

Autistica funds research, shapes
policy and works with autistic people
to make more of a difference

Annual Report and Accounts
for the year ended
31 March 2024

autistica



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Honorary roles and charity management

Our trustees, honorary supporters and leaders help make our vision a reality by overseeing and managing all of the charity's life-saving and life-changing work.

Honorary roles

President

Dame Stephanie Shirley CH

Trustees

Chair

Stephen Boyle

Honorary Treasurer

Matthew Harris (Honorary Treasurer)

James Feeney (appointed February 2024,
Treasurer-elect)

John Carey (retired July 2023)

Caroline Copley (appointed February 2024)

Matthew Davis (retired May 2024)

Peter Dilnot (appointed July 2023)

Professor Jonathan Green

Katharine Harle (appointed February 2024)

Lynn Hawkins

Katherine Hudson

Charity management

Chief Executive Officer

Dr James Cusack

Director of External Affairs

Rebecca Sterry

Director of Finance and Administration

Joanne Merchant

Director of Income Generation

Jennie Chambers

Director of Research

Dr Amanda Roestorf

Auditors

Azets Audit Services

First Floor, River House

1 Maidstone Road

Sidcup

Kent DA14 5RH

Bankers

Metro Bank

One Southampton Row

London WC1B 5HA

Registered office

Suite B

6 Honduras Street

London EC1Y 0TH

020 3857 4340

info@autistica.org.uk

autistica.org.uk

Charity registration no. 1107350

Company registration no. 05184164

Statement from the Chair

In 2021, Autistica launched six strategic Goals to achieve by 2030, and I am extremely impressed by the progress that has been made since then, but especially this year. To see the 2030 Goals develop into strategic plans in 2022, to full projects with hundreds of partner organisations this year has been exciting to witness.



“It’s now clear to see how the plans for each of our six Goals, with the right funding and partnerships can really drive rapid progress for autistic people.”

Stephen Boyle

One Goal has seen particularly rapid progress this year. Our plan to double the employment rate for autistic people has seen developments in terms of research, policy and campaigning. As a result, we now have a set of government backed recommendations for employers, and a fully formed product for companies: the Neurodiversity Employers Index (NDEI®). At time of writing, over 400 companies have registered for the NDEI® this summer. It’s now clear to see how the plans for each of our six Goals, with the right funding and partnerships can really drive rapid progress for autistic people. And that’s testament to the team at Autistica who are working collaboratively with laser sharp focus on these six crucial areas. I would like to take this opportunity to thank them personally for their hard work and commitment to our important cause.

I’m proud to see Autistica’s name in the media on an almost weekly basis. Our team is increasingly recognised as the established experts on a range of autism-related topics and often provides robust analysis of breaking research and new data. The charity has also partnered with television producers to work on autism-focused broadcasts, including the hit documentary from Christine McGuinness. This is helping to educate the wider public and change attitudes.

I’d like to thank John Carey, who left the board in July 2023, following six loyal years serving the charity. I will miss him, his generosity, and his wise counsel.

Despite John’s departure, we grew the Autistica Trustee Board this year: adding new members, all with valuable personal and professional experience that will benefit the team and the charity. I’m delighted that we are attracting an ever-stronger cadre of trustees.

Finally, I’d like to thank the autistic people and families who share their expertise and experiences to support Autistica, and especially members of the Autistica Insight Group and advisory panels. They ensure our research, campaigns and communications are as accurate and relevant as possible and keep us on track to delivering the greatest impact for autistic people. We continue to commit to finding new ways of doing things to ensure that the needs of all autistic people are represented in our work.

Stephen Boyle

Chair of Trustees

Statement from the CEO

It is easy to take for granted the team we have at Autistica, who work hard to ensure we are always making the greatest impact we can for autistic people. The skills we have in-house are enabling us to run projects from start to finish, involving our fundraising, policy and communications teams at every step, which means we can make even faster progress than we did when previously funding mostly external projects.



“I’m proud to say that more people have joined our mission than ever before this year, and I can’t wait to see what we can achieve together.”

Dr James Cusack

Delivering our goals requires the generous support of our donors, the right relationships, and a brilliant team. I am delighted with the progress that we have made over the past year. As a team we’ve worked collaboratively on new values and employee benefits, and are trialling a four-day week, all with the intention of retaining and supporting our brilliant neurodiverse team, building a strong shared culture, and leading by example as a neuroinclusive employer.

In addition to the projects we have been delivering internally, we have also partnered on a large number of external projects, lending our expertise where academics may lack skills themselves, such as with community involvement, policy influencing and communications. This is helping researchers across the company to make real-world impact, that goes beyond publishing their findings in a journal. For a small charity this is allowing us to influence far beyond what we are able to fund ourselves.

We continue to be supported by loyal donors who enable our work to happen. In these challenging and uncertain economic times, we have focused on driving more funding from major donors, trusts and foundations and corporate institutions. Individual donors who give small monthly amounts or take on incredible mountain climbing, or marathon running challenges for us are a valued source of income, and we are so grateful to these supporters who are personally motivated to give back to Autistica in this way.

The relationships we have with other funders and organisations supporting the charity pro-bono ensures that every pound donated is maximised, and in some cases multiplied. We leveraged £1,423,098 worth of research by encouraging funders to support certain projects. And our relationships with creative agencies, advertising companies, and consultancy firms has helped us to secure £238,057 worth of external expertise including gifts in kind, legal advice, national campaigns, and tech project support.

I want to thank all of the people and partner organisations that share our vision of a happy, healthy, long life for autistic people. We can’t do this alone. I’m proud to say that more people have joined our mission than ever before this year, and I can’t wait to see what we can achieve together.

Dr James Cusack
Chief Executive Officer

At Autistica, research is at the heart of everything that we do. We know that it has the potential to transform everyday lives by making sure that treatments, support and services work for autistic people.



Right now, autistic people face far too many inequalities. Most autistic children and adults wait years for a diagnosis, and when they finally receive one, there is little, if any, appropriate support. They experience avoidable challenges throughout education and face the lowest employment rates of any disability. They are more likely to have poor mental health and physical health throughout their lives. And negative attitudes and inaccessible environments can leave many feeling like they just don't fit into this world.

But it doesn't have to be this way.

We have developed a set of six goals for 2030 that set out our vision of a different world; one where autistic people can access the right support, live in an inclusive and accepting world, and find fulfilling and sustainable work. These goals are not only visionary and ambitious; they are also achievable.

Research and the development of evidence-based solutions is at the core of each of these goals, but so too is working in partnership and campaigning for change. Autistica works in partnership not only to achieve a step change in the amount of resource focused on autism research, but also to ensure that research funding is directed to the areas of greatest need. We act as the bridge between autistic people, the research community and other funders of autism science.

We also work with key partners in positions of influence over policy and execution to make sure that the evidence generated by the research we support is put into action. Because research without implementation can never result in impact.

Our unique approach is driven by and developed with autistic people and families. It can and will make more of a difference for autistic people in both the short and long term.

Our vision, mission, values and goals



Our vision

is a world where every autistic person lives a happy, healthy, long life.



Our mission

is to create the breakthroughs that enable autistic people to live happier, healthier, longer lives.

We do this by funding research, shaping policy and working with autistic people to make more of a difference.



Our values

We embrace diverse expertise and think differently

- Our team are diverse and we support them to be the best they can be.
- We collaborate as a team and with a wide range of stakeholders, always including autistic people
- We believe that diversity of thought and experience is the only way we can make real and lasting change

We challenge to find solutions

- We speak up when evidence suggests a need
- We find solutions, however big or complex the problem
- We influence change because we're trusted

We act with urgency

- Research can take time, but that doesn't stop us from taking action now
- We work hard, but efficiently
- We are not afraid of taking risks and failure, we learn from it and move on quickly
- We're driven by a shared aim of improving the world for autistic people



Our Goals

By 2030:

all autistic people will have proven **support from day one**

the **employment rate** for autistic people will double

autistic people will have proven treatments for **anxiety**

public spaces will be more accessible for neurodivergent people

every autistic adult will be offered a yearly, tailored **health check**

attitudes to autistic people will change

Having launched our 2030 Goals in late 2021, the past year has been focused on strategic planning and kickstarting projects and campaigns to achieve them. These are some highlights from key areas of our work.



Enabling and leading world-class research

To achieve our 2030 Goals, we kicked off our own internal research projects this year, including the development of a gold-standard neurodiversity employers index and an online information hub for autistic people and families. We have co-funded research projects with the National Institute of Health Research and NHS England and partnered on collaborative research with organisations across the UK. We also continued to support the next generation of autism researchers with funded studentships and training.

Our research strategy enables us to make a difference to the everyday lives, wellbeing and life outcomes of autistic people and their families. Through the accelerated delivery of impactful activity that is underpinned by world-class evidence-based research, we fund activity focused on community priorities. This approach to funding is unique, demonstrably excellent, and ensures that our activities continue to have broad appeal to their relevant audiences.

To support the ongoing delivery of our 2030 Goals, we revised our Research Strategy to better reflect our model of delivery. This review has resulted in us being able to deliver evidence-based research both in-house and in collaborative partnerships, and through grant awards. We achieve impact by building the right relationships with the right audiences and stakeholder groups, with the support of a strong, aligned team and governance board.

We completed the second year of a strategic funding partnership to unlock a further £3.5m funding of research and implementation of healthcare innovations to support autism and learning disabilities communities.



Launching the Neurodiversity Employers Index (NDEI®)

In 2024, we were thrilled to launch the Neurodiversity Employers Index (NDEI®). The NDEI®, which is the only gold-standard evidence-based framework that can help organisations attract and retain neurodivergent talent, was co-produced in collaboration with neurodivergent advisors and key industry partners from a range of sectors and sized organisations.

The first 40 organisations took part in NDEI® early access between October 2023 and March 2024. These organisations, considered to be neuroinclusive champions, received their NDEI® scores alongside a tailored reports that set out their roadmap for change to support and empower a neurodivergent workforce.

The NDEI® will be open for submissions from August 2024 and is freely available to all sectors and organisations.



Ensuring community involvement

We continue to involve autistic people in everything we do and enable researchers to do the same through the Autistica Network and Autistica Insight Group. We helped to recruit for 57 research projects through the Autistica Network and the Autistica Insight Group shaped the development of 26 research projects. We also worked with autistic people to shape the messaging for two campaigns and to develop the recommendations in the government-led Buckland Review of Autism in Employment.

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Sharing evidence and campaigning for change

We ran two major campaigns this year – one focusing on the poor outcomes for those in inpatient mental health units, and one aimed at encouraging employers to recognise autistic people's talents in the hiring process. We continued to advise the Department for Work and Pensions regarding the barriers autistic people face in employment, and potential solutions, and health bodies such as NHS England and the Department of Health and Social Care. We ran 12 webinars aimed at sharing evidence and experiences with academics, clinicians and autistic people.

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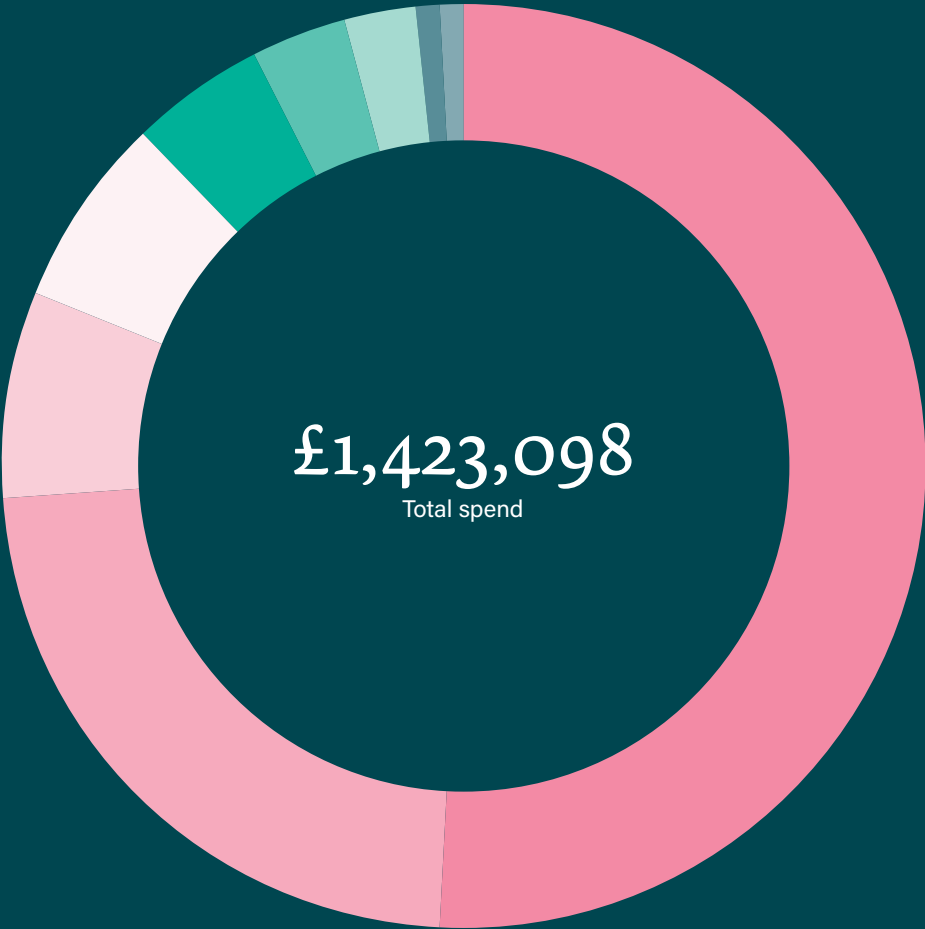
Funding for impact

As part of our fundraising strategy, we have further diversified our income in 23-24, applying to more Statutory funding opportunities as well as launching a new paid-for neurodiversity employment training programme for companies. These new activities have got off to a promising start and we envisage them becoming a key part of our income in future years. This year we secured some new partnerships across Major Donor, Trusts & Foundations and Corporate and we also benefitted from an incredible unrestricted gift of £1 million from our amazing Founder and President, Dame Stephanie Shirley. To receive such a significant gift has really bolstered our income this year, in what continues to be a tough fundraising climate.





2023-24 Charitable activities spend



£723,472
External research grants

£331,084
Support from Day One

£103,411
Communicating research
staff & governance

£94,791
Research Growth

£66,206
Doubling Employment

£45,833
Changing attitudes about autism
- Embracing Complexity

£34,630
Tailored annual health checks

£15,246
Proven treatments for anxiety

£8,425
Accessible public spaces



Support from day one

- Successfully completed a proof-of-concept trial of strengths and needs assessments to make sure support can be individually tailored to every autistic person. This Autistica-led project was delivered in partnership with autistica people and families, researchers and NHS partners to review the utility of a digital assessment toolkit and the strengths and needs profiles as a means to unlock supports for in education, healthcare (adult waitlists), and employment.
- Continued building a platform to provide practical support and guidance for autistic people and their families about everyday concerns and needs.
- Started building a platform to provide practical support and guidance for professionals to better support the needs of autistic people and families.
- Co-funded research for social workers to support autistic adults as they grow older.
- Co-funded research to support autistic people in transitions to adulthood.
- Funded research on developing a toolkit to support autistic people with multiple intellectual disabilities in day centres.

Meaningful, sustained employment

- Continued an evaluation of supporting employment transitions for autistic young people from higher education to their first role.
- Funded research to understand how to better support career progression and retirement planning for autistic people.
- Updated the Autistica Neurodiversity Employers Guide which will be continually added to as new evidence and best practice emerges.
- Launched the Neurodiversity Employers Index NDEI® – a gold standard framework to help companies to create neurodiverse and inclusive workforces, based on best practice guidance.

Proven treatments for anxiety

- Partnered on research to better understand eating behaviours and improve health outcomes for autistic people.
- Collaborated on research to develop adapted safety plans for suicide prevention.
- Trialling new approaches that help point us towards anxiety treatments that reduce anxiety for autistic people across their lifespan.
- Continuing ongoing improvements of our anxiety app Molehill Mountain.

Making public spaces more accessible

- Continuing to work with the government, public services, commissioners, local authorities, and public research funders to create environments that are autism friendly and account for the diversity of autistic people's needs.

Yearly, tailored health checks

- Continuing our research to demonstrate the benefits the health checks give autistic people.
- Supporting NHS England as they look to rollout health checks beyond the initial trial.

Changing attitudes to autism

- Kicking off our innovative new research project, the Autistica Autism Attitudes Index, to track and measure how attitudes to autism change over time.

Our research

“I hope research can help autistic people find better coping strategies for things like anxiety and depression. I have a lot of problems with anxiety, and I think that there should be more out there to help us cope with everyday life.”

Jackie, autistic adult

How we make a difference (our charitable activity)

- We shape research, projects, services, society, and policy
- We fund research, and projects
- We deliver research, products, and insights
- We disseminate research information to key audiences

Our research strategy

Autistica's 2030 Goals set out ambitious programmes of work to make a difference to the everyday lives, wellbeing, and life outcomes of autistic people and their families. The programmes of research and activities under each goal are focused on areas that can make breakthroughs to improve outcomes for autistic people and families. Some of these programmes of work require large-scale government investment and action, whilst others can be achieved by delivering innovative solutions or via a traditional research-led route. Overall, to achieve these goals, our ways of working are evolving to support agile, proactive, and multi-dimensional innovative approaches.

Our research strategy is driven by our mission to create breakthroughs that enable autistic people to live happy, healthy, long lives. The key enablers that underpin our approach are based on a credible and measurable theory of change to deliver innovation through strategic partnerships, independent research embedded in strong governance and ethical practice, and demonstrate policy impact.

We fund activity focused on community priorities which is unique, demonstrably excellent, with broad appeal to the relevant audiences. We achieve world leading research innovations, knowledge, and progress through high quality evidence-based research that is developed by our in-house team of expert researchers, strategic research partnerships, and grant funding awards.

Partnerships – collaboration and commissioning funding

In 2023 we continued to build on relationships with NIHR and NHSE to commission funding in priority areas for autism and learning disabilities related to health and social care and innovations that make a difference to autistic people's lives. We supported a number of other research partnerships across the UK as well as international collaborations related to emotional resilience for autistic young people, the costs of undiagnosed autism and adhd, improved understanding of autism in the criminal justice system, autistic burnout, masking and wellbeing, transitions to adulthood, employment, menopause, physical health, adapted safety plans for suicide prevention, accessible public spaces, and improved

resources for social care support of autistic people. We conducted a review of tools used for autism diagnostic screening and triage in a report for NHSE that set out guidelines for best practice to improve autism assessment pathways. We worked with Internet Matters, Ambitious about Autism, and the Autism Society for America to review the benefits and risks of online gaming for neurodivergent young people. on a Neurodiversity in Gaming and delivered a report to NHSE in partnership with the Autism Alliance and the National Autistic Society and other UK charities, in the second year of a three-year trial to deliver peer education over 5,000 autistic families were helped to understand more about autism diagnosis, navigating the system, and signposting to resources. In total our research partnerships supported £6,604,402 of external funding for autism research and innovation.

Research Funding and development

We received a funding award from the UKRI Medical Research Council Charity Grant Scheme of £378,033 to support our grants to Early Career Researchers who are focused on autism research. We continued to support over £150,477 in research grants to develop innovations on mental health, delivering a home-based parent-focused intervention to support communication in autistic children, develop research knowledge and resources to better understand ways of including autistic people with complex needs, and developing knowledge about barriers to employment outcomes and career progression for autistic adults. We collaborated with Ambitious about Autism to co-funded research delivery and evaluation of a programme to help autistic young people to transition from higher education to employment. Our social care partnership with Caretech Foundation and the NIHR, in the third and final year of this grant scheme in 2023 awarded grants over £131,368 to develop a toolkit for social workers to support autistic people with multiple intellectual disabilities and who are non-speaking, conduct research to empower autistic people in transitions to adulthood, and develop training and resources for social workers to better support autistic adults in older age.

As a charity, the funding that we receive helps to support our in-house expert research team. Not only does financial support help us to build capacity, it also enables us to embed new skills within the team and develop evidence-based innovations that make a real difference. We developed and trialled the Neurodiversity Employers Index NDEI®, created the framework for an employment readiness programme to support autistic young people into work, and delivered a proof-of-concept evaluation of a digital strengths and needs assessment tailored to personalised supports for autistic and adhd people. We campaigned to change negative attitudes and

stigma about autism and created awareness of autistic meltdowns to break the cycle of avoidable inpatient detention and poor life outcomes. We commenced development of tips hubs to provide evidence-based resources for autistic people and families, and professionals who work with them, to support every life and wellbeing outcomes – the hubs will launch in Summer 2024. Through our Embracing Complexity coalition with over 60 charity partners, we supported co-produced community research to identify priority topics for research to support neurodivergent people.

Autistica network and insight group

Our research would not be possible without the support and involvement of autistic and neurodivergent people and their families, supporters, and the many expert professionals who contribute to shaping our work. So many people have generously and enthusiastically contributed to the work outlined above and provided expert guidance and insights, as professionals and lived experience experts to support our mission. We are especially grateful to our co-production partners who advised our research design, delivery and dissemination, and the hundreds of autistic people and families who took part in research to shape this work.

Research governance – our scientific review and expert review panels

To support our 2030 Goals, our ways of working need to continuously evolve and improve to support agile, proactive, and multi-dimensional innovative approaches. Our research framework embodies a robust process for research funding and strategic governance. The delivery of in-house research has been supported by independent expert advisors as governance steering groups and lived experience community involvement groups. They provided guidance and oversight on the development, design, delivery and dissemination of research, to ensure its relevance and benefit to autistic people and families. Their role as independent peer reviewers was invaluable in shaping our work, from building new knowledge to continuous improvement, to ensure our research meets the highest standards of ethical research practice, scientific rigour and research excellence, value for money, impact, and alignment with our 2030 Goals.



We continue to work with government and NHS bodies to drive forward our 2030 Goals, as well as developing our asks for the incoming Government.



“I believe this report provides a way forward that does not require vast sums of public money but that can produce a radical improvement of autistic employment rates and a radical transformation of autistic people’s lives. I call on everyone to now make this happen.”

Sir Robert Buckland KC's foreword in The Buckland Review of Autism Employment.

Leading the conversation on autism and employment

Over the past year, we have supported Sir Robert Buckland's Review of Autism Employment, gathering insights from employers, charities and the autistic community on the barriers autistic people face throughout their careers. The final report was published on 28 February 2024, with Sir Robert and the Minister for Disabled People speaking at a well-attended launch event at Deutsche Bank as well as coverage on BBC television and radio throughout the day. We are now working with the Department for Work and Pensions to establish a Task Group to drive forward the Review's 19 recommendations.

Making public spaces more accessible

The Autistica Inclusive Spaces Plan was published in early 2024, setting our commitments and recommendations for making public spaces more accessible for neurodivergent people. We are continuing to promote the British Standards Institution's PAS 6463 across our projects and networks, and to work with stakeholders to advise on the simple adjustments that can make spaces more inclusive.

Influencing the NHS and Government bodies

We continue to be a key player in a number of government and NHS committees, as the charity that feeds in the latest evidence. We sit on autism-specific advisory boards for NHS England, the Department for Health and Social Care, the Department for Work and Pensions and the Department for Education. This year, we worked with other autism charities to contribute to DHSC's ongoing development of the Autism Strategy statutory guidance, which will soon be published for consultation, as well as developing joint messaging to tackle the growing crisis in autism waiting lists. We have also fed into a range of NHS England projects, including the new all-age framework for autism assessments and guidance on meeting the needs of autistic adults in mental health services.

Setting research priorities across neurodiversity

We manage the Embracing Complexity coalition of charities supporting neurodivergent people. This spring, we published the results of a year-long priority setting exercise for research on neurodivergence; these include intersectionality, stigma, self-advocacy and mental health. This process was led by the new Embracing Complexity Advisory Group, establishing a direct link between Embracing Complexity and the neurodivergent community for the first time.

International advocacy

Our reach and influence is not solely limited to the United Kingdom. Our CEO, James Cusack, currently sits on the board of the International Society for Autism Research (INSAR), a US-based organisation that aims to promote and disseminate the highest quality autism research globally.



We will only achieve our 2030 Goals if we share the latest evidence and inspire others to take action. Our campaigning this year has focused on mental health and employment. Our webinar series and monthly email news continues to cover a wide range of issues that we know matter to autistic people.

“So many autistic people want to be able to work but don’t even get a chance to discuss their challenges. Better employer knowledge of autism would mean a higher rate of employment. It would benefit all of us.”

Cheshia, autistic adult

The inpatient mental health crisis: Break the Cycle

In the lead up to Christmas, we ran a campaign that highlighted the large number of autistic people in inpatient mental health units. The campaign shared striking black and white imagery of autistic people facing years in inpatient mental health units, and was supported by a number of moving stories from Autistica Insight Group members who themselves had been detained under the Mental Health Act. The campaign called for better prevention, understanding and evidence. The ask for government was to deliver on the research action plan promised in the 2021 Autism Strategy. Break The Cycle continued into early Jan, with digital billboards across London, Liverpool and Glasgow. The campaign attracted lots of positive feedback, and a number of replies from local MP's thanks to our supporters making use of the letter template published on our website. The campaign was developed pro-bono by Ogilvy Health and their neurodiversity network ReWired with billboard space donated by Clear Channel.

Employment: Buckland Review launch, NDEI® launch & Unseen CV campaign

We were thrilled that Autistica Neurodiversity Employers Index – NDEI® received so much focus in the Government-led communications surrounding the Buckland Review of Autism in Employment. As a result, the NDEI was featured in much of the Review-related media.

To coincide with the launch of NDEI®, we ran a campaign to draw attention to the neurodivergent talent that too often gets overlooked by employers in the screening and interview process. Unseen CV used a selection of simple imagery featuring blank CVs calling for employers to learn how to benefit from neurodivergent people's skills. The campaign helped to drive hundreds of employers to register for the NDEI®, and garnered support from a number of celebrities and social media influencers. This campaign was developed with the creative agency House 337 who continue to support our communications and campaigning, and secure pro-bono advertising via Ocean Outdoors.

Thanks to all of this activity we have seen around 5,000 people visit our NDEI® landing page, and over 400 organisations registered for the NDEI®. We've also had over 1500 individual registrations for the Employers Guide to Neurodiversity and the associated employer mailing list. This enables us to deliver regular updates on best-practice in neuroinclusion to a broad range of businesses.

World Autism Acceptance Week (1-4 April 2024)

We celebrated World Autism Acceptance Week across the month of April. The first week was dedicated to highlighting the barriers and opportunities associated with employment, which was used as a hook to collaborate with influencers and drive media attention.

The rest of the month focused on celebrating involvement in research and encouraging our community to join the Autistica Network. We shared a series of short videos of people who have been involved in our own research in order to demystify research and show that participating in research leads to driving understanding and acceptance. As a result, more than 1200 people joined the network and are now participating in studies.

Shaping the media and changing attitudes

This year the media has focused heavily on the crisis surrounding diagnosis waiting times, and the resulting lack of support. Our CEO, Dr James Cusack, has spoken across the BBC and beyond on the issue, sharing our views that we need a complete redesign of the process, grounded in research. We have also acted as a consultant with a range of media producers to ensure documentaries and media coverage is authentic, evidence-based and involves a range of credible experts.

Sharing the latest evidence with Autistica webinars

Our webinars are increasingly popular, and provide an accessible way for autistic people, families and professionals to access the latest evidence-based information. We ran 12 webinars this year, with over 1397 attendees.

Funding and support

The various financial pressures over the last few years, and the current political and economic climate has led us to further diversify our income streams in 23-24. We have had some fantastic financial wins this year, including securing multi-year funding, providing us with the opportunity to make great progress with our 2030 Goals.

£1,202,826

Major Donors

£851,070

Trusts

£500,711

Corporate

£238,057

Gifts in kind

£61,491

Events

£51,435

Individuals

£40,801

Investments

£33,517

Other Income

£10,000

Legacy

£5,972

Gift Aid

Trusts & Foundations

We had a great year in Trusts & Foundations benefiting from the continued support of our existing key partners including the Waterloo Foundation and the CareTech Foundation. We were also delighted to receive strategic funding from the Peter Sowerby Foundation to support the growth of our in-house research team, as well as an incredible donation from the Motability Foundation to support research into the barriers autistic people face when accessing public transport. This year we also expanded the Trusts & Foundations team's remit to cover statutory income which led to significant support from UK Research & Innovation (UKRI). Overall, this has meant our income has gone from £367,072 in 22-23 to £851,070 in 23-24 which is a fantastic achievement.

Corporate

We were hugely excited to welcome the Aviva Foundation as our newest partner. The focus of our three-year partnership is on empowering autistic people to develop financial wellbeing and resilience, while supporting professionals to understand how to make financial products and services more inclusive to autistic people. We continued to work closely with companies on our employment 2030 goal and are proud to continue working with London Stock Exchange Foundation on employability skills for autistic people. We also launched a new strand to our corporate income stream, providing practical neurodiverse employment support to companies through the launch of our neurodiversity training programme.

With the support of our Autistica Play Ambassadors, we continued to work closely with the Games industry. We are especially grateful to our long-standing partner GamesAid, whose continued support is so crucial in helping us deliver our 2030 Goal. In December 2023, we took part in the Jingle Jam, the world's biggest gaming charity event which raised an astounding £215,000 in only two weeks. The money raised will go towards our mental health 2030 Goal.

Major Donors

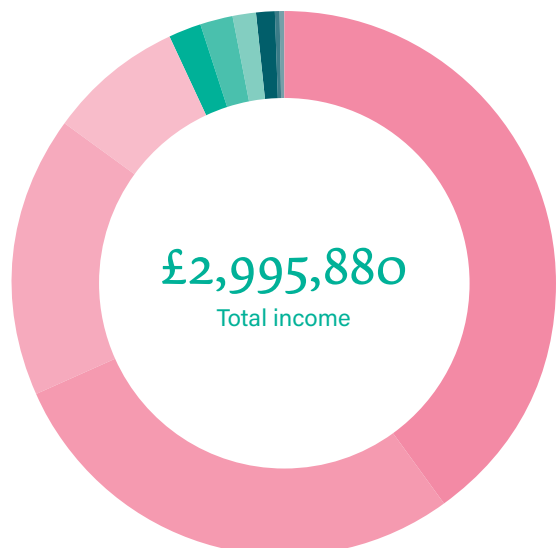
We were delighted to benefit from an incredible unrestricted gift of £1 million from our Founder and President Dame Stephanie Shirley, to mark her 90th Birthday in 2023. We held a celebratory event for Dame Stephanie at the Palace of Westminster in September 2023, which led to numerous gifts from existing and new supporters and was our most successful Major Donor fundraising event in Autistica's history. We also held a couple of other special events in the year to aid our in-year new business activity, as well as secure a strong start to 24-25.

Community & Challenge Events

We have continued to benefit from supporters participating in our challenge events, with the London Marathon continuing to be our most popular, raising over £50,000 in April 23. We also benefitted from our community partners hosting fundraising events, including the Ravens Ball, who run a bi-annual ball in Scotland.

Individuals & Legacies

Our individual supporters who make regular gifts continue to provide incredible unrestricted and sustainable support to the charity. Regular and unrestricted income is so important to us and we thank our supporters for their contributions. We also received our first legacy donation from a long-term supporter, John Pattison, who was heavily invested in our work. We are incredibly grateful to John for this long-lasting legacy and his family's continued support.



Looking ahead

“Although Isabella struggles on a daily basis, she is such a happy little girl, who loves to dance and have fun. She may be slightly different to other children, but she also possesses many excellent qualities. I am tackling the London Marathon to raise awareness and funds to assist Autistica, by doing this I am also directly supporting my young daughter and hopefully other autistic individuals.”

Steve, Autistica London Marathon participant 2024 (pictured right)

We enter the year with a superb and well-established team in place, an outstanding year in terms of fundraising, and some brilliant new and pre-established relationships in place. These developments have enabled us to progress our 2030 Goals plan.

Implementing our 2030 Goals plans

Having finalised our ambitious and visionary 2030 Goals, we are now rapidly implementing our plans.

We were extremely proud to be able to launch the Buckland Review on Autism Employment this year, which we hope will build a society-wide commitment to doubling the rate of employment for autistic people over a ten year period (2020-2030). A key recommendation in this review was to see the widescale implementation of the NDEI®, which we discuss in more detail on page 8.

Ensuring that research that has the power to improve lives is able to reach all autistic people is a key priority for Autistica. That is why we will harness the power of Artificial Intelligence and begin to build an accessible Tips Hub. This hub will deliver personalised recommendations that will enable autistic people to understand day-to-day issues, their mental health needs, and will additionally ensure that employers can support autistic people in the workplace.

In addition to the two new initiatives above, we will also be launching two new indexes that will help us measure our effectiveness as we head towards 2030. The first will mean we can effectively understand attitudes to autism and neurodiversity and what approaches change them for the better. The second will measure how effectively mental health settings

and approaches are accommodating autistic people and meeting their needs.

Fixing the assessment, diagnosis, and support crisis

As at March 2024, the amount of people waiting for an autism assessment is sitting at 183,000: that's bigger than the population of Swindon and enough to fill Wembley twice over. This figure demonstrates how fundamentally broken the system is. Doing more of the same won't work. We are calling for a fundamental rethink of how we carry out diagnosis underpinned by research and development. We want to see diagnosis take a wider view in terms of understanding neurodiversity, neurodivergence, and individual needs with a view to ensuring autistic people get the support they deserve quicker. This will be a key focus for the year ahead.

Building our income and enabling our amazing team

Last year we had a record year in terms of income, and that is testament to the way our community has rallied behind our goals, with Autistica raising almost £3 million. This year, we hope to build on this success by rolling out the NDEI® as a commercial product to fuel our work on employment, and by building links with statutory funders to find new solutions to the diagnosis crisis facing autistic people.

Over the last year we have enjoyed record levels of staff retention at Autistica. We have worked with our team to understand how we can build a more enabling workforce and, as part of this, we are proud to have launched a trial of the four-day week. We believe that this change could help us to build and sustain a happy, healthy, stable and high-quality team. This trial will be reviewed in the autumn.



The trustees have referred to the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit in relation to the charity's aims and objectives. The trustees consider it important to demonstrate to supporters and others interested in our work that the research we have funded will support breakthroughs, create tangible progress, and enhance understanding.

Autistic people and families are at the heart of work, our national research network and embedded within our wider governance processes. By involving our community, we can create breakthroughs that enable all autistic people to live happier, healthier, longer lives.

Autistic people and family members play an active role across our work. The Autistica Network provides autistic people with the opportunity to be involved in research as participants and advisers. It also gives researchers a valuable resource to recruit to their studies.

Our Insight Group provide more specialised input to our and others' work, including co-designing research studies, providing advice on how to best involve autistic people in studies, and reviewing research proposals and Autistica Research Festival submissions to help make sure we support only the best quality research.

We know how important it is that our resources are deployed on research that is important to families. That's why we ensure that our research is of the highest quality, is considered to be internationally competitive, and does not duplicate investments made elsewhere.

As a member of the Association of Medical Research Charities we are committed to the highest possible standards of research governance. Independent peer review underscores all the research that we fund.

In addition to the Scientific Review Panel which scores and deliberates on all our research proposals, we are fortunate to benefit from independent scientific advice from world-leading experts in neurodevelopmental conditions, including autism.

Autistica is regulated by the Fundraising Regulator. We are committed to best practice in fundraising and customer service. We promise to keep our supporters informed about our work and to treat their information with respect.





“The NDEI® is the first thing that has given me real hope that things are changing: employers, attitudes, and wider society. It opens up opportunities I didn’t have. There is no doubt in my mind this is going to be life-changing for autistic people.”

Emma, Autistic adult
(Pictured left)

Structure, governance and management

“It feels good to see an app that was designed for us autistic people. For the first time I felt heard in my concerns and difficulties, not like generic anxiety apps that don’t take autism into account.”

Molehill Mountain user

How we are governed

Autistica was registered as a charity in December 2004 and its governing document is its Memorandum and Articles of Association, which were adopted on 20 July 2004. Autistica is incorporated under the Companies Act 2006 as a company limited by guarantee having no share capital. For the purposes of this Act, the chair and other trustees (none of whom receives any remuneration) are the directors of the company. A full list of trustees, together with other legal and administrative information, can be found at the front of this report.

The board of trustees meets formally four times a year and additionally relies on sub-committees to provide further oversight of the work of the charity. Each is chaired by a trustee. All key decisions, including the allocation of funds for research, are taken at full meetings of the trustee board.

Since 1 April 2023, two trustees have retired from the board having served the maximum terms of six years: John Carey in July 2023 and Matthew Davis in May 2024.

The following issues are addressed by the trustees during the year:

- developing and reviewing the organisational strategy
- reviewing progress against our business plan
- agreeing and monitoring an annual business and financial plan
- the award of all grants for research
- the risks the charity is facing in delivering its plans
- the impact of the charity's work

Each year the skills and expertise required within the trustee board are reviewed to help the charity deliver its objectives. If gaps are identified or a vacancy occurs, new trustees with the appropriate skills and experience are identified. All trustees are offered a full induction when they join, and trustee training is available to keep trustees up to date with the environment in which the charity operates.

How we are managed

The Chief Executive is responsible to the board of trustees for the management of the charity. Director of Finance and Administration, Director of External Affairs, Director of Income Generation, and the Director of Research report to the Chief Executive. Remuneration for senior staff is set at market rates and reviewed annually by the board.

The offices of the charity are registered in Islington.

Risk management

The trustees formally consider the major risks faced by the charity as part of a risk management strategy that comprises:

- an annual review of the risks faced by the charity in delivering its plans
- the establishment of systems and procedures to manage those risks identified in the review
- the implementation of procedures designed to minimise any potential negative impact on the charity should those risks materialise
- raising awareness, amongst staff and trustees, of the risk of fraud and the steps to mitigate that risk to the charity
- increasing team capacity to mitigate cyber fraud, seeking expert advice and raising awareness of risks among staff

The charity has identified a number of key risks this year, including the stability of our current staff team after a year of significant change; rising costs as a result of the high level of inflation, and; the medium-term effect of Brexit on income, income diversification and improving national and international collaborations in autism research. Our loyal donor base and compelling external relationships put us in a strong position to maintain income and influence and continue supporting UK autism research. We actively seek new partnerships within and beyond autism science and build pro bono support to increase capacity.

Financial Performance

Total income for the year was £2,995,880 (2022-23: £1,543,626). The year-on-year increase was due to a generous donation from Dame Stephanie Shirley as well Corporate and Trusts performing particularly well.

The costs of raising funds was £573,386 (2022-23: £302,483). The rise in costs is due to a review in the year of how we allocate costs, so it is more reflective of the charity as it stands today. We spent £1,423,098 (2022-23: £1,495,431) on charitable activities including £699,626 (2022-23: £774,398) on in-house Goals research and £723,472 (2022-23: £721,033) on external research grants.

The overall net income on operating activities was £1,095,827 (2022-23: -£281,243), which we plan to spend next year in order to deliver both our 2030 Goals and our overarching strategy.

Reserves

The trustees review the reserves policy annually and consider the charity should hold free reserves of approximately £750,000 which includes a £50,000 contingency (2022-23: £700,000) to cover six months' operating costs. At 31 March 2024 the charity had free reserves excluding designated funds of £1,089,441 (2022-23: £841,439). The designated funds were £495,597 (2022-23: £NIL). At 31 March 2024 the charity had restricted reserves of £1,060,407 (2022-23: £708,179).

Investments

Free reserves and other surplus cash are held in interest-bearing deposit accounts with authorised UK deposit takers or in regulated money market funds with a maximum of four to six months' operating costs (c.£650,000) held in the current account. Cash outside of the current account should be held in individual interest-bearing deposit accounts with authorised UK deposit takers which benefit from the government Financial Services Compensation Scheme (currently up to £85,000), using the Insignis cash management platform. The maximum amount per deposit account should not exceed £100,000. These can be a mix of instant or close to instant access and longer-term access accounts.

A maximum of 50% of total cash or £1,100,000, whichever is lower, can be held in regulated money market funds with an AAA rating from Fitch and/or S&P Global, provided that the funds offer instant or close to instant access. A maximum of 25% of total cash or £750,000, whichever is the lower, can be held in equities or funds in line with the asset investment policy. These should be managed by a regulated asset manager. Investments are reviewed by the finance committee, which meets four times a year, and trustees are advised of any recommended changes at full meetings of the trustee board. At present we have no investment funds which relate to this policy due to liquidating these funds in 2022-23.

Going concern statement

The trustees have carefully considered the level of funds held and the expected level of income and expenditure for 12 months from the approval of these financial statements. The trustees have concluded that the budgeted income and expenditure is sufficient with the level of reserves for the charity to be able to continue as a going concern.

Approval

The report has been prepared in accordance with the Charities Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP) (FRS 102) and in accordance with the special provisions of Part 15 of the Companies Act 2006 relating to smaller entities. The trustees' report and financial statements were approved by the board of trustees on 19 September 2024.

On behalf of the Board



Matthew Harris

Honorary Treasurer
19 September 2024

Statement of trustee's responsibilities

Statement of disclosure to auditors

The trustees (who are also directors of Autistica for the purposes of company law) are responsible for preparing the trustees' annual report (including the strategic report) and 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 that give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company and of the incoming resources and application of resources, including the income and expenditure, of the charitable company 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 SORP (FRS 102).
- 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 charitable company will continue in operation.

The trustees are responsible for keeping adequate 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. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charitable company and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

Insofar 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.



Stephen Boyle

Chair of Trustees

19 September 2024



“It is always wonderful to meet with the other group members and engage with research projects if I can.

A highlight for me was attending an autism and employment round table event last year. There I was able to share my experience of supporting clients in work and talk about the barriers we can face as neurodivergent people in the workplace.”

Karen-Anne, Insight Group member (pictured below)



Independent auditor's report to members

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of Autistica (the 'charitable company') for the year ended 31 March 2024 which comprise the Statement of Financial Activities, the Balance Sheet, the Cash Flow Statement and the related notes. 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 charitable company's affairs as at 31 March 2024 and of its 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 charitable company in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in the UK, including the FRC's Ethical Standard, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Conclusions relating to going concern

In auditing the financial statements, we have concluded that the Trustees use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.

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

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

Other information

The other information comprises the information included in the Trustees 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 and the incorporated Strategic Report prepared for the purpose of company law for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements; and
- the Trustees' Report and the incorporated Strategic 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 charitable company and its environment obtained in the course of the audit, we have not identified material misstatements in the Trustees' Report and the incorporated Strategic 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, or returns adequate for our audit have not been received from branches not visited by us; or
- the financial statements are not in agreement with the accounting records and returns; or
- certain disclosures of trustees' remuneration specified by law are not made; or
- we have not received all the information and explanations we require for our audit.

Responsibilities of trustees

As explained more fully in the Statement of Trustees' responsibilities set out on page 24, 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 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 charitable company or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

Independent auditor’s report to members continued

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.

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

Irregularities, including fraud, are instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations. We design procedures in line with our responsibilities, outlined above and on the Financial Reporting Council’s website, to detect material misstatements in respect of irregularities, including fraud.

We obtain and update our understanding of the entity, its activities, its control environment, and likely future developments, including in relation to the legal and regulatory framework applicable and how the entity is complying with that framework. Based on this understanding, we identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion. This includes consideration of the risk of acts by the entity that were contrary to applicable laws and regulations, including fraud.

In response to the risk of irregularities and non-compliance with laws and regulations, including fraud, we designed procedures which included:

- Enquiry of management and those charged with governance around actual and potential litigation and claims as well as actual, suspected and alleged fraud;
- Reviewing minutes of meetings of those charged with governance;
- Assessing the extent of compliance with the laws and regulations considered to have a direct material effect on the financial statements or the operations of the company through enquiry and inspection;
- Reviewing financial statement disclosures and testing to supporting documentation to assess compliance with applicable laws and regulations;
- Performing audit work over the risk of management bias and override of controls, including testing of journal entries and other adjustments for appropriateness, evaluating the business rationale of significant transactions outside the normal course of business and reviewing accounting estimates for indicators of potential bias.

As part of an audit in accordance with ISAs (UK), we exercise professional judgment and maintain professional scepticism throughout the audit. We also:

- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.
- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the charitable company’s internal control.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by the trustees.
- Conclude on the appropriateness of the trustees’ use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the charitable company’s ability to continue as a going concern. If we conclude that a material uncertainty exists, we are required to draw attention in our auditor’s report to the related disclosures in the financial statements or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify our opinion. Our conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of our auditor’s report. However, future events or conditions may cause the charitable company to cease to continue as a going concern.
- Evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial statements, including the disclosures, and whether the financial statements represent the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation (ie. gives a true and fair view).

We communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that we identify during our audit.

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.



Michelle Wilkes FCA
Senior Statutory Auditor, Chartered Accountants
For and on behalf of Azets Audit Services,
First Floor, River House
1 Maidstone Road
Sidcup
Kent DA14 5RH

Date : 1 October 2024

**Statement of Financial Activities,
including Income and Expenditure**
for the year ended 31 March 2024

				Year ended 31 March 2024	Year ended 31 March 2023
Income from	Notes	Unrestricted £	Restricted £	Total Funds £	Total Funds £
Donations	2	2,040,621	914,458	2,955,079	1,527,079
Investment Income		40,801	-	40,801	16,547
Total income		2,081,422	914,458	2,995,880	1,543,626
Expenditure on					
Costs of raising funds					
Costs of generating donations	3	455,859	-	455,859	273,083
Cost of events	3	21,096	-	21,096	29,400
		476,955	-	476,955	302,483
Expenditure on charitable activities					
In-house Goals research	4	323,927	375,699	699,626	774,398
External research grants	4	536,941	186,531	723,472	721,033
		860,868	562,230	1,423,098	1,495,431
Total expenditure		1,337,823	562,230	1,900,053	1,797,914
Net (expenditure)/income before gains and losses on investments and transfers					
		743,599	352,228	1,095,827	(254,288)
Net (losses)/gains on investments	9	-	-	-	(26,955)
Transfer between funds	14	-	-	-	-
Net movement in funds		743,599	352,228	1,095,827	(281,243)
Total funds brought forward		841,439	708,179	1,549,618	1,830,861
Total funds carried forward		1,585,038	1,060,407	2,645,445	1,549,618

The statement of financial activities includes all gains and losses recognised in the year.
All income and expenditure is derived from continuing operations.

**Comparative Statement of Financial Activities,
including Income and Expenditure**
for the year ended 31 March 2023

				Year ended 31 March 2023
Income from	Notes	Unrestricted £	Restricted £	Total Funds £
Donations	2	922,792	604,287	1,527,079
Investment Income		16,547	-	16,547
Total income		939,339	604,287	1,543,626
Expenditure on				
Costs of raising funds				
Costs of generating donations	3	273,083	-	273,083
Cost of events	3	29,400	-	29,400
		302,483	-	302,483
Expenditure on charitable activities				
In-house Goals research	4	658,249	116,149	774,398
External research grants	4	638,343	82,690	721,033
		1,296,592	198,839	1,495,431
Total expenditure		1,599,075	198,839	1,797,914
Net (expenditure)/income before gains and losses on investments and transfers				
		(659,736)	405,448	(254,288)
Net losses on investments	9	(26,955)	-	(26,955)
Transfer between funds	14	68,226	(68,226)	-
Net movement in funds		(618,465)	337,222	(281,243)
Total funds brought forward		1,459,904	370,957	1,830,861
Total funds carried forward		841,439	708,179	1,549,618

The statement of financial activities includes all gains and losses recognised in the year. All income and expenditure is derived from continuing operations.

Balance Sheet

as at 31 March 2024

	Notes	£	2024 £	£	2023 £
Fixed assets					
Tangible assets	8		-		-
Investments	9		-		-
			<u>-</u>		<u>-</u>
Current assets					
Debtors - amounts falling due within one year	10	253,014		269,371	
Cash at bank		2,786,820		1,600,572	
		<u>3,039,834</u>		<u>1,869,943</u>	
Creditors					
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	11	(329,037)		(285,647)	
Net current assets			2,710,797		1,584,296
Total assets less current liabilities			2,710,797		1,584,296
Creditors					
Creditors: amounts falling due after one year	12		(65,352)		(34,678)
Net assets			2,645,445		1,549,618
Reserves					
Unrestricted funds - general	13		1,089,441		841,439
Designated funds	13		495,597		-
Restricted funds	14		<u>1,060,407</u>		<u>708,179</u>
Total funds		15	2,645,445		1,549,618

Approved by the board of trustees on 19 September 2024 and signed on behalf of the board



Matthew Harris
Honorary Treasurer
Company Registration Number: 05184164

Statement of Cash Flows

for the year ended 31 March 2024

	Notes	2024 £	2023 £
Net cash (outflow) from operating activities	16	1,145,447	(451,442)
Cash flow from investing activities			
Bank interest		40,801	16,547
Proceeds from sale of investments		-	474,587
Net cash from investing activities		40,801	491,134
Net increase in cash and cash equivalents		1,186,248	39,692
Cash and cash equivalents at beginning of year		1,600,572	1,560,880
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the year		2,786,820	1,600,572

Notes to financial statements
for the year ended 31 March 2024

1. ACCOUNTING POLICIES

a) Basis of preparation

Autistica is a company limited by guarantee in the United Kingdom. In the event of the charity being wound up, the liability in respect of the guarantee is limited to £1 per member of the charity. The address of the registered office is given in the charity information on page 3 of these financial statements. The nature of the charity's operations and principal activities are set out on page 6.

The charity constitutes a public benefit entity as defined by FRS 102. 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 issued in October 2019, the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102), the Charities Act 2011 and UK Generally Accepted Accounting Practice.

The financial statements are prepared on a going concern basis under the historical cost convention, modified to include certain items at fair value. The financial statements are prepared in sterling which is the functional currency of the charity.

The significant accounting policies applied in the preparation of these financial statements are set out below. These policies have been consistently applied to all years presented unless otherwise stated.

b) Income

All income is included in the Statement of Financial Activities (SoFA) when the charity is legally entitled to the income after any performance conditions have been met, the amount can be measured reliably and it is probable that the income will be received.

For donations and grants receivable are included in full in the Statement of Financial Activities when receivable.

Investment income is accounted for when received. Tax recoverable on investment income is accounted for on a receivable basis.

Other income is included in full in the Statement of Financial Activities when receivable.

Gifts in kind and donated services are included at the open market value of the goods or services provided.

c) Expenditure

All expenditure is accounted for on an accruals basis and has been classified under headings that aggregate all costs related to the category. Expenditure is recognised where there is a legal or constructive obligation to make payments to third parties, it is probable that the settlement will be required and the amount of the obligation can be measured reliably.

It is categorised under the following headings:

- Raising funds are those costs incurred in attracting voluntary income.
- Expenditure on charitable activities includes expenditure associated with in-house Goals research and external research grants. Grants payable are accounted for at the point that either conditions for receipt have been satisfied or the post being funded is filled.

d) Fund accounting

Unrestricted funds are available for use at the discretion of the trustees in furtherance of the general objectives of the charity and which have not been designated for other purposes.

Restricted funds are funds which are to be used in accordance with specific restrictions imposed by donors or which have been raised by the charity for particular purposes. The cost of raising and administering such funds are charged against the specific fund. The aim and use of each restricted fund is set out in the notes to the financial statements.

Designated funds comprise unrestricted funds that have been set aside by the Trustees for particular purposes. The aim and use of each designated fund is set out in the notes to the financial statements.

e) Tangible fixed assets

All assets costing over £5,000 are capitalised. Tangible fixed assets are stated at cost less depreciation. Depreciation is provided at rates calculated to write off the cost or valuation of fixed assets, less their estimated residual value, over their expected useful lives as follows:

• Computer equipment	33%	straight line
• Other equipment and fittings	25%	straight line

f) Debtors and creditors receivable / payable within one year

Debtors and creditors with no stated interest rate and receivable or payable within one year are recorded at transaction price. Any losses arising from impairment are recognised in expenditure.

g) Going concern

The financial statements have been prepared on a going concern basis. The Trustees have carefully considered the level of funds held and the expected level of income and expenditure for 12 months from the approval of these financial statements. The Trustees have concluded that the budgeted income and expenditure is sufficient with the level of reserves appropriate for the charity, in the current circumstances, to be able to continue as a going concern.

Notes to financial statements

for the year ended 31 March 2024

h) Judgements and key sources of estimation uncertainty

The following judgements (apart from those involving estimates) have been made in the process of applying the above accounting policies that have had the most significant effect on amounts recognised in the financial statements:

Bad debts

Debtors are regularly reviewed for recoverability. Any debts which in the opinion of trustees are not recoverable are provided for as a specific bad debt.

There are no key assumptions concerning the future and other key 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 within the next financial year.

2. INCOME

	2024 £	2023 £
Donations	1,741,323	611,591
Gifts in kind	238,057	241,941
Challenge events	61,241	69,260
Unrestricted income	2,040,621	922,792
Restricted donations	914,458	604,287
Total income	2,955,079	1,527,079

	2024 £	2023 £
Gifts in kind		
Costs of activities for generating funds, challenge events	137,512	122,250
Charitable activities, website	-	1,608
Charitable activities, administrative support costs - Unrestricted	950	3,096
Charitable activities, disseminating information on autism and autism research - Restricted	99,595	114,987
	238,057	241,941

The above activities were organised by the charity.

Income from activities organised by individuals and donated to the charity are included in voluntary income.

Notes to the Financial Statements

for the year ended 31 March 2024

3. COST OF RAISING FUNDS

	2024	2023
	£	£
Costs of generating donations		
Website, database, literature and PR costs	19,249	9,629
Other fundraising expenses	23,118	38,290
Allocation of administrative support costs (note 6)	73,151	82,702
Staff costs (note 7)	340,341	142,463
	455,859	273,084

	2024	2023
	£	£
Cost of Events		
Challenge events costs	6,510	15,176
Other event costs	9,541	8,520
Allocation of administrative support costs (note 6)	5,045	5,704
	21,096	29,400

4. EXPENDITURE ON CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES

	Unrestricted	Restricted	2024	2023
	£	£	£	£
Grants for In-house Goals research				
Complex Needs Research and Development Hub (COMRAD)	-	19,913	19,913	-
Discover Autism Research and Employment	-	-	-	61,741
Autistica Network (Discover)	-	-	-	41,901
Embracing Complexity	-	(260)	(260)	3,758
Epilepsy Dossier	-	-	-	25,190
Neural markers of emerging autism in infants with epilepsy	-	65,352	65,352	-
NDEI® Knowledge Transfer Partnership	-	65,167	65,167	-
Supporting autistic people as they age	-	53,560	53,560	-
Promoting successful transition to adulthood for autistic people	-	10,254	10,254	-
Developing an autism and homelessness toolkit and training package	-	2,387	2,387	-
Supporting executive functions in infants at risk of autism/adhd	-	-	-	450
Committed grants from prior years - conditions not met or projects cancelled	(52,958)	-	(52,958)	-
Governance costs (Note 5)	32,705	-	32,705	35,968
Grant Administration costs (Note 6)	171,526	-	171,526	193,921
Staff costs (Note 7)	172,654	159,326	331,980	411,469
Total Grant expenditure	323,927	375,699	699,626	774,398
External research grants	236,164	27,205	358,786	273,596
Governance costs (note 5)	32,705	-	32,705	35,968
Staff costs (note 7)	172,655	159,326	331,981	411,469
	765,451	562,230	1,423,098	1,495,431

Notes to the Financial Statements

for the year ended 31 March 2024

5. GOVERNANCE COSTS

	2024 £	2023 £
External audit	15,523	28,748
Trustees' liability insurance	3,274	3,260
Consultancy & recruitment costs	500	20,940
Other governance costs	426	7,985
Allocation of administrative support costs (Note 6)	2,522	2,852
Staff costs (Note 7)	43,165	8,151
	65,410	71,936

No Trustees were paid during this period. Two Trustees received reimbursements for travel expenses and meeting costs totalling £1,156 (2023 : One Trustee received £325 for travel expenses).

Governance costs were allocated equally between activities in Charitable Activities (Note 4).

6. ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT COSTS

The following administrative support costs are allocated between other categories of expenditure as detailed below.

Costs are attributed directly where possible and the balance is allocated based on time spent by trustees, staff and consultants.

	2024 £	2023 £
Telephone	-	1,537
IT Expenditure	30,631	32,414
Stationery, copying, postage and other office expenses	5,356	8,168
Staff recruitment and professional development	35,706	51,530
Rent and rates	77,351	70,615
Accountancy	45,202	71,850
Other	14,716	13,443
Staff costs (note 7)	43,282	35,622
Total support costs	252,244	285,179

These are divided:

Generating donations (Note 3)	73,151	82,702
Events (Note 3)	5,045	5,704
Charitable activities (Note 4)	171,526	193,921
Corporate governance (Note 5)	2,522	2,852
	252,244	285,179

Notes to the Financial Statements

for the year ended 31 March 2024

7. STAFF COSTS

	2024 £	2023 £
Salaries	947,748	880,697
Social security costs	104,817	102,587
Pension costs	26,095	23,240
Redundancy Costs	12,089	2,650
	1,090,749	1,009,174
These are allocated:		
Generating donations (Note 3)	340,341	142,463
Charitable activities	663,961	822,938
Corporate governance (Note 5)	43,165	8,151
Administration - support costs (Note 6)	43,282	35,622
	1,090,749	1,009,174

There has been a review in the year of cost allocation to reflect an up-to-date estimate of where costs are attributed. The charity employed 16 full-time and 5 part-time staff members during the year to 31 March 2024 (2023: 16 full-time and 8 part-time). Staff costs are allocated between the various activities according to time spent.

	2024 no.	2023 no.
The amounts disclosed above include the following number of highly paid employees:		
£60,001 - £70,000	1	-
£80,000 - £90,000	1	1

The total amount of employee benefits received by key management personnel is £344,280 (5 employees) (2023 - £302,791 (4 employees)). The charity considers its key management personnel to comprise those individuals listed on page 3.

8. TANGIBLE FIXED ASSETS

	Computer equipment £	Other equipment and fittings £	Total £
Cost			
As at 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024	2,760	1,285	4,045
Depreciation			
As at 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024	2,760	1,285	4,045
Net book value at 31 March 2024 and 31 March 2023	-	-	-

Notes to the Financial Statements
for the year ended 31 March 2024

9. INVESTMENTS

	2024	2023
Market Value	£	£
As at 1 April 2022	-	501,542
Disposals	-	(474,857)
Unrealised (Loss)/gain	-	(26,685)
As at 31 March 2024	-	-

10. DEBTORS: AMOUNTS FALLING DUE WITHIN ONE YEAR

	2024	2023
	£	£
Trade Debtors	47,719	190,702
Prepayments and accrued income	205,295	78,669
	253,014	269,371

Notes to the Financial Statements

for the year ended 31 March 2024

11. CREDITORS: AMOUNTS FALLING DUE WITHIN ONE YEAR

	2024 £	2023 £
Trade creditors	40,566	21,982
Other creditors	8,315	28,718
Grant commitments (see Note 12 below)	246,427	146,092
Accruals and deferred income	33,729	88,855
	329,037	285,647

12. CREDITORS: AMOUNTS FALLING DUE AFTER MORE THAN ONE YEAR

	2024 £	2023 £
Grant commitments (see table below)	65,352	34,678

	Less than 1 yr £	More than 1 yr £	Total £
At 1 April 2023	146,092	34,678	180,770
Grant commitments	151,280	65,352	216,632
Grant provision released (conditions not met)	(47,440)	-	(47,440)
Commitments now due within one year	34,678	(34,678)	-
Paid in year	(38,183)	-	(38,183)
As at 31 March 2024	246,427	65,352	311,779

13. UNRESTRICTED FUNDS 2024

	Balances £	Income £	Expenditure £	Designated £	Balances c/f £
Unrestricted funds - general	841,439	2,081,422	(1,337,823)	(495,597)	1,089,441
	841,439	2,081,422	(1,337,823)	(495,597)	1,089,441

	Balances b/f £	New designations £	Designations released £	Balances c/f £
Designated funds				
Unfunded projects scheduled for 2024-2025	-	495,597	-	495,597
	-	495,597	-	495,597

Unfunded projects scheduled for 2024-2025

Amounts have been designated from general unrestricted reserves at 31 March 2024 to cover unfunded expenditure for planned and budgeted projects taking place in 2024-2025

UNRESTRICTED FUNDS 2023

	Balances £	Income £	Expenditure £	Transfers £	Balances c/f £
Unrestricted funds - general	1,459,904	939,339	(1,599,075)	41,271	841,439
	1,459,904	939,339	(1,599,075)	41,271	841,439

Designated funds

There were no designated funds at 31 March 2023

Notes to the Financial Statements

for the year ended 31 March 2024

14. RESTRICTED FUNDS 2024

	Balances b/f £	Income £	Expenditure £	Transfers £	Balances c/f £
Support from Day One	355,034	264,246	(331,084)	-	288,196
Doubling Employment	43,250	20,000	(32,221)	-	31,029
Proven treatments for anxiety	-	202,772	(15,246)	-	187,526
Accessible public spaces	-	111,492	(8,425)	-	103,067
Tailored annual health checks	181,000	4,345	(34,630)	-	150,715
Changing attitudes about autism	9,999	-	-	-	9,999
Embracing Complexity	118,896	57,642	(45,833)	-	130,705
Research Growth	-	253,961	(94,791)	-	159,170
Total restricted funds	708,179	914,458	(562,230)	-	1,060,407

14. RESTRICTED FUNDS 2023

	Balances b/f £	Income £	Expenditure £	Transfers £	Balances c/f £
The Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology & Neuroscience Mental Health -	25,724	-	(25,190)	(534)	-
Robert Luff Foundation COMRAD	-	20,000	-	-	20,000
Blackrock	-	11,208	-	(11,208)	-
SHAPE, the Sowerby Health intervention for Autistic People	201,520	-	(20,520)	-	181,000
Fujitsu - Employment guide	-	69,250	-	(26,000)	43,250
Embracing Complexity	65,507	87,631	(3,758)	(30,484)	118,896
Social Care Scoping	25,000	-	-	-	25,000
START	-	358	(358)	-	-
University College - Ambitious about Autism - Education to Employment	-	135,000	(135,000)	-	-
CareTech - Social Care Fund	37,500	37,000	(9,033)	-	65,467
ICF- Sowerby - Digital Breakthrough	-	160,000	-	-	160,000
National Lottery	5,707	-	(4,980)	-	727
National Lottery - Changemakers	9,999	-	-	-	9,999
NHS England	-	73,840	-	-	73,840
Epilepsy Dossier	-	10,000	-	-	10,000
Total restricted funds	370,957	604,287	(198,839)	(68,226)	708,179

See explanatory notes overleaf.

Notes to the Financial Statements

for the year ended 31 March 2024

Restricted funds are funds where the donor has specified the funds must be spent on a particular project as listed below. All of these grants represent either programme grants for autism research at a particular institution, specific Autistica-led projects or where specified fellowships are awarded for the purposes of supporting individuals engaged in autism research. The Trustees have elected to change the presentation of the restricted funds as at 31 March 2024 as we believe it provides more useful information for the reader. This new format better reflects the way we have been operating in the year ended 31 March 2024.

Support from Day One

Many autistic people and families fight for a diagnosis expecting it will unlock the support that they need. But most will receive no support at all. This affects them for years to come. They are unable to reach their full potential in education, work, and relationships. They go on to face avoidable challenges in everyday life and their mental and physical health suffers. This is a practical plan to ensure every autistic person receives support from day one.

Doubling Employment

Fewer than 3 in 10 autistic people have a job, one of the lowest employment rates of all disabled groups. Autistic people are also more likely to be in roles below their skill level or in unstable employment. Being unemployed excludes people from society. It limits their means to support themselves or become financially resilient to live autonomously and plan for the future, and severely negatively impacts their mental health and life outcomes.

Proven treatments for anxiety

Nearly half of all autistic children have an anxiety disorder and 7 in 10 autistic adults have one or more mental health conditions across their lifetime. Without the right support early on, this anxiety can remain with them for life and lead to further mental health problems. The healthcare system is set up to accept anxiety as part of autism but we disagree. Tackling anxiety is one of the most important things we can do to change the life chances and life expectancy of autistic people. Our goal is to fund and shape research that informs evidence based treatments for anxiety that are specifically designed for autistic people. Our plan sets out our commitments to achieve this goal alongside the UK government, National Health Service (NHS), and specialist services. We have set out practical steps to prevent anxiety and promote good mental health from the start, and better understand the experiences of autistic people in inpatient care to prevent crises.

Accessible public spaces

Too many neurodivergent people are overwhelmed by public spaces. That is because they experience differences in the way they process sensory information, such as sound and light. Environments can impact life chances if schools, workplaces, and healthcare services are inaccessible. And autistic people can lack independence and become isolated if they cannot go shopping or enjoy sports and leisure facilities. But small adaptations can go a long way in making an environment safe and accessible, even enjoyable and engaging. By 2030 we aim to have adapted existing

public spaces so that they are more inclusive for neurodivergent people. We are also working with industry partners on new developments that are designed with neurodiversity in mind.

Tailored annual health checks

Autistic people experience poorer health than the rest of the population, and tragically many die early. The failure of health and social care forces many to live difficult lives with health problems that can be prevented or treated. Autism is linked with many common health problems. Many autistic people find it difficult to communicate their needs and access healthcare. They may struggle with interoception - the ability to identify and describe physical sensations, or have sensory sensitivities, and difficulties processing information and communicating their needs. If we can prevent health issues by spotting them earlier with an annual health check, we can stop the flow of tragic headlines and enable autistic people to live happier, healthier, longer lives.

Changing attitudes about autism

How you are perceived and understood matters. It affects your ability to form friendships and relationships, get a job, get the support you need, and live the life you want to lead. Many autistic people feel the need to mask their differences and 'act' their way through life to fit in and access things the rest of us take for granted. We want to build a society that respects and understands difference, and diversity. Our goal is to change attitudes toward autism and neurodiversity.

Embracing Complexity

Our vision is a world inclusive for neurodivergent people. Embracing Complexity brings together organisations working to facilitate evidence-based inclusion of neurodivergent people.

Research Growth

Research funding in the year enabled the Autistica team to facilitate knowledge sharing and develop skills and capacity building across the wider organisation to achieve our 2030 Goals in a sustainable way. The funding supports salary costs to facilitate 1 year of R&D with practical outcomes to achieve our 2030 Goals. These resources enable us to carry out key projects through in-house research and development activities to drive forward our goals with agile and accelerated development.

Notes to the Financial Statements

for the year ended 31 March 2024

15. ANALYSIS OF NET FUNDS 2024

	General £	Restricted £	Total £
Debtors	141,429	111,585	253,014
Bank at cash and in hand	1,526,220	1,260,600	2,786,820
Creditors : Due within one year	(117,287)	(211,750)	(329,037)
Creditors : Due after one year	34,676	(100,028)	(65,352)
	1,585,038	1,060,407	2,645,445

ANALYSIS OF NET FUNDS 2023

	General £	Restricted £	Total £
Debtors	78,669	190,702	269,371
Bank at cash and in hand	902,325	698,247	1,600,572
Creditors : Due within one year	(104,877)	(180,770)	(285,647)
Creditors : Due after one year	(34,678)	-	(34,678)
	841,439	708,179	1,549,618

16. RECONCILIATION OF NET EXPENDITURE TO NET CASH FLOW FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES

	2024 £	2023 £
Net movement in funds	1,095,827	(281,243)
Bank interest	(40,801)	(16,547)
Net gains on investments (see note 9)	-	26,955
(Increase)/decrease in debtors	16,357	(160,887)
Increase/(decrease) in creditors	74,064	(19,720)
Net cash flow from operating activities	1,145,447	(451,442)

17. RELATED PARTY TRANSACTIONS

There were no related party transactions during the year to 31 March 2024 (2023: None).

18. GUARANTEE

Autistica is a company limited by guarantee. The Memorandum of Association prohibits any income or property of the company being paid or transferred to the members. Members of the company undertake to contribute a maximum of £1 to cover its liabilities.

Committees and advisory committees

Board Committees

Finance Committee

Matthew Harris (Chair)
James Feeney
Stephen Boyle
Katherine Hudson
Jeff Saul

Nominations Committee

Lynn Hawkins (Chair)
Stephen Boyle

Advisory Committees

Scientific and Expert Review Panel

Professor Emily Simonoff (Chair)
Professor Sarah Parsons (Vice Chair)
Professor Dermot Bowler
Leneh Buckle
Gyll Curtis-Machin
Professor Lucy Henry
Professor Mark Brosnan
Dr Hannah Hobson
Dr Catherine Jones
Claudia Klaver
Dr Ewelina Rydzewska

Expert advisory groups (in-house research)

Dr Ian Male
Dr Louisa Thomas
Dr Michael Absoud
Kelly Scargill
Bernie Ennis
Teresa Kippax
Chloe Redfern
Lee Foster
Nick Ollerenshaw
Eric Heath
Jenny Shorthouse
Marc Goblot
Abigail Heron
Mark Thompson
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Jess Jones Nielson
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Fay Hendry
Prof Rosa Hoekstra
Prof Patricia Howlin
Sarah Jackson
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Prof Mark Mon-Williams
Dr Raja Mukherjee
Dr Heidi Phillips
Prof Andrew Pickles
Dr Venkat Reddy
Dr Marion Rutherford
Dr Louise Rutter
Dr Sam Tromans
Dr Lucy Waldren
Ann Wilson

Thanks

Thank you to the autism community and all the supporters who make our work possible.

We were very grateful for significant support in 2023-24 from:

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The Peter Sowerby Foundation
The Waterloo Foundation
Robert Luff Foundation
CareTech Foundation
Another Way Women's Foundationn

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Dr Caroline Richards
Prof Sue Fletcher-Watson

The Autistica logo, featuring the word "autistica" in white lowercase letters inside a dark semi-circular shape.

autistica

Autistica
6 Honduras St,
London EC1Y 0TH
T 020 3857 4340
info@autistica.org.uk
autistica.org.uk

Registered in England.
Company No. 5184164
Charity No. 1107350

Can you help us with our mission?

We can't achieve our 2030 Goals alone.

We need to work in partnership with others who have the power to change laws, transform support and fund innovation.

Contact **info@autistica.org.uk** if you share our vision and want to work together.

Thank you.

