

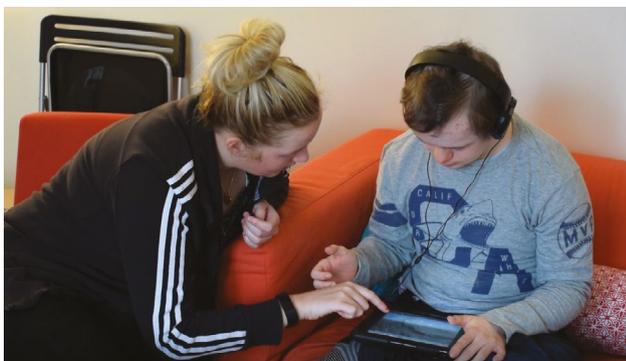
SPRING/SUMMER 2022

Share

Practice, Knowledge
and Innovation

Scottish
autism | Centre for
Practice
Innovation
WHERE AUTISTIC PEOPLE
ARE VALUED

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From the Editor



Dr Joe Long
Research and Policy Lead,
Scottish Autism

Welcome to the Spring 2022 issue of *Share* magazine.

This edition includes a diverse array of topics. Carrie Ballantyne's article shares some of the issues that can arise when police in Scotland engage with autistic people, and outlines some of the training needs that have been identified among Police Scotland officers. We meet Holly Sutherland, a PhD student at Edinburgh University who will be working with Scottish Autism to explore the communication preferences of autistic people, and we interview Dr Rebecca Wood about her exciting new book on autistic teachers. Finally, we remember Dinah Murray, an influential and passionate advocate for autistic people who sadly passed away last year. Among Dinah's many achievements was the theory of monotropism in autistic thinking.

It has been a busy time at Scottish Autism's Centre for Practice Innovation, our hub for bringing together research, policy and practice development.

In collaboration with Fife Health and Social Care Partnership we will be exploring ways to deliver accessible and appropriate mental health support through our One Stop Shop in Fife, addressing an issue highlighted in a previous issue of *Share* by Sonny Hallet. We have also continued to provide online support through our Affinity programme, 'Click and Connect' social activities and

post-diagnostic support services. These innovations are all being rigorously evaluated to ensure that successful elements can be replicated in future.

We are delighted that the Scottish Government has now begun consultation on an autism, learning disability and neurodiversity bill. Particularly important has been the commitment to hear from as many perspectives as possible and Scottish Autism looks forward to seeing the bill take shape. We will continue to advocate for the inclusion of a commissioner to champion the rights of autistic people and to hold policy-makers and services to account in delivering on those rights.

In May 2022 we will host our twice-postponed conference, entitled 'Behind the Mask'. The online conference will explore ways that we can support the wellbeing of autistic people based on acceptance of diverse thinking and communication styles. We will hear both lived experience and research perspectives on the ways in which autistic people feel that they have to fit into societal norms and expectations (known as 'masking') and the detriments to wellbeing that often arise as a result. Since we first mooted this conference theme two and a half years ago, a wealth of new work has been published on this topic and we were pleased to include the work of Amy Pearson in the last issue. We are sure that the conference will be an occasion for reflection, dialogue and debate on the topic and hope that many *Share* readers will be able to join us for the online event.

Autism Understanding among Police Officers in Scotland



Dr Carrie Ballantyne
Lecturer,
School of Education
and Social Services,
University of the West
of Scotland

It is not uncommon for an autistic person to come into contact with the criminal justice system, either as a victim of crime or a suspect. However, a recently accumulated body of research shows that autistic people's experiences within the Criminal Justice System are largely negative. It is therefore vital that the Police have relevant training, knowledge and awareness of autism to allow for inclusive practices and an appropriate framework for working with neurodivergent people. Our recent study based at the University of the West of Scotland aimed to look at how police officers felt about their autism knowledge and interactions with autistic people and where they felt better understanding would help.

Characteristics of autism make people particularly vulnerable to misunderstandings during different stages of police interactions. For example:

- 1) During 'First response' situations, stress and anxiety may exacerbate difficulties with perspective taking, or provoke undesired responses (such as aggressive behaviour) leading to further anxiety. Damian Milton's 'double empathy problem' also suggests that non-autistic police officers may have difficulty understanding the perspective of autistic people, making it difficult to interpret their intentions. Sensory difficulties to bright lights and loud sounds may cause further stress in a first response situation, if the responding officer is not appropriately trained.
- 2) If an autistic person is taken into custody, changes in routine and environment are likely to be traumatic and stressful, particularly for those with sensory issues. Research by Laura Crane and colleagues at University College London found that autistic

suspects are often not accommodated in custody suitably. Difficulties understanding the way that information is communicated may mean that people misunderstand their rights and cautions. Restraining suspects, to reduce harm to self or others, can also lead to adverse reactions, with police often having inadequate training, environments or tools to effectively engage with autistic detainees.

- 3) Interview processes are particularly difficult for autistic people. Difficulties in recalling the temporal order of experiences or context can be particularly problematic and may even lead to somebody unintentionally incriminating themselves. Difficulties with social interaction can also be a challenge: research reports autistic people giving responses that they believe to be socially desirable or agreeing with inaccurate statements given by a police officer in order to please them without realising the consequences.

“ There has to be opportunity for disclosure of diagnosis and for the officer to then act appropriately, with awareness of difficulties that people may experience. ”

Recognition of autism and autistic traits may be difficult for police officers when initially attending the scene of a crime. This means that there has to be opportunity for disclosure of diagnosis and for the officer to then act appropriately, with awareness of difficulties that people may experience. Autistic people often feel negatively stereotyped by disclosing their diagnosis, which may be due to lack of understanding. Frontline officers receive little training on autism. Previous research has shown that police officers can misunderstand the differences between developmental disabilities and mental health difficulties, for example.

| Interaction and Number of Respondents | % Responded as Easy, Neutral or Difficult |
|---|---|
| Obtaining a written statement (n=58) | 50% found difficult |
| Interviewing (n=37) | 35% found difficult |
| Managing distress (n =108) | 59% found difficult |
| Managing unexpected changes to procedures (n = 115) | 46% found difficult |
| Explaining procedures (n = 68) | 42% found difficult |
| Managing sensory issues (n=42) | 40% found difficult |
| Managing memory issues (n=67) | 36% found difficult |
| Helping to focus, engage and/or cooperate (n=86) | 52% found difficult |
| Meeting communication needs (n=108) | 82% found difficult |
| Building and maintaining rapport (n=110) | 18% found easy |
| Providing adequate interviewing facilities and environment (n=42) | 19% found easy |
| Finding appropriate support (n=35) | 69% found easy |
| Carrying out identification parades (n=1) | found difficult |
| Understanding ASD (n=112) | 18% found easy |

The table above summarises the different interactions and if officers found them easy, neutral or difficult.

N, relates to the number of respondents in each category.

These differ as not all police officers take part in all types of interactions.

Our own study used an online survey to investigate the experience and views of 119 police officers from Police Scotland around working with autistic people. These were comprised of 15 Custody Officers, 8 Police Inspectors, 8 Superintendents, 24 Community Support Officers, 10 Police Sergeants and 54 Police Constables. This questionnaire asked officers what they found easy or difficult in their interactions with autistic people.

Overall, only 35% of officers asked were satisfied with how they had worked with autistic individuals, pointing to a need for better understanding of autism and autistic people's needs.

Officers were also asked what the barriers were that they faced in their role in interactions with autistic people and what they felt was good practice. Officers not only cited a lack of training but also the type of training they received as a barrier to better practice. Some felt that online training dealt in abstract information and that more bespoke, specialist training is often only given to those who are high ranking. Other barriers related to time constraints and also catering to autism-specific needs, particularly in custody suites and interview practice.

However, all is not lost as there does appear to be awareness of autism and the variability of autistic traits and behaviours with the Scottish Police Force. When asked about what police officers felt was good practice, autism awareness was a theme, with officers reporting that they understood that particular behaviours and misunderstandings may be a reflection of a person's communication style rather than the individual being difficult or uncooperative. Another theme that emerged when discussing good practice was that police officers knew how to access autism-specific support.

The study showed that although there is still much progress to be made, especially within training, there is a movement and a recognition by police officers that more inclusive approaches to working with autistic people are needed. A move away from online training packs, to more immersive autism training could be one way to improve. The research also suggested that Police Scotland is somewhat fragmented in the way that it operates, and so sharing good practice amongst different divisions will be imperative to improving the way officers engage with autistic people.

Researching Autistic Communication Preferences

An interview with Holly Sutherland



Holly Sutherland
PhD Candidate,
University of Edinburgh

Since the Centre for Practice Innovation was founded in 2014, Scottish Autism has been building a number of research collaborations with university partners in Scotland. In 2020 we were delighted to receive a PhD studentship from Medical Research Scotland in collaboration with the Salvesen Mindroom Research Centre (SMRC) at Edinburgh University. The work centers on effective communication between autistic people and is being undertaken by PhD Student Holly Sutherland. Share caught up with Holly to find out more.

Share: Holly, can you tell us a little bit about yourself and how you came to be interested in autism research?

I'm a linguist by training – my previous degrees were both in linguistics, where I looked at metaphor comprehension in autism. My research now is on social communication in autism more generally, though, and my work sits somewhere at the intersection of psychology and sociology.

I was diagnosed as autistic in early secondary school, but didn't receive much formal support or explanation of what exactly that meant. So it was only when the topic of autism came up in my undergraduate lectures that I thought, "Oh, people have probably done some research on this, huh?". As it turns out, quite a lot of people have! I was fascinated by the insights the research provided into how my own (and other people, both autistic and non-autistic) brain worked, and why. At the same time, though, some of the research was very dehumanizing, or made me feel like it hadn't really grasped what being autistic is like – and I felt that I had an opportunity, as an autistic researcher, to try and change that.

Share: Can you summarise the topic of the PhD for us?

That's a hard one! The specific research questions I have keep changing, in response to the things I'm finding. But, broadly speaking, I'm looking at autistic social communication through a sociological lens rather than a medical one – trying to treat the autistic way of communicating as though it's similar to a cultural difference, rather than a disorder or deficit. Hopefully, we can learn a bit more about how autistic people communicate using this approach, and then use these new insights to improve communication between autistic and non-autistic people.

“ I'm looking at autistic social communication through a sociological lens rather than a medical one – trying to treat the autistic way of communicating as though it's similar to a cultural difference, rather than a disorder or deficit. ”

Share: The research builds on existing work at the Salvesen Mindroom Research Centre. Can you tell us about that work and how you will be building upon that?

Some of the previous work by the SMRC has looked at how autistic people communicate with one another. They've found that not only do autistic people enjoy talking to other autistic people, but that autistic people talking to one another are actually as effective at transferring information as non-autistic people talking to one another. It's only when you put autistic and non-autistic people together that the miscommunication starts.

Given we often think of autism as causing problems with communication, this finding is really interesting! It suggests that the problem is not with autistic people alone, but with the interface between autistic and non-autistic people (Damian Milton calls this "the double empathy problem"). So my work is taking this

finding, and trying to work out why this is the case – what is it that’s causing difficulties between autistic and non-autistic people, and why doesn’t it cause difficulties with just autistic people?

Share: How will the partnership with Scottish Autism work, and how do you think your work will help to inform autism support practice?

The partnership with Scottish Autism is really exciting. It’s such a great opportunity to step outside the university environment and stay grounded in the real-world practicalities and potential impacts of my work. It also allows me to work directly with autistic adults with a learning disability, who are underrepresented in autism research.

Starting soon, I’ll be going into some of Scottish Autism’s day services to meet the people who use them, and the staff who work there. I’ll be working with input from staff and supported individuals to decide what further research activities (like interviews, focus groups, or arts-based methods) I do and how I do them. The results from that research will be used to produce some training materials for staff, designed to improve communication between staff and the autistic people they support. Then I’ll be assessing how well that training works.

The aim is to make this a really useful partnership for everyone. I get to benefit from the expertise of the autistic people and the staff that support them at Scottish Autism – and then Scottish Autism and the people who use their services get to benefit from me being able to synthesize that expertise into advice they can use!

Share: Have you already begun any data collection, and have you found anything interesting so far?

I have! I’ve run two focus groups, where I asked other autistic people about their own social communication and how they think it differs from non-autistic people. I was expecting people to talk about tone, words, body language etc., but there was very little discussion of that. Instead, people talked about (amongst a lot of things!) what I’ve called ‘strongly held principles’ – intuitions about how social communication should work, or what the purpose of it should be. These principles included things like conversations having a purpose, every relationship having a unique ‘language’ to it, the importance of social boundaries, and a unique definition of truth/honesty.

These principles are consistent between autistic people (or at least the ones involved in these two groups), but seem to be different to the intuitions non-autistic people have about social communication. This mismatch in intuitions may be a source of some of the difficulty autistic and non-autistic people have interacting with one another, which is a very interesting finding, and one that the future research at Scottish Autism will hopefully expand on!

Share: What do you hope will be the impact of this research in the longer term?

I really hope that, whatever I find, I end up producing something that’s real-world useful – not just to people working in autism support services, but to all professionals who interact with autistic people on a regular basis. I’d love it if I could make these interactions less stressful for autistic people, and less confusing for non-autistic people, by helping us all speak each other’s social languages a little better.

“ I’d like to see more research, especially focused on description and theory-generation, that takes autistic people as we are and asks the question, “What’s happening here?” rather than, “What’s wrong here?” ”

Beyond that, though, I hope modelling a research strategy that involves approaching autistic behavior on its own terms encourages more people to do the same. Given the history of autism research, a lot of the descriptive work we have about autism is very deficit-focused, or assumes that the non-autistic way of doing things is the best and only way. I’d like to see more research, especially focused on description and theory-generation, that takes autistic people as we are and asks the question, “What’s happening here?” rather than, “What’s wrong here?”.

Share: Thanks for sharing your work with us, Holly. We wish you luck and look forward to featuring your findings in a future issue!

Learning from Autistic Teachers

An Interview with Dr Rebecca Wood



Dr Rebecca Wood
Senior Lecturer,
University of East London

In April 2022 a new book, *Learning From Autistic Teachers: How to Be a Neurodiversity-Inclusive School*, will be published by Jessica Kingsley Publishers. Share caught up with Dr Rebecca Wood, the lead editor to find out more.

Share: There is a lot of literature on autistic learners but very little about autistic teachers – what made you decide to focus on this topic for a book?

There is a very big gap in the literature in relation to autistic teachers and disabled teachers generally. As you say, there is an awful lot out there on autistic learners, especially children, much of it from an interventionist perspective. There has been some strong research and good practice in this area, of course, but it's clear that school remains a difficult environment for many autistic children and young people, and that the problems of exclusion remain. I also used to be a teacher myself, and so I often think about that in my research. I was aware that there is very little available that focuses on autistic and otherwise neurodivergent teachers, and so I wanted to address this gap. The book itself stemmed from the Autistic School Staff Project, which I lead, and book chapter authors are all individuals who work or have worked in schools in various roles. I felt it was important to have a diversity of perspectives in the book.

Share: How was your own research a catalyst for this work?

My PhD research, and everything that stemmed from that for a year or two afterwards, focused on autistic children in schools. But I realised that if we are always thinking about the children only, that is just half of the picture. Schools are very hierarchical institutions,

and can be a little closed off, in my experience, with their own systems and routines. Naturally the attention is predominantly on the pupils, as it should be, but these factors combined can mean that there is insufficient reflection on well-being, inclusion and diversity for staff. So in 2019, I started the Autistic School Staff Project (ASSP), while I was doing an ESRC-funded postdoctoral Fellowship at King's College London, with Professor Francesca Happé (also one of the book editors) as my mentor. The project has been through different phases, but a core principle is that we can't expect to achieve inclusion for a diversity of children if we don't have this for staff. So this is my main area of research at the moment.

“ I realised that if we are always thinking about the children only, that is just half of the picture. ”

Share: What particular strengths and insights do you find that autistic teachers bring to education?

There are many! One point to underscore as well is that our project, and the book itself, doesn't just focus on autistic teachers, but autistic school staff in a range of roles in schools: there are teachers, of course, but also learning support assistants, special educational needs co-ordinators, visiting professionals and members of the leadership team. This means that autistic school staff are bringing their strengths, qualities and insights across the whole school. More specifically, autistic school staff have a particular understanding of autistic pupils and those with other additional learning needs, and so can play an important role in facilitating educational inclusion. If they feel able to be open about being autistic (and this is a key and problematic point which is discussed in the book), then they can act as role models to autistic pupils and their parents. But it's not just pupils with additional learning needs who benefit from autistic

teachers, but the whole school community. For example, monotropism (having a strong, in-depth interest and focus) can be an advantage for subject specialism and attention to detail. Autistic teachers are also less likely to be distracted by school politics and the social complexities of the staff room.

“ Autistic school staff have a particular understanding of autistic pupils and those with other additional learning needs, and so can play an important role in facilitating educational inclusion. ”

Share: The book features quite a number of topics and authors, can you give Share readers a flavor of that variety?

The book covers a range of topics and perspectives, including monotropism, issues with sharing diagnosis, dealing with change, mentorship, inclusion, teacher training, autistic strengths and leadership. It also covers intersectionalities in relation to ethnicity, culture, gender and sexuality, for example, and different work environments (e.g. mainstream, special schools) are included. The authors make clear the many hurdles autistic people can experience in the education profession, but also provide some really important recommendations and advice on how to improve this situation.

Share: What do you think unites all these contributions – did any overarching themes or findings emerge when you brought all of this together?

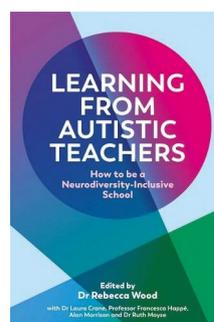
The book was developed from the Autistic School Staff Project, and so I used **our research findings** to inform the planning of the book. It is clear that autistic people can face numerous barriers in the education profession, such as a very significant sensory impact from the school environment, lack of support and understanding, communication and social differences. A key issue is

whether or not they are able to be open about being autistic, and hearing autism discussed in a stigmatising way, for example, can mean that autistic teachers feel unable to share their diagnosis, and by extension ask for the support they need. This can lead to all sorts of other issues, such as having to ‘mask’ (hide autistic identity) at work, mental health issues and exhaustion. By extension, some autistic people go part time, or step back from senior roles, or drop out of the profession altogether. So a key focus of the book is to provide solutions to these issues. The overall message of the book is a very positive one.

Share: What do you hope will be the impact of this book?

I would say that generally, autistic teachers, and other autistic school staff, are very much a hidden population. So even though there has been an increased focus on autism and employment over recent years, there has been very limited attention paid to the school sector. So I think what is the most exciting aspect of the book is the sheer diversity of roles and experiences that are covered. I hope this is the start of a much broader recognition of the needs, rights and strengths of autistic educators, and an understanding of the vital role they play in educational inclusion.

Rebecca Wood would like to extend her thanks to the John and Lorna Wing Foundation who fund the Autistic School Staff Project. Information and free access resources can be found on the **Autistic School Staff Project website**.



‘Learning From Autistic Teachers: How to be a Neurodiversity-Inclusive School’ will be available from 21st April 2022.

Dinah Murray remembered

Dr Joe Long



Dinah Murray 1946-2021

In July of last year we, at Scottish Autism, were saddened to learn of the death of Dr Dinah Murray, an energetic and fierce champion of autistic rights for many years. Dinah's work as a practitioner, researcher and advocate has been influential across the UK and beyond. Her legacy will be felt for years to come.

Dinah's knowledge of autism and autistic people drew on her own lived experience, and her experience as a parent, but it was also formed over several decades as a support professional. Her work was crucial in this regard as she spoke and wrote in a way that resonated with both autistic people and practitioners alike. Such catalysts are vital in building a shared understanding of how autistic people who rely on services can be better empowered and enabled to lead the lives of their choosing.

Dinah's work included campaigning against the abuse of narcoleptic drugs being prescribed to autistic people and advocating for the use of technology in supporting autistic communication. She taught generations of students on Birmingham University's online autism courses, many of whom were support professionals. Several of Scottish Autism's practitioners and managers experienced Dinah's thoughtful teaching there. In 2005 Dinah,

together with Wenn Lawson and Mike Lesser, authored an influential paper on monotropism and attention in autism, discussed in more depth below. The paper was the culmination of Murray's thinking on this topic over the previous decade. The theory has gained further ground in recent years and formed the basis of a memorable event at the Participatory Autism Research Collective's fringe event during Scottish Autism's 50th Anniversary Conference in 2018.

In 2017 the Shirley Foundation's 'National Autism Project' sought to investigate the effectiveness of current autism supports and interventions. After being asked to join the project team, Dinah brought in a panel of autistic advisors to contribute. Following publication of the project's report, *The Autism Dividend*, that panel became the National Autistic Taskforce (NAT). NAT is made up entirely of autistic professionals and advocates. NAT's *An Independent guide to quality care for autistic people* provides a valuable framework for specialist support provision and Scottish Autism frequently signpost professionals and policy-makers to the guide.

In Spring 2019 Scottish Autism invited the National Autistic Taskforce to a 'challenge session' to review Scottish Autism's Ethical Practice framework and our 'Values into Practice' practitioner learning programme. Gaining the critical engagement of autistic professionals was vital to developing the programme, as Charlene Tait recounts:

"Dinah was part of a team from the National Autistic Taskforce who led a challenge session on our practice model. It was one of the most formative experiences that I have had and I valued and appreciated Dinah's sharp insight and support to enable and challenge us to be the best we can be."

Charlene Tait, Deputy CEO, Scottish Autism

We are delighted that the National Autistic Taskforce are currently advising Scottish Autism on improving autistic inclusion in our governance structures and processes along with two other Autistic People's Organisations: Autism Rights Group Highland (ARGH) and Autistic Mutual Aid Society Edinburgh (AMASE).

Dinah was passionate about the need for appropriate communication support for autistic people – the focus of a recent research project at the University of Kent's Tizard Centre. In what proved to be her final years Dinah championed a project known as 'AutNav'. The project comprises development of an app through which autistic people can easily access preferred content, apps, and communication tools on the internet. Through use of a clear and accessible interface, supported people have maximum autonomy to navigate the internet, follow their interests, and communicate with the important people in their lives. The app is being developed by Passio and Scottish Autism has been honoured to facilitate this project and be involved in user testing. The app will add to Dinah's impressive legacy.

We pay tribute to Dinah's incredible life advocating for the rights of autistic people as well as providing professionals with the tools and insights to better realise those rights. Her wisdom and energy will be greatly missed.

Dinah Murray and Monotropism

One of Dinah Murray's most lasting legacies is likely to be the theory of monotropism in autistic thinking. In 2005 Murray, together with Lesser and Lawson, published a paper entitled 'Attention, monotropism and the diagnostic criteria for autism' in the journal *Autism*.

The paper is significant in that it moves away from deficit-based descriptions of 'executive dysfunction', 'weak central coherence' or the 'restricted and repetitive interests and behaviours' found in diagnostic criteria to instead describe the 'attention tunnel' experienced by autistic people as monotropism. Monotropism explains 'atypical patterns of attention' described among autistic

people as a preference for a 'tight focus' of attention over the 'distributed' attention, or wide focus, more commonly found in non-autistic people.

According to the theory, this attentional style explains why sudden task-switching, dealing with unanticipated change, following rapidly occurring social cues, or finding the capacity to engage in communication whilst focus is elsewhere may be difficult for autistic people. Indeed, the authors suggest that the continuous engagement with one's own focus of interest may explain why some autistic people do not come to share in the common communication styles and cultural reference points outside of that focus. However, the monotropism theory also acknowledges the strengths and accomplishments that may come from such sustained focus. Moreover, Murray et al. describe that since this 'intense engagement' is most likely to coalesce around tasks and interests most meaningful to an autistic person, it may also bring great joy and satisfaction. The latter insight is particularly crucial for support practice that seeks to enable autistic people's wellbeing, rather than pushing normative models of behaviour.

Crucially, the theory frames these patterns of attention in a way that reflects the subjective experience of autistic people, including that of the authors – a reason for the monotropism theory's growing popularity with the autistic community.

For the original paper on monotropism see Dinah Murray, Mike Lesser, and Wendy Lawson. 'Attention, Monotropism and the Diagnostic Criteria for Autism'. *Autism* 9, no. 2 May 2005): 139–56.

For a recent reflection on monotropism see also the piece by Fergus Murray for the British Psychological Society on the work of their mother: **Me and Monotropism**: a unified theory of autism. The piece reflects upon how thinking about monotropism has developed since the 2005 paper was published.

NEWS

Finnish Connections

In November 2021, Timo Heiskala visited Scottish Autism services to meet with Autism Practitioners and supported individuals, sharing knowledge and practice. Timo is CEO of Autismisäätiö in Finland. We look forward to continued collaboration with Timo and his organisation.



EVENTS



Autism Europe

The 13th International Autism-Europe Congress is the first full online Congress with high quality access to its sessions, presentations, workshops, discussion panels and more. You can join in person as well, in the historical city of Cracow. The Congress brings expertise from around the world to promote a positive vision for autistic people and their families.

"Happy Journey through Life" is the theme of the Congress – to highlight the importance of taking a lifespan perspective on autism research and practice, with the promotion of wellbeing for all being the focal point.

The call for abstracts is now open, find out more at www.autismcongress2022.org

Autism Seville

Autism Seville holds its 2nd International Congress on 12th and 13th May 2022. Along with a number of renowned speakers, our Research and Policy Lead, Joseph Long will present on "Development of services from a framework of ethical practice: Learning and good practices in Scottish Autism".

Find out more at www.congreso.autismosevilla.org/#



The Gathering

The Gathering, organised by the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations, is the largest voluntary sector event in the UK. Taking place on 15th and 16th June 2022 at the SECC in Glasgow, we look forward to attending to raise awareness and understanding of autism.

Find out more at www.scvo.scot/the-gathering

Scottish Autism Conference

We are delighted to announce that bookings are now open for our Online Conference, 'Behind the Mask', on 12th May!



This virtual conference aims to understand the pressures, stresses and consequences that autistic people feel "fitting in", and in accessing support. We will explore the ways that professionals can

recognise the lived experience of autistic people; change practitioner behaviour to better accommodate autistic needs; and create safe spaces where autistic people can be themselves.

Pay What You Can Scheme

Open to autistic people and their families*

*Spaces are limited



We will ask how professionals and those they support can exchange perspectives through meaningful dialogue, promote respectful interactions and relations, and create a more positive experience of services and society more widely.

We are striving to make our conference as #accessible and inclusive as possible.

Our Pay What You Can is a pilot scheme open to autistic people and their families to access the conference.

Please note, places are limited.

To find out more and book, please visit www.scottishautismconference.org

The Centre for Practice Innovation provides a focus for practitioners, researchers and organisations to come together and collaborate, share knowledge and ideas and shape innovative autism practice.

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