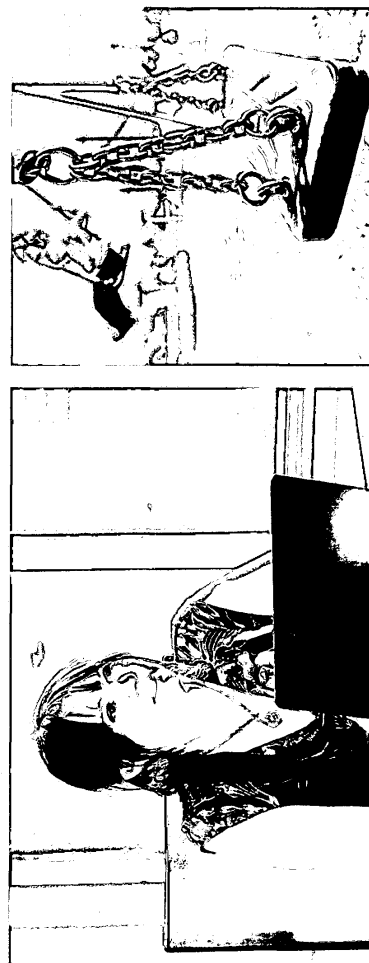


Annual Report and accounts 2020–21



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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.”**

Alshah, 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.”

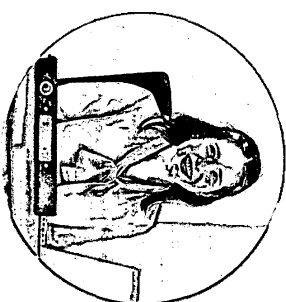
Patrick, Ambitious about Autism
Youth Council member



“

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.”

Sofia, 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



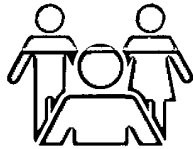
“

I just want to be
my true self.”

Emily, 19

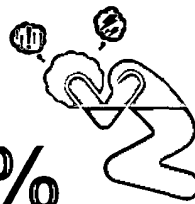
Why we're needed

Autistic children and young people face enormous challenges in all areas of their lives.



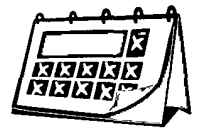
Two-thirds

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



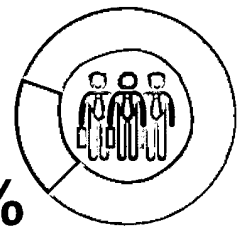
80%

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%

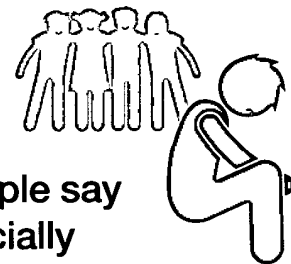
of autistic people are in full or part-time employment, the lowest rate of all disabled groups.⁶

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





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.

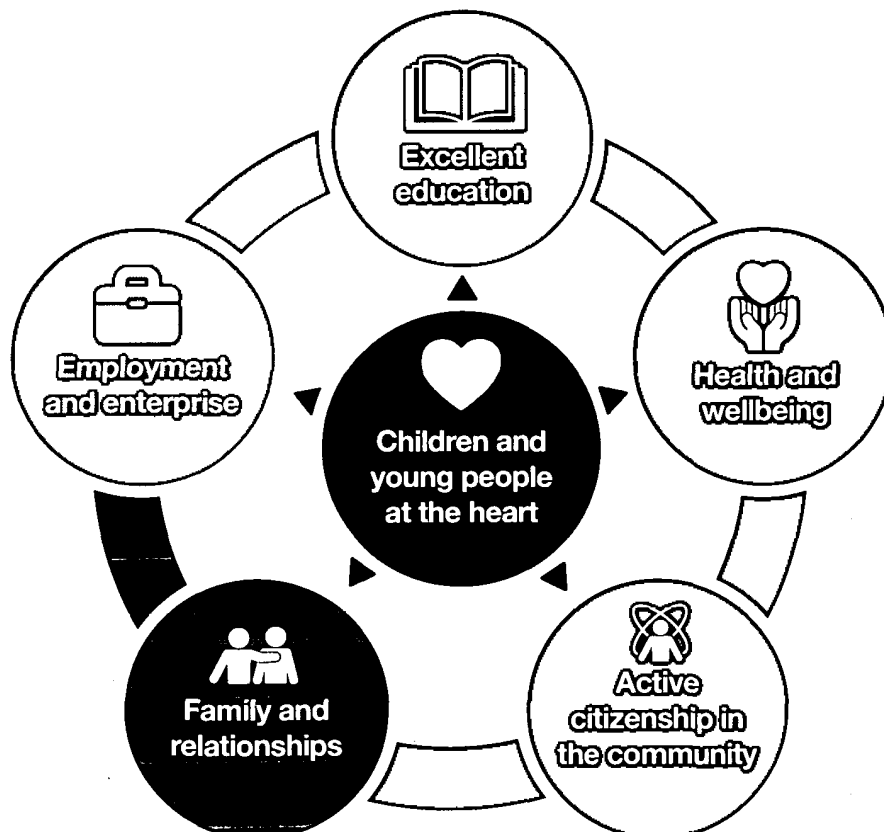
Following the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic, and in the face of a rapidly changing situation, we reacted quickly and adapted our strategic plans.

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.



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.



▶ 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.

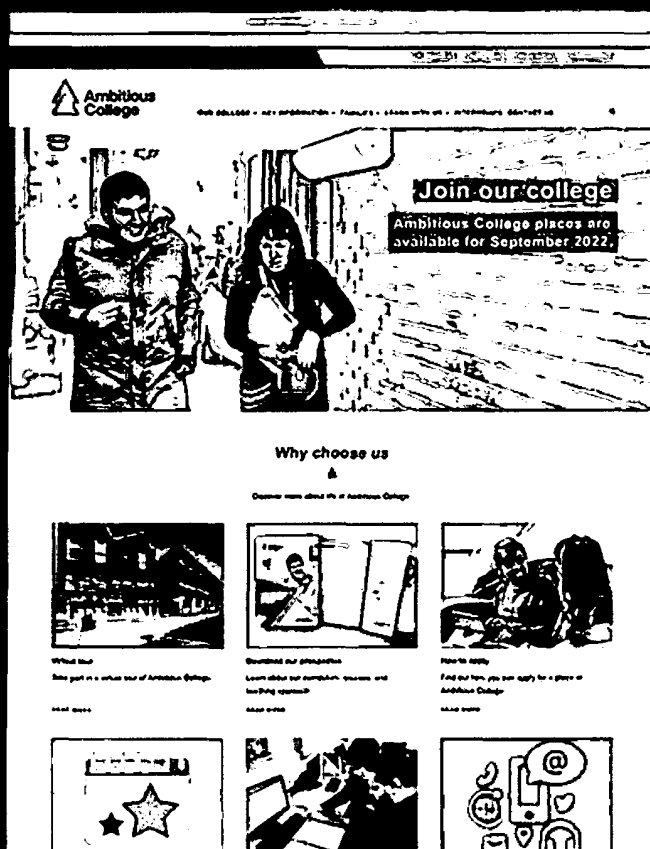
With the **Autism Education Trust** (a not-for-profit programme led by Ambitious about Autism and the National Autistic Society) we launched resources to promote autism-inclusive attitudes in schools.

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.

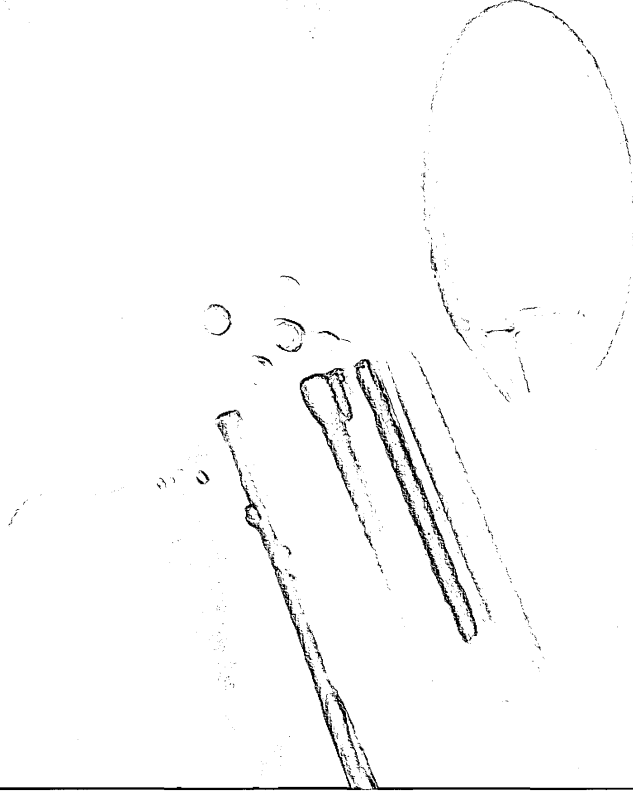
Latest information for



OUR SCHOOL ▾ KEY INFORMATION



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

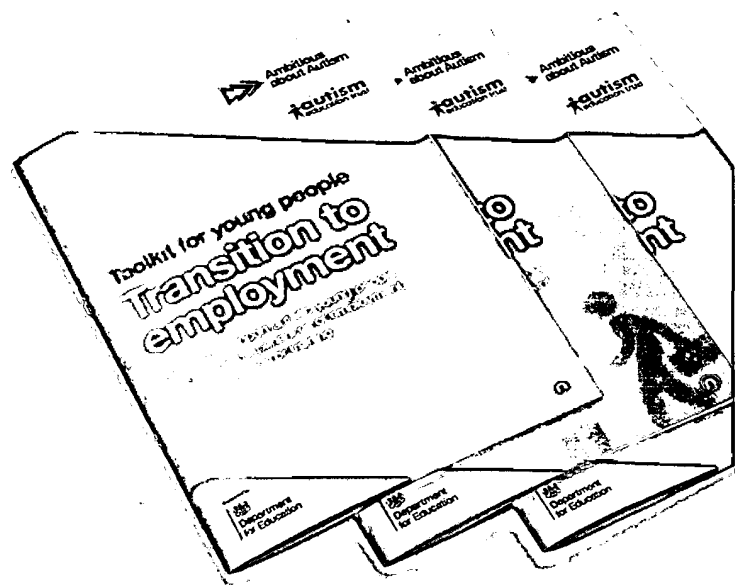
Employment and enterprise

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.

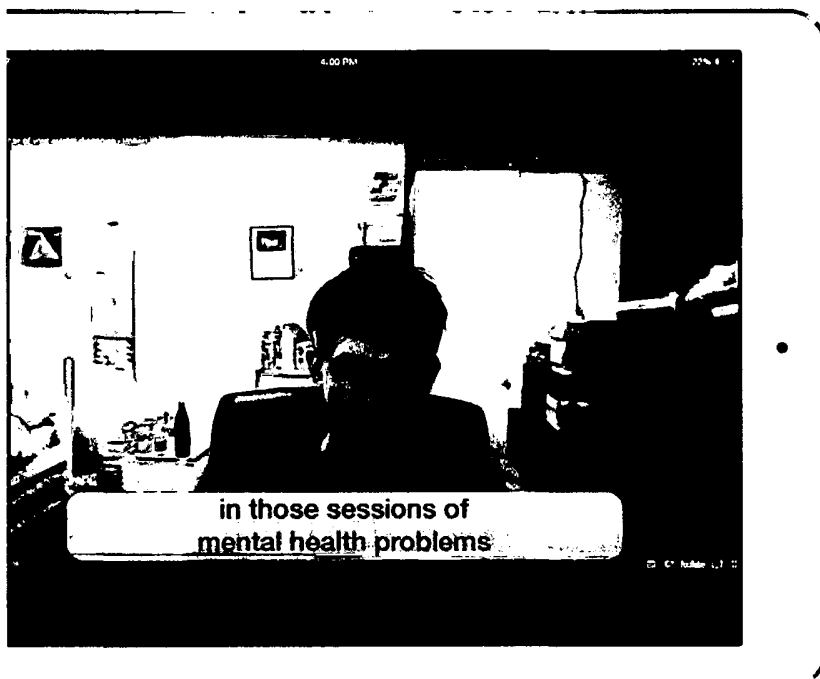
The college provided opportunities for the onward team to come in and shadow Melissa and staff. They used a preferred activity of shopping to have weekly 'shop and visit' days where Melissa would buy a new item for the house in the morning and take it to her new home in the afternoon.

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.

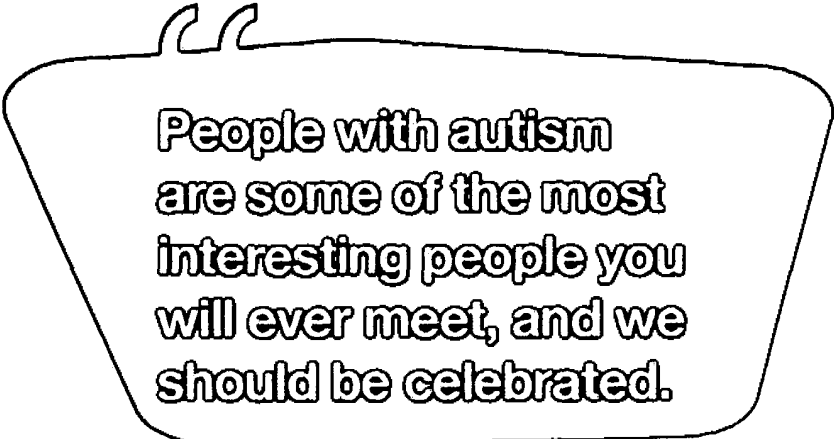
“When someone asks me about



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.

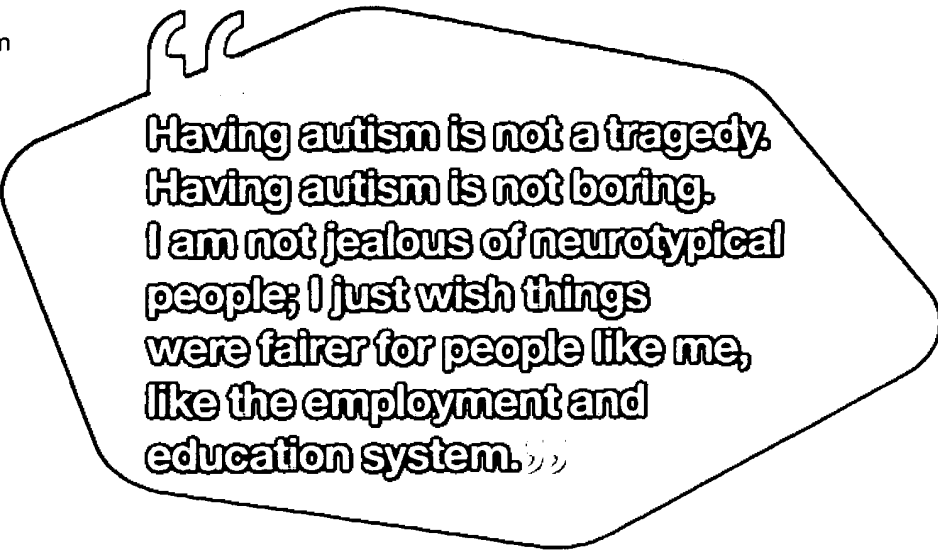
I understand so much more about how my head works: that really has made such a difference in my outlook on life, my dreams for the future, and my determination to do things and be who I want to be! I have been part of several webinars and events with Ambitious about Autism, which have been incredibly 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.



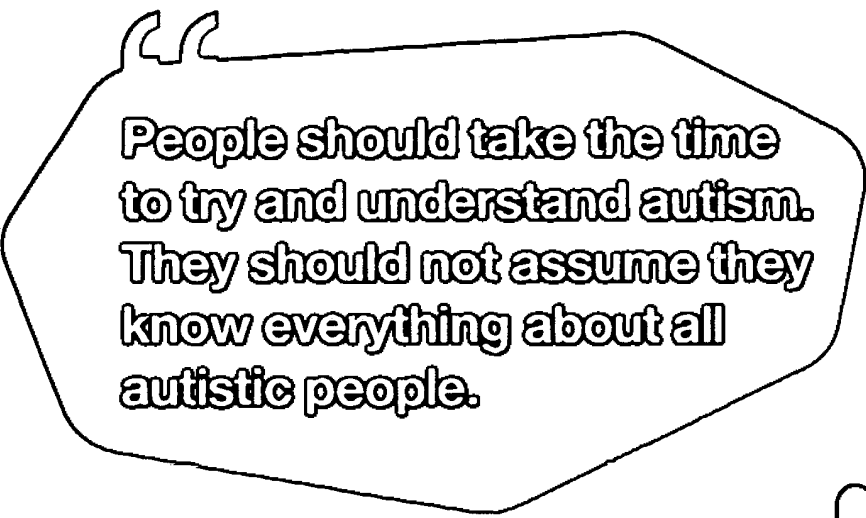
**People with autism
are some of the most
interesting people you
will ever meet, and we
should be celebrated.**

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



**world autism
awareness
week 2021**



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.

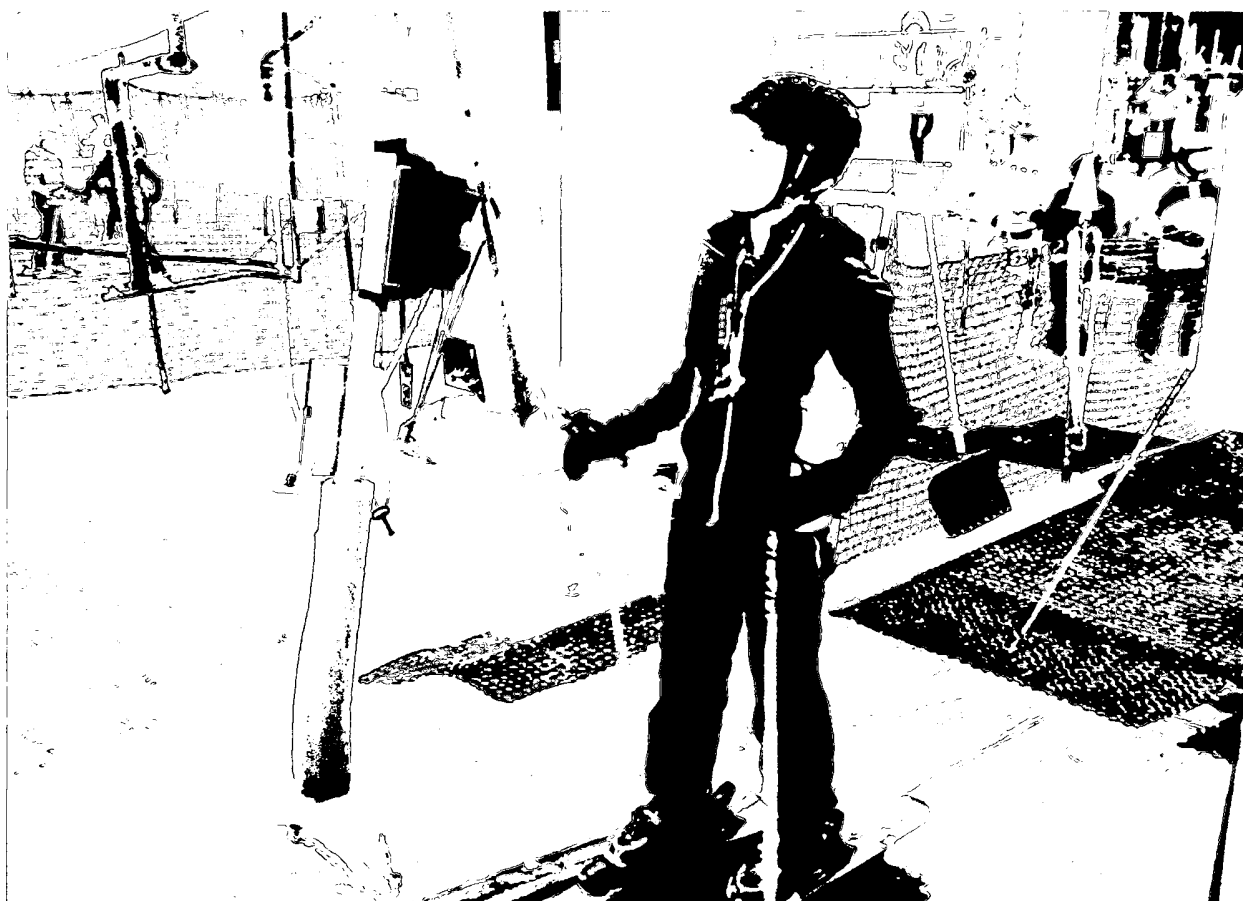
Employ Autism Business Ambassador Network

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.

Skating 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 skating, 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 skating 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.

Skating 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.



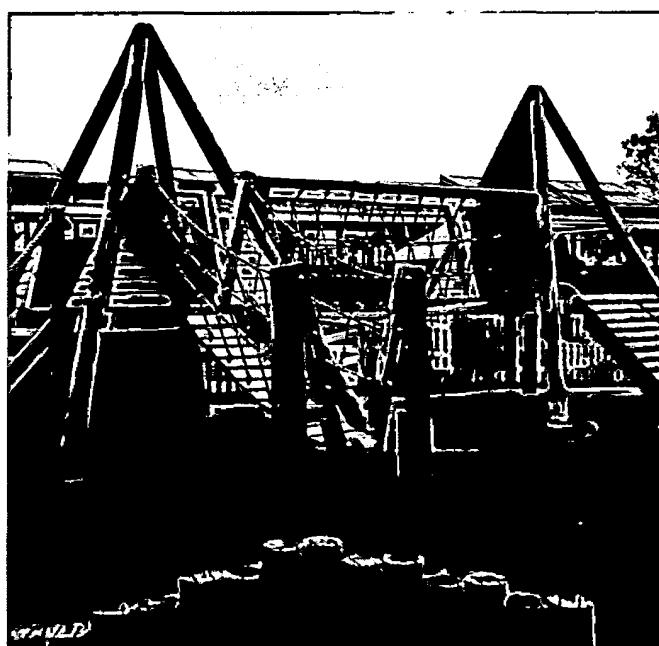
► Enhancing our TreeHouse School facilities

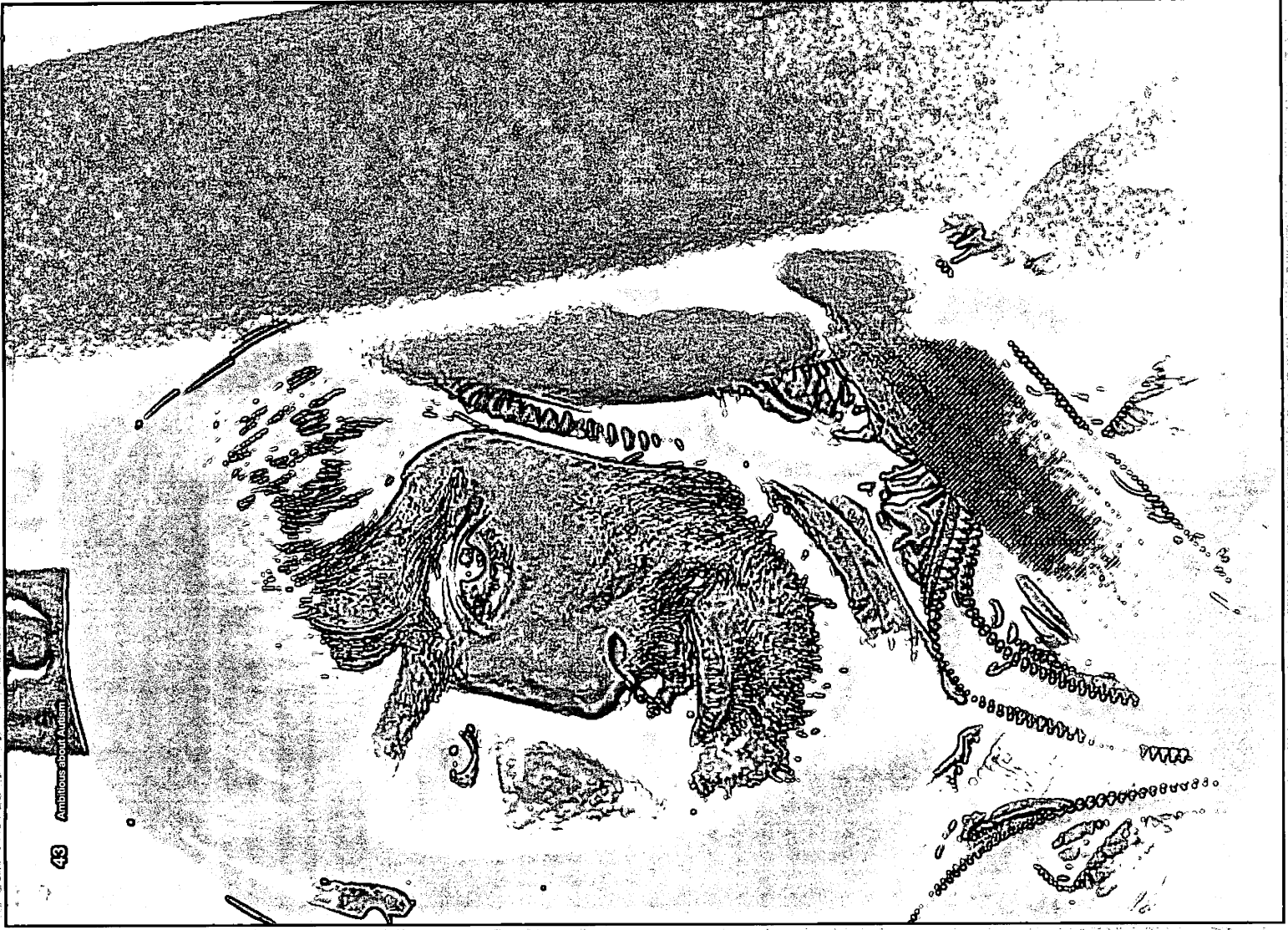
With the coronavirus pandemic continuing to impact our daily lives, we are grateful to our key partners for their sustained commitment and generosity, helping us to continue being there for autistic children and young people throughout the year.

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.







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

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.



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.



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.



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.



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.



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.



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.



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.



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

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

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 Grobier 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

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.

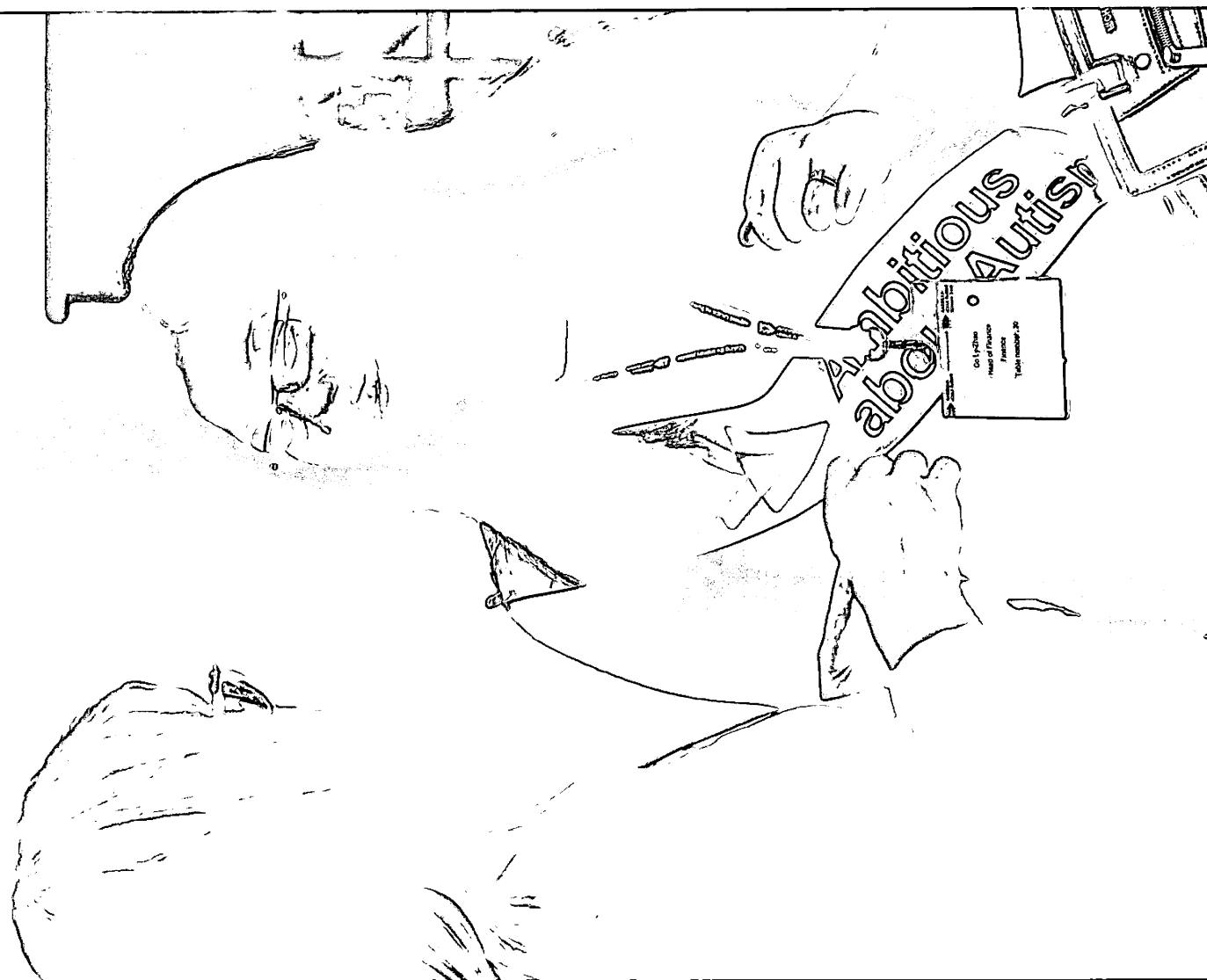
Our fundraising work

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.





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

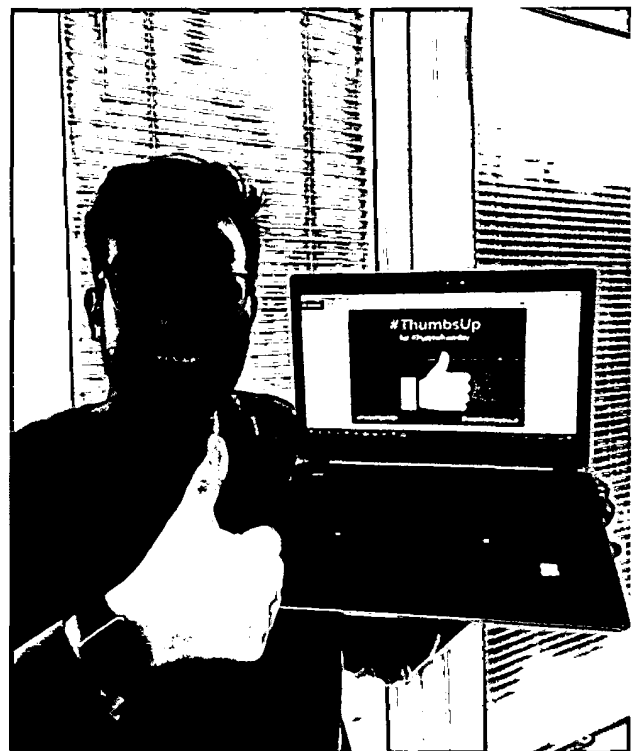
As a charity working to support people with disabilities, we are fully committed to being welcoming and supportive to all staff with disabilities or any other protected characteristic.

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.



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.

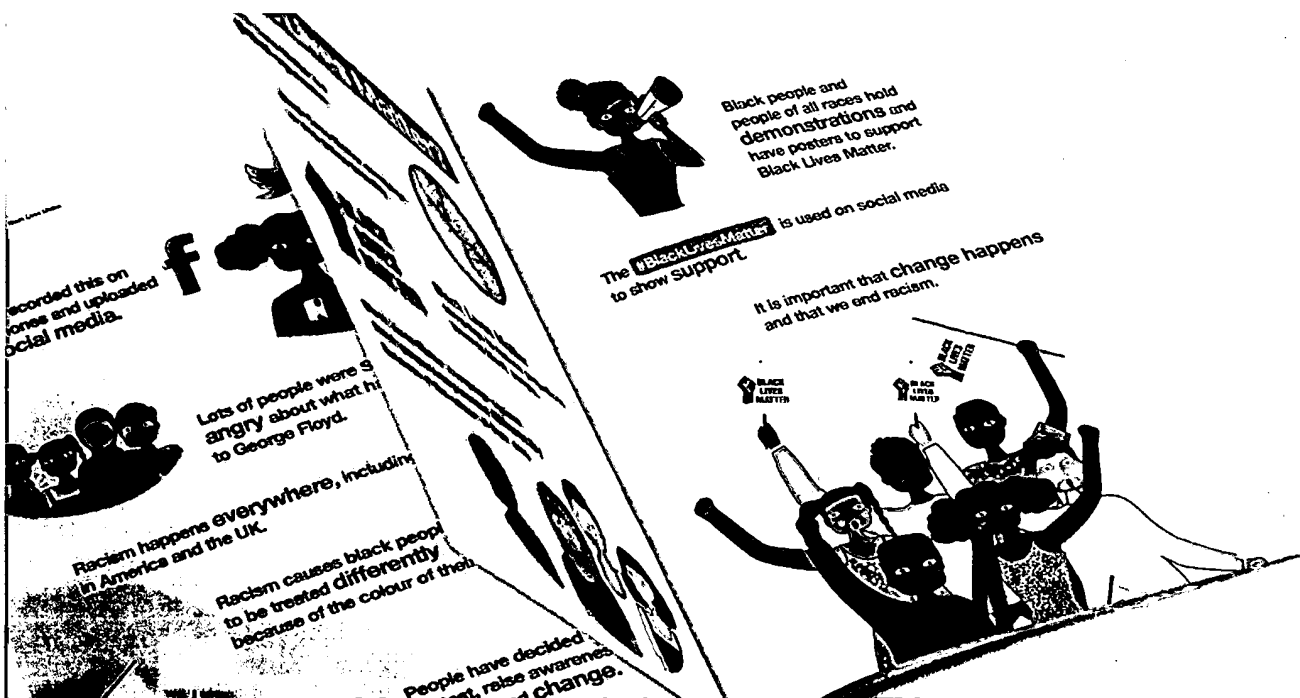
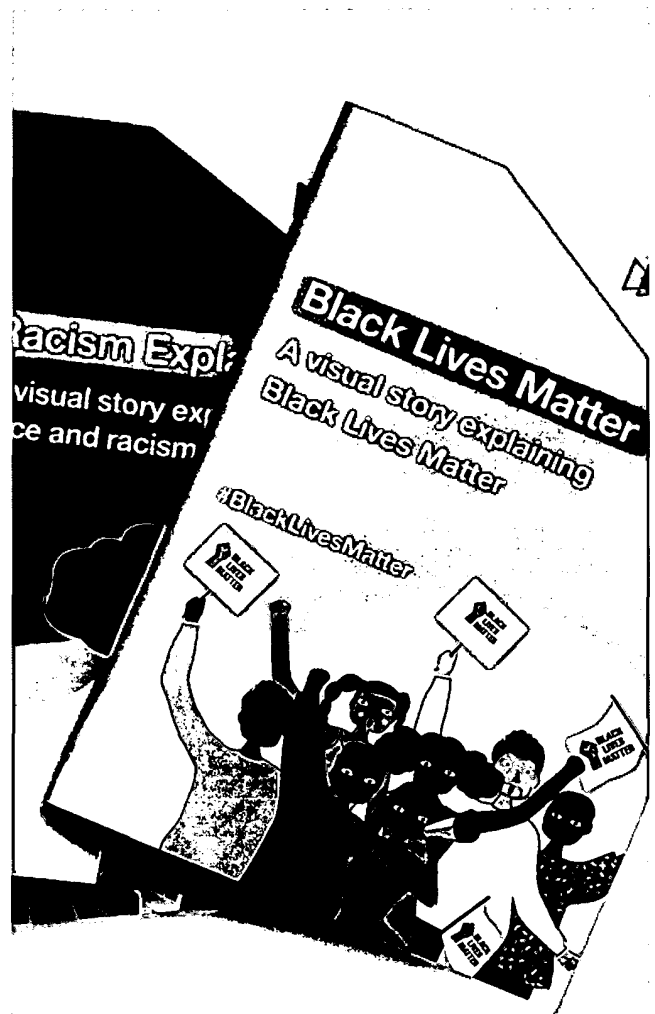
We also carried out further internal activity this year to drive forward our EDI agenda:

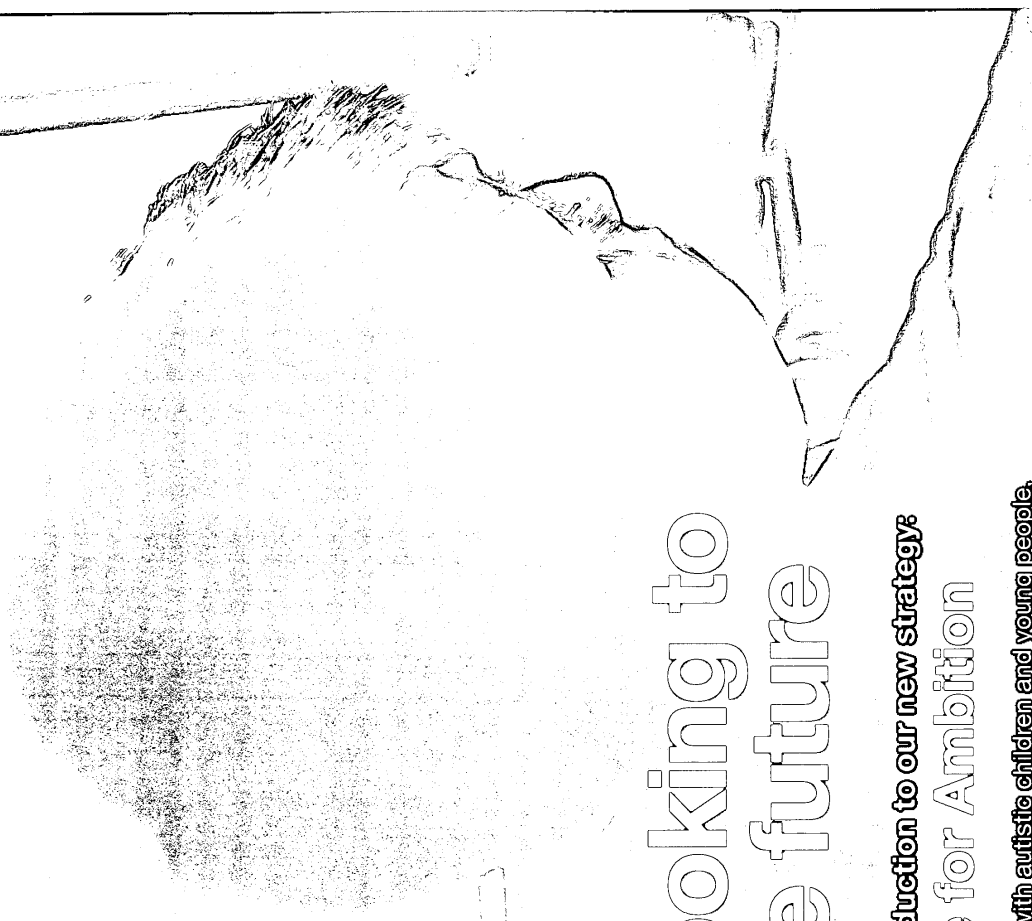
- Our chief executive became overall EDI champion for Ambitious about Autism.

- 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.

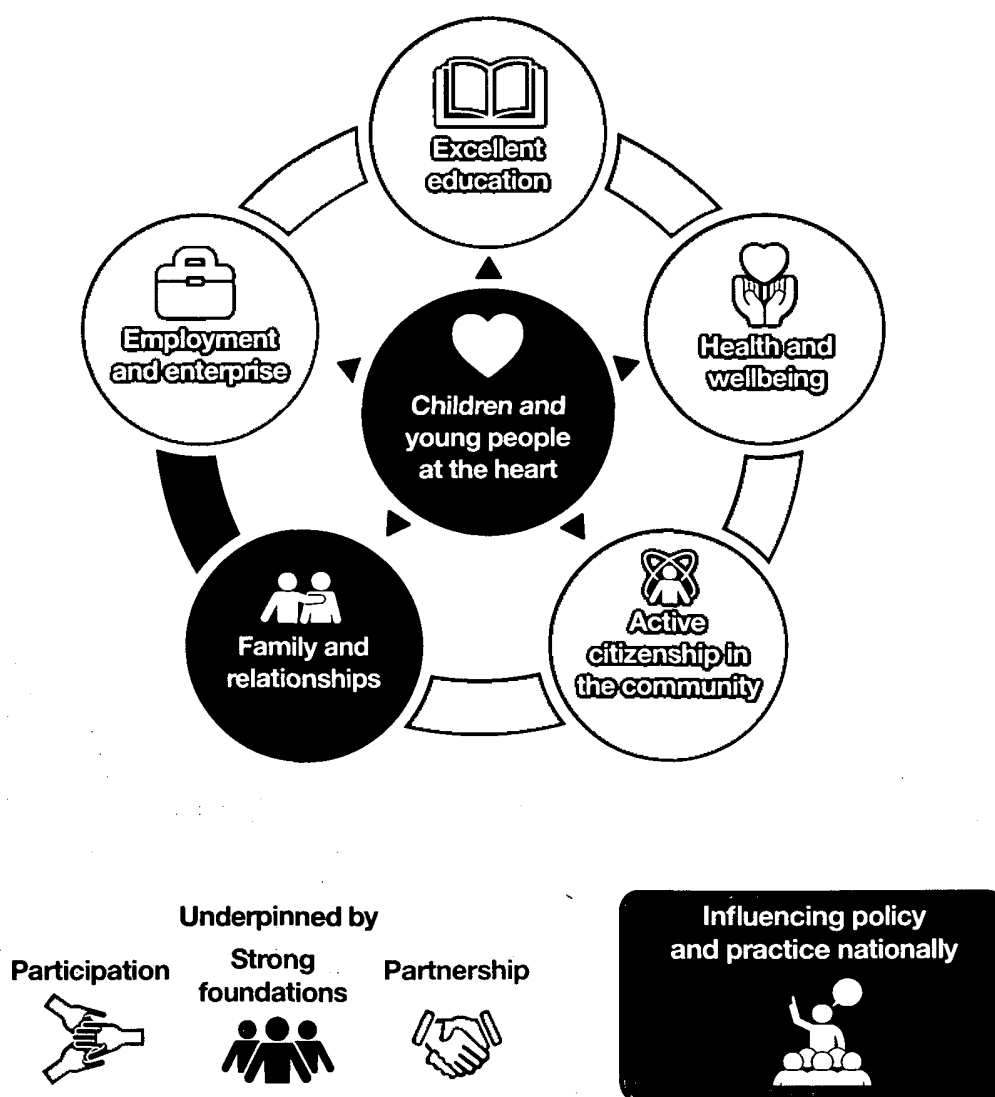


Our strategy at a glance

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.





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.



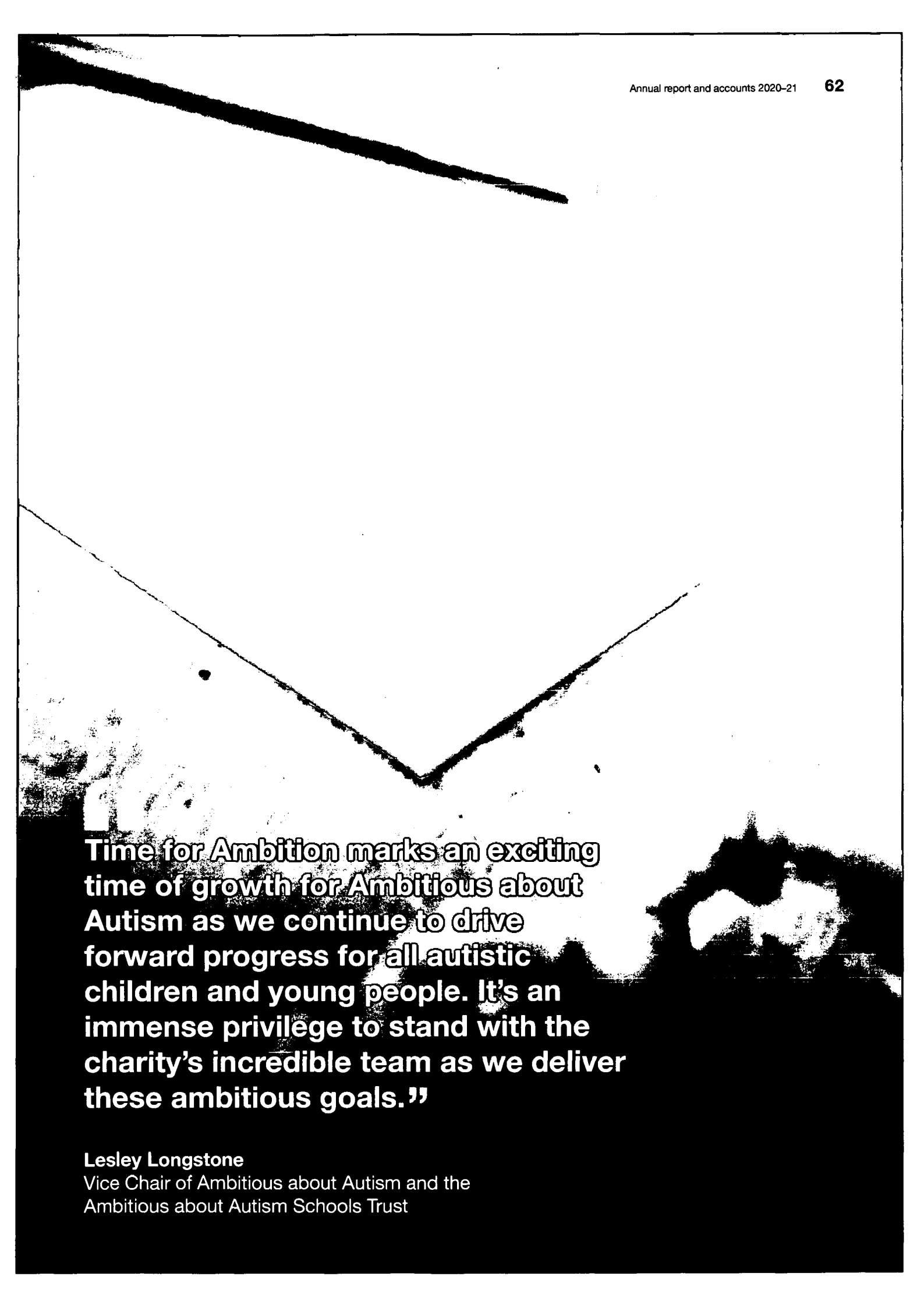
Influencing policy and practice nationally

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."

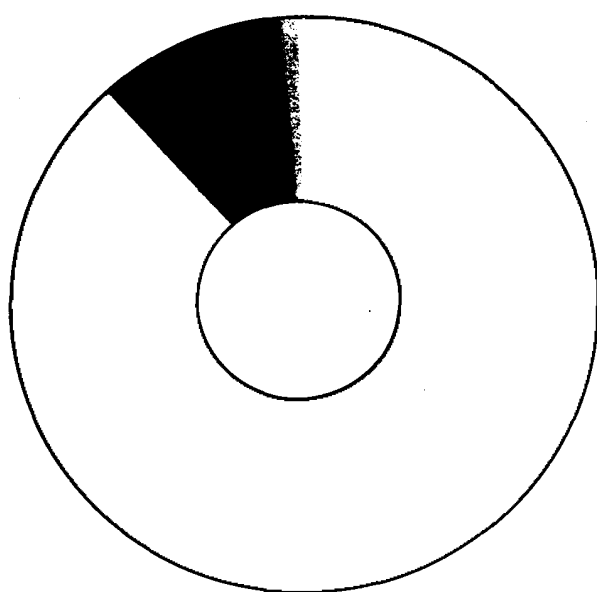
Lesley Longstone

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.

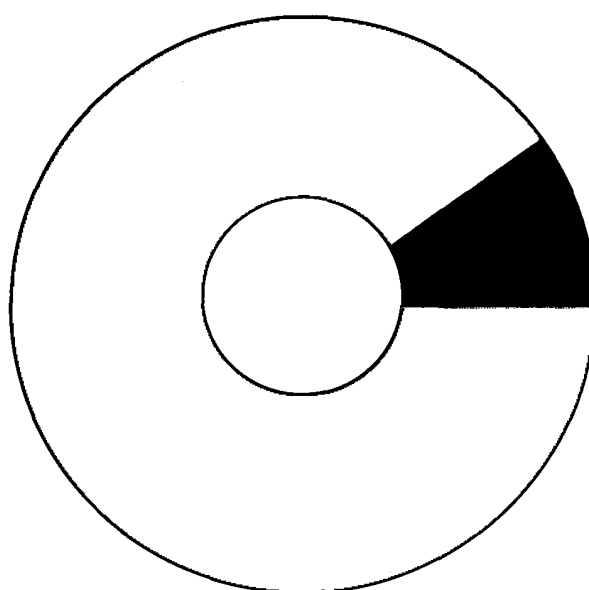
Income

£22.9 million

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

Expenditure

£21.6 million

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	<p>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.</p>	<p>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.</p>
2 Learner and pupil numbers	<p>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.</p>	<p>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.</p>
3 Recruitment	<p>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.</p>	<p>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.</p>

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.

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.

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	tCO ₂ e
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
tCO ₂ e	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		CO ₂ e	
	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 Icton

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

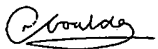
In so far as the trustees are aware:

- 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		Total
	Note	Unrestricted £'000	Restricted £'000	Subtotal £'000	Restricted £'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/(losses) 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

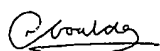
Balance sheets

As at 31 August 2021

Company number: 03375255

		Group		Ambitious about Autism	
	Note	31 August 2021 £'000	31 August 2020 £'000	31 August 2021 £'000	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

		For the year ended 31 August 2021		For the year ended 31 August 2020	
	Note	£'000	£'000	£'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	Cash flows	Other non-cash changes	At end of year
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'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.

<u>Central function</u>	<u>Main basis for allocation</u>
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
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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	Total £'000
	Unrestricted £'000	Restricted £'000	Subtotal £'000	Restricted £'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	Total £'000
	Unrestricted £'000	Restricted £'000	Subtotal £'000	Restricted £'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	Total £'000
	Unrestricted £'000	Restricted £'000	Subtotal £'000	Restricted £'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	Total £'000
	Unrestricted £'000	Restricted £'000	Subtotal £'000	Restricted £'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	For the year ended 31 August 2020
	No	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	For the year ended 31 August 2020
	No	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 improvements £'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	
	31 August 2021 £'000	31 August 2020 £'000	31 August 2021 £'000	31 August 2020 £'000
Deferred income comprises fees received in advance:				
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

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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:

Group	Ambitious about Autism		Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust		Total funds £'000
	General unrestricted £'000	Designated £'000	Restricted £'000	Restricted £'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:

Group	Ambitious about Autism		Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust		Total funds £'000
	General unrestricted £'000	Designated £'000	Restricted £'000	Restricted £'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	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
For the year ended 31 August 2021:					
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	<i>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.</i>
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. <i>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.</i>
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						
	Note	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	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.



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

The Pears National Centre for Autism Education
Woodside Avenue, London N10 3JA

T 020 8815 5444

E info@ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk

W ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk

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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.

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