

Charity trustees' annual report – London Autism Group Charity

1st April 2024 - 31st March 2025

Your charity's name: London Autism Group Charity

Registration number: 1176341

Address: St. Andrews Church, Chase Side, London, N14 5PP

Trustee names: Dr Chris Papadopoulos (Chair during the reporting period), James Gordon, Emma Lazenby, Marianna Dean, Gabrielle Nwaordu, Jane Higgins

Its structure and details of how it is managed, including how it recruits trustees:

The trustees follow and abide to the Charity's Governing Document which is based on the Constitution of a Charitable Incorporated Organisation whose only voting members are its charity trustees ('Foundation' model constitution).

The appointment of new charity trustees follows the following rules:

- (1) Apart from the first charity trustees, every trustee must be appointed for a term of two years by a resolution passed at a properly convened meeting of the charity trustees.
- (2) In selecting individuals for appointment as charity trustees, the charity trustees must have regard to the skills, knowledge and experience needed for the effective administration of the CIO.

Its activities and objectives in the year:

Our activities this year have been aligned with our overall charity objective which is 'to relieve the needs of individuals in London (and surrounding counties) who are autistic, and their family carers, by the provision of information and support'.

We believe we can achieve this objective by conducting activities related to the following goals:

- To provide support for autistic people and/or their family carers living in London or surrounding counties
- To promote social inclusion of autistic people and family carers.
- To promote social acceptance of autism and to reduce autism stigma and discrimination
- To advance the mental and physical health and wellbeing of autistic people and family carers

Its achievements and performance, including reporting on its public benefit:

In the past year, we have conducted the following successful and impactful activities:

1. Continued management of the London Autism Group. The London Autism Group is a private Facebook group aimed at supporting anyone whose lives have been influenced by autism and reside in or near to London. As of the end of March 2024, we had approximately 4248 members. The group is extremely popular and active, with 3235 of the 4248 members being 'active' on the group in the past month (i.e. they have read or interacted with posts). Also, each month, we receive over 65,000 views on posts made. The group consists of a wide and balanced socio-demographic and includes members who identify as autistic, family carers, health and social care professionals, scientists/researchers and more.

2. The Autism Podcast: During the reporting period, The Autism Podcast went through a deliberate and important period of transition. As the London Autism Group Charity continued to grow significantly, the time demands on the original co-hosts, Chris Papadopoulos and James Gordon, increased substantially due to expanding service delivery, safeguarding responsibilities, partnerships, and governance activity. As a result, it was not possible to maintain the previous level of podcast production during this period. Rather than discontinuing the podcast, the charity made a strategic decision to invest in its long-term sustainability and scalability. Two new co-hosts, Simeon Thompson and Sophia Christophi, were recruited and onboarded. This period involved training, shadowing, trial recordings, and gradual handover of hosting responsibilities to ensure quality, continuity, and alignment with the charity's values and neuro-affirming approach.

During the reporting period, three podcast episodes were released:

- An interview with Toni Borneo in May 2024, focusing on stigma, discrimination, employment, and mental health.
- A transition episode in December 2024 introducing the new co-hosts, Simeon Thompson and Sophia Christophi.
- An interview with Aditi Gangrade in February 2025, exploring autism stigma and understanding in India and international advocacy work.

While the number of episodes released during this year was lower than in previous periods, this transition phase significantly strengthened the podcast's future capacity. Following the handover, the podcast entered a new phase with increased production frequency, reduced reliance on senior charity leadership time, and far greater scalability potential. This has positioned The Autism Podcast as a more sustainable and resilient platform for autistic-led discussion, public education, and stigma reduction going forward.

3. Community Cafes: Between 1st April 2024 and 31st March 2025, the London Autism Group Charity continued to deliver a strong and well-established programme of monthly in-person Community Cafés. During this reporting period, the charity both stabilised and strengthened its existing cafés while also opening one new location to meet unmet geographical need. Throughout the year, our Community Cafés in Southgate (St Andrew's Church Hall, N14 5PP), Ealing (St Andrew's Church, Mount Park Road, W5 2RS), Old Street, Islington (Vibast Community Centre, EC1V 9NH), South Woodford (St Mary's Parish Church, E18 2PA), and Grays, Essex (The Community House, RM17 6DR) continued to run reliably on a monthly basis and remained well attended. These cafés consistently provided welcoming, accessible, sensory-considerate spaces for autistic people, family carers, and allies, with no requirement for a formal diagnosis or pre-registration.

During this period, the charity also launched a new Community Café in Lewisham, establishing a dedicated South London presence. Initial attendance was modest, as expected for a new site, but showed encouraging growth by subsequent sessions. The Lewisham café has enabled the charity to reach autistic people who were previously unable to access provision in other parts of London.

As with all new delivery, the Lewisham café provided important learning opportunities. Venue acoustics and layout were identified as areas requiring ongoing review as attendance increases, and trustees and staff proactively considered alternative or supplementary options such as nearby outdoor space during suitable weather. Clear safeguarding arrangements were prioritised from the outset, including appropriate signposting for individuals experiencing acute distress and ensuring volunteers were supported with clear protocols.

Across all cafés, the charity focused deliberately on strengthening delivery rather than rapid expansion. This included recruiting additional autistic-led arts practitioners and music therapists to support inclusive, low-demand engagement, particularly for attendees who find conversation-based social spaces challenging. We also enhanced volunteer support and safeguarding practice, including the sharing of safeguarding documentation and the planning of safeguarding training for Community Café volunteers.

Community-building and communication were further strengthened through the development and active moderation of dedicated WhatsApp groups linked to each café. These groups have become an important extension of the in-person sessions, supporting continuity, peer connection, attendance reminders, and a stronger sense of belonging between meetings.

Overall, the Community Café programme continued to perform strongly during this reporting period and remains one of the charity's most valued and impactful services. It plays a central role in reducing loneliness, improving wellbeing, and creating safe, autistic-led community spaces across London and beyond, while also demonstrating strong governance, reflective practice, and responsiveness to community need.

4. Monthly activity days for autistic adults at the Holy Sepulchre Church in Holborn Viaduct:

Between 1st April 2024 and 31st March 2025, the London Autism Group Charity continued to deliver and further develop its monthly Activity Days for autistic adults at the Holy Sepulchre Church in the City of London (Holborn Viaduct, EC1A 2DQ). During this reporting period, the focus was on stabilising delivery, responding to growing demand, and strengthening the range and quality of activities as the programme became increasingly popular and impactful.

Activity Days provide autistic adults with structured yet low-demand social, creative, and wellbeing-focused opportunities in a fully inclusive and sensory-considerate environment. As attendance and engagement increased, we expanded and strengthened our portfolio of autistic-led practitioners and therapists, ensuring that activities remained accessible, varied, and responsive to different needs, preferences, and communication styles.

Core Activity Day provision during this period included:

- Music therapy sessions led by qualified music therapists with expertise in supporting autistic people, offering a calming and expressive space, particularly valued by non-speaking and minimally speaking autistic adults.
- A Neurodivergent Artists' Collective, providing opportunities for creative exploration, peer connection, and self-expression.
- Autistic-led Tai Chi and mindfulness sessions, supporting emotional regulation, body awareness, and wellbeing.
- Autistic community social time, offering flexible, low-pressure opportunities for connection in a judgement-free space.

In response to participant feedback, the Autistic Women's Group was redesigned during this period to provide a more discreet and psychologically safe space separate from the main Activity Day environment inside the church. Women expressed a clear preference for meeting away from the church setting, and the group was therefore delivered as a monthly, in-person shared lunch funded by the charity and held on Saturdays prior to the main Activity Day programme at restaurants in the vicinity of the Holy Sepulchre Church. The group provided a safe and confidential space for autistic and neurodivergent women, including non-binary participants, to discuss issues particularly relevant to their lives, share

experiences, and offer peer support. Conversations were gently facilitated by trained volunteers to ensure inclusivity and that all participants had an opportunity to contribute. Following the meal, participants were able to join the wider Activity Day events if they wished. This redesign proved highly successful, with strong attendance and very positive feedback, and led to improved psychological safety, peer connection, and sustained engagement.

The Holy Sepulchre Church has continued to provide an accessible and well-located venue, enabling autistic adults from across London to attend via public transport. The Activity Days programme remains closely aligned with the charity's mission to reduce social isolation, promote wellbeing, and create autistic-led spaces where people can participate on their own terms.

Overall, Activity Days continued to be one of the charity's most impactful services during this reporting period. We remain committed to refining and expanding this provision in response to community feedback, ensuring it remains sustainable, inclusive, and led by autistic voices.

5. Autistic-led expert mental health, wellbeing and identity support:

During the reporting period, autistic-led expert mental health, wellbeing, and identity support remained one of the charity's most significant, impactful, and resource-intensive areas of activity. As demand for one-to-one support continued to increase, the charity focused primarily on stabilising and strengthening this provision while also recruiting additional autistic mental health practitioners to expand capacity in a controlled and sustainable way.

This area of work represents one of the charity's key areas of expenditure during the year. Funds were directed towards commissioning specialist autistic therapists, counsellors, and practitioners with expertise in autistic mental health, trauma, burnout, identity, and family dynamics. This investment reflects the charity's strategic commitment to providing effective, affirming support at points of crisis, distress, or significant transition.

The London Autism Group Charity operates a deliberately groundbreaking model in this area: autistic clients are supported exclusively by autistic mental health professionals, and neurodivergent parents are supported by practitioners with lived experience of neurodivergence and parenting. This matching of lived experience is central to the effectiveness of the support offered and is consistently highlighted by service users as a key factor in feeling understood, safe, and able to engage meaningfully.

Through close triage, safeguarding oversight, and an in-depth understanding of autistic lived experience, the charity is able to identify the specific nature of a person's difficulties and refer them to the most appropriate practitioner within our network. This ensures that support is targeted, timely, and responsive, rather than generic or mismatched.

During this reporting period, we expanded our portfolio of autistic practitioners to meet growing demand while maintaining high standards of quality, safety, and neuro-affirming practice. This work continues to have a profound impact, reducing distress, preventing escalation to crisis services, supporting autistic identity development, and improving mental wellbeing for autistic people and their families.

Overall, this area of provision remains central to the charity's mission and is widely recognised by service users as one of the most effective forms of support they receive, particularly in a context where autistic-led mental health provision remains extremely limited within statutory services.

6. Monthly live radio show titled 'All About Autism': The charity has continued its successful monthly live radio show 'All About Autism' on London Greek Radio. This initiative plays a crucial role in raising understanding and acceptance about autism in the Greek and Greek Cypriot communities where certain types of cultural stigma exist, but also to other communities who can access the show (103.3 FM and digital streaming access). Each episode focuses on various aspects of autism, providing valuable insights and education to listeners. The show also served as a platform for sharing experiences and fostering a deeper understanding of autism, reinforcing our commitment to supporting the autistic community and their families. All of the co-hosts are neurodivergent.
7. Advocacy work: During this year, we continued to provide one-to-one advocacy support to an increasing number of autistic individuals and families navigating complex issues such as:
 - Education Rights – Supporting autistic students and their families with navigating Education, Health, and Care Plans (EHCPs), reasonable adjustments in schools, and disability rights in education.
 - Social Care and Benefits Advocacy – Helping autistic adults and carers access Personal Independence Payments (PIP), Carer's Allowance, Direct Payments, and social care services to ensure they receive the financial and practical support they are entitled to.
 - Employment and Workplace Support – Providing guidance on workplace accommodations, discrimination cases, and access to support schemes such as Access to Work.
 - Mental Health and Well-being Support – Advocating for improved access to appropriate mental health services, particularly for autistic individuals struggling with anxiety, depression, or burnout.
 - Substance Misuse Advocacy – Supporting autistic individuals who are experiencing substance misuse challenges, ensuring they can access neurodivergent-affirming addiction services, mental health support, and harm reduction resources without stigma or discrimination.

Through this direct advocacy work, we have supported hundreds of autistic people and families, empowering them to navigate challenges, understand their rights, and access crucial services. Our substance misuse advocacy has been particularly important in addressing the intersection of autism and addiction, ensuring that autistic individuals facing these challenges receive the tailored support they need in a system that is often not designed with their needs in mind.

8. Website: We have continued to improve our website in the past year (londonautismgroupcharity.org) which details our charity's mission and values, the work that we do, and how to get in touch. As can be seen on the 'What We Do' page (<https://www.londonautismgroupcharity.org/what-we-do>), we have also produced several accessible maps that users can gain information about legal services, services, schools and more. These maps have been accessed more than 70,000 times.
9. London Autism Befriending scheme: Our befriending scheme for autistic adults and the wider autism community continued to develop and run very successfully. The scheme provides friendship for people (16yrs+) living in London and surrounding counties including autistic people, parents and family carers. The scheme to support people's mental health

and reduce feelings of loneliness which is particularly important given the times we live in. It involves people being paired with one of our charity volunteers who make contact via WhatsApp and, if you wish, 1-1 conversations over Zoom

10. Expanded social activities and community connection: During the reporting period, the charity also expanded its range of informal social activities to complement structured provision and meet growing demand for low-pressure, enjoyable ways for autistic adults to connect. These activities were developed in response to community feedback and were designed to reduce isolation, build confidence, and strengthen peer relationships outside formal support settings.
Social activities during this period included small-group lunches, cinema trips, bowling outings, and facilitated access to major events such as football matches at Wembley Stadium. These activities were intentionally low-demand, optional, and flexible, allowing participants to engage at their own pace while sharing positive experiences with others who understood their needs.
These social opportunities have been highly valued by participants, particularly those who find traditional social settings challenging. They have supported confidence-building, friendship formation, and a sense of belonging, and have helped bridge the gap between one-to-one support and wider community engagement.
11. Public engagement and hate crime awareness work with British Transport Police: During this reporting period, the charity also began a new strand of public engagement work focused on hate crime awareness and safety for autistic people in public spaces. This work developed following a podcast episode and subsequent engagement with British Transport Police, including collaboration with Barry Davies, a lead officer at British Transport Police based at Euston Station.
As part of this collaboration, the charity supported and participated in public awareness and engagement events aimed at increasing understanding of autism, neurodivergence, and the specific vulnerabilities autistic people may face when travelling or navigating public transport. These events provided opportunities for dialogue between autistic people, families, and transport police officers, helping to build mutual understanding and trust. The events were well received and highlighted the value of autistic-led insight in shaping more informed and compassionate responses to hate crime and public safety concerns. This work has opened the door to potential future collaboration, including the development of formal autistic-led training for British Transport Police and, potentially, other police forces. This emerging area of work aligns closely with the charity's wider objectives of reducing stigma and discrimination, improving public understanding, and promoting safer, more inclusive environments for autistic people.
12. Workshops and training: We facilitated a range of different free workshops for the community to support their wellbeing including training events for healthcare students and workplace staff, school students and SEND teachers
13. Supporting research – we have supported multiple research studies by (a) advising researchers on how to work with the community and (b) enabling researchers to access the autism community.
14. Neurodiversity articles: We have published several articles pertaining to neurodiversity and other themes related to our charitable objectives

Financial summary

The Charity has raised **£52248.41** in funds and has spent **£45664.04**.

Current balance as of end of March 2025 is **£117116.16**

Details of any funds held as a custodian trustee: n/a

Table 1: Month-by-month financial summary for the financial year ended 31 March 2025

Month	Income	Expenditure	Net	Month-end balance
April 2024	£499.68	-£2,889.29	-£2,389.61	£108,292.18
May 2024	£530.58	-£5,114.33	-£4,583.75	£103,608.43
June 2024	£4,091.60	-£2,352.02	£1,739.58	£105,348.01
July 2024	£1,371.49	-£4,283.09	-£2,911.60	£102,820.41
August 2024	£592.21	-£3,020.40	-£2,428.19	£100,008.22
September 2024	£754.13	-£4,702.04	-£3,947.91	£96,060.31
October 2024	£299.44	-£3,269.74	-£2,970.30	£93,090.01
November 2024	£2,731.95	-£3,777.23	-£1,045.28	£92,044.73
December 2024	£600.67	-£5,471.64	-£4,870.97	£87,173.76
January 2025	£137.14	-£4,275.27	-£4,138.13	£83,035.63
February 2025	£40,360.14	-£3,220.53	£37,139.61	£120,185.24
March 2025	£279.38	-£3,288.46	-£3,009.08	£117,166.16
Total (FY 2024-25)	£52,248.41	-£45,664.04	£6,584.37	£117,166.16

Table 2: Summary of income and expenditure by theme for the financial year ended 31 March 2025

Description	Amount (£)
INCOME	
Corporate donations	40,000.00
Other funding and donations	8,030.46
Grant income	3,917.95
Commissioned work	300
Total Income	52,248.41
EXPENDITURE	
Direct Delivery	
1-1 mental health therapy	11,922.31
Community café delivery	5,810.18
Activity day delivery	3,110.00
Music therapy	1,035.00
Tai Chi therapy	867
Women's group	834.64
Training	500.39

Podcast delivery	300.16
Art therapy	165
Other community event costs	10
<i>Sub-total: Direct Delivery</i>	24,554.68
Staffing and Coordination	
Admin officer	7,742.40
Charity support officers	7,055.88
Community outreach officer	6,059.20
<i>Sub-total: Staffing and Coordination</i>	20,857.48
Core Running Costs	
Zoom	155.88
Insurance	96
<i>Sub-total: Core Running Costs</i>	251.88
Total Expenditure	45,664.04
NET SURPLUS FOR THE YEAR	6,584.37

Review of the financial position:

During the financial year ended 31 March 2025, the Charity generated total income of £52,248.41 and incurred total expenditure of £45,664.04, resulting in a net surplus of £6,584.37 for the year. The Charity held a balance of £117,166.16 at the end of the reporting period.

Income during the year was uneven and characterised by relatively low and variable monthly receipts, with the overall annual surplus driven primarily by a significant corporate donation received in February 2025. In contrast, expenditure remained relatively consistent across the year, reflecting the Charity's ongoing commitment to maintaining continuity of services regardless of short-term income fluctuations.

The month-by-month position shows that, excluding February 2025, most months operated at a net deficit. Trustees consider this pattern typical for a small charity delivering regular front-line services, where costs are largely fixed while income is unpredictable and often received in lump sums rather than evenly distributed across the year.

Expenditure was focused predominantly on direct charitable activity, including autistic-led mental health therapy, community outreach, community cafés, activity days and specialist sessions such as music therapy, Tai Chi and women's groups. In addition, the Charity incurred staffing and coordination costs necessary to administer referrals, support volunteers, manage safeguarding responsibilities and ensure services were delivered safely and consistently. Core running costs were kept deliberately low.

The Charity held no debts at the end of the financial year and did not act as a custodian trustee for any funds during the reporting period.

Reserves policy and position

The Charity operates a reserves policy designed to balance financial resilience with the timely application of funds to charitable purposes. Trustees aim to hold a minimum level of reserves equivalent to approximately twelve months of core operating costs, recognising the volatility of income streams and the potential risk to beneficiaries should services need to be withdrawn abruptly.

The reserves position at year end reflects a deliberate and time-limited strategic decision by trustees during a period of organisational growth. Over recent years, demand for the Charity's services increased substantially in both volume and complexity, placing significant operational and safeguarding pressures on a largely volunteer-led leadership model. Trustees therefore planned for the transition to paid executive leadership and strengthened infrastructure, which required reserves to be built in advance to manage this change safely and responsibly.

This planning culminated in the appointment of a part-time Chief Executive Officer in September 2025. The reserves held at the end of March 2025 provided stability during this transition and ensured continuity of essential services while longer-term funding arrangements were pursued.

Trustees review the reserves position annually and consider it appropriate in light of income volatility, safeguarding responsibilities and planned expenditure. It is anticipated that reserves will reduce gradually over time as they are applied to staffing, service delivery and sustainable expansion in line with the Charity's objectives.

Approved by the Board of Trustees on 27th January, 2026.

James Gordon

Mr James Gordon, Chair of Trustees

Independent Examiner's Report to the Trustees of London Autism Group Charity

Report on the Accounts for the period of 1st April 2024 to 31st March 2025

Examiner's responsibilities and basis of report

I report in respect of my examination of the accounts of London Autism Group Charity for the period 1st April 2024 to 31st March 2025, as set out in the attached statements. The charity's trustees are responsible for the preparation of the accounts and ensuring they comply with the law and regulations governing UK charities. My responsibility is to examine the accounts under section 145 of the Charities Act 2011 and to report if there are matters of concern to which attention should be drawn.

I conducted my examination in accordance with the guidance provided by the Charity Commission. An independent examination involves reviewing the accounting records kept by the charity and comparing the accounts presented with those records. It also includes considering whether the accounts represent a true and fair view of the charity's financial activities.

Based on my examination, I confirm that:

- I have not identified any matters that suggest the accounts do not comply with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011.
- In my opinion, the accounts give a true and fair view of the state of the charity's affairs as of the end of March 2025 and of its incoming resources and application of resources, including its income and expenditure, for the year then ended.

Declaration

I am not disqualified from acting as an examiner and have no financial interest in or relationship with the charity that might affect my independence.

Signed:



Mr Antony Nichola

Date: 27/1/26

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