



ACTION FOR NEURODIVERSITY

COUNSELLING LIVES AFFECTED BY AUTISM AND ASPERGER'S SYNDROME



Annual Report 2024 - 2025



The majority of our counsellors are individual members of the British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy.
We are committed to the principles and values set out in the Ethical Framework of the British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy.



Action for Neurodiversity, 9 Darwin House, Corbygate Business Park, Priors Haw Road, Corby, Northamptonshire, NN17 5JG



01536 266681



info@actionforneurodiversity.org



www.actionforneurodiversity.org



Charity founded in 2008. Charity Commission Registration No: 1148790

**Providing autism-specialist counselling
to those who live with and/or those who
live alongside Asperger's
syndrome/autism who are struggling and
in need of help.**

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 2025**

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Introduction

The Trustees present their annual report and unaudited financial statements for the period ended 30 September 2025, and confirm they comply with The Charities Act 1993, as amended by The Charities Act 2006, the Trust Deed, and the Charities SORP 2005.

Principle 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
- Sonia Owen – Vice Chair
- Anthony Mathieson
- Anthony Hall
- Steve Watkins
- Suzanne Styles
- John Galvin (elected November 2024)

Patrons

- Dame Vivienne Westwood (deceased 29.12.2022)
- Dr. Barbara Jacobs
- Mrs. Donna Taggart
- Mr. Scott James
- Mr. Gary Numan
- Dr. Luke Beardon
- Mr. Carne Ross
- Steve Silberman (deceased 28.08.2024)

Independent Examiners

TC Group, The Old Town Hall, Market Place, Oundle, Peterborough, PE8 4BA

Bankers

The Co-operative Bank

Governance

Governing Document

The constitution was adopted on 01 October 2008, amended on 31 August 2012, and subsequently amended on 22 September 2017; 01 Mar 2022; 23 Jul 2022 and 28 Sep 2023.

Organisational Structure

Action for Neurodiversity (AfN) is governed by a board of trustees responsible for overall governance, strategic direction, and financial management. Trustees give their time voluntarily and receive no remuneration.

Day-to-day management of AfN and its projects is delegated to Elaine Nicholson, founder, counsellor, and Chief Executive Officer (CEO), who implements the trustees' strategy and oversees operations.

Trustees meet quarterly and make key decisions regarding the charity's activities and services, with additional meetings held as needed. The CEO reports regularly on activities, finances, performance, and any significant risks or issues.

The trustees also review governance arrangements to ensure appropriate policies and procedures are in place, including safeguarding, financial controls, conflicts of interest, and risk management.

Trustee Roles

- The chair of the trustees is Dr Max Lowenstein.
- The vice-chair is Sonia Owen. Ms Owen is responsible for aiding Elaine Nicholson with managerial matters.
- Tony Mathieson, Trustee, is responsible for all things that are classed as maintenance/repair/service in the main office building.
- Anthony Hall, trustee, is responsible for strategic guidance.
- Steve Watkins, Trustee is responsible for legal matters.
- Suzanne Styles, Trustee, is responsible for aiding with IT and administration matters.
- John Galvin, Trustee, is responsible for networking and communications.

The Recruitment and Appointment of Trustees

Trustees are responsible for identifying and recruiting new board members. In doing so, they seek recommendations from volunteers, professional contacts, and individuals within the autism and neurodiversity community to ensure an appropriate mix of experience, expertise, and knowledge.

Appointments are made in line with the charity's governing document and reflect the current needs of the board in terms of skills and experience.

Prospective trustees are invited to attend a trustees' meeting as observers. Subject to confirmation of eligibility and suitability, candidates may then be proposed for appointment at a subsequent meeting. This process allows the board to assess each candidate's ability to contribute effectively to the governance of the charity.

Induction and Training of trustees

All new trustees receive an induction covering the charity's aims, governance, policies, financial position, and legal responsibilities.

They are also provided with relevant Charity Commission guidance, including trustees' duties and public benefit, to ensure an understanding of their responsibilities under charity law.

New trustees are supported by the existing board during their initial months and are encouraged to take an active role in the charity's work in line with their skills and experience.

Risk Management

The trustees review the principal risks facing the charity on a regular basis, including at their quarterly meetings, and have established procedures to manage and mitigate those risks where possible.

The charity has appropriate safeguarding policies and procedures in place for children and vulnerable adults. Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks are carried out, where appropriate, for trustees, staff, volunteers, and others working on behalf of the charity. Safeguarding training is provided to those whose roles involve working with children or vulnerable adults.

Objectives

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

To provide specialist counselling to neurodivergent individuals and those close to them, delivered by counsellors with relevant personal or professional experience and/or additional qualifications, ensuring a deeper understanding of client experiences.

Our aim serves to enable the furtherance of autistic mental health awareness in both the local and wider community.

Service Provision

AfN'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 payment for their counselling session (currently £43-£65 per hour depending on income). If a client is unable to pay, we offer email support gratis.

AfN also offers student counselling at £22.50 per hour with counsellors who are in their last year of training, and emotional support sessions for £17.50 per hour. Emotional support is provided by workers who, though not counselling trained, have a strong experiential background of autism. Emotional Support Workers (ESWs) also partake in AfN training and monthly autism-specialist supervision.

Funding and Income

AfN remains a donation-led service. Donations from clients for our services, along with a generous donation from Buckles Solicitors, Peterborough, have kept the charity financially stable this year. Full details of accounts can be found on pages 18 - 20 of this report.

Fundraising

At present, our therapists receive around half of what they would earn in private practice. AfN retains only a small proportion of counsellors' hourly fees to cover essential running costs, a model that has enabled the charity to sustain its work since 2008.

Elaine Nicholson and Sonia Owen continue to give their time voluntarily, undertaking AfN's administration and management without payment. In addition, Elaine contributes approximately £20,000 each year from her own counselling income.

Our ambition is to provide free or low-cost counselling to those who need it most but are unable to afford it. However, until additional funding is secured, we are not yet in a position to offer this support. Increased donations and successful grant funding would make this possible and, to help achieve that goal, the charity continues to engage expert fundraising support to strengthen grant applications and secure further funding.

Activities

Customer Relations Management (CRM) System

During the year, we transitioned from our previous CRM system, HubSpot, to Konfidens. While a significant change, Konfidens is designed specifically for counsellors and therapists and is better suited to the charity's needs. We thank Suzanne Styles, Trustee, for sourcing the system and leading the transition.

Statistical data is generated through the CRM system. During the transition period, both systems were used while records were being consolidated, and as a result, some data for this reporting period may be less complete or accurate than expected.

From the next reporting year (October 2025 to September 2026), we will operate solely within Konfidens, enabling more accurate and consistent reporting.

Human Resources (HR)

HR functions continue to be led by Sonia Owen, Vice Chair, who maintains records for the current team, including DBS checks and training records, and oversees the onboarding of all new counsellors, student counsellors and emotional support workers.

During this period, the charity had 22 counsellors, 4 student counsellors and 3 emotional support workers within the team.

Safeguarding

This year we welcomed Lynn Findlay on board to support us with the charity's safeguarding endeavours. Lynn joined us to both provide training to our counsellors, student counsellors and emotional support workers, and be available as a safeguarding consultant for anybody needing safeguarding advice.

In addition, the charity signed up to the Independent Safeguarding Service, which provides further specialist support and training opportunities. This helps to ensure that our safeguarding practices remain up to date and in line with current best practice.

Teen Therapy Project



The Teen Project began in June 2023, when Action for Neurodiversity received funding to provide free, in-person counselling to local neurodivergent teenagers.

The project has enabled the provision of more than 370 hours of free counselling to neurodivergent teenagers who otherwise may not have been able to access the support they needed.

Each young person was offered a series of counselling sessions in which they could talk about what mattered to them in a confidential, empathic and accepting space. Every teenager who came through our doors had their own unique experiences, strengths and challenges, and the counselling was tailored to them as an individual. The work was very much person-centred, adapting to their particular needs, goals and reasons for attending therapy.

Project Counsellor Jemima says:

'Teenagers that I have worked with in this period are dealing with depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, identity issues, friendship issues, social interaction difficulties, learning difficulties, problems within school and family and relationship problems, which massively affect their well-being.'

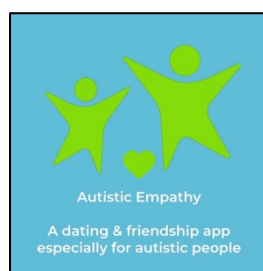
I have seen such positive results in the young people that I have worked with. Seeing young people start to open up, gain more confidence, increase self-esteem, be happier, more positive and able to cope better is such a privilege.

The feedback that I have received from the teens and their caregivers has been so positive. Changes happen when kindness and understanding is offered and young people feel better equipped with the tools to cope.

Thank you to all the young people who have allowed me to get to know them. It's been a privilege.

*Jemima Gee
Teen Counsellor'*

Autistic Empathy



Autistic Empathy is the charity's friendship and dating community, created by CEO, Elaine Nicholson, for people with autism and Asperger's syndrome.

The platform is monitored daily by an administration and moderation team to ensure a safe and secure environment. This includes reviewing content and maintaining systems behind the scenes. A three-week verification process remains in place to help confirm users' identities and aid security of the community.

Membership has remained stable over the past 12 months, as new user regularly join whilst unverified users are regularly removed. The platform continues to average around four new sign-ups per day and approximately 50 active users daily.

The community can be accessed via the app on iOS and Android or through a web version. A web access link can be requested via email at info@autisticempathy.com.

Figures for the reporting period 01/10/2024 – 30/09/2025

Clients and enquiries

During the 12-month reporting period, the charity received approximately 700 email enquiries, compared with 747 in the previous year. This represents a 6.3% decrease; however, enquiry levels remain broadly consistent.

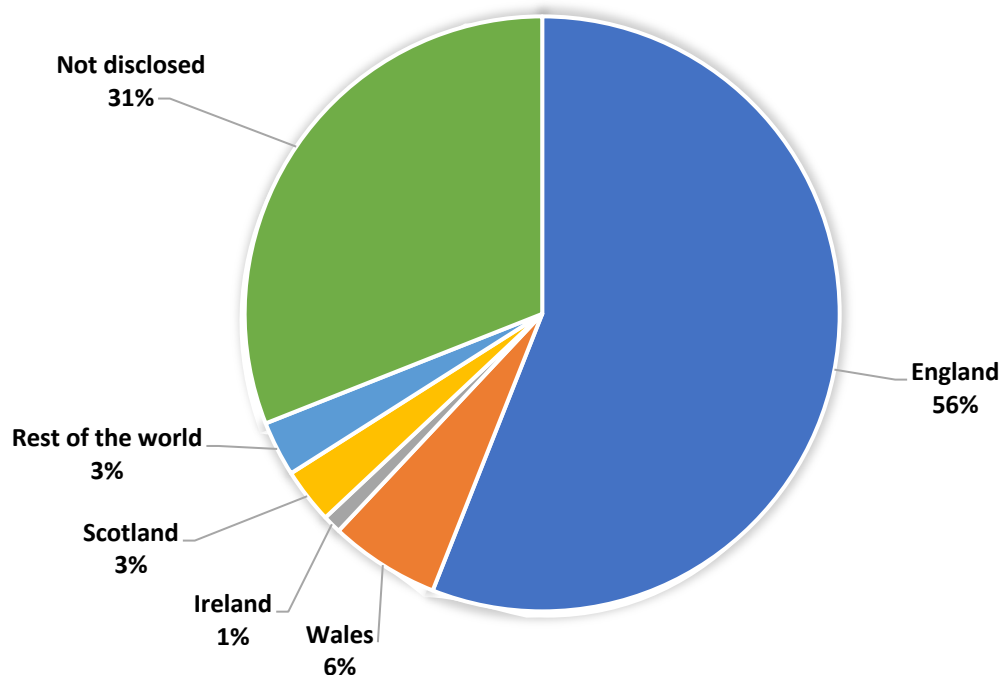
On average, the charity received 58 enquiries per month, equivalent to approximately 13 enquiries per week. It should be noted that not all enquiries result in new clients, as some relate to requests for information, signposting to other services, or individuals who choose not to engage in ongoing support.

The highest number of enquiries was recorded in January 2025, with 100 enquiries received. March 2025 was the second busiest month, with 70 enquiries. The lowest level of activity was recorded in June 2025, with 42 enquiries, while both May 2025 and July 2025 recorded 44 enquiries each.

To date, AfN has supported approximately 9,010 clients and families. This figure includes all individuals who have accessed AfN's services in any capacity, including counselling, emotional support, signposting, and free email advice.

Where do our clients come from?

By Country

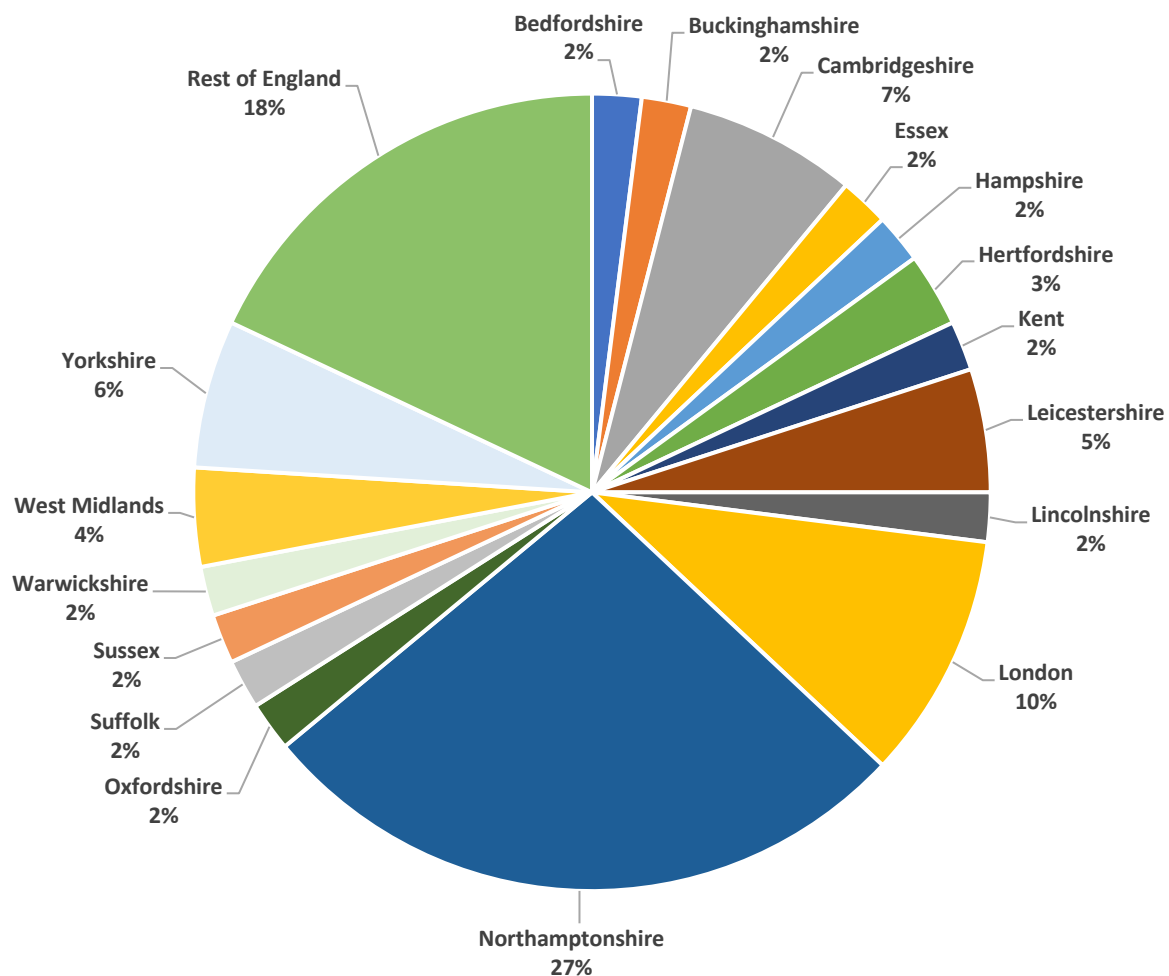


The majority of clients come from England, with the number standing at 56%. Wales represents 6%, Scotland 3% and Ireland 1%. The 31% labelled 'Not Disclosed' indicates that due to client personal preference, the client chose not to divulge their geographical whereabouts.

Thanks to video technology (Zoom/Teams/FaceTime) we have clients from all over the world. The 3% labelled 'Rest of the World' is detailed like follows:

Australia; Bahrain; Belgium; Canada; Channel Islands; Chile; China; Costa Rica; Croatia; Cuba; Cyprus; Czech Republic; Democratic Republic of Congo; Ecuador; Finland; France; Germany; Greece; Hong Kong; Hungary; India; Isle of Man; Israel; Italy; Japan; Kenya; Kuwait; Luxembourg; Malaysia; Mexico; Monaco; Netherlands; New Zealand; Norway; Palestine; Panama; Peru; Philippines; Poland; Portugal; Rwanda; Samoa; Saudi Arabia; Singapore; Slovakia; Spain; Sudan; Sweden; Switzerland; Tanzania; Thailand; Trinidad and Tobago; Tunisia; United Arab Emirates; USA; Vietnam.

England and the breakdown of the counties



The 18% 'Rest of England' is detailed like follows, for the following geographical areas have fewer than 75 clients accessing the service from these areas:

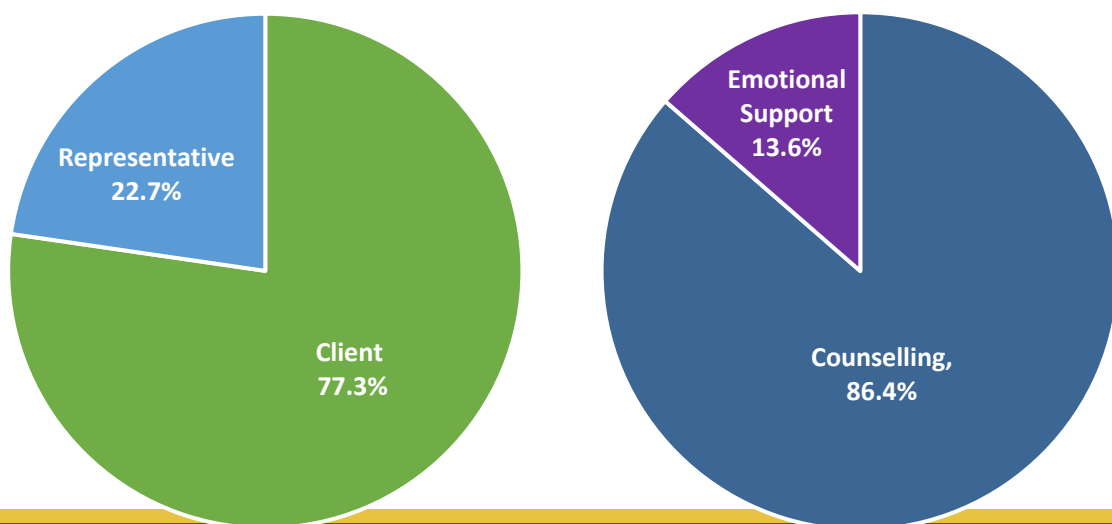
Berkshire; Bristol; Cheshire; Cornwall; County Durham; Cumbria; Derbyshire; Devon; Dorset; Gloucestershire; Greater Manchester; Herefordshire; Isle of Man; Isle of Wight; Lancashire; Merseyside; Norfolk; Northumberland; Nottinghamshire; Rutland; Shropshire; Somerset; Staffordshire; Suffolk; Tyne and Wear; Wiltshire; Worcestershire.

Client Satisfaction

AfN once again undertook client satisfaction audits. We continue to evaluate our performance in this way as part of our ongoing commitment to delivering a high-quality service. We encourage all clients to share their feedback—both positive and negative—so we can better understand what we are doing well and identify areas for improvement or change.

The questionnaire used to gather this information was created using Google Forms and distributed via email to a random selection of AfN clients. Participation was entirely voluntary, and all responses were anonymised.

Feedback was received from respondents across a wide range of age groups, providing a broad perspective. Of those who completed the survey, 77.3% were clients, while 22.7% were representatives responding on behalf of a client (including parents, guardians, or carers). The results showed that 85.7% of respondents had sought counselling services, while the remaining 14.3% had accessed emotional support.

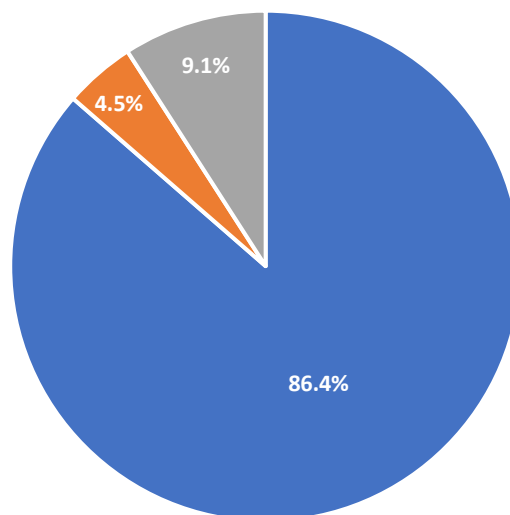


Of those seeking counselling, 78.9% of clients had accessed individual sessions, and 21.1% had accessed relationship counselling.

Having accessed one of our services, 81.8% of clients reported an improvement in their mental health since engaging with AfN. For some, this improvement was significant enough to complete their counselling journey, while others reported meaningful progress while continuing to engage in ongoing therapeutic support.

Feedback from the remaining 18.2% of clients who did not report improvement provided valuable insight into their experiences. This was primarily attributed to individuals being at an early stage in their therapeutic journey, where outcomes have yet to fully develop, and in some cases, a perception that a different therapeutic approach or practitioner match may have been more suitable for their needs. This feedback continues to inform our commitment to ensuring appropriate matching and responsive, person-centred support.

The quality of service provided by Action for Neurodiversity was seen as generally very positive: 86.4% of the clients who responded rated their overall experience with their counsellor or emotional support worker as 'excellent' or 'good', with 4.5% rating as 'Satisfactory', and the remaining 9.1% rated the service as 'Very poor' or 'Needs Improvement'.



- Rated 'Excellent' or 'Good'
- Rated 'Satisfactory'
- Rated 'Very poor' or 'Needs Improvement'

The quality of service provided by Action for Neurodiversity was rated positively overall. Of respondents, 86.4% described their experience with their counsellor or emotional support worker as either 'excellent' or 'good'. A further 4.5% rated their experience as 'satisfactory', while 9.1% reported their experience as 'needs improvement' or 'very poor'.

Feedback from those reporting lower satisfaction highlighted several key themes. These included a perceived lack of structure or guidance within some sessions, which affected feelings of progress; a sense that certain sessions did not fully focus on the client's primary concerns; and perceptions that some work remained at a more surface level rather than exploring issues in sufficient depth. A small number of responses also reflected individual circumstances influencing engagement, as well as differences in expectations regarding therapeutic style and approach.

This feedback is being actively used to strengthen and develop service delivery. In particular, it is informing ongoing work to improve the clarity of therapeutic approaches from the outset, enhance client-practitioner matching processes, and ensure expectations are appropriately explored during early sessions. It is also supporting continued professional development for practitioners, with a focus on maintaining structured, goal-oriented support where appropriate and ensuring clients feel heard, understood, and appropriately challenged within a safe therapeutic framework.

Overall, this feedback is valued as part of our continuous quality improvement approach and contributes directly to enhancing consistency, responsiveness, and client experience across the service.



**ACTION FOR
NEURODIVERSITY**

COUNSELLING LIVES AFFECTED BY AUTISM AND ASPERGER'S SYNDROME

Letter from Elaine Nicholson MBE, the CEO of Action for Neurodiversity:

Dear Valued Supporters,

Action for Neurodiversity would like to express its sincere gratitude to all those who have contributed to our work during the past financial year: our supporters, friends, family members, volunteers, counsellors, student counsellors, and emotional support workers. Your commitment and dedication remain the foundation upon which our services are built.

Financially, the organisation has maintained a stable position, successfully reducing expenditure while sustaining income at a consistent level - a considerable achievement in the current funding climate for small specialist charities.

Looking ahead, our primary funding priority is to secure increased support from grants, trusts, and community giving. We would respectfully draw the attention of funders to the particular challenges faced by smaller organisations such as ours. Whilst larger charities often attract the greatest visibility, it is frequently the smaller, specialist providers - embedded in their communities and operating with lean resources - who deliver targeted, high-impact support to those who need it most. We would warmly encourage funders to consider how their investment might reach organisations like Action for Neurodiversity.

Finally, particular thanks are due to Sonia Owen, Vice Chair, and to all our trustees, whose invaluable and sustained commitment continues to guide and strengthen the organisation. Gratitude is also extended to TC Group, and in particular to Graham Darbourne, for their consistent professional support.

With sincere appreciation,

Elaine Nicholson MBE Founder, Counsellor & CEO

The majority of our counsellors are individual members of the British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy.
We are committed to the principles and values set out in the Ethical Framework of the British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy.

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Action for Neurodiversity
Statement of Financial Activities
Year ended 30 September 2025

	Unrestricted funds £ 2025	Restricted funds £ 2025	Total funds £ 2025	Total funds £ 2024
<u>Incoming resources</u>				
Voluntary Income				
Donations and Grants received	31,404	-	31,404	27,476
	31,404	-	31,404	27,476
Charitable Activities Income				
Consultations, diagnosis and assessments	118,640	-	118,640	124,955
Miscellaneous	-	-	-	-
	118,640	-	118,640	124,955
Activities for Generating Funds				
Sale of Merchandise	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-
Total incoming resources	150,044	-	150,044	152,431
<u>Resources expended</u>				
Activities for Generating Funds Costs				
Opening stock	600	-	600	600
Gifts/Grants given	705	-	705	1,306
Closing stock	(600)	-	(600)	(600)
	705	-	705	1,306
Charitable Activities Direct Costs				
Professional services and Disciple	20,675	-	20,675	14,149
Counselling fees	87,344	-	87,344	92,637
Conference and meeting expenses	1,419	-	1,419	1,742
	109,438	-	109,438	108,528
Charitable Activities Support Costs				
Computer and IT support expenses	12,622	-	12,622	11,634
Postage, printing, stationery and advertising	3,555	-	3,555	12,708
Office rent and other costs	16,961	-	16,961	16,557
Subscriptions	2,667	-	2,667	3,230
Telephone	2,475	-	2,475	2,408
Travel and subsistence	325	-	325	1,143
Bank and paypal charges	2,310	-	2,310	2,152
Insurances	1,707	-	1,707	1,702
Sundry and cleaning	909	-	909	1,525
Depreciation	3,289	-	3,289	2,419
	46,820	-	46,820	55,478
	156,963	-	156,963	165,312
Excess of payments over receipts	(6,919)	-	(6,919)	(12,881)
Funds brought forward	27,971	-	27,971	40,852
Funds carried forward	21,052	-	21,052	27,971

Action for Neurodiversity

Balance sheet as at 30 September 2025

	Note	2025		2024	
		£	£	£	£
NON CURRENT ASSETS					
Computer equipment		2,309		4,790	
Office equipment		801		1,609	
Motor Vehicles		-		-	
	3		3,110		6,399
CURRENT ASSETS					
Stock		600		600	
Bank Accounts		17,342		20,972	
			17,942		21,572
			21,052		27,971
LESS: LIABILITIES					
Creditors and accruals		-		-	
			-		-
			21,052		27,971
REPRESENTED BY: -					
RESTRICTED FUNDS	4		-		-
UNRESTRICTED FUND	4		21,052		27,971
			21,052		27,971
			-		-

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

E Nicholson

Date: 2nd May 2026

The notes on the following page form part of these accounts

Action for Neurodiversity

Notes to the accounts for the year ended 30 September 2025

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 follow:

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 (2024 : £nil). During the year, telephone, travel, DBS and other expenses were reimbursed to trustees at cost totalling £1,299 (2024: £331) which were all for charitable purposes.

3 Non Current Assets

	Office Equipment £	Computer Equipment £	Motor Vehicle £	Total £
Cost:				
Brought forward	9,617	25,516	-	35,133
Additions	-	-	-	-
Disposals	-	-	-	-
Carried forward	<u>9,617</u>	<u>25,516</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>35,133</u>
Depreciation:				
Brought forward	8,008	20,726	-	28,734
Charge for the year	808	2,481	-	3,289
Eliminated on disposals	-	-	-	-
	<u>8,816</u>	<u>23,207</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>32,023</u>
Net book value:				
At 30 September 2024	<u>1,609</u>	<u>4,790</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>6,399</u>
At 30 September 2025	<u>801</u>	<u>2,309</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>3,110</u>

4 Funds movement

	B/fwd £	Income £	Expenditure £	C/fwd £
Restricted funds	-	-	-	-
Unrestricted funds	27,971	150,044	(156,963)	21,052
	<u>27,971</u>	<u>150,044</u>	<u>(156,963)</u>	<u>21,052</u>

Independent Examiner's Report to the Trustees

I report on the accounts of Action for Neurodiversity, charity number 1148790, for the period ended 30 September 2025.

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.

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
 The Old Town Hall
 Market Place
 Oundle
 Peterborough
 PE8 4BA

Date: 2nd May 2026

Notes



Notes



A bespoke counselling service for those who are neurodivergent, or those who live alongside them, and who are struggling and in need of support.

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