



resources for
autism



Impact Report
2015/16

Welcome to our Impact report for 2015/16. I hope you will enjoy reading it, sharing our stories and celebrating our achievements.

Resources for Autism have been providing practical services for those with a diagnosis of autism of all ages and at all points of the spectrum for nearly 20 years. Although our services have grown and developed over that time our aims remain to bridge gaps in provision by offering the highest quality service, as locally as possible for those who need us, when they need us.

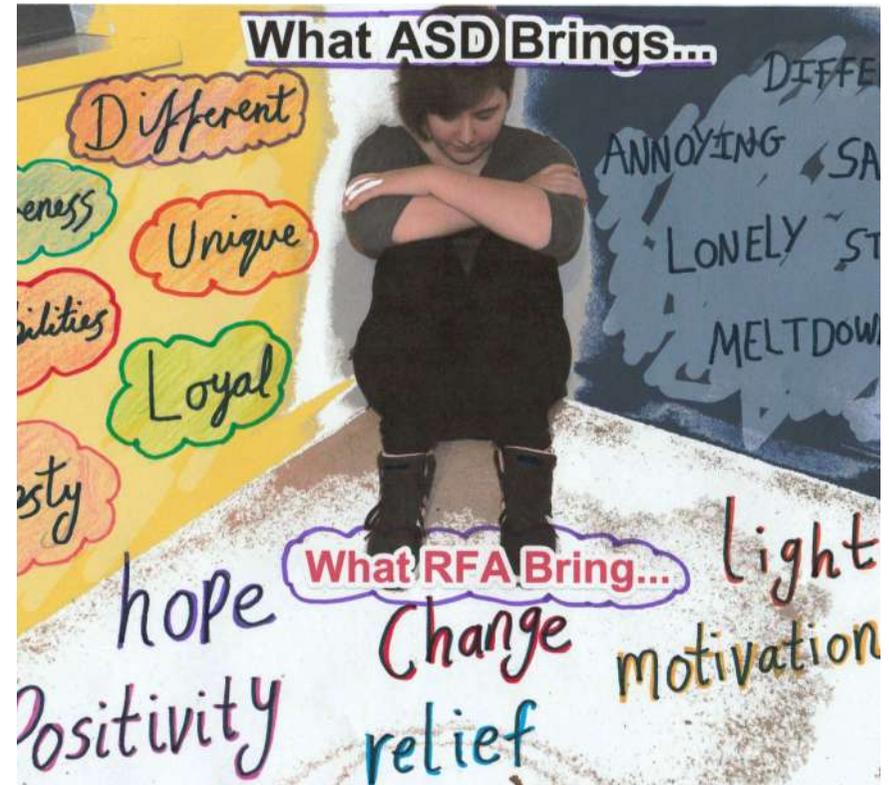
I am immensely proud of the achievements evidenced in this report but remain disappointed that our waiting lists continue to grow and limited funding means we cannot spread ourselves geographically as much as we would like. The year has been full of challenges. Personalisation has led to much less security for many organisations including ours, but has also enabled some families to use budgets creatively with us.

I remain concerned about all those many individuals with a diagnosis who will never qualify for financial support but desperately need help. We have a commitment to those who cannot afford to buy services elsewhere and that means a constant push for funding from established and new sources. We are grateful for every penny!

If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me. If you would like to help by volunteering time or raising money then do get in touch.

Thank you.

Liza Dresner, Director



We asked our young people and adults to send us their art for national autism month in 2016 with the theme “What RfA means to you”. This beautiful submission sums up why we do what we do.

Our purpose

To provide practical services for children and adults with an autistic spectrum condition and for those who love and care for them.



In this part of the page throughout the Impact Report, you'll find statistics from our family evaluations in 2015/16. The feedback is extremely valuable to us and helps us stay on the right track, providing practical, effective services.

Children and youth

We run a variety of groups both in term time and the holidays for isolated children and young people with autism. Specialist autism trained staff provide a safe environment along with fun filled activities and outings.

“This is the first time S has attended something like this and as he is a 5 year old, non-verbal child with challenging behaviour we were slightly anxious about how he would cope with a new environment. These worries were put to rest when it was clear that staff had an excellent understanding of autism along with triggers, prevention and solutions to melt downs.

Everyone we have had contact with has been friendly, professional and knowledgeable and above all so positive! We feel so lucky to have secured S a place on the play scheme and look forward to him enjoying further activities with the Resources for Autism team in the future.”

Parent, Birmingham Term Time Scheme

“My son gets to play and interact with other children like himself, and go out on trips that encourage independence on public transport and public places, also it gives me as a parent a break knowing my child is being looked after and enjoying himself”

Parent, Summer Holiday Scheme



“The 1-1 care is vital as H has never attended such a play scheme. Knowing his particular needs are attended to is life changing for him and our family unit.”

Parent, Birmingham Term Time Scheme

“The play schemes were set up in response to the negative idea that children with autism somehow can't play and lack the imagination and social skills to do so. They are a safe space for children with autism to be themselves. Our young people experience judgement and bullying in many areas of their lives and this is somewhere to let off steam and have the same opportunities as their mainstream peers.”

Catherine Ely, Director of Play and Youth Services

Our Impact

- Young people build social and life skills in a safe setting, leading to increased confidence and reduced anxiety.
- Families benefit from the respite, using the time to rest or play with other children, lowering the risk of family breakdown.
- We have identified a group of very able but extremely anxious young people whose needs we have not yet met.

100% felt they had enjoyed the service provided

94% reported an improvement in play skills

Adam is a non-verbal teenage boy attending a special college in North London.

When Adam first attended the music group he would sporadically make eye contact with others but then look away quickly, withdrawing into himself.

As the group progressed Adam became more confident and found he enjoyed playing drums. He was able to use the structured music making to participate in the group activity; starting and stopping playing with the rest of the group and making eye contact with his therapist so he could start playing at the same time as the rest of the group.

Adam has begun to take more notice of his peers, listening to their play and reaching out to touch their instruments. He can remain seated for the full length of the group, not becoming distracted or wanting to walk off.

Adam's improvement in musical skill has transferred into improved non-verbal communication, especially with members of staff who have reported an increased focus in Adam's college lessons and a delight when he finds his eye contact being noticed and someone reacting positively.



"We are delighted to have recently expanded the service with the introduction of art therapy sessions on Sundays for the first time. This has improved access for clients, particularly for school age children, who are unable to attend our weekday sessions."

Chris Peckham, Art Therapist

"S was so excited about attending her therapy and her excitement affected the rest of the family. She was always so happy and her interactive skills improved at home."

Parent, Art Therapy

"It was great to have a one to one session as K does not interact all that well yet within a group. It was lovely to see how she became a lot more confident throughout the sessions. Her interaction with the therapist greatly improved as well."

Parent, Music Therapy



Our Impact

- Art and music therapy enable new forms of expression, leading to improved communication and interaction with others.
- The bond formed with an arts therapist develops social skills that give rise to friendships and relationships elsewhere.
- *We have yet to implement arts therapy in the West Midlands and this remains a priority for us going forward.*

100% felt they had benefited from their service with us

97% felt the service had resulted in an improvement in mood

I've always wanted to volunteer and work with children – Resources for Autism gave me that chance. I had no previous experience of working with people on the autism spectrum, but I was provided with the training and support I needed to feel confident.



H was a four year old boy with very complex needs. He was non-verbal, sensitive to noise and had a short attention span; he liked to play rough, wasn't toilet trained and had a lot of anxiety. H ignored me completely the first time I met him, but we would become quite close.

I visited every week to spend time with H, giving his family time to relax, teaching him to use the toilet and trying new activities. We visited the park; H loved to play with leaves so we took them home and made art. He liked playing with light and pop-up history books (but they wouldn't last long!).

By the end of my time with H, there were noticeable changes – he could go to the bathroom, was calmer, able to say some words and play with others. Mum was happier too.

Maria, Resources for Autism volunteer



“The befriender was a very friendly person who made my son feel at ease quickly. She understood how to relate to him. She was able to persuade him to go out and start to develop some independence skills when he was reluctant to do this for others. This will enable my son to cope better with his upcoming transition to college. It was also great for us as parents to have some respite on a Saturday!”

Birmingham parent

“It was tailored to the specific needs of my son, which were at the time to learn how to travel a long distance to school, independently, on public transport.”

Birmingham parent



“For some of our families, our volunteer might be the only visitor they get in a week. An extra pair of hands mean that they can go on an outing for the first time as a family and other simple things in life the rest of us take for granted.”

Vesna Glavas, Reach Out Family Coordinator

Our Impact

- We see reductions in outbursts of challenging behaviours and improved access to universal services such as public transport, enabling links to the community.
- Parents and siblings receive valuable respite, leading to a reduction in stress and risk of mental health problems.

100% felt the service met the individuals needs

95% felt the service had resulted in improved interaction

Support into adulthood

Autism is a lifelong condition; many adults on the spectrum find themselves isolated with little support. We provide sport and exercise, art sessions and confidence building social groups.

M is a man in his late twenties with very complex needs. He is non-verbal and requires constant care; he is aided to eat, dress and shower. Before attending the multi-sports group, he had no form of exercise in his routine.

When he first attended, he wouldn't engage with the others or take part in any activities, he would sit down for the entire session and need bribes of food to stand up or kick a ball.

With encouragement and consistent support, M has become an active member of the group. He is up and about for the whole session, exercising and interacting with others through sport. He loves football and has developed skills like a back heel and long kick. He constantly has a smile on his face and you can see how much he enjoys the session.



Our Autism to Autism programme places high functioning individuals into volunteering and work.

"S came to us via Resources for Autism originally looking for a volunteer placement. It took a while for him to find his place, but it also took time for HAIL to recognise his rather impressive skill set. After a while S settled into working on the IT & Communications systems within HAIL, this is where he found his niche! It became apparent that he has skills and knowledge that are a huge asset to us.

HAIL saw this value and knew we'd benefit as an organisation by employing him, we're delighted to say S is now a valued and well liked member of the team here, it's been a pleasure to watch him grow in confidence."

Ewan Flack, HAIL Services Director



"A lot of these guys get no exercise all week and they are trying new activities they've never done before. You can see their confidence and skills grow each week and before I know it, I think I'll have a bunch of pro sports stars on my hands. I'm very proud of my guys and they surprise me each week with their willingness to try new things that at first might seem scary."

Jonny Whitfield, Multi-sports group leader



Our Impact

- Adults develop practical skills such as money management to gain increased independence and less reliance on carers.
- Our services lead to the opportunity for qualifications, work placement and employment.
- Sports groups promote activity and exercise outside, leading to increased health and fitness.

88% reported an improvement in independence

93% reported an improvement in life skills

Volunteering

Wherever possible, we use volunteers for our groups and Reach Out service. Volunteers are given autism specific training to provide people on the spectrum a level of care unavailable elsewhere.

When Gaetano's family business closed after 30 years, he saw a chance to follow his childhood dream of gardening by volunteering.

"I visited RfA's premises and saw a lovely red brick building with a sloping garden that was completely overgrown. I cleared the weeds and brambles and cut the hedges. I began to design a garden to be proud of and realised I had a talent for art and creativity. I had the chance to lead a team of other young volunteers and share my passion with them.

I was provided with guidance, encouragement and enthusiasm and enjoyed the experience so much that I knew it was what I wanted to do. It spurred me on to complete a level two certificate in garden design, and now I'm working on my level three. Today, I'm on the verge of starting my own business.

Volunteering gave me a sense of direction when I was lost. I met new people and found the passion to study again. I feel so fortunate to have had a second chance to pursue the career I wanted. I still visit RfA to check on their plants from time to time!"

Gaetano, Resources for Autism volunteer



"I have seen a huge growth in volunteering with people from different walks of life giving their time to a cause that can be very difficult to say the least. It can bring out the very best in people who go above and beyond in their duties, staying for much longer than the allocated time. Our volunteers gain skills they go on to use in their careers."

JudiYah Daniels, Volunteer Coordinator

Our volunteers gave us over 36,000 hours of their time in the last year

"Our son liked Lucia straight away. She was warm and friendly and he enjoyed spending time with her and doing the activities she organised. The communication from RfA was good and we would be keen to have another Reach Out volunteer. Thank you."

London parent



Our Impact

- All of our staff and volunteers learn how to work with people with disabilities, developing skills they keep for life.
- Volunteers become ambassadors for autism, spreading understanding and acceptance in their families and communities.
- [We have yet to meet our target of recruiting more young male volunteers.](#)

94% reported an improvement in self confidence

92% reported an improvement in making friends/relationships



"I especially enjoyed the 'open session' where parents could bring up their own problems, and together we would come up with ideas.

It was heart-warming to see how parents build a relationship which carried on outside of the session. Thanks to the group, they feel they are not alone. It offers them a place to discuss difficulties and behaviours without being judged."

Iris Korczyn, Family Coordinator



'Facilities benefit my child, staff are very nice, we feel relaxed and at home. It's nice to talk to other parents and have a good time.'

London Mum

"A's sense of being an individual increased significantly. The siblings group was something for her that her sister was not part of. "

London Parent



"The aim of the Sunday drop in is to give children and teenagers with autism an opportunity to spend time together with parents and carers at the centre and meet others. Activities are set up, such as painting, drawing, games, puzzles, music and play outside and in the sensory room. It's a chance for parents and carers to talk together and share."

Kathy Brodbeck, Support Worker

Our Impact

- Families see a reduction in loneliness and isolation by engaging with people that understand their situation.
- Groups provide an opportunity to 'share the journey' with peers
- **There is a high need for more local siblings groups, both in London and the West Midlands that we have yet to meet.**

100% felt the service benefited parents, carers, wider family

89% felt the service had resulted in improved communication

Thank you!

A big thank you to everyone who has supported Resources for Autism over the last year as well as to all our staff and volunteers. We couldn't do what we do without you.

Funders

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Where we worked in the last year



Support us

A donation to Resources for Autism goes entirely towards providing practical help for individuals and families disadvantaged by autism.

You can make a donation securely online at www.justgiving.com/rfa or call us on 020 8458 3259 to speak to one of our team.

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