



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR

# Advancing Autism Education

2024 - 2025 Impact Report

# 2024-2025 Impact Report

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# Introduction

**The National Association for Advancing Autism Education (NAAAE) is making education better for and with autistic and neurodivergent learners**

**We are the first national umbrella organisation bringing together the education sector**, coalesced around one moral imperative – to make education better for and with autistic and neurodivergent children and adults.

We start from the premise that whilst education is predominantly delivered in building-based establishments (schools/nurseries/colleges), it doesn't always need to be. Access to education when only seen through a building-based lens creates boxes around learners and barriers to access. Access to education could and should be so much broader. Working across the education sector, to bring together best practice and to try new approaches, we will create exciting opportunities to think outside of the box, together.



**Autistic voice is at the forefront.** By bringing together education establishments, autism organisations, professionals and individuals across the education sector, the National Association fosters collaboration, knowledge sharing, and professional growth. We serve as a collective voice and provide a platform for our members to address common challenges, share practice they are proud of, and work towards common goals.

**What is being developed is a network like no other.** Rarely do universities talk to nurseries, or special schools talk to colleges, or boarding schools talk to Multi Academy Trusts. The cross-education sector membership of NAAAE is a unique opportunity to share practice, to reduce reinvention of the wheel and to connect education pathways for and with autistic and neurodivergent learners, no matter their age, stage or geography.

We are developing into a body that will play a crucial role in representing the interests of our members to government bodies, policymakers, regulatory agencies, and other stakeholders. We advocate for policies and legislation that support better education for autistic and neurodivergent children and young adults, and we engage in public awareness campaigns, and research initiatives to further our objectives.

Tracie Coultas-Pitman  
Founder and Chair of Trustees

# Our purpose

## Our Vision

A society that makes education better for and with autistic and neurodivergent learners

## Our Mission

To influence policy and improve practice in autism education across the UK



Listening to and engaging in the wider societal debate, particularly around education and awareness to promote equity for autistic people post education.

We have identified these three pillars and convene sector-wide consultation with families, children and professionals to describe more clearly what schools and educational settings can do to support autistic and neurodivergent pupils.

We are beginning to lead the conversation between Government, Ofsted and education settings, to define and describe clearly the expectations we want to set, consistently for all settings.

We bring together organisations who develop and disseminate knowledge of what works for and with neurodivergent pupils, including the autistic and neurodivergent community, to help them develop a more coherent offer of advice and guidance to professionals, parents and stakeholders.



# Building a movement

The increase in demand for assessments that lead to diagnosis has not lessened and in the meantime school refusal and avoidance has increased, exclusions have increased, SENDCos report being at breaking point and families are searching for the right support at the right time. Mainstream Schools are creating their own solutions, driven by a desire to do the right thing. Solutions already exist and we are connecting them.

Early  
identification  
of need &  
support

System  
navigation

## There is no such thing as “the system”

In a year that whipped up a storm of speculation surrounding a SEND Review White Paper, families and professionals have, in the main, gone on the defensive. NAAAE believes that something needs to change, that children and young adults are not consistently being well served through their education. NAAAE is committed to challenging, and helping, all education provision, health partners, and government, to develop positive personal and environmental factors, to enable autistic and neurodivergent children to thrive.

## Person-centred education that drives the question “I can see the child is struggling, how can I help?”

Pupils with SEN make up 17% (Special Educational Needs in England, Department for Education, published 20.6.23) of the school population, yet account for 7 in 10 permanent exclusions and 6 in 10 fixed period exclusions (Great Britain, Department for Education 2015b).

Many schools are unable to provide an environment in which autistic children feel safe, comfortable and able to learn, and few teachers have sufficient awareness of the needs of autistic children to be able to make suitable provision for them. As a result, autistic and neurodivergent children are and will leave education not fulfilling their true potential.

Knowledge,  
training &  
awareness

## Action Research

We seek to foster collaborative action research, bringing groups of practitioners together to find practical and sustainable solutions. Through this we also aim to generate valuable insights to inform broader knowledge in the field, alongside the opportunity for personal and professional development of participants

# Founding members

Our founding members have been pivotal to shaping the future strategy and have been crucial in starting to host regional events.





# Governance

Governance through our board of trustees provides oversight and decision-making, and plays a critical role in ensuring that the organisation is run ethically, legally, and in alignment with our mission, vision, and values.

Our Founding Trustees have been selected according to their connection with autism, with education and/or with lived experience.

The Board meets at least 4 times a year and has been working to set the long-term strategy and goals for NAAAE, ensuring that these align with the mission. It also oversees potential risks, ensuring that the organisation is prepared for challenges and that it maintains appropriate levels of insurance, legal protections, and compliance with regulations. A register of risks is discussed with trustees.

The work carried out by NAAAE during this reporting period (September 2024 - August 2025) continues to be a collaborative approach by Trustees, with the Founding Members.

The Founding Members have paid a reduced membership fee in recognition of their contribution to the development period for the organisation and have committed to attending meetings and to hosting regional events.

A generous grant donation from the Prism Charitable Trust, via our Patron Lisa Wood Binks enabled the employment of admin support during this year.



Our Patron  
Lisa Wood Binks



Founder & Chair of Trustees  
Tracie Coultas-Pitman

# Our Trustees



Jonathan Fingerhut  
Vice Chair



Jaz Kaur



Ruth Zimmerman



VAdm Edward Ahlgren OBE MA



Kiran Hingorani



Seamus Murphy



Alex Stainton

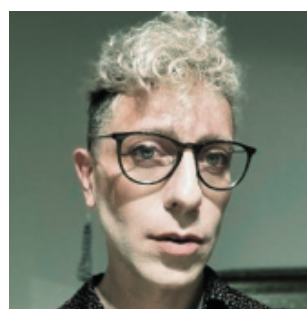


Louise Blythe



Marie Bond  
Treasurer

## Advisor



Ava Green (formerly a trustee)

The trustees recognise the importance of maintaining an effective and diverse Board with the appropriate balance of skills, experience, and perspectives to govern the charity successfully. Trustee recruitment is conducted in line with the charity's governing document and reflects a commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusion. Vacancies are identified through regular skills audits of the Board, and new trustees are recruited through open and transparent processes, including outreach to relevant networks and communities. All prospective trustees are selected based on their ability to contribute to the charity's purposes and are appointed following appropriate due diligence. New trustees receive an induction to ensure they understand their roles, responsibilities, and the work of the charity.



# 2024-2025 impact

1

## Membership is representative of the entire education ecosystem

The membership has grown, albeit not yet representing the entire sector. We have been building our profile through targeted meetings with MATs, independent schools and colleges. The founder members continue to be pivotal to hosting regional events, creating the environment for sharing practice we are proud of, across a diverse geographical backdrop. Membership benefits continue to develop. Three regional events were held this year hosted by members.

Founder Members



2

## Identifying and sharing good practice, challenging the gaps

A group of founding members formed to progress the idea of a “go to” practice guide or journal. They reached out to the membership for case studies and examples of good practice, with a low response rate. There were a number of barriers to collecting and sharing good practice identified:

- Concern about judgement - who determines whether something is good practice?
- The time to collate and write a case study for wide distribution
- Appropriate consent for sharing in the public domain
- Maintaining clear autistic voice

The group also determined that printed/written publications were time intensive and costly, developing the idea of a podcast series “The Happiness Series”. The format and framing for the series has been agreed, with part funding achieved from the Podcast Foundry. Further match funding is being sought so that the series can be recorded.



# 3

## Training, knowledge and awareness - populating the SPARK (Shared Practice and Resource Kits), including practical packs for parents

Pulling together practical packs and information to populate the SPARK has not been as successful as anticipated this year; linked to the barriers identified in sharing good practice and a lack of funding. We have been supported by DeBeer Digital to develop the SPARK online platform, embedded in our website and have learnt from the feedback this year. There will be a number of initiatives introduced in 2025-2026 including sharing "Practice you are proud of" and the first National Knowledge Exchange event.

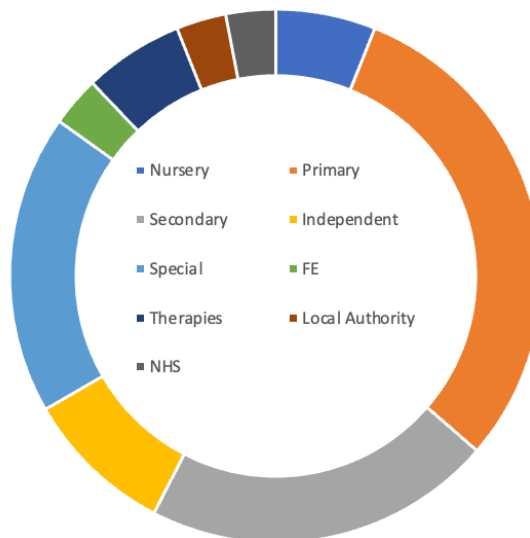
# 4

## System navigation - building key partnerships

Regional events were hosted by Breckenbrough School in Thirsk, Dixons Academy Trust in Bradford and The Sheiling Ringwood. Each event included, where appropriate, visit around the host school, hearing a parent story, sharing practice, meeting professionals from across the sector and agreeing to take an action away. 100% of feedback responses found the different elements of the event to be very valuable.

"Found the day of particular use to talk and share with other colleagues across the sector. Some agencies and jobs I didn't even know were in existence so I have been able to come back with awareness of what else is out there as support to our young people and their families."  
Participant at The Sheiling, Ringwood

### Cross-sector representation at regional events





# Looking forward to 25-26



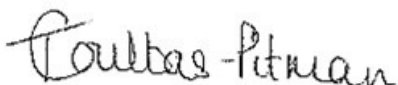
Objective	KPI
Membership is representative of the entire education ecosystem	At least 10 members from each constituent part
	At least 5 new members as a result of event participation
Identify and share good practice, challenging the gaps	Increased engagement with <b><i>practice to be proud of</i></b>
	Event participants rate sharing practice as highly effective
	Online/roundtable events tackle identified challenges
Resources developed together and signposted	Membership body engaged in development of at least 2 resources
	The Happiness Series podcast gains an increased following
	New partnerships are agreed
A locality model is developed by knowing who the learners are	Data gathering is consistent at 2 points in the academic year
	Network map is used to enhance inclusion

# Annual Report Statements

**Public benefit statement** - The trustees of the National Association for Advancing Autism Education (NAAAE) have had due regard to the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit and are satisfied that the charity's activities advance autism education for the public benefit. NAAAE supports autistic and neurodivergent individuals by promoting inclusive, accessible, and alternative approaches to education, sharing resources, training, and guidance to educators, families, and organisations. Its work helps reduce barriers to learning, improves equality of opportunity, and enhances educational outcomes for a section of the public with specific needs, while also benefiting society more broadly through increased understanding, inclusion, and participation. The trustees ensure that the charity's services are appropriately accessible and that all activities further its charitable purposes

**Remuneration policy** - The trustees of NAAAE serve on a voluntary basis and receive no remuneration for their role as trustees. Any expenses incurred in carrying out their duties may be reimbursed in line with the charity's expense policy. The trustees are satisfied that this approach ensures that the charity's resources are applied solely in furtherance of its charitable purposes

**Related party transactions** - The trustees confirm that there were no related party transactions during the reporting period and that no trustee had any financial interest in the activities of the charity. The trustees are satisfied that appropriate procedures are in place to identify and manage any potential conflicts of interest, ensuring that the charity operates with integrity and in accordance with its governing document



Tracie Coultas-Pitman  
Founder & Chair of Trustees



Jonathan Fingerhut  
Vice Chair of Trustees



# Our financial results

Statement of Activity	
NAAAE	
September, 2024-August, 2025	
Account	Total
Income	
Donations and legacies	12,072.66
Services	3,900.00
Total for Income	£15,972.66
Cost of Sales	
Employer NI expense	303.67
WAGES EXPENSE	3,692.31
Total for Cost of Sales	£3,995.98
Gross Profit	£11,976.68
Expenses	
Advertising/Promotional	4,818.52
Computer Costs	465.10
Insurances	-5.65
Office/General Administrative Expenses	28.66
Other Professional Services	1,311.66
Printing, Postage and Stationery	510.65
Stripe fees	28.50
Total for Expenses	£7,157.44
Net Operating Income	£4,819.24
Other Income	
interest	27.22
Total for Other Income	£27.22
Net Other Income	£27.22
Net Income	£4,846.46

£12,000

Donated to provide  
admin support

13

Member organisations

46

Event Participants



# We thank all our supporters and team.

## If you'd like to join our exciting journey:



Become a member



Sponsor an event



Make a donation

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[www.advancingautismeducation.org.uk](http://www.advancingautismeducation.org.uk)

Charity number: 1205797

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