



ANNUAL REPORT

AUTUS 2018



“

There is a place in this world for everyone and I am very proud to be connected with an organisation who is really moving mountains to make this ideal, real.

”

Eleanor Fisk, Chair

We would like to thank our local and referral partners for their continued support throughout the year. We are particularly grateful to All Inclusive Training, A2nd Voice, Lambeth Autism Group, Croydon JCP, Croydon Autism Service and DWP Young People's Community Partners.

It's nice to be able to do stuff in an environment where I don't have to worry about performing for a neurotypical world.



0	INSURANCE	£0	0	0
0	FOOD	£1	0	0
0	HEALTH/ MEDICAL	£0	0	0
0	PET	£0	1	0
0	ENTERTAINMENT	£0	5	0
0	EDUCATION	£0	0	0
0	DEBT/ SAVING	£0	0	0



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Chair's Statement

Well, **Autus** reached its 5th year in 2017, and what a year it has been! The best performance since that 2013 inception.



As a trustee it has been heartening listening to all the updates from the various successful projects this year; Sandbox, MoneySmart and Prism to mention, but a few.....

Encouragingly we have received grant funding for many of these projects and have been able to generate sufficient income to cover the costs of us running the ever-popular Social Job Club. These successful projects in combination with opening our office based in the heart of Croydon, have enabled us to reach new people and build important local partnerships.

We received wide recognition over the year, culminating in us winning the London Youth Awards, and this has led to an increase in referrals. This means there is continuing work to do raising funding to meet the growing need for our personalised and flexible support.

I would like to extend a huge thank you to our CEO, Donna Thompson for all the tireless work she does in pursuing funding opportunities and our Employment Engagement Manager Jo Ivers for the networking and recruiting of employers she dedicates her time to; both are essential and complex tasks for Autus requiring great motivation and tenacity!

We are very fortunate to have a focused and committed staff team of Autism experts, tutors, mentors and technologists who are constantly thinking of new ways to support and motivate our learners with our innovative environments and programmes. Thank you for your hard work!

Finally, well done to all those service users who have wholeheartedly embraced the Autus "mission" and who show dedication, patience and positivity in their work to improve their skills and progress to sustainable employment. It was a great pleasure to see one service

user achieve a Jack Petchey Award in November 2017 as testimony of this.

Thank you also to all the trustees who give of their time, knowledge and experience to support all the practical work that continues.

There is a place in this world for everyone and I am very proud to be connected with an organisation who is really moving mountains to make this ideal, real.

Thank you and good luck for the forthcoming year.

Eleanor Fisk, Chair



Core Funding from Mercer's Charitable Foundation

We attribute much of our success in 2017 to our ability to focus our time and efforts on developing our curriculum and creating innovative, personalised programmes which effectively prepare our service users for employment.



If you get something wrong while doing one of the courses with an adviser, there isn't that moment of shame or embarrassment that you would have in school for getting called out for getting something wrong.

Receiving core funding to meet our CEO's costs was instrumental in us achieving key organisational objectives including:

- Increasing revenue through grant funding, selling programmes and commissioning
- Designing new skills development programmes and projects to engage young people
- Commencing work on the London Youth Quality Assurance Framework

- Developing our social media strategy
- Improving inward referral and other key 'learner journey' processes
- Developing and strengthening partnerships

We are grateful to Mercer's Charitable Foundation for taking the time to understand Autus's unique approach to skills development for Autistic young people and for supporting our growth in 2017.

Sandbox Project

Flagship (more detail later)

Our game design project Sandbox was our flagship programme for 2017/18. We brought together over 25 young Autistic people to design and develop a prototype of a computer game for Autistic school children.

This project represented a new approach for Autus in that our goals of skills development, confidence building and securing work remained but we wanted to test if these could be achieved in a context different to our core training programmes. The context for this was Youth Social Action and thanks to funding from London Community Foundation we mobilised our technically adept service users and set them the challenge to

1. Share their thoughts and experiences on the difficulties they faced as school children
2. Use these to inform decision making on a game idea
3. Collaborate with the support of an IT professional to design a game
4. Work as a team to develop a prototype from scratch

We are delighted with the outcomes of this project. Outcomes included:

- Increased confidence
- In depth discussion and open sharing about school experiences including bullying and the impact that it had on participants
- Learning about game design process and project life cycle
- Individuals were given leadership roles in teams of coding, graphics and testing
- 6 job interviews
- 1 job achieved (programmer for an IT company) and sustained to date
- 663 volunteer hours on the project
- Prototype of game designed to build organisational skills for Autistic school children

The Year's Projects Review



PRISM

The Prism Enterprise Project was devised in response to course evaluations where people requested advice and guidance on self-employment.

The NatWest Skills and Opportunities Fund provided a grant to enable us to design and deliver this programme to 24 Autistic people who have a skill they can turn into a business.

Our design team have used the OCN Level 2 Qualification in First Steps to Enterprise to develop a comprehensive programme that introduces participants to key areas of knowledge and practical support to set up their own business.

The bespoke space created in our virtual learning environment provides participants with 'real estate' to set up their shop and learn about:

- identifying their customers/clients
- marketing their business
- legal and financial considerations
- effectively running a business from home

In the coming months we will bring in outside expertise and mentors to provide the best support to participants.

Laptop Loan Scheme

Boshier Hinton Foundation supported Autus with much needed funding to enable us to set up a Laptop Loan Scheme.

This funding enabled us to purchase 5 high spec laptops which we use to loan to learners who do not have adequate equipment to participate in our programme. This has had a significant impact on increasing participation in our programmes.



Money Smart

Thanks to some funding from the MSE Charity Innovation Fund we worked with our partner accounting and finance experts All Inclusive Training to design a new project to help participants foster money management skills.

The Money Smart project was a fun and motivating personal finance programme where they were immersed in lessons, roleplays and simulations to help them better come to grips with financial scenarios and how to deal with them.

Over an 8 week period 24 people covered topics in the OCN Level 2 Personal Money Management Unit such as budgeting, understanding credit and different types of services offered by banks. The purpose built virtual learning environment brought these lessons to life with games such as 'Budgeting Poker' and 'Piggy Bank Football' and the platform enabled us to simulate role plays including discussing products with bank personnel.

Summer Programme 2017

With a small grant from London Youth CVC we were able to design a remote desert island which we named 'Atoll Island' for our summer fun 6 week programme.

With an island survival theme some of the participants had an interesting context to work on 3D design, team work, problem solving and social skills. Others chose to do our more structured website design course and meet the challenge to create a simple website by the end of the

project. People chose to attend what most appealed to them and on the final day of the course everyone came together (along with a couple of special guests) to tour the island and view the results of everyone's work.

We had fantastic feedback on this summer programme with comments that participants wished it could be longer! We hope to host summer fun programmes annually.

Springboard

A small grant from the Peter Harrison Foundation led to Springboard, our Surrey based short programme.

Our team had just as much fun designing this Bear Grylls type outward bound adventure island as the participants had when they braved the challenges the programme presented. With a team working skills theme, 15 participants worked their way through jungle survival, obstacle courses and group activities to team to reach the end. Several participants had their learning accredited in either Employability Skills or IT User Skills.

ASPIRE

We were delighted to achieve funding from Vanquis Bank / London Community Foundation to deliver our innovative programme in the Southwark area.

We have only just started this programme in which 6 people will undertake a qualification and work with our Employment Engagement Manager to support them in achieving their job goals.

We covered important topics at our Job Clubs such as interview and communication techniques and discussed personal interests.

Clickstart

This project is in the design stage and is for individuals in the borough of Lambeth.

Thanks to some funding from the Lambeth Community Fund we are creating a bespoke island to help participants build employability, IT skills and confidence as well as take active steps towards work. We attended the Lambeth Autism Fayre where many young people got hands on with an avatar to give them insight into what this programme has to offer.

We look forward to delivering this programme in the new year.

Summer Programme 2018

Another programme that we have in development following some funding from the Masonic Charitable Foundation is our Summer 2018 Cooking with Kitty programme.

Our summer programmes are always highly imaginative, engaging and motivational, and designed to build confidence and social communication skills. The environment is currently under construction and promises to be even better than last year's offering.

We are grateful to receive funding from Croydon Partnership, Woodward Charitable Trust and other anonymous donations which have enabled us to provide bespoke support to individuals with additional needs.

The dialogue I've had has helped me to outline and understand some things about myself that were not clear before.



Spotlight on Sandbox

The Sandbox Project was a new way of achieving our outcomes by getting our service users to take an active and leadership role, utilising and developing their technical skills rather than having them simply attend workshops and tutorials as beneficiaries.

This project got them applying their skills (some achieved in formal settings others self-taught) to a live context and where gaps in knowledge were identified they were filled.

The project revealed a number of things to us

- **Gaming knowledge:** the knowledge of participants was not limited to advanced player level but to the extent that they knew and understood the game design process
- **IT and technical skills:** the knowledge and skills base was beyond our expectations; we had a large number of graphic designers keen to participate and programmers who had easily transferable skills with working knowledge of industry software Unity, Photoshop, Paint and tools such as GitHub, Gimp and Discord.
- **Confidence:** Those individuals who were given leadership roles were the ones who secured the most job interviews and jobs.



- **Ready to Work:** We were surprised at motivation levels of participants (some of whom have been unemployed for a number of years) to contribute their skills and time to their project on a voluntary basis. Many have requested another phase to develop the prototype further. People attended meetings on time and participated using different collaborative technologies, some of which they were new to. They were required to record their time and adopt behaviours befitting of a professional environment. We had absolutely no challenges in these areas.

The vast majority of our registered service users are interested in a career in the IT industry. In the absence of much needed work experience with IT companies we consider that delivering projects like Sandbox provides the sort of exposure needed to get people work ready.



Finance Report

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES (INCORPORATING THE INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT) YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2018

		Total Funds 2018 £	Total Funds 2017 £
INCOMING RESOURCES	Note		
Incoming Resources from generating funds:			
Donations		39,468	
Grants	2	92,395	101,846
			25,582
Other training activities		9,406	14,771
TOTAL INCOMING RESOURCES		141,269	142,199
RESOURCES EXPENDED			
Charitable activities		-114,277	-133,307
Governance costs	4		0
TOTAL RESOURCES EXPENDED		-114,277	-133,307
NET INCOMING RESOURCES FOR THE PERIOD/NET INCOME FOR THE PERIOD		26,992	8,892
RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS			
Total funds brought forward		3,645	
Gains and losses of fixed assets		0	
For the charity's own use			4,945
			-1,300
TOTAL FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD		30,637	3,645

BALANCE SHEET 31 MARCH 2018	Note	2018 £	£	2017 £	£
FIXED ASSETS					
Tangible assets		1,524		1,906	
CURRENT ASSETS					
Debtors	6	0		9,706	
Cash at bank		29,491		4,221	
		<u>31,015</u>		<u>15,833</u>	
CREDITORS: Amounts falling due within one year	7				
		<u>378</u>		<u>0</u>	
NET CURRENT ASSETS			30,637		15,833
TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES			30,637		15,833
NET ASSETS			30,637		15,833
FUNDS					
Income & expenditure b//f			3,645		
	9				6,941
Net surplus			26,992		8,892
TOTAL FUNDS	8		*30,637		15,833

*£26086 are restricted/designated funds.

The financial statements have been prepared under the historical cost convention and in accordance with applicable United Kingdom accounting standards, the Statement of Recommended Practice "Accounting and Reporting by Charities" issued in March 2005 (SORP 2005) and the Companies Act 2006. These financial statements were approved by the trustees on the 20 July 2018 and are signed on their behalf by: Nigel Newbutt

Case Study

Luke



(seeking work experience)

Luke came to Autus as a shy and quiet young man of sixteen in March 2017. During the past year he has participated in a range of one to one and group programmes and has grown from strength to strength. Luke started with one to one support and mentoring sessions where he identified he wanted to

- Build on his language and communication skills
- Increase his abilities with IT
- Develop greater personal independence in travel and social activities
- Increase his confidence

Initially Luke was dropped to our office in Croydon by his mother and had support with technology from one of our mentors. As time passed Luke was able to travel independently to and from Croydon with ease.

During his initial sessions Luke was tasked with creating a Power Point Presentation on one of his major interests, Science Fiction.

Subsequently, by now having met a few other team members, he delivered a live version of this presentation in the virtual learning environment to staff and learners. Although he admitted to being nervous, his manner was calm and confident and he fielded questions with ease.

Luke progressed onto working towards an accredited IT qualification for which he is building a strong portfolio of evidence.

Early this year Luke joined the Springboard Programme; his first participation in a group activity. He has been commended for his positive contribution, team working and problem-solving skills.

***Luke's mum says:
'We are delighted
with the progress
Luke is making
with Autus'***



Dawn Duffin, Head of Learning and Developments says:

'My own assessment on the progress Luke has made is that his confidence has grown beyond all recognition and he is an absolute pleasure to work with. In recognition of the progress he has made and the effort he has put into his work Luke has been nominated for a Jack Petchey Award'.

Case Study

James

(now employed)



James has been a long-term service user of Autus having received coaching support (focuses on building his confidence and employability skills) and IT mentoring (support from an IT professional to get him closer to work in the IT industry) since 2016. There has never been any doubt of his master grasp of coding – he had taught himself a number of coding languages by his teens. An IT professional described his code as being ‘very well designed at the macro level’.

This year we received funding for the Sandbox project with a goal of designing and developing a computer game and we invited James to join. James was willing to join the Sandbox course, even though game development is not

his primary focus. We encouraged James to take a leadership role in this project as we considered this would help him develop further vocational skills and prepare him for working in the IT sector. Not only were his skills in Unity of tremendous value in developing the prototype game, he operated as an effective team leader supporting others and taking decisions in the project.

Without doubt his confidence and leadership skills grew beyond all recognition during his participation in the Sandbox Project and we were delighted to hear in March that he was successful at securing a full time job as a Programmer for an IT company (despite it being a major set back to the Sandbox project!)

Andrew, Project Manager:

‘James was a great team player with Sandbox, supportive, encouraging and very quick to take up the responsibility of leading the programming aspect of the game despite this not being an area that he is comfortable with or particularly enjoys.

I think his confidence grew during the course of the project which enabled him to move from taking a bit of a back seat to leading and sharing ideas and advice to others on the project’.

James, Project Mentor

‘...the amount of effort James went to! His coding knowledge was incredibly useful and basically enabled the use of Unity in the first place; the engine may be user friendly but to achieve anything one still needs a basic grasp of the associated programming languages’.

Case Study

Steven

(now employed)



Steven started work with Autus in May 2017 participating in an employability skills programme. Steven has qualifications in mechanics and he was very clear from the outset that his employment goal was to work in this industry. We used this as the context for his employability skills development and gave him the task of using our virtual learning environment to create a 3D vehicle to demonstrate to others the inner workings of a car.

We introduced Steven to our Employer Engagement Manager Jo Ivers to discuss work opportunities in his chosen area and provide 1:1 support in job seeking. He did this alongside his employability skills session using the virtual world.

Over the following months, Steven started to increase his activities with Jo. Jo arranged for him to attend a motor building class and he did this willingly. With some encouragement, he was also able to attend the 'Get Hired' event delivered by Transport for London (TfL).

On a number of occasions Jo set Steven job search related tasks which

he felt were 'too hard'. However, with some encouragement and support, Steven was willing to go a little way out of his comfort zone in order to make progress.

Keen to look at more employment opportunities, Steven joined Jo for a job hunting day. They visited several car showrooms and mechanics in his area to leave a CV and talk about his skills and experience to date. The hope was that if prospective employers met Steven and had a chance to see his enthusiasm and commitment to work, then they may be more inclined to offer him a work opportunity.

Initially this was not easy for Steven to do. Although he was very enthusiastic about the prospect of a work opportunity, he was not willing to say much to the employer at first, beyond a simple greeting. However, as the day progressed and with some additional coaching, Steven became more comfortable with explaining his skills, experience and qualifications. So when given the cue by Jo, he was able to ask appropriate questions and also answer the questions he was asked.

There have been a few situations which have not progressed according to plan, for example, he experienced issues with parts of his building project not aligning as expected, or job offers not coming to fruition and Steven required additional support and encouragement to persevere. In addition to applying for jobs and undertaking his projects, over several months the team worked to help Steven to develop in the areas of:

- problem solving
- communicating more effectively
- remaining calm and positive in challenging situations
- identifying attitudes and traits to avoid in the workplace
- responding positively to feedback

In January 2018, Steven attended another careers event organised by TfL. Although the event was very oversubscribed with many people frustrated about the 2 hour wait for entry Steven remained enthusiastic, smiley and positive. Whereas last time he relied on Jo to initiate conversations, on this occasion, he independently approached the stalls and spoke with staff about the jobs on offer. This event was a great opportunity to see how much Steven had developed in his confidence and communication skills.

He was able to secure an interview with Kwik Fit and was offered a role as a Tyre Fitter, which he started in May 2018.

Steven has been nominated for the Jack Petchey Award, which recognises the strengths, determination, contributions and milestones of young people.

Case Study

Heather



(job seeker with high level technical skills)

Heather achieved well in school and went on to university studying physics but was unable to continue due to health issues. At that time Heather was referred to Autus by her Disability Advisor at Croydon JCP.

Since joining Autus she has participated in a number of short programmes designed to build her confidence and employability skills. In addition to commencing an employability skills qualification she has made a positive contribution to Social Job Club, the Summer Programme, Polish UP and MoneySmart during which she stood out to Autus staff as someone with

an aptitude for and keen interest in technology and the ability to support and encourage others.

Heather's involvement with Autus only takes up some of her time. She has been involved in Scouting since about twelve years of age and continues to be an active part of the Scout Network (18-25). She also volunteers with Go Wild With Us UK Forest School, which caters for a range of ages from 2 years to young adult, including those with disabilities. These provide Heather with a wealth of transferable skills that she can bring to employment.

Heather continues to grow as an Autus peer mentor who is ready to lend a hand to her teammates at the Social Job Club. Her advanced technology skills are an asset to our programmes, and her natural ability to lend support has continued to develop her toward her full potential. As a result, we invited her to be a volunteer mentor on our new Click Start programme which will give her exposure to operating in a professional capacity. We hope this 'internship' will provide the work experience she needs to boost her CV and enable her to confidently progress on to higher education or sustainable work.



Outcomes/Statistics



**New
Referrals
68**



**Qualifications
Started/
Achieved 13**



Jobs 9



**Volunteer Hours
(Sandbox)
663**



**Interviews
Over 42**
(but not everyone tells us!)

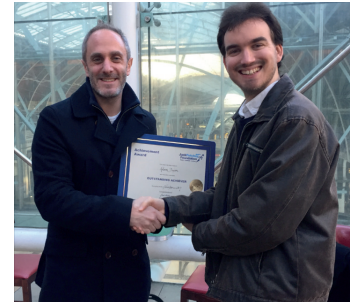


**Work Experience
& Volunteering
23**

January 2018
marked 5 years since
Autus's inception.

The organisation
started with a £5,000
donation from a
parent of an Autistic
young adult who
needed support (and
is now in sustained
full time paid work).

We have made
significant progress
since then and this
year's achievements
include:



- 2018 Winners
London Youth
Awards –
Employability
Category
- Accepted onto
the Jack Petchey
Award Scheme
- 2017 Finalists
Autism
Professional
Awards
- Achieved OCN
London Centre
Status
- Moving to
Croydon based
office

Achievements



Autus is a small charity creating exciting opportunities for growth, learning and work for young people with Autistic Spectrum Conditions.

Registered Charity No. 1153397

Using our innovative and engaging virtual environment we offer a range of programmes and activities to help build confidence and develop social communication, digital and employability skills.



www.autus.org.uk

Autus

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