

**AUTISM SUPPORT
KILKEEL**

Annual Report & Statement of Accounts

For the year ended 31st December 2024

**Registered Office: 204 Carrigenagh Road, Kilkeel, Co Down. BT34 4QA
Charity No: NIC102894**

Annual Report for the year ended December 31st 2024

Report of the trustees for the year ending 31 December 2024. The trustees are pleased to present their annual report together with the financial statements of the charity for the year ending 31 December 2024. The financial statements comply with the Charities Act 2011, the Companies Act 2006, the Memorandum and Articles of Association, and 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) (as amended for accounting periods commencing from 1 January 2019).

Governance and internal control

The trustees are responsible for selecting and recruiting suitable trustees to hold office at the Annual General Meeting. The number of trustees shall be not less than three but is not subject to any maximum.

A retiring trustee is eligible for re-election, and there is no limit on the number of times a trustee may be re-elected.

The minimum age for a trustee is 18 years, but there is no upper age limit imposed on trustees. The Trustees from among their number appoint a chairperson.

New trustees are inducted through a process of briefings by the Chairman and other members of the committee and they are provided with key information relating to the charity's governance and operation.

The board of trustees meets approximately 12 times. None of the trustees received remuneration or other benefit from their work with the charity this financial year.

During this challenging Year, I would like to thank the trustees for their dedicated efforts in Governing the charity.

Monthly Meetings

Throughout the year, we continued to host our monthly coffee mornings and evening meetings, which have proven to be a vital lifeline for parents within our community. These gatherings provide a welcoming space for individuals to connect, share personal experiences, and access practical resources to support them in their parenting journey.

Beyond fostering a strong sense of belonging, these events serve as an effective platform for disseminating essential information, offering guidance, and equipping parents with strategies to navigate the challenges of raising children. The consistent attendance and positive feedback underscore the value and impact of these initiatives.

THERAPIES

ASK Water Safety Program

This year, we were proud to continue our 1:1 water safety program in partnership with **Swimming Buddies NI**, offering a meaningful opportunity for children aged 4 to 15 within our group to develop vital swimming and safety skills. These sessions not only promote physical confidence and safety in aquatic environments but also support emotional wellbeing and self-esteem through gentle, structured engagement. The feedback from families has been overwhelmingly positive, highlighting the value of this initiative in fostering both skill development and trust

We successfully delivered two rounds of our 1:1 water safety program, running from 1st–5th April and again from 1st–5th July. Each program welcomed 20 children, providing them with tailored instruction in swimming and water safety. Prior to the programs commencing each child was matched with a dedicated coach, ensuring personalized support that addressed their individual needs and sensory profiles.

The sessions were fully booked and received overwhelmingly positive feedback from families, who praised the structured, empathetic approach and the visible progress their children made. These programs not only built essential life skills but also boosted confidence and emotional wellbeing in a safe, supportive environment.



Below is a selection of parental feedback highlighting their experiences and impressions of the Swimming Buddies program.

"This is thee most amazing programme ever, thank you so much for this amazing opportunity, Shea absolutely loves this ❤️" Cathy Spiers

"Jude loved it soo much thank you for the opportunity will definitely be wanting to do it in July also if possible ❤️ thank you again xx" Mary Campbell

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Equine Therapy

In 2024, we successfully delivered five Equine Therapy programs, each spanning six weeks. Every program welcomed 15 young people, aged between 5 and 17, offering them the transformative experience of horse riding in a safe, supportive environment. Through these sessions, participants not only learned equestrian skills but also benefited from the therapeutic value of working with horses!

Engaging with the horses offered our young participants a unique opportunity to build emotional regulation, strengthen social skills, and cultivate a sense of responsibility. These programs do more than teach—they spark joy, nurture growth, and create meaningful bonds between children and animals. The benefits often extend far beyond the riding arena, leaving a lasting imprint on each participant's emotional well-being and personal development.

Pictured below: some of our very proud participants, beaming with joy as they celebrate their achievements in Equine Therapy.



It's a magical moment when the shyest of the shy can't wait to flash their pearly whites, certificates in hand, as if to say, "Look, world, I've got proof I achieved something!"

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Music Therapy

Over the summer, our music therapy program led by Music Therapist Shane Harvey proved to be a resounding success. Running for a total of six weeks, the initiative offered a structured schedule of therapeutic engagement, including:

- **Four one-to-one sessions per week**, tailored to individual needs and developmental stages
- **One group session per week**, fostering social interaction and collaborative expression

The sessions welcomed a diverse age range of children, from **4 to 15 years old**, and provided a nurturing environment for emotional exploration, creativity, and personal growth through music.

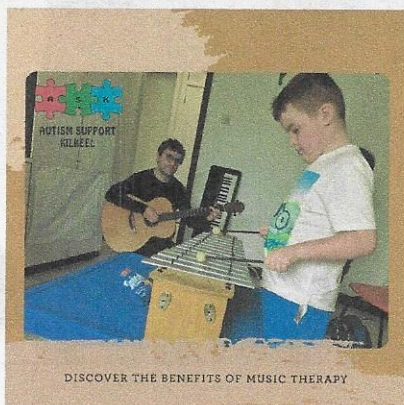
The structure of the music therapy programme—carefully balancing individual attention with group dynamics—enabled a tailored approach that met the unique needs of each participant. This thoughtful design supported both personal growth and collective engagement, allowing children to thrive emotionally, socially, and creatively.

The overwhelmingly positive feedback we received highlights the profound impact of music as a therapeutic tool. Parents consistently shared heartwarming reflections on the transformation they witnessed in their children, noting improvements in confidence, communication, and overall wellbeing. The sessions not only fostered development but also brought joy and a strong sense of community to everyone involved.

We are proud to share these outcomes and deeply grateful for the trust families placed in us throughout the programme.

"Michael has been attending music therapy annually with Shane for 10 years now. He loves the sessions and the opportunity to express himself through music. Shane has such a kind & gentle nature and every session makes us all smile and come away feeling uplifted 😊"
Cliona McDowell

"Sessions with Shane amaze me every time the engagement and rapport he has with Aron is magical never is there a protest at having to go to music therapy"
Pauline Kearney



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Bounce Therapy

This year, we proudly continued offering Bounce Therapy sessions free of charge to individuals aged 13 and up. These sessions are designed to support the development and refinement of gross motor skills through dynamic, movement-based activities that promote coordination, balance, and core strength.

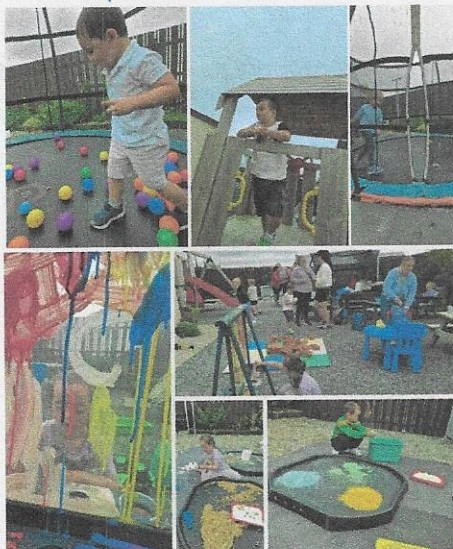
By removing financial barriers, we've ensured that every young person—regardless of background—has access to therapeutic support that fosters physical confidence and emotional well-being. The impact has been especially meaningful for those navigating developmental challenges, transitions in adolescence, or simply seeking a safe, engaging space to move and grow.

Sensory Integration

During July and August, we ran Sensory Camps for children up to Primary 3, designed to engage our youngest members in playful, sensory-rich activities. These camps focused on providing meaningful sensory input while helping children explore self-regulation in a safe and supportive environment. On the final day, we surprised the children with a visit from **Wee Bugs and Beasties**, who brought a fascinating variety of small animals. This hands-on experience offered additional sensory stimulation and sparked curiosity, joy, and connection among the children.



Day one of our sensory Camp Adventures



Mary Campbell 🌟 Top contributor

The best day with the best group ❤️❤️ thank you for giving us a great few days ❤️❤️

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Sign Rhyme and Shine

During the summer holidays, we collaborated with **Bronagh O'Cleirhin** from *Sign, Rhyme and Shine* to create a truly magical experience for our children. The sessions blended **Makaton signing, nursery rhymes, dance, musical instruments, puppets, sensory elements, and story time**—offering a rich, multi-sensory environment where every child could engage, express, and enjoy. Bronagh's warmth and creativity brought smiles, movement, and meaningful connection to each session, making it a highlight of our summer program.



Cara-Louise Sloan

Thank you for a lovely morning, looking forward til tomorrow 🍷

1y Like Reply



Laura Cranston

We had a great time thanks so much for organising, looking forward to tomorrow



Cllr Jill Truesdale APNI

❤️ Pauline's head will be seen from Mars now! So it should! Brilliant work 🍷
Coordinating events isn't easy and it all looked fantastic!

1y Like Reply

2 🍷 🍷



Sign, Rhyme & Shine with Bronagh

Autism Support Kilkeel Thank you for giving me the opportunity to work with such an inclusive organisation. I am so excited to work with you again in the very near future. Pauline Kearney you are amazing and thanks for your support throughout the camp.

1y Like Reply

4 🍷 🍷

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RELAXED SCREENINGS

Our relaxed screenings are a wonderful initiative that provide an inclusive cinema experience for young people with additional needs. By working in collaboration with **Newcastle Community Cinema (NCC)** and the **ADHD Hub Newcastle** we can offer these screenings to the public at a reduced ticket price of £2.00, making it more accessible for families and caregivers to enjoy films in a comfortable environment.

Our relaxed screenings are typically held in a sensory-friendly setting, where the lights are dimmed, the volume is lowered, and audience members are free to move around, making noise, or take breaks if needed. This thoughtful approach not only respects the sensory preferences of individuals but also fosters a sense of community and belonging, as attendees can share the experience without the stress of traditional cinema etiquette.

Our first screening of 2024 was of the movie "Ratatouille" on Friday 19th January at 6pm. We had 36 families in attendance. We ended the year on Sunday 8th December with "The Magic Reindeer"



At special times of the years i.e., Easter and Christmas we like to turn the screenings into grander events and hold red carpet screenings, with the Easter Bunny giving out Easter Eggs and Father Christmas giving out selection Boxes.


FITNESS FOR ALL

Following the success of our pilot "Fitness for All" scheme in November 2023, we expanded the initiative significantly throughout 2024. This year, we delivered seven full programs, each comprising three tailored sessions designed to support teenagers with additional needs. Each session welcomed six participants, allowing for focused engagement and individualized support.

A key element of this year's success was our collaboration with Ryan from **Doherty Sport Therapy & Massage**. Ryan worked closely with our team to deliver personalized sessions targeting both fine and gross motor skills. These sessions were carefully designed to feel fun and engaging—so much so that participants were effectively receiving occupational therapy without even realizing it. This subtle, therapeutic approach not only enhanced physical development but also contributed to improved confidence and social interaction.

The overwhelmingly positive feedback from participants and caregivers continues to affirm the value of this program, and we're excited to explore further opportunities for growth and impact in the coming year.



 **Kelly Walsh**
 An absolutely amazing Fitness For All program with one of the best gym instructors 🏆
Ryan Doherty 🏆 Doherty Sports Therapy & Massage who has Fantastic understanding,
 kindness and such wonderful patience for each individual. We look forward to starting
 our next 6 weeks session 🥰👏
 Like Reply

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Workshops/Parental Training

In February, we hosted a training taster session with **Sarah and Julianne** from **Act to Connect**, offering families an introduction to their approach and resources. The session provided a valuable opportunity for parents to explore practical strategies for building connection, communication, and emotional wellbeing with their children.



In April, we hosted a specialised communication workshop led by **Elaine McGreevey**, Speech and Language Therapist at **Access Communication Ltd.** The session focused on the use of AAC (Augmentative and Alternative Communication) devices to support non-verbal and pre-verbal young people, equipping families with practical tools and strategies to enhance everyday communication.



Following the success of our initial AAC workshop with Elaine McGreevey, we delivered a six-month parent training programme throughout 2024. This initiative supported families in choosing and setting up AAC (Augmentative and Alternative Communication) devices tailored to their child or young person's needs. The sessions provided practical, hands-on guidance and built parents' confidence in using these tools to enhance everyday communication. The programme was warmly received and marked a meaningful step forward in empowering families with knowledge, choice, and connection.

A Journey to becoming an AAC Family

With Autism Support Kilkeel Families



Elaine McGreevey, Speech & Language Therapist

In May, we welcomed guest speakers **Kellie O'Donnell** and **Elaine Trainor** from the Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) at Kilkeel Primary Care Centre. They met with parents to explain their professional roles and how the MDT supports children with additional needs. The session offered valuable insights into local services and helped families better understand the pathways available for accessing support. It was a positive step in strengthening collaboration between families and healthcare professionals.

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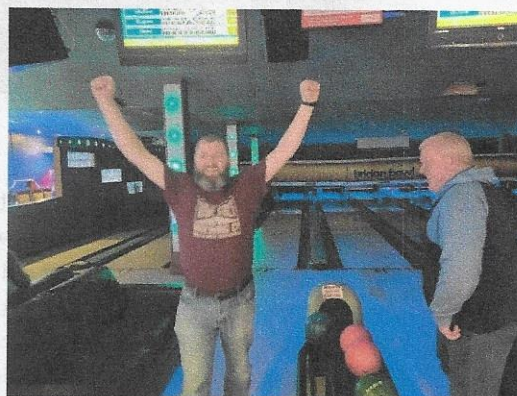
Group Events




Throughout the year, we hosted a wide range of events designed to support and celebrate our vibrant community of children with additional needs, along with their siblings, parents, grandparents and carers. These gatherings provided meaningful opportunities for connection, joy, and shared experiences—strengthening bonds across generations and creating lasting memories for all involved.

We launched our annual activity programme in February with an energetic and engaging table **FREE** tennis taster session led by Alex Barusk of Table Tennis Ulster. This introductory event gave participants a chance to explore the sport in a fun, inclusive environment, while learning basic techniques and building hand-eye coordination.

To continue our commitment to promoting physical activity and social engagement, we hosted two exciting events in mid-February tailored to different age groups. On February 16th, our teenage members enjoyed an action-packed evening of bowling and laser tag—an ideal combination for building teamwork, coordination, and friendly competition. Just two days later, on February 18th, our younger members took on the climbing wall, slide, and spider web challenge at Cheeky Monkeys. Both events were very well attended, reflecting the enthusiasm of our community and the value of providing inclusive, movement-based experiences. These activities encouraged confidence, connection, and plenty of laughter in a safe and supportive environment.

Our Burger & Bowls evening on February 17th provided a fantastic opportunity for dads to come together, connect, and unwind in a relaxed, social setting. The team-based bowling format encouraged camaraderie among participants, many of whom shared similar life experiences. This sense of community not only boosted physical activity but also played a meaningful role in reducing stress and alleviating feelings of isolation or depression. The event was fully funded, with transport provided, ensuring accessibility for all who wished to attend.



-  **Michael Shiels** Admin
It was a fantastic night thanks so much for organising!!!! But your going to have to get me better bowlers for the next one it was too easy!!!! Eugene Davis needs more practice Clare!!
1y Haha Reply Share 5 🗨️ 🍕 🍕
-  **Emma Cowan**
That's so much for organising. Micky has a great time and was lovely to meet the other dad's 🍕
1y Love Reply Share 2 🍕
-  **Kieran McCartan**
Great night thanks for organising it good nite out 🍕
1y Like Reply Share

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In March, it was time for our mums to connect, recharge, and focus on their well-being. We hosted two dedicated mindfulness and spa day events on Saturday the 2nd and Thursday the 7th, facilitated by **Ashling Kearney** from **Coach Approach**. Held at the serene Slieve Donard Hotel, the sessions combined the calming practice of mindfulness with the restorative experience of a spa morning.

Participants were guided through techniques to help integrate mindfulness into their daily routines, promoting improved emotional well-being and effective stress management. These events offered a much-needed pause from everyday responsibilities, allowing mums to engage in self-reflection, connect with others, and enjoy a well-deserved moment of relaxation and care.



Ashling Kearney

Ladies, It was an absolute pleasure to spend time with you all ❤️ I am so pleased that you all enjoyed your day, and I know that you will continue to enjoy and benefit from all you can explore and experiment with, from your Pause Approach Guidebooks. ❤️ Wishing you and your team, continued success in all you arrange and do for the members of your Group, you are inspiring and deserve lots of credit for all, each of you do for each other, each and every day. ★★★★★ Thank you for such a wonderful Testimonial - You put a BIG SMILE on my face today 😊

Easter was a vibrant and activity-filled period for the group, offering a wide range of experiences for members of all ages. On March 29th, we kicked off the celebrations with a visit to Mountpanther Farm Park, where families enjoyed hands-on encounters with animals and outdoor play in a relaxed rural setting. Later that same day, we hosted a relaxed screening of *Brave* at Newcastle Community Cinema, creating a calm and inclusive environment for children and families to enjoy a beloved film together.

The excitement continued into April with a thrilling snowtubing session on April 4th, giving participants a chance to embrace the outdoors and enjoy high-energy fun on the slopes. On April 5th, we wrapped up the Easter programme with a visit to Infinity Adventure Park, where children explored climbing frames, obstacle courses, and interactive play zones designed to challenge and delight.



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Each event was well attended and thoughtfully planned to promote physical activity, social connection, and joyful experiences for all involved.

This summer, we treated our mums to two well-deserved pamper sessions, each filled with care, connection, and a touch of luxury.

20th June – Gordon's Chemist Collaboration In partnership with Gordon's Chemist, we hosted a relaxing pamper evening that gave mums a chance to unwind and feel celebrated. Every attendee received a free goodie bag, adding a little sparkle to the night. The atmosphere was warm and welcoming, with plenty of smiles and shared stories.



25th July – Skincare with Tara from Tropic July brought a glow-up with Tara from Tropic, who led a hands-on skincare session tailored to our mums' needs. Her expert tips and gentle approach made the evening both informative and indulgent. It was a chance for mums to focus on themselves for a change—and they left feeling refreshed and radiant.



These events weren't just about skincare—they were about recognition, rest, and reminding our mums how valued they are in our community. As caregivers, it's not selfish to take time for self-care—it's essential. Looking after themselves allows them to continue showing up for others with strength, compassion, and resilience.

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Our Annual **Ladies Who Lunch** event was held on Saturday 6th July from 1–3pm in The Duke, Warrenpoint, offering a beautiful setting for a well-deserved afternoon of relaxation and connection. It was a special opportunity for the mums in our group to take a break from their daily responsibilities and enjoy a little "**me time**" in the company of others who truly understand their journey.



With a delightful meal and a welcoming atmosphere, the event provided space for laughter, conversation, and mutual support. These gatherings continue to be a cherished tradition—where mums can unwind, share experiences, and strengthen the bonds that make our community so resilient and uplifting.

Throughout July and August, we hosted six exciting days where families could enjoy exclusive access to a bouncy castle—**completely free of charge**. Parents were able to book hourly slots just for their own family or pair up with another to extend the fun and create a shared experience.

These sessions offered a fantastic opportunity for children to engage in energetic play while developing their gross motor skills in a safe, supportive environment. Jumping, climbing, and bouncing not only promoted physical development but also brought plenty of smiles and laughter.

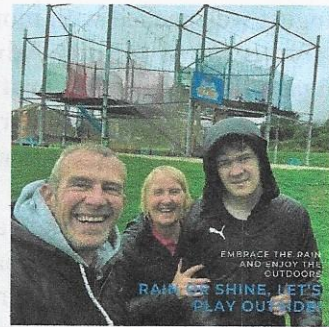
By removing any cost barriers, we ensured that all families could participate and benefit from this joyful activity, reinforcing our commitment to inclusive, accessible programming for the community.

On Saturday 20th July, we held a fantastic **Family Fun Day** at SkyPark in Carlingford. Thanks to generous subsidization, our members received an incredible **70% discount** on park prices, making this exciting adventure far more accessible to all.

Families enjoyed a wide range of outdoor activities in a vibrant, safe, and inclusive environment. From high ropes and zip lines to mini golf and obstacle courses, the day was packed with opportunities for fun, laughter, and connection.

This event not only provided a memorable experience for children and parents alike, but also reinforced our commitment to creating affordable, enriching opportunities for families to spend quality time together. For families with a young person with autism, achieving meaningful family time can often be challenging—so having access to a supportive, inclusive environment

like SkyPark made the day even more special and impactful. **And even though it was a wet day, it certainly didn't dampen our spirits!** The laughter, energy, and sense of togetherness shone through, making it a truly unforgettable experience.



Following the success of our **Easter snow tubing event**, we were thrilled to run another round of sessions in August, giving families another chance to enjoy high-energy fun in a unique and inclusive setting. We held **three sessions** in total:

- **Sessions 1 and 2** were designed for children aged **5 and up**, with **24 places** available in each. These sessions provided a safe and exciting opportunity for younger children to experience the thrill of snow tubing while building confidence and coordination.
- **Session 3** was tailored specifically for young people aged **11+** who experience more **challenging behaviours**, with a smaller group size of **12 places** to ensure a calm, supportive environment and more focused attention.



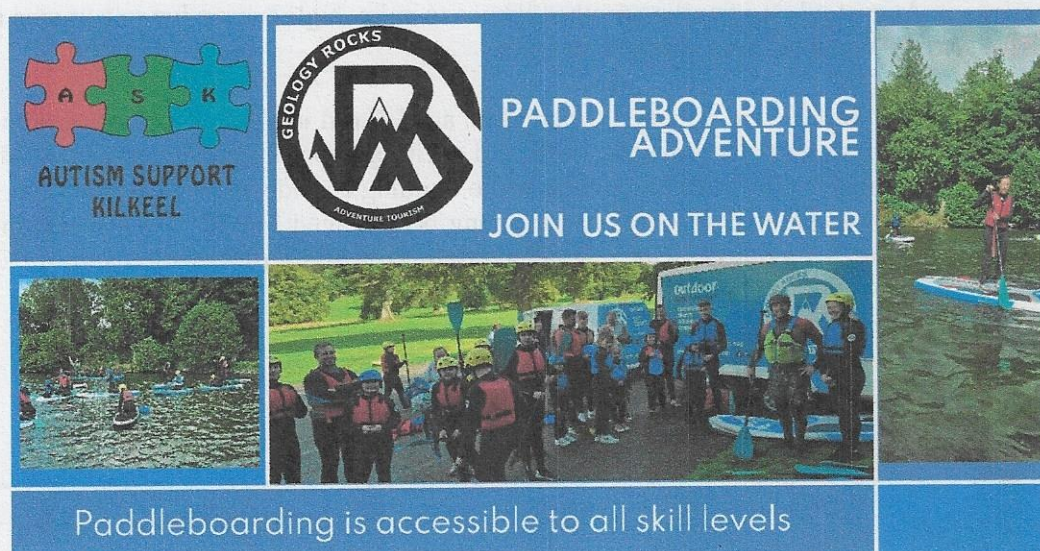
"As a family, it's often difficult to find activities that we can all enjoy together—especially with our 17-year-old autistic son. This event was a rare and wonderful opportunity for us to participate fully, have fun, and create lasting memories as a family. It meant so much to be included in something that truly worked for us."

It was a **fantastic event** that allowed parents to **fully participate in an activity alongside their SEN child**, creating shared moments of joy and connection. By offering a dedicated session for children with challenging behaviour, we ensured that every child had the chance to take part in a way that suited them best—making it a truly welcoming and memorable start to our August programming.

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August was packed with more enriching experiences for our children and young people, with a **free event at Infinity Adventure Park**. This exciting day gave participants the chance to engage in **sensory integration activities**, with a particular focus on movement and input through bouncing. The environment encouraged exploration, physical activity, and regulation in a fun and supportive setting—ideal for children with sensory processing needs. *

Later in the month, we held a **paddleboarding event at Castlewellan Forest Park**, hosted by **Geology Rocks**. This session offered a fantastic opportunity for children and young people to **develop water safety awareness, improve balance**, and build confidence in a social and active outdoor setting. The event was designed to be inclusive and engaging, helping participants connect with peers while learning new skills.



To round off the paddleboarding experience, we enjoyed a relaxed **group lunch**, giving families a chance to unwind, reflect, and share stories from the day. It was a wonderful way to strengthen community bonds and celebrate the achievements of our young adventurers.

On **Saturday 24th August**, we hosted a serene and uplifting **twilight cruise** with *Carlingford Lough Cruises*, exclusively for parents. The evening featured a live performance by **Gavin Gribben**, adding a special touch of music and atmosphere to the experience.

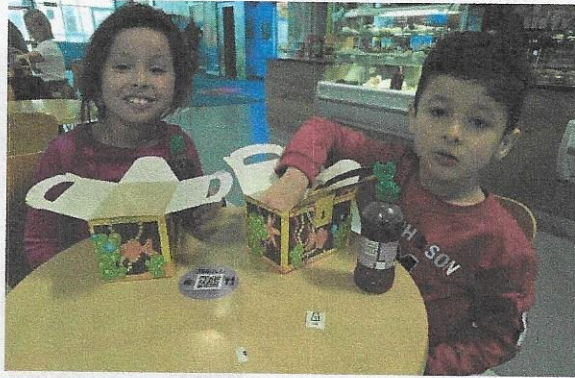


The event offered a much-needed moment of respite, reflection, and connection—bringing together caregivers in a peaceful setting where they could unwind and share in the company of others who understand their journey.

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In September, we hosted a magical event for the **younger members of our group** at *Peter Pan Neverland*. This enchanting venue provided the perfect backdrop for a day filled with imagination, play, and adventure.

The children enjoyed exploring themed play zones, engaging in creative activities, and immersing themselves in the whimsical world of Neverland. To make the day even more special, we provided a **Sunday lunch** for all participants, giving families a chance to relax and enjoy a warm meal together in a friendly, inclusive setting.



Melissa Reavey

It's was a great morning! Thanks for organising it 🙏

51w Like Reply



Niamh Ní Mhurchú

A great morning had by all, Thank you so much for having us ❤️🙏 x

Over Halloween, we delivered a series of exciting and enriching events that brought joy, creativity, and learning to children and young people across our community.

We kicked things off with a **spooktacular trip to Mountpanther Farm Park**, where **90 children** enjoyed a thrilling Halloween adventure. From pumpkin patches to haunted trails, the day was packed with seasonal fun and sensory delights that made for unforgettable memories.

Next, we hosted a **Fancy Dress Halloween Party** at *Infinity Adventure Park*, welcoming **60 children** in their most imaginative costumes. The event was full of energy, laughter, and themed activities, giving everyone a chance to celebrate in style and connect with friends in a safe, inclusive environment.



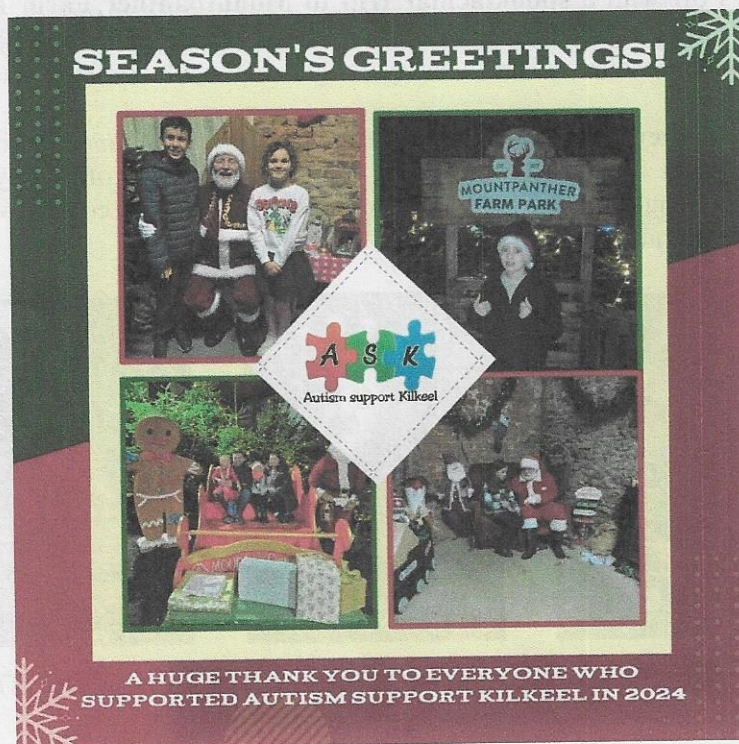
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To round off the Halloween holidays, we held a unique **Woodland Coding Workshop** in *Mourne Park* for young people aged 11–18. Led by **Philip from Flickernet**, participants had the opportunity to **build and code their own radio transmitter**, which they proudly took home. This hands-on experience combined outdoor exploration with STEM learning, sparking curiosity and confidence in a truly magical setting.

Our Christmas celebrations began early this year with a festive breakfast held on Friday, November 29th at The Diamonds Restaurant in Warrenpoint. The event welcomed a group of 25 mums, offering a warm and joyful atmosphere to kick off the holiday season. Everyone enjoyed a delicious full cooked breakfast, with laughter and conversation shared around the table. It was a cherished moment to relax and unwind before the Christmas madness began—an opportunity to connect, reflect, and embrace the spirit of togetherness.



The season continued with a magical Christmas Experience on December 1st at Mountpanther Farm Park, where 160 attendees enjoyed festive activities including a photo opportunity with Santa Claus. The day was filled with excitement, laughter, and memory-making in a truly enchanting setting.



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We also hosted a vibrant Christmas Funday at the *IncredABLE Mourn*e Centre, featuring a range of engaging activities for all ages. For the children, the absolute highlight was meeting the animals from Wee Bugs & Beasties—sparking curiosity, excitement, and lots of giggles. Meanwhile, for our dedicated committee members, meeting the mischievous Grinch added a hilarious twist to the day, proving that even the grumpiest holiday guest couldn't dampen the festive spirit!



To round off our celebrations, on Sunday, December 22nd, we organized a special trip to Cheeky Monkeys for our younger members. The children enjoyed a fun-filled morning of play, while the adults relaxed with tea, coffee, and a selection of yummy treats. It was the perfect way to bring everyone together before Christmas, blending energy and laughter with moments of calm and connection.

As the festive season came to a close, we reflected on the joy, connection, and community spirit that each event brought to life. From shared breakfasts and magical outings to creative fun and playful adventures, every moment was a testament to the strength and warmth of our group. We are deeply grateful to all who participated, supported, and helped make these celebrations so special. Here's to another year of togetherness, laughter, and unforgettable memories

ASK ANNUAL FAMILY FUN DAY

This year's Family Fun Day was held on Saturday 31st August at the grounds of **Dunnaman FC**, who generously provided the venue free of charge. Their support helped us welcome over families with open arms and create a joyful, inclusive afternoon for all.

Entry was free to all members, and the event was designed to ensure SEN children and their siblings could enjoy every moment. Tokens were distributed on arrival, giving children access to a **Kids Meal and Ice Cream Cone**—a small gesture that brought big smiles.

We were delighted to offer a wide range of sensory-friendly and exciting attractions, including:

- **Wee Bugs & Beasties** – always a favourite, with hands-on creepy crawly encounters

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- **Funfair Rides** – thrilling and accessible for all ages
- **Belfast PlayBus** – a vibrant mobile play space tailored for inclusive fun
- **Exploris Aquarium on Tour** – bringing the wonders of the sea to Kilkeel
- **Geology Rocks** – a new addition this year – providing Archery and toasting marshmallows over an open fire!
- **GeeGee's Bouncy Castles** – encouraging jumping, bouncing and crawling.
- **Lorna's Fantasy Faces** – children could become their favourite character for a day



A raffle was held on the day, with prizes kindly donated by local businesses. The funds raised helped cover event costs and ensured we could offer a memorable experience to every family



We extend heartfelt thanks to **Dunnaman FC** for the use of their grounds, and to all our volunteers, entertainers, and local supporters. Your generosity and enthusiasm made this day possible. Special thanks also to the families who joined us—we're proud to celebrate community, connection, and courage with you.

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Annual Christmas Dinner

We wrapped up 2024 with our cherished Annual Parents' Christmas Dinner at the Kilmorey Arms Hotel in Kilkeel—a tradition that continues to bring joy, connection, and a sense of celebration to our community. The evening was filled with laughter, heartfelt conversations, and festive cheer, offering families a well-deserved moment to relax and reflect together. It's a wonderful way to close the year, honouring the strength and spirit of our parents while looking ahead with hope and gratitude.



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Autism Support Kilkeel Centre

Throughout the year ending 31st December 2024, the centre saw a significant increase in activity and engagement. This was driven by the expansion of therapy services, the continued delivery of monthly parent support meetings, a series of targeted workshops. These offerings have contributed to the centre being consistently and meaningfully utilised by families across our community.

The centre has been well maintained by the usual volunteers. Thanks to our members involved in this activity.

Centre Improvement Feasibility Study

Our Garden, completed in 2023, quickly became a cherished space for many of our families. In 2024, thanks to further improvements and thoughtful enhancements, we were able to offer the garden for **booked individual family sessions** throughout the year. This provided a calm, inclusive environment where children could explore at their own pace, and families could enjoy quality time together in a safe and sensory-friendly setting.

Membership

On December 31st, 2024 membership of the private group was 124; the group has accepted 16 new families, from Kilkeel, Rostrevor, Warrenpoint, Hilltown, Ballymartin, Kilcoo Newcastle, in the past year, and we extend a very warm welcome to them. Membership of our public group reached the amazing figure of 922 members.

In 2024, our charity continued to play a vital role in supporting families across the community, with a strong emphasis on tailored interventions for children with additional needs. Through a combination of therapeutic services, inclusive activities, and emotional support, we worked closely with families to meet individual needs and foster resilience.

Autism Support Kilkeel (ASK) is a community-led charity dedicated to empowering individuals on the autism spectrum and their families. With a focus on enhancing quality of life, ASK delivers a wide range of tailored support services and therapies—designed to meet diverse needs, foster inclusion, and promote emotional and developmental wellbeing.

These services may include equine therapy, occupational therapy, music therapy, and sensory integration therapy—all designed to promote social inclusion, build confidence, and support pathways toward future opportunities such as employment, education, and access to community resources

In addition to its therapeutic services, ASK actively organizes fully inclusive events that foster social connection, community participation, and a sense of belonging for families. Our ongoing commitment to raising awareness and supporting families is reflected in our visible presence across the community and the practical resources we continue to provide—ensuring that no family feels isolated or overlooked.

Financial Review

Financial Performance

Financial Performance in the year to December 2023 has resulted in a surplus of expenditure over income of £6,318.35

Income

Income receipts for the year totalled £54,600.30. The year to December 31st, 2024 included a Halifax Foundation grant of £9520, Digit MC grant of £400 and the Warrenpoint Harbour Authority grant of £500. Easy fundraising donations of £20.27, and the reminder income was made up of members of the community running fundraisers for the charity.

The group's income is generally healthy but we are concerned about a shortfall in cash donations in the future as more people turned to contactless payment amid fears over the use of cash during the pandemic.

Fundraising Income for the year to December 2024 was £3715.98 compared to £5610.91 to the same date last year. The committee recognises that due to the global pandemic it has been a challenging external environment for fundraising. Over the past year we have had to review our strategies, invest in new approaches and respond to changes in data protection legislation.

Donations increased in 2024, thanks to the incredible support from members of the public and the inspiring efforts of two dedicated dads who ran the Belfast Marathon to raise funds on our behalf. Incoming donations totalled £10,319.86 compared to £7097.51 last year.

Other income was generated through parents' contributions for events and therapies provided by the group which totalled £18,913.20.

There are so many people that have helped us raise money, donated or sponsored us to name individually but as a group we are extremely thankful and grateful for all their support, as someone once said **"it takes a village to raise a child"** this is never truer than when you have a child with special needs.

Expenditure

Expenditure for the year totalled £48,281.95 an increase on the previous year £38,894.47. This was mainly due to bespoke therapies for the children with complex needs and events provided.

During 2024 we found ourselves in the privileged position to be able to give back to our community. We were able to donate to two local causes. Giving back is about contributing what you can and making a positive impact on the lives of others. Together, we can create a more compassionate and thriving society.

Administrative & General was higher for the year to December 31st, 2024 (£2,327.75) than the year December 31st, 2023 (£1,625.84). This expenditure is due to Vat and Microsoft software fees, Youth Action Annual Membership and Annual Fees on our Credit card account.

Registered Office: 204 Carrigenagh Road, Kilkeel, Co Down. BT34 4QA
Charity No: NIC102894

Committee expenses of Access NI checks and uniforms provided. Stationary. ASK Lanyards. ASK business cards, Vouchers for leaving gifts for committee members and refreshments costs for our events.

Fundraising Expenditure was £590 at the date of this report. This is a decrease on December 2023 figure of £883.74. This decrease is due to local companies providing complementary spot prizes and vouchers.

It is fair to say that 2024 was again a difficult year for our group we were very worried about having to reduce our services and one of our biggest fears was managing limited funds whilst providing what we hope is life enhancing opportunities for the families identified. Our aim is continuing the outreach to more families in 2025.

Managing charity funds effectively is becoming increasingly important as membership grows.

For membership retention and growth, strategies that enhance the membership experience and engage donors can be beneficial. It's also helpful to develop a community of dedicated members and use membership dues to raise funds, as members can assist with organizational tasks, planning, fundraising, referrals, and network building.

It's vital we stay informed about the latest regulations and best practices for financial management in the charitable sector to alleviate concerns about managing funds with an increasing membership base.

Stock

As of December 31st 2024, the group held a stock of Sensory Equipment valued at £1,000, Go Talk Devices at £537.20 and Weenet Tracking Devices with a value of £623.

Gifts and support of Kind

In assessing the finances and assets of the group it must be noted that the chairperson gave a great deal of support in kind. Many purchases are made and the payment never claimed back: for example, printing, stationery and postage costs, have all been paid for by the chairperson but the cost not claimed despite such a claim being perfectly legitimate.

Members give generously of their time; with the many hours given to preparing and delivering talks, days out, residential breaks, and managing the group, without this its growth and success could not be achieved.

The chairperson wishes to place on record their recognition of and gratitude for all these contributions.

Funds materially in Deficit

As of December 31st 2024, the group had no funds in material deficit

Financial Management and Reserves Policies

The group has a Financial Management Policy which meets the requirements of the Charities Act 2011, the Charity Commission guidelines "Internal Financial Controls for Charities" and "Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice (Revised 2005)

The general Fund is unrestricted and is used for the day –to-day operation of the group.

The group operates with an unrestricted reserve at a level set by the trustees; currently this is £30,000 which equated to approximately 12 months running costs. The reserve is held to allow the Group to offset fluctuations in income receipts and to provide for contingencies.

Reserves are held without any exposure to the stock market.

As of December 31st, 2024, the General Fund had a balance £58,148.64 (compared to £51,830.29 at the same time last year).

While the current unrestricted fund level is above the reserve, we feel it is prudent in the current economic climate; maintaining a substantial reserve will better allow the group to meet the funding challenges which the wider economic situation may impose. We also note that securing external funding is becoming increasingly difficult as sponsor and grant making bodies are forced to address their own funding issues.

Approved and adopted by a meeting of the Executive Committee on October 21st, 2025 and signed on their behalf.



Olive Donnan
Chairperson