

Action for Asperger's Annual report 2020-2021

WWW.ACTIONFORASPERGERS.ORG

Charity Registration 1148790

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Coming out of the dark...



Action for Asperger's

Est. 2008



Counselling lives that have become adversely affected by the
experience of autism and Asperger syndrome

Autism- Specialist Counselling Centre
9 Darwin House, Corbygate Business Park
Priors Haw Road, Corby, Northamptonshire NN17 5JG

Report of the Trustees for the Period ended 30 September 2021

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Introduction

The Trustees present their annual report and unaudited financial statements for the period ended 30 September 2021, and confirm they comply with The Charities Act 1993, as amended by The Charities Act 2006, the Trust Deed and the Charities SORP 2005. Principal office: Autism-Specialist Counselling Centre, 9 Darwin House, Corbygate Business Park, Priors Haw Road, Corby, Northamptonshire; NN17 5JG

Board of Trustees

Dr Max Lowenstein – Chair
Anthony Mathieson – Vice Chair
Sonia Owen
Jane Letts
Anthony Hall
Rahcel Duffy
Frances Mackenzie

Patrons

Dame Vivienne Westwood
Dr. Barbara Jacobs
Mrs. Donna Taggart
Mr. Scott James
Mr. Gary Numan
Dr. Luke Beardon

Independent Examiners

Bulley Davey Accountant, 6 North Street, Oundle, Peterborough, PE8 4AL

Bankers

The Co-operative Bank.

Governing Document

The constitution was adopted on 01 October 2008, amended on 31 August 2012, and subsequently amended on 22 September 2017.

Organisational Structure

Action for Asperger's (AfA) is governed by a board of trustees. The charity trustees are responsible for the general control and management of the charity. The trustees give their time freely and receive no remuneration or other financial benefits.

The trustees meet as a body quarterly and are responsible for all decisions taken in relation to running AfA and the activities provided by the charity.

The trustees have encouraged the recruitment of volunteers for AfA since charity registration was awarded on 31 August 2012. The volunteers have been deployed for purposes of fundraising, counselling, and assisting the founder, Elaine Nicholson, with various office administration and secretarial tasks.

The day-to-day management of AfA and its various projects is the responsibility of Elaine Nicholson, founder, counsellor, and chief executive officer of AfA.

The chair of the trustees, Dr Max Lowenstein,

The Vice-Chair/Trustee is Anthony Mathieson. Mr. Mathieson is also responsible for all things that are classed as maintenance/repair/service in the main office building.

Sonia Owen, trustee, is responsible for aiding Elaine Nicholson with managerial matters. Jane Letts, trustee, is responsible for legal matters.

Anthony Hall, trustee, is responsible for strategic guidance

Rachel Duffy, trustee, is responsible for community fundraising.

Frances Mackenzie, trustee, is responsible for human resources and learning development.

The Recruitment and appointment of trustees

The trustees are responsible for the recruitment of new trustees, but in doing so the trustees seek the views and recommendations of volunteers and respected professionals presently working in the autism community. The trustees believe that this approach will ensure that any new trustees have a good knowledge of autism per se – based on personal, professional, and experiential backdrops.

Potential trustees will be invited to attend trustees' meetings as observers and will be apprised of the charity's aims and objectives, and, if all agreed, they will then be proposed as new trustees at the next trustees' meetings. The process will allow for due consideration of the person's eligibility, personal competence, specialist knowledge and skills.

Induction and Training of trustees

Following an appointment of a new trustee, such persons will be introduced to their new role and given copies of the governing document and a guide to the policies and procedures adopted by AfA. Some publications from the Charities Commission are also provided, including the guidance on charities and public benefit and on the advancement of autism awareness knowledge for the public benefit. This should ensure that new trustees should be aware of the scope of their responsibilities under the Charities Act. Initially, new trustees will work and be guided by, existing trustees, and will, within six months, be given the task of heading a project or activity, reporting progress at a trustees meeting that follows within a time frame of 6 months.

Risk Management

The trustees review risk regularly during their quarterly meetings. Appropriate Disclosure and Barring Safeguarding (DBS) checks that are enhanced (formerly CRB) are made for all those who have a connection to AfA, whatever their capacity. Child Safeguarding and Vulnerable Adult safeguarding training courses are made available to those who work with such groups.

Objectives and activities

The objects of AfA are set out in the charity' constitution document and are summarised as follows:

- To offer a bespoke counselling service for lives over the age of three years which have become adversely affected by the experience of Asperger's syndrome (autism spectrum disorder). This applies to those who have autism, and those who have a close relationship with someone who has autism.
- To provide advocacy for its clients when and as required.

Our dual aims serve to enable the furtherance of autistic mental health awareness in both the local and wider community. Additionally, AfA can also provide training; during this year we have been enjoying doing a “swop” training with other organisations; we teach them about autism, and they teach AfA about their speciality. This “swop” training has proved most enjoyable.

Strategies and community activities

AfA's service is a 24/7 assistance facility for those who need it, via electronic communications and/ or face-to-face communications. Clients may contact us at any time via email, hence the “24/7”; this is allowable due to the complex processing that goes with an autistic neurological profile and gives the clients a chance to ask questions and/or share their concerns outside of the counselling sessions. The charity offers low-cost counselling therapy; we request from clients a donation for their counselling session (currently £40-£65 per hour – lower to higher incomes – the client decides where they are on that pricing scale). If a client is unable to pay, we offer telephone and/or email support gratis. AfA also offers student counselling at £20 ph. with counsellors who are in their last year of their training. AfA also provides emotional support for £15 ph; emotional support is provided by workers who, though not counselling trained, have a strong experiential background of autism. Emotional Support Workers also partake in AfA training and monthly autism-specialist supervision, provided by Elaine Nicholson and Chrissy Nickel.

Activities

Customer Relations Management (CRM) System

For the second year, our client notes and records management remains with the tailored CRM system helped and managed by Mr. David Mallinder of Gemini Blue. The CRM system is something which functional and effective though not quite “fitting” our requirements. Between the trustees, David Mallinder, Elaine Nicholson and Sonia Owen, investigations continue as we pursue getting a CRM system that befits our needs. This is a most difficult task, for we do not have the revenue to purchase exactly what we need, so our CRM system investigations continue slowly, but surely. It is hoped that the charity will be in a position to provide precise statistical evidence by the time of the charity year 2023/2024.

Human Resources

As we adapt to post-pandemic life, the demand for counselling continues to be very high. The charity has recruited even more new counsellors and one new emotional support worker. The charity now has 20 counsellors, 5 student counsellors and an emotional support worker and is always looking to recruit new counsellors, as the mental health of our autistic peoples continues to be a priority as we all try and recover from the pandemic and the challenges it brought with it. AfA continues to recruit new counsellors; we are fortunate in that the majority of our counsellors come to us looking to assist the AfA cause:

General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)

The charity has engaged the services of Simon Hinks, Data Protection/GDPR specialist, in the official role of data protection officer (DPO).

Safeguarding

AfA is honoured to have Paul James as our safeguarding consultant. Paul has had a career of over 35 years in school leadership and children's services. He is our guiding light in this respect and we consider ourselves most fortunate to have him on board..

Fundraising

How do we raise funds? Our therapists are priced out at half of what they would earn privately; AfA "creams" off from their hourly rate, and though this isn't much, we have sustained ourselves since 2008. Elaine Nicholson continues to work freely for AfA, donating approximately £20k pa.

The charity has engaged a part-time fundraising consultant to help with bid writing during this year. This has been relatively successful as financial records show an increase in income for this period. We hope to continue this upwards trajectory.

We would like to be able to provide free, in-person counselling to those who do not have the funds to pay for their counselling. Our fundraising consultant is working on this bursary-type funding, hoping that funding can be acquired for this. Currently the NHS support (provide funding for) only two clients out of over 7k clients.

Financial

AfA remains a donation-led service, although it is hoped that funding from sources such as grants will follow as the charity continues to deploy expert fundraising consultancy. The majority of income is from donations for counselling services as mentioned above.

The Effect of the Pandemic on the Charity

AfA continued to work tirelessly post-pandemic. As a pioneer of video counselling - having considered it a vital resource to the counselling of autistic individuals - when the pandemic hit, the charity adapted by doing all counselling consultations via video. This mode of counselling therefore did not impact the counsellors greatly for they were used to this way of working; what has impacted, has been the demand for counselling.

In terms of numbers:

According to the charity's 'Initial Enquiries' mailbox, in the period from 01/03/2020 (roughly when Covid was starting to be talked about and the pandemic was just beginning to hit) to the 31/03/2022 (when this report was being compiled), we have seen approximately **3588 new enquiry emails**. This equates to 75 new enquiries per week. At its peak during the pandemic, AfA received 8 new enquiries per hour; compare that to pre-pandemic when AfA received approximately 8 new enquiries per week.

According to Action for Asperger's CRM system, the change in client numbers across the pandemic has been as follows:

•As of the **01/03/2020**, just as the pandemic was beginning, the number of clients on our client database system was **4351**.

•As of the **31/03/2022**, which is where things are at as this report is being written, the client total stands at **7,500**

Therefore, since the pandemic began, our client list has grown exponentially.

Figures for the reporting period: 01/09/2020 – 31/08/2021

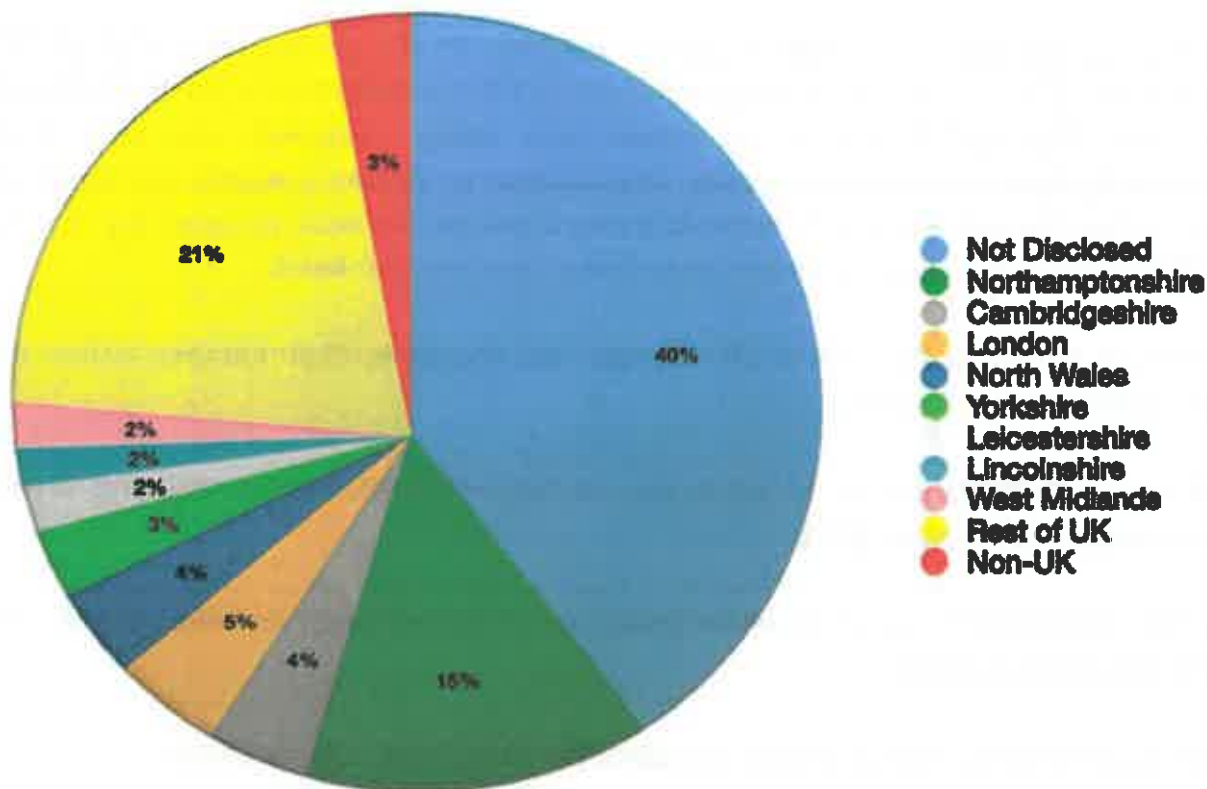
•As of the **01/09/2020**, which was the start of our financial year and thus the start of the 12-month period for reporting, the number of clients on the charity's CRM system was **4743**.

•As of the **31/08/2021**, which was the end of our financial year and thus the end of the 12-month period for reporting, the number of clients on charity's CRM system was **6,001**.

Based on the above figures, during this 12-month period the charity's client list grew by over 1,500 clients.

In terms of the email enquiries the charity dealt with in this same period, there was approximately **1,998 enquiry emails**.

Where do our clients come from?



The 40% 'Not Disclosed' indicates that, via client personal preference, they chose not to divulge their geographical whereabouts.

The 21% 'Rest of UK' is detailed like so, for the following geographical areas have a number of less than 30 clients accessing the service from these areas:

UK Countries

Mid-Wales, South Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland and the following English counties:

English Counties

Bedfordshire; Berkshire; Bristol; Buckinghamshire; Cheshire; Cornwall; Cumbria; Derbyshire; Devon; Dorset; Durham; Essex; Gloucestershire; Greater Manchester; Hampshire; Herefordshire; Hertfordshire; Isle of Wight; Kent; Lancashire; Merseyside; Northumberland; Nottinghamshire; Oxfordshire; Rutland; Shropshire; Somerset; Staffordshire; Suffolk; Surrey; Sussex; Tyne and Wear; Warwickshire; Wiltshire; Worcestershire

Thanks to Skype/Facetime/Zoom technology we have clients from all over the world. The 3% labelled 'Non-UK' is detailed like so:

Australia; Bahrain; Belgium; Canada; China; Cuba; Cyprus; Czech Republic; Democratic Republic of Congo; Finland; France; Germany; Greece; Guernsey; Hong Kong; Hungary; India; Israel; Italy; Japan; Kenya; Korea; Kuwait; Luxembourg; Malaysia; Mexico; Monaco; Netherlands; New Zealand; Norway; Palestine; Panama; Peru; Philippines; Poland; Portugal; Republic of Ireland; Rwanda; Samoa; Saudi Arabia; Singapore; Spain; Sweden; Switzerland; Thailand; Trinidad and Tobago; United Arab Emirates; USA; Vietnam

Letter from Elaine Nicholson, MBE, CEO

Dear Client/Supporter

Thank you for your love, care and support during these most difficult times. You are greatly appreciated.

I must share with you that it has been a difficult year, one of the most difficult in our history since our inception in 2008. During this year, I attempted to hand over the reins of management of AfA, but regrettably this did not work for AfA. Managing a counselling charity requires more than management knowledge, it requires an understanding of counselling also, and a selfless, empathic approach that must be inherent in the individual whom shall manage – we have learned that it cannot be cultivated – and so our positionality is that we will wait patiently for the someone to come along at some point in the future to take over my role of steering/managing the charity, although please let me reassure followers, I will “helicopter” over AfA until my last breath. However, that said, despite a difficult year, managerially speaking, all staff, contractors and trustees, especially Jo Pearson (nee Ferraro), Lynn Lewis, and Sonia Owen, have aided my efforts and have naturally adopted a collective leadership approach. Their efforts have been both stupendous and awe-inspiring as I have watched them build a metaphorical protective fence around AfA.

As we move into 2022, our most important and pressing plan is to continue to serve all new clients who come knocking at our door and to do so without their having to suffer a long waiting list. Recruitment of new counsellors is a priority and so an advertising campaign has begun and shall continue without abating. Another priority is to (a) add to the trustee board and list of patrons and (b) increase funds through fundraising. We are confident all aims can be achieved.

Love and light to all.

Sincerely,

Elaine

Financial Review

The policy of the trustees is to hold enough funds to meet four months operating costs of AfA. Operating costs per month are in the region of £4,500 net on average. It is the CEO's opinion that a bank balance of no less than £10,000 at any one time should sit in the charity bank to act as a financial 'cushion' should such a cushion be needed.

Principal funding sources

The charity's main source of income is client donations for counselling (welfare) services.

Investment policy and objectives

AfA has no long-term investments. The Trustees consider interest earned by the AfA bank account through the Co-operative banking system as a gift of the UK banking system.

Trustees' Responsibilities

The charity Trustees are responsible for preparing an annual report and financial statements in accordance with applicable law and UK Accounting Standards. The law applicable to charity in England and Wales requires the Charity Trustees to prepare financial statements for each year that give a true and fair view of the economic state of affairs of the charity and of the incoming resources and application of resources of the charity for that period. In preparing the financial statements, the Trustees are required to:

- Select suitable accounting policies and apply them consistently – and observe the methods and principles in the Charities SORP.
- Make adjustments and estimates that are reasonable and prudent. State whether applicable 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 appropriate to presume that the charity will continue in business.

The Trustees are responsible for keeping proper accounting records that disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charity and to enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Charities Act 1993, the Charity (Accounts and Reports) regulations 2008 and the provisions of the Trust deed. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charity and hence taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

The Trustees for the purposes of Charity law who served during the period and up to the date of this report are set out on page 4 of this report.

Approved by the Trustees and signed on their behalf by:



Anthony Mathieson (Vice Chair) Dated: 08.05.2022

Independent examiner's statement

In the course of my examination, no matter has come to my attention:

1 which gives me reasonable cause to believe that, in any material respect, the trustees have not met the requirements to ensure that

- proper accounting records are kept in accordance with section 130 of the Charities Act; and
- accounts are prepared which agree with the accounting records and comply with the accounting requirements of the Charities Act; or

2 to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.



Graham Darbourne FCA
TC Group
6 North Street
Oundle
Peterborough
PE8 4AL

Date: 14/5/22

Independent Examiner's Report to the Trustees

I report on the accounts of Action for Asperger's, charity number 1148790, for the period ended 30 September 2021.

Respective responsibilities of trustees and examiner

The charity's trustees are responsible for the preparation of the accounts. The charity's trustees consider that an audit is not required for this period under section 144 of the Charities Act 2011 (the Charities Act) and that an independent examination is needed.

It is my responsibility to:

- examine the accounts under section 145 of the Charities Act;**
- follow the procedures laid down in the General Directions given by the Charity Commission (under section 145(5)(b) of the Charities Act); and**
- state whether particular matters have come to my attention.**

Basis of independent examiner's statement

My examination was carried out in accordance with General Directions given by the Charity Commission. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from you the trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit, and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a 'true and fair' view and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.

Action for Aspergers
Statement of Financial Activities
year ended 30 September 2021

	Unrestricted funds £ 2021	Restricted funds £ 2021	Total funds £ 2021	Total funds £ 2020
Incoming resources				
Voluntary Income				
Donations received	12,174	-	12,174	18,543
Grants received	50,780	-	50,780	1,900
	<u>62,954</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>62,954</u>	<u>20,443</u>
Charitable Activities Income				
Consultations, diagnosis and assessments	164,944	-	164,944	127,987
Speech, Language & Occupational Therapy	-	-	-	8,000
Miscellaneous	676	-	676	12,272
	<u>165,620</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>165,620</u>	<u>148,259</u>
Activities for Generating Funds				
Sale of Merchandise	75	-	75	388
	<u>75</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>75</u>	<u>388</u>
Total incoming resources	<u>328,649</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>328,649</u>	<u>158,690</u>
Resources expended				
Activities for Generating Funds Costs				
Opening stock	600	-	600	600
Gifts/Grants given	1,461	-	1,461	899
Closing stock	(600)	-	(600)	(600)
	<u>1,461</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>1,461</u>	<u>899</u>
Charitable Activities Direct Costs				
Sensory therapy, furniture and toys	28	-	28	628
Professional services	9,222	-	9,222	7,613
Employment costs	35,716	-	35,716	15,041
Office costs	22,960	-	22,960	23,318
Social outings	-	-	-	273
Conference and meeting expenses	137	-	137	3,598
	<u>68,063</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>68,063</u>	<u>50,475</u>
Charitable Activities Support Costs				
Computer expenses	6,914	-	6,914	10,759
Postage, printing, stationery and advertising	2,330	-	2,330	7,818
Subcontractors	101,610	-	101,610	56,124
Subscriptions	12,885	-	12,885	11,961
Telephone	3,512	-	3,512	3,018
Travel and subsistence	1,143	-	1,143	3,998
Bank charges	3,166	-	3,166	2,156
Insurances	1,156	-	1,156	1,800
Subsistence for staff	-	-	-	124
Sundry and cleaning	800	-	800	1,868
Depreciation	5,422	-	5,422	6,040
(Profit)/loss on disposal of fixed assets	(492)	-	(492)	-
	<u>138,446</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>138,446</u>	<u>105,666</u>
	<u>207,970</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>207,970</u>	<u>157,040</u>
Excess of receipts over payments	<u>20,679</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>20,679</u>	<u>11,650</u>
Funds brought forward	42,686	-	42,686	31,036
Funds carried forward	<u>63,365</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>63,365</u>	<u>42,686</u>

Action for Aspergers

Balance sheet as at 30 September 2021

	Note	2021 £	2020 £
NON CURRENT ASSETS			
Computer equipment		11,326	14,146
Office equipment		4,537	4,236
Motor Vehicles		-	6,920
	3	<u>15,863</u>	<u>25,302</u>
CURRENT ASSETS			
Stock		600	600
Debtors		850	-
Rent deposit and prepayments		3,956	4,322
Bank Account		47,337	14,893
PayPal Account		1,704	147
		<u>54,447</u>	<u>19,962</u>
		<u>70,310</u>	<u>45,264</u>
LESS: LIABILITIES			
Accruals		6,543	2,377
Other Creditors		402	201
		<u>6,945</u>	<u>2,578</u>
		<u>63,365</u>	<u>42,686</u>
REPRESENTED BY: -			
RESTRICTED FUNDS	4	-	-
UNRESTRICTED FUND	4	63,365	42,686
		<u>63,365</u>	<u>42,686</u>

The financial statements were approved by the trustees and signed on behalf by:



E Nicholson

14.5.22

Action for Aspergers

Notes to the accounts for the year ended 30 September 2021

1 Accounting policies

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 (FRS102) (effective 1 January 2015) - (Charities SORP (FRS102)), the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS102). The charity meets the definition of a public benefit entity under FRS102.

a) Income and resources expended

Income and expenditure incurred on the operating of the charity is provided for on an accruals basis.

b) Depreciation

Depreciation is provided on non current assets so as to write off the cost or valuation, less any estimated residual value, over their expected useful economic life as follows:

Asset Class	Depreciation method and rate
Computer equipment	5 years straight line basis
Office equipment	5 years straight line basis
Motor Vehicles	25% reducing balance basis

2 Trustees expenses

The trustees received no emoluments (2020 : £nil). During the year, telephone, travel and subsistence expenses were reimbursed to trustees at cost totalling £nil (2020 : £151).

3 Non Current Assets

	Office Equipment £	Computer Equipment £	Motor Vehicle £	Total £
Cost:				
Brought forward	6,509	16,989	18,748	44,245
Additions	1,704	1,199	-	2,903
Disposals	-	-	(18,748)	(18,748)
Carried forward	<u>8,213</u>	<u>20,188</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>28,400</u>
Depreciations:				
Brought forward	2,273	4,843	11,828	18,944
Charge for the year	1,403	4,019	-	5,422
Eliminated on disposals	-	-	(11,828)	(11,828)
	<u>3,676</u>	<u>8,862</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>12,538</u>
Net book value:				
At 30 September 2020	<u>4,236</u>	<u>14,146</u>	<u>6,920</u>	<u>25,302</u>
At 30 September 2021	<u>4,537</u>	<u>11,326</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>15,863</u>
4 Funds movement	B/bwd £	Income £	Expenditure £	C/fwd £
Restricted funds	-	-	-	-
Unrestricted funds	42,686	228,649	(207,970)	63,365
	<u>42,686</u>	<u>228,649</u>	<u>(207,970)</u>	<u>63,365</u>



Autism-Specialist Counselling Centre
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Northamptonshire, NN17 5JG

baacp

Counselling & Psychotherapy



t. (main office) 01536 266 681
e. info@actionforaspergers.org
www.actionforaspergers.org
Charity Commission Registration no: 1148790

All our workers are members of the Health and Care Professions Council
and/or British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy.