

Charity registration number: 1171704

**AUTISM  
FORWARD**



**AUTISM FORWARD**

**ANNUAL REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS**

**FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2022**

## **AUTISM FORWARD**

### **CONTENTS**

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Reference and Administrative Details	1
Trustees' Report	2 to 15
Statement of Trustees' Responsibilities	16
Independent Examiner's Report	17 to 18
Statement of Financial Activities	19
Balance Sheet	20
Notes to the Financial Statements	21 to 26

## **AUTISM FORWARD**

### **REFERENCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS**

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<b>Trustees</b>	Ms J Pierce Ms H Needham Dr E Gokcen Ms A Leverett
<b>Principal Office</b>	37 Granville Park London SE13 7DY
<b>Charity Registration Number</b>	1171704
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.autismforward.org.uk">www.autismforward.org.uk</a>
<b>Bankers</b>	Metro Bank PLC One Southampton Row London WC1B 5HA
<b>Independent Examiner</b>	Rotherham Taylor Limited 21 Navigation Business Village Navigation Way Ashton-on-Ribble Preston PR2 2YP

## **AUTISM FORWARD**

### **TRUSTEES' REPORT**

The trustees have pleasure in presenting their report and the unaudited financial statements of the charity for the year ended 31 March 2022.

The financial statements have been prepared on an accruals basis in accordance with the accounting policies set out in the notes to the financial statements and comply with the charity's constitution, Charities Act 2011 and Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their financial statements in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland published on 16 July 2014. The financial statements have been examined by an Independent Examiner.

#### **1. STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT**

The charity is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation, registered number 117104 and is constituted under a Foundation Constitution which came into force on 20 February 2017. Ann Leverett, Jane Pierce and Elif Gokcen were the three co-founders of the charity and were all reappointed for a further period of 3 years commencing on 23 January 2020. Helen Needham was appointed as a trustee on 20 October 2020.

New trustees are appointed by the existing trustees and in selecting individuals for appointment as charity trustees, the trustees must have regard to the skills, knowledge and experience needed for the effective administration of the charity. The Constitution provides for a minimum of 3 trustees and there is no maximum. Trustees are eligible for reappointment at the end of their term.

As the charity is primarily a grant-making charity, it does not have any paid employees and all fundraising and administrative work is undertaken by the trustees. The trustees attend external training courses as necessary and appropriate for their responsibilities and roles within the charity.

All trustees are required to read the Charity Commission's guidance "The Essential Trustee: What you need to know" and the new Charity Commission Governance Code.

The trustees aim to meet at least once every quarter to discuss fundraising, finances, governance issues, events, new mentor partnerships or initiatives with other autism charities or potential corporate sponsors and to confirm approval of grants. The day to day administration of grants and the processing of applications is handled by the Chair and Secretary. A Grant Approval Sub-Committee was established by unanimous agreement of the trustees on 20 October 2020 and currently comprises three trustees (Ann Leverett, Jane Pierce and Elif Gokcen) which approves all grant applications and grant extensions in accordance with its terms of reference. Details of all grants and grant extensions approved by the Grant Approval Sub-Committee are made available to all trustees and are presented at each board meeting.

All trustees give their time freely and no trustee remuneration was paid in the year and no expenses were claimed by them. Trustees are required to disclose all relevant interests and register them with the charity secretary in accordance with the charity's Conflict of Interest Policy and withdraw from any decisions where a conflict of interest arises. No disclosures have been made by the Trustees since the charity was constituted.

#### **2. RISK MANAGEMENT**

The trustees have considered the major risks to which the charity is exposed and have reviewed those risks and established systems and procedures to manage those risks which are set out in the charity's Risk Management Strategy. This contains procedures to ensure the Charity is complying with the Charity Commission guidance in relation to due diligence procedures in relation to beneficiaries, donors and partners.



## **AUTISM FORWARD**

### **TRUSTEES' REPORT**

The charity is primarily a grant making charity and it raises funds to provide grants for specialist employment related mentoring and workshops for autistic adults who are actively seeking paid or voluntary employment. The mentoring and workshops are provided by independent specialist mentors who have proven experience of providing employment related mentoring to autistic adults. The mentor partners are entirely independent of the charity and the charity carries out due diligence in relation to each proposed mentor partner in accordance with the Charity Commission "Know Your Partner" guidelines to verify their experience, good standing and suitability. The charity also enters into a Referral Agreement with each proposed mentor partner which sets out the process for referring grant applications to the charity and the rights and obligations of the mentor partner and the charity in relation to the mentoring services which are funded by grants provided by the charity.

The charity has put in place processes to obtain regular feedback from grant holders and mentors in relation to the mentoring provided and their progress to monitor the use of the charity's funds and outcomes and demonstrate the public benefit derived from the funding of the specialist mentoring and workshops. The charity also reviews each mentor partner annually to check they continue to meet the good standing and other relevant requirements of the "Know Your Partner" guidelines.

The charity is currently working with eleven independent specialist mentor partners across the country, including a new mentor partner, WayMakers Devon CIC. Two previous mentor partners, Autism Society Greater Manchester Area and Deb Hannah (Liverpool) have ceased offering mentoring services over the last year, so clients in Manchester and Liverpool are now directed to our current mentor partner in Manchester, Think Musique.

The charity's surplus funds are divided between the charity's business saving account at Metro Bank plc and the charity's business saving account with the Nationwide Building Society account in order to benefit from the FSCS compensation scheme with both financial institutions, minimising the charity's financial exposure. All payments made by the charity from its bank and building society accounts require authorisation by two trustees.

### **3. OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES FOR THE PUBLIC BENEFIT**

The objects of the charity are the promotion of social inclusion for the public benefit amongst people aged eighteen or over who are excluded from society, or parts of society, due to an autism spectrum condition, to relieve the needs of such people and assist them to integrate into society and achieve their potential as individuals after they leave education, in particular but not exclusively through funding the provision of:

(a) pre-employment support, including social skills and other relevant training

which enhances employability;

(b) coaching, mentoring, advice and support in relation to employability;

(c) providing specialist skills and awareness training and workshops relating to employability;

(d) facilitating access to a range of social and leisure activities; and

(e) action to increase public and employer awareness of such disabilities and

conditions and promote steps that can be taken to facilitate such social inclusion through employment.

The trustees confirm that they have referred to the guidance contained in the Charity Commission's general guidance on public benefit when reviewing the charity's aims and objectives and planning future activities and setting the grant making policy for the charity.

## AUTISM FORWARD

### TRUSTEES' REPORT

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The charity carries out these objects by:

- providing grants to autistic adults to allow them to access specialist mentoring and/or workshops to help them prepare for, find and maintain paid or voluntary employment and to improve their social inclusion by accessing clubs, groups, workshops and work placements;
- providing information and resources for autistic people and employers on its website, including details of specialist mentors offering one-to-one support and/or workshops to autistic people to help them prepare for, find and maintain paid or voluntary employment and links to other websites and resources;
- raising awareness among employers of the needs and strengths of autistic employees and providing advice and signposting services with the aim of increasing access to employment for autistic people and creating more inclusive workplaces; and;
- liaising with universities and colleges to raise awareness of the charity's services for autistic students upon graduation and other initiatives which can improve employment outcomes for autistic students.

The employment support we fund is of vital importance both to autistic people and wider society. The recent Office of National Statistics figures released in February 2021 showed that between July and September 2020, employment rates for disabled people aged 16-64 in the UK were 52.1%, compared with 81.3% for non-disabled people and that among disabled people, autistic people had some of the lowest levels of employment, at 21.7% (full or part-time). This is an enormous waste of talent. One of the reasons why the unemployment rate is so high for autistic people is the lack of support available once they leave education. This is the gap in support we seek to bridge.

The specialist mentoring funded by the charity enables autistic people to prepare for, find and maintain suitable employment which improves their independence and social inclusion. On average, over the last four years, including the two years when covid restrictions applied, 78% of the autistic job seekers we have supported have secured paid or voluntary employment (55% paid and 23% voluntary). The impressive outcomes for our beneficiaries, as set out in further detail in section 8 of this report, demonstrate the effectiveness of the specialist mentoring support we fund.

The Covid-19 crisis has adversely affected many of our grant holders who remain anxious about their future and their ability to find work. Changes to routine, concerns about the future and the general anxiety of the situation can be particularly overwhelming for autistic people, so our support has been more vital than ever over the last two years.

We have ensured that all our mentors are able to continue to provide regular support to our beneficiaries remotely by phone, skype, email or other appropriate means. Some of our beneficiaries have chosen to pause their support during the current crisis, but most opted to continue with remote support and it is clear from the feedback we have received from our grant holders that this support is incredibly valuable at this challenging time and has helped them access training, workshops, benefits and other support as well as employment. All of our mentors have now resumed face to face support for those who prefer this to remote support.

We strive to ensure that the support we fund is support that the autistic community desires and values and we recognise the importance of including autistic people at all levels of our organisation. Helen Needham, who is autistic herself, joined our Board of Trustees in 2020 and an increasing number of the specialist employment mentors we work with are also autistic. We seek regular feedback from the autistic job seekers we support to ensure that the support we fund is of value to them. We also use our social media and newsletters to promote the work and events of autistic and neurodivergent led organisations such as Neurodiversity in Law, GAIN, AutAngel and Me.Decoded and Merseyside Autistic Adults Group. We also fund regular Peer Support meetings which are run by our mentor partner, AS Mentoring.

## **AUTISM FORWARD**

### **TRUSTEES' REPORT**

We liaise with employers, universities and colleges to raise awareness of the strengths and needs of autistic people, promoting employment opportunities for autistic people across the UK. We have created a network of employers and have been holding recruitment roundtables for employers since May 2019, which have been attended by representatives from over 50 different organisations (including employers, universities and researchers). These provide a forum for HR and Diversity & Inclusion teams to meet with autistic employees and professionals to discuss how employers can improve recruitment processes and implement initiatives to improve opportunities and inclusion for autistic people.

Our mentor partners also work with employers including Goldman Sachs, Credit Suisse First Boston, Herbert Smith Freehills and Invesco to create internship opportunities for autistic candidates, which have benefited a number of our grant holders.

#### **4. PRO BONO CONTRIBUTIONS**

The charity has no paid employees and the expenses of the charity are covered by donations by the trustees. All of the grant administration, record keeping, data analysis, fundraising, event organisation, employer roundtable events, universities and communication is carried out by the trustees on a pro bono basis, drawing on their professional experience, networks and resources. All of the charity's awareness raising events and roundtables to date have been hosted by corporate supporters at no cost to the charity or attendees. This maximises the use of the charity's funds for its beneficiaries and ensures its awareness raising events reach a wide audience.

#### **5. GRANT MAKING POLICY**

The charity has established its grant making policy with the aim of promoting the social inclusion of autistic people and assist them to integrate into society and achieve their potential as individuals after they leave education by providing grants for funding specialist one-to-one mentoring to help them prepare for, find and maintain paid or voluntary employment or for training activities which are relevant to improving employability.

The charity currently works with eleven specialist mentoring organisations across the country and has carried out due diligence checks and entered into Referral Agreements with the organisations listed below which between them cover London, Surrey, Essex, Suffolk, Brighton, Birmingham, Manchester, Bedfordshire, Devon, East Midlands, Northampton, Plymouth, Hull, Liverpool, Chester, Bristol and Poole. Since the onset of the Covid-19 crisis, all our mentors have been offering remote mentoring services, which extends their geographical reach and increases the number of clients they are able to support.

Autism Bedfordshire

Autism East Midlands

AS Mentoring Limited

ASC Key Mentoring (Karen Manghan)

Autism Success Formula Limited

Faraday Fearnside

Matthew's Hub

Ros Evans Coaching

Think Musique

## **AUTISM FORWARD**

### **TRUSTEES' REPORT**

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Track NN Limited

#### **WayMakers Devon CIC**

The charity accepts applications from grants via its mentor partners and directs enquiries from its website to the mentor partners listed on its website. All grant applications must be made via an approved mentor partner and all grant payments are made directly to the mentor partner. The charity awards initial grants for up to one year of weekly or fortnightly one-to-one mentoring support and will consider requests for grant extensions where the grant holder is making good progress towards employment and is engaging well with the mentoring support.

The applicants must be aged 18 or over and must have a diagnosis of an autism spectrum condition or evidence that they are actively seeking such a diagnosis. They must also provide evidence that they live and are entitled to work in the United Kingdom and priority is given to applicants in financial need.

The charity requires regular feedback from the mentors on the progress of the beneficiaries and feedback from the beneficiaries on the mentoring they receive in order to monitor the use of the charity's funds and outcomes.

## **6. ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE**

### **(a) Grants for Mentoring Support**

In the financial year ending 31 March 2022, the charity awarded grants for specialist mentoring support to 41 autistic people around the country with the aim of improving their social inclusion and helping them to secure paid or voluntary employment. The charity also continued to fund mentoring support for 75 of the grant holders from the previous financial years, so provided support for a total of 116 autistic job seekers during the financial year ended 31 March 2022, 58 of whom were still receiving support at the end of the financial year. We received more new applications for support this year than last year and are continuing to see a rise in applications as the covid restrictions have been removed.

The average age of our 2021-22 grant holders is 33 years old, with 70% identifying as male, 29% female and 1% non-binary. The qualifications held by the grant holders range from no formal qualifications to Masters and PhD level degrees and professional qualifications. The sectors in which the applicants have secured or are seeking employment are incredibly varied, currently spanning 80 different career choices, including self-employment. The wide variety of careers pursued by our grant holders dispels common preconceptions of the types of role that are suitable for autistic people and demonstrates that autistic people can pursue any career choice which matches their interest and skills with the right guidance and support.

In addition to supporting our beneficiaries into employment, the mentors help with anxiety, communication, sensory and also practical issues they may be facing, which improves their autonomy, well-being and social inclusion. For example, our mentors have helped beneficiaries with anxiety, travelling on public transport, relationship issues and organisational skills. On a practical level, our mentors have helped beneficiaries deal with benefits claims, tenancy problems, debt problems and referrals to appropriate health and mental health services.

The mentors have also facilitated participation in new clubs, groups and social activities as well as workshops and training to improve their employability, social inclusion and well-being.

We have also increased our funding for workshops and programmes, as set out in more detail in section (e) below. This enables us to provide cost-effective support to a wider range of people across the country.

## **AUTISM FORWARD**

### **TRUSTEES' REPORT**

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#### **(b) Outcomes from Mentoring Support**

Even in these challenging times, the results achieved by our beneficiaries have been impressive, demonstrating the effectiveness of the specialist mentoring support that we fund.

The outcomes for grant holders awarded grants during the financial year 2021-22 who have had between 3 and 12 months' support were as follows:

71% made job applications

54% attended job interviews

31% joined new clubs or groups

40% undertook some form of training or placement

37% secured voluntary roles

37% secured paid employment

The total employment figure for our 2021-22 grant holders is 57% (37% paid; 20% voluntary).

The total employment figure for our 2020-21 grant holders is 80% (66% paid; 14% voluntary).

The total employment figure for our 2019-20 grant holders is: 87% (61% paid; 26% voluntary).

The total employment figure for our 2018-19 grant holders is: 90% (56% paid; 34%voluntary).

The above figures for all financial years include clients whose support was ended early due to health or other issues and clients whose grants have been temporarily paused. The figures for the current financial year include only grant holders who have had between 3 and 12 months' support. Some of the grant holders who were awarded grants in previous financial years have had more than 12 months' support. As the Covid-19 restrictions have now been removed, we anticipate that our beneficiaries will continue to move into employment, improving the employment outcomes for our 2021-22 grant holders.

The outcomes achieved by our grant holders are very significantly better than the statistics provided by the Office of National Statistics for July-September 2020, which showed that only 21.7% of autistic people were in any kind of employment.

## **AUTISM FORWARD**

### **TRUSTEES' REPORT**

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#### **(c) Feedback from our Beneficiaries**

We introduced a new format for the regular feedback from our grant holders in 2021 which enables us to assess the value of the support we fund in more detail. The results of the feedback from grant holders who have had at least 6 months' mentoring support during the financial year ended 31 March 2022 are set out below. This includes grant holders who were awarded grants in previous financial years and who continued to receive support this year. The responses demonstrate the wider impact and value of the specialist mentoring support we fund, beyond employment outcomes.

93% said the support improved their understanding of their strengths and challenges.

81% said the support improved their understanding of what job is suitable for them.

74% said the support improved their understanding of how to find a job.

74% said the support helped them draft or update their CV.

85% said the support made them more confident about disclosing their diagnosis and requesting "reasonable adjustments" from a potential employer.

50% said the support helped them prepare for interviews.

50% said the support helped them join groups, make friends or participate in other activities.

97% said the support improved their self-confidence.

52% said the support helped them access benefits, health care or other public services.

62% said the support helped them access training, workshops or further education.

66% said the support helped them find voluntary employment.

54% said the support helped them find paid employment.

The feedback and qualitative responses below from some of the autistic job seekers we have supported this year provide further evidence of the value of the specialist support we fund. This support enables people not only to find paid or voluntary employment, but also to improve their independence, social inclusion, confidence and self-esteem, to understand better how their autism affects them and to develop strategies to address issues which may be holding them back. This is beneficial not only to the individuals and their families, but also benefits the public purse as it reduces the need for reliance on benefits and public services such as mental health provision and leads to a more inclusive and cohesive society and diverse workforce.

The feedback also highlights the gap in support for autistic people when they leave education, or obtain a late diagnosis, that is so often needed to enable them to fulfil their potential in the workplace and beyond.



## **AUTISM FORWARD**

### **TRUSTEES' REPORT**

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#### **Feedback from Autism Forward beneficiary mentored by Alan Castellaro (ASM Mentoring - London)**

*At last, some help and support which is actually helpful! As an autistic adult, it can be extremely difficult finding and accessing a support service where there is understanding, acceptance and practical help from day one. This is what makes the mentoring I receive so invaluable for navigating the often confusing/overwhelming/stressful neuro-typical world I must contend with on a daily basis.*

*My mentor, Alan, is amazing and has supported me with pretty much everything I've been through over the past few years. We've worked on my CV, looked for jobs (he found a great one but, unfortunately, the pandemic interrupted my application), he supported me through the pandemic, my successful PIP application, help with the job centre, navigating the NHS, support groups, the list goes on!*

*I am so grateful to my mentor and to Autism Forward for widening my support network and providing the practical support I have previously found so difficult to access.*

#### **Autism Forward beneficiary mentored by Sarah Musique of Think Musique (Manchester)**

*I'd highly recommend getting mentored, it's been a positive experience, I have given Sarah's email address out to other Autistic people I have met in the groups I've joined while being mentored. It can only be positive to have someone to bounce your ideas off of and help to magnify your focus. Sarah has given me more routine to my life and I have been able to focus on being content and happy with what I am doing, which is solving problems as I don't want to be a victim of boredom or a benefit life.*

#### **Autism Forward beneficiary mentored by Sarah Musique of Think Musique (Manchester)**

*The difference the mentoring so far has created is subtle in line with the way that I need to work as I would not be able to work with someone that was rushing me. It is really important that I am listened to and that the mentoring is tailored which I believe it has been. I feel we are building things up in such a manner that progress to employment seems workable in a way that it didn't seem to be previously. I didn't have the confidence before and now I seem to have tools that are building confidence in me and my abilities.*

#### **Feedback from Autism Forward beneficiary mentored by Faraday Fearnside (Plymouth)**

*Faraday is the best neurodiversity support I have accessed to date. She was the first to understand autistic burnout and discuss nervous system support. She is excellent at role modeling boundaries if you are late diagnosed and have masked things. She encourages career development to a life you love, to have high expectations for autistic potential.*

#### **Feedback from Autism Forward beneficiary mentored by Karen Manghan (Brighton)**

*Really beneficial in giving me the confidence to get my needs met, and allow me to think about my experiences from an outside perspective.*

#### **Feedback from Autism Forward beneficiary mentored by Karen Manghan (Brighton)**

*Through mentoring I received valuable support on how to improve my skills, apply for jobs and prepare for interviews. It made me more confident to pursue my dream career and not give up, and now I am in a job I love.*

## **AUTISM FORWARD**

### **TRUSTEES' REPORT**

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#### **Feedback from Autism Forward beneficiary mentored by Mark Blake (ASM Mentoring - London)**

*The mentoring is helping me to understand aspects of my diagnosis and its impact on me socially and professionally. It has been used flexibly to fit in with the demands of my work schedule.*

#### **Feedback from Autism Forward beneficiary mentored by Autism Success Formula (Essex)**

*It has been very transformative in the way I go about interviews and job application processes.*

#### **(c) Employer Network and Recruitment Roundtables**

Autism Forward has created a network of employers, autistic employees and professionals who meet regularly to discuss and implement initiatives to improve opportunities and inclusion for autistic people. By meeting regularly and sharing best practice, we can drive change forward more effectively and ensure that the changes autistic people require to access employment and thrive in the workplace are implemented. Notes from the employer roundtables are available for all to access on our website so that employers not able to attend can benefit from the information shared [www.autismforward.org.uk/employers/](http://www.autismforward.org.uk/employers/).

Our network includes a wide range of employers including law firms, accountancy firms, management consultants, banks, investment banks, technology companies, telecoms companies, insurers, asset management firms, universities and other autism charities and is continuing to grow. We were delighted to see initiatives continue to go ahead even during the Covid-19 crisis, in particular Invesco's has extended their six month internship programme which was launched in March 2021 and are exploring the possibility of extending the programme into their Luxembourg office.

We held our first in person employer roundtable for two years in March 2022, hosted by the law firm Weil Gotshal. This event was attended by over 30 people from a wide range of organisations including Ashurst, AstraZeneca, AXA PPP Healthcare, Barclays, Columbia Threadneedle, Credit Suisse, Deutsche Bank, Herbert Smith Freehills, Invesco, Jupiter Asset Management, New Financial, Northern Trust, Publicis Groupe, Shard Capital and Weil Gotshal.

At the roundtable, Lara Bett, EMEA Financial Controller at Invesco and co-chair of the Invesco Neurodiversity Network, explained how the internship scheme has been implemented at Invesco and what they have learned from implementing the programme. Shanice St John, a current technology developer intern at Invesco, outlined her experience of the programme and the adjustments which have enabled her to thrive in the workplace. Shanice also took part in an Autism Forward funded Steps into Work programme last summer and described how it gave her the confidence to apply for the role. David Perkins, Director of AS Mentoring, explained how AS Mentoring supported the internship programme to maximize success.

We continue to provide our employer network with information and resources and advice to help them improve opportunities and inclusion for autistic people both through our website and directly by email.

#### **(d) Workshops for Autistic Adults**

One of the developments from the Covid-19 crisis has been the increase in interest in online workshops, which are an excellent way to provide cost effective and peer to peer support for autistic adults. Our mentor partner, AS Mentoring, has put together three separate programmes which we have committed to fund in line with agreed costing proposals. The programmes are as follows:



## AUTISM FORWARD

### TRUSTEES' REPORT

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#### (i) On-going programme of workshops available to all autistic adults

AS Mentoring run online workshops for autistic adults on a variety of topics including Coronavirus Anxiety & Well-being, Understanding My Autism Diagnosis, Mental Health & Well-being and Thinking of Going to University. Autism Forward has agreed to subsidise workshop places for autistic job seekers who are in financial need. The feedback from the workshops has been consistently excellent.

Examples of participant comments about the benefits of the "Understanding your autism diagnosis" workshop:

*"It was brilliant to connect with other people and to hear about the condition and related issues from experts, rather than just researching it alone. I felt like I belonged, for the first time since my diagnosis."*

*"I hadn't connected shutdowns to anxiety as I associated it with overload/fatigue, so this gave me a new perspective."*

*"I also benefited from the discussions around looking disinterested/unenthusiastic as I frequently get told to by colleagues to cheer up, or that I look miserable."*

*"I appreciated the enthusiasm of the presenters and the efforts they made to allow everyone to take part."*

Examples of participant comments about the benefits of the "Mental Health and wellbeing" workshop:

*"It was helpful to get input from other sufferers as we could share resources and ideas. It was also useful to have the feedback from the leaders."*

*"The sharing element was good, to get ideas you hadn't thought of off others and to know others are the same as you."*

*"Learning new techniques to control Anxiety & Depression i.e energy accounting and the colour coded slide on mood which included activities which can be undertaken to relax at each stage on the scale. Learning about the lived experience of others on the Spectrum."*

*"Opportunity for discussion, knowledgeable tutor and CBT strategies were relevant to the autistic experience."*

*"An opportunity to hear other autistic people's experience of mental health and services experiences, and how a better informed understanding might be translated into practice and service provision."*

#### (ii) Peer Mentoring Pilot

AS Mentoring launched a pilot Peer Mentoring Programme in February 2020, aimed at Autism Forward grant holders and other autistic people who have recently secured employment or are about to start work. This group is funded by Autism Forward and has continued to expand and hold regular meetings. It currently has around 14 regular participants.

The aim of the programme is to enable the participants to share their experiences and to benefit from peer to peer support as well as expert advice from the workshop facilitators. The participants meet together on a monthly basis for an online workshop to discuss a topic based around a work-related issue. The workshop is facilitated by autism specialist mentors from AS Mentoring and the participants are asked to select a topic for each session.

## **AUTISM FORWARD**

### **TRUSTEES' REPORT**

In light of the success of the Peer Mentoring Programme, AS Mentoring are planning to increase the number of Peer Support Groups and also run a series of quarterly workshops available to all members of the groups.

#### **(iii) Steps into Work Programme**

AS Mentoring launched a pilot "Transition to Work Programme" in June 2021 aimed at improving employment outcomes for autistic graduates who had recently graduated and had little previous work experience. Autistic graduates have the highest rate of unemployment amongst all graduates with a disability, as reported in the recent Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services report published earlier this year, which demonstrates the need for targeted support.

Autism Forward funded 12 places on the four month programme which comprised one to one support sessions, six workshops and "homework" tasks with the following objectives:

- Consider employment or further study options and achievable next steps
- Identify potential barriers that their autism presents
- Equip them with job search skills and preparation for interviews
- Give guidance and practical tools to disclose their diagnosis in the workplace, request reasonable adjustments and communicate effectively with managers and colleagues.
- Provide signposting of further sources of support

The benefit of the programme is that it combined tailored one to one support with workshops and peer support for the participants at a key transition stage in their lives, in a very cost effective way.

The feedback from the participants was excellent, with 100% of participants who responded to the feedback survey reporting improved self-confidence, 100% reported that they felt better prepared to get paid employment, 83% had made job applications and 66% had attended interviews.

One of the participants secured a 6 month paid internship with Invesco and spoke about her experience of the programme and the internship at our recent employer roundtable event.

Autism Forward also subsidised 3 places on AS Mentoring's "Looking for Work" programme which was open to autistic job seekers with any level of education and ran between November 2021 and March 2022.

The Feedback from the "Looking for work" programme was also very positive. When asked what elements of the programme helped the most the participants highlighted the following:

- Clear and concise tutorials
- The one-to-one sessions
- Sharing our experiences
- A group to speak with
- Introspection and clarity

When asked what the strengths of the programme were, the participants responded:

- Advice that is tailored to autistic individuals
- Clear and concise guidelines on how best to approach a job searching plan as a neurodivergent
- An understanding of the basic elements of applying for a job
- The one-to-one mentors

## **AUTISM FORWARD**

### **TRUSTEES' REPORT**

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- Welcoming and understanding
  - The session to homework balance

#### **(e) Fundraising**

We are extremely grateful to our supporters and regular donors who have enabled us to continue to provide vital support to autistic job seekers throughout this challenging time and ensure that we have certainty of funds for the coming financial year so that we can continue to increase the number of autistic job seekers we are able to support across the country.

We were delighted to be the Charity of the Year for Sunningdale Golf Club Ladies Team who raised over £4,000 to support our work.

Autism Forward is registered with the donation platforms Just Giving, Charities Aid Foundation and Work for Good and is also a listed charity with Amazon Smile.

## **7. FINANCIAL REVIEW**

At the end of the financial year ending 31 March 2022, the charity had reserves of £186,573 available. The charity awarded 41 grants for mentoring support and approved funding for various workshop programmes run by AS Mentoring for the benefit of autistic job seekers.

During the financial year ending 31 March 2022, the charity received donations totaling £106,542 and £15,452 in gift aid receipts. None of the donations received by the charity had any conditions attached.

The charity's grant making function is entirely reliant on funds that are raised through donations and sponsored events, employer match funding of donations and trust or foundations grants. The trustees are extremely grateful to all the individual donors, fundraisers and corporate supporters who have enabled the charity to provide so many autistic people with the support they need to access employment and fulfil their potential.

The charity only makes grants available if it has sufficient funds available to be able to fund the entire grant which ensures its financial stability. When the charity awards a grant, it designates funds in relation to the full amount of the grant awarded at the time the grant is approved, even though the grant will generally be paid out at regular intervals over the course of the grant period rather than in one upfront payment. If the grant is curtailed for any reason, for example if the beneficiary finds paid employment or no longer wishes to continue with the mentoring, any funds designated for that grant but not used will be reallocated to the charity's general funds and be available to fund other grants.

The charity keeps designated funds to cover the full amount of any grant awarded which ensures that its obligations to grant holders can always be met in full. All of the charity's grant administration, record keeping, data analysis, fundraising, event organisation and awareness raising with employers and universities is carried out by the charity trustees on a pro bono basis.

## **AUTISM FORWARD**

### **TRUSTEES' REPORT**

As the charity relies largely on individual donations which can be unpredictable, based on current levels of expenditure and in order to ensure that the charity is able to renew and continue making grants through periods where donations are lower, the trustees have agreed that appropriate level of reserves should be kept at the level of at least £20,000, to be reviewed at the end of each financial year or more frequently if requested by the Treasurer. The charity currently has a higher than usual level of reserves that will enable it to continue to award new grants and grant extensions without having to seek new sources of funding for the upcoming financial year, but trustees will continue to review the financial situation on a monthly basis to ensure that the charity can continue to operate effectively.

### **8. PLANS FOR THE FUTURE**

The charity is currently funding specialist one-to-one support for over 70 autistic job seekers to help them prepare for, find and maintain paid or voluntary employment and to improve their social inclusion, support which they would not otherwise have been able to access. We are seeing an uptick in new grant applications from autistic job seekers and we will continue to extend grants for existing beneficiaries who are engaging well with support and making progress towards employment. We are continuing to see successful outcomes for our job seekers across a wide range of sectors and are increasingly being contacted by employers who are keen to encourage applications from autistic candidates.

We are delighted with the success of the pilot programme for recent graduates run by AS Mentoring last summer, which was followed up by a similar programme open to autistic job seekers of all education levels. The Peer Support groups have also continued to thrive and we are encouraging our other mentor partners around the country to consider similar initiatives in their area.

The charity is continuing to grow its network of employers who are keen to improve inclusion and support for autistic employees, including making changes to their recruitment procedures and workplaces, developing neurodiversity networks or putting in place specific recruitment programmes or internships for autistic candidates. Now that the Covid-19 restrictions have been removed, the charity has been able to resume its series of recruitment roundtables which provide a forum for employers, autistic employees and professionals to discuss ways to improve recruitment processes and drive changes to make the workplace more accessible and inclusive for all. The Law Society is holding its first Neurodiversity Event this year which is a great step forward, with all law firms being invited to participate. We look forward to being involved with that event.

We are also continuing to expand our connections with universities around the country and will continue to work with other charities and to promote the work of neurodivergent led groups such as Neurodiversity in Law and GAIN to improve inclusion and employment outcomes for autistic people. We are also exploring ways in which we can work with new charities such as Neurodiversity in Business to improve employment opportunities and inclusion in the workplace for autistic people. We have recently taken on a new mentor partner, WayMakers Devon CIC, which extends our geographical reach to a new area and we are actively seeking new mentor partners in other areas of the country where support is not currently readily available.

As far as we are aware, Autism Forward is the only charity operating nationally which funds specialist one to one support to help autistic people find employment in their chosen field and fulfill their potential in life. We are proud to be able to support both autistic job seekers and employers to drive change, reduce the autism employment gap and improve inclusion and opportunities for autistic people in the workplace and beyond. The outcomes and feedback from the autistic job seekers we support demonstrate the value of the specialist support we fund and we are pleased to see more employers recognising the value of a neurodiverse workforce and the skills and different perspective that autistic employees bring, as well as an increase in neurodivergent led support groups both within and outside the workplace.

## AUTISM FORWARD

### TRUSTEES' REPORT

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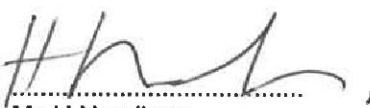
#### 9. INDEPENDENT EXAMINER

A resolution to reappoint Mr NP Smith FCCA as independent examiner for the ensuing year will be proposed at the annual general meeting.

#### 10. DECLARATION

The annual report was approved by the trustees of the charity on 14/9/22 and signed on its behalf by:

  
.....  
Ms J Pierce  
Trustee

  
.....  
Ms H Needham  
Trustee

  
.....  
Dr E Gokcen  
Trustee

  
.....  
Ms A Leverett  
Trustee

## AUTISM FORWARD

### STATEMENT OF TRUSTEES' RESPONSIBILITIES

The trustees are responsible for preparing the trustees' report and the financial statements in accordance with the United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice) and applicable law and regulations.

The law applicable to charities requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charity and of the incoming resources and application of resources of the charity for that period. In preparing these financial statements, the trustees are required to:

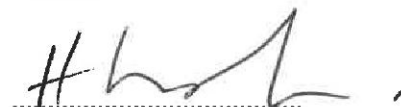
- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- observe the methods and principles in the Charities SORP;
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether applicable accounting standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements; and
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate 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 enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Charities Act 2011, the applicable Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations, and the provisions of the constitution. The trustees are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

Approved by the trustees of the charity on 14/07/22 and signed on its behalf by:




Ms J Pierce  
Trustee



Ms H Needham  
Trustee



Dr E Gokcen  
Trustee



Ms A Leverett  
Trustee

## **AUTISM FORWARD**

### **INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT TO THE TRUSTEES OF AUTISM FORWARD**

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I report to the trustees on my examination of the financial statements of Autism Forward ('the charity') for the year ended 31 March 2021 which comprise the Statement of Financial Activities, the Balance Sheet and related notes, which are set out on pages 19 to 26.

This report is made solely to the charity's trustees, as a body, in accordance with section 145 of the Charities Act 2011. My work has been undertaken so that I might state to the charity's trustees those matters I am required to state to them in this report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, I do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the charity and the charity's trustees as a body, for my work, for this report, or for the opinions I have formed

#### **Respective responsibilities of trustees and examiner**

As the trustees of Autism Forward you are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ('the Act').

I report in respect of my examination of the financial statements of Autism Forward carried out under section 145 of the Act and in carrying out my examination I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

An independent examination does not involve gathering all the evidence that would be required in an audit and consequently does not cover all the matters that an auditor considers in giving their opinion on the financial statements. The planning and conduct of an audit goes beyond the limited assurance that an independent examination can provide. Consequently I express no opinion as to whether the financial statements present a 'true and fair' view and my report is limited to those specific matters set out in the independent examiner's statement.

#### **Independent examiner's statement**

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

1. accounting records were not kept in respect of Autism Forward as required by section 130 of the Act; or
2. the accounts do not accord with those records; or
3. the accounts do not comply with the accounting requirements concerning the form and content of accounts set out in the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 other than any requirement that the accounts give a 'true and fair view' which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination.

## AUTISM FORWARD

### INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT TO THE TRUSTEES OF AUTISM FORWARD

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I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.



.....  
Mr N P Smith  
FCCA

21 Navigation Business Village  
Navigation Way  
Ashton-on-Ribble  
Preston  
PR2 2YP

Date: 14/9/22 .....



## AUTISM FORWARD

### STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2022

	Note	Unrestricted funds £	Total 2022 £
<b>Income and Endowments from:</b>			
Donations and legacies	2	121,994	121,994
Investment income	3	108	108
Total income		<u>122,102</u>	<u>122,102</u>
<b>Expenditure on:</b>			
Raising funds		(1,261)	(1,261)
Charitable activities		(37,369)	(37,369)
Support costs	6	<u>(1,543)</u>	<u>(1,543)</u>
Total expenditure		<u>(40,173)</u>	<u>(40,173)</u>
Net income		<u>81,929</u>	<u>81,929</u>
Net movement in funds		81,929	81,929
<b>Reconciliation of funds</b>			
Total funds brought forward		<u>104,644</u>	<u>104,644</u>
Total funds carried forward	12	<u><u>186,573</u></u>	<u><u>186,573</u></u>

	Note	Unrestricted funds £	Total 2021 £
<b>Income and Endowments from:</b>			
Donations and legacies		52,183	52,183
Investment income	3	<u>172</u>	<u>172</u>
Total income		<u>52,355</u>	<u>52,355</u>
<b>Expenditure on:</b>			
Raising funds		(260)	(260)
Charitable activities		(65,318)	(65,318)
Support costs	6	<u>(1,592)</u>	<u>(1,592)</u>
Total expenditure		<u>(67,170)</u>	<u>(67,170)</u>
Net expenditure		<u>(14,815)</u>	<u>(14,815)</u>
Net movement in funds		(14,815)	(14,815)
<b>Reconciliation of funds</b>			
Total funds brought forward		<u>119,459</u>	<u>119,459</u>
Total funds carried forward	12	<u><u>104,644</u></u>	<u><u>104,644</u></u>

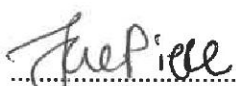
The notes on pages 21 to 26 form an integral part of these financial statements.  
Page 19


## AUTISM FORWARD

(REGISTRATION NUMBER: 1171704)  
BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31 MARCH 2022

	Note	2022 £	2021 £
<b>Current assets</b>			
Debtors	9	5,300	4,934
Cash at bank and in hand	10	<u>235,920</u>	<u>163,257</u>
		241,220	168,191
<b>Creditors: Amounts falling due within one year</b>	11	<u>(54,647)</u>	<u>(63,547)</u>
<b>Net assets</b>		<u>186,573</u>	<u>104,644</u>
<b>Funds of the charity:</b>			
<b>Unrestricted income funds</b>			
Unrestricted funds		<u>186,573</u>	<u>104,644</u>
<b>Total funds</b>	12	<u>186,573</u>	<u>104,644</u>

The financial statements on pages 19 to 26 were approved by the trustees, and authorised for issue on 14/07/22 and signed on their behalf by:

  
.....  
Ms J Pierce  
Trustee

  
.....  
Ms H Needham  
Trustee

  
.....  
Dr E Gokcen  
Trustee

  
.....  
Ms A Leverett  
Trustee

## **AUTISM FORWARD**

### **NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2022**

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#### **1 ACCOUNTING POLICIES**

##### **Statement of compliance**

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2015) - (Charities SORP (FRS 102)), the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) and the Charities Act 2011.

##### **Basis of preparation**

Autism Forward meets the definition of a public benefit entity under FRS 102. Assets and liabilities are initially recognised at historical cost or transaction value unless otherwise stated in the relevant accounting policy notes.

The financial statements have been prepared to give a 'true and fair' view and have departed from the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 only to the extent required to provide a 'true and fair' view. This departure has involved following Accounting and Reporting by Charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) issued on 16 July 2014 rather than the Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of a Recommended Practice effective from 1 April 2005 which has since been withdrawn.

##### **Going concern**

The trustees consider that there are no material uncertainties about the charity's ability to continue as a going concern.

##### **Income and endowments**

Voluntary income including donations, gifts, legacies and grants that provide core funding or are of a general nature is recognised when the charity has entitlement to the income, it is probable that the income will be received and the amount can be measured with sufficient reliability.

##### **Donations and legacies**

Donations and legacies are recognised on a receivable basis when receipt is probable and the amount can be reliably measured.

##### **Grants receivable**

Grants are recognised when the charity has an entitlement to the funds and any conditions linked to the grants have been met. Where performance conditions are attached to the grant and are yet to be met, the income is recognised as a liability and included on the balance sheet as deferred income to be released.

##### **Gift aid**

Gift Aid receivable is included in income when there is a valid declaration from the donor. Any Gift Aid amount recovered on a donation is considered to be part of that gift and is treated as an addition to the same fund as the initial donation unless the donor or the terms of the appeal have specified otherwise.

## **AUTISM FORWARD**

### **NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2022**

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#### ***Investment income***

Income from interest, royalties and dividends are included in the accounts when receipt is probable and the amount received can be measured reliably.

#### **Expenditure and liabilities**

##### ***Grant expenditure***

Grants are recognised in the financial statements as liabilities after they have been approved by the trustees, the recipients have been notified and there are no further terms and conditions to be fulfilled within the control of the charity. In these circumstances there is a valid expectation by the recipients that they will receive the grant.

##### ***Liability recognition***

Liabilities are recognised where it is more likely than not that there is a legal or constructive obligation committing the charity to pay out resources and the amount of the obligation can be measured with reasonable certainty.

##### ***Support costs***

Support costs have been allocated between governance costs and other support. Governance costs comprise all costs involving public accountability of the charity and its compliance with regulation and good practice.

##### ***Creditors***

The charity has creditors which are measured at settlement amounts less any trade discounts.

##### ***Provisions for liabilities***

A liability is measured on recognition at its historical cost and then subsequently measured at the best estimate of the amount required to settle the obligation at the reporting date.

##### ***Financial instruments***

The charity accounts for basic financial instruments on initial recognition as per paragraph 10.7 FRS 102 SORP. Subsequent measurement is as per paragraphs 11.17 to 11.19, FRS 102 SORP.

##### **Fund structure**

Unrestricted income funds are general funds that are available for use at the trustees's discretion in furtherance of the objectives of the charity.

##### **Debtors**

Debtors are measured on initial recognition at settlement amount after any trade discounts or amount advanced by the charity. Subsequently, they are measured at the cash or other consideration expected to be received.

Gift Aid receivable is recorded as accrued income at the reporting date.

## AUTISM FORWARD

### NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2022

---

#### 2 INCOME FROM DONATIONS AND LEGACIES

	Unrestricted funds General £	Total funds £
Donations and legacies;		
Appeals and donations	106,542	106,542
Gift Aid reclaimed	15,452	15,452
<b>Total for 2022</b>	<b>121,994</b>	<b>121,994</b>
<b>Total for 2021</b>	<b>52,183</b>	<b>52,183</b>

#### 3 INVESTMENT INCOME

	Unrestricted funds General £	Total funds £
Interest receivable and similar income;		
Interest receivable on bank deposits	108	108
<b>Total for 2022</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>108</b>
<b>Total for 2021</b>	<b>172</b>	<b>172</b>

#### 4 EXPENDITURE ON RAISING FUNDS

##### A) COSTS OF GENERATING DONATIONS AND LEGACIES

	Unrestricted funds General £	Total funds £
Donations	1,261	1,261
<b>Total for 2022</b>	<b>1,261</b>	<b>1,261</b>
<b>Total for 2021</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>260</b>

# **AUTISM FORWARD**

## **NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2022**

### **5 EXPENDITURE ON CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES**

	<b>Unrestricted funds General £</b>	<b>Total funds £</b>
Grant funding of activities	37,369	37,369
<b>Total for 2021</b>	<b>65,318</b>	<b>65,318</b>

### **6 SUPPORT COSTS**

	<b>Note</b>	<b>Unrestricted funds General £</b>	<b>Total funds £</b>
Independent examiner fees			
Examination of the financial statements	7	1,200	1,200
Marketing and publicity		99	99
Administrative expenses		244	244
<b>Total for 2022</b>		<b>1,543</b>	<b>1,543</b>
<b>Total for 2021</b>		<b>1,592</b>	<b>1,592</b>

### **7 INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REMUNERATION**

	<b>2022 £</b>	<b>2021 £</b>
Examination of the financial statements	1,200	1,140

## AUTISM FORWARD

### NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2022

---

#### 8 TAXATION

The charity is a registered charity and is therefore exempt from taxation.

#### 9 DEBTORS

	2022 £	2021 £
Accrued income	<u>5,300</u>	<u>4,934</u>

#### 10 CASH AND CASH EQUIVALENTS

	2022 £	2021 £
Cash at bank	<u>235,920</u>	<u>163,257</u>

#### 11 CREDITORS: AMOUNTS FALLING DUE WITHIN ONE YEAR

	2022 £	2021 £
Other creditors	53,447	62,407
Accruals	<u>1,200</u>	<u>1,140</u>
	<u>54,647</u>	<u>63,547</u>

#### 12 FUNDS

	Balance at 1 April 2021 £	Incoming resources £	Resources expended £	Balance at 31 March 2022 £
<b>Unrestricted funds</b>				
General	<u>104,644</u>	<u>122,102</u>	<u>(40,173)</u>	<u>186,573</u>

	Balance at 1 April 2020 £	Incoming resources £	Resources expended £	Balance at 31 March 2021 £
<b>Unrestricted funds</b>				
General	<u>119,459</u>	<u>52,355</u>	<u>(67,170)</u>	<u>104,644</u>

**AUTISM FORWARD**

**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2022**

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**13 ANALYSIS OF NET ASSETS BETWEEN FUNDS**

	<b>Unrestricted funds General £</b>	<b>Total funds at 31 March 2022 £</b>
Current assets	241,220	241,220
Current liabilities	<u>(54,647)</u>	<u>(54,647)</u>
Total net assets	<u>186,573</u>	<u>186,573</u>

	<b>Unrestricted funds General £</b>	<b>Total funds at 31 March 2021 £</b>
Current assets	168,191	168,191
Current liabilities	<u>(63,547)</u>	<u>(63,547)</u>
Total net assets	<u>104,644</u>	<u>104,644</u>



## AUTISM FORWARD

### STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES BY FUND FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2022

	<b>Total Unrestricted Funds 2022 £</b>	<b>Total Unrestricted Funds 2021 £</b>
<b>Income and Endowments from:</b>		
Donations and legacies	121,994	52,183
Investment income	<u>108</u>	<u>172</u>
<b>Total income</b>	<u>122,102</u>	<u>52,355</u>
<b>Expenditure on:</b>		
Raising funds	(1,261)	(260)
Charitable activities	(37,369)	(65,318)
Other expenditure	<u>(1,543)</u>	<u>(1,592)</u>
<b>Total expenditure</b>	<u>(40,173)</u>	<u>(67,170)</u>
<b>Net income/(expenditure)</b>	<u>81,929</u>	<u>(14,815)</u>
<b>Net movement in funds</b>	81,929	(14,815)
<b>Reconciliation of funds</b>		
Total funds brought forward	<u>104,644</u>	<u>119,459</u>
<b>Total funds carried forward</b>	<u><u>186,573</u></u>	<u><u>104,644</u></u>