms of references were all updated and are now reviewed annually. All changes in relation to the Trust were approved by the Department for Education.

The trustees of Ambitious about Autism and the trustees of Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust are all members of the Joint Group Board Committee. The respective Ambitious about Autism and Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust boards retain responsibility for all matters and delegate a number of appropriate decisions to the Joint Group Board Committee and its subcommittees. This maximises efficiency and impact between the two boards. For

example, where joint policies exist, they are reviewed and approved, where appropriate, by the Joint Group Board Committee. Clear schemes of reservation and delegation are in place for both boards.

Both boards of trustees follow a regular cycle of termly meetings and have at least one away day with the executive leadership team each year, as well as holding additional meetings when required.

The boards are supported by several joint subcommittees as set out below.

- The Nominations and Remuneration Committee oversees governance planning and policy, including trustee recruitment, support and review. It also reviews and agrees remuneration and terms and conditions of employment for the executive leadership team and staff across the Company and the Trust. It meets termly in advance of board meetings.
- The Finance and Resources Committee meets termly in advance of board meetings and is responsible for the general oversight and scrutiny of systems, planning, financial and resource management, and reviewing internal controls and risk management for the charity and the Trust.
- The Education Committee meets termly and is responsible for our education settings. It also oversees the governing bodies and advisory groups in each service for both the charity and the Trust.
- The Investment Committee, an Ambitious about Autism committee, which reports to the Finance and Resources Committee, monitors the performance of the charity's investment portfolio and meets twice a year.
- The Trust Audit Committee meets termly as part of the Finance and Resources Committee to oversee the annual report and accounts, the audit, the programme of internal scrutiny and compliance with Department for Education legislation for the Trust.

All matters related to the educational performance of TreeHouse School, The Rise School and Ambitious College are examined by their governing bodies. Safeguarding is discussed and considered at every level of our governance.

Management of the charity and the Trust is delegated to the chief executive, who is also the accounting officer for the Trust, and the executive leadership team. The executive leadership team members attend board and subcommittee meetings.

The Ambitious about Autism Youth Council comprised 14 autistic young people aged 16–25 as of 31 August 2022. Members of the Youth Council are encouraged to shape and influence our work and make presentations to the Board of Trustees. Two Youth Council Link Trustees were appointed during the year to ensure a strong link exists between the Board and the Youth Council.

Trustee recruitment, induction and training

The aim of the charity and the Trust is to build a diverse board that has the optimum range of skills, experience and perspectives to ensure that we have the appropriate level of support, scrutiny and oversight.

People with lived experience of autism are involved in the governance and decision-making of the charity and the Trust, including

on the board of trustees, the governing bodies and advisory groups.
The recruitment and induction policy works to promote this goal. New trustees are recruited openly through a variety of channels, including search, advertising and through networks. Once recruited, trustees are supported with an induction programme and handbook in the first few months. As part of the induction process, trustees receive training on issues such as safeguarding, health and safety, and data protection.

The charity also runs a termly training programme for trustees, covering topics such as equality, diversity and inclusion, exclusions and unconscious bias.

The recruitment, induction and appraisal of trustees is overseen by the Nominations and Remuneration Committee. All trustees give their time voluntarily and receive no benefits from the charity or the Trust. Any expenses reclaimed are set out in note 6 to the accounts. (**see page 105**).

Charity Governance Code

The principles and recommended practice set out in the Charity Governance Code are regularly discussed by the trustees.
Areas of focus in 2021–22 were:

Equity, diversity and inclusion

The board believes a balance of experience, skills, knowledge and backgrounds is crucial in the composition of the members to provide a variety of perspectives in discussions and enhance decision-making.

We believe that including people with lived experience of autism in our governance and decision-making and on the Board of Trustees is of benefit to the charity and the Trust.

The board is committed to investing in its diversity and appointed four new trustees to the Ambitious about Autism board and two new trustees to the Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust board in December 2021.

The Joint Group Board Committee undertook a skills and diversity audit in July 2022, which showed a diverse Board with a good range and depth of relevant knowledge and experience.

Integrity

The Board continues to comply with the principles of integrity included in the Charity Governance Code. In particular, the annual review of the safeguarding policies and confirmation of understanding of the Keeping Children Safe in Education requirements by trustees as well as regular reviews of the risk register and incidents ensures that the board continually reflects on its responsibilities and those of the organisation.

Engagement with suppliers, customers and others in a business relationship

We have a strong commitment to paying all suppliers within agreed terms.

Our executive leadership team prioritises achieving the best possible outcomes for our pupils, learners and stakeholders. Open engagement with parents, guardians and our local communities is vital to building successful and long-term relationships.

We continue to work closely and collaboratively with local authorities to ensure that outcomes are mutually beneficial, with our pupils, learners and stakeholders continuing to be our core focus. We work hard to establish and maintain good relationships with our wider stakeholders, including our funders and supporters.

Remuneration policy for key management personnel

The Board of Trustees of Ambitious about Autism and the Trust is responsible for defining the executive pay policy. This includes deciding on the salaries of the chief executive and the executive leadership team. The board delegates this responsibility to the Nominations and Remuneration Committee. The committee reviews executive pay and our total reward strategy for staff.

The group, which comprises trustees and an external expert, meets each term. The committee makes recommendations to the board of trustees for approval. We have an executive pay policy, which sets out our approach to pay for our executive leadership team, how pay is determined and reviewed, and the relative impact on pay across the organisation.

Our approach to pay is underpinned by our principle to:

"Pay a fair salary and reward package to attract and retain skilled and expert senior leaders for Ambitious about Autism and Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust. Salaries and benefits should be competitive within the charity, education and public sectors, proportionate to the complexity of each role and responsibility, and in line with our objectives and affordable."

The executive pay policy aims to follow a robust, evidence-based process to achieve this principle:

- Take account of pay in similar organisations in the UK charity and public sector markets, but do not compete with salaries in the private sector.
- Monitor salary trends in the charity sector through surveys produced by providers such as XpertHR, Croner and ACEVO, as well as Education and Skills Funding Agency academy schools financial benchmarking reports and, where necessary, commission external benchmarking exercises.
- Ensure performance is reviewed and reported to the Nominations and Remuneration Committee on an annual basis. Apply performance-related pay elements only where required by the relevant market sector.
- Mirror the national standards for professional groups, such as headteachers.
- Take account of the Academy Trust Handbook.

- Take account of the difference between executive leadership team pay and the lowest-paid roles, and median and average pay across the organisation.

Our approach to safeguarding

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility within the charity and the Trust. This means our trustees, employees and volunteers are required to ensure that Ambitious about Autism is a safe space.

Our policy and procedures also apply to extended and off-site activities, managed by the charity and the Trust, such as community access programmes, residential visits and work experience placements.

All staff members undertake safeguarding and adult protection training during induction, including whistleblowing procedures, to ensure they understand our safeguarding systems and their responsibilities.

This training is regularly updated, at least annually, and is in line with advice from our local safeguarding adult partnership, Haringey Safeguarding Adults. All staff receive training on the government's anti-radicalisation strategy, PREVENT, to enable them to identify young people at risk of being drawn into terrorism and to challenge extremist ideas.

Staff also receive regular safeguarding and adult protection updates (for example, through emails, newsletters, and staff meetings) as required, but at least annually.

All trustees and governors receive annual training about safeguarding, to make sure they have the knowledge and information needed to perform their functions and understand their strategic responsibilities as outlined in part 2 of the Department for Education's statutory safeguarding guidance, Keeping Children Safe in Education 2022. (KCSiE).

Safeguarding is embedded in our recruitment processes, with at least one person on any interview/appointment panel for a post at the charity or the Trust, required to have completed Safer Recruitment in Education training.

All staff who have contact with young people and families have regular supervisions, and access to external clinical supervisions. These provide staff with support, coaching, and training, promote the interests of young people and allow for confidential discussions of sensitive issues.

Keeping data safe

We are fully committed to protecting the details of all the people we work with and who support us. We continue to make sure we're always thinking about privacy and how to keep data safe and secure. Staff are required to stay up to date and informed through regular training. We never stop working on this.

Public benefit

Ambitious about Autism works to support autistic children and young people and their families throughout the UK. TreeHouse School supports pupils aged 4–19, The Rise School supports pupils aged 4–18 and Ambitious College supports learners aged 16–25, based on their needs.

Placements of learners are funded by a combination of funding from the Education and Skills Funding Agency and local authorities. Other activities are funded through voluntary income or fees earned from providing a service, for example, providing specialist training or support to parents, teachers and other professionals.

In overseeing the provision of education and the support of children, young people and their families, the trustees of Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust have complied with their duty regarding the guidance on public benefit published by the Charity Commission in exercising their powers and duties.

The trustees have referred to the guidance contained in the Charity Commission's general guidance on public benefit when reviewing the aims and objectives of the charity and in planning its future activities.

Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust's principal object is to advance, for the public benefit, education in the UK by developing schools to make special educational provisions for pupils with special educational needs, or 16–19 academies offering curricula appropriate to the needs of their students.

The Trust opened its first school, The Rise School, in September 2014. In particular, the trustees consider how planned activities will contribute to the aims and objectives set and are committed to NCVO's ethical principles.

Connected organisations

Ambitious about Autism is an active member of the Autism Education Trust, Autism Alliance, British Institute of Learning Disabilities (BILD), Council for Disabled Children, Disabled Children's Partnership, National Association for Non-Maintained and Independent Special Schools (NASS), Natspec, Positive Behaviour Support Alliance and the Special Educational Consortium.

Our education provisions are co-located at Springwest Academy (part of the Tudor Park Education Trust), West Thames College, The College of Haringey, Enfield and North East London and Whittington Hospital.

Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust

The Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust is a separate exempt charity.

Ambitious about Autism is the sole corporate member of the Trust. Therefore, the results of Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust are consolidated into these group financial statements.

Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust will be opening a new special free school for autistic children and young people, Spring School, in Kingston, in September 2023.

The Trust is actively seeking further partnerships to develop more special schools to address a growing need for more specialist education provision for autistic children and young people.

Trustees, advisers and senior staff

Our leadership team and advisers

The trustees of Ambitious about Autism are directors and members of the charitable company. The trustees of Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust are also the directors of the charitable company. They each guarantee to contribute an amount not exceeding £1 to the assets of the charitable company in the event of winding up.

The total number of such guarantees on 31 August 2022 was six. The trustees have no beneficial interest in the charitable company.

Trustees of Ambitious about Autism

Neil Goulden
(Chair of Trustees)

Lesley Longstone
(Vice Chair of Trustees and Chair of the Education Committee)

Elizabeth Stanton
(Treasurer, Chair of the Finance and Resources Committee and Chair of the Investment Committee)

Paul Disley-Tindell
(to 22 July 2022)

Andy Forbes
(from 10 December 2021)

Eduardo Gutierrez-Garcia
(from 10 December 2021)

Helen Jeffries
(from 10 December 2021)

Alistair MacCallum
(to 28 January 2022)

Jack Welch
(from 10 December 2021)

Michael Clark
(from 22 July 2022)

Trustees of Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust

Neil Goulden
(Chair)

Lesley Longstone
(Vice Chair)

Koral Anderson
(Trustee and Chair of the Audit Committee until 31 December 2020)

Michael Clark
(Trustee and Chair of the Audit Committee from 1 January 2021 until 17 November 2022)

Paul Disley-Tindell
(Trustee from 10 December 2021 and Chair of the Nominations and Remuneration Committee, to 22 July 2022)

Elizabeth Stanton
(Treasurer and Chair of the Finance and Resources Committee)

Tanith Dodge
(until 3 March 2022)

Joanna Healey

Lucy Nutt

Laura Palmer
(from 10 December 2021)

Kumar Tangri
(from 10 December 2021 and Chair of the Audit Committee from 17 November 2022)

Charlotte Warner
(to 15 December 2021)

Members of Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust

Ambitious about Autism

Martyn Craddock

Paul Disley-Tindell
(until 10 December 2021)

Andy Forbes
(from 28 January 2022)

Eduardo Gutierrez-Garcia
(from 28 January 2022)

Alistair MacCallum
(to 28 January 2022)

The trustees are supported in their work by the president and vice presidents, who all support the work of our charity.

President

Lord Tim Clement-Jones CBE

Vice president

Nick Baldwin CBE
Virginia Bovell CBE
Peter Carroll
John Constantine
Katharine Doré OBE
Karen Edwards OBE
Tristia Harrison
Alex Hatter
Richard Hatter
Nick Hornby
Bruno Paulson
Matthew Punshon
Charlotte Warner
Sid Wells

Expert advisers

Our team of expert advisers are leading academics, clinicians, lawyers and communications professionals, all with an interest in autism and a passion to raise awareness and understanding. They provide advice and guidance on specific projects and campaigns, all as volunteers. We are honoured to be able to draw on the expertise of:

Judith Barnard
Professor Sir Simon Baron-Cohen
Steve Broach
Leo Capella
Prof Tony Charman
Prof Richard Hastings
Prof Patricia Howlin
Jonathan Meth
Dr Emran Mian OBE
David Nicholson
Nick Peacey
Mark Schmid
Dr Rowie Shaw OBE
Fiona Slomovic
Su Thomas
Richard Townley
Gaby Zein

Ambassadors

Our ambassadors come from all walks of life, but all share an interest in autism and a passion to raise awareness and understanding. Our ambassadors are:

Niamh Cusack
Kathy Lette
David Mitchell
Sam Holness
Lucy Mottram
Simon Mottram
Jules Robertson
Hayley Ronson
Jon Snow
Luke Treadaway

Parent patrons

Our team of parent patrons are all people whose lives have been touched by autism:

Nicky Clark
Claire Coombe-Tennant
John Coombe-Tennant
Matthew Davis
Eliza Mishcon
Keith Duffy
Charlotte Moore
Claire Ryan
Sophie Walker

Employ Autism development board

Lord Tim Clement Jones CBE (Chair)
Laurie Edmans CBE
Chris Pond
Tristia Harrison
Alistair MacCallum
Nick Medd
Koral Anderson
Sue Adkins
Matt Hutnell
Jonathan Andrews
Katie Vanneck-Smith
Danuta Gray
Sally Cairns

Business ambassador group

Simon Clements (Chair)
Jean Lavenant
Tim Barber
Matt Davis
Marilyn Swinney
Jim Berrisford
Mark Edwards
Ruth Kennedy
Nathan Ott
Dom Hilleard
Neil Patel
Harriet Forrest
Ian Iceton
Paul Cunningham
Magnus Schoeman
Nick Medd
Andrew Mercer
Dan Snape
Richard Jones
Nigel Moralee
Gina Connell
Tracey Dawes
Tom Marchant
Steven Ingram
Gina Connell
Jack Biddulph
Joanne Smith
Michael Korn
Pia Wilkes
Rob Ford

Executive leadership team

The trustees delegate day-to-day management of the charity to the executive leadership team:

Jolanta Lasota
Chief Executive

Vivienne Berkeley
Director of Education

Paul Breckell
Deputy Chief Executive (and Company Secretary from 9 October 2021 to 23 January 2022)

Louise Honeysett
Director of Finance and Planning, and Company Secretary (from 24 January 2022)

Danae Leaman-Hill
Director of Fundraising and Development (to 28 October 2022), Director of External Affairs and Development (from 31 October 2022)

Louise Posocco
Director of Finance and Planning, and Company Secretary (to 8 October 2021)

Helen Spice
Interim Director of Finance and Planning (from 9 October 2021 to 23 January 2022)

Claire Thomson
Director of National Services (from 31 October 2022)

Zoe Weaver
Director of People

Harry Wilkinson
Director of Service Development (until 15 October 2021)

Alison Worsley
Director of External Affairs (until 21 October 2022)

Independent auditor

RSM UK Audit LLP
25 Farringdon Street, London EC4A 4AB

Bankers

National Westminster Bank Plc
13 Market Place, Reading RG1 2EP

Nationwide Building Society
Nationwide House, Pipers Way, Swindon SN38 1NW

CAF Bank Limited
25 Kings Hill Avenue, Kings Hill, West Malling ME19 4JQ

Solicitors

Stone King LLP
13 Queen Square, Bath BA1 2HJ

Farrer & Co LLP
66 Lincoln's Inn Fields, Holborn, London WC2A 3LH

Investment managers

Rathbone Brothers Public Limited Company
8 Finsbury Circus, London EC2M 7AZ

The statement of trustees' responsibilities

The trustees (who are also directors of Ambitious about Autism for the purposes of company law) are responsible for preparing the Trustees' Annual Report, including the strategic report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

Company law requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year, which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company and group as at the balance sheet date, and of the incoming resources and application of resources, including the income and expenditure, of the group for that period.

In preparing these financial statements, the trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently
- observe the methods and principles in the Charities Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP)
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent
- state whether applicable UK Accounting Standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in operation.

The trustees are responsible for maintaining proper accounting records that disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charitable company and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006.

Statement as to disclosure of information to auditor

In so far as the trustees are aware:

- there is no relevant audit information of which the charitable company's auditor is unaware
- the trustees have taken all steps that they ought to have taken to make themselves aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the auditor is aware of that information.

The trustees are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charitable company and the group, and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

The trustees are responsible for the maintenance and integrity of the corporate and financial information on the charitable company's website. Legislation in the UK governing the preparation and dissemination of financial statements may differ from legislation in other jurisdictions.

The Trustees' Annual Report is approved by order of the Board of Trustees and the Strategic Report and the Directors' Report required by company law (included therein) are approved by the Board of Trustees in their capacity as the directors at a meeting on 24 March 2023 and signed on their behalf by:

Neil Goulden
Chair of the Board of Trustees

Independent auditor's report to the members of ambitious about autism

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of Ambitious about Autism (the 'parent charitable company') and its subsidiaries (the 'group') for the year ended 31 August 2022 which comprise the Consolidated Statement of Financial Activities incorporating an Income and Expenditure Account, the Group and Company Balance Sheets, the Group Cash Flow Statement and notes to the financial statements, including significant accounting policies. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards, including FRS 102 "The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland" (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

In our opinion the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the group's and the parent charitable company's affairs as at 31 August 2022 and of the group's incoming resources and application of resources, including its income and expenditure, for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice; and
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006.

Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)) and applicable law. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of our report. We are independent of the group and parent charitable company in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in the UK, including the FRC's Ethical Standard and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities

in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Conclusions relating to going concern

In auditing the financial statements, we have concluded that the trustees' use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.

Based on the work we have performed, we have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the group's or parent charitable company's ability to continue as a going concern for a period of at least twelve months from when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

Our responsibilities and the responsibilities of the trustees with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this report.

Other information

The other information comprises the information included in the Annual Report other than the financial statements and our auditor's report thereon. The trustees are responsible for the other information contained within the Annual Report. Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in our report, we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

Our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or our knowledge obtained in the course of the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If we identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, we are required to determine whether this gives rise to a material misstatement in the financial statements themselves. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact.

We have nothing to report in this regard.

Opinions on other matters prescribed by the Companies Act 2006

In our opinion, based on the work undertaken in the course of the audit:

- the information given in the Trustees' Report, which includes the Directors' Report and the Strategic Report prepared for the purposes of company law, for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements; and
- the Directors' Report and the Strategic Report included within the Trustees' Report have been prepared in accordance with applicable legal requirements.

Matters on which we are required to report by exception

In the light of the knowledge and understanding of the group and the parent charitable company and their environment obtained in the course of the audit, we have not identified material misstatements in the Directors' Report or the Strategic Report included within the Trustees'/Directors' Report.

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters where the Companies Act 2006 requires us to report to you if, in our opinion:

- adequate accounting records have not been kept by the parent charitable company, or returns adequate for our audit have not been received from branches not visited by us; or
- the parent charitable company financial statements are not in agreement with the accounting records and returns; or
- certain disclosures of trustees' remuneration specified by law are not made; or
- we have not received all the information and explanations we require for our audit.

Responsibilities of trustees

As explained more fully in the Statement of Trustees' responsibilities set out on **page 86**, the trustees (who are also the directors of the charitable company for the purposes of company law) are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view, and for such internal control as the trustees determine is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the trustees are responsible for assessing the group's and parent charitable company's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the trustees either intend to liquidate the group or parent charitable company or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

The extent to which the audit was considered capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud

Irregularities are instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations. The objectives of our audit are to obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence regarding compliance with

laws and regulations that have a direct effect on the determination of material amounts and disclosures in the financial statements, to perform audit procedures to help identify instances of non-compliance with other laws and regulations that may have a material effect on the financial statements, and to respond appropriately to identified or suspected non-compliance with laws and regulations identified during the audit.

In relation to fraud, the objectives of our audit are to identify and assess the risk of material misstatement of the financial statements due to fraud, to obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence regarding the assessed risks of material misstatement due to fraud through designing and implementing appropriate responses and to respond appropriately to fraud or suspected fraud identified during the audit.

However, it is the primary responsibility of management, with the oversight of those charged with governance, to ensure that the entity's operations are conducted in accordance with the provisions of laws and regulations and for the prevention and detection of fraud.

In identifying and assessing risks of material misstatement in respect of irregularities, including fraud, the group audit engagement team:

- obtained an understanding of the nature of the sector, including the legal and regulatory framework that the group and parent charitable company operates in and how the group and parent charitable company are complying with the legal and regulatory framework;
- inquired of management, and those charged with governance, about their own identification and assessment of the risks of irregularities, including any known actual, suspected or alleged instances of fraud;
- discussed matters about non-compliance with laws and regulations and how fraud might occur including assessment of how and where the financial statements may be susceptible to fraud.

As a result of these procedures we consider the most significant laws and regulations that have a direct impact on the financial statements are FRS 102, Charities SORP (FRS 102), Companies Act 2006, Charities Act 2011, the parent charitable company's governing document, tax legislation and Charities (Protection and Social Investment) Act 2016. We performed audit procedures to detect non-compliances which may have a material impact on the financial statements which included reviewing the financial statements including the Trustees' Report, remaining alert to new or unusual transactions which may not be in accordance with the governing documents, inspecting correspondence with tax authorities and evaluating advice received from internal/ external advisors.

The most significant laws and regulations that have an indirect impact on the financial statements are those in relation to the Keeping Children Safe in Education under section 175 of the Education Act 2002, and the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR). We performed audit procedures to inquire of management and those charged with governance whether the group is in compliance with these law and regulations and inspected correspondence with regulatory authorities.

The group audit engagement team identified the risk of management override of controls as the area where the financial statements were most susceptible to material misstatement due to fraud. Audit procedures performed included but were not limited to testing manual journal entries and other adjustments, evaluating the business rationale in relation to significant, unusual transactions and transactions entered into outside the normal course of business and challenging judgments and estimates.

A further description of our responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements is provided on the **Financial Reporting Council's website**. This description forms part of our auditor's report.

Use of our report

This report is made solely to the charitable company's members, as a body, in accordance with Chapter 3 of Part 16 of the Companies Act 2006. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the charitable company's members those matters we are required to state to them in an auditor's report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the charitable company and the charitable company's members as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

Hannah Catchpool

Hannah Catchpool
Senior Statutory Auditor

For and on behalf of
RSM UK AUDIT LLP
Statutory Auditor
Chartered Accountants
25 Farringdon Street
London
EC4A 4AB

Date: 30 March 2023

Consolidated statement of financial activities

(incorporating an income and expenditure account)

For the year ended 31 August 2022

		For the year ended 31 August 2022					For the year ended 31 August 2021
			Ambitious about Autism		Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust		
	Note	Unrestricted £'000	Restricted £'000	Subtotal £'000	Restricted £'000	**Total £'000**	**Total £'000**
Income from:							
Donations and legacies:							
Gifts and donated services		453	1,545	1,998	96	**2,094**	2,309
Charitable activities:	2						
Educational services		15,914	189	16,103	5,685	**21,788**	20,164
External affairs	3	-	29	29	-	**29**	71
Other income	**3**						
Trading income		342	42	384	9	**393**	238
Investment income		169	-	169	-	**169**	39
CJRS income		-	-	-	-	**-**	31
Total income		**16,878**	**1,805**	**18,683**	**5,790**	**24,473**	**22,852**
Expenditure on:							
Raising funds							
Fundraising activities		750	-	750	-	**750**	642
Investment management costs		13	-	13	-	**13**	13
		763	-	763	-	**763**	655
Charitable activities:							
Educational services		15,300	555	15,855	4,823	**20,678**	19,421
External affairs		1,356	626	1,982	-	**1,982**	1,508
Total expenditure	**4**	**17,419**	**1,181**	**18,600**	**4,823**	**23,423**	**21,584**
Net Income/(expenditure)/ before other gains/(losses)		**(541)**	**624**	**83**	**967**	**1,050**	**1,268**
Net gains/(losses) on investments		(159)	-	(159)	-	**(159)**	**258**
Net gains/(losses) on pension deficit		-	-	-	2,814	2,814	(480)
Net income/ (expenditure)		**(700)**	**624**	**(76)**	**3,781**	**3,705**	**1,046**
Transfers between funds	19	857	(160)	697	(697)	**-**	-
Net movement in funds		**157**	**464**	**621**	**3,084**	**3,705**	**1,046**
Reconciliation of funds:							
Total funds brought forward	19	8,967	622	9,589	6,778	**16,367**	15,321
Total funds carried forward	**19**	**9,124**	**1,086**	**10,210**	**9,862**	**20,072**	**16,367**

Balance sheets

As at 31 August 2022

Company number: 03375255

		Group		Ambitious about Autism	
	Note	**31 August 2022 £'000**	31 August 2021 £'000	**31 August 2022 £'000**	31 August 2020 £'000
Fixed assets:					
Tangible assets	10	**16,399**	16,634	**10,267**	10,434
Investments	12	**1,762**	1,878	**1,762**	1,878
Intangible assets	11	**123**	103	**113**	103
		18,284	18,615	**12,142**	12,415
Current assets:					
Debtors	13	**1,213**	824	**1,145**	1,148
Cash at bank and in hand		**9,248**	8,678	**4,687**	4,342
Short-term deposits		**13**	13	**8**	8
		10,474	9,515	**5,840**	5,498
Liabilities:					
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	14	**(3,712)**	**(3,819)**	**(3,082)**	**(2,845)**
Net current assets		**6,762**	**5,696**	**2,758**	**2,653**
Total assets less current liabilities		**25,046**	**24,311**	**14,900**	**15,068**
Creditors: amounts falling due after one year	16	**(4,690)**	**(5,479)**	**(4,690)**	**(5,479)**
Defined benefit pension scheme liability	17	**(284)**	**(2,465)**	**-**	**-**
Total net assets	**18**	**20,072**	**16,367**	**10,210**	**9,589**

As at 31 August 2022

Company number: 03375255

		Group		Ambitious about Autism	
	Note	**31 August 2022 £'000**	31 August 2021 £'000	**31 August 2022 £'000**	31 August 2020 £'000
Funds					
Restricted funds:					
Ambitious about Autism		1,086	622	1,086	622
Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust		9,862	6,778	-	-
Total restricted funds		**10,948**	**7,400**	**1,086**	**622**
Unrestricted funds:					
Designated funds		6,261	6,553	6,261	6,553
General funds		2,863	2,414	2,863	2,414
Total unrestricted funds		**9,124**	**8,967**	**9,124**	**8,967**
Total funds	**19**	**20,072**	**16,367**	**10,210**	**9,589**

The financial statements were approved and authorised for issue by the trustees on 24 March 2023 and signed on their behalf by

Neil Goulden
Chair of the Board of Trustees

The notes on pages 96 to 123 form an integral part of these financial statements.

Consolidated statement of cash flows

For the year ended 31 August 2022

	Note	For the year ended 31 August 2022 £'000	For the year ended 31 August 2022 £'000	For the year ended 31 August 2021 £'000	For the year ended 31 August 2021 £'000
Cash flows from operating activities					
Net cash provided by operating activities	20		**2,051**		3,698
Cash flows from investing activities					
Dividends and interest from investments		**103**		39	
Interest payable		**(120)**		(92)	
Purchase of tangible and intangible fixed assets		**(698)**		(721)	
Proceed from sale of tangible fixed asset		**-**		5	
Proceeds from the sale of investments		**352**		299	
Change on cash held for investment		**(45)**		27	
Purchase of investments		**(350)**		(301)	
Net cash used in investing activities			**(758)**		(744)
Cash flows from financing activities					
Purchase of new loans		**-**		-	
Repayments of borrowing		**(723)**		(371)	
Net cash (used in)/provided by financing activities			**(723)**		(371)
Change in cash and cash equivalents			**570**		2,583
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the year			**8,691**		6,108
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the year			**9,261**		8,691
Cash and cash equivalents consists of:					
Cash at bank and in hand			**9,248**		8,678
Short-term deposits			**13**		13
			9,261		**8,691**

Consolidated statement of cash flows (continued)

For the year ended 31 August 2022

Net debt reconciliation	At the start of the year	Cash flows	Other non-cash changes	At end of year
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Cash	8,678	570	-	9,248
Cash equivalents	13	-	0	13
Loans falling due within one year	(424)	424	(424)	**(424)**
Loans falling due after more than one year	(5,340)	300	424	**(4,616)**
Total	**2,927**	**1,294**	**0**	**4,221**

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 August 2022

1. Accounting policies

Ambitious about Autism is a charitable group limited by guarantee and is incorporated in England and Wales. The registered office address is Woodside Avenue, London, N10 3JA.

a. Basis of preparation

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) – (Charities SORP FRS 102), the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (March 2018) and the Companies Act 2006.

The financial statements are presented in Sterling (£) which is also the functional currency of the group.

The accounts are rounded to the nearest thousand (£'000).

Assets and liabilities are initially recognised at historical cost or transaction value unless otherwise stated in the relevant accounting policy or note.

b. Basis of consolidation

Ambitious about Autism is the sole corporate member of Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust. Therefore the consolidated financial statements of the charity incorporate the financial statements of the trust, a UK company limited by guarantee (company registration number 8335297) that is also an exempt charity. Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust's results and net assets at 31 August 2022 are consolidated within these accounts on a line by line basis. Intercompany transactions and balances between charitable companies are eliminated. Consistent accounting policies have been adopted across the group.

c. Public benefit entity

The charitable company meets the definition of a public benefit entity under FRS 102.

d. Going concern

The trustees consider that there are no material uncertainties about the charitable company's ability to continue as a going concern. A 12-month detailed budget is prepared from year-end as well as a higher level five-year finance model. The trustees have a reasonable expectation that Ambitious about Autism and the Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust has available cash to settle liabilities as they fall due and has adequate resources to continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future.

The organisation regularly reviews cash flow forecasts in light of current performance, and assesses whether there is either a need to seek additional financing or repay loans earlier than scheduled. While there were no changes to the financing arrangements during the 2021--22 financial year, two early repayments on a loan facility were made post year-end, reflecting increased financial stability and strong cashflow forecast positions over the next 12 months.

The Trustees do not consider that there are any sources of estimation uncertainty at the reporting date that have a significant risk of causing a material adjustment to the carrying amounts of assets and liabilities for a period of at least 12 months from sign off.

e. Income

Income is recognised when the group has entitlement to the funds, any performance conditions attached to the income have been met, it is probable that the income will be received and that the amount can be measured reliably.

Income from government and other grants, whether 'capital' grants or 'revenue' grants, is recognised when the group has entitlement to the funds, any performance conditions attached to the grants have been met, it is probable that the income will be received and the amount can be measured reliably and is not deferred. Fees are recognised as services are rendered, deferring until criteria are met.

Grant income relating to the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) is recognised under the accrual model. There are no unfulfilled conditions or other contingencies relating to the grant, and there have been no other forms of government assistance from which the entity has directly benefited in relation to the coronavirus pandemic in the year.

School and college fee income received in advance of the provision of a specified service is deferred until the criteria for income recognition are met.

f. Donations of gifts, services and facilities

Donated professional services and donated facilities are recognised as income when the group has control over the item or received the service, any conditions associated with the donation have been met, the receipt of economic benefit from the use by the group of the item is probable and that the economic benefit can be measured reliably.

On receipt, donated gifts, professional services and donated facilities are recognised on the basis of the value of the gift to the group, which is the amount the group would have been willing to pay to obtain services or facilities of equivalent economic benefit on the open market; a corresponding amount is then recognised in the expenditure in the period of receipt.

g. Interest receivable

Interest on funds held on deposit is included when receivable and the amount can be measured reliably by the group; this is normally upon notification of the interest paid or payable by the bank.

h. Fund accounting

Restricted funds are to be used for specific purposes as laid down by the donor. Expenditure which meets these criteria is charged to the fund.

Unrestricted funds are donations and other incoming resources received or generated for the charitable purposes.

Designated funds are unrestricted funds earmarked by the Trustees for particular purposes.

i. Expenditure and irrecoverable VAT

Expenditure is recognised once there is a legal or constructive obligation to make a payment to a third party, it is probable that settlement will be required and the amount of the obligation can be measured reliably. Expenditure is classified under the following activity headings:

- Costs of raising funds relate to the costs incurred by the charitable company in inducing third parties to make voluntary contributions to it, as well as the cost of any activities with a fundraising purpose.
- Expenditure on charitable activities includes the costs of delivering services and other educational activities undertaken to further the purposes of the group, and their associated support costs.

Ambitious about Autism is VAT registered. As the charity provides a mixture of taxable and exempt supplies, VAT on expenditure that cannot be directly attributed to either type of supply is partially recovered.

Irrecoverable VAT is charged as a cost against the activity for which the expenditure was incurred.

j. Allocation of support costs

Resources are expended and allocated to the particular activity where the cost relates directly to that activity. However, the cost of overall direction and administration of each activity, comprising the salary and the overhead costs of the central function, is apportioned on the following bases which are estimates, based on staff time, of the amount attributable to each activity.

Central function	Main basis for allocation
Leadership	Time spent
Finance	Staff head count
Human resources	Staff head count
IT	Staff head count
Facilities management	Area occupied
General administration	Staff head count
Premises and office costs	Area occupied

Where information about the aims, objectives and projects of the group is provided to potential beneficiaries, the costs associated with this are allocated to charitable expenditure.

Governance costs are the costs associated with the governance arrangements of the group. These costs are associated with constitutional and statutory requirements and include any costs associated with the strategic management of the group's activities.

The management charge for the Ambitious about Autism support provided to Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust is eliminated on consolidation of the group accounts.

k. Operating leases

Rental charges are charged on a straight line basis over the term of the lease.

l. Tangible fixed assets

Items of equipment or groups of items are capitalised where the purchase price exceeds £5,000. Depreciation costs are allocated to activities on the basis of the use of the related assets in those activities. Assets are reviewed for impairment if circumstances indicate their carrying value may exceed their net realisable value and value in use.

Depreciation is provided at rates calculated to write down the cost of each asset except freehold land to its estimated residual value over its expected useful life. The useful lives are as follows:

Freehold land building at Woodside Avenue	50 years
Long leasehold	50 years
Short and long leasehold improvements	over the lease term
Computer equipment	3 years
Educational, office furniture and equipment	3-10 years
Motor vehicles	5 years

m. Intangible fixed assets

Intangible assets are measured at cost less accumulated amortisation and any accumulated impairment losses.

Software development costs are recognised as an intangible asset when all of the following criteria are demonstrated:

- the technical feasibility of completing the software so that it will be available for use or sale
- the intention to complete the software and use or sell it
- the ability to use the software or to sell it
- how the software will generate probable future economic benefits
- the availability of adequate technical, financial and other resources to complete the development and to use or sell the software
- the ability to measure reliably the expenditure attributable to the software during its development

Amortisation is charged so as to allocate the cost of intangibles less their residual values over their estimated useful lives, using the straight-line method. The intangible assets are amortised over the following useful economic lives:

Software development costs	3 years

n. Listed investments

Investments are a form of basic financial instrument and are initially recognised at their transaction value and subsequently measured at their fair value as at the balance sheet date using the closing quoted market price. Any change in fair value will be recognised in the statement of financial activities. Investment gains and losses, whether realised or unrealised, are combined and shown in the heading 'Net gains/(losses) on investments' in the statement of financial activities.

o. Debtors

Trade and other debtors are recognised at the settlement amount due after any trade discount offered. Prepayments are valued at the amount prepaid net of any trade discounts due.

p. Cash and cash equivalents

Cash and cash equivalents includes cash and short term highly liquid investments with a short maturity of three months or less from the date of acquisition or opening of the deposit or similar account.

q. Short-term deposits

Short-term deposits include liquid investments with a maturity of three to 12 months from the date of acquisition or opening of the deposit or similar account.

r. Creditors and provisions

Creditors and provisions are recognised where the group has a present obligation resulting from a past event that will probably result in the transfer of funds to a third party and the amount due to settle the obligation can be measured or estimated reliably. Creditors and provisions are normally recognised at their settlement amount after allowing for any trade discounts due.

s. Financial instruments

The group has elected to apply the provisions of Section 11 'Basic Financial Instruments' and Section 12 'other Financial Instruments Issues' of FRS 102 in full to all of its financial instruments. Basic financial instruments are initially recognised at their transaction value and subsequently measured at their settlement value. Other financial instruments are recognised at fair value with the change in fair value recognised as a gain or loss in the statement of financial activities.

Derivatives are initially recognised at fair value on the date a derivative contract is entered into and are subsequently re-measured to fair value, at each reporting date. Fair value gains and losses are recognised in profit or loss. This has been recognised as expenditure under finance costs.

Borrowings are initially recognised at the transaction price, including transaction costs and subsequently measured at amortised cost using the effective interest method. Interest expense is recognised on the basis of the effective interest method and is included in interest payable and other similar expenses.

A financial asset is derecognised only when the contractual rights to cash flows expire or are settled, or substantially all the risks and rewards of ownership are transferred to another party, or if some (but not substantially all) risks and rewards of ownership are retained but control of the asset has transferred to another party that is able to sell the asset in its entirety to an unrelated third party. A financial liability (or part thereof) is derecognised when the obligation specified in the contract is discharged, cancelled or expires.

t. Pensions

Ambitious about Autism has a defined contribution pension scheme available to all staff.

On 1 July 2014, and in compliance with Government legislation on Auto Enrolment, a defined contribution group personal pension scheme was opened. Employees were able to join on inception or under the rules of auto enrolment with a deferred period of three months.

Ambitious about Autism also contributes to the Teachers' Pension Scheme. The pension available to teaching staff is a defined benefit, multi employer scheme and the assets and liabilities of the scheme cannot be split out for individual employers. Further information is given in note 17.

The pension costs charged in the statement of financial activities represent the contributions payable by the group in the year to all pension schemes.

Retirement benefits to employees of the Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust are provided by the Teachers' Pension Scheme ('TPS') and the Local Government Pension Scheme ('LGPS'). These are defined benefit schemes.

The TPS is an unfunded scheme and contributions are calculated so as to spread the cost of pensions over employees' working lives with the trust in such a way that the pension cost is a substantially level percentage of current and future pensionable payroll. The contributions are determined by the Government Actuary on the basis of quadrennial valuations using a prospective unit credit method. TPS is a multi-employer scheme and there is insufficient information available to use defined benefit accounting. The TPS is therefore treated as a defined contribution scheme for accounting purposes and the contributions recognised in the period to which they relate.

The LGPS is a funded scheme and the assets are held separately from those of Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust in separate trustee-administered funds. Pension scheme assets are measured at fair value and liabilities are measured on an actuarial basis using the projected unit credit method and discounted at a rate equivalent to the current rate of return on a high-quality corporate bond of equivalent term and currency to the liabilities. The actuarial valuations are obtained at least triennially and are updated at each balance sheet date. The amounts charged to operating surplus are the current service costs and the costs of scheme introductions, benefit changes, settlements and curtailments. They are included as part of staff costs as incurred. Net interest on the net defined benefit liability is also recognised in the Statement of Financial Activities and comprises the interest cost on the defined benefit obligation and interest income on the scheme assets, calculated by multiplying the fair value of the scheme assets at the beginning of the period by the rate used to discount the benefit obligations. The difference between the interest income on the scheme assets and the actual return on the scheme assets is recognised in other recognised gains and losses. Actuarial gains and losses are recognised immediately in other recognised gains and losses. Actuarial gains and losses are recognised immediately in other recognised gains and losses.

u. Redundancy payments

Redundancy payments are accounted for in the period in which the obligation to make a payment arises.

v. Judgements and key sources of estimation uncertainty

In the application of the group's accounting policies, the directors are required to make judgements, estimates and assumptions about the carrying amount of assets and liabilities that are not readily apparent from other sources. The estimates and associated assumptions are based on historical experience and other factors that are considered to be relevant. Actual results may differ from these estimates.

The estimates and underlying assumptions are reviewed on an ongoing basis. Revisions to accounting estimates are recognised in the period in which the estimate is revised where the revision affects only that period, or in the period of the revision and future periods where the revision affects both current and future periods

Key sources of estimation uncertainty

The estimates and assumptions which have a significant risk of causing a material adjustment to the carrying amounts of assets and liabilities are as follows:

- Depreciation: fixed assets are depreciated over the assets, expected useful life.
- Pensions: the pension liability is sensitive to movements in actuarial assumptions such as discount rate, mortality and inflation. Further details are set out in Note 17.

2. Income from donations and legacies

For the year ended 31 August 2022

	Ambitious about Autism			Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust	
	Unrestricted £'000	Restricted £'000	Subtotal £'000	Restricted £'000	**Total £'000**
Gifts	403	1,545	1,948	96	**2,044**
Donated services	50	-	50	-	**50**
	453	**1,545**	**1,998**	**96**	**2,094**

For the year ended 31 August 2021

	Ambitious about Autism			Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust	
	Unrestricted £'000	Restricted £'000	Subtotal £'000	Restricted £'000	**Total £'000**
Gifts	1,018	1,214	2,232	27	**2,259**
Donated services	50	-	50	-	**50**
	1,068	**1,214**	**2,282**	**27**	**2,309**

3. Income from charitable activities

	For the year ended 31 August 2022				
	Ambitious about Autism			Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust	
	Unrestricted £'000	Restricted £'000	Subtotal £'000	Restricted £'000	**Total £'000**
Local authorities	13,685	-	13,685	4,208	**17,893**
Education Skills Funding Agency	2,229	189	2,418	1,477	**3,895**
Subtotal for educational services	**15,914**	**189**	**16,103**	**5,685**	**21,788**
Autism Education Trust	-	29	29	-	**29**
Subtotal for external affairs	**-**	**29**	**29**	**-**	**29**
Total income from charitable activities	**15,914**	**218**	**16,132**	**5,685**	**21,817**

	For the year ended 31 August 2021				
	Ambitious about Autism			Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust	
	Unrestricted £'000	Restricted £'000	Subtotal £'000	Restricted £'000	**Total £'000**
Local authorities	12,618	80	12,698	3,883	**16,581**
Education Skills Funding Agency	2,077	95	2,172	1,411	**3,583**
Subtotal for Educational services	**14,695**	**175**	**14,870**	**5,294**	**20,164**
Autism Education Trust	-	71	71	-	**71**
Subtotal for External affairs	**-**	**71**	**71**	**-**	**71**
Total income from charitable activities	**14,695**	**246**	**14,941**	**5,294**	**20,235**

4. Analysis of expenditure

	Staff costs (note 6) £'000	Direct costs £'000	Finance (incl loan interest) £'000	Human resources £'000	Information technology £'000	Premises and office costs £'000	Leadership £'000	Support costs £'000	Governance costs £'000	For the year ended 31 August 2022 £'000
Ambitious about Autism:										
Cost of generating funds	514	112	6	-	-	16	-	84	19	**751**
Educational services	9,617	991	-	-	40	867	-	3,987	367	**15,869**
External affairs	1,156	410	38	-	-	64	-	261	51	**1,980**
Ambitious about Autism	**11,287**	**1,513**	**44**	**-**	**40**	**947**	**-**	**4,332**	**437**	**18,600**
Support costs	1,880	351	816	657	169	426	33	**(4,332)**	-	**-**
Governance costs	327	28	-	-	-	-	82	-	(437)	**-**
Allocated costs	2,207	379	816	657	169	426	115	(4,332)	(437)	**-**
Ambitious about Autism subtotal	**13,494**	**1,892**	**860**	**657**	**209**	**1,373**	**115**	**-**	**-**	**18,600**
Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust	3,844	517	-	-	-	462	-	-	-	**4,823**
Total expenditure 2022	**17,338**	**2,409**	**860**	**657**	**209**	**1,835**	**115**	**-**	**-**	**23,423**

Resources expended are allocated to the particular activity where the cost relates directly to that activity. However, the cost of overall direction and administration of each activity, comprising the salary and the overhead costs of the central function, is apportioned based on staff time, of the amount attributable to each activity.

All Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust support costs are paid through management fees, which are eliminated on consolidation. Any other costs are allocated directly to Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust.

5. Net income for the year

This is stated after charging:	For the year ended 31 August 2022 £'000	For the year ended 31 August 2021 £'000
Depreciation	**864**	860
Amortisation	**49**	36
Derivative Liability	**-**	136
Interest payable	**120**	100
Auditor's remuneration:		
Ambitious about Autism	**25**	29
Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust	**19**	19
Ambitious about Autism Teachers, Pension Scheme audit	**1**	1
Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust annual accounts return	**2**	2
Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust Teachers, Pension Scheme audit	**1**	1
Ambitious about Autism other services	**2**	2
Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust other services	**4**	4
Payments under operating leases:		
Property	**143**	134
Equipment	**8**	20

6. Analysis of group staff costs, Trustee remuneration and expenses, and the costs of key management personnel

Staff costs were as follows:

	For the year ended 31 August 2022 £'000	Restated for year ended 31 August 2021 £'000
Salaries and wages	**14,035**	13,326
Social security costs	**1,402**	1,265
Employer's contribution to defined benefit pension schemes	**1,586**	1,210
Employer's contribution to defined contribution pension schemes	**315**	381
	17,338	**15,774**

The 2021 figures have been restated for Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust to include all costs of the defined benefit pension scheme in pension costs, not just employer contributions.

Redundancy and termination costs (including payment in lieu of notice) of £21k were paid in the year (2021: £49k).

The following number of employees received employee benefits (excluding employer pension and National Insurance costs) during the year to 31 August 2022, between:

	For the year ended 31 August 2022 £'000	For year ended 31 August 2021 £'000
£60,000-£69,999	**5**	8
£70,000-£79,999	**4**	3
£80,000-£89,999	**3**	4
£90,000-£99,999	**1**	2
£100,000-£109,999	**1**	1
£110,000-£119,999	**1**	2
£120,000-£129,999	**1**	0

The total employee benefits including Employer pension and national insurance contributions of the key management personnel were £831k for the 12 month period to 31 August 2022 (2021: £898k).

Jolanta Lasota, Chief Executive of Ambitious About Autism, was paid an annual salary of £119k to 31 August 2022 (2021: £115k).

The charity Trustees were not paid and did not receive any other benefits from employment with the charity in the year (2021: £nil).
No charity Trustee received payment for professional or other services supplied to the charity (2021: £nil).

One Trustee was reimbursed £444.77 of travel and subsistence costs in 2022 (2021: £nil).

7. Staff numbers

The average number of employees (headcount based on number of staff employed) during the year was as follows:

	For the year ended 31 August 2022 No	For the year ended 31 August 2021 No
Raising funds	**8**	12
Educational services	**374**	408
External affairs	**26**	18
Support	**53**	39
	461	**477**

The increase of staff numbers is due to the planned growth across educational services.

The full time equivalent of staff employed during the year was as follows:

	For the year ended 31 August 2022 No	For the year ended 31 August 2021 No
Raising funds	**8**	13
Educational services	**341**	375
External affairs	**25**	15
Support	**49**	35
	423	**438**

8. Related party transactions

The charity purchased £1,371 (2021: £3,709) of office furniture from Assman Office Furniture during the year. Assman Office Furniture is managed by the partner of Vivienne Berkeley, Director of Education. At the balance sheet date, the amount has been fully paid leaving a nil creditor balance (2021: nil).

Charlotte Warner, a Trustee of the Trust (until 15th December 2021), is also a director of Tudor Park Education Trust, which runs Spring West Academy. The Rise School holds a contract with the Spring West Academy with respect to the procurement of curriculum placements, provision of caretaker services, grounds maintenance and the car park. During the year, the Trust made payments totalling £29k (2021: £34k) to the Spring West Academy. At the year end costs accrued were nil (2021: nil).

During the year trustees either personally donated or donated through entities where they have significant control a total of £789 (2021: £16,823) to the charity. Of these, no gifts (2021: nil) were restricted donations.

Paul Breckell is an unpaid trustee of NCVO and NCVO Trading Ltd. Ambitious about Autism has booked rooms at The Society Building which is run by NCVO (via NCVO Trading Limited). During the year payments to NCVO were £19,224 (2021: £1,177). At the year end, there was a £265 creditor balance with NCVO (2021: £411).

Services were provided to Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust at a cost of £697k from September 2021 to August 2022 (2021: £617k). These services include Finance, Education, HR, Communications, Facilities and IT support. These are provided at cost and would otherwise need to be procured commercially. The increase is due to the growth in the Rise School. At year end £237k (2021: £267k) was reported under amounts owed by group undertakings (debtors) and nil (2021: £205k) as accrued income (debtors).

9. Taxation

The group is exempt from corporation tax as all its income is charitable and is applied for charitable purposes.

10. Tangible fixed assets

Group	Freehold land and buildings £'000	Long leasehold £'000	Leasehold improvements £'000	Educational, office furniture and equipment £'000	Computer equipment £'000	Motor vehicles £'000	Total £'000
Cost							
At the start of the year	11,903	6,643	1,728	997	1,147	218	**22,636**
Additions	20	84	10	346	169	-	**629**
Disposals	-	-	-	(36)	(60)	-	**(96)**
At the end of the year	11,923	6,727	1,738	1,307	1,256	218	**23,169**
Depreciation							
At the start of the year	3,050	718	743	506	869	116	**6,002**
Charge	241	133	186	100	179	25	**864**
Disposals	-	-	-	(36)	(60)	-	**(96)**
At the end of the year	3,291	851	929	570	988	141	**6,770**
Net book value	8,632	5,876	809	737	268	77	**16,399**
At the end of the year	**8,632**	**5,876**	**809**	**737**	**268**	**77**	**16,399**
At the start of the year	**8,853**	**5,925**	**985**	**491**	**278**	**102**	**16,634**

10. Tangible fixed assets (continued)

Ambitious about Autism	Freehold land and buildings £'000	Leasehold improvements £'000	Educational, office furniture and equipment £'000	Computer equipment £'000	Motor vehicles £'000	Total £'000
Cost						
At the start of the year	11,903	1,580	812	885	218	**15,398**
Additions	20	10	346	90	-	**466**
Disposals	-	-	-	-	-	**-**
At the end of the year	11,923	1,590	1,158	975	218	**15,864**
Depreciation						
At the start of the year	3,050	713	375	710	116	**4,964**
Charge	241	171	77	119	25	**633**
Disposals	-	-	-	-	-	**-**
At the end of the year	3,291	884	452	829	141	**5,597**
Net book value	8,632	706	706	146	77	**10,267**
At the end of the year	**8,632**	**706**	**706**	**146**	**77**	**10,267**
At the start of the year	**8,853**	**867**	**437**	**175**	**102**	**10,434**

Land (Ambitious about Autism) with a cost of £834,000 (2021: £834,000) is included within freehold property and is not depreciated.
The long leasehold (125 years) in the group note refers to The Rise School building.

All recognised assets are used for charitable purposes.

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 August 2022

11. Intangible fixed assets

Group	Computer software £'000	Assets under construction £'000	Total £'000
Cost			
At the start of the period	158	-	**158**
Additions in the period	61	8	**69**
At the end of the period	219	8	**227**
Amortisation			
At the start of the period	55	-	**55**
Charge for the period	49	-	**49**
At the end of the period	104	-	**104**
Net book value	115		**123**
At the end of the period	115		**123**
At the start of the period	103		**103**

Ambitious about Autism	Computer software £'000	Assets under construction £'000	Total £'000
Cost			
At the start of the period	158	-	**158**
Additions in the period	51	8	**59**
At the end of the period	209	8	**217**
Amortisation			
At the start of the period	55	-	**55**
Charge for the period	49	-	**49**
At the end of the period	104	-	**104**
Net book value	105	8	**113**
At the end of the period	105	8	**113**
At the start of the period	103	-	**103**

Amortisation charge is reflected in the SOFA.

12. Investments

Group and Ambitious about Autism	31 August 2022 £'000	31 August 2021 £'000
Market value at the start of the year	**1,850**	1,590
Additions at cost	**350**	301
Disposal proceeds	**(352)**	(299)
Net gain/(loss) on change in fair value	**(159)**	258
Market value at the end of the year	**1,689**	1,850
Cash held in investments	**73**	28
Total investments held	**1,762**	**1,878**

Investments comprise	31 August 2022 £'000	31 August 2021 £'000
Listed securities		
Fixed interest	**183**	262
Direct UK equities	**607**	651
Direct overseas equities	**628**	708
Alternatives - property and managed funds	**271**	229
Cash held for re-investment	**65**	21
Cash	**8**	7
Market value at the end of the year	**1,762**	**1,878**

The historical cost of investments is £1,575k (2021: £1,540k).

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 August 2022

13. Debtors

	Group		Ambitious about Autism	
	31 August 2022 £'000	31 August 2021 £'000	**31 August 2022 £'000**	31 August 2021 £'000
Trade debtors	**352**	367	**320**	319
Amounts owed by group undertakings	**-**	-	**238**	267
Other debtors	**287**	104	**34**	14
Prepayments	**276**	217	**255**	206
Accrued income	**298**	136	**298**	342
	1,213	**824**	**1,145**	**1,148**

14. Creditors: amounts falling due within one year

	Group		Ambitious about Autism	
	31 August 2022 £'000	31 August 2021 £'000	**31 August 2022 £'000**	31 August 2021 £'000
Bank loans	**424**	424	**424**	424
Amounts owed to group undertakings	**-**	-	**-**	-
Trade creditors	**344**	475	**162**	441
Taxation and social security	**385**	357	**325**	299
Other creditors	**55**	132	**53**	100
Accruals	**902**	669	**717**	412
Deferred income (note 15)	**1,602**	1,762	**1,401**	1,169
	3,712	**3,819**	**3,082**	**2,845**

15. Deferred income

	Group		Ambitious about Autism	
	31 August 2022 £'000	31 August 2021 £'000	**31 August 2022 £'000**	31 August 2021 £'000
Balance at the beginning of the year	**1,762**	1,139	**1,169**	1,077
Amount released to income in the year	**(1,762)**	(1,139)	**(1,169)**	(1,077)
Amount deferred in the year	**1,602**	1,762	**1,401**	1,169
Balance at the end of the year	**1,602**	**1,762**	**1,401**	**1,169**

Deferred income as at 31 August 2022 relates to autumn 2022 term fees that were received in advance of the new academic year.

16. Creditors: amounts falling due after one period

Group and Ambitious about Autism	31 August 2022 £'000	31 August 2021 £'000
Loans to finance the freehold property	**3,515**	4,148
Loan to finance Ambitious College	**1,101**	1,195
Derivative Liability	**74**	136
Balance at the end of the year	**4,690**	**5,479**

The charity has a loan from Futurebuilders which commenced in October 2008 and is repayable over 25 years.

Interest is chargeable at 1.25% above the Bank of England base rate. The loan is secured over the freehold land and buildings at Woodside Avenue.

The charity also has a loan from NatWest, in tranches of £1.1m and £1.9m, which commenced in November 2008 and April 2012 respectively. Interest is chargeable at 0.75% above LIBOR and 1.25% above LIBOR respectively until 31st January 2022. From 1st February 2022, both loans are moved to the SONIA rate. One tranche of the loan (£1.1m) is capped at an interest rate of 4%. The loan is repayable from November 2013 over 22 years. The loan is secured over the freehold land and buildings at Woodside Avenue.

Two new loans were acquired in August 2020, £500k from Rathbones and the other £500k from NatWest with both loans charging interest of 2.5% over base rate. The NatWest loan is repayable over 20 years and the Rathbones loan is repayable in 5 years.

The charity is using an interest rate swap option to manage its exposure to interest rate movements on its £1.1m bank loan with NatWest. The agreement was entered into a variable to fixed interest rate swap in February 2011. The option swaps the variable rate of interest for a fixed rate of 4% per annum for the period up to August 2033 with a fair value gain of £50k recognised in the year.

The Rathbones loan has been classified as a long-term loan based on the repayment due date. However, it can be recalled by the lender with one month's notice. Rathbones has formally confirmed that it's highly unlikely that they would request the pay back of the remaining loan balance.

The capital amounts repayable under each loan are:	Within 1 year £'000	2–5 years £'000	Over 5 years £'000
Futurebuilders	267	1,105	1,063
NatWest £1.1m tranche	52	236	464
NatWest £1.9m tranche	93	394	707
NatWest £500k	15	70	377
Rathbones £500k	-	200	-
	427	**2,005**	**2,611**

17. Pension schemes

Ambitious about Autism makes contributions to the Aegon Pension Scheme, The People's Pension and into one employee's private pension scheme. Both Ambitious about Autism and Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust pay into the Teachers' Pension Scheme. Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust also make contributions to the Local Government Pension Scheme.

Contributions to these schemes were £1,275k (2021: £1,183k).

Defined Contribution Schemes

The assets of the schemes are held separately from those of Ambitious about Autism. Pension costs charged in the statement of financial activities represent the contributions payable by Ambitious about Autism for the year.

Teachers' Pension Scheme

Introduction

The Teachers' Pension Scheme (TPS) is a statutory, contributory, defined benefit scheme, governed by the Teachers' Pensions Regulations (2010) and, from 1 April 2014, by the Teachers' Pension Scheme Regulations 2014. Membership is automatic for full-time teachers in academies and, from 1 January 2007, automatic for teachers in part-time employment following appointment or a change of contract, although they are able to opt out.

The TPS is an unfunded scheme and members contribute on a 'pay as you go' basis - these contributions along with those made by employers are credited to the Exchequer. Retirement and other pension benefits are paid by public funds provided by Parliament.

Valuation of the Teachers' Pension Scheme

The Government Actuary's Department, using normal actuarial principles, conducts a formal actuarial review of the TPS in accordance with the Public Service Pensions (Valuations and Employer Cost Cap) Directions 2014 published by HM Treasury every four years. The aim of the review is to specify the level of future contributions. Actuarial scheme valuations are dependent on assumptions about the value of future costs, design of benefits and many other factors. The latest actuarial valuation of the TPS was carried out as at 31 March 2016. The valuation report was published by the Department for Education on 5 March 2019. The key elements of the valuation and subsequent consultation are:

- employer contribution rates set at 23.68% of pensionable pay (including a 0.08% employer administration charge);
- total scheme liabilities (pensions currently in payment and the estimated cost of future benefits) for service to the effective date of £218,100m, and notional assets (estimated future contributions together with the notional investments held at the valuation date) of £196,100m giving a notional past service deficit of £22,000m;
- the SCAPE rate, set by HMT, is used to determine the notional investment return.

The current SCAPE rate is 2.4% above the rate of CPI. assumed real rate of return is 2.4% in excess of prices and 2% in excess of earnings. The rate of real earnings growth is assumed to be 2.2%. The assumed nominal rate of return including earnings growth is 4.45%. The next valuation result is due to be implemented from 1 April 2023.

A copy of the valuation report and supporting documentation is on the Teachers' Pensions website.

Under the definitions set out in FRS 102, the TPS is a multi-employer pension scheme. The group is unable to quantify its share of liabilities under the scheme and therefore, in accordance with FRS 102 has accounted for its contributions to the scheme as if it were a defined contribution scheme. The group has set out above the information available on the scheme.

The employer's pension costs paid to TPS by Ambitious about Autism in the year amounted to £315k (2021: £299k).

The employer's pension costs paid to TPS by Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust in the year amounted to £198k (2021: £192k).

27 Ambitious about Autism employees were members of the scheme at 31 August 2022 (2021: 31).

22 employees were members of the scheme at 31 August 2022 (2021: 19).

Local Government Pension Scheme

The LGPS is a funded defined benefit pension scheme, with the assets held in separate Trustee-administered funds. The total contributions made for the year ended 31 August 2022 were £420k (2021: £379k), of which employer's contributions totalled £340k (2021: £301k) and employees' contributions totalled £80k (2021: £78k). Contribution rates for employees increase with salary and during the year ended 31 August 2022, the average employer contribution rate was 19%, and for employees a minimum of 5.5% to a maximum of 12.5% of pensionable salary. During the year ended 31 August 2022 no employees took advantage of the 50/50 option, where employees can pay 50% of normal contributions to build up half the normal pension.

Parliament has agreed, at the request of the Secretary of State for Education, to a guarantee that, in the event of academy closure, outstanding Local Government Pension Scheme liabilities would be met by the Department for Education. The guarantee came into force on 18 July 2013.

At 31 August 2021, 64 employees were members of the scheme (2020: 67).

The following information is based upon a full actuarial valuation of the fund at 31 March 2019 updated to 31 August 2022 by a qualified independent actuary.

Principal actuarial assumptions	**At 31 August 2022 £'000**	At 31 August 2021 £'000
Rate of increase in salaries	**3.90%**	3.85%
Rate of increase for pensions in payment/ inflation	**2.90%**	2.85%
Discount rate for scheme liabilities	**4.20%**	1.70%
Inflation assumption (CPI)	**2.90%**	2.85%
Commutation of pensions to lump sums	**50.00%**	50.00%

17. Pension schemes (continued)

Sensitivity analysis for the liability at 31 August 2022	£'000	£'000	£'000
Adjustment to discount rate	**+0.1%**	**0.0%**	**-0.1%**
Present value of total obligation	2,018	2,094	2,173
Projected service cost	253	267	282
Adjustment to long-term salary increase	**+0.1%**	**0.0%**	**-0.1%**
Present value of total obligation	2,095	2,094	2,093
Projected service cost	268	267	267
Adjustment to pension increases and deferred revaluation	**+0.1%**	**0.0%**	**-0.1%**
Present value of total obligation	2,173	2,094	2,017
Projected service cost	282	267	253
Adjustment to life expectancy assumptions	**+ 1 Year**	**None**	**- 1 Year**
Present value of total obligation	2,155	2,094	2,034
Projected service cost	278	267	257

The current mortality assumptions include sufficient allowance for future improvements in mortality rates. The assumed life expectations on retirement age 65 are:

	At 31 August 2022 £'000	At 31 August 2021 £'000
Retiring today		
Males	**21.0**	21.0
Females	**23.5**	23.8
Retiring in 20 years		
Males	**22.3**	22.4
Females	**24.9**	25.6

17. Pension schemes (continued)

The estimated asset allocation for the Rise School as at 31 August 2022 is as follows:

Employer asset share – bid value	At 31 August 2022 £'000	%	At 31 August 2021 £'000	%
Equities	**1,166**	**64%**	953	64%
Gilts	**89**	**5%**	69	5%
Other bonds	**186**	**10%**	157	10%
Property	**93**	**5%**	61	4%
Absolute return funds	**251**	**14%**	236	16%
Cash	**9**	**1%**	16	1%
Infrastructure	**16**	**1%**	-	0%
Total market value of assets	**1,810**	**100%**	**1,492**	100%
Present value of scheme liabilities - funded	**(2,094)**		(3,957)	
(Deficit) in the scheme	**(284)**		**(2,465)**	

The Trust's share of the assets of the fund is less than 1%.

The actual return on scheme assets was a loss of £111k (2021: £191k gain).

Amounts recognised in the statement of financial activities	31 August 2022 £'000	31 August 2021 £'000
Current service cost	**(933)**	(684)
Net interest cost	**(39)**	(24)
Administration	**(1)**	(1)
Total operating charge	**(973)**	**(709)**

17. Pension schemes (continued)

Changes in the present value of defined benefit obligations were as follows:	2022 £'000	2021 £'000
At 1 September	**3,957**	2,474
Current service cost	**933**	684
Interest cost	**68**	42
Actuarial (gain) / loss	**(2,954)**	653
Benefits paid	**10**	26
Employee contributions	**80**	78
At 31 August	**2,094**	3,957

Changes in the fair value of the academy's share of scheme assets:	2022 £'000	2021 £'000
At 1 September	**1,492**	897
Interest on assets	**29**	18
Return on plan assets (excluding net interest on the defined pension liability)	**(140)**	173
Employer contributions	**340**	301
Employee contributions	**80**	78
Administration expenses	**(1)**	(1)
Benefits paid	**10**	26
At 31 August	**1,810**	1,492

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 August 2022

18. Analysis of net assets between funds

Fund balances as at 31 August 2022 are represented by:

	Ambitious about Autism			Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust	
Group	General unrestricted £'000	Designated £'000	Restricted £'000	Restricted £'000	**Total funds £'000**
Tangible fixed assets	-	10,267	-	6,132	**16,399**
Investments	1,762	-	-	-	**1,762**
Intangible fixed assets	-	113	-	10	**123**
Net current assets	1,101	571	1,086	4,004	**6,762**
Long term liabilities	-	(4,690)	-	(284)	**(4,974)**
	2,863	**6,261**	**1,086**	**9,862**	**20,072**

Ambitious about Autism	General unrestricted £'000	Designated £'000	Restricted £'000	**Total funds £'000**
Tangible fixed assets	-	10,267	-	**10,267**
Investments	1,762	-	-	**1,762**
Intangible fixed assets	-	113	-	**113**
Net current assets	1,101	571	1,086	**2,758**
Long term liabilities	-	(4,690)	-	**(4,690)**
	2,863	**6,261**	**1,086**	**10,210**

18. Analysis of net assets between funds (continued)

Fund balances as at 31 August 2021 are represented by:

	Ambitious about Autism			Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust	
Group	General unrestricted £'000	Designated £'000	Restricted £'000	Restricted £'000	**Total funds £'000**
Tangible fixed assets	-	10,434	-	6,200	**16,634**
Investments	1,878	-	-	-	**1,878**
Intangible fixed assets	-	103	-	-	**103**
Net current assets	536	1,495	622	3,043	**5,696**
Long term liabilities	-	(5,479)	-	(2,465)	**(7,944)**
	2,414	**6,553**	**622**	**6,778**	**16,367**

Ambitious about Autism	General unrestricted £'000	Designated £'000	Restricted £'000	**Total funds £'000**
Tangible fixed assets	-	10,434	-	**10,434**
Investments	1,878	-	-	**1,878**
Intangible fixed assets	-	103	-	**103**
Net current assets	536	1,495	622	**2,653**
Long term liabilities	-	(5,479)	-	**(5,479)**
	2,414	**6,553**	**622**	**9,589**

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 August 2022

19a. Movement in funds

For the year ended 31 August 2022:	At the start of the year £'000	Incoming resources and gains £'000	Outgoing resources and losses £'000	Transfers £'000	At the end of the year £'000
Restricted funds:					
a) Ambitious about Autism					
Ambitious College	-	292	(217)		**75**
Education Services projects	100	709	(461)		**348**
Autism Exchange	151	25	(29)		**147**
Family Support	29	343	(124)		**248**
Participation	50	156	(158)		**48**
TreeHouse School	182	158	(138)	(148)	**54**
Online Information Support	10	-	(10)		**-**
Online Youth Support	8	100	(24)		**84**
IT Equipment	77	22	(18)	(12)	**69**
Other	15	-	(2)		**13**
Total Ambitious about Autism restricted funds	**622**	**1,805**	**(1,181)**	**(160)**	**1,086**
b) Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust	6,778	5,790	(2,009)	(697)	**9,862**
Total group restricted funds	**7,400**	**7,595**	**(3,190)**	**(857)**	**10,948**
Ambitious about Autism unrestricted funds:					
Designated funds					
Fixed assets	4,014	-	(682)	525	**3,857**
School development	5	-	-	-	**5**
Transformation fund	1,182	-	(80)	-	**1,102**
Covid Recovery fund	668	-	(176)	-	**492**
Service Development	-	-	(8)	207	**199**
Buildings maintenance and development fund	684	-	-	(78)	**606**
Total designated funds	**6,553**	**-**	**(946)**	**654**	**6,261**
General funds	2,414	16,878	(16,632)	203	**2,863**
Total Ambitious about Autism unrestricted funds	**8,967**	**16,878**	**(17,578)**	**857**	**9,124**
Total group funds	**16,367**	**24,473**	**(20,768)**	**-**	**20,072**

Transfers

£525k has been designated to the Fixed Asset funds to cover the depreciation of fixed assets acquired during the year. This includes £160k of fixed assets funded from restricted income, and £178k of fixed assets funded from the designated repairs and maintenance fund.

£95k has been designated from the Cyclical Maintenance fund to provide for restoration work on the TreeHouse toilets.

£544k has been designated from unrestricted funds to the Covid fund to provide a contingency against future risks as a result of Coronavirus, including additional costs or losses in income.

£100k has been designated from unrestricted funds to the Transformation fund to support our new strategy work.

£451k was transferred from Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust to general funds to reflect the intercompany management charge and salaries recharged to Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust.

£100k has been designated from the Buildings Maintenance and Development fund to provide major refurbishment works at TreeHouse School.

£207k has been designated from unrestricted funds to the service development fund.

£697k was transferred from Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust to general funds to reflect the intercompany management charge.

The charity is using an interest rate swap option to manage its exposure to interest rate movements on its £1.1m bank loan with NatWest. The agreement was entered into a variable to fixed interest rate swap in February 2011. The option swaps the variable rate of interest for a fixed rate of 4% per annum for the period up to August 2033 with a fair value gain of £50k recognised in the year.

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 August 2022

19a. Movement in funds (continued)

For the year ended 31 August 2021:	At the start of the year £'000	Incoming resources and gains £'000	Outgoing resources and losses £'000	Transfers £'000	At the end of the year £'000
Restricted funds:					
a) Ambitious about Autism					
Ambitious College	56	120	(176)	-	**-**
Education Services projects	137	-	(37)	-	**100**
Autism Exchange	20	590	(459)	-	**151**
Family Support	109	121	(201)	-	**29**
Participation	40	112	(102)	-	**50**
TreeHouse School	95	456	(120)	(249)	**182**
Online Information Support	48	-	(38)	-	**10**
Online Youth Support	122	-	(114)	-	**8**
IT Equipment	168	39	(93)	(37)	**77**
Other	114	22	(121)	-	**15**
Total Ambitious About Autism restricted funds	**909**	**1,460**	**(1,461)**	**(286)**	**622**
b) Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust	6,936	5,337	(4,878)	(617)	**6,778**
Total group restricted funds	**7,845**	**6,797**	**(6,339)**	**(903)**	**7,400**
Ambitious about Autism unrestricted funds:					
Designated funds					
Fixed assets	4,086	-	(666)	594	**4,014**
School development	5	-	-	-	**5**
Transformation fund	173	-	(39)	1,048	**1,182**
Covid recovery fund	590	7	(319)	390	**668**
Buildings maintenance and development fund	724	-	(3)	(37)	**684**
Total designated funds	**5,578**	**7**	**(1,027)**	**1,995**	**6,553**
General funds	1,898	16,305	(14,697)	(1,092)	**2,414**
Total Ambitious about Autismunrestricted funds	**7,476**	**16,312**	**(15,724)**	**903**	**8,967**
Total group funds	**15,321**	**23,109**	**(22,063)**	**-**	**16,367**

19b. Summary movement in funds

Purpose of restricted funds:

Ambitious College	The charity continues its work to develop Ambitious College, London's first specialist day college for autistic young people aged 16–25 including those with learning disabilities. Ambitious College has two campuses co-located within the College of Haringey, Enfield and North East London and West Thames College.
Education Services projects	This fund includes developing and embedding a competency framework for the Ambitious Approach. The Ambitious Approach is our model of education practice, which was designed to be used in our education settings to support autistic children and young people. At its heart, the approach is centred around improving the quality of life of autistic young people while they are in education and ensuring this quality of life continues into adulthood. The framework is being embedded in the charity, and in partner schools and colleges, and includes audit tools, implementation guidance, evaluation protocols, parent toolkits and training materials.
Employ Autism and Autism Exchange	Employ Autism's mission is to ensure that more autistic people can become part of the workforce. The programme acts as a bridge to employment for autistic people by working with employers and careers and employability professionals to increase confidence in autism and neurodiversity, and as a result create opportunities in the workplace. We deliver training, resources and ongoing mentorship to a wide network of partners across the UK and together drive a collective movement for change. The programme comprises the Employ Autism network, the Employ Autism Higher Education network and Autism Exchange.
Learner and Family Support	Our specialist Learner and Family Support team helps the parents and carers of autistic children and young people attending our educational settings throughout their journey with us. We ensure that families have increased knowledge, skills and confidence to support autistic children and young people in their care by providing timely direct advice and support. This includes support at times of transition such as from school to further education, training or other placement, and to adulthood; and advocacy for families to try and secure statutory services such as respite care or social care support.
Participation	Young people are at the heart of everything we do. We listen to them to ensure our work reflects their views and needs. We stand with them and ensure their voices are heard and considered by policymakers and decision-makers, the media and the general public. Through our Ambitious Youth Network, online peer support and project work we bring autistic young people together to tackle isolation and loneliness, understand their autistic identity and have their voices heard.

Purpose of restricted funds: (continued)

TreeHouse School	Funding provided to support a range of specific activities across the school.
Online Information Support	A project to provide vital information online for parents and carers, and empowerment to connect and support each other.
Online Youth Support	A project to provide vital information online for autistic young people, including through a new online community platform for the Ambitious Youth Network.
IT Equipment	This fund supports additional IT equipment and resources for 300 autistic children and young people in our schools and college, so they can access education and support.
Other	Other funds represent a number of small funds.

Purpose of designated funds:

Fixed Assets	This fund represents the net book value of the fixed assets, net of the loans used to purchase them, which are not, by the nature of fixed assets, readily available for other purposes.
Schools development	The school fund has been established to fund school development.
Transformation fund	This fund has been established to support the organisation's new strategy.
Buildings maintenance and development fund	The fund has been allocated to provide for any repairs to and development of the building based on 30-year life cycle costings prepared by external consultants.
Covid Recovery fund	This fund has been established to support the organisation in managing the risks and impact of the coronavirus pandemic.
Service development	This fund has been established to support the growth of existing and new services.

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 August 2022

20. Net cash provided by group operating activities

	2022 £'000	2021 £'000
Net income	**3,705**	1,046
Depreciation and amortisation charges	**913**	895
Losses/(gains) on investments	**159**	(258)
(Gain) on sale of fixed assets	**-**	(5)
Dividends, interest and rent from investments	**(119)**	(39)
Interest payable	**120**	92
(Increase) in debtors	**(389)**	(21)
(Decrease)/increase in derivative liability	**(50)**	136
(Decrease)/increase in creditors	**(107)**	964
(Decrease)/increase in pension deficit	**(2,181)**	888
Net cash provided by operating activities	**2,051**	**3,698**

21. Operating lease commitments

The group's total future minimum lease payments under non-cancellable operating leases is as follows for each of the following periods:

	Property		Equipment	
	2022 £'000	2021 (restated) £'000	**2022 £'000**	2021 £'000
Less than one year	**145**	134	**8**	11
One to five years	**511**	538	**7**	19
Over five years	**75**	147	**-**	-
	731	**819**	**15**	**30**

The 2021 figures have been restated to take account of the break clause in the lease for The Rise Sixth Form.

22. Capital commitments

At the balance sheet date, the group had no contractual capital commitments (2021: £146k).

23. Legal status of the charity

The charity is a company limited by guarantee and has no share capital. The liability of each member in the event of winding up is £1.

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 August 2022

24. Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust

On 1 April 2017, Ambitious about Autism became the sole member of Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust, a company limited by guarantee and an exempt charity (company number 08335297).

Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust operates independently from Ambitious about Autism and as such Ambitious about Autism has no right or access to the assets (cash and non-cash) of Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust. In the group accounts all income and reserves of Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust are treated as restricted. While both entities operate independently the accounts are consolidated on the basis that Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust is the sole corporate member of Ambitious about Autism.

Balance sheet	2022 £'000	2021 £'000
Fixed Assets		
Tangible assets	**6,132**	6,200
Intangible assets	**10**	-
Current Assets		
Debtors	**306**	159
Cash at bank and in hand	**5**	5
Short-term deposit	**4,560**	4,336
	4,871	**2,487**
Liabilities		
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	**(867)**	**(1,457)**
Net current assets	**4,004**	**2,213**
Net assets excluding pension liability	**10,136**	**8,513**
Defined benefit pension scheme liability	**(284)**	**(2,465)**
Total net assets	**9,852**	**6,936**
Funds of the Academy Trust:		
Restricted funds		
Fixed asset fund	**6,206**	6,210
Restricted income fund	**3,940**	3,033
Pension reserve	**(284)**	**(2,465)**
Total restricted funds	**9,862**	**6,936**
Unrestricted income funds	**-**	**-**
Total funds	**9,862**	**6,936**

24. Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust (continued)

A summarised extract of Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust statement of financial activities for the year:	Unrestricted Funds £'000	Restricted Funds £'000	Restricted Fixed Asset Fund £'000	**Total £'000**
Income from:				
Donations and capital grants	-	32	64	**96**
Charitable activities	-	5,685	-	**5,685**
Other income	-	9	-	**9**
	-	**5,726**	**64**	**5,790**
Expenditure on:				
Charitable activities	-	(5,289)	(231)	**(5,520)**
Net surplus/(deficit)	-	437	(167)	**270**
Transfer Between Funds	-	(163)	163	**-**
Other recognised gains	-	2,814	-	**2,814**
Net movement in funds	-	3,088	(4)	**3,084**
Funds brought forward	**-**	**568**	**6,210**	**6,778**
Funds carried forward	**-**	**3,656**	**6,206**	**9,862**

Services were provided to Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust at a cost of £696k from September 2021 to August 2022 (2021: £617k). These services include Finance, Education, HR, Communications, Facilities and IT support. These are provided at cost and would otherwise need to be procured commercially. The increase is due to the growth in the Rise School. At year end £238k (2021: £267k) was reported under amounts owed by group undertakings (debtors) and nil (2021: £205k) as accrued income (debtors).

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 August 2022

25. Consolidated statement of financial activities
(incorporating an income and expenditure account)

For the year ended 31 August 2021

	Note	Ambitious about Autism Unrestricted £'000	Ambitious about Autism Restricted £'000	Ambitious about Autism Subtotal £'000	Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust Restricted £'000	**Total £'000**
Income from:						
Donations and legacies:						
Gifts and donated services	2	1,068	1,214	2,282	27	**2,309**
Charitable activities:						
Educational services	3	14,695	175	14,870	5,294	**20,164**
External affairs	3	-	71	71	-	**71**
Other income						
Trading income		222	-	222	16	**238**
Investment income		39	-	39	-	**39**
CJRS income		31	-	31	-	**31**
Total income		**16,055**	**1,460**	**17,515**	**5,337**	**22,852**
Expenditure on:						
Raising funds						
Fundraising activities		642	-	642	-	**642**
Investment management costs		13	-	13	-	**13**
		655	**-**	**655**	**-**	**655**
Charitable activities:						
Educational services		14,191	832	15,023	4,398	**19,421**
External affairs		879	629	1,508	-	**1,508**
Total expenditure	**4**	**15,725**	**1,461**	**17,186**	**4,398**	**21,584**
Net Income/(expenditure) before other gains/(losses)		**330**	**(1)**	**329**	**939**	**1,268**
Net gains on investments		258	-	258	-	**258**
Net losses on pension deficit		-	-	-	(480)	**(480)**
Net income/(expenditure)	**5**	**588**	**(1)**	**587**	**459**	**1,046**
Transfers between funds	19	903	**(286)**	617	**(617)**	**-**
Net movement in funds		**1,491**	**(287)**	**1,204**	**(158)**	**1,046**
Reconciliation of funds:						
Total funds brought forward	19	7,476	909	8,385	6,936	**15,321**
Total funds carried forward	**19**	**8,967**	**622**	**9,589**	**6,778**	**16,367**

We are Ambitious about Autism

Ambitious about Autism is the national charity standing with autistic children and young people.

We believe every autistic child and young person has the right to be themselves and realise their ambitions.

We started as one school and have become a movement for change. We champion rights, campaign for change and create opportunities.

Ambitious about Autism

Contact us

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Ambitious about Autism is a registered charity in England and Wales: 1063184 and a registered company: 03375255.

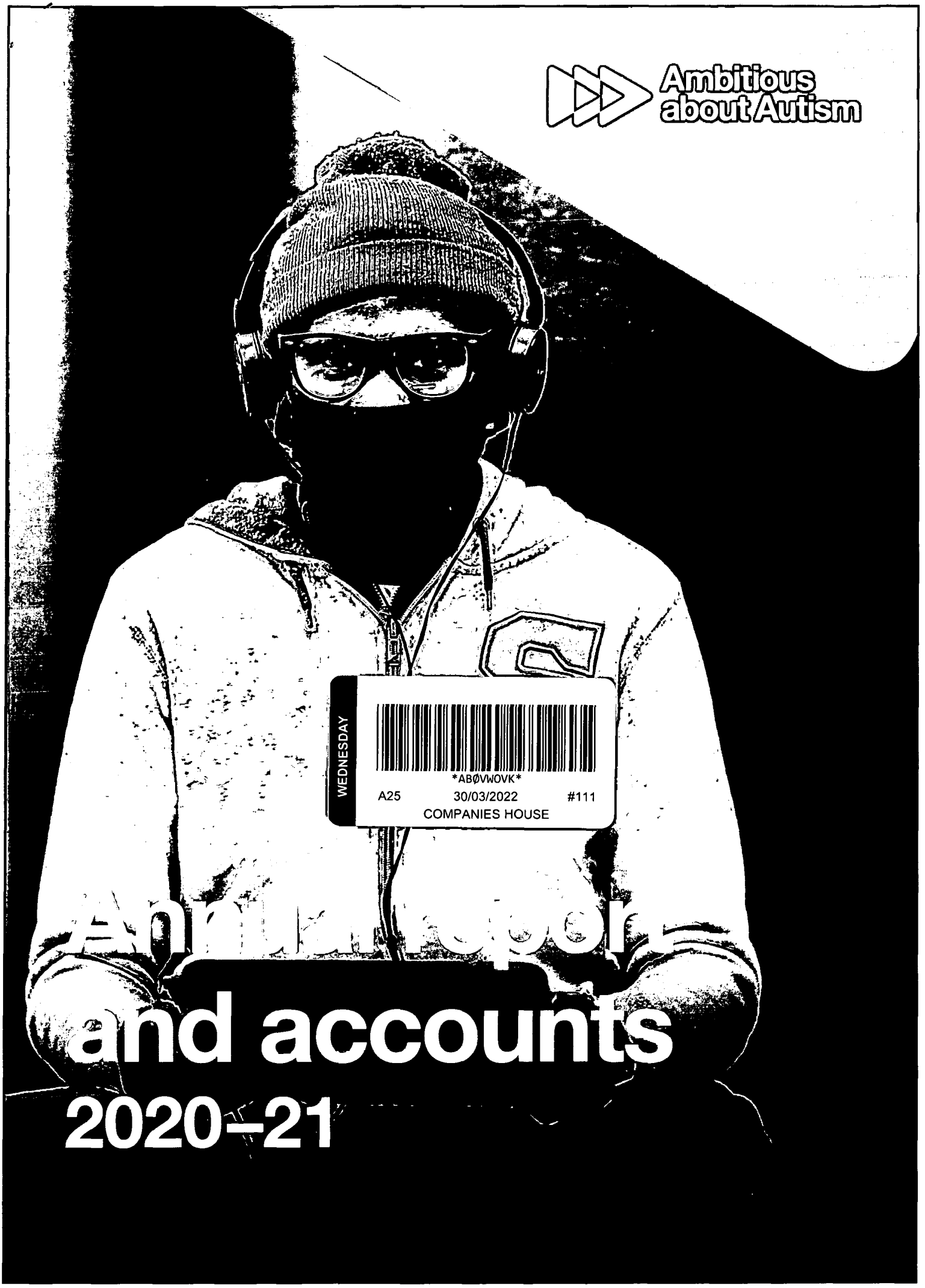
Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust is an exempt charity in England and Wales and a registered company: 08335297.

Published – April 2023

AMBITIOUS ABOUT AUTISM

England & Wales - Charity number 1063184

Accounts


Ambitious about Autism
WEDNESDAY
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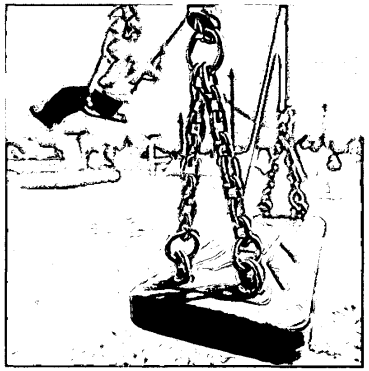
#111
COMPANIES HOUSE
Annual report and accounts
2020–21



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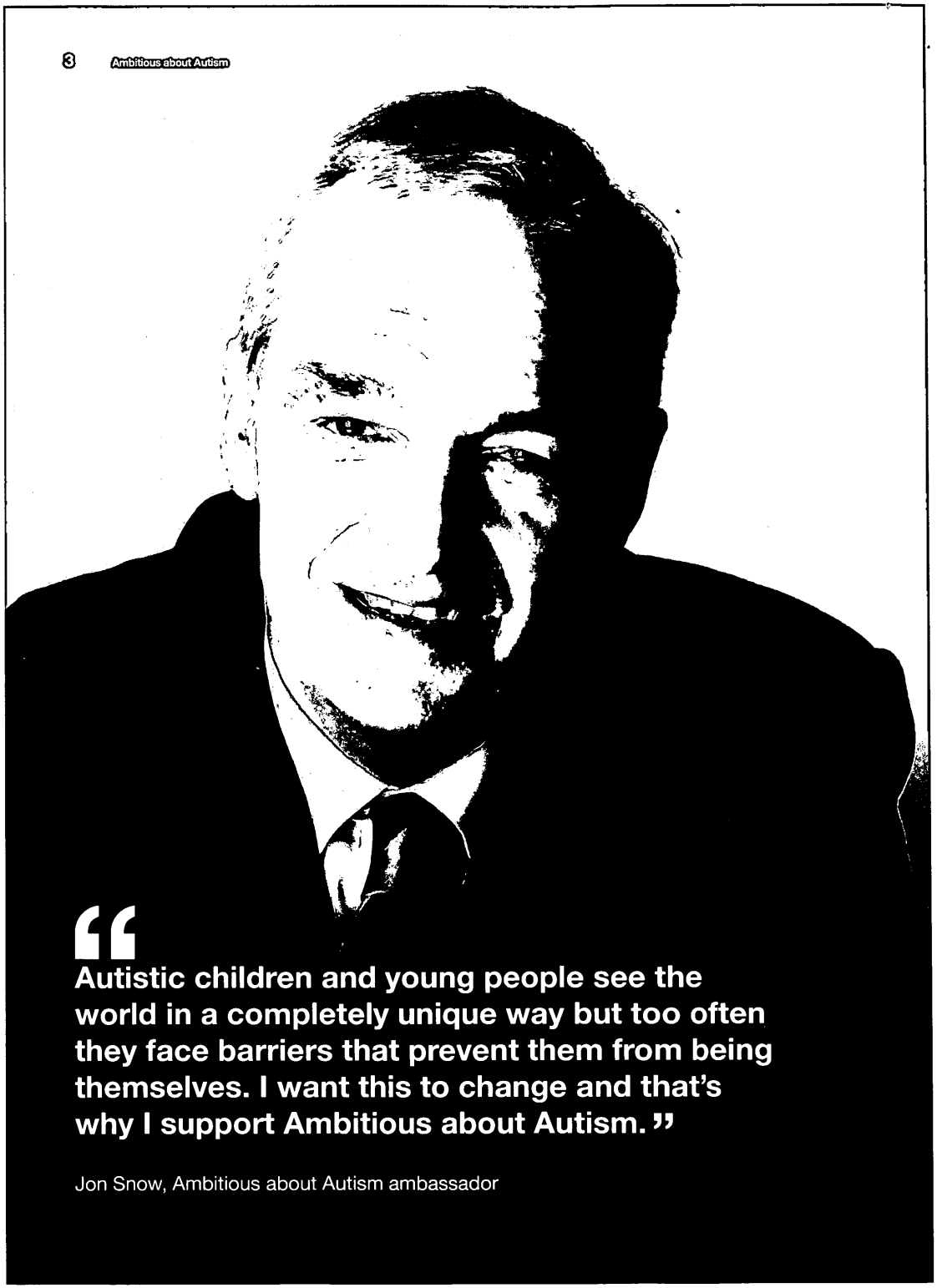


“Autistic children and young people see the world in a completely unique way but too often they face barriers that prevent them from being themselves. I want this to change and that’s why I support Ambitious about Autism.”

Jon Snow, Ambitious about Autism ambassador

Our vision, mission and values

Ambitious about Autism is the national charity standing with autistic children and young people.

We believe every autistic child and young person has the right to be themselves and realise their ambitions.

We started as one school and have become a movement for change. We champion rights, campaign for change and create opportunities.

Our purpose

We help autistic children and young people to be themselves.

Our vision

Our vision is for a future where every autistic child and young person can be themselves and realise their ambitions.

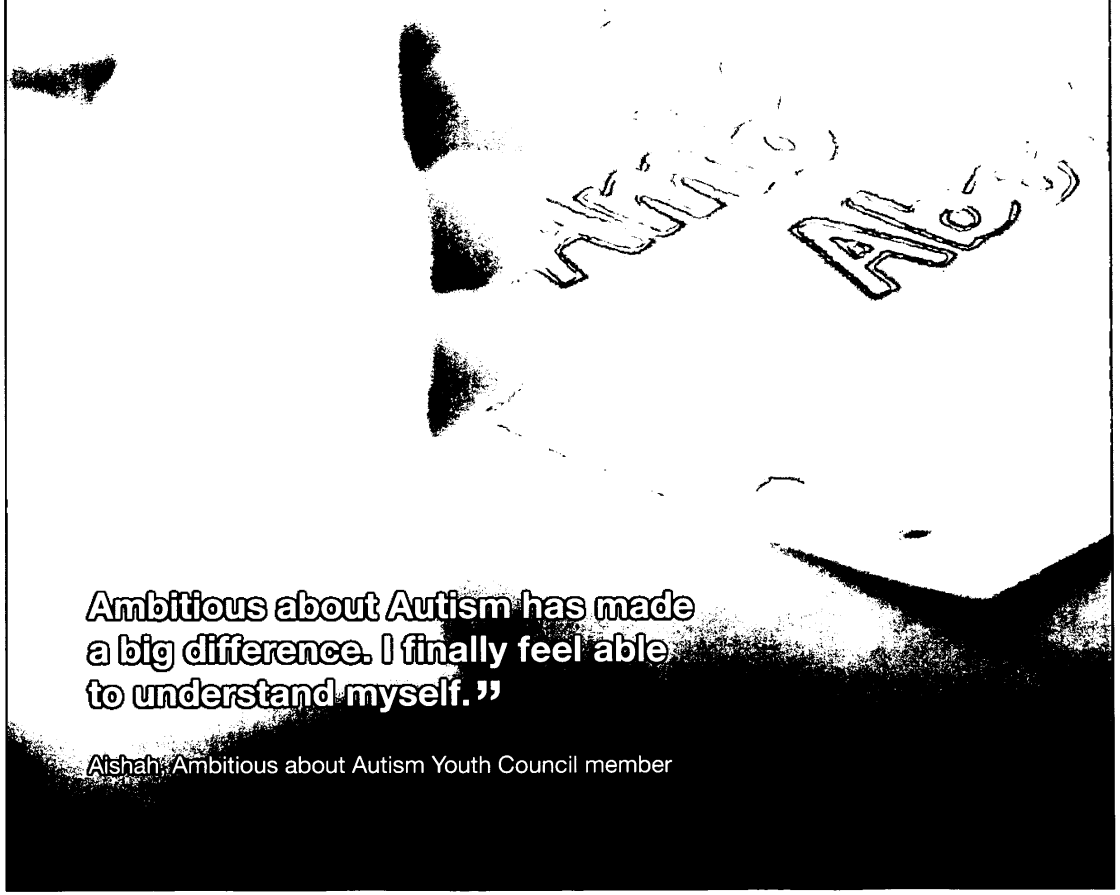
Our mission

We stand with autistic children and young people, champion their rights and create opportunities.

Our values

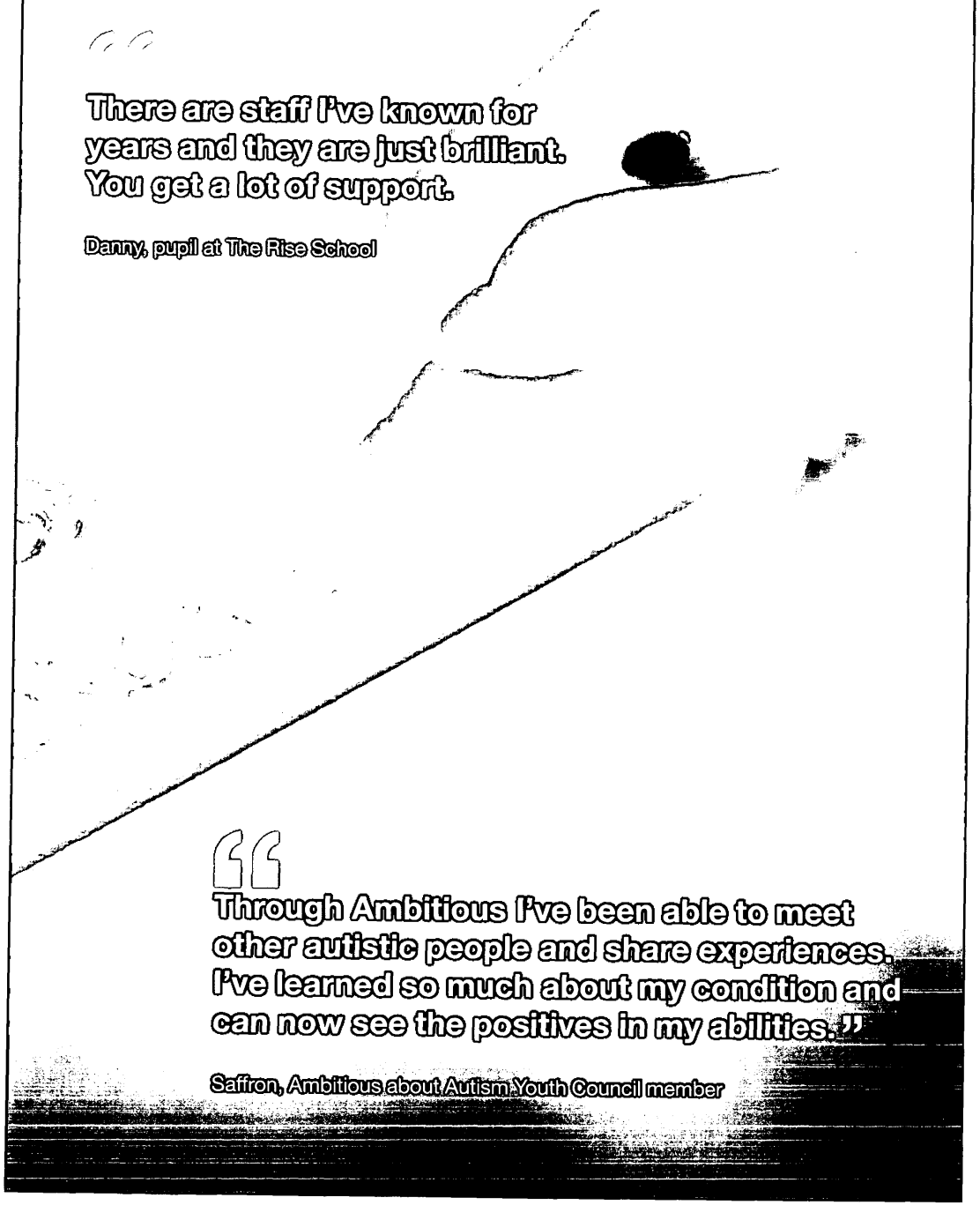
Autistic children and young people are at the heart of everything that we do.

Standing with autistic children and young people



Ambitious about Autism has made a big difference. I finally feel able to understand myself."

Aishah, Ambitious about Autism Youth Council member

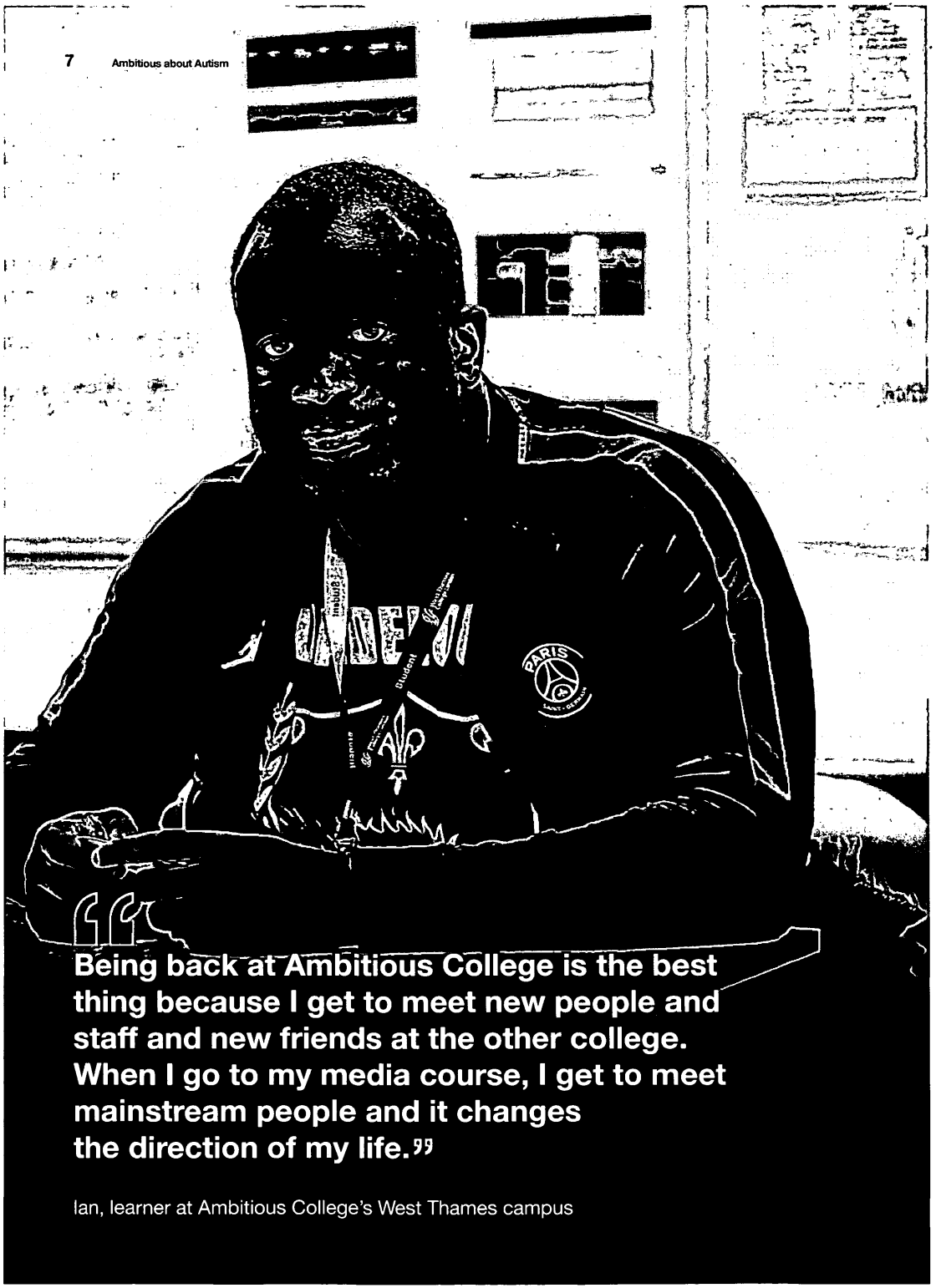


"There are staff I've known for years and they are just brilliant. You get a lot of support."

Danny, pupil at The Rise School

"Through Ambitious I've been able to meet other autistic people and share experiences. I've learned so much about my condition and can now see the positives in my abilities."

Saffron, Ambitious about Autism Youth Council member



“Being back at Ambitious College is the best thing because I get to meet new people and staff and new friends at the other college. When I go to my media course, I get to meet mainstream people and it changes the direction of my life.”

Ian, learner at Ambitious College’s West Thames campus

"I'm definitely coming out of this pandemic a different person, thanks to Ambitious about Autism."

Patrick, Ambitious about Autism Youth Council member

"Employ Autism has helped me to prepare for any role that I might want to do in the future."

Isobel, Employ Autism intern

"TreeHouse School is helping me build my dreams."

Sotiris, pupil at TreeHouse School

Welcome from the Chief Executive and the Chair of Trustees

This was another turbulent year for autistic children and young people and their families, as the coronavirus pandemic continued to disrupt lives and create isolation and hardship.

At the beginning of 2021 we entered a new national lockdown: yet another crushing upheaval for autistic children and young people, who had already been so deeply affected by the coronavirus crisis.

Through our TreeHouse School, The Rise School and Ambitious College, we directly provided specialist education and support for families throughout this challenging period and beyond.

Nationally, we provided vital online peer support to isolated young people across the UK and we continued to develop Employ Autism, a programme aimed at securing better employment opportunities for autistic candidates.

None of these achievements would have been possible without our dedicated and committed staff members, supporters and partners.

In a rapidly changing situation, we responded nimbly to ensure that we could target our support at the right time. Following the end of our Ambitious Futures 2020 strategy, we launched our new one-year strategy to focus our support during the coronavirus pandemic. It places autistic children and young people firmly at the heart of all we do.

In addition to building on our expertise in education, employment and youth participation, our strategic plan responded to the increased need for support in health and wellbeing, families and relationships and local communities, particularly in these exceptional times.

We continued to deliver this support despite a challenging economic environment and the cancellation of key fundraising events.

We responded creatively and looked for innovative new ways to generate vital funds, which led to our hugely successful Be Ambitious fundraising campaign.

We were delighted to be selected as Marsh McLennan's UK strategic charity partner for 2021–23 and built innovative corporate partnerships with many organisations raising vital funds, as well as championing neurodiversity within the workplace.

We know from our work and from research we commissioned that the impact of the pandemic will be deep and long lasting, affecting autistic children and young people's mental health, wellbeing and future aspirations for many years to come.

Our mission is to stand with autistic children and young people, champion their rights and create opportunities. We can do this only thanks to you: our wonderful children and young people, parents and carers, and generous partners, supporters and staff. Your ongoing support throughout this challenging time helps autistic children and young people be themselves and realise their ambitions.

Jolanta Lasota
Chief Executive

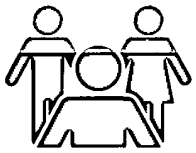
Neil Goulden
Chair of Trustees

“I just want to be my true self.”

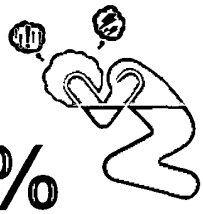
Emily, 19

Why we're needed

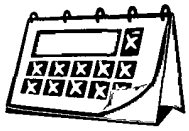
Autistic children and young people face enormous challenges in all areas of their lives.



Two-thirds
of autistic people and their families didn't receive any support during lockdown.[1]



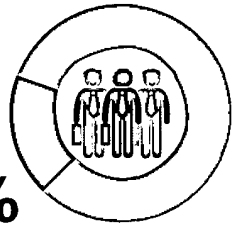
63%
of autistic young people say their mental health is worse following the pandemic.[2]



70%
of under-18s are waiting longer than the NHS 13-week deadline for an autism diagnosis.[3]

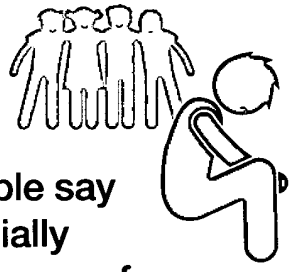
80%
of parents have lost sleep worrying about their child's school placement.[4]

Fewer than
half
of autistic children and young people say they are happy at school.[5]



Just
21.7%
of autistic people are in full or part-time employment, the lowest rate of all disabled groups.[6]

70% of autistic young people fear discrimination if they disclose to employers that they are autistic.[7]



79%
autistic people say they are socially isolated because of a lack of understanding.[8]

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Autistic children and young people are at the heart of all that we do.

Our strategic plan

In 2019, we started developing our new strategy. We engaged with autistic young people, parents and carers, partners and our staff to help shape our plans.

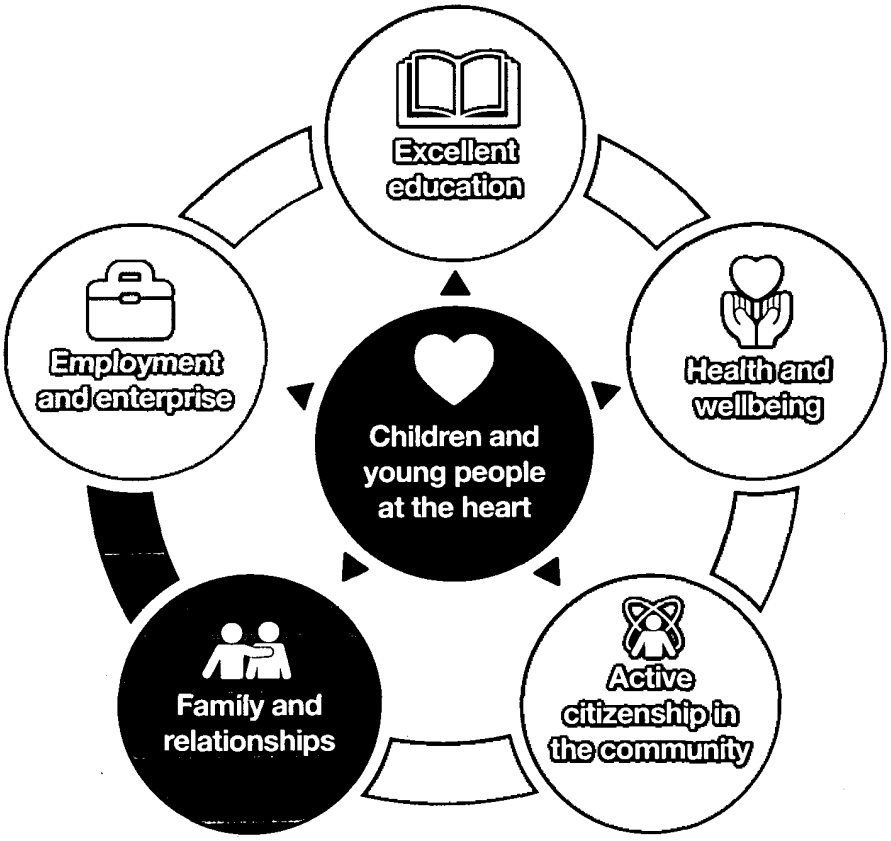
Following the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic, and in the face of a rapidly changing situation, we reacted quickly and adapted our strategic plans.

We developed a responsive one-year strategy for 2020–21 to target our support for autistic children and young people during the pandemic.

Ensuring autistic children and young people are at the heart of all we do, we focused our work on five key objectives.

This report outlines our progress in achieving these five strategic objectives.

Our strategic objectives



The health and wellbeing of our pupils, learners and staff was our key priority.

Excellent education

This year the coronavirus pandemic continued to disrupt the lives of autistic children and young people, but our education settings were resilient and agile, adapting to meet the changing circumstances. The health and wellbeing of our pupils, learners and staff was our key priority during these challenging times.

The new academic year began with face-to-face learning for pupils at TreeHouse School and The Rise School and learners at Ambitious College. Our staff worked tirelessly to prepare our settings for the safe return of young people and staff, ensuring social distancing could be practised as much as possible.

In January 2021, we once again faced a national lockdown and many of our pupils and learners returned to virtual, home-based learning, except for the most vulnerable and those who were children of key workers.

From March 2021, in line with the government's four-step roadmap out of the lockdown, we welcomed more pupils and learners back to our settings and also set up staff testing centres.

As hopeful reports about coronavirus vaccines were announced, we lobbied for autistic people with learning disabilities and those who support them to be included in the priority group for vaccination. After this was confirmed, we worked with families to support young people with learning disabilities in our settings to receive vaccinations.

We also produced **easy read guides** and visual stories about the coronavirus vaccines to offer further support to families across the UK.

Despite the challenges, there have been incredible successes across our settings this year.

Talia's story

When Talia* joined Treehouse School, she found it challenging to communicate her wants and needs and to follow teachers' instructions.

The trans-disciplinary team at TreeHouse School worked with Talia and her parents to develop strategies to help her with her overall school experience. They began with a few simple steps, such as taking regular breaks, providing a varied and motivating timetable for Talia and giving her additional tasks to help support her to recognise and manage her emotions.

Talia spent time building rapport and trust with new teachers, as well as exploring fun and engaging activities and learning through play and sensory experiences.

With support from a speech and language therapist, Talia also learned to increase her use of Makaton, paired with verbal language and visuals, to develop her communication skills. Makaton is a language that uses signs, symbols and speech to help autistic people who are minimally verbal or experience difficulty in expressing themselves verbally.

Talia now spends more time in class engaging in work-related learning activities for longer periods of time and with several different teachers. She has made good progress, particularly with her use of Makaton, and her vocabulary has also expanded. She continues to participate in a variety of fun and engaging activities within the pre-formal curriculum.

*Name has been changed

TreeHouse School

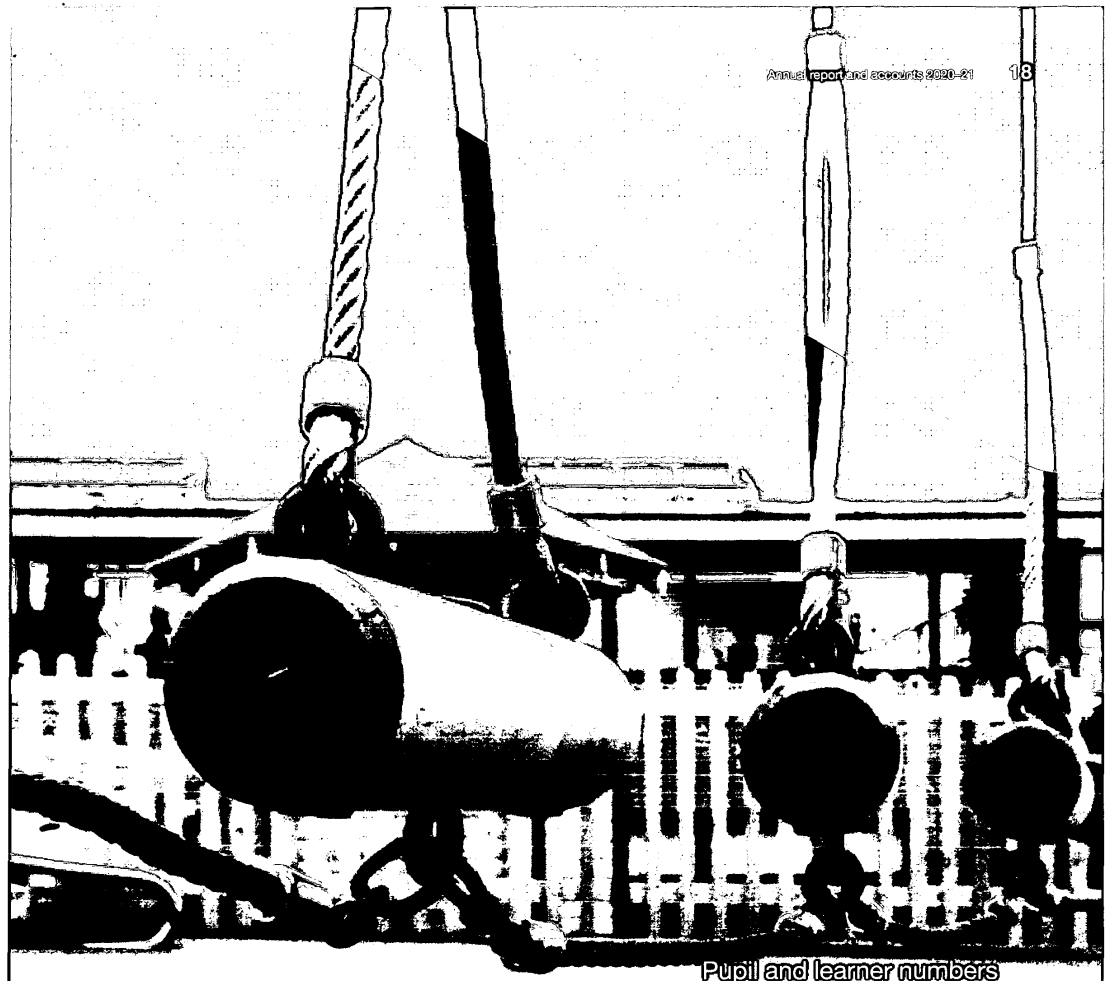
In March 2021, TreeHouse School was shortlisted in two categories in the Music & Drama Education Awards 2021: our music department in the Outstanding School Music Department category, and our ukulele project, led by our Head of Performing Arts, in the Excellence in SEND (Music & Drama) category.

Thanks to the generosity of funders, pupils also benefited from some exciting new renovations to the school's site this year.

In February 2021, TreeHouse School's secondary playground was renovated to include a sensory walkway with totem poles, bug hotels, an amphitheatre and multisensory surface. The primary play area was also enhanced with the addition of mud kitchen zones.

In August 2021, the two former training kitchens in the secondary area were transformed into eight high-spec life skills kitchens.

TreeHouse School



Pupil and learner numbers at the end of August 2021.

TreeHouse School

97 pupils

Ambitious College

90 learners

The Rise School

121 pupils

The Rise School

The Rise School is a vibrant learning community that equips young people with qualifications and communication, social, emotional and employability skills.

Year 11 pupils at The Rise School celebrated excellent exam results this year, thanks to the hard work of pupils and staff.

Nine pupils gained five or more GCSEs at grade 4 or above and one pupil achieved seven GCSEs. One pupil also received the school's first ever GCSE computer science award, a hugely successful grade 8.

The Rise SCHOOL

Ambitious College

In May 2021, Ambitious College won a prestigious Natspec award for the second year in a row. The award celebrated the innovative strategies that the college had put in place to support learners, and their parents, while some learning was taking place at home. The team championed a combined approach using learning packs, online lessons and resources, resulting in an increase in learners' ICT literacy. The judging panel remarked that Ambitious College had used the pandemic as an opportunity for innovation and positivity, ensuring that no learner would be left behind.

Ambitious College

AJ's story

AJ has been a pupil at The Rise School since he was in year 7 and is now in year 10. Before his autism diagnosis, AJ went to a mainstream primary school where he encountered many challenges due to the teaching staff not understanding his needs.

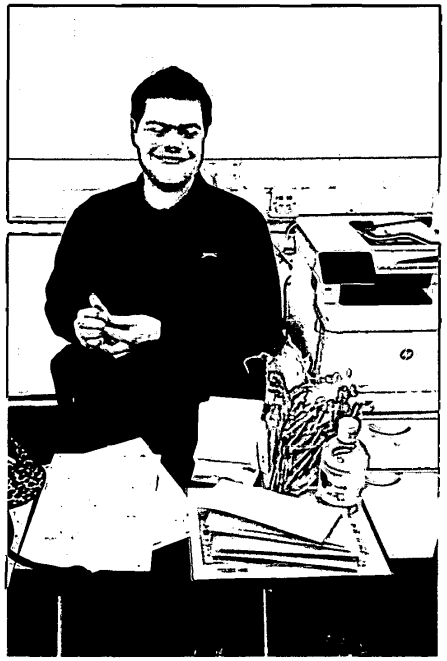
The Rise School has made a huge difference to both AJ's education and wellbeing. His mum Sarah said: **"He is much happier, and the environment has helped massively. He's not very affectionate, but it feels like a dark cloud has been lifted and he now gives me a hug and tells me that he loves me."**

Sarah feels reassured that AJ is being supported and likes that the school understands his needs. He loves learning about history, Japan and food technology, and even likes to cook food at home now for his family. He is also taking his GCSE in computer science.

As a parent, Sarah really appreciates the communication between the school staff and her. She said: **"I am supported by the school and I'm not afraid to ask for advice when I need it. AJ going to The Rise School has been completely life changing for him and the family. I cannot fault them."**

Supported Internships

Ambitious College offers supported internships for young people who want to work in competitive employment. The internships take place at Whittington Hospital in north London and form part of the interns' education, equipping young people with special educational needs and disabilities with the skills needed for adulthood and employment.



Angus's story

When Angus started his internship, he had little work experience and was incredibly anxious after spending months learning online from home during the first lockdown. As a person who thrives on predictability, he took a while to settle into his new routine.

Since joining the programme, Angus has completed three work rotations: two at Whittington Hospital and one at Tottenham Foodbank, where he worked as a volunteer through the second national lockdown. When internships were restarted at the hospital site in April, Angus worked as a groundsperson and was responsible for maintaining outdoor public spaces and disposing of waste. He worked hard with his job coach to develop strategies to manage his anxiety at work as well as to build his social communication skills.

Angus is currently working in the health records department as an assistant and is responsible for collecting files ready for clinics. He learned the job and the number system incredibly quickly and has impressed the team with his speed and accuracy, even picking up mistakes made by others. Angus has also learned how to use his watch so he can manage his lunch and break times independently, something he relied on staff support for at the start of the internship.

Angus is thriving in his new department and is enjoying his working week. He has received excellent feedback from his colleagues and manager and is currently looking for paid employment in the health records department at Whittington Hospital or in a similar environment elsewhere.

Angus's mentor, George, said: "He has a great memory and always spots mistakes. Angus has learned the two hardest parts of the job as you have to be very accurate and precise."

Ambitious Approach

The Ambitious Approach is our model of education practice, which focuses on improving the quality of life of autistic young people while they are in education and ensuring that this quality of life continues into adulthood. We want to prepare children and young people for happy and fulfilling lives and, while doing so, afford them dignity, respect and compassion.

In September 2020, we launched our Ambitious Approach model within our services and externally. We focused our attention on ensuring that we have enabling environments across all our education settings.

We also identified two external settings, a school and a specialist college, to pilot and evaluate our Ambitious Approach. The pilot project began in September 2021 and will end in July 2022, when we will report on the project's impact.

Excellent induction, training and professional development are really important to us and so we invested in training on attachment and trauma for all staff. We also developed a robust framework to ensure that staff have the necessary skills and confidence to support autistic children and young people.

National work

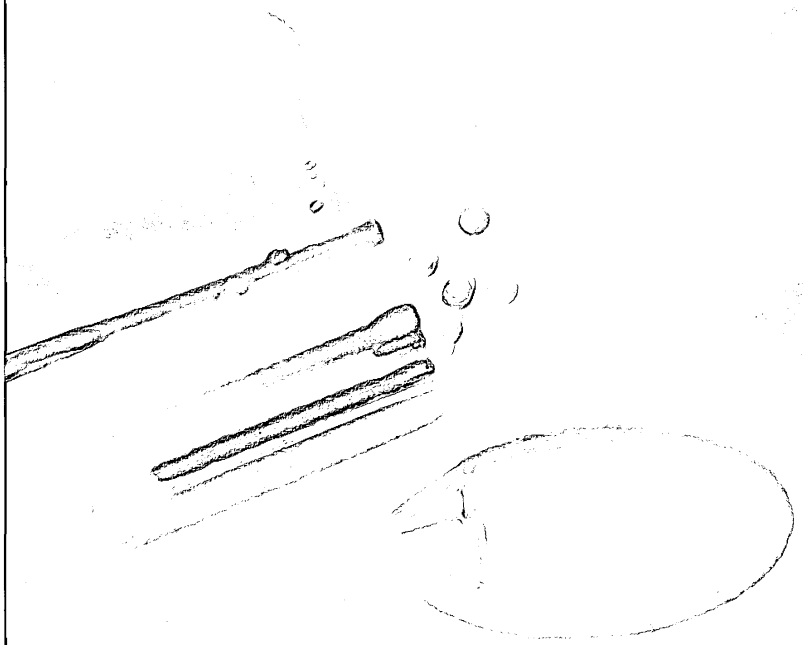
In December 2020, we hosted a panel comprising autistic young researchers, parents and teachers to discuss the impact of the Children and Families Act 2014 on outcomes for SEND (special educational needs and disabilities) learners aged 16 and over. This was based on research conducted by the Centre for Research in Autism Education at UCL, co-produced with autistic young people.

We met then children's minister at the time, Vicky Ford MP, in spring 2021 to discuss our concerns about the government's proposed new use of language regarding exclusions. We were pleased that following our meeting and through our work with the Special Educational Consortium, the minister reconsidered the use of the outdated and punitive term 'expulsion' to describe school exclusions.

With the **Autism Education Trust** (a not-for-profit programme led by Ambitious about Autism and the National Autistic Society) we launched resources to promote autism-inclusive attitudes in schools.

This year, our training and consultancy team engaged with 1,842 education and careers professionals, of whom 97% reported increased knowledge and skills and 94% reported increased confidence.

We relaunched the TreeHouse School and Ambitious College websites in 2021 to make them more accessible.



Jack's story

Jack,* a learner at Ambitious College, completed a work experience placement in a cafe. He said that he wanted to be rewarded financially for his work and wanted more control and independence when it came to decision-making.

To support this, his employment specialist at Ambitious College worked with Jack on entrepreneurship. Jack was encouraged to devise his own business and the team ordered a barista coffee machine so that it could be run within the college.

With support, Jack then completed the relevant tasks required of a start-up business owner, including designing a logo, devising a menu, writing a business plan, ordering products and practising with equipment.

As Jack's entrepreneurial skills have continued to grow, he has become more confident and independent, has improved his customer service skills and has shown a clear passion for advertising and promotion. He continues to run his coffee shop at Ambitious College.

*Name has been changed

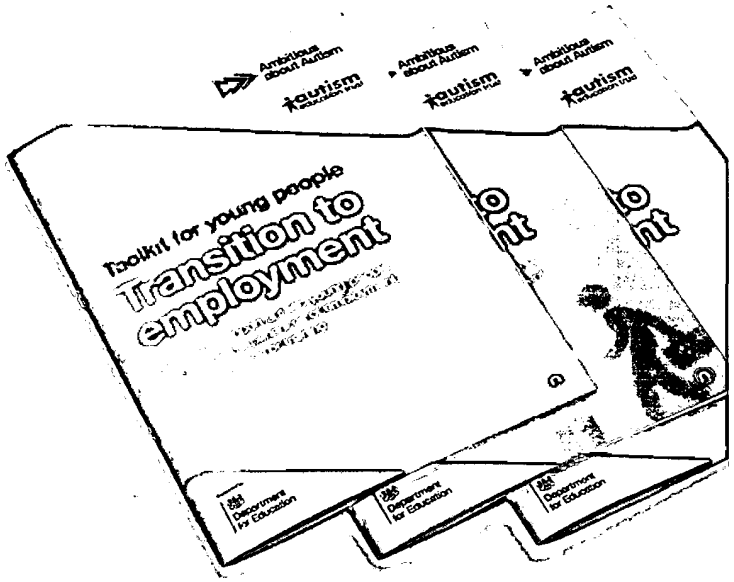
Employment and enterprise

Transition to Employment toolkit

Thanks to funding from the Autism Education Trust, in June 2021 we launched a new toolkit to support autistic young people into employment.

The **Transition to Employment toolkit** has been developed to support those working with autistic young people to understand their needs and help them on to the job ladder, or into further training or education. It includes resources for employers, careers professionals and autistic young people.

The toolkit includes templates to help careers professionals understand young people's skills, experience, career goals and ambitions; tips to help young people prepare for job interviews; and information to support employers working with autistic young people. All the resources, which may be edited and adapted, are free to download from Ambitious about Autism's website.



By 31 August 2021, just three months after it was launched, the toolkit had been downloaded 2,892 times.

Employ Autism

Enabled by the generosity and vision of programme partners including Pears Foundation, Marsh McLennan, the Civil Service and others, Employ Autism has established partnership networks between employers and educators across the nation. Over the last year, nearly 300 autistic young people have undertaken paid internships, improving their skills and confidence.

Employ Autism Higher Education Network

Ambitious about Autism worked in partnership with Santander Universities UK to create an employability programme for autistic students and graduates. The Employ Autism Higher Education Network was launched in October 2020, with an endorsement from Justin Tomlinson MP, then minister for disabled people, health and work.

Through the programme, autistic students at 17 universities across the UK can access paid internships and tailored careers support and advice. Professionals working with them receive training to understand their needs and help them identify roles that match their skills and career goals.

Since the programme began, we have delivered training to more than 130 employers hosting internships as well as 500 higher education professionals. Through the partnership, autistic young people took part in 60 work experience placements with 54 employers in summer 2021.

Civil Service partnership

We have a successful record in supporting autistic young people to access paid work experience through our award-winning Autism Exchange programme.

Over the last six years, we have developed extensive experience in providing careers advice and work experience to young people, as well as training for employers.

This year our bid for the Civil Service autism internship programme was successful, resulting in a two-year contract to deliver internships for 120 young people.

In July 2021, 85 autistic young people – a record-breaking number – took part in three-week-long paid internships in 20 government departments across the UK, including the Cabinet Office, the Department for Education and the Department of Health and Social Care.

We also worked with a host of other partners this year, including m/Six, BNP Paribas, Atos, Tech Mahindra, Michael Page and Compass Group, to deliver paid internship opportunities.

Emily's story

"The transition from education to work was daunting as I didn't know what to expect or what I might be capable of.

"I am interested in a career where I can make an impact on others' lives so when I learned about the Civil Service Autism Exchange internship programme, I thought it would be a great opportunity to gain valuable work experience in a supported situation; this proved true.

"The internship was a great first experience of the world of work. It was extremely enjoyable, and proved invaluable in building my confidence and resilience. I went from being nervous about arranging meetings to organising and conducting them myself and giving a presentation.

"I've really valued the opportunity to experience the day-to-day life of a civil servant and to make a positive contribution. The opportunity gave me an idea of what reasonable adjustments I can ask for, a question that I always found hard to answer on job applications. Everybody I interacted with was extremely welcoming, accepting and accommodating. I'm so grateful that the Autism Exchange programme exists."

Emily studied sociology at the University of Surrey and graduated in 2020.

We are proud of our pioneering approach.

Family and relationships

Support for autistic young people and their families reduced substantially during the pandemic, or stopped, leaving many feeling even more vulnerable and isolated than ever before.

During Children's Mental Health Week in February 2021, we published **new research** investigating families' experiences during the pandemic. Our findings were based on a survey of over 2,000 autistic children and young people and their parents.

Parents reported feeling 'overwhelmed' and 'alone' as support services were withdrawn. The research also highlighted the impact of the pandemic on autistic children and young people's mental health. Nearly two-thirds (63%) said that their mental health was worse than before the outbreak of the pandemic.

Three-quarters of respondents (75%) said they felt more anxious since the pandemic and over half described feeling stressed (56%) and overwhelmed (54%) during the pandemic.

We joined a coalition of charities supporting the National Autistic Society's Left Stranded campaign, which called for a government action plan to help autistic children and young people and their families recover from the pandemic.

Information and support

Being connected to others is vital, and autistic young people and their families have told us they want uplifting but realistic information tailored to them.

This year we created free **online resources to support families**, including easy read guides and visual stories about receiving a coronavirus vaccine. We also published information to support families as lockdown restrictions were lifted.

Over the past year, our website had almost one million page views and over 3,500 people viewed our coronavirus resources.

After visiting our website, 83% of parents and carers felt they had better knowledge and skills to support their autistic child or young person and 84% felt more confident supporting their autistic child or young person.

Learner and family support

Our Learner and Family Support team helps the parents and carers of autistic children and young people attending our education settings throughout their journey with us.

At the start of the pandemic, we expanded our service to offer direct support to families of autistic pupils and learners. The service provided a vital source of support during the coronavirus pandemic, ranging from the delivery of food parcels to liaising with local authorities and facilitating access to urgent health care.

This year the team provided tailored support to more than 50 parents and carers in our education settings. They also hosted online transition events for many parents and carers and bespoke training sessions for staff across our settings.

Melissa's story

Melissa* progressed from Ambitious College to a supported living provider with help and guidance from the Learner and Family Support team.

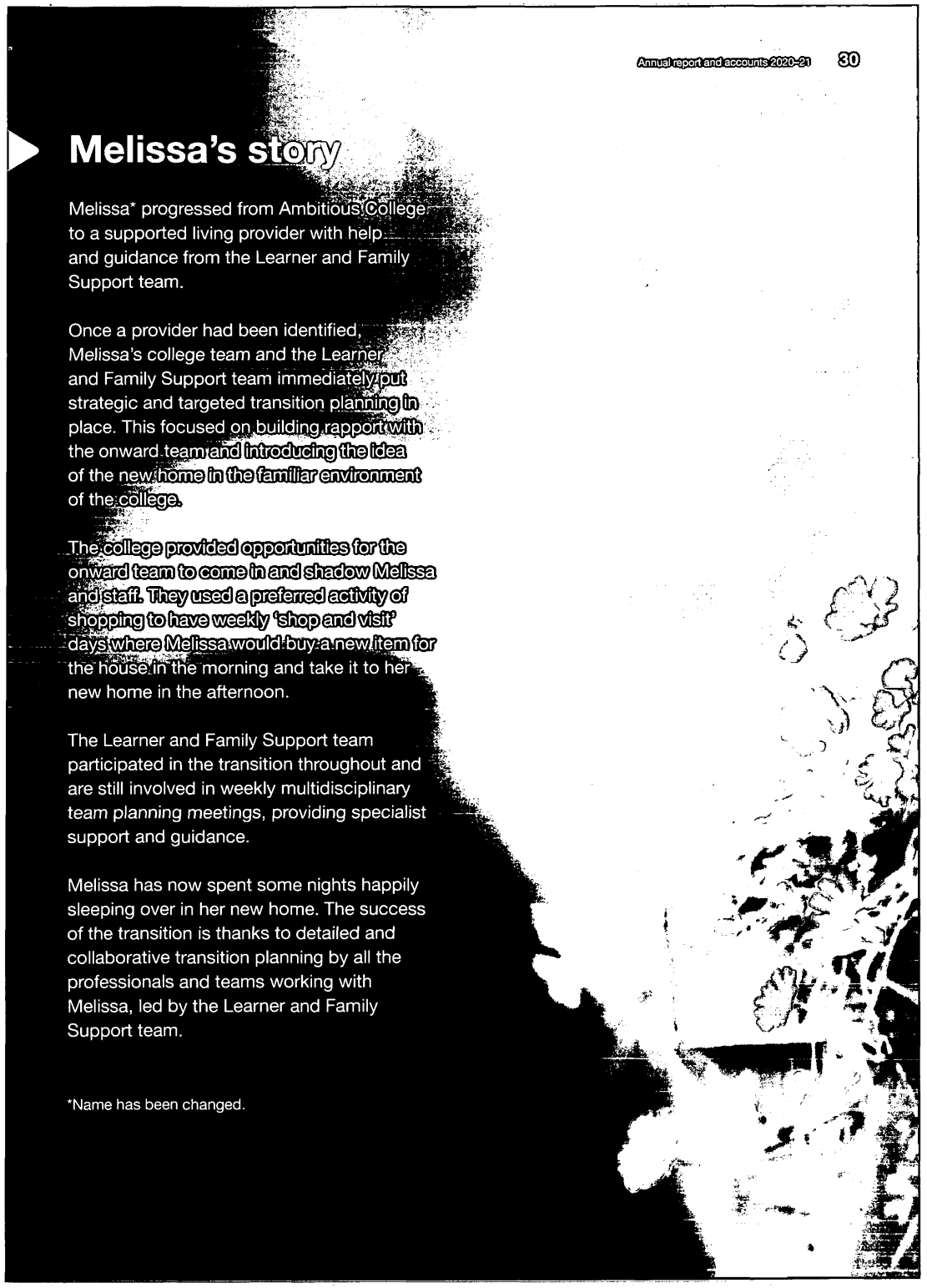
Once a provider had been identified, Melissa's college team and the Learner and Family Support team immediately put strategic and targeted transition planning in place. This focused on building rapport with the onward team and introducing the idea of the new home in the familiar environment of the college.

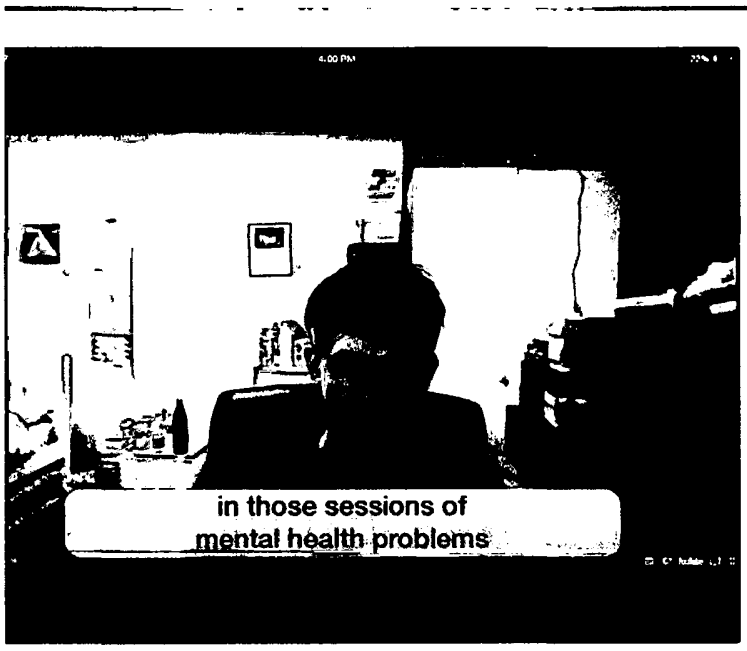
The college provided opportunities for the onward team to come in and shadow Melissa and staff. They used a preferred activity of shopping to have weekly 'shop and visit' days where Melissa would buy a new item for the house in the morning and take it to her new home in the afternoon.

The Learner and Family Support team participated in the transition throughout and are still involved in weekly multidisciplinary team planning meetings, providing specialist support and guidance.

Melissa has now spent some nights happily sleeping over in her new home. The success of the transition is thanks to detailed and collaborative transition planning by all the professionals and teams working with Melissa, led by the Learner and Family Support team.

*Name has been changed.





Together with autistic young people we tackle health inequalities.

Health and wellbeing

We work to make sure that autistic children and young people have timely access to support and care that will enable good physical and mental health and wellbeing.

This year, we ran online webinars for professionals who work with autistic young people to increase their understanding of autism, mental health and wellbeing.

These webinars were co-produced and co-delivered with young people from our Ambitious Youth Network. During 2020–21, we engaged with 1,811 health and social care professionals, of whom 93% reported increased knowledge to support autistic young people.

We also worked with NHS England to support decisions about autism training programmes for inpatient facilities. Two autistic young people from the Ambitious Youth Network, who had experience of inpatient facilities, were involved in decision-making for the Health Education England tendering process in relation to an autism train-the-trainer programme for inpatient services.

Post-diagnosis resources

Young people from our Ambitious Youth Network embarked on a project to tackle the lack of peer-led advice and support available for young people going through the autism diagnosis process.

In August 2021, we published a **series of new videos and blogs** in which they talked about what it felt like to be diagnosed – some as children, some as teenagers and others as young adults.

Currently, 70% of under-18s are waiting longer than the NHS 13-week target for a medical diagnosis for autism; the average waiting time is 352 days.

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (Nice) guidelines on autism recommend a follow-up appointment within six weeks of a diagnosis, a personalised autism plan and a key worker to support the individual. However, research undertaken by Ambitious about Autism revealed that this is not often the case: many autistic people are given only very basic support, such as a leaflet or links to further online reading.

The Ambitious Youth Network's free resources give other autistic young people much-needed access to relatable advice from their peers.

Bella's story

"At the age of 15, I was sitting in a dingy room in the mental health unit I had been admitted to five months earlier, when my psychiatrist told me that I was autistic. How I was told of my autism diagnosis was so far from how I needed to have been told that I still to this day feel the same punch in my stomach when I think how those words hit me.

"It was never a case of being positive or looking at the strengths of an autistic mind. Rather it was a life sentence, a disability, something 'wrong' with me. But most of all it was a relief for the professionals involved in my care because they could finally give me an answer to send me on my way with.

"When I was discharged from hospital, my parents were given a place on a six-week parenting course. It helped them to understand some of my behaviours and anxieties, but it didn't change the fact they still had to face a harsh reality: parenting an autistic, mentally ill teenager and supporting them to somehow reintegrate into society.

"The psychiatrist will never know of the damage that the approach he took in disclosing my diagnosis caused to my already vulnerable mental health. He will never know of the resentment and embarrassment I felt towards myself as a result of a lack of post diagnostic support.

"Post-diagnostic support shouldn't just be leaflets or websites. It should be therapy and a safe space to explore your life before and after diagnosis. It shouldn't be professionals defining your future or self-worth based on the language they use to describe being neurodiverse. Ultimately, post diagnostic support should be a given, a right and as unique as each autistic individual."

Bella is a member of the Ambitious Youth Network.

Active citizenship in the community

Autistic children and young people are at the heart of all our work and this year, through our co-production with them, we influenced policy and practice nationally.

Nine autistic young people met Justin Tomlinson MP, minister for disabled people at the time, to discuss the Department for Work and Pensions' health and disability green paper and national strategy for disabled people. He was very engaged and spent 90 minutes with the young people to hear their views. Feedback from 12 youth patrons also informed the new children's commissioner for England's strategy development.

We also worked with autistic young people and parents and carers on a project with the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) and O2. We produced **new online safety tips**, advice and activities specifically for parents and carers of children with special educational needs and disabilities for their online safety hub.

We continued to work with young people to co-create content for our website, including information about autism diagnosis for girls, eating disorders and coping with exam cancellations.

Our growing Ambitious Youth Network provides a safe space for autistic young people aged 16 to 25 to be themselves and connect with other.

The voices of our Ambitious Youth Network members were also at the centre of our World Autism Awareness Week campaign in April 2021, when we shared their words of what it means to be autistic.

"When someone asks me about Ambitious about Autism, I don't know where to begin. All I can really say is that the impact it has had on my life has been so vast and significant, it is truly amazing. Before joining the Ambitious Youth Network, I felt very lost as to who I was, and I didn't understand my diagnosis. Connecting with others with autism and the support of the team has helped me grow so much in confidence and begin to build an identity for myself. I understand so much more about how my head works: that really has made such a difference in my outlook on life, my dreams for the future, and my determination to do things and be who I want to be! I have been part of several webinars and events with Ambitious about Autism, which have been incredibly rewarding. Being part of the network has also led to me making friends and meeting some very inspiring individuals who have shaped my view on things."

Saffron is a member of the Ambitious Youth Network.

People with autism are some of the most interesting people you will ever meet, and we should be celebrated.

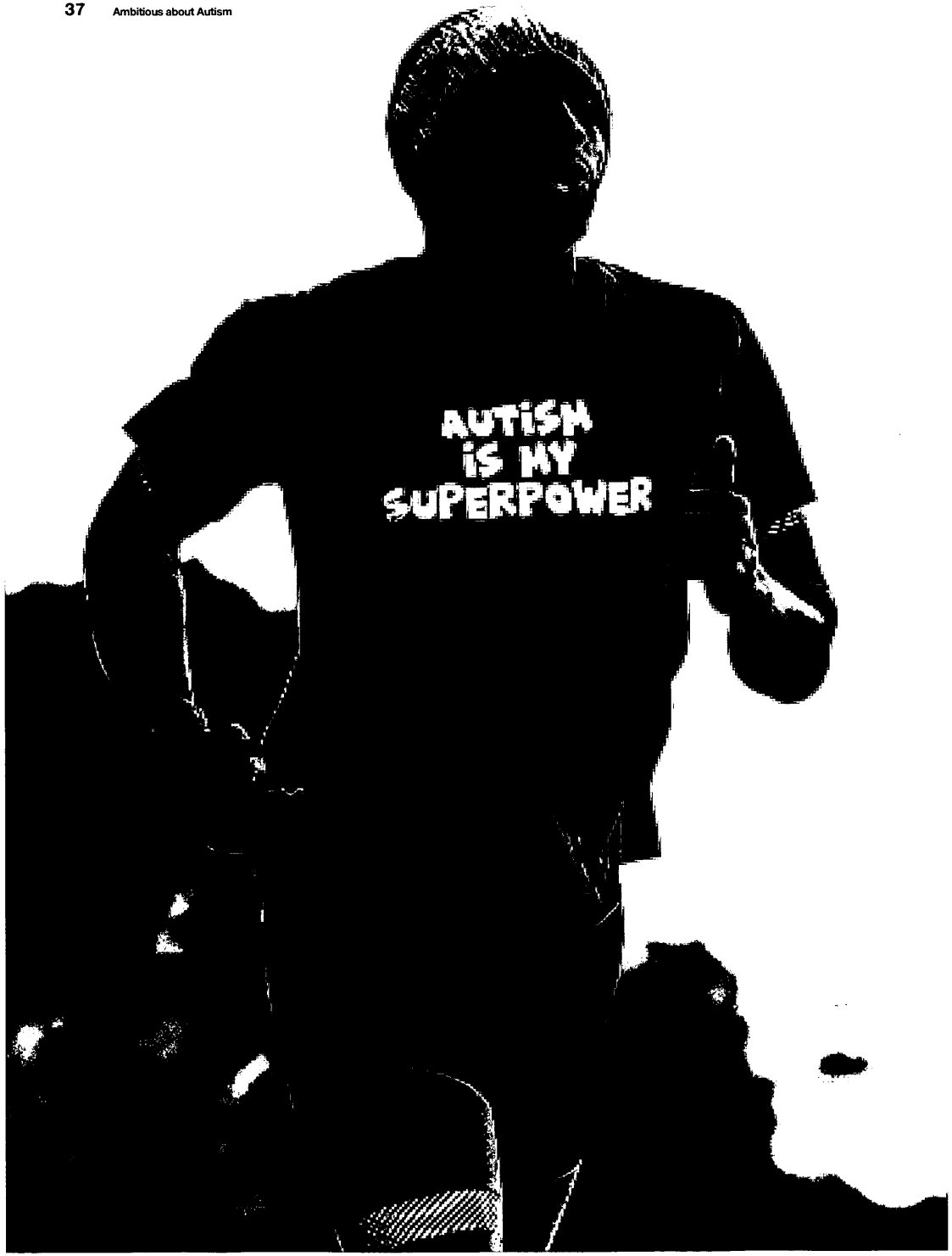
Saffron, Ambitious about Autism Youth Council member

Having autism is not a tragedy. Having autism is not boring. I am not jealous of neurotypical people; I just wish things were fairer for people like me, like the employment and education system.

Josefina, Ambitious about Autism Youth Council member

People should take the time to try and understand autism. They should not assume they know everything about all autistic people.

Emily, Ambitious about Autism Youth Council member


AUTISM
IS MY
SUPERPOWER

This year we appointed autistic Ironman triathlete Sam Holness as our new ambassador.

“Doing sport has helped to reduce my anxiety, and improve my communication skills and health. In addition, being autistic has helped me to focus on my career as a triathlete. I like structure and I never give up. I’m proud to support Ambitious about Autism, which champions other autistic young people like me to reach their ambitions, whatever they might be.”

Our partners and supporters

Ambitious about Autism stands with autistic children and young people so they can be themselves and realise their ambitions. We create opportunities, run services and campaign for change.

The life-changing work we carry out running vital services and influencing national policy and practice simply wouldn't be possible without generous giving from our supporters.

These donations support our organisational structures, including governance and leadership, people and culture, finance, fundraising, marketing and communications, research and evaluation, digital and IT and property. These teams provide the core foundation that enables us to support autistic children and young people, providing them with outstanding education services and a range of exciting projects that champion their voices and improve their lives.

Maintaining these services requires continual investment. And we can do this only by having voluntarily donated income that we are free to spend where we know that it's most needed. We are fortunate and very grateful to have received generous donations this year, from a host of supporters.

This was vital as the coronavirus pandemic continued to create upheaval and instability, leading to the postponement or cancellation of fundraising events, which are our largest source of unrestricted income.

We offer our heartfelt thanks to everyone who donated unrestricted funds to us this year, from our regular individual supporters to our corporate partners and all of you who creatively and enthusiastically raised money for our Be Ambitious fundraising campaign.

We are extremely fortunate to have the support of a committed group of supporters, many of whom have funded our mission to help autistic children and young people over a long period. In a year in which our supporters received many other calls for assistance, we are honoured and grateful to have received unrestricted support to help fund our core work.

We have recognised these supporters in this report. We wish to pay special thanks to four longstanding partners: Pears Foundation, Rapha, TalkTalk, Marsh McLennan and Graham and Susan Tobbell.

This commitment to our core mission supports the lifeblood of our organisation. As the pandemic continued, the unrestricted income helped us stand with autistic children and young people and gave us much-needed financial stability in uncertain times.

Thank you.

Be Ambitious 36-hour fundraising campaign

As we entered 2021, we looked to the digital space for a new fundraising initiative to help us respond to the next stage of the pandemic. This gave rise to Be Ambitious, a 36-hour fundraising drive, which took place on 9 and 10 May 2021.

More than 100 'Ambitious Champions' encouraged their networks to give generously to us during the campaign. We are hugely grateful to our Business Ambassador Network, major donors, trusts and foundations, corporate partners, supporters, patrons, ambassadors, trustees, governors and staff members who made this such a success, raising an amazing £284,000.

Ambitious 220

Our annual 220-mile charity ride with our longstanding partner Rapha Racing Ltds has raised over £1.4m in support of our work since it launched in 2014. Given that major events have still not been allowed because of the coronavirus pandemic, Rapha launched a self-supported and self-guided 220-mile riding challenge to raise funds for our work. Nearly 900 riders from 30 countries took to the open road over one June weekend, clocking up over 192,000 miles. An incredible £114,000 was raised for Ambitious about Autism, and we are so grateful to our ambassador Simon Mottram and everyone at Rapha for their ongoing support of our vital work.

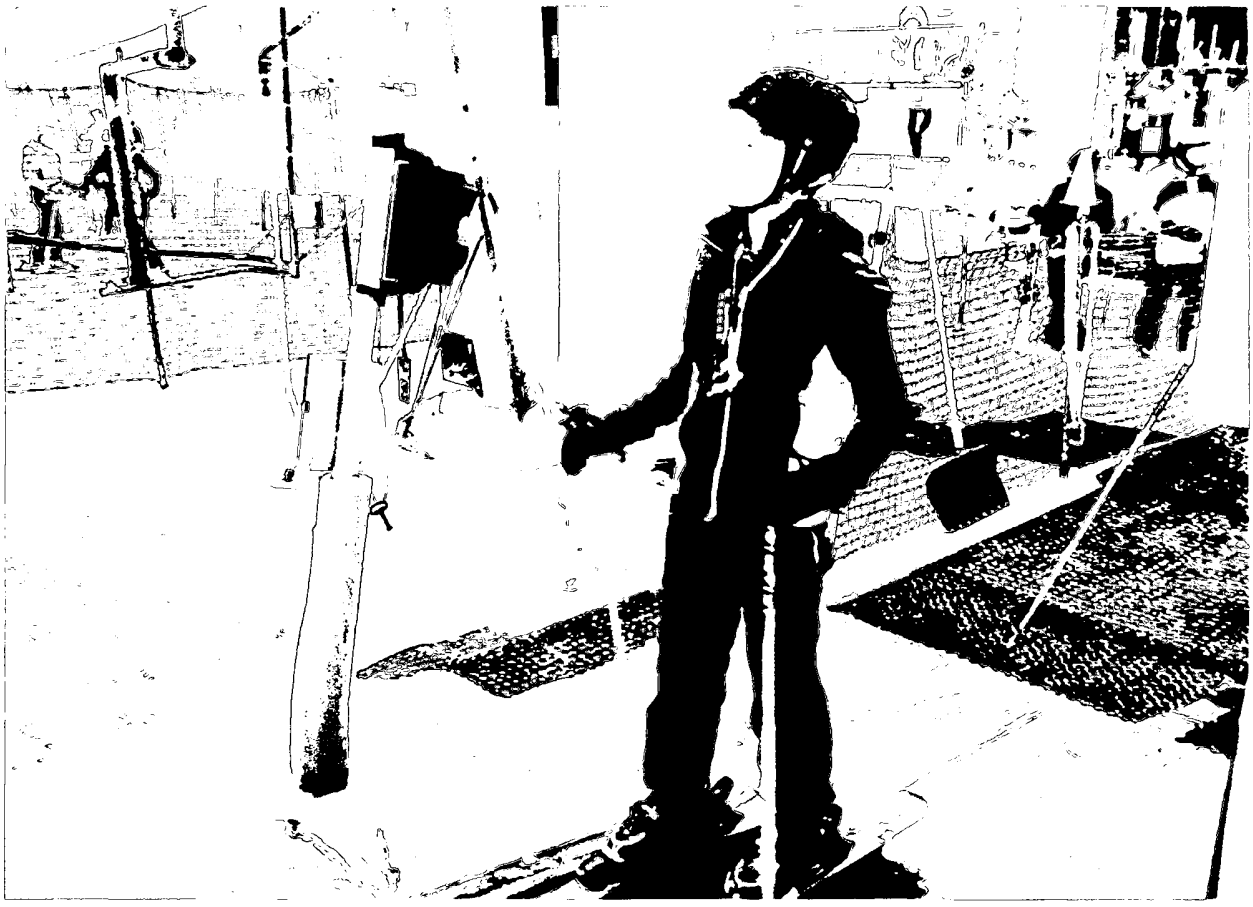
Employ Autism Business Ambassador Network

In 2020, we established our Business Ambassador Network of passionate, like-minded business leaders working collaboratively to raise funds and secure partnerships for our Employ Autism programme. We now have more than 40 members and, with a solid foundation and framework, are excited about the prospect of growing our contributions in 2021–22 and beyond.

Skiing lessons

Thanks to the longstanding support of the Thompson Family Charitable Trust, pupils at TreeHouse School and The Rise School have the chance to learn skiing, run by the wonderful Snowbility charity. Based at the Snow Centre in Hemel Hempstead, Snowbility instructors provide adapted lessons for children and young people with additional needs to help them gain the wide range of benefits that skiing offers. Our pupils have been attending each week for several years, and we have seen incredible progress with cross-body coordination, stamina, confidence, anxiety reduction and bonding with their classmates.

Skiing down the slopes has become a beloved feature of our schools' weekly routine and pupils are so excited to learn skills in an alternative way and be in the cold, snowy environment. The biggest of thanks to the Thompson Family Charitable Trust and the wonderful team at Snowbility.



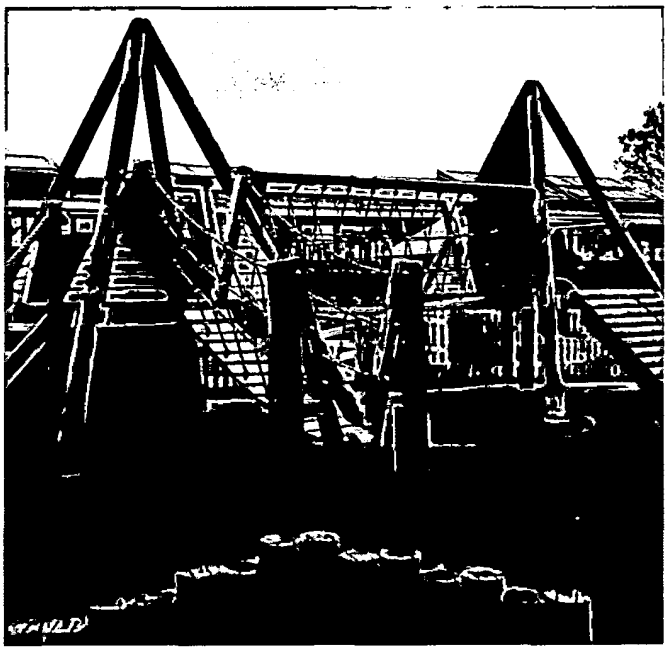
Enhancing our TreeHouse School facilities

With the coronavirus pandemic continuing to impact our daily lives, we are grateful to our key partners for their sustained commitment and generosity, helping us to continue being there for autistic children and young people throughout the year.

An uplifting example of pulling together to make positive changes for autistic children and young people is the refurbishment of our facilities at TreeHouse School. We set out to revamp our primary and secondary playgrounds, the former having been updated over 15 years ago, and in August were delighted to have completed the works on our life skills kitchen. Facilities like this play a critical role in an autistic young person's journey to adulthood, helping them to build independence, prepare and cook their own meals, and develop their confidence.

Without the help of our funding partners, we would not have been able to transform our facilities, helping to enhance the multisensory learning experience, and the mental and physical wellbeing of pupils.

We are delighted to have raised over £420,000 during the lifetime of the project. We are grateful to our lead supporter for this project, the Constable Educational Trust, as well as all the major donors, trusts, foundations and corporate partners who have contributed to the refurbishments, helping to make the new facilities a reality and enhancing the environment for autistic children and young people to thrive and realise their potential.



43 Ambitious about Autism

Marsh McLennan

This year Ambitious about Autism was selected as the new UK charity partner of Marsh McLennan, the world's leading professional services firm in the areas of risk, strategy and people.

UK-based colleagues at Marsh McLennan businesses Marsh, Mercer, Guy Carpenter and Oliver Wyman voted overwhelmingly to choose Ambitious about Autism as the firm's UK strategic charity partner for 2021–23. Through the partnership, Marsh McLennan has committed to become a more autism-confident employer and industry leader in promoting and championing neurodiversity in the workplace.

Since the partnership began in February 2021, Marsh McLennan has galvanised its UK workforce of 12,700 people to raise £110,000 during the first six months of the partnership through colleague fundraising, which has directly supported Ambitious about Autism's Employ Autism programme.

More than 900 Marsh McLennan colleagues also volunteered 5,856 hours of their time, attending sessions such as autism awareness 'lunch and learns' to understand more about diversity and inclusivity in the workplace.

Marsh McLennan is also providing pro bono support to Ambitious about Autism on three projects: business continuity, disaster recovery and project management refinement.

More than 100 Marsh McLennan colleagues with lived experience of autism have played an active role in the partnership and helped guide activities and desired outcomes.

Marsh McLennan is now working hard to develop and improve its own workplace environment, inclusive policies and recruitment practices, and will be hosting five autistic interns in 2021–22.

"This partnership gives us the enormous opportunity to transform the lives of autistic young people across the UK by opening new career paths.

By educating colleagues, creating career paths and engaging in fundraising and volunteering activities, our aim is to drive long-lasting social change."

Chris Lay, Chief Executive of the UK and Ireland region of Marsh

MarshMcLennan

Our strategic partners

Pears Foundation

We are indebted to the Pears Foundation for its unwavering dedication, partnership and generosity towards our work. The foundation is a firm advocate of giving core funding – unrestricted grants or funding for essential costs such as staff posts – and we are delighted to be the recipients of this special funding. As a seed funder for our Employ Autism programme, the foundation also gives us stability, through its renewed, multi-year commitment, and safeguards future work experience opportunities for autistic young people.

Pears Foundation

The Clothworkers' Foundation

As a long-standing friend of Ambitious about Autism, the Clothworkers' Foundation has been involved in developing many strategic projects with us since 2006 and transforming the lives of hundreds of autistic children and young people. A lead funder in the construction of TreeHouse School, it supported the school once again in 2021, helping fund our new life skills kitchen and wider school renovations.

THE CLOTHWORKERS' FOUNDATION

Joseph Levy Foundation

Last year we continued developing our Ambitious Approach thanks to the support and encouragement of the Joseph Levy Foundation. At its heart, the Ambitious Approach focuses on the wellbeing, dignity and happiness of the individual and this has never been more important as we support pupils and learners in the face of the pandemic. We are thrilled to have been able to share the Ambitious Approach with others over the past year and look forward to rolling this out to other schools and colleges in the future.

JL

MariaMarina Foundation

A committed funder of Ambitious College for the last five years, MariaMarina Foundation has been instrumental in the expansion of the college and was its lead funder from 2019 to 2021. MariaMarina Foundation also made a generous donation in response to the coronavirus pandemic, helping us to support families of autistic children during this especially challenging period.

MariaMarina FOUNDATION

Marsh McLennan

Marsh McLennan became our three-year strategic partner in February 2021 with a goal to create brighter futures by empowering talent and unlocking opportunities. The partnership aims to raise £750,000 to support the vital growth and expansion of Employ Autism. Marsh McLennan continues to raise awareness about autism and inclusivity in the workplace through autism awareness sessions and training.

Colleagues have also volunteered their time and expertise to support many aspects of Ambitious about Autism's work, including pro bono support for strategic projects. Marsh McLennan is also working hard to become an autism-confident employer through developing its own inclusive practices, policies and workplace environment with support from Ambitious about Autism's consultancy team. Together, we can create brighter futures, and Marsh McLennan is certainly showing us how it's done.

MarshMcLennan

Rapha

Thanks to the support of its chief executive and founder, Simon Mottram, Rapha Racing Ltd has raised more than £1.4m since its first cycling challenge in aid of Ambitious about Autism in 2014. Through fantastic innovation and support, Rapha continues to stand with autistic children and young people through its fundraising efforts.

Rapha

Santander Universities UK

Santander Universities UK has coordinated a £1m investment in our groundbreaking employability initiative, the Employ Autism Higher Education Network. Just under half of these funds support Ambitious about Autism's work, including the provision of training, and the rest is used directly by universities to provide paid (salaried) internships for autistic students, alongside wider support.

Santander Universities

TalkTalk

Since 2006, TalkTalk has raised £5m for Ambitious about Autism. As well as sponsoring the annual Night of Ambition gala event, TalkTalk supports us with campaign development and broadband connectivity. In October 2020, colleagues at TalkTalk and a team of employees from Gamma took to the streets of Manchester and London for our inaugural fundraising challenge, 10k Your Way, raising nearly £8,000.

TalkTalk Group

Graham and Susan Tobbell

We are delighted to have had Graham and Susan Tobbell as partners of Ambitious about Autism, since their first gift in 2016. More recently, Graham and Susan have made a significant, unrestricted donation to our work; gifts of this kind are critical to helping us adapt our work, such as we have done throughout the pandemic, so that we can continue to be there for autistic children and young people.

Huge thanks to our proud partners and supporters

Ambitious partners

The Clothworkers' Foundation
Joseph Levy Foundation
MariaMarina Foundation
Marsh McLennan
Pears Foundation
Rapha Racing Ltd
Santander Universities UK
TalkTalk Group plc
Graham and Susan Tobbell

Ambitious supporters

Aberdeen Asset Management
Ali MacCallum
Apply Recruitment
Atos
BBC Children in Need
Beatrice Laing Trust
Carlyle Group
Chapman Charitable Trust
Charity Extra
Charlotte Grobien OBE, Give It Away
Charlotte Warner and Bruno Paulson
Chris Pond Collaboration Company
Constable Education Trust
Crédit Agricole CIB
David Astor
Department for Education
Department of Health and Social Care
Elizabeth Stanton
Foyle Foundation
Gavin Sumner
Heathrow Community Trust
Hornsey Parochial Charities
Hospital Saturday Fund
Jean Levenant
Jefferies
Joanna Healey
John and Clare Coombe-Tennant
Jonathan Andrews
Ketchum
Koral Anderson
Laurie Edmans CBE
Lesley Longstone
Lloyds of London
Lucy Nutt
M/Six
Magnus Schoeman
Mark Naughton
Martyn Craddock
Masonic Charitable Foundation
Matt Davis and Eliza Mischon
Matt Hutnell
Michael Clark
Mind
National Lottery Community Fund
Neil Goulden
Nick Hornby
Paul Disley-Tindell

Peter Cruddas Foundation
PF Charitable Trust
Phil Haslam
Philip Noblet
Philippa Stobbs
PIMCO Foundation
Red Brick Road
Ruth Kennedy
Sarah Yamani and Prof Dr Malik R Dahlan
Simon Clements
Simon Hillson
Simon and Lucy Mottram
Smurfit Kappa Foundation
Snowbility
Sue Adkins
TalkTalk
Tanith Dodge
The Annette Duvollet Trust
The Edward Gostling Foundation
The Harebell Centenary Fund
The Health Foundation (PPP)
The Lawson Trust
The Rayne Foundation
The St James's Place Charitable Foundation
The Story of Christmas
The Thompson Family Charitable Trust
The&Partnership
Tim Barber
Lord Tim Clement-Jones CBE
Tokio Marine
Tristia Harrison
Dr Virginia Bovell OBE

National Lottery Community Fund

The National Lottery Community Fund's support enabled us to develop vital online content and resources for parents and carers, as well as online engagement and participation opportunities for autistic young people.

Our approach to fundraising

Fundraising practices

Meeting the highest fundraising standards is essential to retaining the trust and support of our much-valued donors and partners. We pay the voluntary levy to register with the Fundraising Regulator, and we take care to ensure that our practices comply with the Code of Fundraising Practice and the Fundraising Promise. We are also a member of the Chartered Institute of Fundraising. We maintain up-to-date policies for our fundraising code of conduct; compliments and complaints; and whistleblowing and ensure that all team members understand and comply with these policies.

Our Board of Trustees reviews these policies, alongside our compliance with fundraising regulations, annually.

Our privacy policy continues to comply with data protection legislation and regulation and is accessible to all on our websites. We also ensure that we are compliant with the UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), the EU GDPR, the Data Protection Act 2018 and Privacy and Electronic Communications Regulations (PECR).

In the year under review, the prior year, and up until the date of signing, there have been no instances of non-compliance with the requirements of the Code of Fundraising Practice or formal complaints.

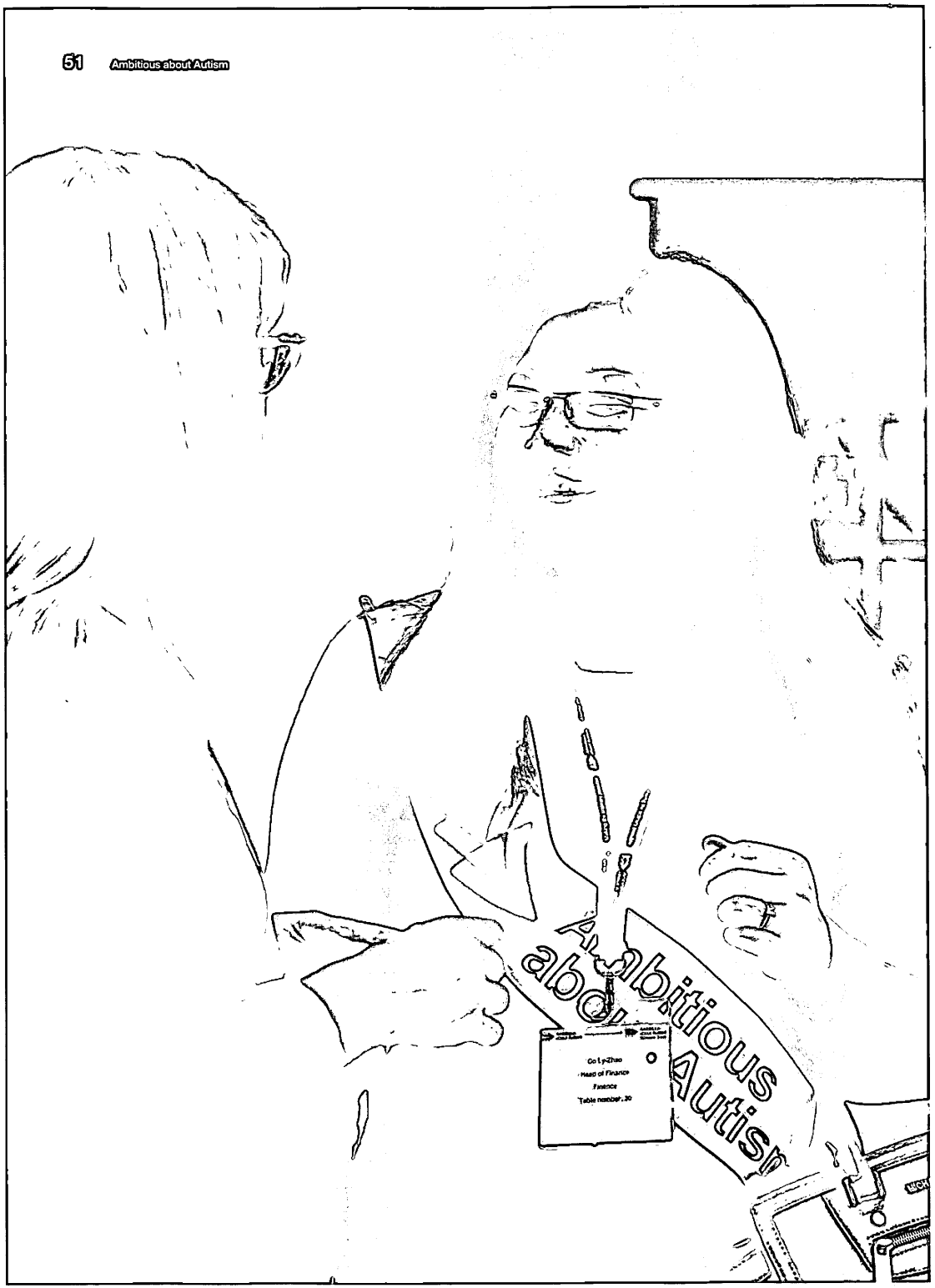
As a charity set up to protect and champion vulnerable people, we consider it important that these values are echoed in our fundraising. Through our close adherence to fundraising regulations, scrutiny by the executive leadership team and transparency with donors, we ensure that we do not unreasonably intrude on a person's privacy; are not unreasonably persistent; and do not place undue pressure on any person to give money or other property.

Our fundraising work

Most of our fundraised income is generated through partnerships with individuals who have an interest in our cause, as well as trusts, foundations and corporate partners. We have also benefited from the generosity of community members and individuals participating in online and in-person events and challenges.

We use third parties to support our fundraising when specific digital platforms are required for fundraising events, for example JustGiving and Charity Extra.

We do not engage through face-to-face or telephone direct marketing. Our regular giving programme is conducted primarily with our close community. We do not conduct street or public site collections, nor do we have any mass participation activities in place.


Ambitious
about Autism

Our people

The work we do to champion autistic children and young people would not be possible without our dedicated and resilient staff. We are committed to being a diverse, inclusive and supportive organisation that our staff are proud to work for.

This year the coronavirus pandemic continued to impact our work and supporting our staff through these changes was a key priority. We also placed a focus on nurturing and developing talent within our organisation.

We supported some staff to work from home, in line with government guidance, which allowed us to operate better social distancing for those working in our schools and college educating autistic children and young people.

Our People Team led an inspiring programme of events and activities for staff, covering themes such as mental, emotional, social, physical and financial wellbeing. This included a popular cross-organisational step challenge, called Big Team Challenge, which encouraged teams of staff to work together to stay active and motivated.

We also launched a new 'my benefits' portal offering a range of advice to staff on all aspects of financial wellbeing, as well as information on benefits available to them as Ambitious about Autism employees.

As part of our commitment to nurturing and develop talent, we launched our new learning and development programme, Ambitious Leaders, created to support people leaders across our organisation.

The programme has been created in collaboration with staff from across Ambitious about Autism and has been accredited by the Institute of Leadership and Management (InstLM). This means that all participants who successfully complete programme will become Associate Members of the Institute of Leadership and Management.

We are enormously grateful for the dedication, high standards and care of everyone who works at Ambitious about Autism.

Due in part to the impact of the pandemic, we continue to develop our approaches to selection and interviewing, and we rolled out training to recruiting managers. We were shortlisted for the Personnel Today Awards 2020 in the Innovation in Recruitment category and for the 2021 Recruitment Industry Disability Initiative (RIDI) Awards in the Disability Specialist category.

Engagement with staff, beneficiaries and stakeholders

Our staff are fundamental to the success of Ambitious about Autism and we are committed to making our organisation a great place to work.

From ensuring that we remain a responsible employer, to considering pay and benefits, and our health, safety and workplace environment, our executive leadership team considers the impact of its decisions on employees, wherever possible.

We regularly engage and communicate with staff, using a range of methods, including whole staff and team face-to-face meetings and briefings, newsletters, senior management team cascades and management meetings.

We celebrate and recognise our successes as a whole staff team each year, and in 2021 we launched our first virtual Staff Awards ceremony, to include those working remotely. We encourage the involvement of staff across the organisation through a range of activities, including participating in fundraising events and supporting activities and events for our pupils and learners.

During the coronavirus pandemic, we communicated with our staff regularly to relay critical information and to offer support. We provided emergency updates through line managers, emails and team meetings as appropriate.

In our 2021 annual survey, 91.6% of staff said they were proud to be part of Ambitious about Autism and 92.1% said they enjoyed their job. When asked about understanding developments in the organisation, 86.4% of staff said they felt informed. We are proud that, across the group, 96.2% of staff said that they understood our vision, mission and values.

We have a staff council, which meets regularly to share the views of staff on decisions regarding people, policies and practices. The council also contributes to the continuing improvement of the organisation and our working environment. Our employees are consulted on issues through staff meetings and kept informed on specific matters directly by managers. We have adopted a procedure of upward feedback for senior managers and the trustees.

We've also established fair employment practices in the recruitment, selection, retention and training of all staff.

All staff joining Ambitious about Autism and the Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust have a comprehensive induction covering our values, plans and policies, including for safeguarding, whistleblowing and data protection. We engage with and update staff on our performance during the year.

Disability Confident

As a charity working to support people with disabilities, we are fully committed to being welcoming and supportive to all staff with disabilities or any other protected characteristic.

We are proud to be members of Purple, a disabled user-led organisation working to improve disability inclusion, to have its support and to have maintained our Level 3 Disability Confident Leader status following reaccreditation this year.

As part of this scheme, we guarantee to interview candidates with a disability whose application meets the minimum criteria for the role as detailed in the person specification. Our recruiting managers and team are trained to ensure that applicants with disabilities are considered fully and fairly, and that they are supported with relevant adjustments made during the recruitment process and in the workplace.

We make sure that all staff, including those with disabilities, can benefit from the appropriate training, career development and promotion opportunities.

This process starts at induction and is managed through supervisions and ongoing performance reviews. We have access to advice from occupational health support, an onsite physiotherapist and an employee assistance programme to enable us to support any member of staff, including those who become disabled during employment.

disability confident LEADER

Equality, diversity and inclusion

Equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) affect everybody. We serve and work with people from all backgrounds and we are motivated and energised by the opportunity to improve outcomes for everybody in our charity, education sectors and wider society.

In May 2020, the murder of George Floyd and the Black Lives Matter movement caused us all to confront the injustices that continue to exist in our society. Like many organisations, we realised how much we still had to do ourselves.

We are committed to achieving meaningful and lasting change around EDI through the development of a comprehensive strategy, informed by people's views and experiences, embedded throughout our organisation and championed by our board, leadership teams and EDI committee, which has representatives from across the organisation.

This year we appointed EW Group to carry out an independent audit of our organisation's EDI work, which included focus groups with staff. The audit and feedback we received helped us to develop four priorities and overarching goals:

Courageous governance and leadership

A key reflection from our audit was the need for courageous governance and leadership that demonstrably and actively leads on EDI.

Inclusive workplace

We want to create an environment that celebrates diversity; to understand more about the profile, needs and views of our people; and to ensure that leadership and management is driven by the principles of inclusion.

High-quality and inclusive education and services

We will ensure the curriculum and content within our services reflect the diverse histories, interests and experiences of the communities we serve.

Influencing national work

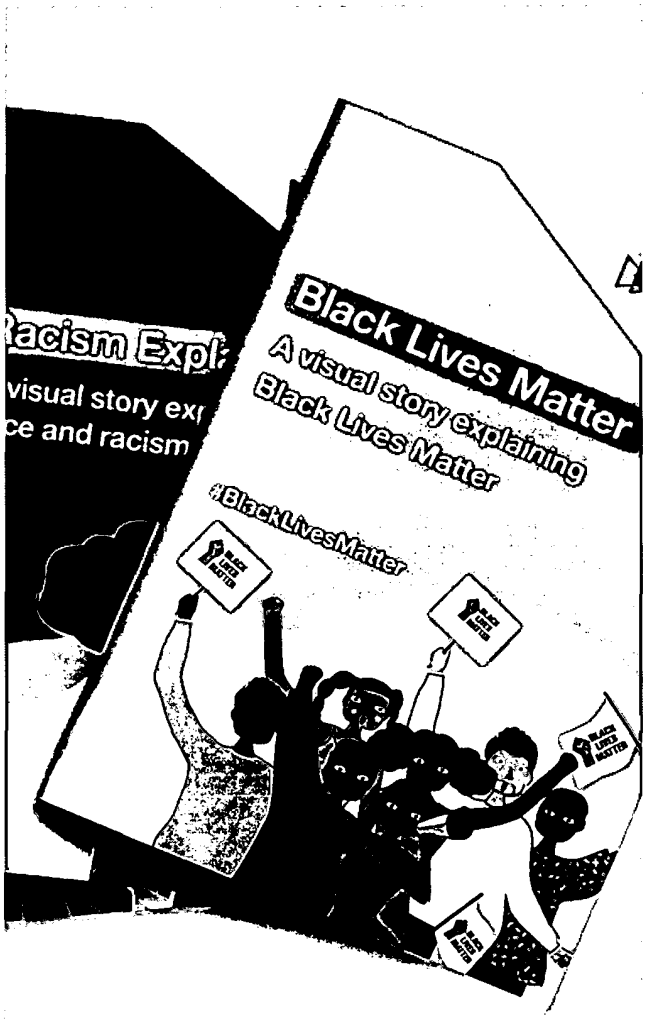
On a national scale, we will continue to stand with autistic children and young people from diverse communities, researching and highlighting their views and experiences and investigating the barriers they face.

The findings from the audit were used to develop our EDI strategy and action plan, published in October 2021.

We also carried our further internal activity this year to drive forward our EDI agenda:

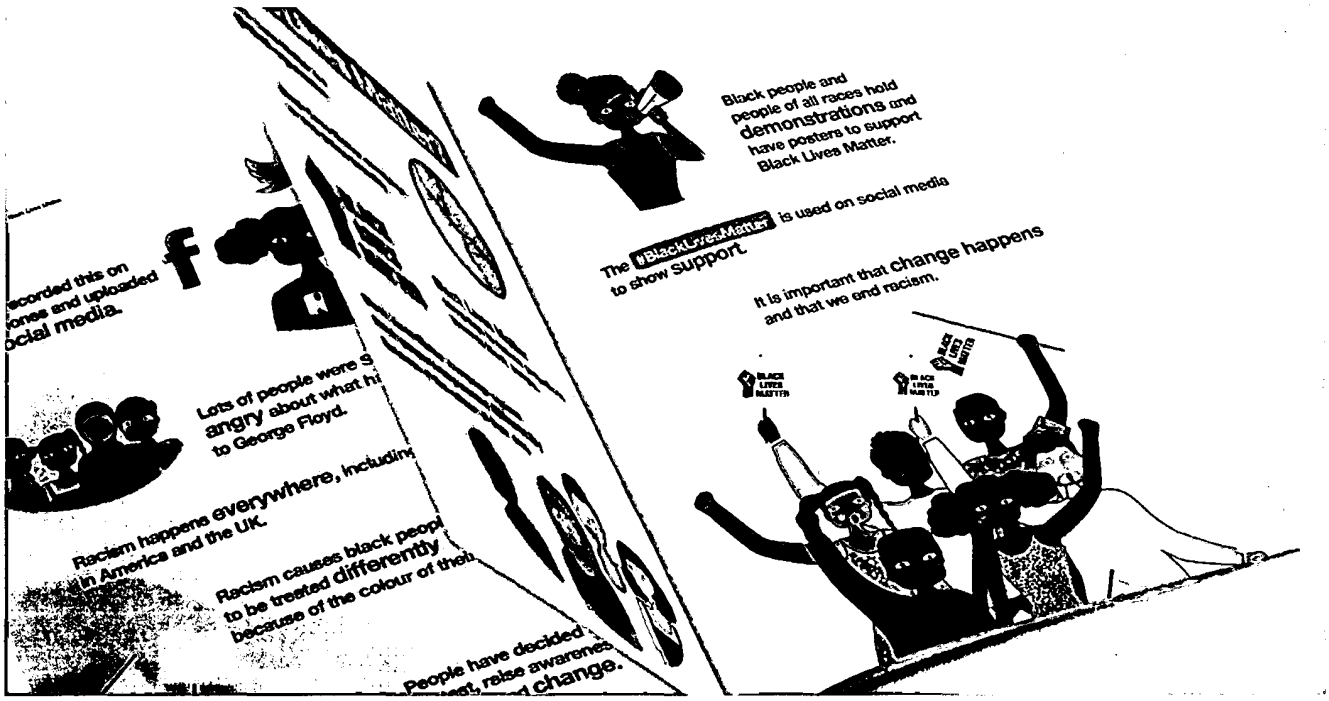
- Our chief executive became overall EDI champion for Ambitious about Autism.

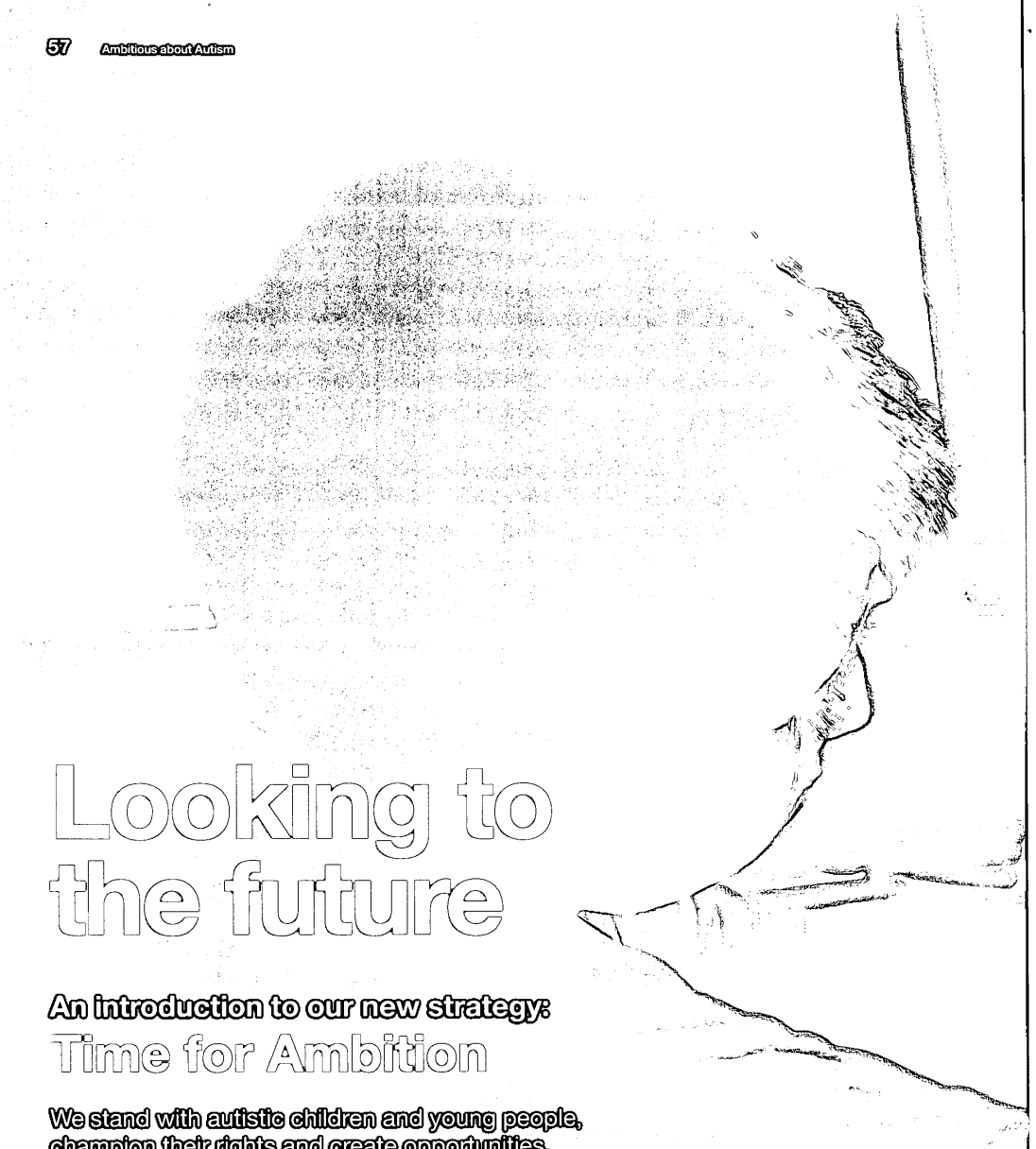
- We set up a new equality, diversity and inclusion hub on our internal staff network to share information and support with staff groups.
- We recruited new members to our staff EDI committee to continue to develop the role the group plays in our organisation.
- We appointed a new EDI business partner in the people team to develop our EDI work.
- We rolled out training for trustees, governors, the senior management team, staff and managers on unconscious bias and inclusion.



Inclusion resources

Following the Black Lives Matter protests, we launched a new inclusion section of our external website, including **articles on race and racism**. We also created accessible easy read guides and visual stories on race and racism for autistic children and young people and their families to understand the issues.





Looking to the future

An introduction to our new strategy: Time for Ambition

We stand with autistic children and young people, champion their rights and create opportunities.

As part of our strategic plan for 2021–24, we want autistic children and young people to be themselves and realise their ambitions.

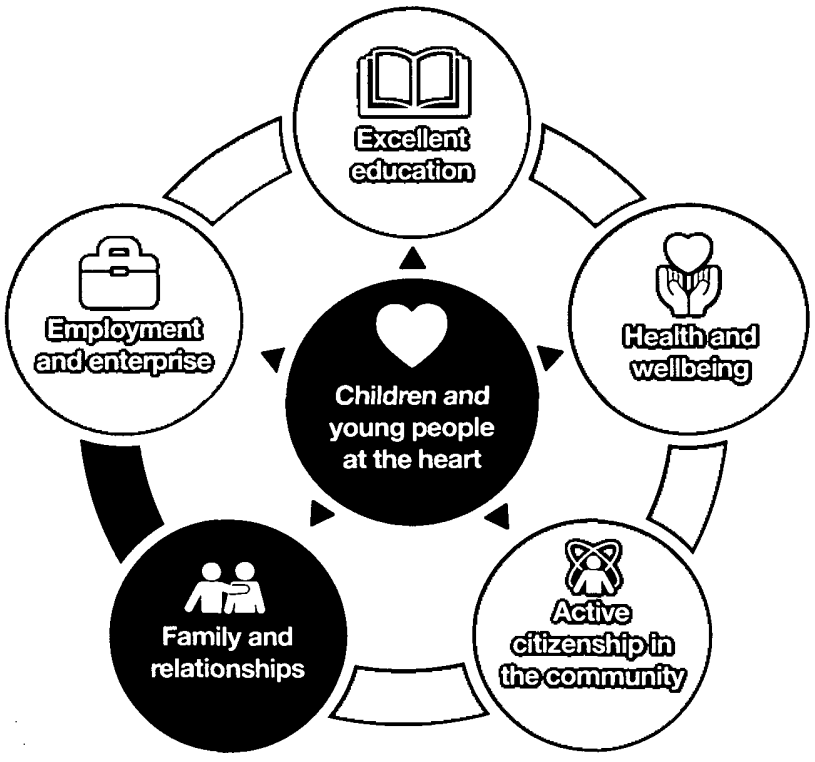
We want to help create a world where autistic people are heard, included and supported.

Our strategy at a glance

The next three years will be critical in our work with autistic children, young people and their families to overcome the enormous challenges they face as a result of the lack of understanding of their needs.

We will take a person-centred approach, focused on individuals' quality of life, which we call the Ambitious Approach.

Over the next three years, we will continue to build on our core expertise in education and employability while engaging more than ever before in the other areas that are essential for autistic children and young people to lead fulfilling lives, such as having supportive families and relationships, good health and wellbeing and being active citizens in their communities.



Underpinned by

Participation

Strong foundations

Partnership

Influencing policy and practice nationally

Excellent education

Our overarching aim is that all autistic children and young people have an excellent and inclusive education that enables them to learn, thrive and achieve. Ultimately, this will support them to have a good quality of life, including the realistic prospect of living and working as part of their communities.

Employment and enterprise

Our guiding principle is that we want every autistic young person to have good careers education at school and in further and higher education, including experience of work. This will equip them to progress to employment and instil transferable life skills.

Health and wellbeing

Good physical and mental health and wellbeing are essential components of an autistic child or young person's ability to thrive. Right from the start, timely diagnosis followed by post-diagnostic support lays the foundations for understanding autism and how to access the right healthcare and support. Alongside this, autistic people need services that support good mental health by reducing isolation and early intervention through signposting to specialist support.

Family and relationships

During the pandemic, the support that autistic young people and their families received reduced substantially or stopped, leaving many feeling even more vulnerable and isolated than ever before. Being connected to others is vital, and autistic young people and their families have told us that they want peer networks as well as uplifting but realistic information tailored to them.

Active citizenship in the community

Inclusion is a cornerstone of our Ambitious Approach and is just as important in the community as it is in education or employment. Our Ambitious Youth Network will be further developed and expanded nationally to empower young people to connect with one another and to influence societal change.

Influencing policy and practice nationally

We are passionate about standing with autistic children and young people. To achieve this, we'll work with autistic young people and their families to influence policy and practice nationally, to improve their access to excellent education, quality health support and fulfilling careers.

Strong foundations

We will continue to develop our strong foundations (including governance and leadership, people and culture, fundraising and finances, marketing and communications, research and evaluation, and digital and information technology) to support delivery of the strategy.

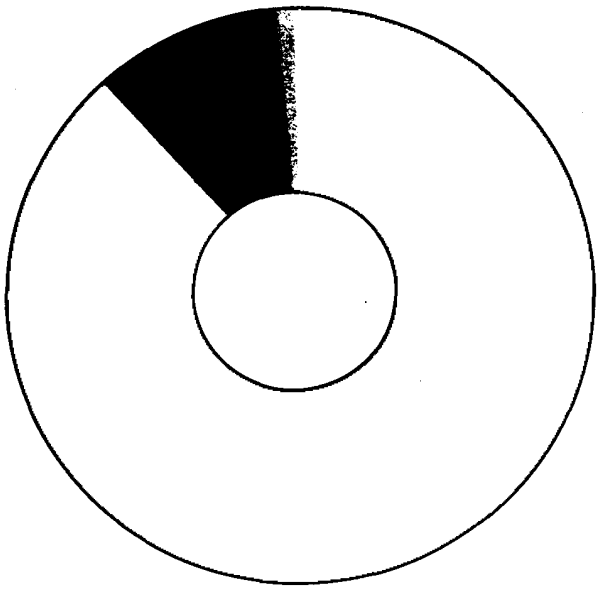
Time for Ambition marks an exciting time of growth for Ambitious about Autism as we continue to drive forward progress for all autistic children and young people. It's an immense privilege to stand with the charity's incredible team as we deliver these ambitious goals."

Lesley Longstone
Vice Chair of Ambitious about Autism and the Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust

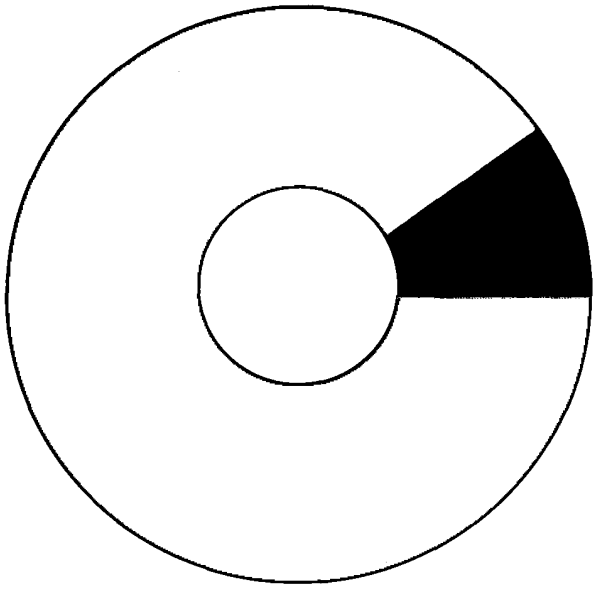
Financial review

Our total income for the year was £22.9m and our overall expenditure £21.6m. Our net assets are £16.4m, compared with net assets of £15.3m at 31 August 2020.

Income
£22.9 million



Expenditure
£21.6 million



Income:

- **£20.2m**
  Charitable activities: education services
- **£0.1m**
  Charitable activities: external affairs
- **£2.3m**
  Gifts and donated service
- **£0.2m**
  Trading income
- **£0.1m**
  Investments and other income

How our money was spent:

- **£19.4m**
  Charitable activities: education services
- **£1.5m**
  Charitable activities: external affairs
- **£0.7m**
  Raising funds

Financial performance

Our overall excellent financial performance, with income increased to £22.9m from £20.0m in 2020, is attributed to the growth in learner and pupil numbers at Ambitious College, TreeHouse School and The Rise School, as well as the generosity of our partners and supporters. The coronavirus pandemic continued to create some financial uncertainty in the year, to which we responded with careful cost management. This measure allowed us to replenish our designated coronavirus recovery fund to £0.7m, which will help us manage the future financial uncertainties in relation to the continuing impact of the pandemic. We also extended the repayment date of our loan from Rathbones to May 2026 to boost liquidity in these uncertain times. Our total expenditure for the year was £21.6m, an increase of £2.4m (2020: £19.2m).

In line with this positive financial performance, our free reserves for the year increased to £2.4m (2020: £1.9m), which is within our reserves range of £1.7m–£2.5m. During the year, the charity invested £0.1m in freehold and leasehold improvements, £0.4m on furniture and equipment, £0.1m on vehicles and £0.1m on computer equipment as we equipped our staff, pupils and learners to work and learn from home.

Ambitious about Autism is using an interest rate swap to manage its exposure to interest rate movements with the interest rate fixed at 4% for the NatWest Loan of £1.1m. The value of the interest rate swap entered into in February 2011 relates to a loss of £136k.

Our investment portfolio performed in line with the target during the year and was valued at £1.9m as at 31 August 2021, taking into account an unrealised gain of £0.2m.

Investment policy

The charity's investment policy was approved by the Board of Trustees in July 2021. It aims to produce the best financial return at an acceptable level of risk. The risk profile is agreed with the investment manager and is regarded as medium. The policy is reviewed at least once a year. The trustees have set a target return of inflation (CPI) +3%, over the long term, which was achieved in the year.

Over the last three years, the investments have increased from £1,710k to £1,868k which is a gain of 9%.

Investment risk management

The investment portfolio is diversified across a range of instruments to reduce the risk of overexposure to one type of asset. We hold the following instruments: fixed interest, direct UK and overseas equities, cash and property and managed funds. Note 12 provides further analysis of these assets (see p101).

The investments are managed by investment managers appointed by the charity, currently Rathbone Brothers Plc, which is a reputable FTSE 250 company with net income of £26.7m in 2020. The risk profile is agreed with the investment manager and is regarded as medium risk.

Risk management practices

Members of the investment committee meet the investment manager twice a year to review performance and discuss market risks. The investment committee reports to the trustees on the risk profile, selection of investment managers and returns achieved.

Reserves policy and going concern

Free reserves exclude restricted funds, designated funds and any parts of unrestricted funds not readily available, such as fixed assets. At Ambitious about Autism, we hold free reserves to mitigate against risks resulting from unexpected drops in fundraising income, a downturn in learner numbers or unexpected short-term increases in expenditure. Our reserves policy is reviewed by the trustees annually and was last reviewed in December 2021.

Based upon an evaluation of income and expenditure risks and working capital requirements, the trustees have agreed that free reserves should be in the range of £1.7m–£2.5m. As at 31 August 2021, free reserves were £2.4m. The trustees will continue to monitor the reserves position closely throughout the year.

In addition to the free reserves, Ambitious about Autism has a number of designated funds totalling £6.6m as at 31 August 2021.

These are:

- Fixed assets, valued at £4.0m. Depreciation expenditure will be funded from this fund on an annual basis, of which £0.7m is planned depreciation expenditure for 2021–22.
- Buildings maintenance and development fund, which is based on projected 30-year life cycle costs and was established for major repairs to the Pears National Centre for Autism Education. As at 31 August 2021, there was £0.7m in this fund.
- School development fund – a designated fund was created in 2013 for broader school development. The fund had a balance of £5k as at 31 August 2021.
- Coronavirus fund – a fund established in 2020 to provide a contingency against future risks as a result of the coronavirus pandemic, including additional costs or losses in income. The fund had a balance of £0.7m as at 31 August 2021. This will continue in the coming year (2021–22) as we continue to operate and manage during the pandemic, covering the additional costs of cleaning, PPE, additional venue hire to facilitate physical distancing, staff cover for those who need to isolate, and supporting remote learning and working.
- Transformation fund – a fund totalling £1.2m at 31 August 2021, which was established in 2020 to support our new strategy.

The policy of the Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust is to hold sufficient reserves to provide a working balance to mitigate the impact of uneven cash flows; provide a contingency in respect of unexpected events; and plan for potential major items of expenditure, including continued expansion.

Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust funds balances as at 31 August 2021 totalled £6.8m. This comprised nil unrestricted funds, £3.1m of restricted funds and £6.2m of restricted fixed asset funds, net of a £2.5m pension deficit. The funds balance at 31 August 2021, excluding the pension deficit, totalled £9.3m.

The £2.5m pension deficit is increasing, resulting in year-on-year unrealised losses, which is at risk of increasing further in the future. In accordance with the arrangements for a multi-academy trust, the deficit relating to the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) is underwritten by the Department for Education. We also monitor the pension

scheme carefully and in 2020 a review of the LGPS was undertaken to provide assurance to trustees that the set-up of the scheme was appropriate and being correctly administered.

After making appropriate enquiries, the trustees have a reasonable expectation that the trust has adequate resources to continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future. For this reason, it continues to adopt the going concern basis in preparing the financial statements. Further details regarding the adoption of the going concern basis can be found in the Statement of Accounting Policies. While there have been some challenges in response to the coronavirus pandemic, the trust has continued to ensure all pupils continue to learn and that the situation is managed well.

In response to the uncertainties from the coronavirus pandemic, expenditure budgets have been managed carefully to ensure that there was sufficient cash to continue operating in case of delayed payments from customers, while the longer-term impact of the coronavirus pandemic was assessed. This continues to be assessed, and the financial and operational impact monitored.

Risks and uncertainties

Risks are managed in accordance with the risk policy approved by the Board of Trustees, which was reviewed and updated in March 2021.

The aim of the policy is to:

- understand as fully as possible the risks being faced
- take appropriate action to manage those risks
- minimise the risk of new initiatives adversely affecting existing work
- accept a higher level of uncertainty, if appropriate, when taking advantage of new opportunities.

Ambitious about Autism has a risk register, which is reviewed annually by the Finance and Resources Committee and the Board of Trustees. Risks are scored according to likelihood, impact and the organisation's attitude to that risk. The changes to risks are reviewed termly by the Finance and Resources Committee and board, alongside the actions being taken or proposed to mitigate the risks.

The table on the next page identifies the three key strategic risks that have been identified by the Board of Trustees and explains how these risks are being managed.

	Risk	Mitigation
1 **Coronavirus**	That the coronavirus pandemic continues to affect our operations, has a negative impact on our financial position and has a negative effect on staff, pupil and learner wellbeing.	Our coronavirus response team, which includes the executive leadership team, is carefully managing the impact of the coronavirus pandemic. The team is continuing to minimise the negative impact on the charity through forward planning, adapting quickly and effectively to ensure that our pupils and learners continue to have access to excellent education and focusing on initiatives to promote staff, pupil and learner wellbeing.
2 **Learner and pupil numbers**	That there are more applications to our schools and college than we can accommodate within the constraints of our maximum admission numbers and physical space, resulting in pupils and learners not getting access to the educational support they require and impacting our ability to plan.	To manage the risk, we monitor pupil and learner numbers so that we can carefully manage admissions and increase our admission numbers as required. We maintain good relationships with commissioners, ensuring timely assessment dates to enable a fast turnaround of consultations, and support parents and carers through the admissions process. We are looking at future opportunities and undertaking a feasibility study into increasing our space.
3 **Recruitment**	That we are unable to recruit the number and quality of specialist staff, for both our current structure and our growth structure, as specialist staff are in high demand and are reluctant to change jobs while the coronavirus pandemic continues to cause uncertainty.	We are building our recruitment pipeline, diversifying our approach to recruitment and building relationships with training schools to attract applicants in hard-to-recruit professions. We have several initiatives in place to ensure that our terms and conditions are competitive in a challenging market.

Legal structures and governance

Governance

Ambitious about Autism (the Company) is a charitable company limited by guarantee, incorporated on 23 May 1997 per Companies House (company number 03375255) and registered as a charity on 2 July 1997 (charity number 1063184). The Company was established under a memorandum of association, which established the objects and powers of the charitable company and is governed under its articles of association.

Ambitious about Autism is governed by a board of trustees who also act as the directors of the Company for the purposes of company law.

Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust (the Trust) is a multi-academy trust, a company limited by guarantee and an exempt charity. It was founded and incorporated on 18 December 2012 (company number 08335297) to support the development and running of The Rise School and further free schools.

The charitable company's memorandum and articles of association are the primary governing documents of the Trust. The Trust is governed by a board of trustees who also act as the directors of the charitable company for the purposes of company law, and it has members whose duty is to ensure that the board is effectively discharging its responsibilities. Ambitious about Autism is the sole corporate member of the Trust along with four individual members.

A formal governance review was conducted in 2019 supported by an external facilitator with a focus on streamlining and strengthening governance arrangements across the group. The board and committee structure and membership, articles of association, members agreements, scheme of reservation and delegation, and terms of references were all updated and are now reviewed annually. All changes in relation to the Trust were approved by the Department for Education.

The trustees of Ambitious about Autism and the trustees of Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust are all members of the Joint Group Board Committee. The respective Ambitious about Autism and Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust boards retain responsibility for all matters and delegate a number of appropriate decisions to the Joint Group Board Committee and its subcommittees. This maximises efficiency and impact between the two boards. For example, where joint policies exist, they are

reviewed and approved, where appropriate, by the Joint Group Board Committee. Clear schemes of reservation and delegation are in place for both boards.

Both boards of trustees follow a regular cycle of termly meetings and have at least one awayday with the executive leadership team each year, as well as holding additional meetings when required.

The boards are supported by several joint subcommittees as set out below.

- The Nominations and Remuneration Committee oversees governance planning and policy, including trustee recruitment, support and review. It also reviews and agrees remuneration and terms and conditions of employment for the executive leadership team and staff across the Company and the Trust. It meets termly in advance of board meetings.
- The Finance and Resources Committee meets termly in advance of board meetings and is responsible for the general oversight and scrutiny of systems, planning, financial and resource management, and reviewing internal controls and risk management for the charity and the Trust.
- The Education Committee meets termly and is responsible for our education services. It also oversees the governing bodies and advisory groups in each service for both the charity and the Trust.
- The Investment Committee, an Ambitious about Autism committee which reports to the Finance and Resources Committee, monitors the performance of the charity's investment portfolio and meets twice a year.
- The Trust Audit Committee meets termly as part of the Finance and Resources Committee to oversee the annual report and accounts, the audit, the programme of internal scrutiny and compliance with Department for Education legislation for the Trust.

All matters related to the educational performance of TreeHouse School, The Rise School and Ambitious College are examined by their governing bodies. Safeguarding is discussed and considered at every level of our governance.

Management of the charity and the Trust is delegated to the chief executive, who is also the accounting officer for the Trust, and the executive leadership team. The executive leadership team members attend board and subcommittee meetings.

The Ambitious about Autism Youth Council comprised 14 autistic young people aged 16–25 as at 31 August 2021. Members of the Youth Council are encouraged to shape and influence our work and make presentations to the Board of Trustees.

Trustee recruitment, induction and training

The aim of the charity and the Trust is to build a diverse board that has the optimum range of skills, experience and perspectives to ensure that we have the appropriate level of support, scrutiny and oversight. People with lived experience of autism are involved in the governance and decision-making of the charity and the Trust, including on the Board of Trustees, the governing bodies and advisory groups.

The recruitment and induction policy works to promote this goal. New trustees are recruited openly through a variety of channels, including search, advertising and through networks. Once recruited, trustees are supported with an induction programme and handbook in the first few months. As part of the induction process, trustees receive training on issues such as safeguarding, health and safety and data protection.

The charity also runs a termly training programme for trustees, covering topics such as equality, diversity and inclusion, exclusions and unconscious bias.

The recruitment, induction and appraisal of trustees is overseen by the Nominations and Remuneration Committee. All trustees give their time voluntarily and receive no benefits from the charity or the trust. Any expenses reclaimed are set out in note 6 to the accounts (see p97).

Charity Governance Code

The principles and recommended practice set out in the Charity Governance Code are regularly discussed by the trustees.

Areas of focus in 2020–21 were:

Equality, diversity and inclusion: The board believes a balance of experience, skills, knowledge and backgrounds is crucial in the composition of the members to provide a variety of perspectives in discussions and enhance decision-making. We believe that including people with lived experience of autism in our governance and decision-making and on the Board of Trustees is of benefit to the charity and the Trust.

The board is committed to investing in its diversity and appointed four new trustees to the Ambitious about Autism board and two new trustees to the Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust board in December 2021. The Joint Group Board Committee is undertaking a skills and diversity audit in early 2022.

Integrity: The board reviewed the new principles of integrity included in the Charity Governance Code from December 2020 and confirmed that it was adhering to the new principles. In particular, the annual review of the safeguarding policies and confirmation of understanding of the Keeping Children Safe in Education requirements by trustees as well as regular reviews of the risk register and incidents ensures that the board continually reflects on its responsibilities and those of the organisation.

Engagement with suppliers, customers and others in a business relationship

We have a strong commitment to paying all suppliers within agreed terms.

Our executive leadership team prioritises achieving the best possible outcomes for our pupils, learners and stakeholders. Open engagement with parents, guardians and our local communities is vital to building successful and long-term relationships.

We continue to work closely and collaboratively with local authorities to ensure that outcomes are mutually beneficial, with our pupils, learners and stakeholders continuing to be our core focus. We work hard to establish and maintain good relationships with our wider stakeholders, including our funders and supporters.

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The executive leadership team and board make assessments and decisions in good faith, considering the potential consequence on stakeholders. In addition, they consider the expected outcomes most likely to promote the success of Ambitious about Autism. The benefit of our pupils, learners and stakeholders is always paramount.

The executive leadership team and the board consider the following:

- The consequences of any decision in the long term. This includes a regular review of our risk register, departmental operational plans and overall strategic plan.
- The interests of our employees, through regular feedback from all-staff meetings, team meetings and individual monthly supervisions.
- The need to foster business relationships with suppliers, customers, and others, ranging from prompt supplier payments to regular meetings and communication with local authorities. This includes weekly updates to local authorities with respect to our pupils and learners.
- The impact of the operations of the charity and the Trust on the community and the environment. We have a community representative on all our governing bodies and continue to review our fleet management to achieve further cost savings in terms of running costs and our impact on the environment.
- The desirability of the charity and the Trust in maintaining a reputation for high standards of business conduct. We lead by example and build a culture of excellence through good recruitment choices and practices, and excellent training.
- The need to act fairly as members of the charity and the Trust. We have combined most of our policies across the group.

Remuneration policy for key management personnel

The Board of Trustees of Ambitious about Autism and the Trust is responsible for defining the executive pay policy. This includes deciding on the salaries of the chief executive and the executive leadership team. The board delegates this responsibility to the Nominations and Remuneration Committee. The committee reviews executive pay and our total reward strategy for staff.

The group, which comprises trustees and an external expert, meets each term. The committee makes recommendations to the Board of Trustees for approval. We have an executive pay policy, which sets out our approach to pay for our executive leadership team, how pay is determined and reviewed, and the relative impact on pay across the organisation.

Our approach to pay is underpinned by our principle to:

"Pay a fair salary and reward package to attract and retain skilled and expert senior leaders for Ambitious about Autism and Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust. Salaries and benefits should be competitive within the charity, education and public sectors, proportionate to the complexity of each role and responsibility, and in line with our objectives and affordable."

The executive pay policy aims to follow a robust, evidence-based process to achieve this principle.

- Take account of pay in similar organisations in the UK charity and public sector markets, but do not compete with salaries in the private sector.
- Monitor salary trends in the charity sector through surveys produced by providers such as XpertHR, Croner and ACEVO, as well as Education and Skills Funding Agency academy schools financial benchmarking reports and, where necessary, commission external benchmarking exercises.
- Ensure performance is reviewed and reported to the Nominations and Remuneration Committee on an annual basis. Apply performance-related pay elements only where required by the relevant market sector.
- Mirror the national standards for professional groups, such as headteachers.
- Take account of the Academy Trust Handbook.
- Take account of the difference between executive leadership team pay and the lowest-paid roles, and median and average pay across the organisation.

The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS)

We continued to use the CJRS scheme in 2020–21, based on the needs of the charity to meet our resourcing requirements and in line with government guidance.

During the year, we furloughed a few Ambitious about Autism staff members, in areas we lost significant income, claiming a total of £31k (2020: £118k) through the CJRS, in line with government guidance, until May.

Streamlined Energy and Carbon Reporting (SECR)

Energy and carbon consumption

SECR is the new legislative reporting requirement from 1 April 2019. It mandates that all companies that meet the thresholds must report on their operational energy consumption and associated emissions. The high-level breakdown is as follows:

		kWh	Mileage	tCO2e
Gas	2020–21	546,995	n/a	100
	2019–20	504,439	n/a	97
Electricity	2020–21	482,779	n/a	103
	2019–20	548,620	n/a	139
Transport	2020–21	16,488	17,974	6
	Restated 2019-20	18,319	19,855	14
Total	2020–21	1,046,262	17,974	208
	Restated 2019-20	1,071,368	19,855	241

Intensity metric

An intensity metric gives us an indicator of carbon performance based on an operational figure of the number of service users (pupils and learners), with 291 users emitting on average 0.72kgCO2e each. This is measured annually and compared with previous years to show progress in reducing our carbon intensity. The 2019–20 figures have been restated due to a calculation error.

	2020–21	Restated 2019–20
Number of service users	291	274
tCO2e	208	241
	0.72	0.88

Ambitious about Autism initiatives

We are committed to making carbon-reducing changes and have been reviewing our carbon footprint to ensure we have an accurate baseline from which to build on.

We are renewing our fleet of vehicles to move towards lower carbon vehicles. Two of these vehicles were purchased this year. We are also beginning to make other carbon-reducing changes to the estate such as moving towards LED lighting where possible.

Calculations

The following figures were used to convert energy (kWh) to tCO2e figures:

	Litre		CO2e	
	2020–21	2019–20	2020–21	2019–20
Gas	n/a	n/a	0.18316 per tonne	0.18387 or 0.2331 per tonne
Electricity	n/a	n/a	0.21233 per tonne	0.23314 or 0.289 per tonne
Fuel	9.1kWh per litre	9.1kWh per litre	0.31349 per tonne	0.28369 per tonne

Keeping data safe

We are fully committed to protecting details of all the people we work with and who support us. We continue to make sure we're always thinking about privacy and how to keep data safe and secure. Staff are required to stay up to date and informed through regular training. We never stop working on this.

Public benefit

Ambitious about Autism works to support autistic children and young people and their families throughout the UK. TreeHouse School supports pupils aged 4–19, The Rise School support pupils aged 4–18 and Ambitious College supports learners aged 16–25, based on their needs.

Placements of learners are funded by a combination of funding from the Education and Skills Funding Agency and local authorities. Other activities are funded through voluntary income or fees earned from providing a service, for example, providing specialist training or support to parents, teachers and other professionals.

In overseeing the provision of education and the support of children, young people and their families, the trustees of Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust have complied with their duty regarding the guidance on public benefit published by the Charity Commission in exercising their powers and duties.

The trustees have referred to the guidance contained in the Charity Commission's general guidance on public benefit when reviewing the aims and objectives of the charity and in planning its future activities. Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust's principal object is to advance, for the public benefit, education in the UK by developing schools to make special educational provisions for pupils with special educational needs, or 16–19 academies offering curricula appropriate to the needs of their students.

The Trust opened its first school, The Rise School, in September 2014. In particular, the trustees consider how planned activities will contribute to the aims and objectives set, and are committed to NCVO's ethical principles.

Connected organisations

Ambitious about Autism is an active member of the Autism Education Trust, Autism Alliance, British Institute of Learning Disabilities (BILD), Council for Disabled Children, Disabled Children's Partnership, National Association for Non-Maintained and Independent Special Schools (NASS), Natspec, Positive Behaviour Support Alliance and the Special Educational Consortium.

Our education provisions are co-located at Springwest Academy (part of the Tudor Park Education Trust), West Thames College, The College of Haringey, Enfield and North East London and Whittington Hospital.

All the organisations listed here are independent organisations and their results are not included in the financial statements.

Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust

The Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust is a separate exempt charity.

Ambitious about Autism is the sole corporate member of the Trust. Therefore, the results of Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust are consolidated into these group financial statements.

Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust has been chosen to open a new special free school for autistic children and young people in Kingston and is actively seeking further partnerships to develop more special schools.

Our leadership team and advisers

The trustees of Ambitious about Autism are directors and members of the charitable company. They each guarantee to contribute an amount not exceeding £1 to the assets of the charitable company in the event of winding up. The total number of such guarantees at 31 August 2021 was six (2020: nine). The trustees have no beneficial interest in the charitable company.

Trustees of Ambitious about Autism

Neil Goulden
(Chair)

Lesley Longstone
(Vice Chair of the Board of Trustees and Chair of the Education Committee)

Elizabeth Stanton
(Treasurer, Chair of the Finance and Resources Committee and Chair of the Investment Committee)

Paul Disley-Tindell
(Chair of Nominations and Remuneration Committee)

Jonathan Andrews
(until 31 December 2021)

Andy Forbes
(from 10 December 2021)

Eduardo Gutierrez-Garcia
(from 10 December 2021)

Alison Halsey
(until 30 August 2021)

Helen Jeffries
(from 10 December 2021)

Alistair MacCallum
(to 28 January 2022)

Jack Welch
(from 10 December 2021)

Trustees of Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust

Neil Goulden
(Chair)

Lesley Longstone
(Vice Chair)

Koral Anderson
(Trustee and Chair of the Audit Committee until 31 December 2020)

Michael Clark
(Trustee and Chair of the Audit Committee from 1 January 2021)

Paul Disley-Tindell
(Trustee from 10 December 2021 and Chair of the Nominations and Remuneration Committee)

Elizabeth Stanton
(Treasurer and Chair of the Finance and Resources Committee)

Tanith Dodge
(until 3 March 2022)

Joanna Healey

Lucy Nutt

Laura Palmer
(from 10 December 2021)

Kumar Tangri
(from 10 December 2021)

Charlotte Warner
(until 15 December 2021)

Members of Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust

Ambitious about Autism

Martyn Craddock

Paul Disley-Tindell
(until 10 December 2021)

Andy Forbes
(from 28 January 2022)

Eduardo Gutierrez-Garcia
(from 28 January 2022)

Alison Halsey
(until 30 August 2021)

Alistair MacCallum
(to 28 January 2022)

The trustees are supported in their work by the president and vice presidents, who all support the work of our charity.

President

Lord Tim Clement-Jones CBE

Vice presidents

Nick Baldwin CBE

Virginia Bovell CBE

Peter Carroll

John Constantine

Katharine Doré OBE

Karen Edwards OBE

Tristia Harrison

Alex Hatter

Richard Hatter

Nick Hornby

Bruno Paulson

Matthew Punshon

Charlotte Warner

Sid Wells

Youth Council

Jonathan

Grace

Kieran

Dominic

Rayhan

Saffron

Emily

Josefina

Aishah

Patrick

Josef

Lucy

Trinny

Olivia

Youth ambassadors

Jack Welch

Sam Ahern

Jaz Bigden

Expert advisers

Our team of expert advisers are leading academics, clinicians, lawyers and communications professionals, all with an interest in autism and a passion to raise awareness and understanding. They provide advice and guidance on specific projects and campaigns, all as volunteers. We are honoured to be able to draw on the expertise of:

Judith Barnard
Sir Simon Baron-Cohen
Steve Broach
Leo Capella
Prof Tony Charman
Prof Richard Hastings
Prof Patricia Howlin
Jonathan Meth
Dr Emran Mian OBE
David Nicholson
Nick Peacey
Mark Schmid
Dr Rowie Shaw OBE
Fiona Slomovic
Su Thomas
Richard Townley
Gaby Zein

Ambassadors

Our ambassadors come from all walks of life, but all share an interest in autism and a passion to raise awareness and understanding. Our ambassadors are:

Niamh Cusack
Kathy Lette
David Mitchell
Sam Holness
Lucy Mottram
Simon Mottram
Jules Robertson
Hayley Ronson
Jon Snow
Luke Treadaway

Parent patrons

Our team of parent patrons are all people whose lives have been touched by autism:

Nicky Clark
Claire Coombe-Tennant
John Coombe-Tennant
Matthew Davis
Eliza Mishcon
Keith Duffy
Charlotte Moore
Claire Ryan
Sophie Walker

Employ Autism development board

Lord Tim Clement Jones CBE (Chair)
Laurie Edmans CBE
Chris Pond
Tristia Harrison
Alistair MacCallum
Koral Anderson
Sue Adkins
Matt Hutnell
Jonathan Andrews
Katie Vannick-Smith

Business ambassador group

Simon Clements (Chair)
Jean Lavenant
Tim Barber
Matt Davis
Marilyn Swinney
Jim Berrisford
Ricky DeLandro
Danuta Gray
Mark Edwards
Chris Evans
Ruth Kennedy
Nathan Ott
Dom Hilleard
Neil Patel
Harriet Forrest
Ian Iceton
Paul Cunningham
Sally Cairns
Gavin Summer
Magnus Schoeman
Nick Medd
Lucy Thompson
Andrew Mercer
Dan Snape
Richard Jones
Nigel Moralee
Gina Connell

Executive leadership team

The trustees delegate day-to-day management of the charity to the executive leadership team:

Jolanta Lasota
Chief Executive

Vivienne Berkeley
Director of Education

Paul Breckell
Deputy Chief Executive (and Company Secretary from 9 October 2021)

Danae Leaman-Hill
Director of Fundraising and Development

Louise Posocco
Director of Finance and Planning, and Company Secretary (until 8 October 2021)

Helen Spice
Interim Director of Finance and Planning (from 9 October 2021 to 23 January 2022)

Louise Honeysett
Director of Finance and Planning (from 24 January 2022)

Zoe Weaver
Director of People

Harry Wilkinson
Director of Service Development (until 15 October 2021)

Alison Worsley
Director of External Affairs

Independent auditor

RSM UK Audit LLP
25 Farringdon Street, London EC4A 4AB

Bankers

National Westminster Bank Plc
13 Market Place, Reading RG1 2EP

Nationwide Building Society
Nationwide House, Pipers Way, Swindon SN38 1NW

CAF Bank Limited
25 Kings Hill Avenue, Kings Hill, West Malling ME19 4JQ

Solicitors

Stone King LLP
13 Queen Square, Bath BA1 2HJ

Farrer & Co LLP
66 Lincoln's Inn Fields, Holborn, London WC2A 3LH

Investment managers

Rathbone Brothers Public Limited Company
8 Finsbury Circus, London EC2M 7AZ

The statement of trustees' responsibilities

The trustees (who are also directors of Ambitious about Autism for the purposes of company law) are responsible for preparing the Trustees' Annual Report, including the strategic report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

Company law requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year, which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company and group as at the balance sheet date, and of the incoming resources and application of resources, including the income and expenditure, of the group for that period.

In preparing these financial statements, the trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently
- observe the methods and principles in the Charities Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP)
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent
- state whether applicable UK Accounting Standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in operation.

The trustees are responsible for maintaining proper accounting records that disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charitable company and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006.

Statement as to disclosure of information to auditor

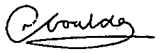
In so far as the trustees are aware:

- there is no relevant audit information of which the charitable company's auditor is unaware
- the trustees have taken all steps that they ought to have taken to make themselves aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the auditor is aware of that information.

The trustees are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charitable company and the group, and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

The trustees are responsible for the maintenance and integrity of the corporate and financial information on the charitable company's website. Legislation in the UK governing the preparation and dissemination of financial statements may differ from legislation in other jurisdictions.

The Trustees' Annual Report is approved by order of the Board of Trustees and the Strategic Report and the Directors' Report required by company law (included therein) are approved by the Board of Trustees in their capacity as the directors at a meeting on 25 March 2022 and signed on their behalf by:



Neil Goulden
Chair of the Board of Trustees

Independent auditor's report to the members of Ambitious about Autism

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of Ambitious about Autism (the 'parent charitable company') and its subsidiaries (the 'group') for the year ended 31 August 2021 which comprise the Consolidated Statement of Financial Activities incorporating an Income and Expenditure Account, the Group and Company Balance Sheets, the Group Cash Flow Statement and notes to the financial statements, including significant accounting policies. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards, including FRS 102 "The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland" (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

In our opinion the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the group's and the parent charitable company's affairs as at 31 August 2021 and of the group's incoming resources and application of resources, including its income and expenditure, for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice; and
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006.

Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)) and applicable law. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of our report. We are independent of the group and parent charitable company in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in the UK, including the Financial Reporting Council

Ethical Standard and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Conclusions relating to going concern

In auditing the financial statements, we have concluded that the trustees' use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.

Based on the work we have performed, we have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the group's or parent charitable company's ability to continue as a going concern for a period of at least 12 months from when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

Our responsibilities and the responsibilities of the trustees with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this report.

Other information

The other information comprises the information included in the annual report other than the financial statements and our auditor's report thereon. The trustees are responsible for the other information contained within the annual report. Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in our report, we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

Our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or our knowledge obtained in the course of the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If we identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, we are required to determine whether this gives rise to a material misstatement in the financial statements themselves. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact.

We have nothing to report in this regard.

Opinions on other matters prescribed by the Companies Act 2006

In our opinion, based on the work undertaken in the course of the audit:

- the information given in the Trustees' Report, which includes the Directors' Report and the Strategic Report prepared for the purposes of company law, for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements; and
- the Directors' Report and the Strategic Report included within the Trustees' Report have been prepared in accordance with applicable legal requirements.

Matters on which we are required to report by exception

In the light of the knowledge and understanding of the group and the parent charitable company and their environment obtained in the course of the audit, we have

not identified material misstatements in the Directors' Report or the Strategic Report included within the Trustees'/Directors' Report.

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters where the Companies Act 2006 requires us to report to you if, in our opinion:

- adequate accounting records have not been kept by the parent charitable company, or returns adequate for our audit have not been received from branches not visited by us; or
- the parent charitable company financial statements are not in agreement with the accounting records and returns; or
- certain disclosures of trustees' remuneration specified by law are not made; or
- we have not received all the information and explanations we require for our audit.

Responsibilities of trustees

As explained more fully in the statement of trustees' responsibilities set out on p82, the trustees (who are also the directors of the charitable company for the purposes of company law) are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view, and for such internal control as the trustees determine is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the trustees are responsible for assessing the group's and parent charitable company's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the trustees either intend to liquidate the group or parent charitable company or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

The extent to which the audit was considered capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud

Irregularities are instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations. The objectives of our audit are to obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence regarding compliance with laws and regulations that have a direct effect on the determination of material amounts and disclosures in the financial statements, to perform audit procedures to help identify instances of non-compliance with other laws and regulations that may have a material effect on the financial statements, and to respond appropriately to identified or suspected non-compliance with laws and regulations identified during the audit.

In relation to fraud, the objectives of our audit are to identify and assess the risk of material

misstatement of the financial statements due to fraud, to obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence regarding the assessed risks of material misstatement due to fraud through designing and implementing appropriate responses and to respond appropriately to fraud or suspected fraud identified during the audit.

However, it is the primary responsibility of management, with the oversight of those charged with governance, to ensure that the entity's operations are conducted in accordance with the provisions of laws and regulations and for the prevention and detection of fraud.

In identifying and assessing risks of material misstatement in respect of irregularities, including fraud, the group audit engagement team:

- obtained an understanding of the nature of the sector, including the legal and regulatory framework that the group and parent charitable company operates in and how the group and parent charitable company are complying with the legal and regulatory framework;
- inquired of management, and those charged with governance, about their own identification and assessment of the risks of irregularities, including any known actual, suspected or alleged instances of fraud;
- discussed matters about non-compliance with laws and regulations and how fraud might occur including assessment of how and where the financial statements may be susceptible to fraud.

As a result of these procedures we consider the most significant laws and regulations that have a direct impact on the financial statements are FRS 102, Charities SORP (FRS 102), Companies Act 2006, Charities Act 2011, the parent charitable company's governing document, tax legislation and Charities (Protection and Social Investment) Act 2016. We performed audit procedures to detect non-compliances which may have a material impact on the financial statements which included reviewing the financial statements including the Trustees' Report, remaining alert to new or unusual transactions which may not be in accordance with the governing documents, inspecting correspondence with tax authorities and evaluating advice received from internal and external advisers.

The most significant laws and regulations that have an indirect impact on the financial statements are those in relation to the Keeping Children Safe in Education under section 175 of the Education Act 2002, and the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR). We performed audit procedures to inquire of management and those charged with governance whether the group is in compliance with these laws and regulations and inspected correspondence with regulatory authorities.

The group audit engagement team identified the risk of management override of controls as the area where the financial statements were most susceptible to material misstatement due to fraud. Audit procedures performed included but were not limited to testing manual journal entries and other adjustments, evaluating the business rationale in relation to significant, unusual transactions and transactions entered into outside the normal course of business and challenging judgements and estimates.

A further description of our responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

is provided on the Financial Reporting Council's website at **www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities.** This description forms part of our auditor's report.

Use of our report

This report is made solely to the charitable company's members, as a body, in accordance with chapter 3 of part 16 of the Companies Act 2006. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the charitable company's members those matters we are required to state to them in an auditor's report and for no other purpose.

To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the charitable company and the charitable company's members as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

RSM UK Audit LLP

Hannah Catchpool
Senior Statutory Auditor

For and on behalf of
RSM UK AUDIT LLP
Statutory Auditor
Chartered Accountants
25 Farringdon Street
London
EC4A 4AB

Date: 28th March 2022

Consolidated statement of financial activities

(incorporating an income and expenditure account)

For the year ended 31 August 2021

		For the year ended 31 August 2021					For the year ended 31 August 2020
			Ambitious about Autism		Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust		
	Note	Unrestricted £'000	Restricted £'000	Subtotal £'000	Restricted £'000	Total £'000	Total £'000
Income from:							
Donations and legacies:							
Gifts and donated services	2	1,068	1,214	2,282	27	**2,309**	2,031
Charitable activities:							
Educational services	3	14,695	175	14,870	5,294	**20,164**	17,671
External affairs	3	-	71	71	-	**71**	103
Other income							
Trading income		222	-	222	16	**238**	63
Investment income		39	-	39	-	**39**	53
CJRS income		31	-	31	-	**31**	118
Total income		**16,055**	**1,460**	**17,515**	**5,337**	**22,852**	**20,039**
Expenditure on:							
Raising funds							
Fundraising activities		642	-	642	-	**642**	936
Investment management costs		13	-	13	-	**13**	12
		655	-	655	-	**655**	948
Charitable activities:							
Educational services		14,191	832	15,023	4,398	**19,421**	17,052
External affairs		879	629	1,508	-	**1,508**	1,239
Total expenditure	**4**	**15,725**	**1,461**	**17,186**	**4,398**	**21,584**	**19,239**
Net income/(expenditure) before other gains/(losses)		**330**	**(1)**	**329**	**939**	**1,268**	**800**
Net gains/(losses) on investments		258	-	258	-	**258**	**(90)**
Net losses on pension deficit		-	-	-	(480)	(480)	(122)
Net income/ (expenditure)	**5**	**588**	**(1)**	**587**	**459**	**1,046**	**588**
Transfers between funds	19	903	(286)	617	(617)	-	-
Net movement in funds		**1,491**	**(287)**	**1,204**	**(158)**	**1,046**	**588**
Reconciliation of funds:							
Total funds brought forward	19	7,476	909	8,385	6,936	**15,321**	14,733
Total funds carried forward	**19**	**8,967**	**622**	**9,589**	**6,778**	**16,367**	**15,321**

Balance sheets

As at 31 August 2021

Company number: 03375255

	Note	Group 31 August 2021 £'000	Group 31 August 2020 £'000	Ambitious about Autism 31 August 2021 £'000	Ambitious about Autism 31 August 2020 £'000
Fixed assets:					
Tangible assets	10	**16,634**	16,846	**10,434**	10,546
Investments	12	**1,878**	1,644	**1,878**	1,644
Intangible assets	11	**103**	66	**103**	66
		18,615	18,556	**12,415**	12,256
Current assets:					
Debtors	13	**824**	803	**1,148**	723
Cash at bank and in hand		**8,678**	6,095	**4,342**	3,758
Short-term deposits		**13**	13	**8**	8
		9,515	6,911	**5,498**	4,489
Liabilities:					
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	14	**(3,819)**	(2,804)	**(2,845)**	(2,595)
Net current assets		**5,696**	**4,107**	**2,653**	**1,894**
Total assets less current liabilities		**24,311**	**22,663**	**15,068**	**14,150**
Creditors: amounts falling due after one year	16	**(5,479)**	**(5,765)**	**(5,479)**	**(5,765)**
Defined benefit pension scheme liability	17	**(2,465)**	**(1,577)**	**-**	**-**
Total net assets	18	**16,367**	**15,321**	**9,589**	**8,385**
Funds					
Restricted funds:					
Ambitious about Autism		622	909	622	909
Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust		6,778	6,936	-	-
Total restricted funds		**7,400**	**7,845**	**622**	**909**
Unrestricted funds:					
Designated funds		6,553	5,578	6,553	5,578
General funds		2,414	1,898	2,414	1,898
Total unrestricted funds		**8,967**	**7,476**	**8,967**	**7,476**
Total funds	19	**16,367**	**15,321**	**9,589**	**8,385**

The financial statements were approved by the trustees on 25 March 2022 and signed on their behalf by

Neil Goulden

Chair of the Board of Trustees

Consolidated statement of cash flows

For the year ended 31 August 2021

	Note	For the year ended 31 August 2021 £'000	£'000	For the year ended 31 August 2020 £'000	£'000
Cash flows from operating activities					
Net cash provided by operating activities	20		**3,698**		1,949
Cash flows from investing activities					
Dividends and interest from investments		**39**		53	
Interest payable		**(92)**		(107)	
Purchase of tangible and intangible fixed assets		**(721)**		(512)	
Proceed from the sale of tangible fixed asset		**5**		-	
Proceeds from the sale of investments		**299**		269	
Change in cash held for investment		**27**		34	
Purchase of investments		**(301)**		(287)	
Net cash used in investing activities			**(744)**		(550)
Cash flows from financing activities					
Purchase of new loans		**-**		1,000	
Repayments of borrowing		**(371)**		(209)	
Net cash (used in)/provided by financing activities			**(371)**		791
Change in cash and cash equivalents			**2,583**		2,190
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the year			**6,108**		3,918
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the year			**8,691**		6,108
Cash and cash equivalents consists of:					
Cash at bank and in hand			**8,678**		6,095
Short-term deposits			**13**		13
			8,691		**6,108**

Net debt reconciliation	**At the start of the year** £'000	**Cash flows** £'000	**Other non-cash changes** £'000	**At end of year** £'000
Cash	6,095	2,583	-	8,678
Cash equivalents	13	-	-	13
Loans falling due within one year	(373)	373	(424)	**(424)**
Loans falling due after more than one year	(5,765)	-	286	**(5,479)**
Total	**(30)**	**2, 956**	**(138)**	**2,788**

Notes to the financial statements
For the year ended 31 August 2021

1. Accounting policies

Ambitious about Autism is a charitable group limited by guarantee and is incorporated in England and Wales. The registered office address is Woodside Avenue, London N10 3JA.

a. Basis of preparation
The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2019) – (Charities SORP FRS 102), the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (March 2018) and the Companies Act 2006.

The financial statements are presented in sterling (£) which is also the functional currency of the group.

The accounts are rounded to the nearest thousand (£'000).

Assets and liabilities are initially recognised at historical cost or transaction value unless otherwise stated in the relevant accounting policy or note.

b. Basis of consolidation
Ambitious about Autism is the sole corporate member of Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust. Therefore the consolidated financial statements of the charity incorporate the financial statements of the Trust, a UK company limited by guarantee (company registration number 08335297) that is also an exempt charity. Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust's results and net assets at 31 August 2021 are consolidated within these accounts on a line-by-line basis. Intercompany transactions and balances between charitable companies are eliminated. Consistent accounting policies have been adopted across the group.

c. Public benefit entity
The charitable company meets the definition of a public benefit entity under FRS 102.

d. Going concern
The trustees consider that there are no material uncertainties about the charitable company's ability to continue as a going concern. A 12-month detailed budget is prepared from year-end as well as a higher-level five-year finance model. The trustees have a reasonable expectation that Ambitious about Autism and the Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust have available cash to settle liabilities as they fall due and have adequate resources to continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future.

Two loans have been acquired, £500k from NatWest and £500k from Rathbones, to provide sufficient liquidity. A Covid-19 fund of £0.6m was established in 2020, (2021, £0.7m) to provide a contingency against future risks as a result of the coronavirus pandemic, including additional costs or losses in income. The financial forecast and assumptions for the financial year 2021–22 have taken into account the financial impact of Covid-19, and due to pupil and learner numbers exceeding budgeted levels, the additional costs of incurred because of the coronavirus pandemic have been offset. The ongoing financial impact of Covid-19 will continue to be monitored over the course of the year.

The trustees do not consider that there are any sources of estimation uncertainty at the reporting date that have a significant risk of causing a material adjustment to the carrying amounts of assets and liabilities for a period of at least 12 months from sign-off.

e. Income
Income is recognised when the group has entitlement to the funds, any performance conditions attached to the income have been met, and it is probable that the income will be received and that the amount can be measured reliably.

Income from government and other grants, whether 'capital' grants or 'revenue' grants, is recognised when the group has entitlement to the funds, any performance conditions attached to the grants have been met, it is probable that the income will be received, and the amount can be measured reliably and is not deferred. Fees are recognised as services are rendered, deferring until criteria are met.

Grant income relating to the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) is recognised under the accrual model. There are no unfulfilled conditions or other contingencies relating to the grant, and there have been no other forms of government assistance from which the entity has directly benefited in relation to the coronavirus pandemic in the year.

School and college fee income received in advance of the provision of a specified service is deferred until the criteria for income recognition are met.

f. Donations of gifts, services and facilities
Donated professional services and donated facilities are recognised as income when the group has control over the item or received the service, any conditions associated with the donation have been met, the receipt of economic benefit from the use by the group of the item is probable and the economic benefit can be measured reliably.

On receipt, donated gifts, professional services and donated facilities are recognised on the basis of the value of the gift to the group, which is the amount the group would have been willing to pay to obtain services or facilities of equivalent economic benefit on the open market; a corresponding amount is then recognised in the expenditure in the period of receipt.

g. Interest receivable
Interest on funds held on deposit is included when receivable and the amount can be measured reliably by the group; this is normally upon notification of the interest paid or payable by the bank.

h. Fund accounting
Restricted funds are to be used for specific purposes as laid down by the donor. Expenditure which meets these criteria is charged to the fund.

Unrestricted funds are donations and other incoming resources received or generated for the charitable purposes.

Designated funds are unrestricted funds earmarked by the trustees for particular purposes.

i. Expenditure and irrecoverable VAT
Expenditure is recognised once there is a legal or constructive obligation to make a payment to a third party, it is probable that settlement will be required and the amount of the obligation can be measured reliably. Expenditure is classified under the following activity headings:

- Costs of raising funds relate to the costs incurred by the charitable company in inducing third parties to make voluntary contributions to it, as well as the cost of any activities with a fundraising purpose.

- Expenditure on charitable activities includes the costs of delivering services and other educational activities undertaken to further the purposes of the group, and their associated support costs.

Ambitious about Autism is VAT registered. As the charity provides a mixture of taxable and exempt supplies, VAT on expenditure that cannot be directly attributed to either type of supply is partially recovered.

Irrecoverable VAT is charged as a cost against the activity for which the expenditure was incurred.

j. Allocation of support costs

Resources are expended and allocated to the particular activity where the cost relates directly to that activity. However, the cost of overall direction and administration of each activity, comprising the salary and the overhead costs of the central function, is apportioned on the following bases, which are estimates, based on staff time, of the amount attributable to each activity.

Central function	Main basis for allocation
Leadership	Time spent
Finance	Staff head count
Human resources	Staff head count
IT	Staff head count
Facilities management	Area occupied
General administration	Staff head count
Premises and office costs	Area occupied

Where information about the aims, objectives and projects of the group is provided to potential beneficiaries, the costs associated with this are allocated to charitable expenditure.

Governance costs are the costs associated with the governance arrangements of the group. These costs are associated with constitutional and statutory requirements and include any costs associated with the strategic management of the group's activities.

The management charge for the Ambitious about Autism support provided to Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust is eliminated on consolidation of the group accounts.

k. Operating leases

Rental charges are charged on a straight-line basis over the term of the lease.

l. Tangible fixed assets

Items of equipment or groups of items are capitalised where the purchase price exceeds £5,000. Depreciation costs are allocated to activities on the basis of the use of the related assets in those activities. Assets are reviewed for impairment if circumstances indicate their carrying value may exceed their net realisable value and value in use.

Depreciation is provided at rates calculated to write down the cost of each asset, except freehold land, to its estimated residual value over its expected useful life. The useful lives are as follows:

Freehold land and building at Woodside Avenue	50 years
Long leasehold	50 years
Short and long leasehold improvements	over the lease term
Computer equipment	3 years
Educational, office furniture and equipment	3–10 years
Motor vehicles	5 years

m. Intangible fixed assets

Intangible assets are measured at cost less accumulated amortisation and any accumulated impairment losses.

Software development costs are recognised as an intangible asset when all the following criteria are demonstrated:

- the technical feasibility of completing the software so that it will be available for use or sale
- the intention to complete the software and use or sell it
- the ability to use the software or to sell it
- how the software will generate probable future economic benefits
- the availability of adequate technical, financial and other resources to complete the development and to use or sell the software
- the ability to measure reliably the expenditure attributable to the software during its development.

Amortisation is charged so as to allocate the cost of intangible assets less their residual values over their estimated useful lives, using the straight-line method. The intangible assets are amortised over their useful economic life as follows:

Software development costs	3 years

n. Listed investments

Investments are a form of basic financial instrument and are initially recognised at their transaction value and subsequently measured at their fair value as at the balance sheet date using the closing quoted market price. Any change in fair value will be recognised in the statement of financial activities. Investment gains and losses, whether realised or unrealised, are combined and shown in the heading 'Net gains/(losses) on investments' in the statement of financial activities.

o. Debtors

Trade and other debtors are recognised at the settlement amount due after any trade discount offered. Prepayments are valued at the amount prepaid net of any trade discounts due.

p. Cash and cash equivalents

Cash and cash equivalents includes cash and short-term, highly liquid investments with a short maturity of three months or less from the date of acquisition or opening of the deposit or similar account.

q. Short-term deposits

Short-term deposits include liquid investments with a maturity of three to 12 months from the date of acquisition or opening of the deposit or similar account.

r. Creditors and provisions

Creditors and provisions are recognised where the group has a present obligation resulting from a past event that will probably result in the transfer of funds to a third party and the amount due to settle the obligation can be measured or estimated reliably. Creditors and provisions are normally recognised at their settlement amount after allowing for any trade discounts due.

s. Financial instruments

The group has elected to apply the provisions of section 11 'Basic Financial Instruments' and section 12 'other Financial Instruments Issues' of FRS 102 in full to all its financial instruments. Basic financial instruments are initially recognised at their transaction value and subsequently measured at their settlement value. Other financial instruments are recognised at fair value with the change in fair value recognised as a gain or loss in the statement of financial activities.

Derivatives are initially recognised at fair value on the date a derivative contract is entered into and are subsequently remeasured to fair value, at each reporting date. Fair value gains and losses are recognised in profit or loss. This has been recognised as expenditure under finance costs.

Borrowings are initially recognised at the transaction price, including transaction costs, and subsequently measured at amortised cost using the effective interest method. Interest expense is recognised on the basis of the effective interest method and is included in interest payable and other similar expenses.

A financial asset is derecognised only when the contractual rights to cash flows expire or are settled, or substantially all the risks and rewards of ownership are transferred to another party, or if some (but not substantially all) risks and rewards of ownership are retained but control of the asset has transferred to another party that is able to sell the asset in its entirety to an unrelated third party. A financial liability (or part thereof) is derecognised when the obligation specified in the contract is discharged, cancelled or expires.

t. Pensions

Ambitious about Autism has a defined contribution pension scheme available to all staff.

On 1 July 2014, and in compliance with government legislation on auto-enrolment, a defined contribution group personal pension scheme was opened. Employees were able to join on inception or under the rules of auto-enrolment with a deferred period of three months.

Ambitious about Autism also contributes to the Teachers' Pension Scheme. The pension available to teaching staff is a defined benefit, multi-employer scheme and the assets and liabilities of the scheme cannot be split out for individual employers. Further information is given in note 17.

The pension costs charged in the statement of financial activities represent the contributions payable by the group in the year to all pension schemes.

Retirement benefits to employees of the Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust are provided by the Teachers' Pension Scheme ('TPS') and the Local Government Pension Scheme ('LGPS'). These are defined benefit schemes.

The TPS is an unfunded scheme and contributions are calculated so as to spread the cost of pensions over employees' working lives with the Trust in such a way that the pension cost is a substantially level percentage of current and future pensionable payroll. The contributions are determined by the Government Actuary's Department on the basis of quadrennial valuations using a prospective unit credit method. TPS is a multi-employer scheme and there is insufficient information available to use defined benefit accounting. The TPS is therefore treated as a defined contribution scheme for accounting purposes and the contributions are recognised in the period to which they relate.

The LGPS is a funded scheme and the assets are held separately from those of Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust in separate trustee-administered funds. Pension scheme assets are measured at fair value and liabilities are measured on an actuarial basis using the projected unit credit method and discounted at a rate equivalent to the current rate of return on a high-quality corporate bond of equivalent term and currency to the liabilities. The actuarial valuations are obtained at least triennially and are updated at each balance sheet date. The amounts charged to operating surplus are the current service costs and the costs of scheme introductions, benefit changes, settlements and curtailments. They are included as part of staff costs as incurred. Net interest on the net defined benefit liability is also recognised in the statement of financial activities and comprises the interest cost on the defined benefit obligation and interest income on the scheme assets, calculated by multiplying the fair value of the scheme assets at the beginning of the period by the rate used to discount the benefit obligations. The difference between the interest income on the scheme assets and the actual return on the scheme assets is recognised in other recognised gains and losses. Actuarial gains and losses are recognised immediately in other recognised gains and losses.

u. Redundancy payments

Redundancy payments are accounted for in the period in which they fall due for payment.

v. Judgements and key sources of estimation uncertainty

In the application of the group's accounting policies, the directors are required to make judgements, estimates and assumptions about the carrying amount of assets and liabilities that are not readily apparent from other sources. The estimates and associated assumptions are based on historical experience and other factors that are considered to be relevant. Actual results may differ from these estimates.

The estimates and underlying assumptions are reviewed on an ongoing basis. Revisions to accounting estimates are recognised in the period in which the estimate is revised where the revision affects only that period, or in the period of the revision and future periods where the revision affects both current and future periods.

Key sources of estimation uncertainty

The estimates and assumptions which have a significant risk of causing a material adjustment to the carrying amounts of assets and liabilities are as follows:

- Depreciation: fixed assets are depreciated over the assets' expected useful life.
- Pensions: the pension liability is sensitive to movements in actuarial assumptions such as discount rate, mortality and inflation. Further details are set out in note 17.

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 August 2021

2. Income from donations and legacies

	For the year ended 31 August 2021				
	Ambitious about Autism			Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust	
	Unrestricted £'000	Restricted £'000	Subtotal £'000	Restricted £'000	**Total £'000**
Gifts	1,018	1,214	2,232	27	**2,259**
Donated services	50	-	50	-	**50**
	1,068	**1,214**	**2,282**	**27**	**2,309**

	For the year ended 31 August 2020				
	Ambitious about Autism			Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust	
	Unrestricted £'000	Restricted £'000	Subtotal £'000	Restricted £'000	**Total £'000**
Gifts	580	1,283	1,863	111	**1,974**
Donated services	57	-	57	-	**57**
	637	**1,283**	**1,920**	**111**	**2,031**

3. Income from charitable activities

	For the year ended 31 August 2021				
	Ambitious about Autism			Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust	
	Unrestricted £'000	Restricted £'000	Subtotal £'000	Restricted £'000	**Total £'000**
Local authorities	12,618	80	12,698	3,883	**16,581**
Education a Skills Funding Agency	2,077	95	2,172	1,411	**3,583**
Subtotal for educational services	**14,695**	**175**	**14,870**	**5,294**	**20,164**
Autism Education Trust	-	71	71	-	**71**
Subtotal for external affairs	**-**	**71**	**71**	**-**	**71**
Total income from charitable activities	**14,695**	**246**	**14,941**	**5,294**	**20,235**

	For the year ended 31 August 2020				
	Ambitious about Autism			Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust	
	Unrestricted £'000	Restricted £'000	Subtotal £'000	Restricted £'000	**Total £'000**
Local authorities	11,246	38	11,284	3,362	**14,646**
Education and Skills Funding Agency	1,867	67	1,934	1,091	**3,025**
Subtotal for educational services	**13,113**	**105**	**13,218**	**4,453**	**17,671**
Autism Education Trust	-	103	103	-	**103**
Subtotal for external affairs	**-**	**103**	**103**	**-**	**103**
Total income from charitable activities	**13,113**	**208**	**13,321**	**4,453**	**17,774**

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 August 2021

4. Analysis of expenditure

	Staff costs (note 6) £'000	Direct costs £'000	Finance (incl loan interest) £'000	Human resources £'000	Information technology £'000	Premises and office costs £'000	Leadership £'000	Support costs £'000	Governance costs £'000	For the year ended 31 August 2021 £'000
Ambitious about Autism:										
Cost of generating funds	468	49	-	-	-	20	-	104	14	**655**
Educational services	9,144	830	4	-	-	867	-	3,846	332	**15,023**
External affairs	901	408	-	-	-	16	-	158	25	**1,508**
Ambitious about Autism	**10,513**	**1,287**	**4**	**-**	**-**	**903**	**-**	**4,108**	**371**	**17,186**
Support costs	1,894	258	857	461	161	467	10	**(4,108)**	-	**-**
Governance costs	301	36	-	-	-	2	32	-	**(371)**	**-**
Allocated costs	**2,195**	**294**	**857**	**461**	**161**	**469**	**42**	**(4,108)**	**(371)**	**-**
Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust	3,066	1,118	-	-	-	214	-	-	-	**4,398**
Total expenditure 2021	**15,774**	**2,699**	**861**	**461**	**161**	**1,586**	**42**	**-**	**-**	**21,584**

Resources expended are allocated to the particular activity where the cost relates directly to that activity. However, the cost of overall direction and administration of each activity, comprising the salary and the overhead costs of the central function, is apportioned based on staff time, of the amount attributable to each activity.

All Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust support costs are paid through management fees, which are eliminated on consolidation. Any other costs are allocated directly to Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust.

	Staff costs (note 6) £'000	Direct costs £'000	Finance (incl loan interest) £'000	Human resources £'000	Information technology £'000	Premises and office costs £'000	Leadership £'000	Support costs £'000	Governance costs £'000	For the year ended 31 August 2020 £'000
Ambitious about Autism:										
Cost of generating funds	482	355	-	-	-	7	-	93	11	**948**
Educational services	8,379	738	1	-	-	601	-	3,415	297	**13,431**
External affairs	787	257	-	-	-	22	-	153	20	**1,239**
Ambitious about Autism	**9,648**	**1,350**	**1**	**-**	**-**	**630**	**-**	**3,661**	**328**	**15,618**
Support costs	1,589	236	778	387	131	526	14	**(3,661)**	-	**-**
Governance costs	280	29	-	-	-	1	18	-	**(328)**	**-**
Allocated costs	**1,869**	**265**	**778**	**387**	**131**	**527**	**32**	**(3,661)**	**(328)**	**-**
Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust	2,704	747	-	-	-	170	-	-	-	**3,621**
Total expenditure 2020	**14,221**	**2,362**	**779**	**387**	**131**	**1,327**	**32**	**-**	**-**	**19,239**

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 August 2021

5. Net income for the year

This is stated after charging:		For the year ended 31 August 2021 £'000	Restated for the year ended 31 August 2020 £'000
Depreciation		**860**	870
Amortisation		**36**	12
Derivative Liability		**136**	-
Interest payable		**100**	107
Auditor's remuneration:			
	Ambitious about Autism	**29**	29
	Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust	**19**	19
	Ambitious about Autism Teachers, Pension Scheme audit	**1**	1
	Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust annual accounts return	**2**	2
	Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust Teachers, Pension Scheme audit	**1**	1
	Ambitious about Autism other services	**4**	-
	Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust other services	**2**	-
Payments under operating leases:	Property	**134**	135
	Equipment	**20**	21

The 2019-20 figures have been restated to include VAT.

6. Analysis of group staff costs, trustee remuneration and expenses, and the costs of key management personnel

Staff costs were as follows:	For the year ended 31 August 2021 £'000	For year ended 31 August 2020 £'000
Salaries and wages	**13,326**	12,179
Social security costs	**1,265**	1,122
Employer's contribution to defined benefit pension schemes	**802**	599
Employer's contribution to defined contribution pension schemes	**381**	321
	15,774	**14,221**

Redundancy and termination costs (including payment in lieu of notice) of £49,491 were paid in the year (2020: £3,228).

The following number of employees received employee benefits (excluding employer pension and national insurance costs) during the year to 31 August 2021, between:	For the year ended 31 August 2021 £'000	For year ended 31 August 2020 £'000
£60,000–£69,999	**8**	3
£70,000–£79,999	**3**	4
£80,000–£89,999	**4**	2
£90,000–£99,999	**2**	2
£100,000–£109,999	**1**	1
£110,000–£119,999	**2**	2

The number of higher earners has increased due to the planned strengthening and development of the management team in light of the charity's ongoing growth strategy and investment in education.

The total employee benefits including employer pension and national insurance contributions of the key management personnel were £898,225 for the 12-month period to 31 August 2021 (2020: £1,289,537).

Jolanta Lasota, Chief Executive of Ambitious about Autism, was paid an annual salary of £115,827 to 31 August 2021 (2020: £115,000).

The charity trustees were not paid and did not receive any other benefits from employment with the charity in the year (2020: £nil). No charity trustee received payment for professional or other services supplied to the charity (2020: £nil).

Trustees did not claim any expenses for reimbursement of travel and subsistence costs in 2021 (2020: £nil).

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 August 2021

7. Staff numbers

The average number of employees (headcount based on number of staff employed) during the year was as follows:

	For the year ended 31 August 2021 No	For the year ended 31 August 2020 No
Raising funds	12	11
Educational services	408	395
External affairs	18	19
Support	39	35
	477	460

The increase of staff numbers is due to the planned growth across educational services.

The fulltime equivalent of staff employed during the year was as follows:

	For the year ended 31 August 2021 No	For the year ended 31 August 2020 No
Raising funds	13	13
Educational services	375	365
External affairs	15	17
Support	35	32
	438	427

8. Related party transactions

The charity purchased £3,709 (2020: £6,012) of office furniture from Assman Office Furniture during the year. Assman Office Furniture is managed by the partner of Vivienne Berkeley, director of education. At the balance sheet date, the amount has been fully paid leaving a nil creditor balance (2020: nil).

Charlotte Warner, a trustee of the Trust until December 2021, is also the chair of Tudor Park Education Trust, which runs Springwest Academy. The Rise School holds a contract with Tudor Park Education Trust with respect to the procurement of curriculum placements, provision of caretaker services, grounds maintenance and the car park. During the year, the trust made payments totalling £34k (2020: £29k) to Springwest Academy. Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust entered into a 125-year lease with Tudor Park Education Trust commencing on 19 May 2015 for the site shared with Springwest Academy and pays a peppercorn rent to Tudor Park Education Trust. At the year end, there was no outstanding balance (2020: nil) with Springwest Academy.

During the year trustees either personally donated or donated through entities where they have significant control a total of £16,823 (2020: £44,792) to the charity. Of these, none were made donated to restricted funds (2020: £41,355).

Paul Breckell is an unpaid trustee of NCVO and NCVO Trading Ltd. Ambitious about Autism has booked rooms at The Society Building, which is run by NCVO (via NCVO Trading Limited). During the year payments to NCVO were £1,177 (2020: £2,360). At the year end, there was a £411 creditor balance with NCVO (2020: nil).

Services were provided to Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust at a cost of £617k from September 2020 to August 2021 (2020: £437k). These services include finance, education, HR, communications, facilities and IT support. These are provided at cost and would otherwise need to be procured commercially. The increase is due to the growth in The Rise School. At year end £267k (2020: £63k) was reported under amounts owed by group undertakings (debtors) , nil (2020: £5k) under amounts owed to group undertakings (creditors), and £205k (2020: nil) as accrued income (debtors).

9. Taxation

The group is exempt from corporation tax as all its income is charitable and is applied for charitable purposes.

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 August 2021

10. Tangible fixed assets

Group	Freehold land and buildings £'000	Long leasehold £'000	Leasehold improvements £'000	Educational, office furniture and equipment £'000	Computer equipment £'000	Motor vehicles £'000	Total £'000
Cost							
At the start of the year	11,864	6,550	1,729	639	1,095	166	**22,043**
Additions	39	92	-	358	88	71	**648**
Disposals	-	-	-	-	(35)	(19)	**(54)**
At the end of the year	11,903	6,642	1,729	997	1,148	218	**22,637**
Depreciation							
At the start of the year	2,805	590	555	449	682	116	**5,197**
Charge	245	128	188	57	223	19	**860**
Disposals	-	-	-	-	(35)	(19)	**(54)**
At the end of the year	3,050	718	743	506	870	116	**6,003**
Net book value							
At the end of the year	**8,853**	**5,924**	**986**	**491**	**278**	**102**	**16,634**
At the start of the year	**9,059**	**5,960**	**1,174**	**190**	**413**	**50**	**16,846**

Ambitious about Autism	Freehold land and buildings £'000	Leasehold improvements £'000	Educational, office furniture and equipment £'000	Computer equipment £'000	Motor vehicles £'000	Total £'000
Cost						
At the start of the year	11,864	1,580	454	868	166	**14,932**
Additions	39	-	358	52	71	**520**
Disposals	-	-	-	(35)	(19)	**(54)**
At the end of the year	11,903	1,580	812	885	218	**15,398**
Depreciation						
At the start of the year	2,805	540	348	577	116	**4,386**
Charge	245	173	27	168	19	**632**
Disposals	-	-	-	(35)	(19)	**(54)**
At the end of the year	3,050	713	375	710	116	**4,964**
Net book value						
At the end of the year	**8,853**	**867**	**437**	**175**	**102**	**10,434**
At the start of the year	**9,059**	**1,040**	**106**	**291**	**50**	**10,546**

Land (Ambitious about Autism) with a cost of £834,000 (2020: £834,000) is included within freehold property and is not depreciated.

The long leasehold (125 years) refers to The Rise School building.

All the above assets are used for charitable purposes.

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 August 2021

11. Intangible fixed assets

Group	Computer software £'000	Total £'000
Cost		
At the start of the year	85	**85**
Additions in the year	73	**73**
Disposals in the year	-	-
At the end of the year	158	**158**
Amortisation		
At the start of the year	19	**19**
Charge for the year	36	**36**
Disposals in the year	-	-
At the end of the year	55	**55**
Net book value		
At the end of the year	103	**103**
At the start of the year	66	**66**

Amortisation charge is reflected in the statement of financial activities.

Ambitious about Autism	Computer software £'000	Total £'000
Cost		
At the start of the year	85	**85**
Additions in the year	73	**73**
Disposals in the year	-	-
At the end of the year	158	**158**
Amortisation		
At the start of the year	19	**19**
Charge for the year	36	**36**
Disposals in the year	-	-
At the end of the year	55	**55**
Net book value		
At the end of the year	103	**103**
At the start of the year	66	**66**

Notes to the financial statements
For the year ended 31 August 2021

12. Investments

Group and Ambitious about Autism	31 August 2021 £'000	31 August 2020 £'000
Market value at the start of the year	**1,590**	1,662
Additions at cost	**301**	287
Disposal proceeds	**(299)**	(269)
Net gain/(loss) on change in fair value	**258**	(90)
Market value at the end of the year	**1,850**	1,590
Cash held in investments	**28**	54
Total investments held	**1,878**	**1,644**

Investments comprise	31 August 2021 £'000	31 August 2020 £'000
Listed securities		
Fixed interest	**262**	278
Direct UK equities	**651**	530
Direct overseas equities	**708**	548
Alternatives – property and managed funds	**229**	234
Cash held for re-investment	**21**	48
Cash	**7**	6
Market value at the end of the year	**1,878**	**1,644**

The historical cost of investments is £1,540k (2020: £1,388k).

13. Debtors

	Group		Ambitious about Autism	
	31 August 2021 £'000	31 August 2020 £'000	31 August 2021 £'000	31 August 2020 £'000
Trade debtors	**367**	348	**319**	332
Amounts owed by group undertakings	**-**	-	**267**	63
Other debtors	**104**	144	**14**	22
Prepayments	**217**	195	**206**	190
Accrued income	**136**	116	**342**	116
	824	**803**	**1,148**	**723**

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 August 2021

14. Creditors: amounts falling due within one year

	Group		Ambitious about Autism	
	31 August 2021 £'000	31 August 2020 £'000	**31 August 2021 £'000**	31 August 2020 £'000
Bank loans	**424**	373	**424**	373
Amounts owed to group undertakings	**-**	-	**-**	5
Trade creditors	**475**	320	**441**	296
Taxation and social security	**357**	397	**299**	365
Other creditors	**132**	179	**100**	156
Accruals	**669**	396	**412**	323
Deferred income (note 15)	**1,762**	1,139	**1,169**	1,077
	3,819	**2,804**	**2,845**	**2,595**

15. Deferred income

	Group		Ambitious about Autism	
Deferred income comprises fees received in advance:	**31 August 2021 £'000**	31 August 2020 £'000	**31 August 2021 £'000**	31 August 2020 £'000
Balance at the beginning of the year	**1,139**	1,104	**1,077**	1,078
Amount released to income in the year	**(1,139)**	(1,104)	**(1,077)**	(1,078)
Amount deferred in the year	**1,762**	1,139	**1,169**	1,077
Balance at the end of the year	**1,762**	**1,139**	**1,169**	**1,077**

Deferred income as at 31 August 2021 relates to autumn 2021 term fees that were received in advance of the new academic year.

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 August 2021

16. Creditors: amounts falling due after one period

Group and Ambitious about Autism	31 August 2021 £'000	31 August 2020 £'000
Loans to finance the freehold property	4,148	4,480
Loan to finance Ambitious College	1,195	1,285
Derivative liability	136	-
Balance at the end of the year	**5,479**	**5,765**

The charity has a loan from Futurebuilders which commenced in October 2008 and is repayable over 25 years. Interest is chargeable at 1.25% above the BoE base rate. The loan is secured over the freehold land and buildings at Woodside Avenue.

The charity also has a loan from NatWest, in tranches of £1.1m and £1.9m, which commenced in November 2008 and April 2012 respectively. Interest is chargeable at 0.75% above LIBOR and 1.25% above LIBOR respectively, until 31 January 2022. From 1 February 2022, both loans were moved to the SONIA rate. One tranche of the loan (£1.1m) is capped at an interest rate of 4%. The loan is repayable from November 2013 over 22 years. The loan is secured over the freehold land and buildings at Woodside Avenue.

Two new loans were acquired in August 2020: £500k from Rathbones and the other £500k from NatWest. Both loans charge interest of 2.5% over base rate. The NatWest loan is repayable over 20 years and the Rathbones loan is repayable in five years.

The charity is using an interest rate swap to manage its exposure to interest rate movements on its £1.1m bank loan with NatWest. The agreement was entered into a variable to fixed interest rate swap with NatWest in February 2011. The contract swaps the variable rate of interest for a fixed rate of 4% per annum for the period up to August 2033 and with a fair value loss of £136k recognised in the year.

The capital amounts repayable under each loan are:	Within 1 year £'000	2–5 years £'000	Over 5 years £'000
Futurebuilders	264	1,091	1,345
NatWest £1.1m tranche	49	223	530
NatWest £1.9m tranche	91	386	809
NatWest £500k	20	85	376
Rathbones £500k	-	500	-
	424	**2,285**	**3,060**

Notes to the financial statements
For the year ended 31 August 2021

17. Pension schemes

Ambitious about Autism makes contributions to the Aegon Pension Scheme, The People's Pension and into one employee's pension scheme. Both Ambitious about Autism and Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust pay into the Teachers' Pension Scheme. Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust also make contributions to the Local Government Pension Scheme.

Contributions to these schemes were £1,183k (2020: £921k).

Defined contribution schemes
The assets of the schemes are held separately from those of Ambitious about Autism. Pension costs charged in the statement of financial activities represent the contributions payable by Ambitious about Autism for the year.

Teachers' Pension Scheme
Introduction
The Teachers' Pension Scheme (TPS) is a statutory, contributory, defined benefit scheme, governed by the Teachers' Pensions Regulations (2010) and, from 1 April 2014, by the Teachers' Pension Scheme Regulations 2014. Membership is automatic for full-time teachers in academies and, from 1 January 2007, automatic for teachers in part-time employment following appointment or a change of contract, although they may opt out.

The TPS is an unfunded scheme and members contribute on a 'pay as you go' basis – these contributions along with those made by employers are credited to the Exchequer. Retirement and other pension benefits are paid by public funds provided by Parliament.

Valuation of the Teachers' Pension Scheme
The Government Actuary's Department, using normal actuarial principles, conducts a formal actuarial review of the TPS in accordance with the Public Service Pensions (Valuations and Employer Cost Cap) Directions 2014 published by HM Treasury every four years. The aim of the review is to specify the level of future contributions. Actuarial scheme valuations are dependent on assumptions about the value of future costs, design of benefits and many other factors. The latest actuarial valuation of the TPS was carried out as at 31 March 2016. The valuation report was published by the Department for Education on 5 March 2019. The key elements of the valuation and subsequent consultation are:

- employer contribution rates set at 23.68% of pensionable pay (including a 0.08% employer administration charge);
- total scheme liabilities (pensions currently in payment and the estimated cost of future benefits) for service to the effective date of £218,100m, and notional assets (estimated future contributions together with the notional investments held at the valuation date) of £196,100m giving a notional past service deficit of £22,000m;
- the SCAPE rate, set by HM Treasury, is used to determine the notional investment return.
- The current SCAPE rate is 2.4% above the rate of CPI. Assumed real rate of return is 2.4% in excess of prices and 2% in excess of earnings. The rate of real earnings growth is assumed to be 2.2%. The assumed nominal rate of return including earnings growth is 4.45%. The next valuation result is due to be implemented from 1 April 2023.

A copy of the valuation report and supporting documentation is on the Teachers' Pensions website.

Under the definitions set out in FRS 102, the TPS is a multi-employer pension scheme. The group is unable to quantify its share of liabilities under the scheme and therefore, in accordance with FRS 102, has accounted for its contributions to the scheme as if it were a defined contribution scheme. The group has set out above the information available on the scheme.

The employer's pension costs paid to TPS by Ambitious about Autism in the year amounted to £299k (2020: £225k).

The employer's pension costs paid to TPS by Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust in the year amounted to £193k (2020: £162k).

31 Ambitious about Autism employees were members of the scheme at 31 August 2021 (2020: 26).

19 Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust employees were members of the scheme at 31 August 2021 (2020: 15).

Local Government Pension Scheme
The Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) is a funded, defined benefit pension scheme, with the assets held in separate trustee-administered funds. The total contributions made for the year ended 31 August 2021 were £379k (2020: £290k), of which employer's contributions totalled £301k (2020: £219k) and employees' contributions totalled £78k (2020: £71k). Contribution rates for employees increase with salary and during the year ended 31 August 2021 employee primary contribution rates were between 5.5% and 12.5% of pensionable salary. The agreed contribution rates for future years are 23.3% for employers, and for employees a minimum of 5.5% to a maximum of 12.5% of pensionable salary. During the year ended 31 August 2021, no employees took advantage of the 50/50 option, where employees can pay 50% of normal contributions to build up half the normal pension.

Parliament has agreed, at the request of the secretary of state for education, to a guarantee that, in the event of academy closure, outstanding Local Government Pension Scheme liabilities would be met by the Department for Education. The guarantee came into force on 18 July 2013.

At 31 August 2021, 67 employees were members of the scheme (2020: 55).

The most recent comprehensive actuarial valuation report is dated 12 October 2021.

Notes to the financial statements
For the year ended 31 August 2021

17. Pension schemes *(continued)*

Principal actuarial assumptions	At 31 August 2021 £'000	At 31 August 2020 £'000
Rate of increase in salaries	**3.85%**	3.20%
Rate of increase for pensions in payment/inflation	**2.85%**	2.20%
Discount rate for scheme liabilities	**1.70%**	1.65%
Inflation assumption (CPI)	**2.85%**	2.20%
Commutation of pensions to lump sums	**50.00%**	50.00%

Sensitivity analysis	£'000	£'000	£'000
Adjustment to discount rate	**0.10%**	**0.00%**	**-0.10%**
Present value of total obligation	3,809	3,957	4,111
Projected service cost	834	872	912
Adjustment to long-term salary increase	**0.10%**	**0.00%**	**-0.10%**
Present value of total obligation	3,959	3,957	3,955
Projected service cost	873	872	872
Adjustment to pension increases and deferred revaluation	**0.10%**	**0.00%**	**-0.10%**
Present value of total obligation	4,107	3,957	3,797
Projected service cost	911	872	834
Adjustment to life expectancy assumptions	**+ 1 Year**	**None**	**- 1 Year**
Present value of total obligation	4,124	3,957	3,797
Projected service cost	913	872	834

The current mortality assumptions include sufficient allowance for future improvements in mortality rates. The assumed life expectations at retirement age 65 are:

	At 31 August 2021 £'000	At 31 August 2020 £'000
Retiring today		
Males	**21**	21.3
Females	**23.8**	23.9
Retiring in 20 years		
Males	**22.4**	22.8
Females	**25.6**	25.5

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 August 2021

17. Pension schemes *(continued)*

The estimated asset allocation as at 31 August 2021 is as follows:

	31 August 2021 £'000	%	31 August 2020 £'000	%
Equities	953	64%	541	61%
Gilts	69	5%	41	5%
Other bonds	157	10%	104	9%
Property	61	4%	40	5%
Absolute return funds	236	16%	157	18%
Cash	16	1%	14	2%
Total market value of assets	**1,492**	**100%**	**897**	**100%**
Present value of scheme liabilities - funded	**(3,957)**		**(2,474)**	
Deficit in the scheme	**(2,465)**		**(1,577)**	

The group's share of the assets of the fund is less than 1%.

The actual return on scheme assets was £191,000 (2020: £5,000).

Amounts recognised in the statement of financial activities	31 August 2021 £'000	31 August 2020 £'000
Current service cost	(684)	(470)
Net interest cost	(24)	(21)
Total operating charge	**(708)**	**(491)**

Changes in the present value of defined benefit obligations were as follows:	2021 £'000	2020 £'000
At 1 September	2,474	1,908
Current service cost	684	470
Interest cost	42	37
Actuarial loss/(gain)	653	(4)
Benefits paid	26	(8)
Employee contributions	78	71
At 31 August	3,957	2,474

Changes in the fair value of the group's share of scheme assets:	2021 £'000	2020 £'000
At 1 September	897	726
Interest on assets	18	16
Return on plan assets (excluding net interest on the defined pension liability)	173	(11)
Other actuarial losses	-	(115)
Employer contributions	301	219
Employee contributions	78	71
Administration expenses	(1)	(1)
Benefits paid	26	(8)
At 31 August	1,492	897

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 August 2021

18. Analysis of net assets between funds

Fund balances as at 31 August 2021 are represented by:

	Ambitious about Autism			Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust	
Group	General unrestricted £'000	Designated £'000	Restricted £'000	Restricted £'000	**Total funds £'000**
Tangible fixed assets	-	10,434	-	6,200	**16,634**
Investments	1,878	-	-	-	**1,878**
Intangible fixed assets	-	103	-	-	**103**
Net current assets	536	1,495	622	3,043	**5,696**
Long-term liabilities	-	(5,479)	-	(2,465)	**(7,944)**
	2,414	**6,553**	**622**	**6,778**	**16,367**

Ambitious about Autism	General unrestricted £'000	Designated £'000	Restricted £'000	**Total funds £'000**
Tangible fixed assets	-	10,434	-	**10,434**
Investments	1,878	-	-	**1,878**
Intangible fixed assets	-	103	-	**103**
Net current assets	536	1,495	622	**2,653**
Long-term liabilities	-	(5,479)	-	**(5,479)**
	2,414	**6,553**	**622**	**9,589**

Fund balances as at 31 August 2020 are represented by:

	Ambitious about Autism			Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust	
Group	General unrestricted £'000	Designated £'000	Restricted £'000	Restricted £'000	**Total funds £'000**
Tangible fixed assets	-	10,546	-	6,300	**16,846**
Investments	1,644	-	-	-	**1,644**
Intangible fixed assets	-	66	-	-	**66**
Net current assets	254	731	909	2,213	**4,107**
Long term liabilities	-	(5,765)	-	(1,577)	**(7,342)**
	1,898	**5,578**	**909**	**6,936**	**15,321**

Ambitious about Autism	General unrestricted £'000	Designated £'000	Restricted £'000	**Total funds £'000**
Tangible fixed assets	-	10,546	-	**10,546**
Investments	1,644	-	-	**1,644**
Intangible fixed assets	-	66	-	**66**
Net current assets	254	731	909	**1,894**
Long-term liabilities	-	(5,765)	-	**(5,765)**
	1,898	**5,578**	**909**	**8,385**

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 August 2021

19a. Movement in funds For the year ended 31 August 2021:	At the start of the year £'000	Incoming resources and gains £'000	Outgoing resources and losses £'000	Transfers £'000	At the end of the year £'000
Restricted funds:					
a) Ambitious about Autism					
Ambitious College	56	120	(176)	-	-
Education services projects	137	-	(37)	-	100
Employ Autism and Autism Exchange	20	590	(459)	-	151
Family support	109	121	(201)	-	29
Participation	40	112	(102)	-	50
TreeHouse School	95	456	(120)	(249)	182
Online information support	48	-	(38)	-	10
Online youth support	122	-	(114)	-	8
IT equipment	168	39	(93)	(37)	77
Other	114	22	(121)	-	15
Total Ambitious about Autism restricted funds	**909**	**1,460**	**(1,461)**	**(286)**	**622**
b) Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust	6,936	5,337	(4,878)	(617)	6,778
Total group restricted funds	**7,845**	**6,797**	**(6,339)**	**(903)**	**7,400**
Ambitious about Autism unrestricted funds:					
Designated funds					
Fixed assets	4,086	-	(666)	594	4,014
School development	5	-	-	-	5
Transformation fund	173	-	(39)	1,048	1,182
Covid recovery fund	590	7	(319)	390	668
Buildings maintenance and development fund	724	-	(3)	(37)	684
Total designated funds	**5,578**	**7**	**(1,027)**	**1,995**	**6,553**
General funds	1,898	16,305	(14,697)	(1,092)	2,414
Total Ambitious about Autism unrestricted funds	**7,476**	**16,312**	**(15,724)**	**903**	**8,967**
Total group funds	**15,321**	**23,109**	**(22,063)**	**-**	**16,367**

Transfers

£594k has been designated to the fixed asset funds to cover the depreciation of fixed assets acquired during the year, including the completion of the websites, redevelopment of the TreeHouse School training kitchen and IT equipment. This includes £286k of fixed assets funded from restricted income.

£137k has been designated from the cyclical maintenance fund to provide major refurbishment works at TreeHouse School.

£390k has been designated from unrestricted funds to the Covid recovery fund to provide a contingency against continued and future risks as a result of the coronavirus pandemic, including additional costs or losses in income.

£1,048k has been designated from unrestricted funds to the transformation fund to support our new strategy work.

£617k was transferred from Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust to general funds to reflect the intercompany management charge.

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 August 2021

19a. Movement in funds *(continued)*

For the year ended 31 August 2020:	At the start of the year £'000	Incoming resources and gains £'000	Outgoing resources and losses £'000	Transfers £'000	At the end of the year £'000
Restricted funds:					
a) Ambitious about Autism					
Ambitious College	95	100	(139)	-	**56**
Education services projects	148	337	(348)	-	**137**
Autism Exchange	24	58	(62)	-	**20**
Family support	13	162	(66)	-	**109**
Participation	93	59	(112)	-	**40**
Succeeding at college	22	65	(47)	-	**40**
TreeHouse School	96	109	(48)	(62)	**95**
Online information support	-	48	-	-	**48**
Online youth Support	-	122	-	-	**122**
IT equipment	-	238	-	(70)	**168**
Other	43	200	(169)	-	**74**
Total Ambitious about Autism restricted funds	**534**	**1,498**	**(991)**	**(132)**	**909**
b) Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust	6,566	4,564	(3,743)	(451)	**6,936**
Total group restricted funds	**7,100**	**6,062**	**(4,734)**	**(583)**	**7,845**
Ambitious about Autism unrestricted funds:					
Designated funds					
Fixed assets	4,295	-	(668)	459	**4,086**
School development	5	-	-	-	**5**
Transformation fund	100	-	(27)	100	**173**
Covid recovery fund	-	-	-	590	**590**
Buildings maintenance and development fund	819	-	-	(95)	**724**
Total designated funds	**5,219**	**-**	**(695)**	**1,054**	**5,578**
General funds	2,414	13,887	(13,932)	(471)	**1,898**
Total Ambitious about Autism unrestricted funds	**7,633**	**13,887**	**(14,627)**	**583**	**7,476**
Total group funds	**14,733**	**19,949**	**(19,361)**	**-**	**15,321**

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 August 2021

19b. Summary movement in funds

Purpose of restricted funds:

Ambitious College	The charity continues its work to develop Ambitious College, London's first specialist day college for autistic young people aged 16–25 including those with learning disabilities. Ambitious College has two campuses co-located within the College of Haringey, Enfield and North East London and West Thames College.
Education services projects	This fund includes developing and embedding a competency framework for the Ambitious Approach. The Ambitious Approach is our model of education practice, which was designed to be used in our education settings to support autistic children and young people. At its heart, the approach is centred around improving the quality of life of autistic young people while they are in education and ensuring this quality of life continues into adulthood. The framework is being embedded in the charity, and in partner schools and colleges, and includes audit tools, implementation guidance, evaluation protocols, parent toolkits and training materials.
Employ Autism	*Employ Autism's mission is to ensure that more autistic people can become part of the workforce. The programme acts* as a bridge to employment for autistic people by working with employers and careers and employability professionals to increase confidence in autism and neurodiversity, and as a result create opportunities in the workplace. We deliver training, resources and ongoing mentorship to a wide network of partners across the UK and together drive a collective movement for change. The programme comprises the Employ Autism network, the Employ Autism Higher Education network and Autism Exchange.
Learner and Family Support	Our specialist Learner and Family Support team helps the parents and carers of autistic children and young people attending our educational settings throughout their journey with us. We ensure that families have increased knowledge, skills and confidence to support autistic children and young people in their care by providing timely direct advice and support. This includes support at times of transition such as from school to further education, training or other placement, and to adulthood; and advocacy for families to try and secure statutory services such as respite care or social care support.
Participation	Young people are at the heart of everything we do. We listen to them to ensure our work reflects their views and needs. *We stand with them and ensure their voices are heard and considered by policymakers and decision-makers,* the media and the general public. Through our Ambitious Youth Network, online peer support and project work we bring autistic young people together to tackle isolation and loneliness, understand their autistic identity and have their voices heard.
TreeHouse School	Funding provided to support a range of specific activities across the school.
Online information support	A project to provide vital information online for parents and carers, and empowerment to connect and support each other.
Online youth support	A project to provide vital information online for autistic young people, including through a new online community platform for the Ambitious Youth Network.
IT equipment	This fund supports additional IT equipment and resources for 300 autistic children and young people in our schools and college, so they can access education and support.
Other	Other funds represent a number of small funds.

Purpose of designated funds:

Fixed assets	This fund represents the net book value of the fixed assets, net of the loans used to purchase them, which are not, by the nature of fixed assets, readily available for other purposes.
Schools development	The school fund has been established to fund school development.
Transformation fund	This fund has been established to support the organisation's new strategy.
Buildings maintenance and development fund	The fund has been allocated to provide for any repairs to and development of the building based on 30-year life cycle costings prepared by external consultants.
Covid recovery fund	This fund has been established to support the organisation in managing the risks and impact of the coronavirus pandemic.

Notes to the financial statements
For the year ended 31 August 2021

20. Net cash provided by (used in) group operating activities

	2021 £'000	2020 £'000
Net income	1,046	588
Depreciation and amortisation charges	895	882
(Gains)/losses on investments	(258)	90
(Gain) on sale of fixed assets	(5)	-
Dividends, interest and rent from investments	(39)	(53)
Interest payable	92	107
(Increase)/decrease in debtors	(21)	64
Increase in derivative liability	136	-
Increase/(decrease) in creditors	964	(124)
Increase in pension deficit	888	395
Net cash provided by operating activities	**3,698**	**1,949**

21. Operating lease commitments

The group's total future minimum lease payments under non-cancellable operating leases is as follows for each of the following periods:

	Property		Equipment	
	2021 £'000	Restated 2020 £'000	2021 £'000	2020 £'000
Less than one year	134	134	11	23
One to five years	560	562	19	30
Over five years	270	402	-	-
	964	1,098	30	53

The 2019–20 figures have been restated due to a correction to the calculations for the break clause on 31 July 2021.

22. Capital commitments

At the balance sheet date, the group had contractual capital commitments of £146k (2020: £37k).

23. Legal status of the charity

The charity is a company limited by guarantee and has no share capital. The liability of each member in the event of winding up is £1.

Notes to the financial statements
For the year ended 31 August 2021

24. Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust

On 1 April 2017, Ambitious about Autism became the sole member of Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust, a company limited by guarantee and an exempt charity (company number 08335297).

Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust operates independently from Ambitious about Autism and as such Ambitious about Autism has no right or access to the assets (cash and non-cash) of Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust. In the group accounts, all income and reserves of Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust are treated as restricted. While both entities operate independently the accounts are consolidated on the basis that Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust is the sole corporate member of Ambitious about Autism.

Balance sheet	2021 £'000	2020 £'000
Fixed assets		
Tangible assets	**6,200**	6,300
Current assets		
Debtors	**159**	143
Cash at bank and in hand	**4,336**	2,339
Short-term deposit	**5**	5
	4,500	**2,487**
Liabilities		
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	**(1,457)**	**(274)**
Net current assets	**3,043**	**2,213**
Net assets excluding pension liability	**9,243**	**8,513**
Defined benefit pension scheme liability	**(2,465)**	**(1,577)**
Total net assets	**6,778**	**6,936**
Funds of the Academy Trust:		
Restricted funds		
Fixed asset fund	**6,210**	6,300
Restricted income fund	**3,033**	2,213
Pension reserve	**(2,465)**	**(1,577)**
Total restricted funds	**6,778**	**6,936**
Unrestricted income funds	**-**	**-**
Total funds	**6,778**	**6,936**

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 August 2021

24. Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust *(continued)*

A summarised extract of Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust statement of financial activities for the year:	Unrestricted Funds £'000	Restricted Funds £'000	Restricted Fixed Asset Fund £'000	**Total £'000**
Income from:				
Donations and capital grants	-	17	10	**27**
Charitable activities	-	5,294	-	**5,294**
Other income	-	16	-	**16**
	-	**5,327**	**10**	**5,337**
Expenditure on:				
Charitable activities	-	4,787	228	**5,015**
Net surplus/(deficit)	-	**540**	**(218)**	**322**
Transfer between funds	-	(128)	128	-
Other recognised (losses)	-	(480)	-	**(480)**
Net movement in funds	-	(68)	(90)	**(158)**
Funds brought forward		636	6,300	**6,936**
Funds carried forward	-	**568**	**6,210**	**6,778**

Services were provided by Ambitious about Autism to Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust at a cost of £617k from September 2020 to August 2021 (2020: £437k). These services include finance, education, HR, facilities and IT support. These are at cost, and would otherwise need to be procured commercially. The increase is due to the growth in The Rise School. At year end costs accrued to be paid to Ambitious about Autism were £205k excluding VAT (2020: £53k). Included within trade creditors is a further amount of £246k including VAT (2020: nil) to be paid to Ambitious about Autism.

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 August 2021

25. Consolidated statement of financial activities

		For the year ended 31 August 2020				
			Ambitious about Autism		Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust	
	Note	Unrestricted £'000	Restricted £'000	Subtotal £'000	Restricted £'000	**Total £'000**
Income from:						
Donations and legacies:						
Gifts and donated services	2	637	1,283	1,920	111	**2,031**
Short-term deposits						
Charitable activities:						
Educational services	3	13,113	105	13,218	4,453	**17,671**
External affairs	3	-	103	103	-	**103**
Other income						
Trading income		56	7	63	-	**63**
Investment income		53	-	53	-	**53**
CJRS income		118	-	118	-	**118**
Total income		**13,977**	**1,498**	**15,475**	**4,564**	**20,039**
Expenditure on:						
Raising funds						
Fundraising activities		936	-	936	-	**936**
Investment management costs		12	-	12	-	**12**
		948	-	**948**	-	**948**
Charitable activities:						
Educational services		12,934	497	13,431	3,621	**17,052**
External affairs		745	494	1,239	-	**1,239**
Total expenditure	**4**	**14,627**	**991**	**15,618**	**3,621**	**19,239**
Net income before other (losses)/gains		**(650)**	**507**	**(143)**	**943**	**800**
Net losses on investments		(90)	-	(90)	-	**(90)**
Net losses on pension deficit		-	-	-	(122)	**(122)**
Net (expenditure)/income for the period	**5**	**(740)**	**507**	**(233)**	**821**	**588**
Transfers between and from funds	19	583	**(132)**	451	**(451)**	-
Net movement in funds	**19**	**(157)**	**375**	**218**	**370**	**588**
Reconciliation of funds:						
Total funds brought forward		7,633	534	8,167	6,566	**14,733**
Total funds carried forward	**19**	**7,476**	**909**	**8,385**	**6,936**	**15,321**

References

[1] Ambitious about Autism (2021) Coronavirus and Lockdown: The Impact on Autistic Children and Young People [Online]. Available at **www.ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk/sites/default/files/reports/files/Coronavirus-and-lockdown-report-2021.pdf** (Accessed 30 December 2021).

[2] Ambitious about Autism (2021).

[3] NHS (2021) Autism Waiting Time Statistics – Quarter 1 2019–20 to Quarter 2 2020–21 and Quarter 3 (October to December) 2020–21 [Online]. Available at **www.digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/autism-statistics/quarter-3-october-to-december-2020-21** (Accessed 30 December 2021).

[4] According to an online survey conducted by Ambitious about Autism between September and November 2019, which was open to parents and carers of autistic children aged 0–25 and to which 3,842 people responded.

[5] All Party Parliamentary Group on Autism (APPGA) (2019) The Autism Act: 10 years on [Online]. Available at **www.pearsfoundation.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/APPGA-Autism-Act-Inquiry-Report.pdf** (Accessed 30 December 2021).

[6] Office for National Statistics (2021). Outcomes for Disabled People in the UK: 2020 [Online]. Available at **www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/disability/articles/outcomesfordisabledpeopleintheuk/2020** (Accessed 30 December 2021).

[7] According to an Ambitious about Autism employment survey of over 500 autistic young people and parents in 2021.

[8] According to a National Autistic Society survey conducted in 2016 as part of its Too Much Information campaign.

10

We are
Ambitious about Autism

Ambitious about Autism is the national charity standing with autistic children and young people.

We believe every autistic child and young person has the right to be themselves and realise their ambitions.

We started as one school and have become a movement for change. We champion rights, campaign for change and create opportunities.

Contact us

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Woodside Avenue, London N10 3JA

020 8815 5444
info@ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk
ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk

Follow us

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Ambitious about Autism

Ambitious about Autism is a registered charity in England and Wales: 1063184 and a registered company: 03375255.

Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust is an exempt charity in England and Wales and a registered company: 08335297.

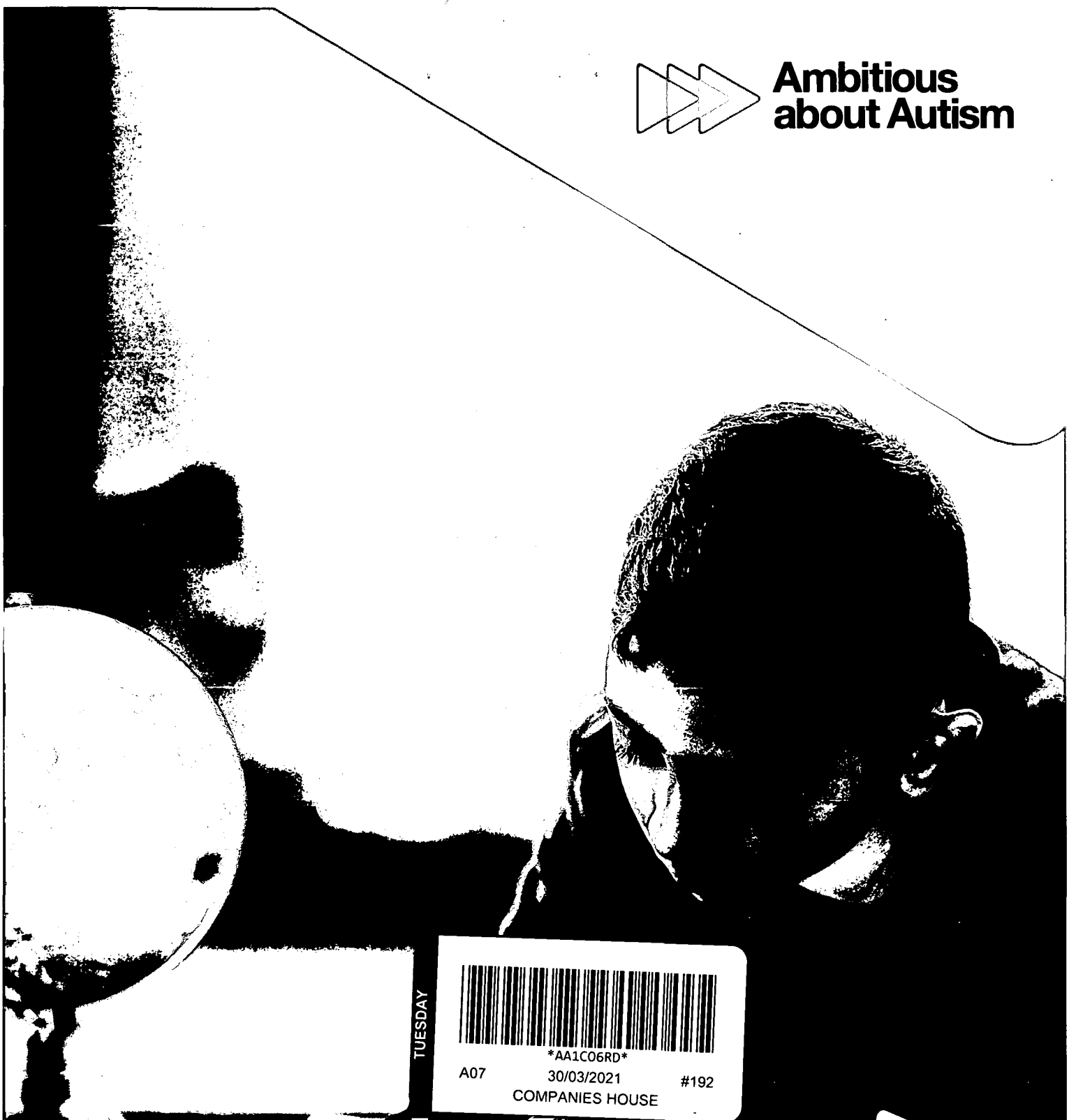
Published – April 2022

AMBITIOUS ABOUT AUTISM

England & Wales - Charity number 1063184

Accounts

Ambitious about Autism



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COMPANIES HOUSE

Annual report and accounts 2019–20

Acknowledgements

We would like to say a big thank you to our volunteer editorial board members who contributed to the production of this report.

Natasha Hawley
Ambitious about Autism

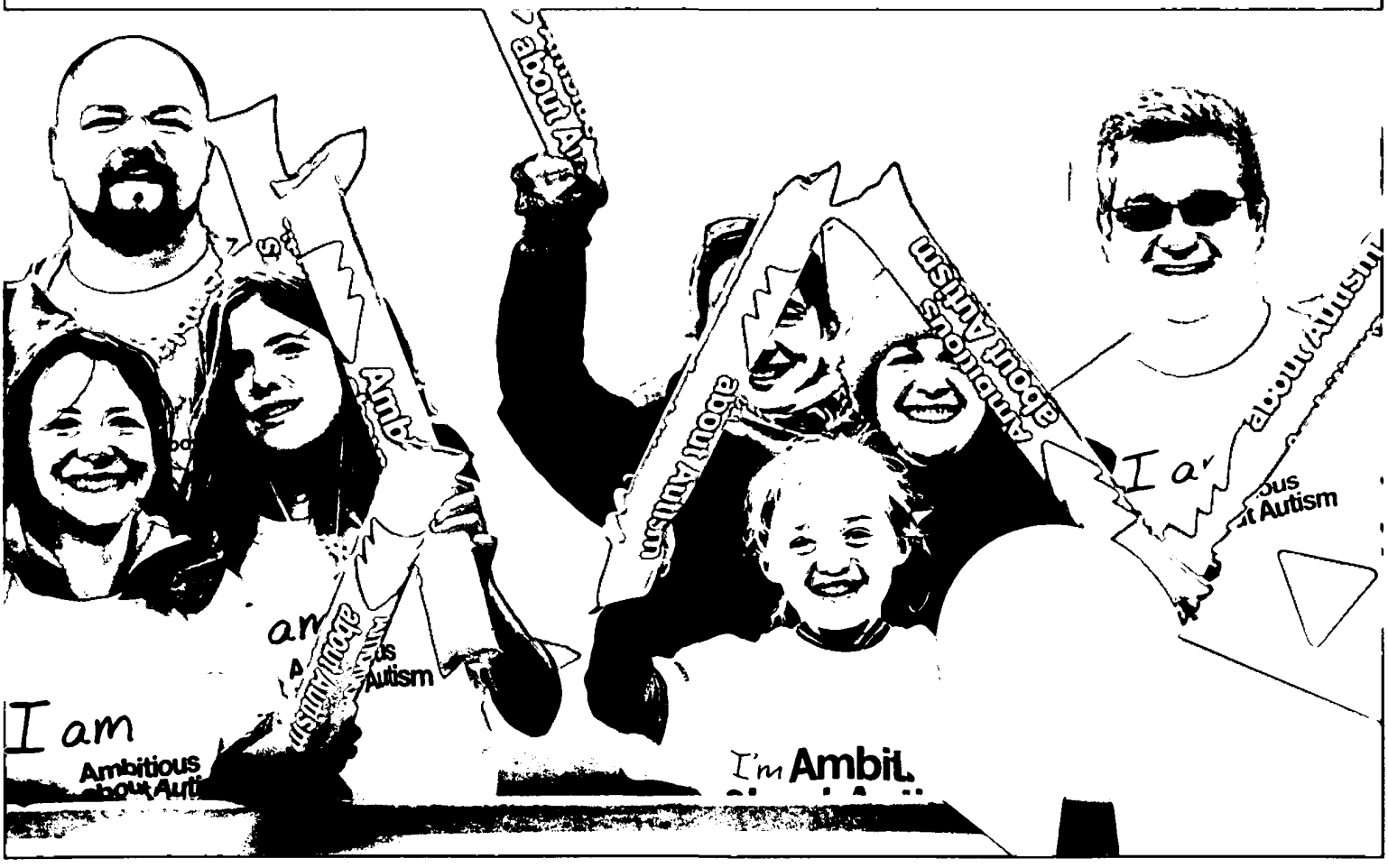
Maddie Heywood
Ambitious about Autism

Caroline Hopton
parent of Ambitious College learner

Saffron Mae
Youth Council member

Emily Morse
Youth Council member

Josefina Troncoso
Youth Council member



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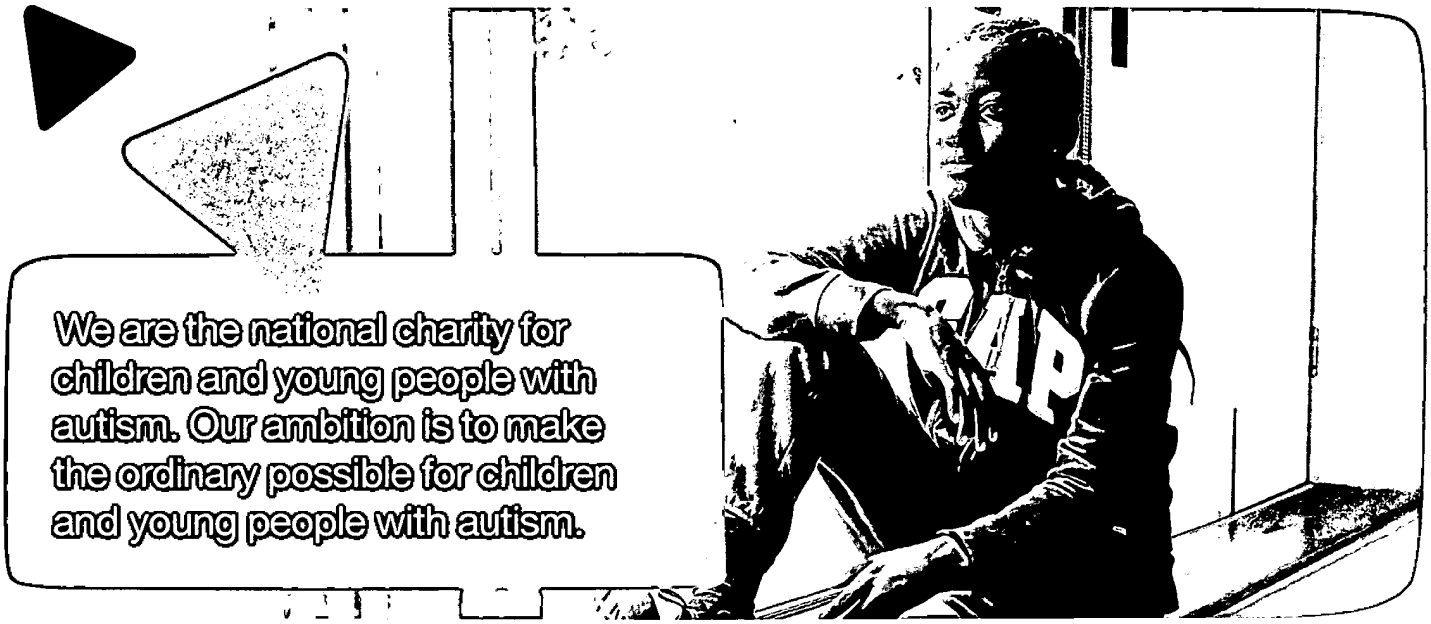
Our story



We are proud of our pioneering approach, which started in 1997 when a group of parents set up the TreeHouse Trust to enable autistic children and young people to access the education they need and deserve. Since then, we have increased our reach and impact across the UK.

Despite our many successes, the sad fact is that children and young people with autism still face a lack of understanding of their needs and the right support. Their worlds have been turned upside down by the coronavirus pandemic, and they need our support now more than ever.

Our priority over the next 12 months will be to support children and young people with autism and their families to manage the impact of this pandemic.

We want to help even more children and young people with autism to improve their quality of life and secure a fulfilling and rewarding future.

About autism

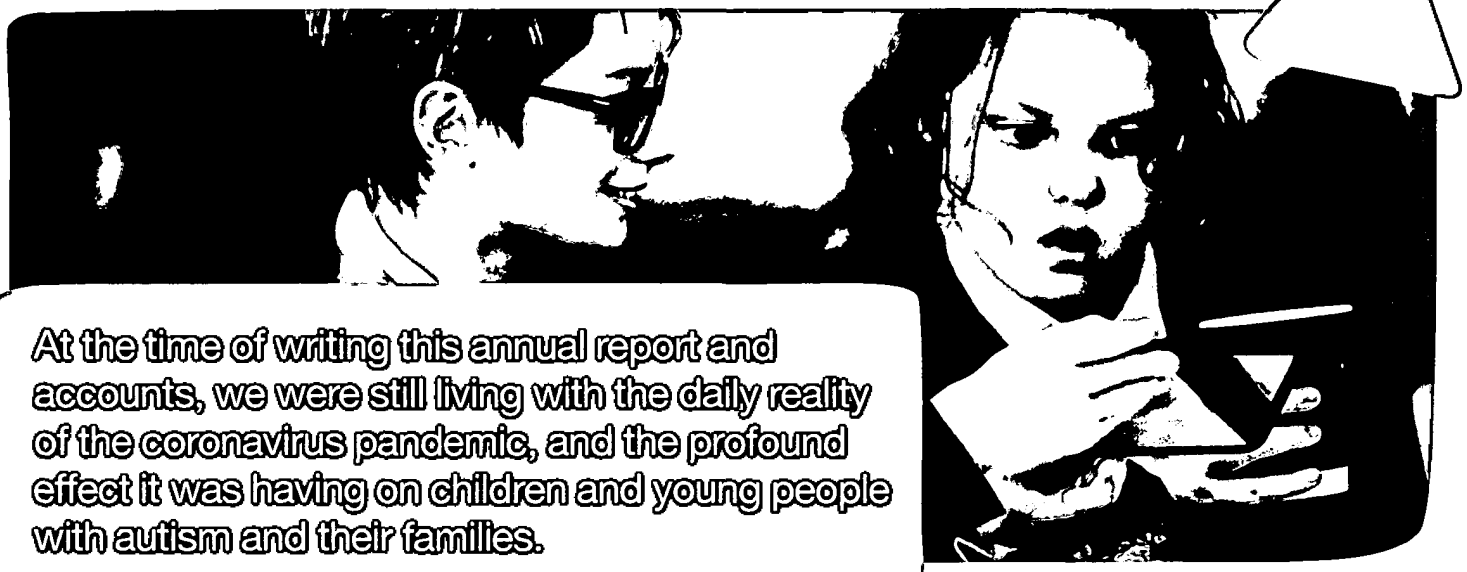
Autism is a lifelong developmental disability that affects 1 person in 100 in the UK. Autism affects the way a person communicates and how they experience the world around them.

It is described as a spectrum condition because while people with autism share certain characteristics, they have individual interests, needs and preferences.

Children and young people with autism face enormous challenges due to a lack of understanding of their needs.

Some people with autism can live independent lives, but others may have additional needs, including learning disabilities. Early intervention, education and support are critical if children and young people with autism are to learn, thrive, achieve and lead fulfilling lives.

Welcome from the Chair of Trustees and Chief Executive



At the time of writing this annual report and accounts, we were still living with the daily reality of the coronavirus pandemic, and the profound effect it was having on children and young people with autism and their families.

Many children and young people with autism, already deeply affected by isolation, anxiety and financial hardship, have struggled to cope. As a result, the need for our services and support is greater now than ever before in our history.

This was the last year of our Ambitious Futures 2020 strategy. The progress we have made since its publication ensured that we were in a better position to manage the unexpected.

Our charity continued to live up to its name as we achieved so many of our ambitious plans, from the development of our Right from the Start toolkit to the launch of Employ Autism, and our amazing co-production and participation with autistic young people.

Throughout this report, you'll see how we've grown and evolved over the last three years. Through our TreeHouse School, The Rise School and Ambitious College, we have directly offered specialist education and support.

As we embark on a new decade, and a new strategy, we are no less determined to achieve our vision: of a world where the ordinary is the everyday experience of children and young people with autism.

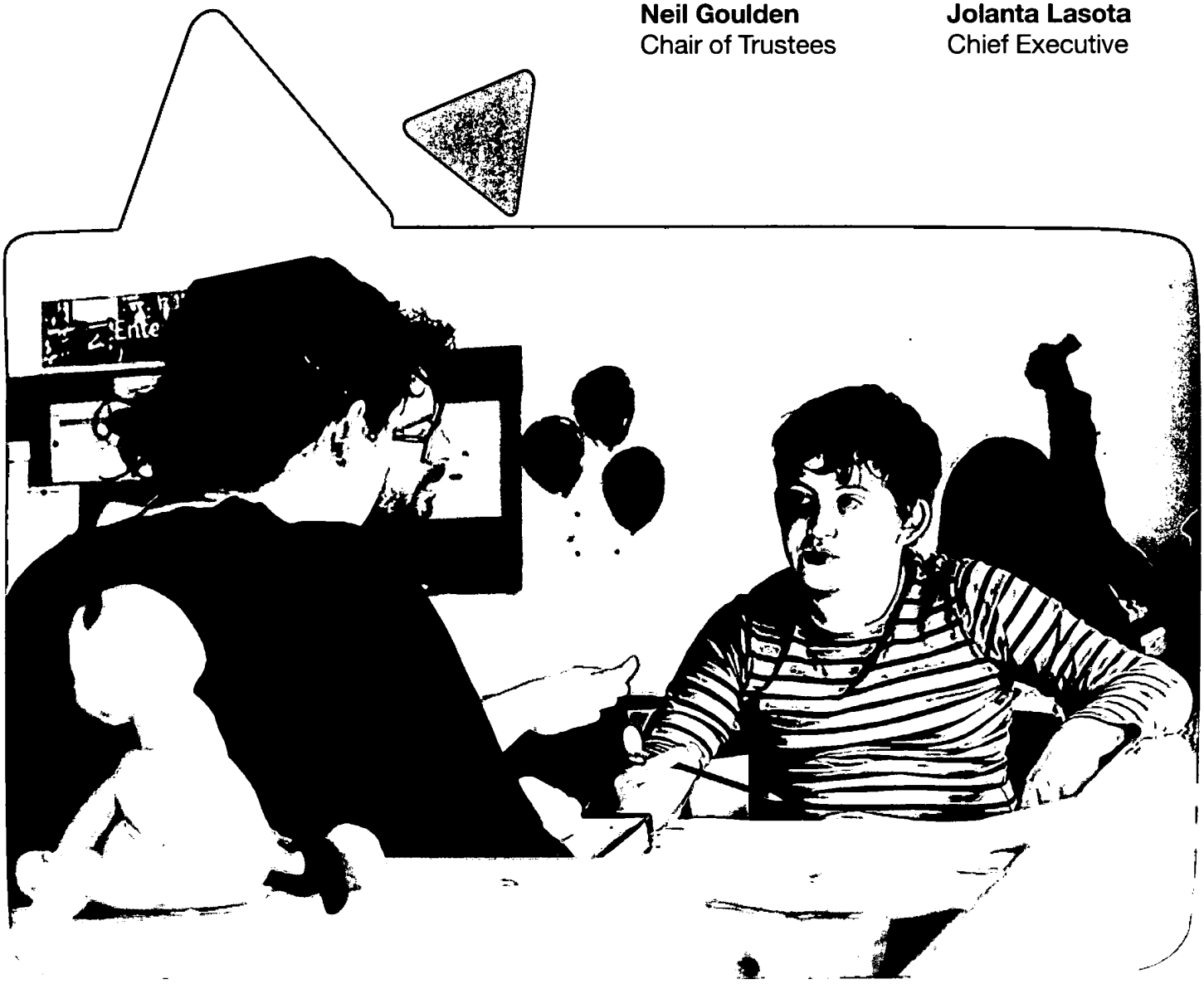
In addition to building on our expertise across education, employment and youth participation, our new strategic plan will address the increased need for support in health and wellbeing, families and relationships and local communities, particularly in these exceptional times.

The pandemic has had a significant impact on our fundraising activities. Our calendar of events – the London Marathon and community fundraising activities and events – was cancelled in line with government guidance. Nevertheless, we were quick to act: soon after the first lockdown in March 2020, we launched our Emergency Coronavirus Appeal. We set and exceeded our ambitious target to raise much-needed funds to help us address the crisis that autistic young people and their families were and are still facing.

What we have achieved would not have been possible without you. This year, the support of our wonderful children and young people, parents and carers, and generous partners and supporters is appreciated more than ever. No matter how you've contributed, you have been crucial to our mission to make the ordinary possible for children and young people with autism.

Neil Goulden
Chair of Trustees

Jolanta Lasota
Chief Executive



An update from our Youth Council

This year has been one of two halves. We spent the first half meeting face to face with other people on panels and the Youth Council. By the second half, all engagement had moved online. Nevertheless, the principles and importance of co-production still remain at the heart of Ambitious about Autism.

What's most important when representing, advocating and supporting any group is that the real opinions and views of that group are heard and understood. And the best way to do this is to involve them directly. The participation programme enables us, the experts by experience, to share our opinions on what affects us and the changes that need to be made.

Without our involvement as young autistic people, charities would lack the intimate understanding of our needs. Being involved also allows us to use our skills, gaining experience in different projects, whilst benefiting others in our community.

No one is better positioned to voice the needs, worries, hopes and opinions of people with autism than autistic children and young people themselves. The participation programme has continued to listen to us throughout this year. It has given us the space and opportunity to have our voices heard and acted upon.

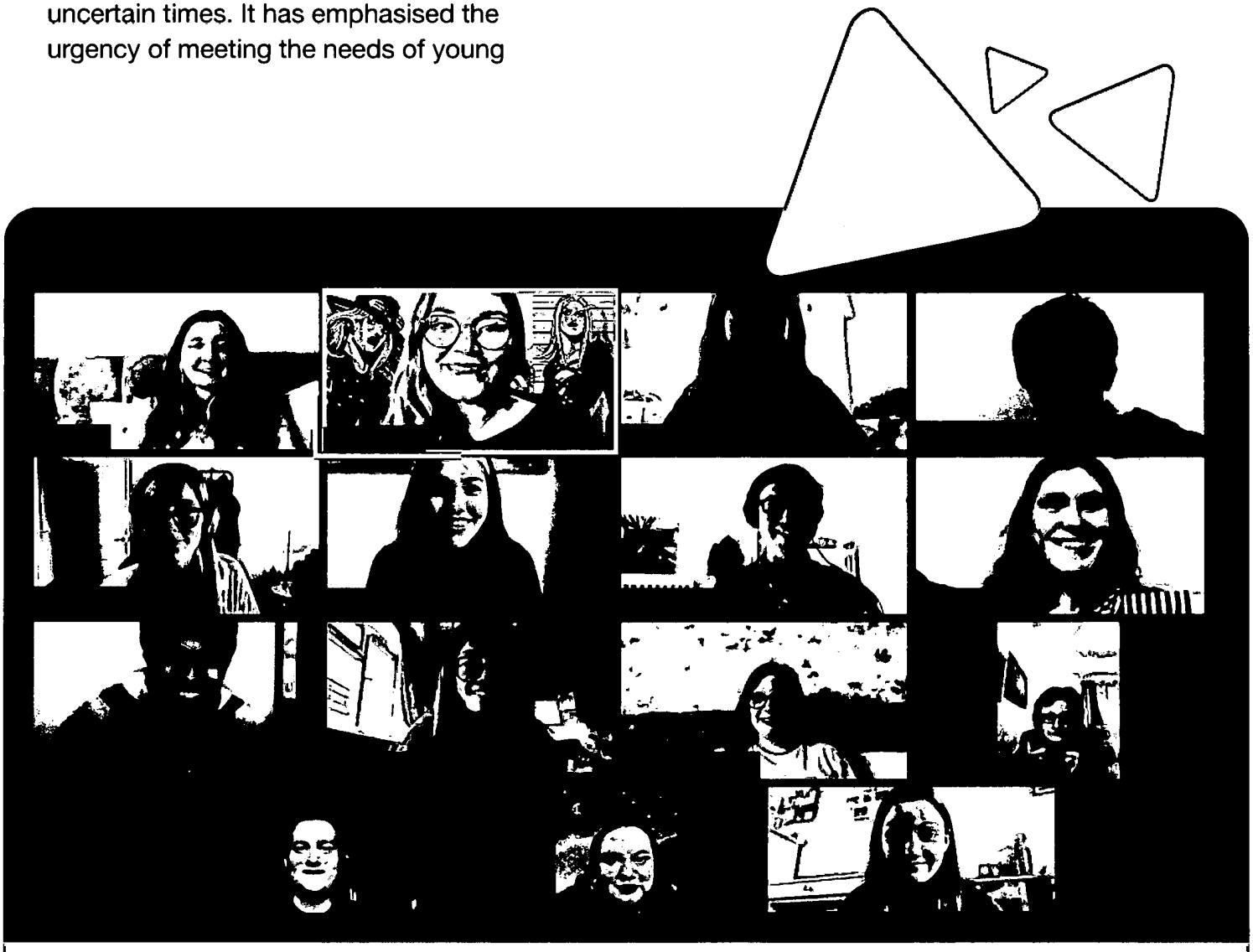
The pandemic was, and is, a completely unexpected disruption filled with change, fear, confusion and isolation. These have been incredibly difficult for anyone to deal with, but are even more challenging for people with autism.

Autistic people can be considered a vulnerable demographic, whether or not there is a pandemic. However, our specific, wide-ranging, and often individualised needs have been forgotten in conversations surrounding the pandemic and its consequences.

Ambitious about Autism's work during the pandemic speaks for itself – it has stepped up to this challenge by providing support for as many young people as possible and allowed people to thrive in these very uncertain times. It has emphasised the urgency of meeting the needs of young autistic people and has shed light on those pandemic-related modifications to our lifestyles that could help autistic people in the long run.

Amid all the chaos, Ambitious about Autism has been a source of information, advocacy, friendship, advice and understanding, at a time when all of these were more important than ever.

Emily, Josefina and Saffron
Youth Council members 2019–2020

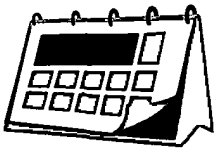


Why we're needed

Meeting the challenge, making a difference

We're proud of our many successes, but the sad reality is that autistic children and young people face enormous challenges due to a lack of understanding of their needs.

On average, families are waiting

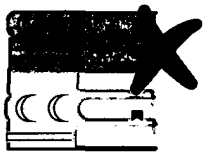


18 months

for an autism diagnosis.

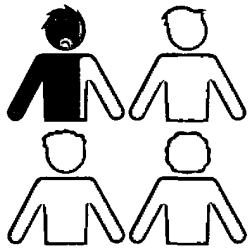
More than **130,000** schoolchildren in England are autistic, and this number is growing.

56%



of children with autism have been sent home from school illegally or denied a full education.

Fewer than **one in four** young people with autism access education beyond school.



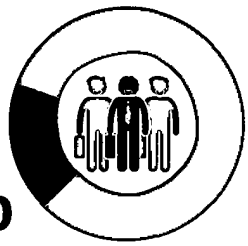
Autistic graduates are least likely to be in full-time employment, with

13.5%

identifying as unemployed.

This figure is higher than for graduates with other disabilities and [illegible] than for non-disabled graduates (3.8%).

Just **21.7%** of autistic people are in full or part-time employment.



£32bn a year is the cost to society of the lack of support for autistic people and their families. This is more than the combined cost of strokes, cancer and heart disease.

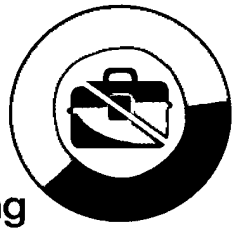
79% of autistic people and **70%** of their families said they were socially isolated due to a lack of understanding of their needs.

42% of autistic adults said they needed employment support, but **only 12%** said they received it.

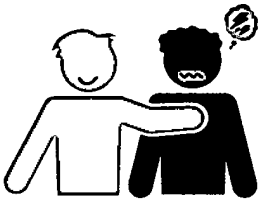
Coronavirus and lockdown

The impact on autistic children and young people

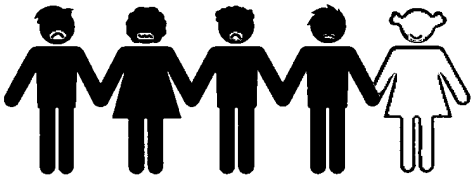
Two-thirds of people did not receive any support during the lockdown.



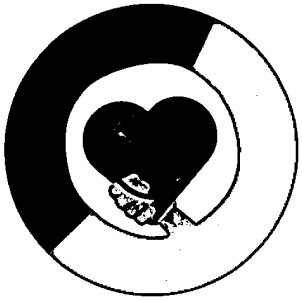
65% of autistic young people and those who support them believed it would be harder for them to find a job following the coronavirus pandemic.



Autistic children and young people were accessing some support before the pandemic, **with more than half (58%)** receiving specialist support in education and one-fifth receiving mental health support.

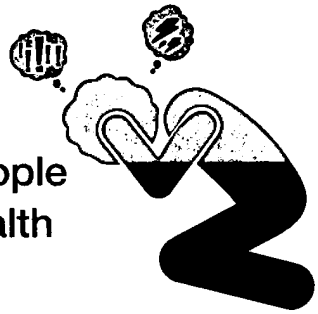


Before the pandemic, **four in five** autistic young people were experiencing mental health issues.



Almost **80%** reported that this support had reduced or stopped following the outbreak of the pandemic.

Following the outbreak of the pandemic, **63%** of autistic young people said their mental health was worse.



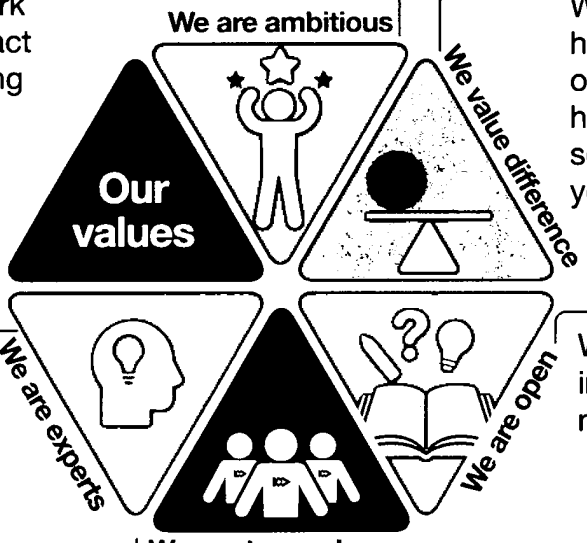
Our mission, vision and values

Our mission is to make the ordinary possible for children and young people with autism.

Our vision is of a world where the ordinary is the everyday experience of children and young people with autism.

Our values. Children and young people with autism are at the centre of all that we do.

Investing in our staff to make sure our work has the biggest impact on children and young people with autism.



We value difference: given how unique every experience of autism really is, we work hard to develop personalised solutions for the children and young people we work with.

We believe in the talent of our staff and bring this expertise together as an organisation to challenge the status quo for children and young people with autism.

We are open: to new ideas, in how we work and how we make decisions.

We are team players

We are team players: in how we work within the organisation, with children and young people, with parents and carers, and with our partners.

Strategic report

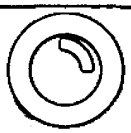
Review of the year ended 31 August 2020

This year was the third and final year of our Ambitious Futures 2020 strategy. Over the last three years, we've focused our efforts on six strategic priorities. Together, these have taken us closer to achieving our vision of a world where the ordinary is the everyday experience of children and young people with autism.

Ready for school:
research, design and delivery of early years resources for parents of autistic children.

Achieving at school:
extending our role in providing services to school-age autistic children and influencing schools more widely.

Preparing for adulthood:
developing our post-16 work for young people with autism.



Building the evidence:
of the quality of our work and its outcomes.

Building a community of support:
developing our information, participation, training, support and policy work, doing more to make sure that those with autism are heard loud and clear.

Developing our organisational capacity:
developing and aligning our people, culture, infrastructure, systems and processes to support the delivery of our strategic aims.

This report outlines our progress in achieving these strategic objectives and outcomes in 2019–20 across the three main areas of our work: education, employability and engagement activities.

Our Ambitious moments

As an organisation, we're proud of our ambition in both name and practice. Thanks to the hard work of autistic children and young people, their parents and carers, staff, partners, supporters and volunteers, we have so much to celebrate from the last year.

With thanks to our editorial board of youth patrons, parents and staff, these are just a few of our highlights for 2019–20.

Ready for school

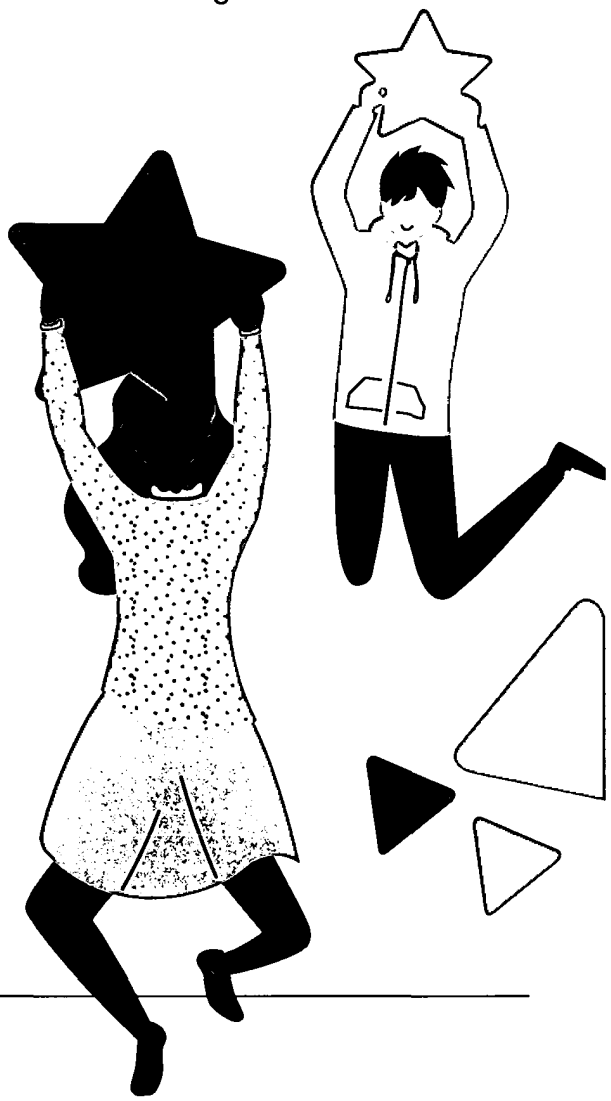
Our **Right from the Start** toolkit was downloaded 5,844 times from its launch in January 2020.[1] The online toolkit – a guide to autism in the early years – contains information to help families with young children to navigate the autism diagnosis process.

Achieving at school

The Rise School Sixth Form opened in September 2019 in partnership and co-located with West Thames College. We welcomed 12 pupils in our successful first year with all pupils achieving their academic and personal ambitions.

The Saplings project at TreeHouse School won the BIG Biodiversity Challenge's Community Engagement Award in September 2019. The outdoor space gives children and young people with autism an opportunity to learn more about the natural world and develop new skills.

The Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust (AaAST) was chosen to open a new special free school in Kingston, London. The school will support up to 90 pupils with autism aged 4–19.



[1] For the period January 2020 until 31 August 2020.

Preparing for adulthood

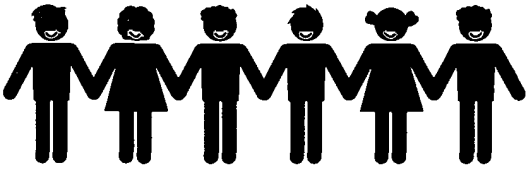
The first Ambitious College supported internships programme began, offered in partnership with Whittington Health Trust. Interns participating in the programme combined their education with work across different parts of the hospital.

In July 2020, Ambitious College won Natspec's Wellbeing and Mental Health Award, in recognition of our work to support learners' self-regulation and sensory needs.

Our Autism Exchange programme continued to offer autistic young people paid experiences of work, despite the pandemic. Working in partnership with employers, we were able to adapt our offer to accommodate remote working placements, work environment assessments and careers support to 96 young people with autism.

Employ Autism was formally launched in November 2019 at our Night of Ambition gala event. Building on the success of Autism Exchange, Employ Autism will offer support to autistic young people across the country through access to specialist careers advice and work experience. We were quick to secure the support of employer partners – including TalkTalk Group in Greater Manchester, Deutsche Bank in Birmingham and the Civil Service – which have played a leading role in attracting wider employer interest.

Building a community of support



The **Ambitious Youth Network** ran peer support sessions four times a week from the beginning of the first lockdown at the end of March 2020. More than 80 young people had attended the sessions by the end of August. To complement the Zoom chats, we also produced information resources, authored by young people, based on topics that matter to them.

We expanded our **Learner and Family Support** service to offer direct support to families of autistic pupils and learners at our schools and college. The service provided a vital source of support during the coronavirus pandemic, ranging from delivery of food parcels to liaising with local authorities and facilitating access to urgent health care.

We published **coronavirus and autism resources** on our website. Using expert information and advice, these resources were developed specifically to help families and young people with autism during the pandemic, and were shared nationally and internationally. From the launch in April 2020 more than 18,000 website visitors had accessed them.[2]

Developing our organisational capacity

We successfully launched our **Emergency Coronavirus Appeal,** which raised a generous £574k from donors, exceeding our £546k target.

Our Night of Ambition gala dinner gala dinner, hosted by TalkTalk in November 2019 raised £358k.

[2] For the period April 2020 to 31 August 2020.

Ambitious Futures 2019–20 review

Autism is a different way of viewing and experiencing the world. Some people with autism can live independent lives, while others face additional challenges, including learning difficulties and disabilities, which affect them so profoundly that they need support in many areas.

When we launched our Ambitious Futures strategy in 2017, we knew we had some way to go to achieve our vision of a world where the ordinary is the everyday experience of children and young people with autism. This report outlines how we focused our efforts on six key areas to take us one step closer to making this a reality.

Ready for school

Lack of early support has a profound impact on children and young people with autism, their families and our communities. Our research shows that from their child first being referred for an autism assessment, nearly half of parents wait longer than 18 months for a formal diagnosis. In some cases, parents reported waiting over three years.[3]

Our Ambitious Futures 2020 plan

We wanted more families to be better informed; to have the confidence to support their child and be able to make and influence decisions affecting their lives. We committed to research and create an early years resource specifically for parents.

[3] 46% of parents. Data from an online survey conducted by Ambitious about Autism between September and November 2019. The survey was open to parents and carers of autistic children aged 0–25 and 3,842 people responded.

Right from the Start

We embarked on a two-year project to examine the pathways and barriers to accessing pre and post-diagnostic support in the early years. Through this research, we developed a programme of support to help parents understand their options if they think their young child may have autism or following an autism diagnosis.

"I didn't think I could go to the GP with concerns about my son's development. I lived this life, day in, day out, worrying he might have something like brain cancer, or wondering if I was just a bad mum, and not knowing how to help him.

Having a resource that shows parents what to look out for and how they can raise their concerns is really important. It's also important parents know where to look for support and what their rights are."

Helen, a parent in Kent, who was involved in the development of the toolkit, and spent two years waiting for a diagnosis for her son, Evan

We worked with the University of Warwick, University College London and a host of partners in the fields of autism, health and early education. As part of our commitment to co-production, we collaborated with parents and young people in the development of the toolkit. We aimed to research what families need, develop solutions and provide trusted information.

The Right from the Start online toolkit – a guide to autism in the early years – was launched in January 2020. It contains a wealth of information and support to help families with young children navigate the autism diagnosis process. We want parents to feel fully informed and better able to provide and secure the support their child needs, as early as possible.

We officially launched the toolkit at our Right from the Start conference in central London, attended by 150 eminent researchers, academics and education, health and social care professionals, and parents and carers.

Before the conference, we received significant coverage in the national, local and trade press, and on TV and radio broadcast media, highlighting our new research on autism diagnosis waiting times. This enabled us to raise awareness of the plight faced by thousands of parents waiting for diagnosis and effective support.

The toolkit has been extremely successful, with 5,844 downloads from its launch to the end of August 2020.

Achieving at school

More than 130,000 schoolchildren in England are autistic, and this number is growing. Yet autistic pupils are still missing out on education because of a lack of provision and support.

Fixed-term and permanent exclusions of autistic pupils have risen by over 90% since 2011. One-fifth of parents of children with autism have had to give up their job due to school exclusions; they regularly have to miss days from work too and reduce their working hours. Meanwhile, 80% of parents said the stress of getting their child the right support at school caused them to lose sleep.[4]

Our Ambitious Futures 2020 plan

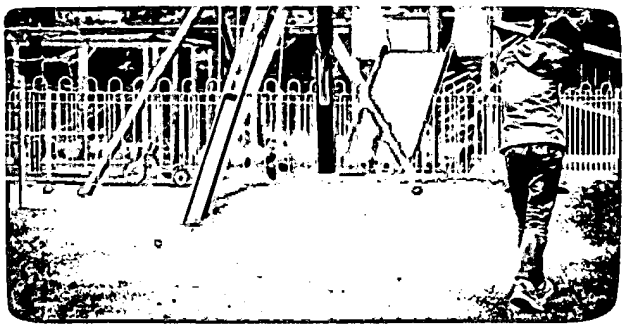
As part of our strategy, we wanted to extend our role in providing services to school-age children with autism and influence schools more widely. This included embedding our Ambitious Approach to education, further developing TreeHouse School, developing The Rise School and exploring opportunities to open further schools through our Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust.

Our schools

Since TreeHouse School was formed in 1997, we've established our reputation for expertise and innovation in providing education services for autistic children and young people. By 2019–20, TreeHouse School and The Rise School were well established and The Rise School Sixth Form opened in September 2019. Last year we educated 200 pupils across both schools.

Our Ambitious Approach is our model of education practice that's offered across our schools and college. When pupils and learners leave our settings, we want them to find employment, go on to further education or training, and live fully as part of the communities of their choice (see p20).

[4] Ambitious about Autism We Need an Education survey conducted between September and November 2019



Resilience during the pandemic

The coronavirus pandemic has created upheaval in everybody's lives but children and young people with autism and their families have been acutely affected by disruption to education, change to routine and the withdrawal of support services. During the pandemic and the lockdown, we provided high-quality education and support to pupils and learners, through our settings and home learning.

TreeHouse School

TreeHouse School is dedicated to educating and supporting pupils with autism and learning difficulties aged 4–19 from across London and the home counties. We're proud to have maintained our Outstanding Ofsted rating since 2011.

Pupils at TreeHouse School receive individual and personalised learning and support suited to their needs, talents and interests. Our curriculum is creative and flexible, using our natural environment to extend pupils' learning. You are as likely to see maths being practised in the shop, the community or the garden, as you are in the classroom.

TreeHouse School

What parents of TreeHouse School pupils have told us

"Excellent provision focused on my child's abilities rather than disabilities. The school promotes hope [and] skilled education, which embraces my child's needs, including emotional, psychological, pedagogical, social, sensory [and] independence skills."

"100%. TreeHouse School is an example of how a specialist school should cater for children with autism and their families. Very compassionate, high[ly] skilled, determined, friendly ... a superb school."

"Perfect. Even through the pandemic, the school has been supportive and progressive."

"My child has improved a lot. His behaviour is better, as a result; his communication skills [have been] enhanced. He is happier because we can do a lot more as a family."

Responses to the TreeHouse School parent and carer survey, 2019–20

The Rise School

The Rise School, established in 2014, is dedicated to educating pupils with autism aged 4–19. We were proud to open The Rise School Sixth Form in 2019 in partnership with and co-located at West Thames College. Pupils at The Rise School access the national curriculum at approximately the same level as their neurotypical peers.

All pupils are given the support and challenge they need to learn and succeed in the world beyond school – their quality of life is key. Our aim for all our pupils is that they lead their lives as independently as possible, and are prepared for a promising future in the community of their choice.

The Rise SCHOOL

Achieving strong results at The Rise School

At The Rise School, we pursue quality of life through excellence in academic and social progress. Highlights in 2019–20 include:

- **Exceptional Key Stage 4 outcomes for the third cohort of Year 11 pupils, with all choosing to continue in The Rise School Sixth Form.**
- **The opening of The Rise School Sixth Form, co-located at West Thames College. In our first year all pupils achieved the necessary passes on their Level 2 and Level 3 BTec courses.**

Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust

The Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust (AaAST) is our multi-academy trust, which aims to develop more schools to reach the children and young people with autism who need our specialist support. In January 2020, the Department for Education (DfE) approved the Trust to become an academy sponsor. This status will allow us to support underperforming academies so that more children and young people can receive the high-quality education they deserve.

In July 2020, the DfE announced that it had chosen AaAST to run a new special free school in Kingston, London. The school will support up to 90 pupils with autism aged 4–19.

An expert project group is leading on the planning for the school opening. Work has already begun on the initial design of the new school building.

Engagement with partners and the local community is vital to the development and success of our new school. We continue to work closely with the DfE, Kingston Council, local schools and Express CiC – a local parent and family support group for those with autistic children – to develop a school that is user-led and meaningful to the community.

innovative teaching and learning during the lockdown

The Rise School

Gemma is a speech and language therapist. She works with pupils across the school providing a range of support to help them with English, communication skills, comprehension and vocabulary. Oh, and she knows everything there is to know about Disney characters.

Our schools remained open during the lockdown in early 2020. While some pupils continued to come to school, others pursued their education online. Gemma held weekly sessions over Skype with pupils who needed support. Working closely with teachers to ensure that lessons could still be engaging online, she tuned in to the pupils' interests to support their learning.

One pupil is a huge fan of Disney and Super Mario, so Gemma harnessed these interests to engage him with his lessons. In one example, she used a Disney version of "A Midsummers Night's Dream" to help the pupil's comprehension of Shakespeare's well-known play. He clearly understood the story and quickly knew all the characters and how they interacted. (For the record, Goofy plays Puck.)

TreeHouse School

Percy has attended TreeHouse School from the age of five. He has complex autism and learning disabilities. His communication is severely limited and he has many behaviours that challenge. However, from his very earliest years, Percy has always loved music, going to concerts and festivals with us, and this passion has been actively developed by TreeHouse School, where he's flourished.

Other parents within the school community have shared similar experiences. Stories of shared music-making and children taking their first steps towards vocalising and communicating; the live concerts that have helped with pupils' anxiety levels and behaviours that challenge.

During the lockdown, many TreeHouse School pupils would wake up in the morning and go straight to the computer because they knew it was Tuesday, and Tuesday was the day for a remote-learning music lesson. One week, Percy got his music teacher, Patxi, to try and play one of his favourite songs. Not only had Patxi learned it by the following week but had also turned it into part of the lesson plan. Such talent!

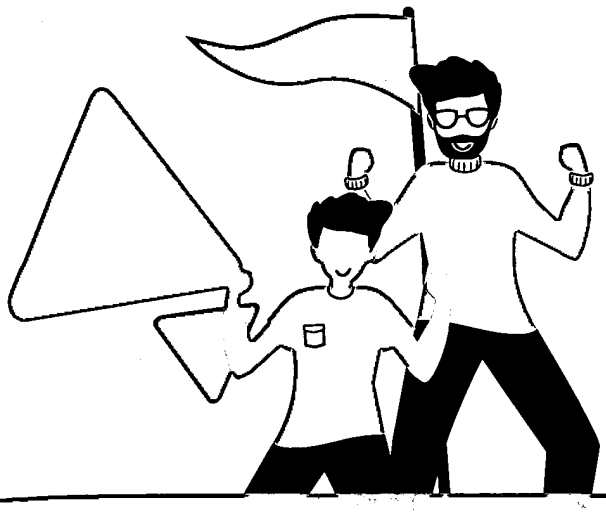
Martyn, Percy's father

Our Ambitious Approach

The Ambitious Approach is our model of education practice, which focuses on improving the quality of life of autistic young people while they are in education and ensuring that this quality of life continues into adulthood. We have a clear vision of what we want our education settings to achieve. We want to prepare children and young people for a happy and fulfilling life and, while doing so, afford them dignity, respect and compassion.

This year, thanks to the generous support of the Joseph Levy Foundation, we were able to train our school and college staff to begin embedding the Ambitious Approach across our organisation.

In this first year, the foundation's grant has enabled us to develop and test this model in our own schools and college, and to develop a robust guidance and competency framework.



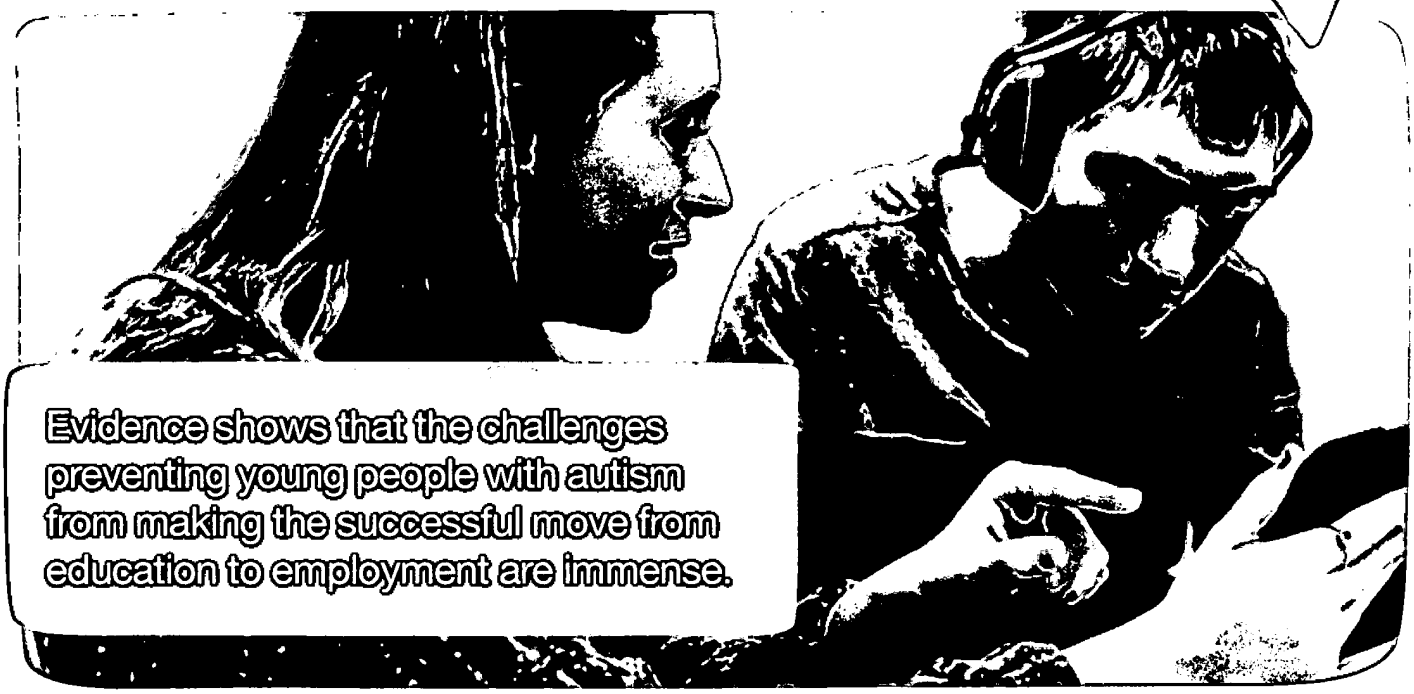
Other highlights include:

- In consultation with the PBS Alliance steering group and National Association of Independent Schools & Non-Maintained Special Schools (NASS) member schools, we developed a self-review tool. This tool enables education settings to conduct an audit of their practice and identify areas for development. Feedback has been very positive, with settings stating that using the tool as a starting point makes the model framework more accessible and has helped them identify short and long-term goals.
- We started using an action research structure to support the development and implementation of change management projects. This should help improve accountability and measuring the impact of the initiatives implemented.
- Expansion of our Integrated Services Team comprising transdisciplinary professionals to help us develop and implement the Ambitious Approach.
- We adapted our Ambitious Approach model to create the Ambitious Framework, which will enable other education settings to use a similar approach, with support from Ambitious about Autism.
- Successfully identifying three suitable education settings that will partner with us to develop the Ambitious Framework in the 2020–21 academic year.

Our key performance indicator is pupil and learner numbers. We ended the year with 95 pupils (2019: 88) at TreeHouse School, 73.8 full-time equivalent learners (2019: 77.4) at Ambitious College and 105 pupils (2019: 94) at The Rise School.

We've made a good start to the 2020–21 academic year, as we've met or exceeded our term one target numbers of pupils and learners for all three education settings. This includes 114 pupils at The Rise School, 93 pupils at TreeHouse School and 70 learners at Ambitious College.

Preparing for adulthood



Evidence shows that the challenges preventing young people with autism from making the successful move from education to employment are immense.

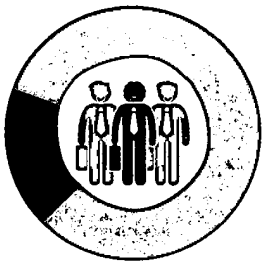
All young people deserve the support to progress to further education, training or employment when they leave school and to live as part of their community. Just 21.7% of autistic people are in full or part-time employment. Crucially, there's a lack of specialist careers advice and work experience tailored to their needs.

We want more children and young people with autism to be empowered to influence decisions about their lives.

Our Ambitious Futures 2020 plan

Our strategy set out how we would develop our post-16 support for young people with autism. This included the development of Ambitious College and our first supported internship programme.

We also wanted to develop our employment programme, Employ Autism, to support more young people to make the successful transition from education to employment.



Just **21.7%** of autistic people are in full or part-time employment.

Ambitious College

Ambitious College was set up as London's first independent specialist day college dedicated to providing specialist and integrated further education support for people with autism. We work with learners aged 16–25, through our Ambitious Approach to education.

Our highly personalised curriculum is designed to support our learners positively to acquire new skills and take part in everyday life.

At Ambitious College, we believe that every young person attending the college deserves a fulfilling, happy and rewarding life. We have learner councils on both campuses and a number of ways of listening creatively to our learners and hearing what they want to tell us about college life.

Ambitious College

What learners and their parents have told us about their experience of Ambitious College

90% of learners like college.

90% of learners feel safe in college.

Community access is the most popular activity amongst learners.

95% of learners agreed with the statement, "when I ask for things at college they happen".

78% of learners like work experience.

70% of learners who learned from home during the first lockdown in 2020, said they enjoyed it.

Results from the Ambitious College learner survey, 2019-20.

> They have provided invaluable advice, telephone support and additional resources such as computers and learning materials to access learning. For our daughter, it was having access to classes online, which she thoroughly enjoyed. She was able to access her speech and language therapy and occupational therapy. ”

> We believe Ambitious College staff and the leadership and management team have been exceptional!

Responses to the Ambitious College parent and carer survey, 2019–20.

Supported internships

The first Ambitious College supported internships programme started in 2019–20, in partnership with Whittington Health NHS Trust.

A typical day for our supported interns includes:

- classroom instruction in employability and independent living skills
- participation at one or more internship rotations
- social interaction in their internship department
- regular feedback from the instructor, job coaches and business colleagues.

Interns are supported through on-the-job coaching and improvement strategies, the goal being to help them secure paid employment and live independently.

All supported interns in our 2019–20 cohort undertook and passed the OCN Level 1 Certificate in Employability, achieving a 100% pass rate in our first year of the programme.

One intern's story: Mikey

This is Mikey (pictured right), our Ambitious intern who took part in our supported internship at Whittington Hospital in 2019–20.

During his placement, Mikey worked as a ward assistant, where he developed his communication, teamwork and admin skills by organising patient files and working on reception on one of the wards. Mikey also helped manager Rae review menu options for patients on the wards and learned about money management and budgeting.

Natspec award winner: Ambitious College

In July 2020, we were the proud winners of the Natspec Award for Wellbeing and Mental Health. There were more than 50 entries in the category. Nonetheless, we won based on the innovative work of our occupational therapist (OT) team, and their creation of "OT TV" to support regulation and wellbeing. The judging panel said they especially liked how the approach was embedded across the whole curriculum and were impressed by the evidence of the impact that it has had across the college.

Building confidence and independence through creativity

Zubair continued to learn on site at Ambitious College during the lockdown in the summer term of 2019–20, while others learned from home.

In the previous two terms, he had started engaging in several vocational activities alongside our employment specialist, to explore work options for the future.

Zubair's goal was to improve his decision-making and independence, to support his quality of life.

As he completed different activities, his confidence started to improve. He was working quickly, without mistakes, and making decisions independently. At this point, he was introduced to photography.

Zubair walked around the college taking photos, initially only when prompted. He soon became more confident and began to point out what he would like to photograph. To build on this, he was given photos of various things around the college and asked to explore the college to find them. This task encouraged him to work on his analytical skills and decision-making. When he found one of the images on his sheet, he would photograph it.

During the first session, Zubair completed the task in half the allotted time, almost entirely independently. Over the next few weeks, he was given objects that were increasingly difficult to find around the college and continued to complete the sessions quickly and independently.

Having found an object, he would point at it and photograph it, without seeking affirmation. This clearly showed his improved decision-making skills.

With increased confidence, Zubair was also able to say he did not like something for the first time. He continues to work more independently in class, with less need for support.

"Up close and beautiful", photo by Zubair

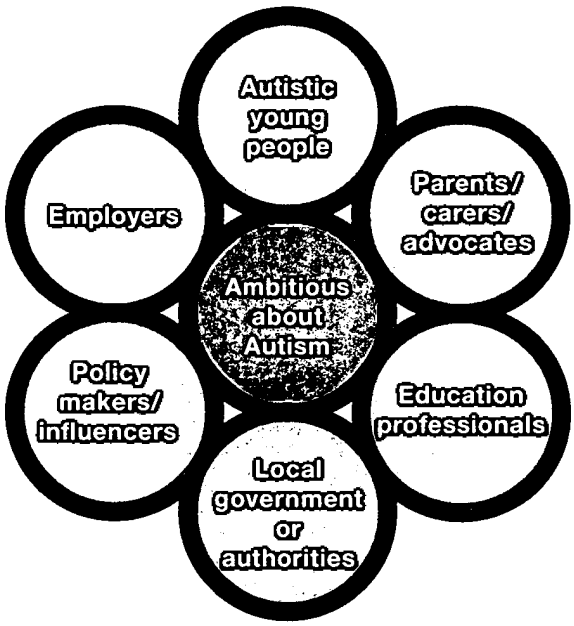
Employ Autism

Autistic people bring unique qualities and diverse perspectives to the workplace and we are working across the UK to ensure that they get employment experience.

Through Employ Autism, we want to improve outcomes for autistic young people and help them bridge the gap to employment. We are achieving this by working in partnership with young people, their families, educators, careers advisers and employers.

The Employ Autism network is creating a sustainable model to give young people careers advice and work experience, and provide training for employers, educators, charities and public sector organisations.

In February 2020, we launched the first phase of the Employ Autism network – in the north-west of England – at an event hosted by TalkTalk in Manchester. Representatives from local government, business and autism charities were invited to hear more about the programme and how they could be involved in their region. Theo, an Autism Exchange intern, spoke at the event, alongside Tristia Harrison, CEO of TalkTalk, and the Mayor of Salford.



Employment is often out of reach for autistic young people, which is a huge waste of potential. Employ Autism seeks to change this, and I am proud to play a part in this vital programme.

Lord Tim Clement-Jones CBE, Ambitious about Autism President and Chair of the Employ Autism Development Board

Autism Exchange

We have a successful record in supporting autistic young people to access paid work experience through our award-winning Autism Exchange programme in London.

Over the last five years, we've developed extensive experience in providing careers advice and work experience to young people, as well as training for employers.

During 2019–20, we continued to work with partners to provide work experience opportunities for autistic young people with organisations including the Civil Service, SAP, Nest, BP and Essex County Council, despite the impact of the pandemic.

As workplace restrictions were introduced due to the pandemic, some employers needed staff to work from home. Others, however, were able to continue to support staff within the workplace.

Changes such as these can have a big impact on autistic employees, especially young people still adjusting to the world of work. We worked closely with our employer partners to support autistic young people to adjust to working from home as well as returning to physical workspaces.

Creating a more neurodiverse workplace

"As a 23-year-old recent graduate with a degree in English and creative writing, I was feeling pretty unhirable. Add a global pandemic and things get even tougher. Now imagine being autistic on top of all of that. Would you hire me? I was feeling pretty confident that nobody ever would before I took part in my internship with the Civil Service.

"In 2020, for the first time since it began in 2015, the Civil Service Autism Exchange ran entirely virtually (for obvious reasons). Not an ideal situation, certainly, but one that came with unique benefits: the normalisation of remote working will undoubtedly be a benefit to autistic jobseekers, many of whom will be able to work much more comfortably and efficiently from home.

And despite never having met face to face, I felt a real sense of connection with my team. In fact, the members of my team – and indeed every single civil servant who was kind enough to lend me their time – acknowledged me as an autistic woman, offered me support, but never once treated me in the condescending manner that people often do when they learn I am disabled. The culture of the Civil Service is, to echo the sentiments of fellow intern Rashida Denbow, "a workforce that celebrates difference".

"On a practical level, I have gained a whole host of experiences – training in project management, insight into business operations, networking, recruiting skills and one-to-one career coaching, to name a few. It's an excellent CV booster and a few interns even go on to forge careers within the Civil Service. In a world where many autistic individuals find mainstream work difficult, but where access to disability benefits is becoming more and more scarce for those with learning difficulties, and the Guaranteed Interview scheme is often ignored by employers, the government has a duty to its autistic citizens to create suitable career opportunities.

"I am immensely grateful for the experience provided to me by my department, the GCF Capability Team, and I want more of my fellow autistic adults to have access to such a valuable opportunity."

This is an excepf from a blog by Rachel published on the Ambitious about Autism website.

Building a community of support

Children and young people with autism are at the heart of what we do. Through our national information, participation, training and support work, we want to create a world where autistic children and young people are heard, included and supported.

Following the coronavirus outbreak, this was more important than ever. Our focus turned to amplifying the voices of autistic children and young people, and their parents and carers, as they faced the urgent need for support.

Our Ambitious Futures 2020 plan

While our strategic plan was implemented before the coronavirus pandemic, it did enable us to establish important community and support networks, which proved vital during the lockdown.

Ambitious Youth Network and Youth Council

Over the past three years, youth participation at Ambitious about Autism has developed from the core Youth Council into a programme that covers a range of projects in education, health, research, and arts and heritage.

Our Know Your Normal and Include Autism campaigns have had worldwide reach and influence and have been recognised with awards.

Working with autistic young people to face the challenges of the pandemic

The pandemic posed challenges and changed the way in which we collaborate with autistic young people. The development of the online Ambitious Youth Network during 2020 enabled us to reach more young people and professionals than ever before.

Since March 2020, the participation team has adapted its programme to engage online with autistic young people.

The participation team and training team have also offered online webinars to professionals who work with autistic young

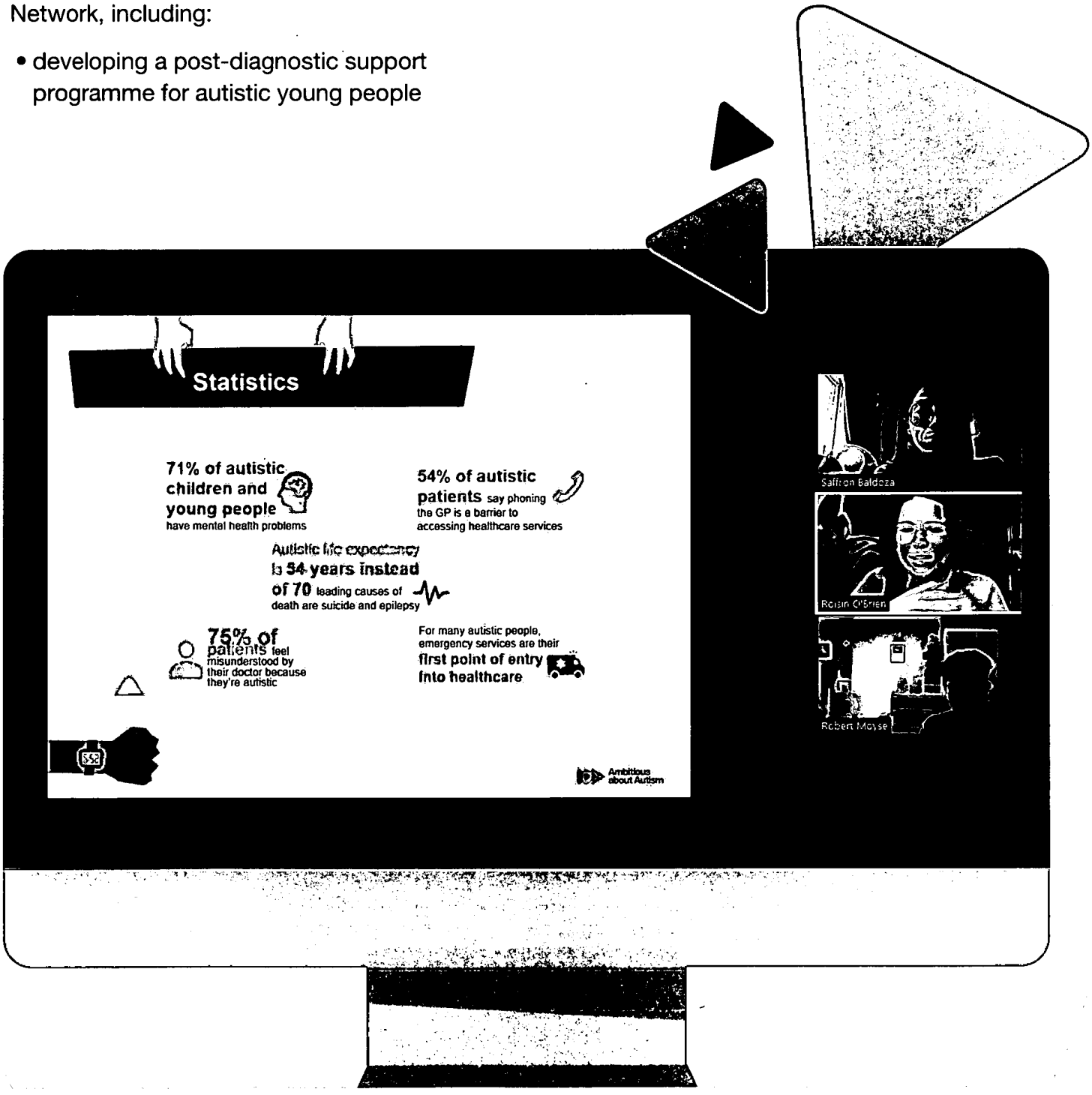
people on 'Understanding autism and mental health'. These webinars, funded by Mind (the mental health charity) and the Department of Health and Social Care, were co-produced and co-delivered with young people from our Ambitious Youth Network.

A positive future

Despite the challenges of 2020, we have so much we still want to achieve in collaboration with our Youth Council and Ambitious Youth Network, including:

- developing a post-diagnostic support programme for autistic young people
- continuing the expansion of our Ambitious Youth Network to reach more young people across the country
- the ability to offer more online peer support sessions to reduce loneliness and encourage more young people to connect with one other.

We're looking forward to building on this exciting work in the year ahead.



Peer support

The pandemic was a source of anxiety and increased isolation for many autistic young people. So, when our Youth Network suggested that we offer support to them and other autistic young people during the lockdown, we started weekly Zoom chats.

Our participation team ran four 90-minute sessions a week, with 10 young people in each session. From the beginning of the lockdown in March until 31 August 2020, more than 80 young people attended the sessions. To complement the Zoom chats, we also produced content, authored by young people, based on topics that matter to them.

> I joined the sessions in late March and immediately felt welcomed. No matter what mood I was in, or what external situations I was facing, chatting to other young people and doing fun activities made me completely forget about the rest of the world.

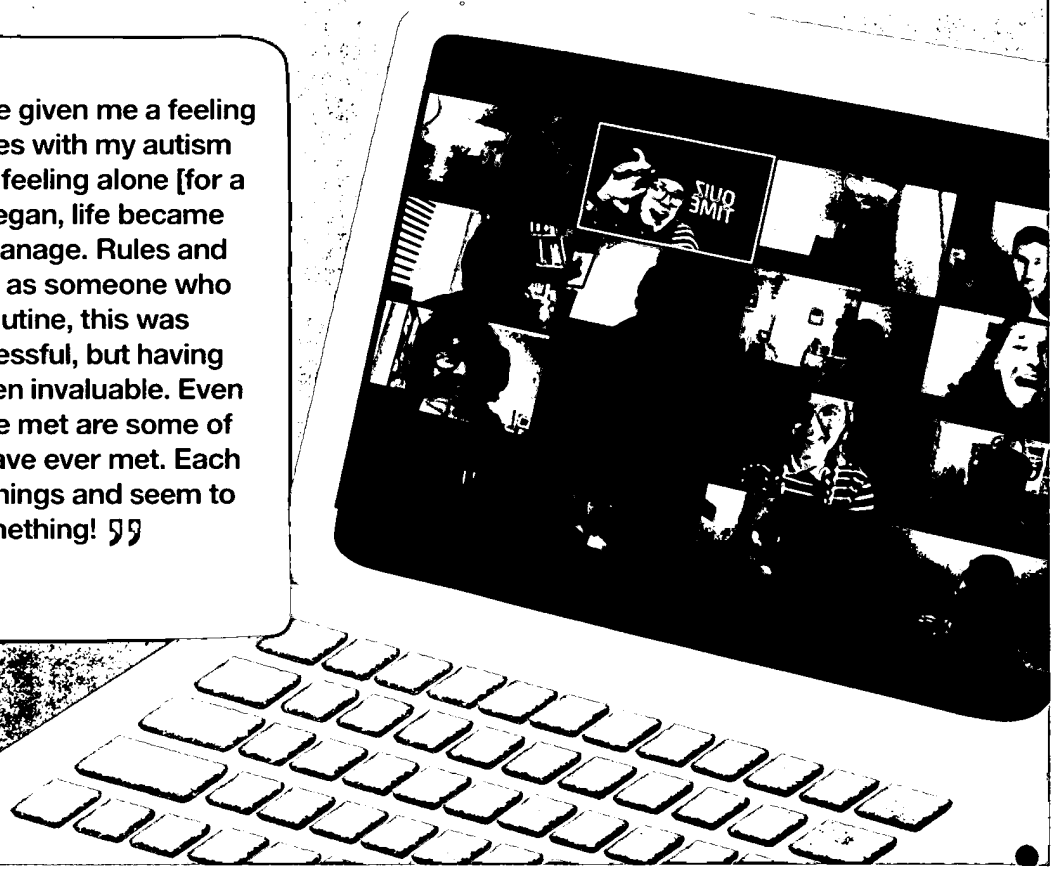
Vera, peer support session participant

> After finding out about the online chats and being able to speak to other young autistic people who know how I'm feeling, I don't feel alone in all this any more. We can share our feelings and advice in a safe space full of honesty, kindness and support. Thanks to the participation team, I'm making it through this when I didn't think I could.

Young autistic participant, peer support sessions

> The peer support sessions have given me a feeling of friendship when my difficulties with my autism and mental health have left me feeling alone [for a long time]. [When] lockdown began, life became even more scary and hard to manage. Rules and restrictions kept changing and, as someone who clings to order, numbers and routine, this was extremely stressful. It still is stressful, but having people to check in with has been invaluable. Even more so when the people I have met are some of the most interesting people I have ever met. Each meeting, I learn so many new things and seem to have a new perspective on something!

Saffron, member of Youth Council



Learner and Family Support service

Before the pandemic, we offered family support to the parents and carers of autistic pupils and learners attending our schools and college. The team initially comprised a learner and family support manager and two transitions officers. They offered advice, support and guidance to ensure that autistic pupils and learners had a secure pathway of progress once they left school or college.

The pandemic suddenly presented the team with a new and pressing challenge. Calls for support increased dramatically as essential local services and support disappeared overnight. Anxious parents needed support to help with their autistic child being at home, and to cope with the changes to routine and ever-changing rules. There was a clear need to expand the team and provide welfare support to parents and carers, in addition to the usual guidance.

We quickly expanded the team, adding two new welfare support officers. The support the team provided ranged from delivering food parcels to liaising with local authorities and facilitating access to urgent health care.

We also produced information and resources for families coping with the lockdown, in our schools and college communities, and nationwide.

A life-saving service during lockdown

"The new Ambitious Learner and Family Support service has been a lifesaver. With local authorities under even more financial pressure during the pandemic, battling for and sustaining the right level of support for our young people has become even harder; this applies to both education and social care.

The Learner and Family Support team stepped in to assist with my son's case and I can't tell you the relief I felt. As parents or carers, we often feel isolated in our battles and don't know where to turn to get the 'instant' help we need. I have only the highest praise for the family support team who have guided me through the necessary processes to achieve the best outcomes for my son. I honestly don't know what I would have done without them.

Not only has the team helped with our case, they have also furnished me, as a parent, with a wealth of knowledge to take forward.

Thank you so much for your expertise and efficiency and keep up the amazing work to 'make the ordinary possible' for all our sons and daughters."

Caroline, parent of Ambitious College learner

Online information and support

In April 2020, we completed our website refresh project. The new ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk features improved navigation and new information to address the needs of parents, carers and families of children with autism, as well as autistic young people themselves.

From the website refresh until August 2020, we had more than 1m page views on our website. Engagement with our online resources has increased significantly as users find information more efficiently and spend more time on the site.

Our online coronavirus and autism resources brought together expert information and advice to support people during the pandemic. These proved to be an important resource for parents and carers, as well as autistic young people in their time of need – as evidenced through engagement levels and feedback. From April to August 2020, the resources had almost 18,500 unique visitors, with 11,179 engaging with our illustrated story, The World Has Turned Upside Down, which aimed to explain the lockdown to autistic young people.

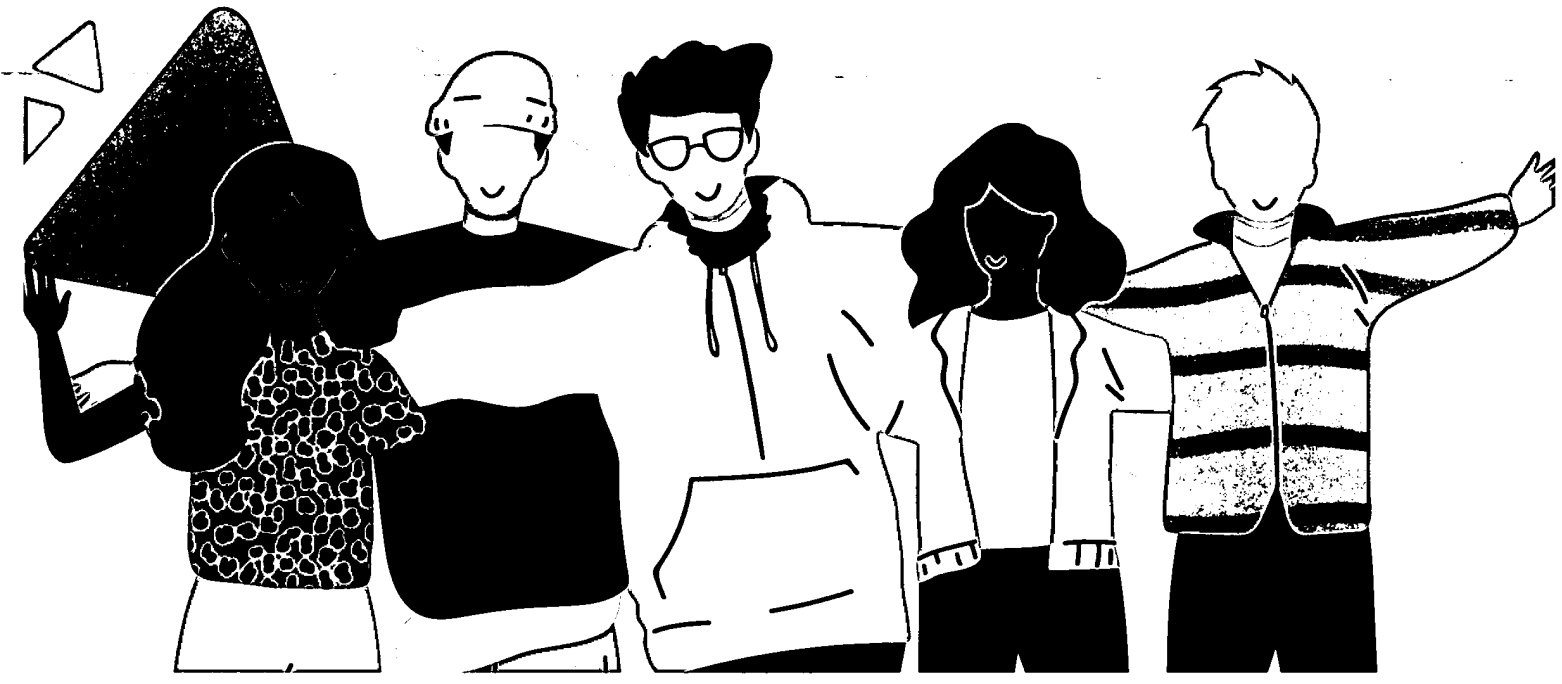
We launched the first in our series of autism and inclusion information in July 2020, focusing on race and racism. The purpose of these resources is to support autistic young people to explore different identities to foster greater understanding and acceptance. We will work with autistic young people, parents and carers, and teachers to co-produce new autism-specific resources on topics, including mental health, friendships and LGBTQ+ issues.

We developed our Talk about Autism online community, which provides peer support for parents and carers of children with autism.

Training

Ambitious about Autism provides training and consultancy to local authorities, healthcare providers, schools, colleges, employers and community groups.

During 2019-20 we trained more than 1,500 professionals (1,996 in 2018-19) across a range of sectors to become more autism confident. Figures for this year were reduced due to the postponement of training in the early stages of the pandemic. Of those



completing the training in 2019-20, 91% said they felt they had improved their knowledge and confidence.

Our partnership with the Autism Education Trust

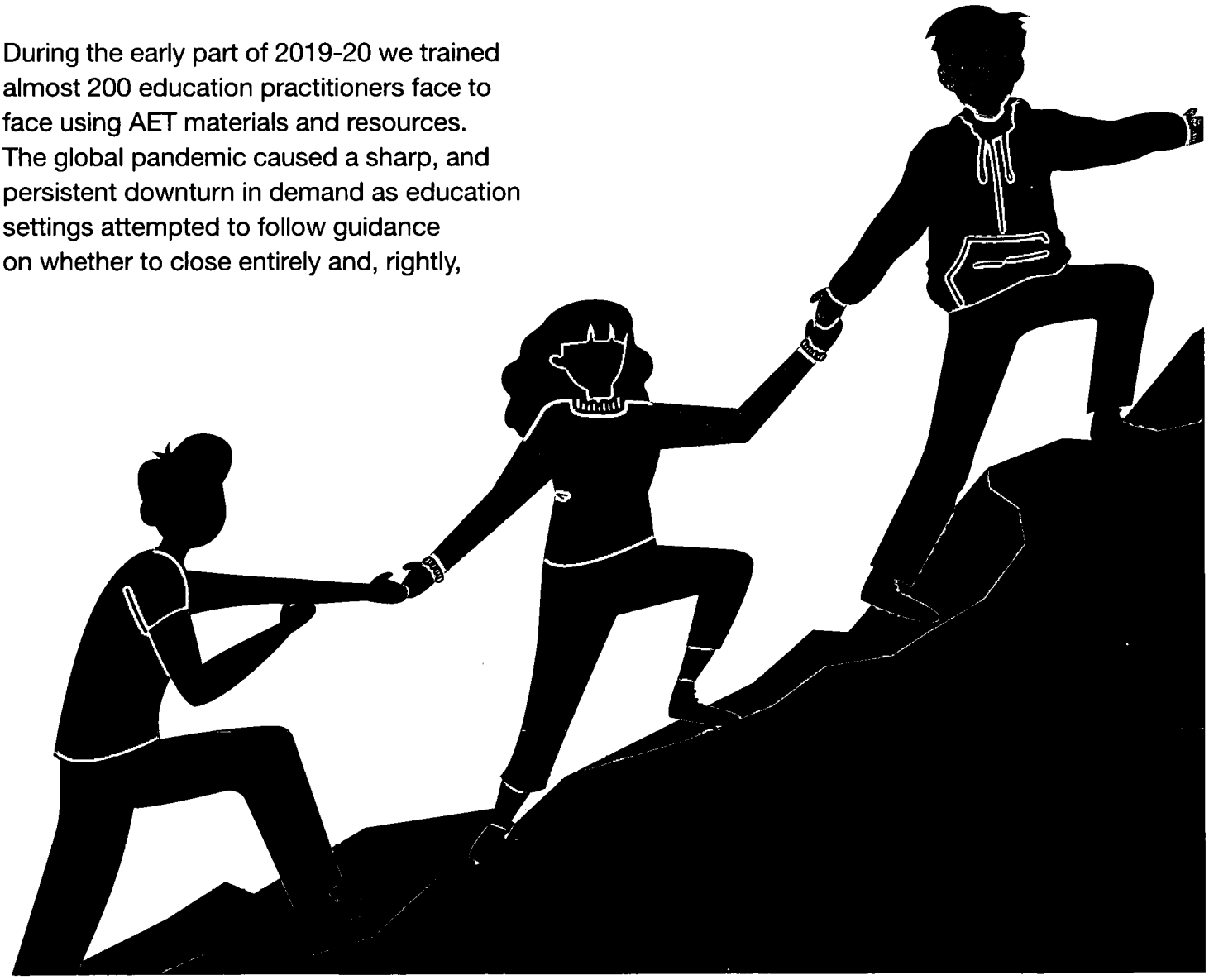
We are proud to be a founding partner of the Autism Education Trust (AET), supported by the Department for Education. Together, we strive to ensure that all autistic children and young people receive the education they deserve.

The partnership gives us the opportunity to provide training to schools and post-16 settings, as well as strategic support and quality assurance to other training organisations.

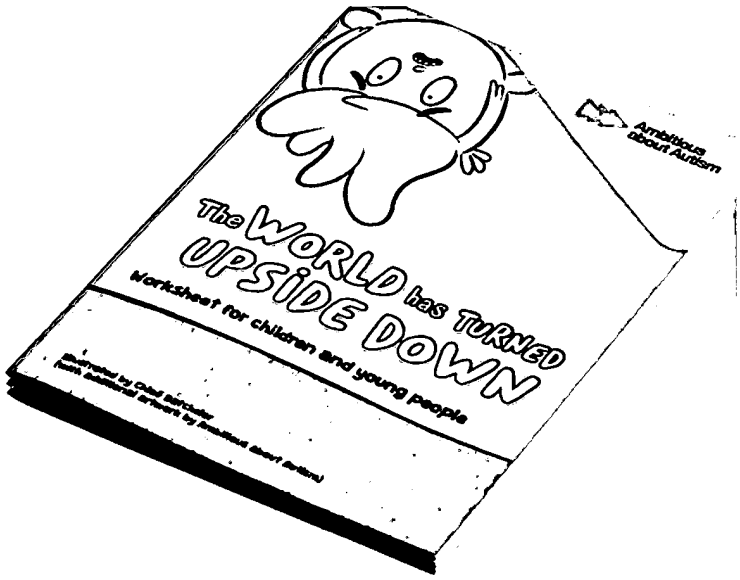
During the early part of 2019-20 we trained almost 200 education practitioners face to face using AET materials and resources. The global pandemic caused a sharp, and persistent downturn in demand as education settings attempted to follow guidance on whether to close entirely and, rightly, focused on their learners. Despite this, we worked with AET to move to online training, facilitating access to some resources for free for professionals, rather than printed versions, which have an associated cost.

We completed a comprehensive, two-year, multi-region project with the AET at the end of March 2020, to increase uptake by post-16 professionals in our training.

Since then, we've been fortunate to secure additional funding to develop a free toolkit for professionals, autistic young people and employers. The toolkit will be aligned with Employ Autism, to support more autistic young people on their journey to employment. We are on track to launch the toolkit in 2021.



The World Has Turned Upside Down



Following the UK-wide lockdown in March 2020, Red Brick Road, a creative agency, approached us about collaborating on a project to support children and young people with autism. This project would also help to raise much-needed funds as part of our Emergency Coronavirus Appeal.

We enlisted bestselling children's author Kes Gray ("Oi Dog") and illustrator Chloe Batchelor to help us create an illustrated story to explain the lockdown to children with autism. Crucially, it was a story that all children could enjoy. The story was available to download from a web page that included an invitation to make a voluntary donation to the charity's coronavirus appeal.

Jon Snow, broadcaster and Ambassador of Ambitious about Autism, recorded a reading of the story, which we shared on YouTube. The story was also available on our website and shared through email, social media and outdoor display advertising in cities such as Bristol, Cardiff, Oxford and Southampton.

More than 20,000 visitors accessed the story through the website, YouTube, social media and the Issuu publishing platform. It was read by people in the UK, as well as the US, Republic of Ireland, Australia, Canada and Germany.

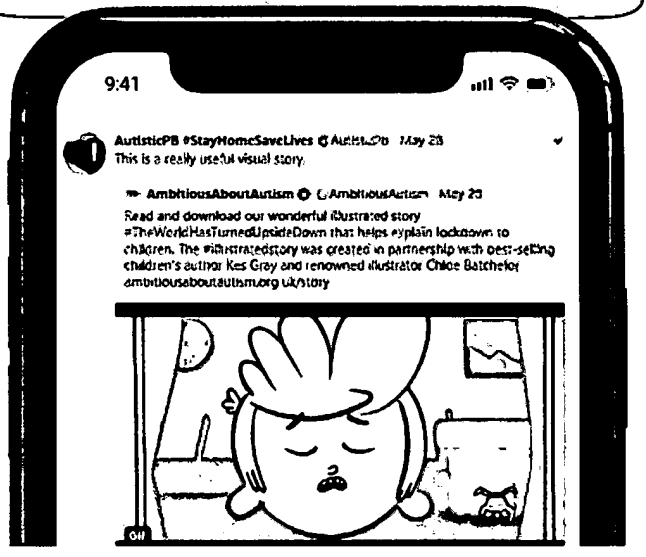
> **What a lovely book. This will be very useful for some our KS2 and KS3 students. Thank you for sharing.**
>
> School Head Teacher

Following the launch of the story, we worked with special education teachers to produce worksheets for children and young people, to help them work through their perceptions of the lockdown.

Red Brick Road and Ambitious about Autism won Bronze in the Best Thoughtful Marketing Campaign category of the Data and Marketing Association (DMA) Awards in October 2020.

This project would not have been possible without the generous support of Kes Gray and Chloe Batchelor. We're also very grateful to Red Brick Road, m/SIX, The&Partnership, Clear Channel UK and Tony Gray from Words by Design for contributing their valuable expertise and time to support the publication of this story.

> **We just had to let you know what a fabulous social story this was, and we are now sharing with our families.**
>
> Parents of Ealing Self Help Training Scheme (PESTS)



Developing our organisational capacity

In March 2020, we were halfway through what was turning out to be another successful year for Ambitious about Autism.

We had successfully launched the Right from the Start toolkit for parents, as well as our Employ Autism programme. We had opened our new sixth form at The Rise School, and were embedding our Ambitious Approach across our schools and college. In February, we were able to enjoy the rare privilege of bringing all our staff together for our staff conference and awards. Our new strategy was also on track to be launched in September 2020.

Our Ambitious Futures 2020 plan

Our strategic objective was to develop and align our people, culture, infrastructure, systems and processes to support the delivery of our strategic aims.

Our response to the coronavirus pandemic

The coronavirus outbreak meant that we had to review our priorities. Across the entire organisation, our number one focus was to support children and young people with autism and their families to cope with the impact of the pandemic.

Everyone in our organisation pulled together to support autistic children and young people, their parents and carers and our own staff during this challenging time. Our resilience was often tested, yet from staff in our schools and college to facilities and IT to HR, fundraising, finance and youth participation, we were united in our aim to make the ordinary possible for children and young people with autism, even in extraordinary circumstances.

Ambitious about Autism Strategy 2020–21

In 2019, we started developing our new five-year strategy for 2020–25. We engaged with young autistic people, parents and carers, partners, staff and trustees to help shape our plans.

Thanks to their input, we were well on our way to developing a new strategy to achieve our vision of world where the ordinary is the everyday experience of children and young people with autism.

Given the emergency, we decided to produce a one-year strategy to focus our efforts on meeting the extraordinary and urgent needs of our community. Our new strategy is based on the principles we'd planned for the next five years, the key one being that autistic children and young people are at the heart of all we do.

Building the evidence

Although it is estimated that autism costs the UK £32bn a year in lost earnings and care and support (more than heart disease, stroke and cancer combined), only £4m a year is spent on autism research.

Our aim as a charity is to gather more evidence of the best educational approaches for children and young people with autism. This evidence-based approach underpins all of our work.

Our Ambitious Futures 2020 plan

We set out to build evidence of the quality of our work and its outcomes, including evaluation of our Ambitious Approach and the Employ Autism programme.

Our research and evaluation programme

Our Research Governance Committee oversees our research and evaluation work to ensure alignment with our strategy and an ethical approach. We partnered with the University of Warwick and University College London on research evidence to underpin our Right from the Start toolkit. We also worked with the Centre for Research in Autism Education (CRAE) to assess post-16 outcomes since the Children and Families Act 2014.

We have adapted our plans to evaluate the quality of work and outcomes of the Ambitious Approach. Despite the impact of the pandemic on our ability to research in a consistent environment, we were able to react to data collection in an agile way to undertake a formative rather than a summative assessment.

We established a partnership with Discover Autism Research and Employment (DARE), CRAE and Autistica to evaluate our Employ Autism programme. We are looking forward to completing the first phase of our evaluation in the 2020–21.

Our Ambitious partners and supporters

We are deeply grateful to our strategic partners and generous supporters, who have stood by us throughout this very challenging year. It's thanks to your ongoing support that we raised £2m this year, enabling us to continue to ensure better outcomes for children and young people with autism.

Our Ambitious Futures 2020 plan

We committed to exploring new fundraising opportunities, expanding our reach and developing new sources of income, to support the achievement of our strategic aims. Here's a taste of just some of our highlights over the last three years.

- Right from the Start: The development and creation of this important toolkit for parents was made possible thanks to **Sarah Yamani's** generosity.
- Ambitious Approach: Thanks to the multi-year support from the **Joseph Levy Foundation**, we have started implementing the Ambitious Approach.
- Ambitious College: Our appeal successfully raised £4.5m to fund the vital work of our two college campuses. A particular thank you to our funding partner **MariaMarina Foundation** for its significant contribution, and to every supporter who donated since our appeal began.
- Supported internships: Thanks to the generous gift from **Graham and Susan Tobbell**, we were able to open our first supported internships programme.
- Employ Autism: **Pears Foundation** provided seed funding that made the launch of this vital programme possible.
- Understanding autism and mental health webinars: Thanks to funding from **Mind** and the **Department of Health and Social Care**, we worked with young people to co-produce and deliver webinars, designed for professionals, which started in August 2020.

Our strategic partners

We are proud of the strong working relationships forged with our partners over many years. Our strategic partners share our ambition to make the ordinary possible for children and young people with autism.

Pears Foundation

The launch of Employ Autism during 2019–20 was made possible thanks to the generosity of Pears Foundation, long-standing partners and friends of Ambitious about Autism. In March 2020, Sir Trevor Pears spoke of his motivations for supporting Employ Autism at our President's Dinner at the House of Lords, inspiring employers and funders to get behind the programme.

We remain forever grateful to Pears Foundation for sharing our vision and striving to make the ordinary possible for children and young people with autism.

Pears Foundation

Rapha

Thanks to the support of its chief executive and founder, Simon Mottram, Rapha Racing Ltd has raised more than £1.3m since its first cycling challenge in aid of Ambitious about Autism in 2014. In April 2020, 34 cyclists took part in the Rapha Hill Climb in support of the 2.6 Challenge. Collectively, they raised £21k. We're also pleased to have Simon and Lucy Mottram's support as two of our ambassadors.

Rapha

TalkTalk

Since 2006, TalkTalk has raised £5m for Ambitious about Autism. As well as sponsoring the annual Night of Ambition gala event, TalkTalk supports us with campaign development and broadband connectivity. In 2019, they became a leading partner of Employ Autism in rolling out the programme to the north-west of England and leading the call to encourage businesses to join the partnership.

TalkTalk Group

Joseph Levy Foundation

Our partnership with the Joseph Levy Foundation continued over the last year. We have been enormously grateful for the foundation's ongoing support to enable us to develop our pioneering Ambitious Approach to education, and to navigate the challenges presented by the coronavirus pandemic. The Ambitious Approach has already had a tremendously positive impact on our services, which would not have been possible without the backing and friendship of the foundation.

JL

Santander

Santander has coordinated a £1m investment into our groundbreaking employability initiative, the Employ Autism Higher Education Network. This programme will unlock the potential of thousands of autistic students and boost neurodiversity within the UK workforce.

The strategic partnership between Ambitious about Autism and Santander has created a game-changing new autism employability programme spanning a network of universities across the UK. Hundreds of careers and employment professionals in this network will receive specialist training and support to work with autistic students, to help guide them into sustainable employment.

Santander Universities

MariaMarina Foundation

A committed funder of Ambitious College since 2016, MariaMarina Foundation has been instrumental in the expansion of the college and were lead funder in 2019-20. Their unwavering support and belief in the potential of our learners has transformed the lives of hundreds of autistic young people across London.

MariaMarina FOUNDATION

The Clothworkers' Foundation

The Clothworkers' Foundation is a long-standing friend of Ambitious about Autism, involved in developing many strategic projects with us since 2006. A lead funder in the construction of TreeHouse School and Ambitious College and, more recently, an early and committed supporter of our expanding Learner and Family Support service; their contribution over the last 15 years has underpinned our success.

THE CLOTHWORKERS' FOUNDATION

Graham and Susan Tobbell

Since their first introduction to us back in 2016, Graham and Susan Tobbell have provided essential seed funding to our Ambitious Futures appeal and to our supported internships programme. They embody the essence of working in partnership, regularly attending our events and always providing honest and valuable feedback on our plans and strategies. In 2019–20, as the pandemic struck, they were early and generous with significant unrestricted funding to help us weather the storm. We are fortunate and grateful to have Graham and Susan as our partners.

Thank you

Donors who support our mission

Our mission is to make the ordinary possible for children and young people with autism. We can achieve this only through our outstanding education services and a range of exciting and innovative projects that support autistic children and young people. This work would not be possible without our organisational structures, which support the work that we do. From our participation team, through to marketing, fundraising, IT and HR these teams provide the foundations that enable us to deliver our services to support autistic children and young people.

Maintaining these services requires continual investment. And we can do this only by having voluntarily donated income that we are free to spend where we know that it's most needed. We are fortunate and very grateful to have received generous donations this year, from a whole host of funders.

This unrestricted income was so important in the first half of 2020, when the coronavirus pandemic presented us with the challenge of increased costs for providing emergency support. This was just as all our fundraising events – our largest source of unrestricted income – were cancelled or postponed.

We launched our Emergency Coronavirus Appeal to help manage this unprecedented double impact on our finances and are grateful for the overwhelmingly generous response.

We offer our heartfelt thanks to everyone who donated unrestricted funds to us this year, from our regular individual donors to our corporate partners and all of you who creatively and enthusiastically raised money for our Emergency Coronavirus Appeal. We are extremely fortunate to have the support of a committed group of donors, many of whom have funded our mission to help autistic children and young people over a long period. In a year in which our supporters received many other calls for assistance, we are honoured and grateful to have received unrestricted support to help fund our core work.

We have recognised these supporters in this report (see p42). We wish to pay special thanks to the following donors: Pears Foundation, Jefferies, Rapha, TalkTalk, and Graham and Susan Tobbell.

The unrestricted income helped pay for our emergency response to the pandemic and gave us much-needed financial stability in uncertain times. This commitment to our core mission supports the lifeblood of our organisation. It is the reason we can continue our work to make the ordinary possible for children and young people with autism.

Thank you.

Emergency Coronavirus Appeal

The coronavirus pandemic presented an unimaginably difficult challenge for autistic children and young people and their families.

We had to think fast and work round the clock to create innovative solutions to the problems faced by those we serve. We acted quickly, setting an ambitious target of £546k to meet the unanticipated costs incurred directly as a result of the pandemic crisis. We are so grateful to our donors, who gave £574k.

> "You really have gone out of your way to support us and we are so very grateful to have had you 'in our corner'. I don't honestly know what we would've done without your support!"
>
> Parent of pupil

We would like to pay special thanks to the National Lottery Community Fund, Jefferies, Rapha, TalkTalk, Pears Foundation, MariaMarina Foundation, Charlotte Warner and Bruno Paulson, Sir Harvey McGrath, the Masonic Charitable Foundation and Kusuma Trust for their generous contributions to our appeal.

This phenomenal show of support for autistic children and young people, and their families, has enabled us to give them specific, new support, including IT to enable remote learning, information and advice services, and support networks.

The 2.6 Challenge

Many of our supporters participated in the 2.6 Challenge on Sunday, 26 April 2020 to raise funds for Ambitious about Autism, which would usually have been donated through the London Marathon.

Despite the pandemic and the lockdown, our supporters came up with some extraordinarily creative ways to raise funds: from selling made-to-order face masks to tap-dancing, hosting online quizzes, a DJ set and even 26 sun salutations. Combined with the efforts of those who cycled, climbed, walked and ran, a total of £76k was generously donated.

TalkTalk employee fundraising

TalkTalk employees have also raised funds for Ambitious about Autism this year. Michael Clark a TalkTalk staff member, raised almost £2k in the 2.6 Challenge, running 26 hill repetitions. Ruth Kennedy and Bronagh McCloskey organised a virtual 10k run in which 72 people took part, running, walking and even paddle boarding.

Collectively, they raised £10k. It's thanks to the efforts of inspirational individuals like Michael, Ruth, Bronagh and their colleagues that we can continue our vital work.

Our Employ Autism supporters

Night of Ambition

Our Night of Ambition gala dinner, hosted by TalkTalk, raised £358k. The event was compèred by comedian and performer Ruby Wax and featured a powerful video produced by our Youth Patrons, which highlighted the challenges that so many autistic young people face in accessing paid work.

Employ Autism Business Ambassador Group

In 2020, we established our Business Ambassador Group of like-minded business leaders working collaboratively to develop our Employ Autism programme. We now have more than 30 ambassadors and, with a solid foundation and framework, are excited about the prospect of growing our contributions in 2021 and beyond.

President's dinner

We held our annual president's dinner in March 2020 at the House of Lords. The event was hosted by our president, Lord Tim Clement-Jones CBE, and attended by Sir Trevor Pears of Pears Foundation, our long-standing partner. Through the event, we raised awareness of Employ Autism with employers and donors and increased support for the programme.

We are delighted to have established our Business Ambassador Group of business leaders who share a passion for bridging the gap between education and employment for young autistic people. With representation ranging from the telco, energy tech and financial services sectors, through to insurance, media and entertainment, professional services and healthcare, we are committed to supporting the fantastic Employ Autism programme. We achieve this through fundraising, leveraging our networks for introductions and promoting the significant business value that a neurodiverse workforce delivers.

Simon Clements, Chair, Business Ambassador Group

Encouraging colleagues to be themselves is one of TalkTalk's core values, so celebrating diversity and providing an inclusive working environment is really important to us. The Employ Autism programme is a truly transformative initiative that will enable thousands of autistic young people to fulfil their potential in the workplace and I would encourage other business leaders to get involved.

Tristia Harrison, TalkTalk Chief Executive

Huge thanks to our proud partners and supporters

COMMUNITY FUND

Ambitious partners

Pears Foundation
TalkTalk Group plc
Joseph Levy Foundation
Rapha Racing Ltd
MariaMarina Foundation
Santander
The Clothworkers' Foundation
Graham and Susan Tobbell

Ambitious supporters

Aberdeen Asset Management
Ali MacCallum
Alison Halsey
Atos
BBC Children in Need
Beatrice Laing Trust
Bernard Sunley Charitable Foundation
Carlyle Group
Chapman Charitable Trust
Charlotte Grobien OBE, Give It Away
Charlotte Warner
Chris Pond
Collaboration Company
Crédit Agricole CIB
David Astor
Department for Education
Department of Health and Social Care
Elizabeth Stanton
Gavin Sumner
Sir Harvey McGrath
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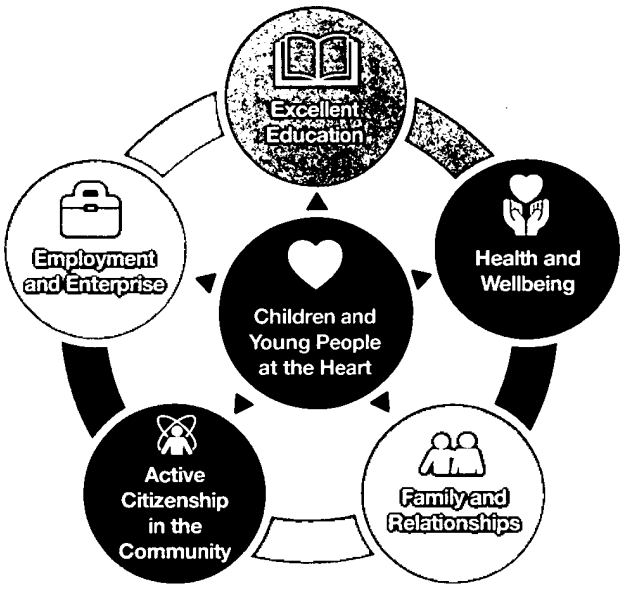
Hornsey Parochial Charities
Jean Levenant
Jefferies
Joanna Healey
John and Clare Coombe-Tennant
Jonathan Andrews
Ketchum
Koral Anderson
Kusuma Trust UK
Laurie Edmans CBE
Lesley Longstone
Lucy Nutt
M/Six
Magnus Schoeman
Martyn Craddock
Masonic Charitable Foundation
Matt Davis and Eliza Mischon
Matt Hutnell
Michael Clark
Mind
National Lottery Community Fund
Neil Goulden
Nick Hornby
Paul Disley-Tindell
Peter Cruddas Foundation
Philip Noblet
Philippa Stobbs
PIMCO Foundation
Rather Be Cycling
Red Brick Road
Sarah Yamani and Prof Dr Malik R Dahlan
Simon Clements
Simon Hillson
Simon and Lucy Mottram
Smurfit Kappa Foundation
Snowbility
St James's Place Foundation
Sue Adkins
Tanith Dodge
The Annette Duvollet Trust
The Edward Gostling Foundation
The Gerald and Gail Ronson Family Foundation
The Harebell Centenary Fund
The Health Foundation (PPP)
The Lawson Trust
The Rayne Foundation
The Thompson Family Charitable Trust
The&Partnership
Tim Barber
Lord Tim Clement-Jones CBE
Tokio Marine
Tottenham Grammar School Foundation
Tristia Harrison
Variety, The Children's Charity
Dr Virginia Bovell OBE

Looking to the future

Ambitious about Autism strategy 2020–21

Our strategic plan for 2020–21 describes what we plan to do as we focus on supporting autistic children and young people during the coronavirus pandemic and beyond. Although the world is changing, our vision for a world where the ordinary is the everyday experience of children and young people with autism remains the same.

Children and young people will continue to be at the heart of all that we do. Our new strategic plan sets out five objectives on which we will focus our efforts.



This work will be underpinned by strong foundations.

Excellent education

- We will speak out to stop autistic children and young people being left out and left behind as they return to full-time education during the coronavirus outbreak. We will amplify the voices of autistic children and young people and their parents and carers, drawing on our experience as an education provider and a national charity.
- We will continue to provide high-quality and safe education services, as we use and embed our Ambitious Approach. We will continue to adapt and continually improve our approach in light of the coronavirus pandemic.
- We will develop ways of enhancing learning and careers education through the innovative use of digital technology.
- We will put the necessary steps in place to expand our direct education services in the south of England. We will do this by pursuing opportunities to develop new free schools or providing sponsorship for school transfers and considering other partnership opportunities.

Employment and enterprise

- We will establish Employ Autism as the umbrella programme under which all our employability activities are consolidated. The Employ Autism programme will be adapted and offered across three regions over the next year.
- We will continue to offer our current supported internship programme.

- We will continue to develop the careers education we offer pupils and learners in our education settings. We will also work to improve careers education for all autistic children and young people by providing online information and support, and our training programme for careers professionals nationally.

Family and relationships

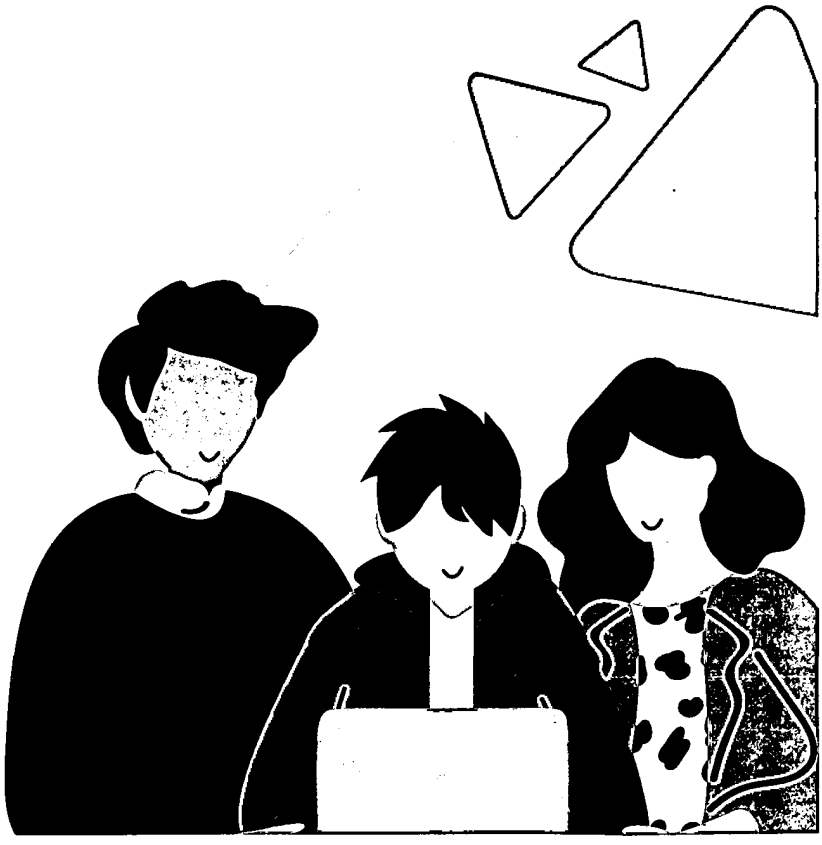
- We will expand our Learner and Family Support service for autistic children and young people, and their families, within our education settings This service will provide support in responding to the challenges of the coronavirus pandemic and beyond.
- We will develop information and support to empower parents, carers and other family members of autistic children and young people across the UK. This information will be available through existing and new digital services.
- We will continue to support pupils and learners in our schools and college to make a successful transition to work and adult life, as part of their communities. We will develop our model for use as an exemplar to others.

Health and wellbeing

- We will improve access to physical and mental health support and services in our education settings for pupils and learners, and their parents or carers. Working with strategic partners, we want to improve the experience of autistic children and young people in accessing health services.
- We will develop best practice guidance and influence decision-makers in the health system. We will develop the information and guidance we produce, as well as partnerships to promote the mental health of children and young people with autism, and their parents or carers.

Active citizenship in the community

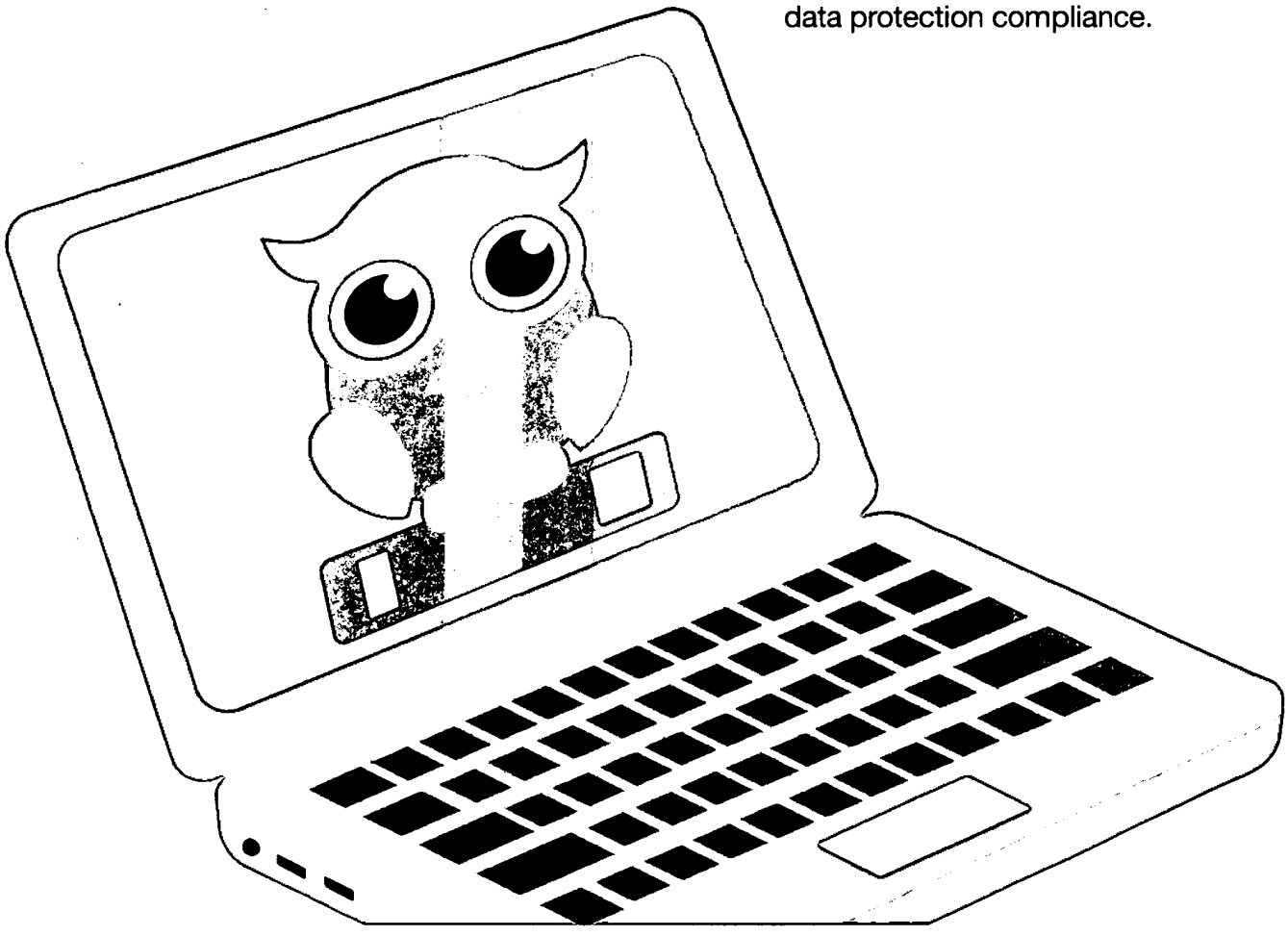
- We want to develop our services so that we can integrate them within local communities. Considering the challenges posed by the coronavirus pandemic, we will adapt our approach to ensure that our services are accessible and relevant to the communities they aim to serve.
- We will develop a youth participation strategy and, subject to funding, expand our Ambitious Youth Network. We want to create a safe and trusted space for peer support, to access information and empower autistic young people to campaign for more inclusive communities.



Strong foundations

Achieving our objectives would not be possible without the strong foundations that underpin our strategic plan.

- Co-production and taking a user-centred approach will be central to the way we work. We will take into account the views of autistic children and young people, their parents and carers and our partners in planning, governance, external influencing and developing services and activities.
- We will continue to respond to the coronavirus pandemic through our crisis management, financial planning, wellbeing, and health and safety systems, and across our support services.
- We will continue to carefully manage our financial position, including treasury management, to ensure the sustainability of our organisation.
- We will continue our work with existing partners, while also building our supporter base. We will diversify our fundraising activities, working closely with our supporters and partners.
- We will further develop our approach to learning, development and talent management for our staff and act as an exemplar of good practice in equality, diversity and inclusion.
- We will continue to strengthen our marketing and communications to provide trusted information supported by a robust content and digital marketing strategy.
- We will continue to implement our IT strategy, support remote and mobile learning and working, and make better use of technology currently in place.
- We will further improve how we store and manage our data, and how we communicate with supporters, while continuing to maintain high standards of data protection compliance.

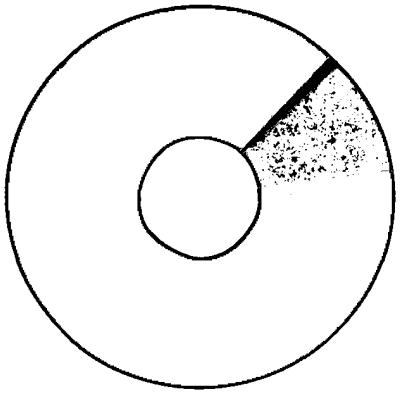


Financial review

Our total income for the year was £20.0m and our overall expenditure £19.2m, giving us a net income of £0.8m for the year. Taking into account net losses on our investment and pension position, there was a positive net movement in funds of £0.6m, taking net assets at 31 August 2020 to £15.3m, compared with net assets of £14.7m at 31 August 2019.

Income

£20.0 million

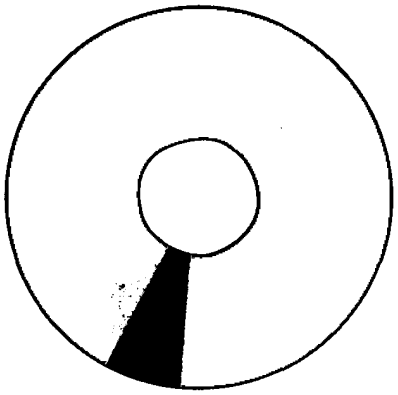


Income:

- **£17.7m** Charitable activities: education services
- **£0.1m** Charitable activities: external affairs
- **£2.0m** Gifts and donated service
- **£0.1m** Investments
- **£0.1m** Other income

Expenditure

£19.2 million



How our money was spent:

- **£17.1m** Charitable activities: education services
- **£1.2m** Charitable activities: external affairs
- **£0.9m** Raising funds

Financial performance

This good financial performance is attributed to the growth in learner and pupil numbers at Ambitious College, TreeHouse School and The Rise School, as well as the generosity of our partners and supporters. The coronavirus pandemic created financial uncertainty in the year, to which we responded with careful cost management and launching a successful fundraising appeal. These measures allowed us to create a designated coronavirus fund of £0.6m, which will help us manage the future financial uncertainties in relation to the continuing impact of the pandemic. We also secured longer-term financing of £1m to boost liquidity in these uncertain times. Our total expenditure for the year was £19.2m, an increase of £1m in comparison to 2019 (£18.2m).

In line with this positive financial performance, our free reserves for the year are £1.9m, which are within, but at the lower end of, our reserves parameter of £1.7m–£2.5m. During the year, the charity invested £0.1m in freehold improvements, £0.1m on furniture and equipment, £0.1m on website development and £0.2m on computer equipment as we equipped our staff, pupils and learners to work and learn from home. The investment portfolio performed in line with the benchmark during the year and was valued at £1.6m as at 31 August 2020, taking into account an unrealised loss of £0.1m.

Investment policy

The charity's investment policy was approved by the board of trustees in July 2020. It aims to produce the best financial return at an acceptable level of risk. The risk profile is agreed with the investment manager and is regarded as medium. The policy is reviewed at least once a year. The trustees have set a target return of inflation (CPI) +3%, averaged over three to five years, which was not achieved in the year, because of the unrealised losses on investments.

Investment risk management

As at year end we held £1.6m in listed securities (£1.7m, 2018–19).

The portfolio is diversified across a range of instruments to reduce the risk of overexposure to one type of asset. We hold the following instruments: fixed interest, direct UK and overseas equities, cash and property and managed funds. Note 12 provides further analysis of these assets (see p84).

The investments are managed by investment managers appointed by the Charity, currently Rathbone Brothers Plc, which is a reputable FTSE 250 company with net income of £26.9m in 2019. The risk profile is agreed with the investment manager and is regarded as medium risk.

Risk management practices

Members of the investment committee meet the investment manager at least twice a year to review performance and discuss market risks. The investment committee reports to the trustees on the risk profile, selection of investment managers and returns achieved.

Reserves policy and going concern

Free reserves exclude restricted funds, designated funds and any parts of unrestricted funds not readily available, such as fixed assets. At Ambitious about Autism, we hold free reserves to mitigate against risks resulting from unexpected drops in fundraising income, a downturn in learner numbers or unexpected short-term

increases in expenditure. Our reserves policy is reviewed by the trustees annually and was last reviewed in November 2020.

Based upon an evaluation of income and expenditure risks and working capital requirements, the trustees have agreed that free reserves should be in the range of £1.7m – £2.5m. As at 31 August 2020, free reserves were £1.9m. The trustees will continue to monitor the reserves position closely throughout the year.

In addition to the free reserves, Ambitious about Autism has a number of designated funds totalling £5.6m as at 31 August 2020.

These are:

- Fixed assets, valued at £4.1m. Depreciation expenditure will be funded from this fund on an annual basis, of which £0.7m is planned depreciation expenditure for 2020–21.
- Cyclical Maintenance Fund – a sinking fund, which is based on projected 30-year life cycle costs, was established for major repairs to the Pears National Centre for Autism Education. As at 31 August 2020, there was £0.7m in this fund.
- School Development Fund – a designated fund was created in 2013 for broader school development. The fund had a balance of £5k as at 31 August 2020.
- Coronavirus Fund – a fund of £0.6m was established in 2020 to provide a contingency against future risks as a result of the coronavirus pandemic, including additional costs or losses in income. This will continue in the coming year (2020–21) as we continue to operate and manage during the pandemic, covering the additional costs of cleaning, PPE, additional venue hire to facilitate physical distancing, staff cover for those who need to isolate, and supporting remote learning and working.
- Transformation Fund – a fund totalling £0.2m at 31 August 2020, which has been established to support the work of the new strategy.

The policy of the Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust is to hold sufficient reserves to provide a working balance to mitigate the impact of uneven cash flows; provide a contingency in respect of unexpected events; and plan for potential major items of expenditure, including the set-up of the sixth form. Funds balances as at 31 August 2020 totalled £6.9m. This comprised nil unrestricted funds, £2.2m of restricted funds, a £1.6m pension liability and £6.3m of restricted fixed asset funds. The funds balance at 31 August 2020, excluding the pension deficit, totalled £8.5m.

The £1.6m pension deficit is increasing, resulting in year-on-year unrealised losses, which is at risk of increasing further in the future. In accordance with the arrangements for a multi-academy trust, the deficit relating to the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) is underwritten by the DfE. We also monitor the pension scheme carefully and in 2020 a review of the LGPS was undertaken to provide assurance to trustees that the set-up of the scheme was appropriate and being correctly administered.

After making appropriate enquiries, the trustees have a reasonable expectation that the trust has adequate resources to continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future. For this reason, it continues to adopt the going concern basis in preparing the financial statements. Further details regarding the adoption of the going concern basis can

be found in the Statement of Accounting Policies. While there have been some challenges in response to the coronavirus pandemic, the trust has continued to ensure all pupils continue to learn and that the situation is managed well.

In response to the uncertainties from the coronavirus pandemic, six month capital holiday repayments were secured for all of our existing long-term loans (Futurebuilders, NatWest £1.1m tranche and NatWest £1.9m tranche). Delaying our loan capital repayments by six months helped ensure that there was sufficient cash to continue operating in case of delayed payments from customers, while the longer-term impact of the coronavirus pandemic was assessed. This continues to be assessed, monitoring the financial and operational impact.

Risks and uncertainties

Risks are managed in accordance with the risk policy approved by the board of trustees, which was reviewed and updated in March 2021.

The aim of the policy is to:

- understand as fully as possible the risks being faced or taken
- take appropriate action to manage those risks, where possible and cost-effective
- minimise the risk of new initiatives adversely affecting existing work
- accept a higher level of uncertainty, if appropriate, when taking advantage of new opportunities.

Ambitious about Autism has a risk register, which is reviewed annually by the finance and resources committee (FRC) and the board of trustees. Risks are scored according to likelihood, impact and the organisation's attitude to that risk. The changes to risks are reviewed termly by the FRC and board, with the actions taken or proposed to manage them.

The table below identifies the three key strategic risks that have been identified by the board of trustees and explains how these risks are being managed.

	Risk	Mitigation
1 **Coronavirus:**	That the coronavirus pandemic adversely affects our operations, has a negative impact on our financial position, including cash flow, and has a negative effect on staff, pupil and learner wellbeing.	Our coronavirus response team, which includes the executive leadership team, is carefully managing the impact of the coronavirus pandemic, and is minimising the negative impact on the charity through risk mitigation and forward planning, including a number of initiatives to promote staff, pupil and learner wellbeing.
2 **Learner and pupil numbers:**	Within an uncertain policy environment in times of austerity, there is an increased risk to pupil and learner numbers in our education services and this uncertainty then affects our ability to plan.	To manage the risk, we monitor pupil and learner numbers so that we can carefully manage admissions. We maintain good relationships with commissioners, ensuring timely assessment dates to enable a fast turnaround of consultations, and support parents and carers through the admissions process. We also host open days to maximise opportunities for parents and commissioners to see our services first hand.
3 **Fundraising:**	Our ability to operate and grow as set out in our strategy depends on our ability to raise funds, which we depend on for other impactful projects across Ambitious about Autism.	We are working hard to ensure our existing partners are well supported and spread the work with new partners.

Our approach to fundraising

Fundraising practices

Meeting the highest fundraising standards is essential to retaining the trust and support of our much-valued donors.

We pay the voluntary levy to register with the Fundraising Regulator, and we take care to ensure that our practices comply with the Code of Fundraising Practice and the Fundraising Promise.

We are also a member of the Chartered Institute of Fundraising. We maintain up-to-date policies for our fundraising code of conduct; compliments and complaints; and whistleblowing, and ensure that all team members understand and comply with these policies. Our board of trustees reviews these policies, alongside our compliance with fundraising regulations, annually.

Our privacy policy continues to comply with data protection legislation and regulation and is accessible to all on our websites.

We also ensure that we are compliant with the General Data Protection Regulation.

In the year under review and beyond, there have been no instances of non-compliance with the requirements of the Code of Fundraising Practice.

A company contracted to provide auction support at our gala event went out of business at the start of the pandemic crisis in 2020. Like several charities affected, this has meant we have not yet received all funds due. We raised this as a serious incident with the Charity Commission, which decided not to investigate. We notified all guests at the event, which led to a single complaint about involving a third party in handling their donation, which was satisfactorily resolved.

No other complaints have been received by us regarding fundraising activities in the year ended 31 August 2020.

As a charity set up to protect and champion vulnerable people, we consider it important that these values are echoed in our fundraising. Through our close adherence to fundraising regulations, scrutiny by the executive leadership team and transparency with donors, we ensure that we do not unreasonably intrude on a person's privacy; are not unreasonably persistent; and do not place undue pressure on any person to give money or other property.

Our fundraising work

Most of our fundraised income is generated through partnerships with individuals who have an interest in our cause, as well as trusts, foundations and corporate partners. We have also benefitted from the generosity of community members and individuals participating in challenge events and attendees at our annual gala event; Night of Ambition.

In partnership with TalkTalk, we were fortunate to benefit from another successful Night of Ambition in November 2019. As before, TalkTalk sold tickets and helped with auction items, while all materials for the event and fundraising activities were designed and monitored by the Ambitious about Autism team.

Unfortunately, most challenge events and community fundraising activities were cancelled due to the coronavirus pandemic. We are grateful to those supporters who took part in the 2.6 Challenge - the online fundraising event organised by the team behind the Virgin Money London Marathon. For these fundraisers, we have continued to use the services of online fundraising platforms JustGiving and VirginMoneyGiving, ensuring that these platforms remain compliant and meet high standards.

Like many other organisations, we are continuing to manage the challenges and uncertainty caused by the coronavirus pandemic. Due to the increasingly challenging fundraising environment and the diversification of the fundraising strategy, fundraising expenditure is higher; we have made additional investments to set the foundation for our fundraising work in the future, to ensure that opportunities are grasped and that we can continue to be proactive as ever.

We do not engage through face-to-face or telephone direct marketing. Our regular giving programme is conducted primarily with our close community, and one small Christmas appeal to a selection of supporters. We do not conduct street or public site collections, nor do we have any mass participation activities in place.

Legal structures and governance

Governance

Ambitious about Autism (The Company) is a charitable company limited by guarantee, incorporated on 25 May 1997 (company number 03375255) and registered as a charity on 2 July 1997 (charity number 1063184). The company was established under a memorandum of association, which established the objects and powers of the charitable company and is governed under its articles of association. Ambitious about Autism is governed by a board of trustees who also act as the directors of the company for the purposes of company law.

Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust (The Trust) is a multi-academy trust, a company limited by guarantee and an exempt charity. It was founded and incorporated on 18 December 2012 (company number 08335297) to support the development and running of The Rise School and further free schools. The charitable company's memorandum and articles of association are the primary governing documents of the trust. The trust is governed by a board of trustees who also act as the directors of the charitable company for the purposes of company law, and it has members whose duty is to ensure that the board is effectively discharging its responsibilities. Ambitious about Autism is the sole corporate member of the trust along with four individual members.

A formal governance review was conducted during the year and changes were made to the governance structure, which took effect from 13 December 2019. The governance review was supported by an external facilitator and had a remit to streamline and strengthen governance arrangements across the group. This included the board and committee structure and membership; with updated articles, members agreements, scheme of reservation and delegation, and terms of references being put in place. The work was informed by interviews and questionnaires completed by trustees and members of the executive leadership team, and appropriate legal advice was taken at each stage. The proposals from the governance review were then reviewed and approved by the DfE, in relation to the trust.

The new governance structure also resulted in changes to the company members of the trust. Until 12 December 2019, the four members were Ambitious about Autism, the chair of Ambitious about Autism, the chair of the trust and the chief executive. Under the new governance arrangements, there are five members: Ambitious about Autism and four individuals who are trustees of Ambitious about Autism.

As a result of the new governance structure, the Joint Group Board Committee was created, and the trustees of Ambitious about Autism and the Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust became members of this from 13 December 2019. The respective Ambitious about Autism and Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust boards retain responsibility for all matters and delegate a number of appropriate decisions to the Joint Group Board Committee and its subcommittees. The aim is to maximise efficiency and impact between the two boards. For example, where joint policies exist, they are reviewed and approved, where appropriate by the Joint Group Board Committee. Clear schemes of reservation and delegation have been approved by both boards.

Both boards of trustees follow a regular cycle of termly meetings and have at least one awayday with the executive leadership team each year, as well as holding additional meetings when required.

The boards are supported by several joint subcommittees, which since the 13 December 2019 restructure have been as set out below.

- The Nominations and Remuneration Committee oversees governance planning and policy, including trustee renewal, support and review. It also reviews and agrees remuneration and terms and conditions of employment for the executive leadership team and staff across the charity and the trust. It meets termly in advance of board meetings.
- The Finance and Resources Committee (FRC) meets termly in advance of board meetings and is responsible for the general oversight and scrutiny of systems, planning, financial and resource management, and reporting internal controls and risk management for the charity and the trust.
- The Education Committee meets termly and is responsible for our education services. It also oversees the governing bodies and advisory groups in each service for both the charity and the trust.
- The Investment Committee, an Ambitious about Autism committee, which reports to the FRC, monitors the performance of the charity's investment portfolio and meets twice per year.
- The Trust Audit Committee meets annually in November, and termly from 2021, to oversee the annual report and accounts, the audit, the programme of internal scrutiny and compliance with DfE legislation for the trust.

All matters related to the educational performance of TreeHouse School, The Rise School and Ambitious College are examined by their governing bodies.

Management of the charity and the trust is delegated to the chief executive, who is also the accounting officer for the trust, and the executive leadership team. They attend board and subcommittee meetings.

The Ambitious about Autism Youth Council comprised 14 autistic young people aged 16–25, as at 31 August 2020. Members of the Youth Council are encouraged to shape and influence our work and make presentations to the board of trustees.

Trustee recruitment, induction and training

The aim of the charity and the trust is to build a diverse board that has the optimum range of skills, experience and perspectives to ensure we have the appropriate level of support, scrutiny and oversight. People with lived experience of autism are involved in the governance and decision-making of the charity and the trust, including on the board of trustees, the governing bodies and advisory groups.

The recruitment and induction policy works to promote this goal. New trustees are recruited openly through a variety of channels, including search, advertising and through networks. Once recruited, trustees are supported with an induction programme and handbook in the first few months, followed by ongoing training as required.

The recruitment, induction and appraisal of trustees is overseen by the Nominations and Remuneration Committee.

All trustees give their time voluntarily and receive no benefits from the charity or the trust. Any expenses reclaimed are set out in note 6 to the accounts (see p80).

Charity Governance Code

The principles and recommended practice set out in the Charity Governance Code are regularly discussed by the trustees.

Areas of focus in 2019–20 were:

- **Board effectiveness:** During 2019–20, a formal governance review was conducted with changes to the governance structure being implemented in December 2019, resulting in changes to the committee structure, and various updates to board filings such as articles (please see above for further details).
- **Equality, diversity and inclusion:** The board believes a balance of experience, skills, knowledge and backgrounds is crucial in the composition of the members to provide a variety of perspectives in discussions and enhance decision-making. We believe that including people with lived experience of autism in our governance and decision-making and also on the board of trustees is of benefit to the charity. The board is committed to investing in its diversity through future recruitment.

Our people

Our skilled and dedicated staff and volunteers are vital to achieving our mission and vision and living our values. We are committed to being a great organisation to work and volunteer for.

It is critical that we attract, motivate, develop and retain staff and volunteers with the right skills, talents and knowledge so that we can run the charity as efficiently and effectively as possible.

As part of the Ambitious Futures 2020 strategy, we continued our focus on investment in recruitment, development and retention, and ensuring that managers have the skills and capabilities to lead and manage to a high standard.

During the coronavirus pandemic, the health and wellbeing of our staff, pupils and learners was our utmost priority. We supported our staff to work from home, in line with government guidance, which allowed us to

operate better social distancing for staff at our schools and college to provide education to autistic children and young people.

We developed a homeworking charter and wellbeing resources, including online physiotherapy, yoga, resilience training, regular supervisions, and guidance for managers to support teams working remotely.

We are enormously grateful for the dedication, high standards, and care of everyone who works at Ambitious about Autism.

The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS)

From April to August 2020, we furloughed a few charity staff members, claiming a total of £118k through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) in line with government guidance. After the year-end, we continued to furlough staff members on an operational basis and to meet our resourcing requirements.

Engagement with staff, beneficiaries and stakeholders

Employee engagement

Our staff are fundamental to the success of Ambitious about Autism and the delivery of our strategic aims. We must attract, retain and motivate employees. From ensuring that we remain a responsible employer, to considering pay and benefits, and our health, safety and workplace environment, our executive leadership team considers the impact of its decisions on employees, wherever this is feasible.

We regularly engage and communicate with staff, using a range of methods, including whole staff and team face-to-face meetings and briefings, newsletters, senior management team cascades and management meetings.

During the coronavirus pandemic, our internal communications were targeted, timely and relevant. We provided emergency updates through line managers, emails and team meetings as appropriate.

In our 2020 annual survey, 96% of staff said they were proud to be part of Ambitious about Autism (compared to 95.7% in 2019). When asked about coronavirus communications, 96% of staff said the updates were clear. We are proud that, across the group, 97% of staff understand our vision, mission and values.

We have a staff council, with representatives from across the organisation. The council meets regularly to share the views of staff on decisions regarding people, policies and practices. The council also contributes to the continuing improvement of the organisation and our working environment.

Our employees are consulted on issues through staff meetings and kept informed on specific matters directly by managers. We have adopted a procedure of upward feedback for senior managers and the trustees. We've also established fair employment practices in the recruitment, selection, retention and training of all staff.

We celebrate and recognise our successes as a whole staff team each year.

We encourage the involvement of staff across the organisation through a range of activities, including participating in fundraising events and supporting activities and events for our pupils and learners.

All staff joining Ambitious about Autism and the Trust have a comprehensive induction covering our values, plans and policies, including for safeguarding, whistleblowing and data protection. We engage with and update staff on our performance during the year.

Engagement with suppliers, customers and others in a business relationship

We have a strong commitment to paying all suppliers within agreed terms.

Our executive leadership team prioritises achieving the best possible outcomes for our pupils, learners and stakeholders. Open engagement with parents, guardians and our local communities is vital to building successful and long-term relationships.

We continue to work closely and collaboratively with local authorities to ensure outcomes are mutually beneficial, with our pupils, learners and stakeholders continuing to be our core focus. We work hard to establish and maintain good relationships with our wider stakeholders, including our funders and supporters.

S172 statement

The executive leadership team and board make assessments and decisions in good faith, considering the potential consequence on stakeholders. In addition, they consider the expected outcomes most likely to promote the success of Ambitious about Autism. The benefit of our pupils, learners and stakeholders is always paramount.

The executive leadership team and the board consider the following:

- The likely consequences of any decision in the long term. This includes a regular review of our risk register, departmental operational plans and overall strategic plan.
- The interests of our employees, through regular feedback from all-staff meetings, team meetings,and individual monthly supervisions.
- The need to foster business relationships with suppliers, customers and others, ranging from prompt supplier payments to regular meetings and communication with local authorities. This includes weekly updates to local authorities with respect to our pupils and learners.
- The impact of the operations of the charity and the trust on the community and the environment. We have a community representative on all our governing bodies and continue to review our fleet management to achieve further cost savings in terms of running costs and our impact on the environment.
- The desirability of the charity and the trust in maintaining a reputation for high standards of business conduct. We lead by example and build a culture of excellence through good recruitment choices and practices, and excellent training.
- The need to act fairly as members of the charity and the trust. We have combined most of our policies across the group.

Remuneration policy for key management personnel

The Board of Trustees of Ambitious about Autism and the Trust is responsible for defining the executive pay policy. This

includes deciding on the salaries of the chief executive and the executive leadership team. The board delegates this responsibility to the Nominations and Remuneration Committee. The committee reviews executive pay and our total reward strategy for staff. The group which comprises trustees and an external expert, meets each term. The committee makes recommendations to the board of trustees for approval. We have an executive pay policy, which sets out our approach to pay for our executive leadership team, how pay is determined and reviewed, and the relative impact on pay across the organisation.

Our approach to pay is underpinned by our principle to:

"Pay a fair salary and reward package to attract and retain skilled and expert senior leaders for AaA/AaAST. Salaries and benefits should be competitive within the charity, education and public sectors, proportionate to the complexity of each role and responsibility, and in line with our objectives and affordable."

The executive pay policy aims to follow a robust evidence-based process to achieve this principle.

- Take account of pay in similar organisations in the UK charity and public sector markets, but do not compete with salaries in the private sector.
- Monitor salary trends in the charity sector through surveys produced by providers such as XpertHR, Croner and ACEVO, as well as Education and Skills Funding Agency academy schools financial benchmarking reports and, where necessary, commission external benchmarking exercises.
- Ensure performance is reviewed and reported to the Nominations and Remuneration Committee on an annual basis.
- Apply performance-related pay elements only where required by the relevant market sector.
- Mirror the national standards for professional groups, such as headteachers.
- Take account of the Academies Financial Handbook.
- Take account of the difference between executive leadership team pay and the lowest-paid roles, and median and average pay across the organisation.

Disability Confident employer

As a charity working to support people with disabilities, we are fully committed to being welcoming and supportive to all staff with disabilities or any other protected characteristic.

Our recruiting staff are trained to ensure that applicants with disabilities are considered fully and fairly, and are supported with relevant adjustments made during the recruitment process, and in the workplace.

We are proud to have achieved Level 3 Disability Confident Leader status. As part of this scheme, we guarantee to interview candidates with a disability whose application meets the minimum criteria for the role as detailed in the person specification.

We work to ensure that all staff, including those with disabilities, have the appropriate training, career development and promotion opportunities put in place. This process

starts at induction and is managed through supervisions and ongoing performance reviews. We have access to advice from occupational health support, an on-site physiotherapist and an employee assistance programme to enable us to support any member of staff, including those who become disabled during employment.

Our wellbeing offer is extensive, and we continue to demonstrate our commitment to supporting improved mental health and wellbeing across the organisation.

Equality, diversity and inclusion: living our values

We proudly value and embrace difference at Ambitious about Autism, but we know there is more we can all do. As Chief Executive, Jolanta Lasota publicly signed up to the sector-wide initiative to address the diversity deficit in charity leadership.

One of our core values is that 'we value difference'. We are ambitious in name and this includes ambition in equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI). It is part of our core purpose to be an organisation that champions and supports diversity. Race is an integral part of this that needs far greater attention. We serve and work with people from all backgrounds and we are motivated and energised by the opportunity to improve outcomes for everybody in our charity, education sectors and wider society.

In 2020, we committed to achieve meaningful and lasting change around EDI through a proactive and comprehensive approach that:

- is embedded throughout our organisation and strategy
- is championed by our board and leadership teams
- takes into account people's views and experiences and the external context
- must result in a range of actions that deliver clear and measurable benefits, which are reviewed, appraised and reported to our key stakeholders.

Streamlined Energy and Carbon Reporting

Energy and carbon consumption

Streamlined Energy and Carbon Reporting (SECR) is the new legislative reporting requirement from 1 April 2019. It mandates that all companies that meet the thresholds must report on their operational energy consumption and associated emissions. The high-level breakdown is as follows:

	Gas	Electricity	Transport	Total
kWh	504,439	548,610	40,745	1,093,794
Mileage	N/A	N/A	47,970	47,970
tCO2e	97	139	120	356

Intensity metric

An intensity metric gives us an indicator of carbon performance based on an operational figure of the number service users (pupils and learners), with 274 members emitting on average 1.30 kgCO2e each. This will be measured annually and compared with previous years to show progress in reducing our carbon intensity.

Number of service users	274
tCO2e	356
2019–20	**1.30**

Ambitious about Autism initiatives

This section highlights energy and carbon improvement projects undertaken during the year or those that are currently under way.

Monitoring mileage underpins good fleet management and should be more than a data collection exercise. Reducing mileage reduces costs and emissions, and technology solutions will make the process easier and more accurate. We've already secured voluntary funding towards the purchase of two new vehicles, of which one was bought in this financial year, enabling us to replace two aging vehicles and achieve further cost savings in terms of running costs. We continue to focus on our fleet management.

Calculations

The following figures were used to convert energy to CO2 figures:

	Litre	CO2e
Gas	NA	0.18387 or 0.2331 per tonne
Electricity	NA	0.23314 or 0.289 per tonne
Fuel	**9.1kwh per litre**	0.28369 per tonne

Keeping data safe

We are fully committed to protecting details of all the people we work with and who support us. We continue to make sure we're always thinking about privacy and how to keep data safe and secure. Staff are required to stay up to date and informed through regular training. We never stop working on this.

Public benefit

Ambitious about Autism works to support children and young people with autism and their families throughout the UK.

TreeHouse School supports pupils aged 4–19 and Ambitious College supports learners aged 16–25, based on their needs.

Placements of learners are funded by a combination of funding from the Education and Skills Funding Agency and local authorities. Other activities are funded through voluntary income or fees earned from providing a service, for example, providing specialist training or support to parents, teachers and other professionals.

In overseeing the provision of education and the support of children, young people and their families, the trustees of Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust have complied with their duty regarding the guidance on public benefit published by the Charity Commission in exercising their powers and duties.

The trustees have referred to the guidance contained in the Charity Commission's general guidance on public benefit when reviewing the aims and objectives of the charity and in planning its future activities. Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust's principal object is to advance, for the public benefit, education in the UK by developing schools to make special educational provisions for pupils with special educational needs, or 16–19 academies offering curricula appropriate to the needs of their students. The trust opened its first school, The Rise School, in September 2014.

In particular, the trustees consider how planned activities will contribute to the aims and objectives set, and are committed to NCVO's ethical principles.

Connected organisations

Ambitious about Autism is an active member of the Autism Education Trust, Autism Alliance, British Institute of Learning Disabilities (BILD), Council for Disabled Children, Disabled Children's Partnership, National Association for Non-Maintained and Independent Special Schools (NASS), Natspec, Positive Behaviour Support Alliance and the Special Educational Consortium.

Our education provisions are co-located at Springwest Academy (part of the Tudor Park Education Trust), West Thames College and The College of Haringey, Enfield and North East London.

All the organisations listed here are independent organisations and their results are not included in the financial statements of Ambitious about Autism and the Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust.

Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust

The Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust (AaAST) is a separate exempt charity.

Ambitious about Autism is the sole corporate member of the trust. Therefore, the results of AaAST are consolidated into these group financial statements.

AaAST has been chosen to open a new special free school for autistic children and young people in Kingston and is actively seeking further partnerships to develop more special schools.

Our leadership team and advisers

The trustees of Ambitious about Autism are directors and members of the charitable company. They each guarantee to contribute an amount not exceeding £1 to the assets of the charitable company in the event of winding up. The total number of such guarantees at 31 August 2020 was nine (2019: nine). The trustees have no beneficial interest in the charitable company.

Trustees of Ambitious about Autism

Neil Goulden
(Chair)

Lesley Longstone
(Vice Chair of the Board of Trustees and Chair of the Education Committee)

Paul Disley-Tindell
(Trustee and Chair of the Nominations and Remuneration Committee)

Elizabeth Stanton
(Treasurer, Chair of the Finance and Resources Committee and Chair of the Investment Committee)

Phillippa Stobbs
(Trustee and Chair of the TreeHouse School Governing Body, until 31 August 2020)

Koral Anderson
(until 12 December 2019)

Jonathan Andrews

Martyn Craddock
(Trustee until 18 September 2020 and Chair of the TreeHouse School Governing Body from 1 September 2020)

Alison Halsey
(from 7 October 2019)

Alistair MacCallum
(from 7 October 2019)

Charlotte Warner
(until 12 December 2019)

Trustees of Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust

Neil Goulden
(Vice Chair until 12 December 2019, Chair from 13 December 2019)

Lesley Longstone
(Chair until 12 December 2019, Vice Chair from 13 December 2019)

Koral Anderson
(Trustee and Chair of the Audit Committee from 13 December 2019 until 31 December 2020)

Michael Clark
(appointed 7 October 2019 and Chair of the Audit Committee from 1 January 2021)

Tanith Dodge
(appointed 7 October 2019)

Joanna Healey

Jolanta Lasota
(until 20 April 2020)

Lucy Nutt

Elizabeth Stanton
(Treasurer and Chair of the Finance and Resources Committee)

Charlotte Warner

Members of Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust

Ambitious about Autism

Martyn Craddock
(from 13 December 2019)

Paul Disley-Tindell
(from 13 December 2019)

Neil Goulden
(until 12 December 2019)

Alison Halsey
(from 13 December 2019)

Jolanta Lasota
(until 12 December 2019)

Lesley Longstone
(until 12 December 2019)

Alistair MacCallum
(from 13 December 2019)

The trustees are supported in their work by the president and vice presidents, who all support the work of our charity.

President

Lord Tim Clement-Jones CBE

Vice Presidents

Nick Baldwin CBE

Virginia Bovell OBE

Peter Carroll

John Constantine

Katharine Doré OBE

Karen Edwards OBE

Tristia Harrison

Alex Hatter

Richard Hatter

Nick Hornby

Matthew Punshon

Sid Wells

Autism Professionals Lifetime Achievement Award

Dr Virginia Bovell OBE
Dr Virginia Bovell is the mother of Danny, 25, who has autism and severe learning disabilities. She was one of the founding parents of TreeHouse School and Ambitious about Autism. She is now one of our Vice Presidents. Dr Bovell was recognised at the Autism Professionals Awards in March 2020 for her policy and campaigning work in relation to autism and special educational needs, and for contributing to several national guidance documents, including the NICE guideline on the management of autism in children and young people.

Youth Patrons

Jonathan
Grace
Kieran
Dominic
Rayhan
Saffron
Emily
Josefina
Aishah
Patrick
Josef
Lucy
Trinny
Olivia

Youth Ambassadors

Jack Welch

Sam Chown-Ahern

Jasmine Bigden

Kerrie Portman

Expert advisers

Our team of expert advisers are leading academics, clinicians, lawyers, communications professionals and young people – all with an interest in autism and a passion to raise awareness and understanding. They provide advice and guidance on specific projects and campaigns, all as volunteers. We are honoured to be able to draw on the expertise of:

Judith Barnard
Sir Simon Baron-Cohen
Steve Broach
Leo Capella
Prof Tony Charman
Prof Richard Hastings
Prof Patricia Howlin
Jonathan Meth
Dr Emran Mian OBE
David Nicholson
Nick Peacey
Prof Liz Pellicano
Mark Schmid
Dr Rowie Shaw OBE
Fiona Slomovic
Su Thomas
Richard Townley
Gaby Zein

Ambassadors

Our ambassadors come from all walks of life, but all share an interest in autism and a passion to raise awareness and understanding. Our ambassadors are:

Sarah Cawood

Michelle Collins

Niamh Cusack

Jonny Gould

Kathy Lette

David Mitchell

Lucy Mottram

Simon Mottram

Jules Robertson

Hayley Ronson

Jon Snow

Luke Treadaway

Parent Patrons

Our team of parent patrons are all people whose lives have been touched by autism:

Rt Hon John Bercow MP
(retired 31 October 2019)

Sally Bercow
(retired 31 October 2019)

Nicky Clark

Claire Coombe-Tennant

John Coombe-Tennant

Matthew Davis

Keith Duffy

Eliza Mishcon

Charlotte Moore

Claire Ryan

Sophie Walker

Employ Autism Development Board

Chair Lord Tim Clement-Jones CBE

Members

Laurie Edmans CBE

Chris Pond

Tristia Harrison

Alistair MacCallum

Koral Anderson

Sue Adkins

Matt Hutnell

Executive Leadership Team

The trustees delegate day-to-day management of the charity to the executive leadership team:

Jolanta Lasota
Chief Executive

Vivienne Berkeley
Executive Principal

Paul Breckell
Deputy Chief Executive

Danae Leaman-Hill
Director of Fundraising and Development

Louise Posocco
Director of Finance and Planning, and Company Secretary

Zoe Weaver
Director of People

Harry Wilkinson
Director of Service Development

Alison Worsley
Director of External Affairs

Independent auditor

RSM UK Audit LLP
25 Farringdon Street, London EC4A 4AB

Bankers

National Westminster Bank Plc
13 Market Place Reading,
Berkshire RG1 2EP

Nationwide Building Society
Nationwide House, Pipers Way
Swindon, Wiltshire SN38 1NW

CAF Bank Limited
25 Kings Hill Avenue, Kings Hill,
West Malling ME19 4JQ

Solicitors

Stone King LLP
13 Queen Square, Bath BA1 2HJ

Farrer & Co LLP
66 Lincoln's Inn Fields, Holborn,
London WC2A 3LH

Investment managers

Rathbone Brothers Public Limited Company
8 Finsbury Circus, London EC2M 7AZ

The statement of trustees' responsibilities

The trustees (who are also directors of Ambitious about Autism for the purposes of company law) are responsible for preparing the Trustees' Annual Report, including the strategic report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

Company law requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year, which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company and group as at the balance sheet date, and of the incoming resources and application of resources, including the income and expenditure, of the group for that period.

In preparing these financial statements, the trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently
- observe the methods and principles in the Charities Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP)
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent
- state whether applicable UK Accounting Standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in operation.

The trustees are responsible for maintaining proper accounting records that disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charitable company and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006.

Statement as to disclosure of information to auditor

In so far as the trustees are aware:

- there is no relevant audit information of which the charitable company's auditor is unaware
- the trustees have taken all steps that they ought to have taken to make themselves aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the auditor is aware of that information.

The trustees are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charitable company and the group, and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

The trustees are responsible for the maintenance and integrity of the corporate and financial information on the charitable company's website. Legislation in the UK governing the preparation and dissemination of financial statements may differ from legislation in other jurisdictions.

Auditor

The appointment of our new auditors, RSM UK Audit LLP, was made on 5 June 2020 following a tender process supported by trustees.

The Trustees' Annual Report is approved by order of the board of trustees and the Strategic Report and the Directors' Report required by company law (included therein) are approved by the board of trustees in their capacity as the directors at a meeting on 26 March 2021 and signed on their behalf by:

Neil Goulden
Chair of the Board of Trustees

Independent auditor's report to the members of Ambitious about Autism

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of Ambitious about Autism (the 'parent charitable company') and its subsidiary (the 'group') for the year ended 31 August 2020, which comprise the Consolidated Statement of Financial Activities incorporating an Income and Expenditure Account, the Group and Company Balance Sheets, the Group Cash Flow Statement and notes to the financial statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards, including FRS 102 "The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland" (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

In our opinion the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the group's and the parent charitable company's affairs as at 31 August 2020 and of the group's incoming resources and application of resources, including its income and expenditure, for the year then ended
- have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006.

Basis for opinion

We have been appointed auditors under the Companies Act 2006 and section 151 of the Charities Act 2011 and report in accordance with those Acts.

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)) and applicable law. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of our report. We are independent of the group and parent charitable company in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in the UK, including the FRC's Ethical Standard and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Conclusions relating to going concern

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters in relation to which the ISAs (UK) require us to report to you where:

- the trustees' use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is not appropriate
- the trustees have not disclosed in the financial statements any identified material uncertainties that may cast significant doubt about the group's or parent charitable company's ability to continue to adopt the going concern basis of accounting for a period of at least 12 months from the date when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

Other information

The trustees are responsible for the other information. The other information comprises the information included in the annual report other than the financial statements and our auditor's report thereon. Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in our report, we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

In connection with our audit of the financial statements, our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or our knowledge obtained in the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If we identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, we are required to determine whether there is a material misstatement in the financial statements or a material misstatement of the other information. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact. We have nothing to report in this regard.

Opinions on other matters prescribed by the Companies Act 2006

In our opinion, based on the work undertaken in the course of the audit:

- the information given in the Trustees' Report, which includes the Directors' Report and the Strategic Report prepared for the purposes of company law, for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements
- the Directors' Report and the Strategic Report included within the Trustees' Report have been prepared in accordance with applicable legal requirements.

Matters on which we are required to report by exception

In the light of the knowledge and understanding of the group and the parent charitable company and their environment obtained in the course of the audit, we have not identified material misstatements in the Directors' Report or the Strategic Report included within the Trustees' Report.

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters where the Companies Act 2006 requires us to report to you if, in our opinion:

- adequate accounting records have not been kept by the parent charitable company, or returns adequate for our audit have not been received from branches not visited by us

- the parent charitable company financial statements are not in agreement with the accounting records and returns
- certain disclosures of trustees' remuneration specified by law are not made
- we have not received all the information and explanations we require for our audit.

Responsibilities of trustees

As explained more fully in the statement of trustees' responsibilities set out on p67, the trustees (who are also the directors of the charitable company for the purposes of company law) are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view, and for such internal control as the trustees determine is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the trustees are responsible for assessing the group's and parent charitable company's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the trustees either intend to liquidate the group or parent charitable company or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

A further description of our responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements is provided on the Financial Reporting Council's website at frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities. This description forms part of our auditor's report.

Use of our report

This report is made solely to the charitable company's members, as a body, in accordance with Chapter 3 of Part 16 of the Companies Act 2006. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the charitable company's members those matters we are required to state to them in an auditor's report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the charitable company and the charitable company's members as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

RSM UK Audit LLP

Hannah Catchpool

Senior Statutory Auditor

For and on behalf of RSM UK AUDIT LLP, Statutory Auditor
Chartered Accountants
25 Farringdon Street
London
EC4A 4AB

Date: 26 March 2021

Consolidated statement of financial activities

(incorporating an income and expenditure account)

For the year ended 31 August 2020

		For the year ended 31 August 2020					For the year ended 31 August 2019
			Ambitious about Autism		Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust		
	Note	Unrestricted £'000	Restricted £'000	Sub total £'000	Restricted £'000	**Total £'000**	**Total £'000**
Income from:							
Donations and legacies:							
Gifts and donated services	2	637	1,283	1,920	111	**2,031**	**1,975**
Charitable activities:							
Educational services	3	13,113	105	13,218	4,453	**17,671**	**16,542**
External affairs	3	-	103	103	-	**103**	**101**
Other income:							
Trading income		56	7	63	-	**63**	**93**
Investment income		53	-	53	-	**53**	**66**
CJRS income		118	-	118	-	**118**	-
Total income		**13,977**	**1,498**	**15,475**	**4,564**	**20,039**	**18,777**
Expenditure on raising funds:							
Fundraising activities		936	-	936	-	**936**	**952**
Investment management costs		12	-	12	-	**12**	**12**
		948	**-**	**948**	**-**	**948**	**964**
Charitable activities:							
Educational services		12,934	497	13,431	3,621	**17,052**	**16,041**
External affairs		745	494	1,239	-	**1,239**	**1,163**
Total expenditure	**4**	**14,627**	**991**	**15,618**	**3,621**	**19,239**	**18,168**
Net (expenditure)/income before other gains/(losses)		**(650)**	**507**	**(143)**	**943**	**800**	**609**
Net (losses)/gains on investments		(90)	-	(90)	-	**(90)**	**53**
Net losses on pension deficit		-	-	-	(122)	**(122)**	**(312)**
Net (expenditure)/income		**(740)**	**507**	**(233)**	**821**	**588**	**350**
Transfers between and from funds	19	583	(132)	451	(451)	**-**	**-**
Net movement in funds		**(157)**	**375**	**218**	**370**	**588**	**350**
Reconciliation of funds:							
Total funds brought forward	19	7,633	534	8,167	6,566	**14,733**	**14,383**
Total funds carried forward	**19**	**7,476**	**909**	**8,385**	**6,936**	**15,321**	**14,733**

Balance sheets

As at 31 August 2020

Company number: 03375255

	Note	Group 31 August 2020 £'000	Group 31 August 2019 £'000	Ambitious about Autism 31 August 2020 £'000	Ambitious about Autism 31 August 2019 £'000
Fixed assets:					
Tangible assets	10	**16,846**	17,262	**10,546**	10,839
Investments	12	**1,644**	1,750	**1,644**	1,750
Intangible assets	11	**66**	19	**66**	19
		18,556	19,031	**12,256**	12,608
Current assets:					
Debtors	13	**803**	867	**723**	765
Cash at bank and in hand		**6,095**	2,414	**3,758**	1,335
Short-term deposits		**13**	1,504	**8**	1,002
		6,911	4,785	**4,489**	3,102
Liabilities:					
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	14	**(2,804)**	(2,932)	**(2,595)**	(2,574)
Net current assets		**4,107**	**1,853**	**1,894**	**528**
Total assets less current liabilities		**22,663**	20,884	**14,150**	13,136
Creditors: amounts falling due after one year	16	**(5,765)**	(4,969)	**(5,765)**	(4,969)
Defined benefit pension scheme liability	17	**(1,577)**	(1,182)	**-**	-
Total net assets	**18**	**15,321**	**14,733**	**8,385**	**8,167**
Funds					
Restricted funds:					
Ambitious about Autism		909	534	909	534
Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust		6,936	6,566	-	-
Total restricted funds		**7,845**	**7,100**	**909**	**534**
Unrestricted funds:					
Designated funds		5,578	5,219	5,578	5,219
General funds		1,898	2,414	1,898	2,414
Total unrestricted funds		**7,476**	**7,633**	**7,476**	**7,633**
Total funds	**18**	**15,321**	**14,733**	**8,385**	**8,167**

The financial statements were approved by the trustees on 26 March 2021 and signed on their behalf by

Neil Goulden

Chair of the Board of Trustees

Consolidated statement of cash flows

For the year ended 31 August 2020

	Note	For the year ended 31 August 2020 £'000	£'000	For the year ended 31 August 2019 £'000	£'000
Cash flows from operating activities					
Net cash provided by operating activities	20		**1,949**		**966**
Cash flows from investing activities					
Dividends and interest from investments		53		66	
Interest payable		(107)		(113)	
Purchase of tangible and intangible fixed assets		(512)		(616)	
Proceeds from the sale of investments		269		192	
Change on cash held for investment		34		(56)	
Purchase of investments		(287)		(123)	
Net cash used in investing activities			**(550)**		**(650)**
Cash flows from financing activities					
Purchase of new loans		1,000		-	
Repayments of borrowing		(209)		(371)	
Net cash used in financing activities			**791**		**(371)**
Change in cash and cash equivalents			**2,190**		**(55)**
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the year			**3,918**		**3,973**
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the year			**6,108**		**3,918**
Cash and cash equivalents consists of:					
Cash at bank and in hand			**6,095**		**2,414**
Short-term deposits			**13**		**1,504**
			6,108		**3,918**

Net debt reconciliation	**At the start of the year**	**Cash flows**	**Other non-cash changes**	**At end of year**
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Cash	2,414	3,681	-	6,095
Cash equivalents	1,504	(1,491)	-	13
Loans falling due within one year	(378)	5	-	(373)
Loans falling due after more than one year	(4,969)	204	(1,000)	(5,765)
Total	**(1,429)**	**2,399**	**(1,000)**	**(30)**

Notes to the financial statements
For the year ended 31 August 2020

1. Accounting policies

Ambitious about Autism is a charitable group limited by guarantee and is incorporated in England and Wales. The registered office address is Woodside Avenue, London, N10 3JA.

a. Basis of preparation
The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2019) – (Charities SORP FRS 102), the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (March 2018) and the Companies Act 2006.

The financial statements are presented in sterling (£).

The accounts are rounded to the nearest thousand (£'000).

Assets and liabilities are initially recognised at historical cost or transaction value unless otherwise stated in the relevant accounting policy or note.

b. Basis of consolidation
Ambitious about Autism is the sole corporate member of AaAST. Therefore the consolidated financial statements of the charity incorporate the financial statements of the trust, a UK company limited by guarantee (company registration number 8335297) that is also an exempt charity. Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust's results and net assets at 31 August 2020 are consolidated within these accounts on a line by line basis. Intercompany transactions and balances between charitable companies are eliminated. Consistent accounting policies have been adopted across the group.

c. Public benefit entity
The charitable company meets the definition of a public benefit entity under FRS 102.

d. Going concern
The trustees consider that there are no material uncertainties about the charitable company's ability to continue as a going concern. A 12-month detailed budget is prepared from year-end as well as a higher level five-year finance model. The trustees have a reasonable expectation that Ambitious about Autism and the Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust has available cash to settle liabilities as they fall due and has adequate resources to continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future.

Two loans have been acquired, £500k from Natwest and £500k from Rathbones, to provide sufficient liquidity. A designated Covid fund of £0.6m was established in 2020 to provide a contingency against future risks as a result of coronavirus, including additional costs or losses in income. The financial forecast and assumptions for the financial year 2020-21 have taken into account the financial impact of Covid-19, and due to pupil and learner numbers exceeding budgeted levels, the additional costs of Covid-19 have been offset. The ongoing financial impact of Covid-19 will continue to be monitored over the course of the year.

The trustees do not consider that there are any sources of estimation uncertainty at the reporting date that have a significant risk of causing a material adjustment to the carrying amounts of assets and liabilities for a period of a least 12 months from sign-off.

e. Income
Income is recognised when the group has entitlement to the funds, any performance conditions attached to the income have been met, it is probable that the income will be received and the amount can be measured reliably.

Income from government and other grants, whether 'capital' grants or 'revenue' grants, is recognised when the group has entitlement to the funds, any performance conditions attached to the grants have been met, it is probable that the income will be received and the amount can be measured reliably and is not deferred. Fees are recognised as services are rendered, deferring until criteria are met.

Grant income relating to the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) is recognised under the accrual model. There are no unfulfilled conditions or other contingencies relating to the grant, and there have been no other forms of government assistance from which the entity has directly benefited in relation to the coronavirus pandemic in the year.

School and college fee income received in advance of the provision of a specified service is deferred until the criteria for income recognition are met.

f. Donations of gifts, services and facilities
Donated professional services and donated facilities are recognised as income when the group has control over the item or received the service, any conditions associated with the donation have been met, the receipt of economic benefit from the use by the group of the item is probable and the economic benefit can be measured reliably.

On receipt, donated gifts, professional services and donated facilities are recognised on the basis of the value of the gift to the group, which is the amount the group would have been willing to pay to obtain services or facilities of equivalent economic benefit on the open market; a corresponding amount is then recognised in the expenditure in the period of receipt.

g. Interest receivable
Interest on funds held on deposit is included when receivable and the amount can be measured reliably by the group; this is normally upon notification of the interest paid or payable by the bank.

h. Fund accounting
Restricted funds are to be used for specific purposes as laid down by the donor. Expenditure which meets these criteria is charged to the fund.

Unrestricted funds are donations and other incoming resources received or generated for the charitable purposes.

Designated funds are unrestricted funds earmarked by the trustees for particular purposes.

i. Expenditure and irrecoverable VAT
Expenditure is recognised once there is a legal or constructive obligation to make a payment to a third party, it is probable that settlement will be required and the amount of the obligation can be measured reliably. Expenditure is classified under the following activity headings:

- Costs of raising funds relate to the costs incurred by the charitable company in inducing third parties to make voluntary contributions to it, as well as the cost of any activities with a fundraising purpose.

Notes to the financial statements
For the year ended 31 August 2020

1. Accounting policies *(continued)*

- Expenditure on charitable activities includes the costs of delivering services and other educational activities undertaken to further the purposes of the group, and their associated support costs.

Ambitious about Autism is VAT registered. As the charity provides a mixture of taxable and exempt supplies, VAT on expenditure that cannot be directly attributed to either type of supply is partially recovered.

Irrecoverable VAT is charged as a cost against the activity for which the expenditure was incurred.

j. Allocation of support costs
Resources are expended and allocated to the particular activity where the cost relates directly to that activity. However, the cost of overall direction and administration of each activity, comprising the salary and the overhead costs of the central function, is apportioned on the following bases, which are estimates, based on staff time, of the amount attributable to each activity.

Central function	Main basis for allocation
Leadership	Time spent
Finance	Staff head count
Human resources	Staff head count
IT	Staff head count
Facilities management	Area occupied
General administration	Staff head count
Premises and office costs	Area occupied

Where information about the aims, objectives and projects of the group is provided to potential beneficiaries, the costs associated with this are allocated to charitable expenditure.

Governance costs are the costs associated with the governance arrangements of the group. These costs are associated with constitutional and statutory requirements and include any costs associated with the strategic management of the group's activities.

The management charge for the Ambitious about Autism support provided to Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust is eliminated on consolidation of the group accounts.

k. Operating leases
Rental charges are charged on a straight-line basis over the term of the lease.

l. Tangible fixed assets
Items of equipment or groups of items are capitalised where the purchase price exceeds £5,000. Depreciation costs are allocated to activities on the basis of the use of the related assets in those activities. Assets are reviewed for impairment if circumstances indicate their carrying value may exceed their net realisable value and value in use.

Depreciation is provided at rates calculated to write down the cost of each asset except freehold land to its estimated residual value over its expected useful life. The useful lives are as follows:

Freehold land and building at Woodside Avenue	50 years
Long leasehold	50 years
Short and long leasehold improvements	over the lease term
Computer equipment	3 years
Educational, office furniture and equipment	3–10 years
Motor vehicles	5 years

m. Intangible fixed assets

Intangible assets are measured at cost less accumulated amortisation and any accumulated impairment losses.

Software development costs are recognised as an intangible asset when all of the following criteria are demonstrated:

- the technical feasibility of completing the software so that it will be available for use or sale
- the intention to complete the software and use or sell it
- the ability to use the software or to sell it
- how the software will generate probable future economic benefits
- the availability of adequate technical, financial and other resources to complete the development and to use or sell the software
- the ability to measure reliably the expenditure attributable to the software during its development.

Amortisation is charged so as to allocate the cost of intangibles less their residual values over their estimated useful lives, using the straight-line method. The intangible assets are amortised over the following useful economic lives:

Software development costs	3 years

n. Listed investments
Investments are a form of basic financial instrument and are initially recognised at their transaction value and subsequently measured at their fair value as at the balance sheet date using the closing quoted market price. Any change in fair value will be recognised in the statement of financial activities. Investment gains and losses, whether realised or unrealised, are combined and shown in the heading 'Net gains/(losses) on investments' in the statement of financial activities. The group does not acquire put options, derivatives or other complex financial instruments.

o. Debtors
Trade and other debtors are recognised at the settlement amount due after any trade discount offered. Prepayments are valued at the amount prepaid net of any trade discounts due.

p. Cash and cash equivalents
Cash and cash equivalents includes cash and short term highly liquid investments with a short maturity of three months or less from the date of acquisition or opening of the deposit or similar account.

q. Short-term deposits
Short-term deposits include liquid investments with a maturity of three to 12 months from the date of acquisition or opening of the deposit or similar account.

r. Creditors and provisions
Creditors and provisions are recognised where the group has a present obligation resulting from a past event that will probably result in the transfer of funds to a third party and the amount due to settle the obligation can be measured or estimated reliably. Creditors and provisions are normally recognised at their settlement amount after allowing for any trade discounts due.

Notes to the financial statements
For the year ended 31 August 2020

1. Accounting policies *(continued)*

s. Financial instruments
The group has financial assets and financial liabilities only of a kind that qualify as basic financial instruments. Basic financial instruments are initially recognised at transaction value and subsequently measured at their settlement value.

t. Pensions
Ambitious about Autism has a defined contribution pension scheme available to all staff.

On 1 July 2014, and in compliance with government legislation on auto-enrolment, a defined contribution group personal pension scheme was opened. Employees were able to join on inception or under the rules of auto-enrolment with a deferred period of three months.

Ambitious about Autism also contributes to the Teachers' Pension Scheme. The pension available to teaching staff is a defined benefit, multi-employer scheme and the assets and liabilities of the scheme cannot be split out for individual employers. Further information is given in note 17.

The pension costs charged in the statement of financial activities represent the contributions payable by the group in the year to all pension schemes.

Retirement benefits to employees of the Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust are provided by the Teachers' Pension Scheme ('TPS') and the Local Government Pension Scheme ('LGPS'). These are defined benefit schemes.

The TPS is an unfunded scheme and contributions are calculated so as to spread the cost of pensions over employees' working lives with the trust in such a way that the pension cost is a substantially level percentage of current and future pensionable payroll. The contributions are determined by the Government Actuary on the basis of quadrennial valuations using a prospective unit credit method. TPS is a multi-employer scheme and there is insufficient information available to use defined benefit accounting. The TPS is therefore treated as a defined contribution scheme for accounting purposes and the contributions recognised in the period to which they relate.

The LGPS is a funded scheme and the assets are held separately from those of Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust in separate trustee-administered funds. Pension scheme assets are measured at fair value and liabilities are measured on an actuarial basis using the projected unit credit method and discounted at a rate equivalent to the current rate of return on a high-quality corporate bond of equivalent term and currency to the liabilities. The actuarial valuations are obtained at least triennially and are updated at each balance sheet date. The amounts charged to operating surplus are the current service costs and the costs of scheme introductions, benefit changes, settlements and curtailments. They are included as part of staff costs as incurred. Net interest on the net defined benefit liability is also recognised in the Statement of Financial Activities and comprises the interest cost on the defined benefit obligation and interest income on the scheme assets, calculated by multiplying the fair value of the scheme assets at the beginning of the period by the rate used to discount the benefit obligations. The difference between the interest income on the scheme assets and the actual return on the scheme assets is recognised in other recognised gains and losses. Actuarial gains and losses are recognised immediately in other recognised gains and losses.

u. Significant judgements and estimates

Judgements and key sources of estimation uncertainty

In the application of the group's accounting policies, the directors are required to make judgements, estimates and assumptions about the carrying amount of assets and liabilities that are not readily apparent from other sources. The estimates and associated assumptions are based on historical experience and other factors that are considered to be relevant. Actual results may differ from these estimates.

The estimates and underlying assumptions are reviewed on an ongoing basis. Revisions to accounting estimates are recognised in the period in which the estimate is revised where the revision affects only that period, or in the period of the revision and future periods where the revision affects both current and future periods.

Key sources of estimation uncertainty

The estimates and assumptions that have a significant risk of causing a material adjustment to the carrying amounts of assets and liabilities are as follows:

- **Depreciation:** fixed assets are depreciated over the assets, expected useful life.
- **Pensions:** the pension liabiltiy is sensitive to movements in actuarial assumptions such as discount rate, mortality and inflation. Further details are set out in note 17.

Notes to the financial statements
For the year ended 31 August 2020

2. Income from donations and legacies

	For the year ended 31 August 2020				
	Ambitious about Autism			Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust	
	Unrestricted £'000	Restricted £'000	Sub total £'000	Restricted £'000	**Total £'000**
Gifts	580	1,283	1,863	111	**1,974**
Donated services	57	-	57	-	**57**
	637	**1,283**	**1,920**	**111**	**2,031**

	For the year ended 31 August 2019				
	Ambitious about Autism			Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust	
	Unrestricted £'000	Restricted £'000	Sub total £'000	Restricted £'000	**Total £'000**
Gifts	853	928	1,781	136	**1,917**
Donated services	56	2	58	-	**58**
	909	**930**	**1,839**	**136**	**1,975**

3. Income from charitable activities

	For the year ended 31 August 2020				
	Ambitious about Autism			Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust	
	Unrestricted £'000	Restricted £'000	Sub total £'000	Restricted £'000	**Total £'000**
Local authorities	11,246	38	11,284	3,362	**14,646**
Education and Skills Funding Agency	1,867	67	1,934	1,091	**3,025**
Sub total for educational services	**13,113**	**105**	**13,218**	**4,453**	**17,671**
Autism Education Trust	-	103	103	-	**103**
Sub total for external affairs	**-**	**103**	**103**	**-**	**103**
Total income from charitable activities	**13,113**	**208**	**13,321**	**4,453**	**17,774**

	For the year ended 31 August 2019				
	Ambitious about Autism			Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust	
	Unrestricted £'000	Restricted £'000	Sub total £'000	Restricted £'000	**Total £'000**
Local authorities	11,168	24	11,192	2,649	**13,841**
Education and Skills Funding Agency	1,707	96	1,803	898	**2,701**
Sub total for educational services	**12,875**	**120**	**12,995**	**3,547**	**16,542**
Autism Exchange Trust	-	101	101	-	**101**
Sub total for external affairs	**-**	**101**	**101**	**-**	**101**
Total income from charitable activities	**12,875**	**221**	**13,096**	**3,547**	**16,643**

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 August 2020

4. Analysis of expenditure

	Staff costs (note 6) £'000	Direct costs £'000	Finance (incl loan interest) £'000	Human resources £'000	Information technology £'000	Premises and office costs £'000	Leadership £'000	Support costs £'000	Governance costs £'000	For the year ended 31 August 2020 £'000
Ambitious about Autism:										
Cost of generating funds	482	355	-	-	-	7	-	93	11	**948**
Educational services	8,379	738	1	-	-	601	-	3,415	297	**13,431**
External affairs	787	257	-	-	-	22	-	153	20	**1,239**
	9,648	**1,350**	**1**	**-**	**-**	**630**	**-**	**3,661**	**328**	**15,618**
Support costs	1,589	236	778	387	131	526	14	(3,661)	-	-
Governance costs	280	29	-	-	-	1	18	-	(328)	-
Sub total Ambitious about Autism costs	**1,869**	**265**	**778**	**387**	**131**	**527**	**32**	(3,661)	(328)	-
Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust	2,704	747	-	-	-	170	-			**3,621**
Total expenditure	**14,221**	**2,362**	**779**	**387**	**131**	**1,327**	**32**	-	-	**19,239**

Resources expended are allocated to the particular activity where the cost relates directly to that activity. However, the cost of overall direction and administration of each activity, comprising the salary and the overhead costs of the central function, is apportioned based on staff time, of the amount attributable to each activity.

All AaAST support costs are paid through management fees, which are eliminated on consolidation; any other costs are allocated directly to AaAST.

	Staff costs (note 6) £'000	Direct costs £'000	Finance (incl loan interest) £'000	Human resources £'000	Information technology £'000	Premises and office costs £'000	Leadership £'000	Support costs £'000	Governance costs £'000	For the year ended 31 August 2019 £'000
Ambitious about Autism:										
Cost of generating funds	447	394	-	-	-	8	-	99	16	**964**
Educational services	7,899	1,029	-	-	-	477	-	3,339	249	**12,993**
External affairs	681	285	-	-	-	19	-	145	33	**1,163**
	9,027	**1,708**	**-**	**-**	**-**	**504**	**-**	**3,583**	**298**	**15,120**
Support costs	1,360	150	806	565	161	520	21	(3,583)	-	-
Governance costs	214	22	-	-	-	-	62	-	(298)	-
Sub total Ambitious about Autism costs	**1,574**	**172**	**806**	**565**	**161**	**520**	**83**	(3,583)	(298)	-
Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust	2,097	781	-	-	-	170	-			**3,048**
Total expenditure 2019	**12,698**	**2,661**	**806**	**565**	**161**	**1,194**	**83**	-	-	**18,168**

Notes to the financial statements
For the year ended 31 August 2020

5. Net income for the year

This is stated after charging:		For the year ended 31 August 2020 £'000	For the year ended 31 August 2019 £'000
Depreciation and amortisation		882	852
Interest payable		107	113
Auditor's remuneration:			
	Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust	21	12
	Ambitious about Autism	24	14
	Other services	1	4
Payments under operating leases:	Property	135	103
	Equipment	21	14

6. Analysis of group staff costs, trustee remuneration and expenses, and the costs of key management personnel

Staff costs were as follows:	For the year ended 31 August 2020 £'000	For year ended 31 August 2019 £'000
Salaries and wages	12,179	11,056
Social security costs	1,122	990
Employer's contribution to defined benefit pension schemes	599	386
Employer's contribution to defined contribution pension schemes	321	266
	14,221	12,698

Redundancy costs of £3,228 were paid in the year (2019: £nil) with no other severance payments made.

The number of employees who received employee benefits (excluding employer pension and National Insurance costs) fell within the following bands:	For the year ended 31 August 2020 £'000	For year ended 31 August 2019 £'000
£60,000–£69,999	3	5
£70,000–£79,999	4	3
£80,000–£89,999	2	4
£90,000–£99,999	2	2
£100,000–£109,999	1	0
£110,000–£119,999	2	1
£130,000–£139,999	0	1

The number of the employees in the above bandings during 2018/19 have been restated to exclude employer's National Insurance contributions.

The number of higher earners has increased due to the planned strengthening and development of the management team in light of the charity's ongoing growth strategy.

The total employee benefits including employer pension and National Insurance contributions of the key management personnel were £1,289,537 for the 12-month period to 31 August 2020 (2019: £950,117).

Jolanta Lasota, Chief Executive of Ambitious About Autism, was paid an annual salary of £115,000 to 31 August 2020 (2019: £111,100).

The charity trustees were not paid and did not receive any other benefits from employment with the charity in the year (2019: £nil). No charity trustee received payment for professional or other services supplied to the charity (2019: £nil).

Trustees did not claim any expenses for reimbursement of travel and subsistence costs in 2020 (2019: £nil).

Notes to the financial statements
For the year ended 31 August 2020

7. Staff numbers

The average number of employees (headcount based on number of staff employed) during the year was as follows:

	For the year ended 31 August 2020 No.	Restated for the year ended 31 August 2019 No.
Raising funds	11	11
Educational services	395	362
External affairs	19	18
Support	35	33
	460	424

The increase of staff numbers is due to the planned growth across educational services.

8. Related party transactions

Some members of the board of trustees are parents of children attending TreeHouse School. The places are funded in the same way as all other places at the school and the children receive the same service and benefits as other children.

The charity purchased £6,012 (2019: £9,492) of office furniture from Assman Office Furniture during the year. Assman Office Furniture is managed by the partner of Vivienne Berkeley, executive principal. At the balance sheet date, the amount has been fully paid leaving a nil creditor balance (2019: nil).

Charlotte Warner, a trustee of the trust, is also the Chair of Tudor Park Education Trust, which runs Springwest Academy. The Rise School holds a contract with Tudor Park Education Trust with respect to the procurement of curriculum placements, provision of caretaker services, grounds maintenance and the car park. During the year, the trust made payments totalling £29k (2019: £54k) to the Tudor Park Education Trust. Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust entered a 125-year lease with Tudor Park Education Trust commencing on 19 May 2015 for the site shared with Springwest Academy and pays a peppercorn rent to Tudor Park Education Trust.

The vice chair of the board of trustees for Ambitious about Autism and Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust and the chair of the Education Committee, Lesley Longstone, was employed by the Department for Education but was seconded to the Independent Police Complaints Commission and Crown Prosecution Service. During the year, no income had been received from the Department for Education (2019: £nil); however, Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust did receive grant income totalling £1,091k (2019: £898k) and Ambitious about Autism £1,934k (2019: £1,803k) from the Education and Skills Funding Agency, an executive agency sponsored by the Department of Education.

During the year trustees or donated personally through entities where they have significant control a total of £44,792 (2019: £40,175) to the charity. Of these, £41,355 (2019: nil) were restricted to the Emergency Coronavirus Appeal. The remainder were unrestricted.

Paul Breckell is an unpaid trustee of NCVO and NCVO Trading Limited. Ambitious about Autism has booked rooms at The Society Building, which is run by NCVO (via NCVO Trading Limited). During the year payments to NCVO were £2,360 (2019: nil)

9. Taxation

The group is exempt from corporation tax as all its income is charitable and is applied for charitable purposes.

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 August 2020

10. Tangible fixed assets

Group	Freehold land and buildings £'000	Long leasehold £'000	Leasehold improvements £'000	Educational, office furniture and equipment £'000	Computer equipment £'000	Motor Vehicles £'000	Total £'000
Cost							
At the start of the year	11,770	6,550	1,728	556	1,339	156	**22,099**
Additions in the year	94	-	1	83	245	31	**454**
Disposals in the year	-	-	-	-	(489)	(21)	**(510)**
At the end of the year	11,864	6,550	1,729	639	1,095	166	**22,043**
Depreciation							
At the start of the year	2,563	452	372	374	946	130	**4,837**
Charge for the year	242	138	183	75	225	7	**870**
Disposals in the year	-	-	-	-	(489)	(21)	**(510)**
At the end of the year	2,805	590	555	449	682	116	**5.197**
Net book value							
At the end of the year	**9,059**	**5,960**	**1,174**	**190**	**413**	**50**	**16,846**
At the start of the year	**9,207**	**6,098**	**1,356**	**182**	**393**	**26**	**17,262**

Ambitious about Autism	Freehold land and buildings £'000	Leasehold improvements £'000	Educational, office furniture and equipment £'000	Computer equipment £'000	Motor Vehicles £'000	Total £'000
Cost						
At the start of the year	11,770	1,580	392	1,075	156	**14,973**
Additions in the year	94	-	62	175	31	**362**
Disposals in the year	-	-	-	(382)	(21)	**(403)**
At the end of the year	11,864	1,580	454	868	166	**14,932**
Depreciation						
At the start of the year	2,563	372	305	764	130	**4,134**
Charge for the year	242	168	43	195	7	**655**
Disposals in the year	-	-	-	(382)	(21)	**(403)**
At the end of the year	2,805	540	348	577	116	**4,386**
Net book value						
At the end of the year	**9,059**	**1,040**	**106**	**291**	**50**	**10,546**
At the start of the year	**9,207**	**1,208**	**87**	**311**	**26**	**10,839**

Land with a cost of £834,000 (2019: £834,000) is included within freehold property and is not depreciated.
The long leasehold (125 years) refers to The Rise School building.

All the above assets are used for charitable purposes.

2018–19 figures have been restated due to the separation of intangible computer software costs (note 11).

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 August 2020

11. Intangible fixed assets

Group	Computer software £'000	Total £'000
Cost		
At the start of the year	26	**26**
Additions in the year	59	**59**
Disposals in the year	-	**-**
At the end of the year	85	**85**
Amortisation		
At the start of the year	7	**7**
Charge for the year	12	**12**
Disposals in the year	-	**-**
At the end of the year	19	**19**
Net book value		
At the end of the year	66	**66**
At the start of the year	19	**19**

Ambitious about Autism	Computer software £'000	Total £'000
Cost		
At the start of the year	26	**26**
Additions in the year	59	**59**
Disposals in the year	-	**-**
At the end of the year	85	**85**
Amortisation		
At the start of the year	7	**7**
Charge for the year	12	**12**
Disposals in the year	-	**-**
At the end of the year	19	**19**
Net book value		
At the end of the year	66	**66**
At the start of the year	19	**19**

Notes to the financial statements
For the year ended 31 August 2020

12. Investments

Group and Ambitious about Autism	31 August 2020 £'000	31 August 2019 £'000
Market value at the start of the year	1,662	1,678
Additions at cost	287	123
Disposal proceeds	(269)	(192)
(Net loss)/gain on change in fair value	(90)	53
Market value at the end of the year	1,590	1,662
Cash held in investments	54	88
Total investments held	**1,644**	**1,750**

Investments comprise:	31 August 2020 £'000	31 August 2019 £'000
Listed securities		
Fixed interest	278	279
Direct UK equities	530	594
Direct overseas equities	548	567
Alternatives – property and managed funds	234	222
Cash held for reinvestment	48	79
Cash	6	9
Market value at the end of the year	**1,644**	**1,750**

The historical cost of investments is £1,388k (2019: £1,426k).

13. Debtors

	Group		Ambitious about Autism	
	31 August 2020 £'000	31 August 2019 £'000	31 August 2020 £'000	31 August 2019 £'000
Trade debtors	348	322	332	347
Amounts owed by group undertakings	-	-	63	-
Other debtors	144	139	22	19
Prepayments	195	296	190	292
Accrued income	116	110	116	107
	803	867	723	765

Notes to the financial statements
For the year ended 31 August 2020

14. Creditors: amounts falling due within one year

	Group		Ambitious about Autism	
	31 August 2020 £'000	31 August 2019 £'000	**31 August 2020 £'000**	31 August 2019 £'000
Bank loans	**373**	378	**373**	378
Amounts owed to group undertakings	**-**	-	**5**	-
Trade creditors	**320**	389	**296**	305
Taxation and social security	**397**	342	**365**	311
Other creditors	**179**	120	**156**	154
Accruals	**396**	599	**323**	348
Deferred income (note 15)	**1,139**	1,104	**1,077**	1,078
	2,804	**2,932**	**2,595**	**2,574**

15. Deferred income

	Group		Ambitious about Autism	
Deferred income comprises fees received in advance:	**31 August 2020 £'000**	31 August 2019 £'000	**31 August 2020 £'000**	31 August 2019 £'000
Balance at the beginning of the year	**1,104**	1,176	**1,078**	1,176
Amount released to income in the year	**(1,104)**	(1,176)	**(1,078)**	(1,176)
Amount deferred in the year	**1,139**	1,104	**1,077**	1,078
Balance at the end of the year	**1,139**	**1,104**	**1,077**	**1,078**

Deferred income as at 31 August 2020 relates to autumn 2020 term fees that were received in advance of the new academic year.

Notes to the financial statements
For the year ended 31 August 2020

16. Creditors: amounts falling due after one year

Group and Ambitious about Autism	31 August 2020 £'000	31 August 2019 £'000
Loans to finance the freehold land and buildings	4,480	3,638
Loan to finance Ambitious College	1,285	1,331
Balance at the end of the year	**5,765**	**4,969**

The charity has a loan from Futurebuilders, which commenced in October 2008 and is repayable over 25 years. Interest is chargeable at 1.25% above the Bank of England base rate. The loan is secured over the freehold land and buildings at Woodside Avenue.

The charity also has a loan from NatWest, in tranches of £1.1m and £1.9m, which commenced in November 2008 and April 2012, respectively. Interest is chargeable at 0.75% above LIBOR and 1.25% above LIBOR, respectively. One tranche of the loan (£1.1m) is capped at an interest rate of 4%. The loan is repayable from November 2013 over 22 years. The loan is secured over the freehold land and buildings at Woodside Avenue.

Two new loans were acquired in August 2020, £500k from Rathbone Brothers and the other £500k from NatWest, with both loans charging interest of 2.5% over base rate. The NatWest loan is repayable over 20 years, and the Rathbone Brothers loan is repayable in five years.

The capital amounts repayable under each loan are:	Within 1 year £'000	2–5 years £'000	Over 5 years £'000
Futurebuilders	218	1,076	1,622
NatWest £1.1m tranche	47	212	589
NatWest £1.9m tranche	89	377	909
NatWest £500k	19	82	399
Rathbones £500k	-	500	-
	373	**2,247**	**3,519**

Notes to the financial statements
For the year ended 31 August 2020

17. Pension schemes

Ambitious about Autism makes contributions to the Aegon Pension Scheme, The People's Pension and into one employee's personal pension scheme. Both Ambitious about Autism and Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust pay into the Teachers' Pension Scheme. Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust also make contributions to the Local Government Pension Scheme.

Contributions to these schemes were £921k (2019: £652k).

Defined contribution schemes
The assets of the schemes are held separately from those of Ambitious about Autism. Pension costs charged in the statement of financial activities represent the contributions payable by Ambitious about Autism for the year.

Teachers' Pension Scheme
Introduction
The Teachers' Pension Scheme (TPS) is a statutory, contributory, defined benefit scheme, governed by the Teachers' Pensions Regulations (2010) and, from 1 April 2014, by the Teachers' Pension Scheme Regulations 2014. Membership is automatic for full-time teachers in academies and, from 1 January 2007, automatic for teachers in part-time employment following appointment or a change of contract, although they are able to opt out.

The TPS is an unfunded scheme and members contribute on a 'pay as you go' basis – these contributions and those made by employers are credited to the Exchequer. Retirement and other pension benefits are paid by public funds provided by parliament.

Valuation of the Teachers' Pension Scheme
Not less than every four years the Government Actuary, using normal actuarial principles, conducts a formal actuarial review of the TPS in accordance with the Public Service Pensions (Valuations and Employer Cost Cap) Directions 2014 published by HM Treasury. The aim of the review is to specify the level of future contributions. Actuarial scheme valuations are dependent on assumptions about the value of future costs, design of benefits and many other factors. The latest actuarial valuation of the TPS was carried out as at 31 March 2016. The valuation report was published by the Department for Education on 5 March 2019. The key elements of the valuation and subsequent consultation are:

- employer contribution rates set at 23.68% of pensionable pay (including a 0.08% employer administration charge)
- total scheme liabilities (pensions currently in payment and the estimated cost of future benefits) for service to the effective date of £218,100m, and notional assets (estimated future contributions together with the notional investments held at the valuation date) of £196,100m giving a notional past service deficit of £22,000m
- the SCAPE rate, set by HM Treasury, is used to determine the notional investment return.

The current SCAPE rate is 2.4% above the rate of CPI. Assumed real rate of return is 2.4% in excess of prices and 2% in excess of earnings. The rate of real earnings growth is assumed to be 2.2%. The assumed nominal rate of return including earnings growth is 4.45%. The next valuation result is due to be implemented from 1 April 2023.

A copy of the valuation report and supporting documentation is on the Teachers' Pensions website.

Under the definitions set out in FRS 102, the TPS is a multi-employer pension scheme. The group is unable to quantify its share of liabilities under the scheme and therefore, in accordance with FRS 102 has accounted for its contributions to the scheme as if it were a defined contribution scheme. The group has set out above the information available on the scheme.

The employer's pension costs paid to TPS by AaA in the year amounted to £225k (2019: £162k).

The employer's pension costs paid to TPS by AaAST in the year amounted to £162k (2019: £85k).

26 AaA employees were members of the scheme at 31 August 2020 (2019: 22).

15 AaAST employees were members of the scheme at 31 August 2020 (2019: 13).

Local Government Pension Scheme
The Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) is a funded, defined benefit pension scheme, with the assets held in separate trustee-administered funds. The total contributions made for the year ended 31 August 2020 were £290k (2019: £220k), of which employer's contributions totalled £219k (2019: £161k) and employees' contributions totalled £71k (2019: £59k). Contribution rates for employees increase with salary and during the year ended 31 August 2020 employee primary contribution rates were between 5.5% and 12.5% of pensionable salary. The agreed contribution rates for future years are 23.3% for employers, and for employees a minimum of 5.5% to a maximum of 12.5% of pensionable salary. During the year ended 31 August 2020, no employees took advantage of the 50/50 option, where employees can pay 50% of normal contributions to build up half the normal pension.

Parliament has agreed, at the request of the Secretary of State for Education, to a guarantee that, in the event of academy closure, outstanding Local Government Pension Scheme liabilities would be met by the Department for Education. The guarantee came into force on 18 July 2013.

At 31 August 2020, 55 employees were members of the scheme (2019: 48).

The most recent comprehensive actuarial valuation report is dated 15 September 2020.

Notes to the financial statements
For the year ended 31 August 2020

17. Pension schemes *(continued)*

Principal actuarial assumptions	At 31 August 2020 £'000	At 31 August 2019 £'000
Rate of increase in salaries	**3.20%**	3.65%
Rate of increase for pensions in payment/inflation	**2.20%**	2.15%
Discount rate for scheme liabilities	**1.65%**	1.90%
Inflation assumption (CPI)	**2.20%**	2.15%
Commutation of pensions to lump sums	**50.00%**	50.00%

Sensitivity analysis	£'000	£'000	£'000
Adjustment to discount rate	**0.10%**	**0.00%**	**-0.10%**
Present value of total obligation	2,382	2,474	2,570
Projected service cost	567	591	616
Adjustment to long term salary increase	**0.10%**	**0.00%**	**-0.10%**
Present value of total obligation	2,382	2,474	2,570
Projected service cost	567	591	616
Adjustment to pension increases and deferred revaluation	**0.10%**	**0.00%**	**-0.10%**
Present value of total obligation	2,568	2,474	2,384
Projected service cost	616	591	567
Adjustment to life expectancy assumptions	**+ 1 Year**	**None**	**- 1 Year**
Present value of total obligation	2,569	2,474	2,382
Projected service cost	614	591	569

The current mortality assumptions include sufficient allowance for future improvements in mortality rates. The assumed life expectations on retirement age 65 are:

	At 31 August 2020 £'000	At 31 August 2019 £'000
Retiring today		
Males	**21.3**	20.6
Females	**23.9**	24
Retiring in 20 years		
Males	**22.8**	22.3
Females	**25.5**	25.8

Notes to the financial statements
For the year ended 31 August 2020

17. Pension schemes *(continued)*
The estimated asset allocation as at 31 August 2020 is as follows:

	31 August 2020 £'000	%	31 August 2019 £'000	%
Equities	**541**	**61%**	446	61%
Gilts	**41**	**5%**	39	5%
Other bonds	**104**	**9%**	65	9%
Property	**40**	**5%**	34	5%
Absolute return funds	**157**	**18%**	129	18%
Cash	**14**	**2%**	13	2%
Total market value of assets	**897**	**100%**	**726**	**100%**
Present value of scheme liabilities – funded	**(2,474)**		**(1,908)**	
Deficit in the scheme	**(1,577)**		**(1,182)**	

The group's share of the assets of the fund is less than 1%.

The actual return on scheme assets was £5,000 (2019: £42,000).

Amounts recognised in the statement of financial activities	**31 August 2020 £'000**	31 August 2019 £'000
Current service cost	**(470)**	(353)
Net interest cost	**(21)**	(15)
Total operating charge	**(491)**	**(368)**

Changes in the present value of defined benefit obligations were as follows:	**2020 £'000**	2019 £'000
At 1 September	**1,908**	1,129
Current service cost	**470**	353
Interest cost	**37**	31
Actuarial loss / (gain)	**(4)**	338
Benefits paid	**(8)**	(2)
Employee contributions	**71**	59
At 31 August	**2,474**	1,908

Changes in the market value of the group's share of scheme assets:	**2020 £'000**	2019 £'000
At 1 September	**726**	466
Interest on assets	**16**	16
Return on plan assets (excluding net interest on the defined pension liability)	**(11)**	26
Other actuarial losses	**(115)**	-
Employer contributions	**219**	161
Employee contributions	**71**	59
Administration expenses	**(1)**	-
Benefits paid	**(8)**	(2)
At 31 August	**897**	726

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 August 2020

18. Analysis of net assets between funds

Fund balances as at 31 August 2020 are represented by:

	Ambitious about Autism			Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust	
Group	General unrestricted £'000	Designated £'000	Restricted £'000	Restricted £'000	**Total funds £'000**
Tangible fixed assets	-	10,546	-	6,300	**16,846**
Investments	1,644	-	-	-	**1,644**
Intangible fixed assets	-	66	-	-	**66**
Net current assets	254	731	909	2,213	**4,107**
Long-term liabilities	-	(5,765)	-	(1,577)	**(7,342)**
	1,898	**5,578**	**909**	**6,936**	**15,321**

Ambitious about Autism	General unrestricted £'000	Designated £'000	Restricted £'000	**Total funds £'000**
Tangible fixed assets	-	10,546	-	**10,546**
Investments	1,644	-	-	**1,644**
Intangible fixed assets	-	66	-	**66**
Net current assets	254	731	909	**1,894**
Long-term liabilities	-	(5,765)	-	**(5,765)**
	1,898	**5,578**	**909**	**8,385**

Restated fund balances as at 31 August 2019 are represented by:

	Ambitious about Autism			Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust	
Group	General unrestricted £'000	Designated £'000	Restricted £'000	Restricted £'000	**Total funds £'000**
Tangible fixed assets	-	10,839	-	6,423	**17,262**
Investments	1,750	-	-	-	**1,750**
Intangible fixed assets	-	19		-	**19**
Net current assets / (liabilities)	664	(670)	534	1,325	**1,853**
Long-term liabilities	-	(4,969)	-	(1,182)	**(6,151)**
	2,414	**5,219**	**534**	**6,566**	**14,733**

Ambitious about Autism	General unrestricted £'000	Designated £'000	Restricted £'000	**Total funds £'000**
Tangible fixed assets	-	10,839	-	**10,839**
Investments	1,750	-	-	**1,750**
Intangible fixed assets		19	-	**19**
Net current assets / (liabilities)	664	(670)	534	**528**
Long-term liabilities	-	(4,969)	-	**(4,969)**
	2,414	**5,219**	**534**	**8,167**

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 August 2020

19. Movement in funds For the year ended 31 August 2020:	At the start of the year £'000	Incoming resources and gains £'000	Outgoing resources and losses £'000	Transfers £'000	At the end of the year £'000
Restricted funds:					
a) Ambitious about Autism					
Ambitious College	95	100	(139)	-	**56**
Education Services projects	148	337	(348)	-	**137**
Autism Exchange	24	58	(62)	-	**20**
Family Support	13	162	(66)	-	**109**
Participation	93	59	(112)	-	**40**
Suceeding at College	22	65	(47)	-	**40**
TreeHouse School	96	109	(48)	(62)	**95**
Online Information Support	-	48	-	-	**48**
Online Youth Support	-	122	-	-	**122**
IT equipment	-	238	-	(70)	**168**
Other	43	200	(169)	-	**74**
Total Ambitious about Autism restricted funds	**534**	**1,498**	**(991)**	**(132)**	**909**
b) Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust	6,566	4,564	(3,743)	(451)	**6,936**
Total group restricted funds	**7,100**	**6,062**	**(4,734)**	**(583)**	**7,845**
Ambitious about Autism unrestricted funds:					
Designated funds					
Fixed assets	4,295	-	(668)	459	**4,086**
School development	5	-	-	-	**5**
Transformation fund	100	-	(27)	100	**173**
Coronavirus fund	-		-	590	**590**
Cyclical maintenance fund	819	-	-	(95)	**724**
Total designated funds	**5,219**	**-**	**(695)**	**1,054**	**5,578**
General funds	2,414	13,887	(13,932)	(471)	**1,898**
Total Ambitious about Autism unrestricted funds	**7,633**	**13,887**	**(14,627)**	**583**	**7,476**
Total group funds	**14,733**	**19,949**	**(19,361)**	**-**	**15,321**

Transfers

£459k has been designated to the fixed asset fund to cover the depreciation of fixed assets acquired during the year, including the completion of the website, a new minibus for TreeHouse School and IT equipment. This includes £132k of fixed assets funded from restricted income.

£95k has been designated from the cyclical maintenance fund to provide for restoration work on the TreeHouse toilets.

£590k has been designated from unrestricted funds to the coronavirus fund to provide a contingency against future risks as a result of the coronavirus pandemic, including additional costs or losses in income.

£100k has been designated from unrestricted funds to the transformation fund to support our new strategy work.

£451k was transferred from AaAST to general funds to reflect the intercompany management charge and salaries recharged to AaAST.

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 August 2020

19a. Movement in funds *(continued)* For the year ended 31 August 2019:	At the start of the year £'000	Incoming resources and gains £'000	Outgoing resources and losses £'000	Transfers £'000	At the end of the year £'000
Restricted funds:					
a) Ambitious about Autism					
Ambitious College	252	255	(388)	(24)	**95**
Education Services projects	178	156	(186)	-	**148**
Autism Exchange	23	120	(119)	-	**24**
Family Support	8	48	(43)	-	**13**
Participation	18	145	(70)	-	**93**
Suceeding at College	-	88	(66)	-	**22**
TreeHouse School	60	114	(70)	(8)	**96**
Other	28	231	(216)	-	**43**
	567	**1,157**	**(1,158)**	**(32)**	**534**
Capital					
Ambitious College	131	27	(1)	(157)	-
Total Ambitious about Autism restricted funds	**698**	**1,184**	**(1,159)**	**(189)**	**534**
b) Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust	6,597	3,683	(3,360)	(354)	**6,566**
Total group restricted funds	**7,295**	**4,867**	**(4,519)**	**(543)**	**7,100**
Ambitious about Autism unrestricted funds:					
Designated funds					
Fixed assets	4,631	-	(678)	342	**4,295**
School development	5	-	-	-	**5**
Transformation fund	-	-	-	100	**100**
Cyclical maintenance fund	586	-	-	233	**819**
Total designated funds	**5,222**	**-**	**(678)**	**675**	**5,219**
General funds	1,866	13,963	(13,283)	(132)	**2,414**
Total Ambitious about Autism unrestricted funds	**7,088**	**13,963**	**(13,961)**	**543**	**7,633**
Total group funds	**14,383**	**18,830**	**(18,480)**	**-**	**14,733**

Notes to the financial statements
For the year ended 31 August 2020

19b. Summary movement in funds

Purpose of restricted funds:

Ambitious College	The charity continues its work to develop Ambitious College, London's first independent specialist day college for young people with complex autism aged 16–25. Both campuses are co-located and developed in partnership with another general further education college.
Education Services projects	This fund includes the Ambitious Approach, a programme to develop a competency framework for a way of working that is values-driven, person-centred, underpinned by Positive Behaviour Support (PBS) and delivered by a transdisciplinary team, to achieve an improved quality of life for children and young people with autism and complex needs. The framework will be piloted in Ambitious about Autism settings and partner schools over three years. It will support schools and colleges with audit tools, implementation guidance and evaluation protocols, parent toolkits and training materials. It also includes Right from the Start, our national programme to examine early years support for children with autism and their parents. The programme will commission a major piece of research to examine the needs of parents, carers and early years professionals, taking into account stress points, barriers and potential interventions to understand what works. The programme will produce a highly accessible information pack for parents, to walk them through the process from the point at which they feel they need to seek advice about diagnosis. The research and toolkit will be used to influence policy and practice.
Autism Exchange	The Autism Exchange programme aims to ensure young people with autism are given the careers advice and work experience they need to prepare them for the workplace, and employers have the training and understanding to recruit and support people on the autism spectrum. The programme has developed a unique partnership between young people, employers and post-16 education providers. It is tailored to support young people with autism from across the spectrum, including those with complex needs. Young people can access work placements in a range of different disciplines, including HR, finance, communications and IT.
Family Support	The Family Support function sits across our services and aims to secure strong and timely direct advice and support to families and carers of young people through periods of transition, such as from school to further education, training or other placement, and to adulthood.
Participation	A programme to give young people a direct voice so that all our work reflects the views and needs of children and young people with autism. Our Youth Council, Youth Patrons and Ambitious Youth Network give opportunities for young people to act as ambassadors for the charity, directly influencing policy and decision-makers, raising awareness and providing consultancy and training. We believe that better decisions are made and better outcomes achieved when people are involved in decisions made about their lives.
Succeeding at College	Succeeding at College is a project funded by the Department for Education through the Autism Education Trust. It aims to support more young peple with autism to continue their education beyond school through engaging more post-16 education providers in a national, face-to-face training programme on understanding autism. The project also includes a research component.
Treehouse School	Funding provided to support a range of specific activities across the school.
Online Information Support	A project to provide vital information online for parents and carers, and empowerment to connect and support each other.
Online Youth Support	A project to provide vital information online for autistic young people, including peer support from our Youth Network.
IT equipment	This fund will support additional IT equipment and resources for 300 autistic children and young people in our schools and college, so they can access education and support when they need to be at home.
Other	This represents a number of small funds.

Purpose of designated funds:

Fixed assets	This fund represents the net book value of the fixed assets, net of the loans used to purchase them, which are not, by the nature of fixed assets, readily available for other purposes.
Schools development	The school fund has been established to fund school development.
Transformation fund	This fund has been established to support the organisation's future strategy development and any transformation work that arises from it.
Cyclical maintenance fund	The sinking fund has been established to provide for major repairs to the building based on 30-year life cycle costings prepared by external consultants.
Coronavirus fund	This fund has been established to support the organisation in managing the risks and impact of the coronavirus pandemic.

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 August 2020

20. Net cash provided by / (used in) group operating activities

	2020 £'000	2019 £'000
Net income	588	350
Depreciation and amortisation charges	882	852
Gains/(losses) on investments	90	(53)
Dividends, interest and rent from investments	(53)	(66)
Interest payable	107	113
Decrease/(Increase) in debtors	64	(164)
Decrease in creditors	(124)	(585)
Increase in pension deficit	395	519
Net cash provided by operating activities	**1,949**	**966**

21. Operating lease commitments

The group's total future minimum lease payments under non-cancellable operating leases is as follows for each of the following periods:

	Property		Equipment	
	2020 £'000	2019 £'000	2020 £'000	2019 £'000
Less than one year	128	132	23	18
One to five years	360	405	30	22
Over five years	352	431	-	-
	840	**968**	**53**	**40**

22. Capital commitments

At the balance sheet date, the group had contractual capital commitments of £37k (2019: £7k).

23. Legal status of the charity

The charity is a company limited by guarantee and has no share capital. The liability of each member in the event of winding up is £1.

Notes to the financial statements
For the year ended 31 August 2020

24. Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust

On 1 April 2017, Ambitious about Autism became the sole member of Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust, a company limited by guarantee and an exempt charity (company number 08335297).

Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust operates independently from Ambitious about Autism and as such Ambitious about Autism has no right or access to the assets (cash and non-cash) of Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust. In the group accounts, all income and reserves of Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust are treated as restricted. While both entities operate independently, the accounts are consolidated on the basis that Ambitious about Autism School Trust is the sole corporate member of Ambitious about Autism.

Balance sheet	2020 £'000	2019 £'000
Fixed assets		
Tangible assets	**6,300**	6,423
Current assets		
Debtors	**143**	205
Cash at bank and in hand	**2,339**	1,079
Short-term deposit	**5**	502
	2,487	**1,786**
Liabilities		
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	**(274)**	**(461)**
Net current (liabilities) / assets	**2,213**	**1,325**
Net assets excluding pension liability	**8,513**	**7,748**
Defined benefit pension scheme liability	**(1,577)**	**(1,182)**
Total net assets	**6,936**	**6,566**
Funds of the Academy Trust:		
Restricted funds		
Fixed asset fund	**6,300**	6,342
Restricted income fund	**2,213**	1,406
Pension reserve	**(1,577)**	**(1,182)**
Total restricted funds	**6,936**	**6,566**
Unrestricted income funds	**-**	**-**
Total funds	**6,936**	**6,566**

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 August 2020

24. Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust *(continued)*

A summarised extract of AaAST statement of financial accounts (SoFA) for the year:	Unrestricted Funds £'000	Restricted Funds £'000	Restricted Fixed Asset Fund £'000	**Total £'000**
Income from:				
Donations and capital grants	4	24	83	**111**
Charitable activities	-	4,453	-	**4,453**
	4	**4,477**	**83**	**4,564**
Expenditure on:				
Charitable activities	4	3,854	214	**4,072**
Net surplus/(deficit)	**-**	**623**	**(131)**	**492**
Transfer between funds	-	(89)	89	**-**
Other recognised (losses)	-	(122)	-	**(122)**
Net movement in funds	**-**	**412**	**(42)**	**370**
Funds brought forward		224	6,342	**6,566**
Funds carried forward	**-**	**636**	**6,300**	**6,936**

Services were provided by Ambitious about Autism to Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust at a cost of £297k from September 2019 to August 2020 (2019: £250k). These services include finance, education, HR, facilities and IT support. These are provided at or below cost, and would otherwise need to be procured commercially. The increase is due to the growth in The Rise School. At year end, costs accrued to be paid to Ambitious about Autism were £53k (2019: £nil).

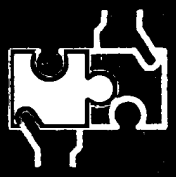
Notes to the financial statements
For the year ended 31 August 2020

25. Consolidated statement of financial activities
(incorporating an income and expenditure account)

		For the year ended 31 August 2019				
			Ambitious about Autism		Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust	
	Note	Unrestricted £'000	Restricted £'000	Sub total £'000	Restricted £'000	**Total £'000**
Income from:						
Donations and legacies:						
Gifts and donated services	2	909	930	1,839	136	**1,975**
Short-term deposits						
Charitable activities:						
Educational services	3	12,875	120	12,995	3,547	**16,542**
External affairs	3	-	101	101	-	**101**
Training and consultancy		60	33	93	-	**93**
Investments:		66	-	66	-	**66**
Total income		**13,910**	**1,184**	**15,094**	**3,683**	**18,777**
Expenditure on:						
Raising funds						
Fundraising activities		952	-	952	-	**952**
Investment management costs		12	-	12	-	**12**
		964	**-**	**964**	**-**	**964**
Charitable activities:						
Educational services		12,184	809	12,993	3,048	**16,041**
External affairs		813	350	1,163	-	**1,163**
Total expenditure	**4**	**13,961**	**1,159**	**15,120**	**3,048**	**18,168**
Net income before other gains/(losses)		**(51)**	**25**	**(26)**	**635**	**609**
Net gains on investments		53	-	53	-	**53**
Net gains/(losses) on pension deficit		-	-	-	(312)	**(312)**
Net income for the year		**2**	**25**	**27**	**323**	**350**
Transfers between and from funds	19	543	(189)	354	(354)	**-**
Net movement in funds	**19**	**545**	**(164)**	**381**	**(31)**	**350**
Reconciliation of funds:						
Total funds brought forward		7,088	698	7,786	6,597	**14,383**
Total funds carried forward	**18**	**7,633**	**534**	**8,167**	**6,566**	**14,733**

Get involved

Partner with us



Nothing we do would be possible without our partners. A lot of people have a connection to someone with autism or are impacted by autism. There are many ways you can support us. You may want to fund one of our projects, join our employability programme or support employees who want to volunteer for us.

Donate online

Donate online via our secure website page and make a lasting difference to the lives and futures of children with autism, today.

Fundraising

Despite the limitations we're all experiencing as a result of the coronavirus pandemic, there are still plenty of ways that you can be part of Team Ambitious. You can raise money and make memories along the way, by joining a virtual challenge event or organising your own fundraising activity.

Leave us a gift in your will

By leaving a legacy, you can support the next generation of autistic children and young people.

Volunteering

Showing your support for our work doesn't have to be financial: donating your time and talents is equally valuable. Volunteering is an incredible way to show your support, from helping our Youth Network refine their CV writing and interview skills, to tending our school gardens, or joining our network of business ambassadors. There are many opportunities available - we can find the right one for you!

Join Team Ambitious today and help us to enable children and young people to learn, thrive and achieve.

Thanks to colleagues across the organisation, including the finance and planning, fundraising, and marketing and communications teams for your contribution to compiling this annual report and accounts.

We are Ambitious about Autism

Ambitious about Autism is the national charity for children and young people with autism.

We provide services, raise awareness and understanding, and campaign for social and policy change. Through TreeHouse School, The Rise School and Ambitious College, we offer specialist education and support.

Our ambition is to make the ordinary possible for more children and young people with autism.

Contact us

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Ambitious about Autism

Ambitious about Autism is a registered charity in England and Wales: 1063184 and a registered company: 03375255.

Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust is an exempt charity in England and Wales and a registered company: 08335297.

Published – April 2021