



Impact Report 2016/17

Welcome

Welcome to our 21st anniversary impact report, I hope you enjoy reading it. This has been a year of celebration for us but also of reflection, and our impact report is a bit of both.

21 is traditionally seen as a big birthday. A launch into adulthood and often the moment young people begin to move away from the family home. For many of our families 21 is a point when services available in childhood suddenly finish with nothing to replace them. There is a feeling, often expressed by parents, of falling off a cliff with no safety net.

For our young adults, Resources for Autism offers continuity or somewhere new that is welcoming and understanding. We have several groups for those age 19–25 and groups for older adults with a mixture of people who have come from our children's groups and new users. BUT we don't have nearly enough. For our 21st year we are focusing on growing our service for our 19 – 25's and developing new services to meet some of the 400 young adults currently waiting for service from us.

Last year I described my concern for those waiting for service with us and have worked hard to ensure we make our waiting lists active rather than passive. I have been writing regularly to those on our waiting list with information they might find useful such as autism friendly events, welfare rights changes and details of things like disabled cinema cards. These have proved helpful and the responses have been heartwarming.

Liza Dresner, Director



Resources for Autism turned 21 this year! Celebrations included a birthday event for families in Birmingham (pictured above) and a special art exhibition in London to showcase some of the work of our wonderful service users.

Our Purpose

To provide practical services for children and adults with autism and for those who love and care for them.



In this part of the page throughout the Impact Report, you will find statistics from our family evaluations in 2016/17. The feedback is extremely valuable to us and helps us stay on the right track, providing practical, effective services.

Children and Young People

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.



“What we have seen in our groups reflects national trends such as a higher incidence of mental health in teens, and we are completing further training to step up to this challenge, addressing issues in our groups such as anxiety, isolation, social media, body image and bullying. We have also seen more families affected by poverty and cuts and are trying our hardest to cover those gaps and also provide some treats and fun in a difficult time.”

Catherine Ely, Group Services Manager

“RfA is the only place she will go without family.”
Walsall Parent

“The play scheme really helped with E’s self esteem and anxiety issues. He was around people similar to himself and staff who really get autism.”
West Midlands Parent

“It was tailor made to deal with my son’s needs. No request was too much and Resources did all in their power to ensure he felt comfortable with his programme and that he had an amazing time.”
London Parent



Our Impact

- We provide autism safe environments with one to one and two to one support so young people can enjoy themselves whilst building social and life skills.
- Young people can form relationships, grow in confidence and reduce their anxiety.
- Families benefit from the respite, using the time to rest or play with other children, lowering the risk of family breakdown.

100% felt they had enjoyed the service provided

97% reported an improvement in play skills

Arts Therapy

We offer one to one or group art and music therapy sessions in purpose built, safe and welcoming spaces with experienced therapists who specialise in working with autism.

R is a six year old boy who has been diagnosed with Autism and learning disabilities. His mum had been struggling to cope with his challenging behavior and communication barriers. R started coming to music therapy and soon his mum realised how much he was looking forward to the sessions, becoming the highlight of his week.

After a year of music therapy, R's progress in social interaction and self-expression is evident. He is proactive, initiating musical exchanges and using his music not only to satisfy his sensory needs but also to express his emotions and to communicate with his music therapist. He doesn't show any challenging behavior throughout the session. Mum has mentioned how happy he is for the rest of the day after the sessions and that he tends to have a really good night's sleep.

'It's absolutely wonderful to see how much my son looks forward to the sessions; it's the only activity he genuinely enjoys'.

- R's Mother



"When our fingers are on the piano, we make friends."
Music Therapy Client

"Our therapist has a lovely way with R and he is so comfortable with her. The difference in a few months is amazing, eye contact, communication skills, sitting, waiting and lots more."
London Parent

"You spend the time to really get to know these children... I cried when I read your therapy report and it was tears of happiness instead of disappointment or despair. Thank you for seeing my son as the individual he is."
London Parent

"The Aspergers Artists Group provides a therapeutic, social setting for artists with high functioning autism, who struggle with social anxieties, isolation and mental health difficulties. Through the support gained within the group, they have developed confidence and motivation to develop their identities as artists. A new partnership with Artistic UK enables them to sell their artwork in a professional gallery setting and step further into the visual art world."

Chris Peckham, Art Therapist

Our Impact

- Art and music therapy enables 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

98% reported an improvement in mood

Home Support

Our Reach Out service places volunteers or support workers with families disadvantaged by autism, in their homes and communities.

C started one to one support when he was six years old. His autism was causing delayed development. A Resources for Autism support worker, Aster, began working with C for two hours each week. She used autism specific strategies to encourage him to communicate. Starting with symbols, they worked towards associating humming noises with what he wanted, then slowly transitioning to actual words in games and activities.



“The volunteers are always lovely and very welcoming. My son always comes back in a happy mood. It brings my son out of himself and he interacts far greater than he ever does at school. The service redefines that term “care”.”

London Parent



C is nine years old now and has received one to one support for three years. The change is remarkable; C speaks very well in a beautifully calm and expressive voice. He has just started at a new school and is settling in well. He even wants to learn new languages, starting with French. Mum has been able to use the time the support worker is there to rest and spend time with her other son. Although she still worries about C, she is more confident than ever about his future.

“(The support worker) has helped him so much, I was so worried he’d never be able to hold a pen or talk. It’s a massive difference. A massive difference.”

Marie, C’s mum



“We are focused on not only reducing our waiting list, but also providing the quality of support that makes a real difference to the families we work with.”

Vesna Glavas, Family Coordinator

“It’s been really difficult for us all coming to terms with my son’s diagnosis of autism and thinking about what the future will hold for him. But for the first time, I know that with the right support he is going to be just fine”

Birmingham Parent

Our Impact

- We see reductions in outbursts of challenging behaviour 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.
- The waiting list for our free Reach Out service is extremely long and we must do more to provide for those families who are waiting for support.

99% felt the service met the individual’s needs

96% reported an improvement in interaction

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.

B is a young girl in a large family whose autism is affecting her ability to develop; she is very slow to learn new concepts, peer interaction is limited and her language is delayed. She struggles with sharing and always wants to be in control, acting aggressively and causing a lot of tension amongst her siblings. Mum has found herself devoting more and more time to B and less to her other children, getting frustrated at B's lack of progress with speech and communication.



Because of B's language difficulties, our coordinator found a volunteer with experience as a speech and language therapist. They set clear goals for what they hoped to achieve – to facilitate play and social interaction, learn turn taking and improve verbal communication. They have begun making trips out and playing games that emphasise verbs – “catch”, “push”, “move”. They are using key phrases and words like “please” and “more”. Mum says B has started to use them around the house and is keen to learn some of the volunteer's techniques. The volunteer and mum are now beginning to prepare B to join reception at school.

“Over the last year our volunteering programme has seen dedicated and committed people who have supported our families to the best of their abilities and gone the extra mile. Our volunteers more often than not will not only support the person with autism but their siblings as well.”

JudiYah Daniels, Volunteer Coordinator

“This is the best thing I have done in my adult life.”

Victoria, RfA Volunteer

“The young people I have worked with are amazing, the experience was great.”

Zara, Reach Out Volunteer

“By going to RfA, this has helped me improve my confidence and learn new skills. I enjoy helping and supporting others and seeing what each individual is like, in their own special and unique way.”

Otis, Reach Out Volunteer



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.
- Volunteering allows support to be offered for free to families who struggle financially, and would otherwise not be able to receive support.

96% reported an improvement in self-confidence

97% reported an improvement in making friends/relationships

Adult Services

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 as well as a service offering volunteer opportunities.

“As always, our focus is on reaching out to isolated individuals and their families and supporting them in any way that we possibly can, whether it's joining a new group, support with PIP applications or finding a volunteering placement. The Autism Community Volunteering Service is having more referrals than ever. We are on average placing three to four volunteers per month into all kinds of exciting opportunities such as conservation on Hampstead Heath, assisting in a local library and helping a local charity with graphic design.”

Charlotte Leighton, Adult Autism Support Manager



My favourite thing to do at social group was talking about challenges we faced and how to overcome them, and talk about how to improve social skills and communication. As an adult with Asperger's, I feel that the group is the only place I get real support.

Natalie, Adult Group Member



“S has improved immeasurably since his first shift. At the beginning he needed to take several breaks and found it difficult to focus on his given tasks - now he takes no breaks and is more focused every week. He is a joy to have in the kitchen and we all love having him working at the cafe!”

Alice, The Dragon Cafe

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.
- A multi-sports group promotes activity and exercise outside, leading to increased health and fitness.

97% reported an improvement in independence

97% reported an improvement in life skills

Family Services

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.

“We have been delighted with our Sunday Drop-In sessions running weekly in Barnet. We have recently extended our hours of opening as we are aware that some families travel quite far to attend. Many of the same families return and share their experiences and give helpful advice to each other. Some families only attend one or two sessions as they come along to ask for help and guidance to other services such as one to one support at home or how to get appropriate early years support.”

Kathy Brodbeck, Sunday Drop in Leader



“The Sunday Drop-In has been an amazing lifeline for our family. It provides much needed respite and a relaxing space for our child with Autism and his siblings.”

Stephanie, London Parent

“RfA gives us a place to go, we feel welcome when we have nowhere else. My son wants to go out but his challenging behaviour means that most places are not accessible.”

Deborah, London Parent

“We’ve seen our siblings group become a place where young people build meaningful relationships with others in similar situations, giving support and advice to each other. The group has justified the need for a service that supports the wider impact autism has on families.”

Shoaib Raza, Siblings Group Leader



Our Impact

- Families see a reduction in loneliness and isolation by engaging with people who understand their situation.
- Groups for parents allow peer support and focus on issues as decided by parents themselves, for example, strategies where sleep is an issue for the family.
- Siblings whose brother or sister have autism, have the chance to make friends with others who share their situation, and to learn and freely ask questions about autism.

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

94% 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

29th May 1961 Charitable Trust
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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.

www.resourcesforautism.org.uk

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