



FEBRUARY 2026

NEWSLETTER

The Autism Wellbeing Project CIC

SCAN ME



The Autism Wellbeing Podcast

We are delighted to announce the launch of our brand-new project, The Autism Wellbeing Podcast.

This podcast has been created, produced, hosted and led by autistic experts by experience. It is a space for real, honest conversations about life, autism, and wellbeing, covering relationships, work, mental health, identity, challenges, wins, mess-ups, and everything in between. The aim is simple. To sound like real life, not polished or scripted, but warm, authentic and relatable.

We are incredibly grateful to the Clothworkers Foundation, whose funding enabled us to purchase the equipment needed to make this podcast possible. Their support has helped us ensure autistic voices are heard clearly, confidently and on our own terms.

We would love your support. Please listen, share the podcast with others, and help us spread the word. If you would like to get involved, contribute to a discussion, or be a guest on a future episode, we would be delighted to hear from you.

You can contact the podcast team at theautismwellbeingpodcast@gmail.com



A Brilliant Month of Training and Lots to Smile About

This month has been a busy one for our training team, and honestly, we have loved it. We've been out and about, meeting great people, having brilliant conversations, and delivering training that really connects.

We were delighted to deliver three Oliver McGowan Training sessions for Halton Borough Council. The rooms were full of local people who were curious, thoughtful, and fully engaged. There were loads of questions, reflections, and those lightbulb moments that remind us why these sessions matter so much.

We also continued our training with Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust, this time at a brand new venue in Wythenshawe. We can confirm it is very fancy. Great space, great atmosphere, and another group of passionate staff ready to learn and reflect together.

Our lovely partnership with Making Space has continued too, with regular training sessions for their workforce. These sessions are always full of warmth, honesty, and practical learning that people can take straight back into their roles.

Alongside all of this, we've launched our Pay per Place courses, offering both online and in-person options. Whether people prefer to join us from their sofa or in the room with us, the feedback so far has been fantastic, and we're excited to keep these rolling.

And there's more good news. We've also started a brand new partnership with Quartz Care in Kirkby, delivering their Oliver McGowan Training. New partnerships are always exciting, and this one is already shaping up to be a really positive collaboration.

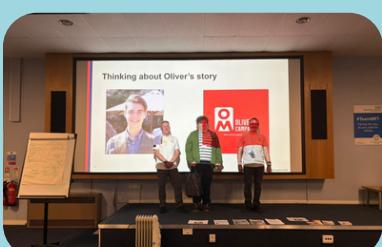
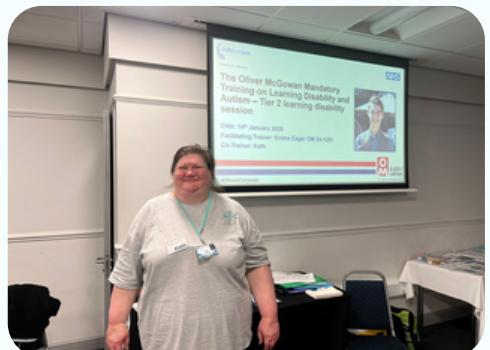
The feedback from this month has honestly made us smile. People described the training as empowering, inspiring, and very informative. Many shared that it helped them gain a better understanding of autism and neurodiversity, and really highlighted why reasonable adjustments matter so much.

The lived experience stories from our co-trainers were mentioned again and again. People said hearing first-hand experiences "made it real", "put things into perspective", and helped them truly understand the impact of everyday interactions. Several shared that it felt more personal, more meaningful, and much easier to remember than traditional training.

We're incredibly proud of our training team and the quality they bring to every session. A huge thank you to everyone who has joined us this month, shared their experiences, asked thoughtful questions, and helped make each session such a positive space.

If you'd like to join us for future training, book a Pay-per-Place course, or explore working together, we'd love to hear from you.

Training News



Training Total!

We have now trained over

3750

Health and Social Care professionals



Running a Marathon for Autism Wellbeing

On 19 April, four very determined humans will be doing a slightly wild thing. They are running the Manchester Marathon, all 26.2 miles of it, in support of us. Even better, they are all first-time marathon runners, which means a lot of training, sore legs, and a lot of commitment to something that really matters.

The team is our legendary trainer and therapist, Jon Simons, Danielle Simons, Rachel Hampson and Simon Stringer. They are running not just for the challenge, but because they genuinely care about improving wellbeing and support for autistic adults.

All the money raised will directly support autistic adults across Halton and surrounding areas, helping our important community-based work continue.

We also need to talk about Jon, because honestly, he deserves a moment. Jon is not only running a full marathon. Still, he is also a fantastic member of our team who actively supports the project through therapy provision, professional training, and serving as a key member of our Advisory Board. He helps strengthen accessible, high-quality support across and brings a rare mix of professionalism, kindness and down-to-earth humanity to everything he does. Trainer, therapist, advocate, and all-around legend is a pretty accurate description!

Every donation, big or small, makes a real difference. It helps keep our support accessible, pays for skilled professionals, and ensures autistic adults continue to receive the care and understanding they deserve. If you can donate or share the link, you will be directly supporting people, not paperwork.

https://www.paypal.com/donate/?campaign_id=6YZYR4JLRVBF8

Thank you for cheering on the runners, supporting us, and being part of something genuinely good. And if you spot four slightly exhausted but very proud runners in Manchester this April, that will be them doing something amazing.



A Quick Reminder – Time Is Running Out

Last month, we shared some exciting news about Autism Futures, and we wanted to remind everyone that time is running out gently. The funding for this project ends at the end of March, so there is a limited window for autistic young people to take part.

Autism Futures is designed for autistic young people aged 18 to 21 who are not currently in education, employment or training.

The 16-week programme offers autism affirming support, including one-to-one mentoring, therapy, and small-group life skills sessions. There are also opportunities for creative activities, wellbeing sessions, and gentle support to help young people build confidence, manage anxiety, develop routines, and think about next steps such as training, volunteering, apprenticeships, or employment.

This project is all about supporting young people who often fall through the cracks, and we don't want anyone to miss out because they hear about it too late.

If you are a young person or you support young autistic people in Halton, please get in touch as soon as possible. We would love to make the most of the remaining funding and welcome our participants before the end of March.



Congratulations Nicky!

Huge congratulations to co-trainer and community member Nicky, who has received the all clear following her cancer treatment. Throughout the challenges of chemotherapy, radiotherapy and immunotherapy, Nicky has continued working tirelessly as a Teaching Assistant, supporting pupils with complex social, emotional and mental health needs, autistic spectrum conditions, and learning difficulties.

We are incredibly proud of her strength, dedication and determination. What a woman!

You did it!



Emily Abbott

Director



Emma Eager

Director



Jon Simons

Psychotherapist, clinical supervisor, and educator with over twenty years of experience in mental health, trauma informed practice, and autism focused support.



James Eager

Director at the Eric Wright Group with leadership experience in national SEND and education projects, bringing both strategic expertise and lived experience as a parent carer.



Jamie Yarker

Senior Operations Manager at Altrad and DEI Champion with experience supporting SEND and disability inclusion.



Guy Rands

Neuroaffirming psychotherapist, educator, and facilitator with a background in science and education, specialising in autism informed therapy



Marilla Bianco

Neurodivergent psychologist, researcher, and founder of Work'n'Diversity CIC, specialising in neuroinclusive training and support for autistic and neurodivergent adults.



Lucie Wheeler

Research Fellow and PhD candidate at Anglia Ruskin University specialising in inclusive education and neurodiversity.



Dr Linda Buchan

Clinical Psychologist and Co Director of Axia ASD with extensive experience in autism assessment and support.



Eiman Munroe

Co founder of Hidden Histories CIC, trainer for national autism programmes, and editor of Fractal Spectrum Magazine.



Jane McNeice

Founder of Mind Matters, mental health and neurodiversity trainer, and author focusing on autism and lived experience.

Our Advisory Board provides independent guidance, insight and constructive challenge to help ensure The Autism Wellbeing Project stays true to its values and mission. The board supports our strategic planning, brings autistic and community voices into decision making, and advises on the development and quality of our services. Members also help strengthen our partnerships, uphold good practice and contribute to the long term sustainability and positive impact of our work.



Emily Abbott
Director



Emma Eager
Director



Maria Moreira
Therapist & Therapy Coordinator



Jon Simons
Freelance Mental Health
Practitioner/ Trainer



Chelsey Kingsley
Social Care Coordinator



Rachael Bakhbakhi
Lead Mentor



Emma Doyle
Admin Assistant



Jordan Abbott
Office Assistant



Jess Davies
Marketing Apprentice



Roger Clarke
Independence Support Worker



Katie Kearns
Independence Support Worker



Sandra Warnick
Independence Support Worker



Becks Ross
Independence Support Worker



Chantelle McCully
Independence Support Worker



Krystian Hudson
Independence Support Worker



Melanie Hunt
Independence Support Worker



Steve O'Brien
Training Support Assistant



Tori Smith
Volunteer Support Worker &
Children's Student Counsellor



THE AUTISM WELLBEING PROJECT

Therapy • Training • Support

Steve O is super excited about the podcast launching. He is also celebrating allowing himself a lovely “flop day” after a busy week. Self care is always a good use of time Steve!



“My win is that I met former first minister of Scotland Nicola Sturgeon at a Pride event” **Elizabeth**



“My win for this month is that Matthew and I have been approved for a house and are moving in together soon!” **Ellie**



“I caught the man who was putting dog poop in my bin and gave him a piece of my mind. I'm actually really proud of myself for this because normally I would avoid this situation and probably have a panic attack. I actually didn't! Also I'm up to date with paperwork too.

Also I think I call the podcast a win for all of us too!! **Kath**

Phil shared a brilliant set of wins this month. He put together a presentation about train travel in Mid Cheshire and met with his MP to discuss it, made huge progress at home by clearing and deep cleaning key living spaces after a long and overwhelming period, and has rebuilt daily routines by exercising regularly and getting out of the house each day. He's also rediscovered his creativity, creating video content, returning to singing, playing guitar and bass, and writing music. Overall, Phil says his confidence has grown from a 2 to a 9 out of 10, something reflected in him attending many more AWP sessions, and he wanted to thank the staff for their support along the way.



Megan has been busy building Lego and making diamond art this month- we are loving the Lego shelf!



Nikita and **Chantelle** managed to build a TV stand whilst on support- it took a long time but they did it! Well done!



Jake just chose and ate 2 blueberry muffins. Why is this a win? Because he's never chosen anything with fruit before and eaten it.

“- I've started to do Poi again - I beat my personal record by doing 30 catches when juggling 3 balls”

Jasmine



“Win for the team - Halfway through this morning, Lou realised he wasn't wearing his dad's watch, his lucky charm. He stayed calm and collected, spoke with Krystian, and came to me to advise that he was “wobbly.” After a little reflection and some very clear thoughts, Lou was able to not only carry on, but he did his usual - got great buy-in from the delegates with his no-nonsense honesty and openness. His humour still shone through as he shared his experiences - he fielded a couple of questions too. He has gone from a shy but powerful positive presence in the room 12 months ago to being a hugely competent trainer. I relish sessions with Lou as he's genuine and humble. Thanks Lou”

Jon



Lou is celebrating that he went into The Route cafe and someone came up to shake his hand, ask about his work and thank him for the course.

“Training is always a win in my book but I was incredibly happy to have trained people from the route where I see their hard work with LD and Autistic folk a lot”