

April 2020

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A packed month of action...

- ▶ We launched the **RfA Crisis Helpline** answering calls for advice and help over 7 days a week until 9pm each evening.
- ▶ We assessed that the risk of not offering in-person support for some families was higher than the risk of the virus. With this in mind, we identified **our most vulnerable families**, and carried on supporting them with home visits and food drops; our community outreach provided both consistency in routines and respite for families.
- ▶ For our other families, we offered **weekly phone and video calls**. We were pleasantly surprised to see how positively our community responded to online communications.
- ▶ We put online a range of **downloadable, practical resources**, including a COVID-19 social story, information about local food banks, and handwashing videos for kids. Our loyal community raised much-needed funds for us through the **2.6 Challenge**: Staff, children and adults we support took part baking 26 cakes, walking 26 miles, doing 26 star jumps. One of the children in our Community ran around a park 26 times raising over £1,000. In total we raised just under £8,000 but most importantly we enjoyed a moment of fun and connection in the middle of what was a true crisis response. This was a video we sent round to say thank you!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M79ihUzQN0Y>



May 2020

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An almighty team effort

was launched to provide autism-specific resources to families stuck at home: over 650 **Home Isolation Kits** were distributed, tailored to the needs of each family, with items such as a visual timetable, fidget spinners and art supplies.

"We received our isolation pack. I'm honestly blown away. What a lovely gesture and just in time - we were starting to run out of things to do." - London parent

Wanting to care for our staff working on the 'front line', we established a **wellbeing initiative**, offering free weekly yoga classes, mindfulness sessions, access to a meditation app, and resilience coaching. We were immensely grateful to three clinical psychologists who offered their time to us at no cost.

"I found that the counselling sessions during lockdown was much-needed to be able to continue working and deal with life and pandemic. It helped in emotions and anxieties, change behaviours, habits and a boost in self-esteem and confidence. Recommended to colleagues who did not take it up." - RfA support worker

26 relèves for

@RESOURCESFORAUTISM

June 2020



Our Fundraising team

worked round the clock to raise income that would allow us to adapt our work and leave no one behind. Of the many successes of the year, we were especially proud of a significant grant from The National Lottery Community Fund. This allowed us to keep going and covered our significant drop in income – since 23 March, we hadn't asked for contributions towards any of our work.

Many loyal supporters also demonstrated their belief in our work by approving additional grants to us. Director of The Joseph Levy Foundation, writes:

"The Joseph Levy Foundation has seen the positive impact RfA has had on the lives of autistic children, young people and their families. RfA has told us how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected the people and families it supports, and we hope that the additional funding we provided has helped the charity to continue to deliver the support that is needed - now more than ever."

July 2020



As lockdown rules began to ease,

we resumed **normal clubs and schemes** for service users in a COVID-secure way, while continuing to offer online support for those too anxious to go out. We continued to update our virtual resources regularly, and we developed anxiety packs for those struggling with their mental health.



August 2020



Four weeks of our Summer Scheme

were held in London and the West Midlands, with all hands on deck to ensure risks could be minimised and our 200 attendees kept safe while still having fun! Some of the young people had not left their homes since March, and their families had had no break. It was an incredible success.

“The level of planning, risk assessment and coordination we had to do this year was unimaginable. Support bubbles, lack of venues willing to host us, supply of PPE, assurance to families, staff training... but it was worth all the effort.” – Senior Play Coordinator, West Midlands

September 2020



Increasingly concerned

about those adults living independently who were isolated and too anxious to go out, we launched a calendar of **virtual events** including a film club, wellbeing activities, art classes, and opportunities for socialising. We also continued to run our popular music and art therapy groups online with an increased attendance.



October 2020



Despite being incredibly careful

with our risk assessments, during our **half-term scheme** for young people, eight members of staff contracted COVID through a single source; we were forced to close the scheme and ask staff and the young people to isolate. Thankfully all team members soon recovered and are now back to full health.

November 2020



We were delighted and relieved

to **welcome most staff back from furlough** this month – and just in time, too, as referrals began to increase, with many families requesting additional support.

In a short **survey** sent to parents to garner feedback, **78%** of respondents told us that they value and want to continue to receive face-to-face support; many reported that RfA activities are the only ones for which their children will leave the house.



December 2020



Two Christmas schemes

that we ran offered children and young people fun, COVID-secure activities in consistent bubbles. We knew that by this point in the year, many parents were desperate for respite.

With the generous support of The Jack Petchey Foundation, we launched a **Staff Wellbeing Group** and further developed our strategy around ensuring that RfA continues to be a truly caring, inclusive and mentally healthy organisation for all its staff.

January 2021



The year started

with the announcement of yet another lockdown: anxiety levels were running high within our community and beyond. We launched a new **online parenting group** for parents to share their experiences, gain new strategies and be heard in a safe and non-judgmental space.



February 2020



Our art therapists

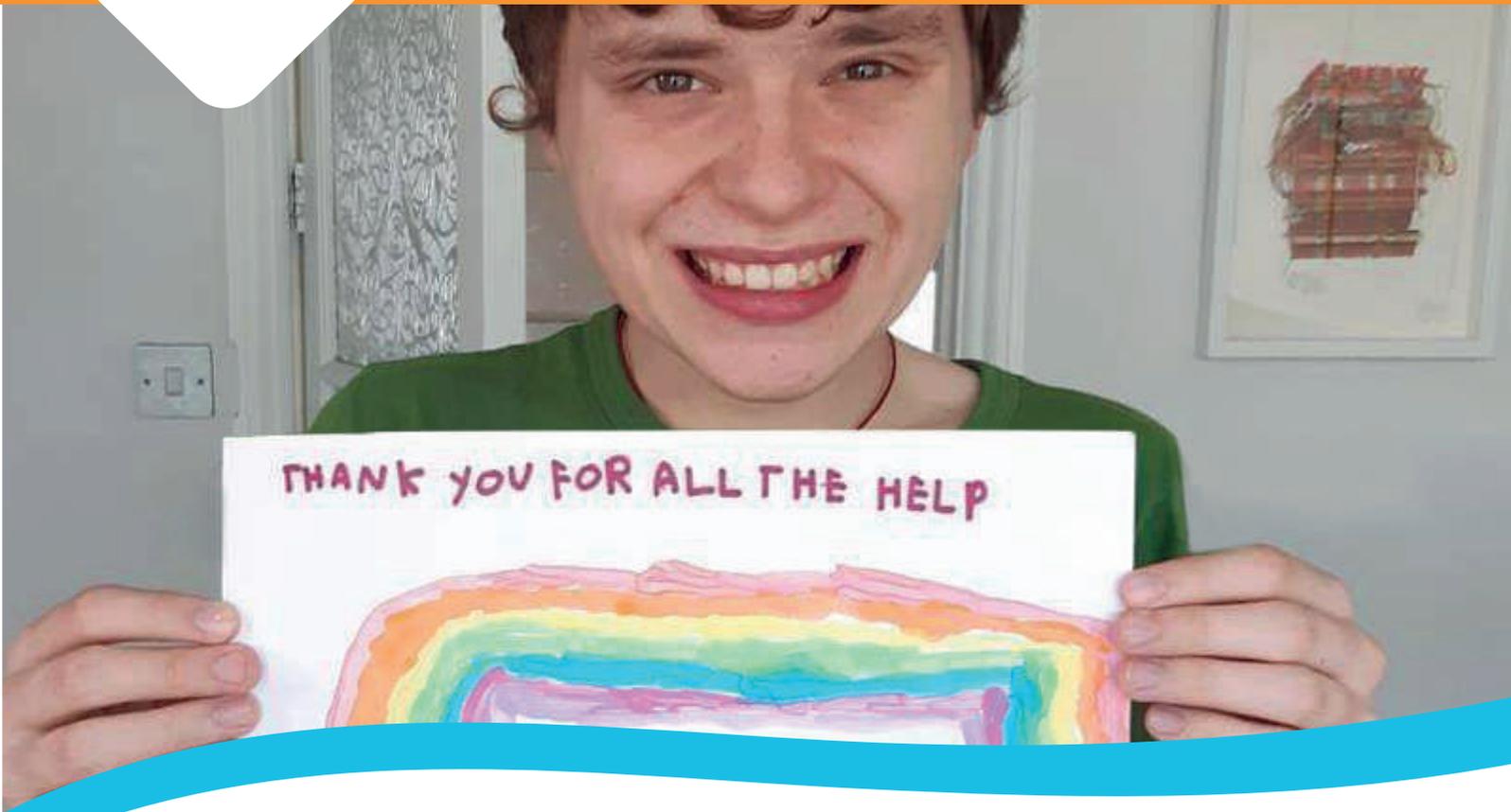
developed two new online offers for young people and families to connect, express and have fun through **art**. Both sessions were at capacity within two days of sending out the email.

Looking forwards...



We have responded, adapted and found ways to innovate during this year. As the effects of the lockdown on our Community become more visible to us, we know we cannot stand still; we need to look into the future with clarity and determination. We hope you'll continue to join us on our journey – over the coming year, in addition to our core work, our ambition is to focus on the following priorities:

- ▶ **Breaking isolation for adults living independently:** this has been one of our most-impacted groups, and post-COVID we want to create more opportunities for them to socially connect, engage in physical activity and develop skills to gain employment.
- ▶ **Building resilience in parents and carers:** we know that many parents have carried the full responsibility of caring for an autistic child struggling with a thoroughly disrupted routine. Targeting services to this group is key to supporting family recovery.
- ▶ **Offering specialist mental health support across all age groups:** we are researching how we could create holistic initiatives such as therapy; behaviour support; mindfulness groups; and groups to encourage physical movement and wellbeing for our community as it recovers.

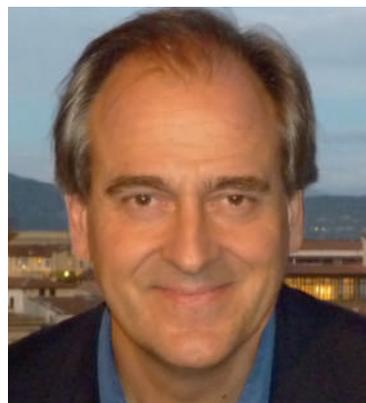


Thank you,

on behalf of all of us at Resources for Autism, for your incredible support during these challenging times: we are proud of what we've achieved, and very grateful to you. We know that the coming months will continue to be difficult for so many of the people that we seek to help, and we're aware of the increasing need ahead of us, but with the ongoing involvement of friends of RfA such as yourselves, we're confident that we will be able to keep delivering, and we're excited to build up our capacity in our three new priority areas of breaking isolation for adults, building resilience for parents and carers and specialist mental-health support.



Dolyanna Mordochai, CEO



Kit Hunter Gordon, Chair