



Ambitious
about Autism

Annual report and accounts

2021–22

Standing with autistic children and young people



Welcome to Ambitious about Autism's annual report and accounts 2021–22

This annual report and accounts tells our story of 2021–22. It provides an overview of our successes as we embarked upon the first year of our [Time for Ambition](#) strategy.

We're proud to share our stories and ambitious moments, and we hope you enjoy reading them.

You can also learn how we raise and spend money each year to ensure every autistic child and young person can be themselves and realise their ambitions.

You may choose to read the report from start to finish, or you can head straight to the section that interests you the most.

We're grateful to everyone who has assisted in the production of this report – autistic children and young people, parents and carers, and colleagues.

How you can get involved

The generosity of our supporters and partners helps us stand with autistic children and young people. Find out how you can get involved.

[Sign up to receive our supporter newsletter](#) for updates on our work with autistic children and young people, and how you can support us to champion rights, campaign for change and create opportunities.

Work with us

Autistic children and young people are at the heart of all that we do.

[Join our inclusive team](#) and make a real difference.

Fundraising

There are plenty of ways to be part of Team Ambitious. In a group, on your own, online or in person, you can raise money and make memories along the way.

Volunteering

Showing your support for our work doesn't have to be financial: donating your time and talents is equally valuable. Volunteering is an incredible way to show your support, from lending your skills on a pro bono project to tending our school gardens or joining our network of business ambassadors.



Welcome to Ambitious about Autism's annual report and accounts 2021–22

continued

Leave a gift in your will

By leaving a legacy, you can ensure support for the next generation of autistic children and young people. These funds will help us to achieve our vision for a future where every autistic child and young person can be themselves and achieve their ambitions.

Corporate partnerships

By becoming an Ambitious about Autism partner, you can demonstrate your company's commitment to promoting and championing autism in the workplace. There are many ways you can support us. From cause-related marketing and sponsorship opportunities to staff donations, or pro bono work, your company can join us to stand with autistic children and young people.

Philanthropy

Nothing we do would be possible without the support we receive from our generous partners, made up of individuals, trusts and foundations. For those who want to connect closely with a project, service or the strong foundations that underpin everything we do, there are many ways to partner with us.

Donate today

Donate online via our website and support us to champion rights, campaign for change and create opportunities for autistic children and young people.





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Jon Snow, Ambitious about Autism ambassador

“

Ambitious about Autism stands alongside autistic children and young people to build a better future in a world that is more accepting of difference. I'm very proud to support its vital and life-changing work work.”

Our purpose, vision, mission and values

Ambitious about Autism is the national charity standing with autistic children and young people.

We believe every autistic child and young person has the right to be themselves and realise their ambitions.

We started as one school and have become a movement for change. We champion rights, campaign for change and create opportunities.





Our purpose

We help autistic children and young people to be themselves.



Our vision

Our vision is for a future where every autistic child and young person can be themselves and realise their ambitions.



Our mission

We stand with autistic children and young people, champion their rights and create opportunities.





Our values

Children and young people are at the heart of everything that we do.

We are ambitious
for autistic children and young
people and our work.

We celebrate difference
creating a world where
everyone belongs.

We love learning
and commit to learn
from our successes
and mistakes; sharing
knowledge, expertise
and resources.

We are open
to new approaches,
in how we make
decisions, and engage
with our community.

We work together
with autistic children and young people, parents and carers,
our partners and staff to maximise impact and reach.



Foreword: Welcome from the chair of trustees and chief executive

This year, as we gradually emerged from the coronavirus pandemic, we were determined to focus our efforts on building a better future for autistic children and young people, to help them recover from the turmoil of the last few years.

Together with autistic children and young people, our staff and supporters, we developed and launched Time for Ambition, our three-year strategy setting out our bold new vision and mission.

Our vision is for a future where every autistic child and young person can be themselves and realise their ambitions. Our mission is to stand with autistic children and young people, champion their rights and create opportunities.

We refreshed our values to reflect our desire to be a great place to work and champions in our sector. Our plans encompass the work we have already undertaken and our ambitions to increase our reach and impact by 2024.

In the first year of our new strategy, we continued to provide direct support and specialist education to hundreds of autistic children and young people through TreeHouse School, The Rise School and Ambitious College. There was also exciting progress on the development of our new specialist provision, Spring School.

Nationally, we launched our Ambitious Youth Network, a new UK-wide online platform helping hundreds of autistic young people to build connections and access opportunities.

Our employment programme, Employ Autism, continued to reach new employers and more young people. We also launched an exciting new project to develop a post-diagnosis support programme for autistic young people.

This year there were significant developments in the Government's strategy on the special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) system, with the publication of its long-awaited SEND Review. We submitted a comprehensive response to influence future policy implementation, using evidence and expertise from our settings, as well as the views of nearly 2,000 young people, and parents and carers.

Following the disruption caused by the coronavirus pandemic, we were also delighted to see the return of our fundraising events. These included Ambitious 220 – our Manchester to London ride with longstanding partner Rapha. Meanwhile, our strategic charity partnership with Marsh McLennan continued to grow in reach and impact.

None of our achievements would have been possible without our dedicated staff, so we continued to invest in our people to make Ambitious about Autism a great place to work.

Our thanks go to you, our wonderful children and young people, parents and carers, generous partners, supporters and staff. Your ongoing support helps autistic children and young people be themselves and realise their ambitions.



Neil Goulden
Chair of Trustees



Jolanta Lasota
Chief Executive

Foreword: Welcome from the Ambitious Youth Council

Autistic children and young people are at the heart of everything we do. That's why our Youth Council and Ambitious Youth Network play a vital role informing our work. From educating people across different sectors to advising our Board of Trustees, Ambitious about Autism would not be the same without them.


It's important to us that our opinions and views are heard and understood, and the Youth Council and Ambitious Youth Network has given us a safe place to do that. The network enables us to share our experiences and the needs, worries and hopes of autistic children and young people.

We started the year by presenting to staff at The Birmingham Women and Children's Hospital about how to make healthcare more accessible for autistic people. It meant a lot to be able to educate frontline staff on why healthcare should be inclusive for everyone. For some of us, it was the first time we'd given a speech to a large audience, and we were very proud of what we achieved.

We want autistic children and young people to feel included in all aspects of their life, from education to extracurricular clubs. At the start

of 2022, we presented 'Include Autism' to a group of Girlguiding volunteers explaining how to make their group accessible to autistic young people. These opportunities are always so exciting, as we know the impact we can have.

This year, the Youth Council has been invited to discuss topics to be presented to the Board of Trustees. At our first Youth Council meeting of the year, we discussed the government's SEND Review, giving our views and opinions on the government's proposals. This meant a lot to us because, even though we all have different experiences and learning needs, we were able to say how it has been a constant battle for all of us to receive the right SEND support.

A group of people, including a woman in a wheelchair, are posing for a photo at a formal event. The woman in the wheelchair is wearing a blue dress and is holding a tablet. She is surrounded by several other people, including a man in a suit and a woman in a red scarf. The background shows a crowded event space with other people and a bar area.

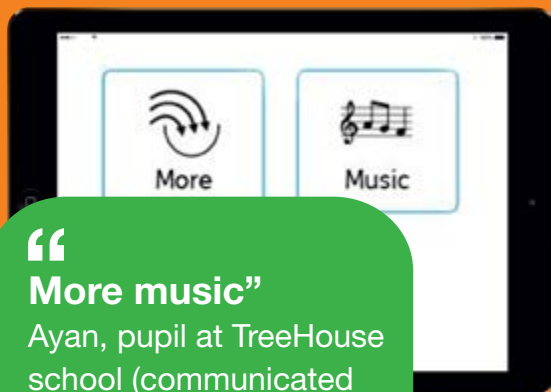
In the summer, we took part in an anti-bullying workshop. We worked with the Anti-Bullying Alliance to provide insight into what can be done to help stop the bullying of autistic children and young people. We also supported the development of **friendship resources** for the website, to help autistic young people make and maintain friendships.

It's been an exciting year and Ambitious about Autism has been a source of support and understanding for us all. We're grateful to them for always standing with autistic children and young people.

The Ambitious Youth Council, 2021–22

Pupil and learner voices

As part of our Ambitious Approach to education, we involve pupils and learners in decisions about their learning, support and future, and value their voices and opinions. For many pupils, communication can be difficult, so we invest in skills and resources to enable their participation in a variety of ways. Here are a few responses from pupils and learners about their experience during 2021–22.



“
More music”

Ayan, pupil at TreeHouse school (communicated using PECS board)



“
I have better support and the staff understand autistic people and their needs.”

Joe, pupil at The Rise School



“
The Rise has helped me to improve as an individual, to become more resilient, and to help me take that next step onto university.”

Arun, learner at The Rise School Sixth Form



“
I love piano. I’m good at piano and love playing Christmas songs with my teacher.”

David, pupil at TreeHouse School



“
In the future I will be able to talk to more people and have more communication so I can have a job.”

Bradley, learner at Ambitious College



“
This year I have been to a lot of places like CONEL, Costa Coffee and B&Q. I had fun on my trips on to the different places. Next year I would like to learn to travel to places on my own.”

Gopal, learner at Ambitious College

Why we're needed

Autistic children and young people continue to be disadvantaged by system failures and lack of understanding and acceptance.



Nearly **90%** of under-18s are waiting longer than the NHS 13-week deadline for an autism diagnosis.¹



4 out of 5 young autistic people have mental health conditions.²



Autistic pupils are **twice as likely** to be regularly, and unlawfully, excluded from school as their peers.³



Just **29%** of autistic people are in full-time or part-time employment, the lowest rate of all disabled groups.⁴



70% of autistic young people fear discrimination if they disclose to employers that they are autistic.⁵



79% of autistic people say they are socially isolated because of a lack of understanding.⁶

¹ NHS Digital. **Autism Waiting Times statistics**. Published December 2021

² Ambitious about Autism. **Know Your Normal Research Findings**. Published June 2017

³ University of Birmingham Autism Centre for Education and Research. **Investigation of the causes and implications of exclusion for autistic children and young people**. Published April 2022

⁴ Office for National Statistics. **Outcomes for disabled people in the UK: 2021**. Published February 2022

⁵ **Survey by Ambitious about Autism** of over 500 autistic young people and their parents and carers. 2021

⁶ National Autistic Society. **Too Much Information**. Published 2016

⁷ Office for National Statistics. **Outcomes for Disabled People in the UK: 2021**. Published February 2022

Time for Ambition strategy 2021–24

We started as one school and have become a movement for change. Progress towards equality for autistic children and young people has been made and we're proud of our role in this.

But that progress now hangs in the balance. A perfect storm of the Covid-19 pandemic, economic uncertainty, reduced resources and an ongoing lack of understanding of autism means the next three years are critical.

The systems meant to provide support have never been so unforgiving of difference. Despite the best efforts of individuals, unfair treatment of autistic children and young people is becoming routine and invisible, and goes unchallenged. Parents are anxious and losing hope.

We see the unnecessary barriers autistic children and young people face. The closing doors, the opportunities out of reach, the devastating consequences of being pushed to the margins.

It doesn't need to be this way.

We see a world where autistic children and young people can be themselves and realise their ambitions.

Understanding, flexibility, the right support at the right time. That's all we ask.

Now is the time for change. Now, is the time for ambition.

It's in this context that we embarked upon the first year of our **Time for Ambition strategy**.

Time for Ambition: Introduction

We stand with autistic children and young people, champion their rights and create opportunities.

We take a person-centred approach, focused on individuals' quality of life, which we call the Ambitious Approach.

The next three years are critical if we are to work with autistic children, young people and their families to overcome the enormous challenges they face as a result of the lack of understanding of their needs.

We will continue to build on our core expertise in education and employability while engaging more than ever before in the other areas essential to autistic children and young people leading fulfilling lives.

This report outlines our progress towards achieving our strategic objectives and outcomes during 2021–22, the first year of Time for Ambition.



Excellent education

Our overarching aim is that all autistic children and young people have an excellent and inclusive education that enables them to learn, thrive and achieve. Ultimately, this will support them to have a good quality of life, including the realistic prospect of living and working as part of their communities.

Our education settings remained open throughout the coronavirus pandemic. So, after 18 months of virtual, home-based learning, and social distancing, we were delighted to return to face-to-face learning for all pupils at TreeHouse School and The Rise School and learners at Ambitious College. But the pandemic had not gone away and continued to disrupt the lives of autistic children and young people.

Despite this challenge, our education settings continued thanks to the resilience and agility of our staff, pupils, learners and their families. We are committed to providing ongoing support in the aftermath of, and recovery from, the pandemic.

In this first year of our Time for Ambition strategy we made progress against the following objectives:

- We will continue to embed, evaluate and refine our Ambitious Approach, use it to improve our careers education practice,

and support meaningful transitions and progress for autistic children and young people.

- We will share our model and expertise in autism education nationally through our policy and influencing, information, training, consultancy and national partnership work.
- Our priority is to support autistic children and young people in our education settings to live through and recover from the coronavirus pandemic. We will enable them to achieve positive outcomes through careers education and support, and progress to education, employment or training.
- We will develop new education settings, including a free school in Kingston, and consider further opportunities for new services and partnerships with aligned education providers. Our guiding principle will be to ensure any new settings provide an excellent and inclusive education.

Getting the SEND system right for autistic children and young people

This year was dominated by the Government's publication of the long-awaited review of the special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) system.

Commissioned by the Treasury from the Department for Education in 2019, the SEND Review picked up momentum in early 2022.

We know that it's critical to get the review of the SEND system right for autistic children and young people. Autism is the most prevalent primary need among children with an Education, Health and Care plan. A significant proportion of children receiving SEN support will be autistic.

In January 2022, we published our **five asks for the SEND Review** based on the views of autistic children, young people and their families.

When the review was published for consultation at the end of March, **our first response** was featured in the Guardian and on Channel 5 news.



During the consultation period, we held meetings for groups of parents with officials from the Department for Education. Five autistic young people met the then Children's Minister, Will Quince MP.

We presented at a meeting of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Autism, which gave us another opportunity to share our views with the minister. We also spoke at sector events and conferences.

Our website and social media amplified autistic young people's voices, as we shared videos of their experiences and recommendations.

During May and June, we surveyed autistic young people and their parents and carers to inform our evidence in response to the review. We received detailed responses from almost 2,000 people about their experiences. We submitted our comprehensive consultation response to the government in July and expect it to publish its next steps for implementation in 2023.





The SEND review: Alice's story

“

Despite having an Education, Health and Care plan, I really struggled in mainstream schools. I couldn't access the curriculum and struggled academically and socially. I had no one to relate to and knew no one with the same interests as me. I was behind my age group academically too.

Despite all this, my mum was told I needed to stay in mainstream school, which was very frustrating. I think this was because, despite an early diagnosis, I had coped so far by masking my autism. Also, I didn't have any particular behaviour problems that disrupted learning in the classroom. I existed but I didn't thrive.

Eventually, when things came to a head and I was struggling emotionally and academically, I started spending one afternoon a week at a local special school. I loved the school, my lessons and the people I met there. The school was smaller and I felt understood. I felt I belonged. I became an independent learner and felt just like everyone else. For me, this was inclusion.

It was finally agreed I could move to the special school. This was life-changing – being in the right environment for me has been incredible. I have now developed social skills, learned more about myself, grown in confidence, found a love of sports and been able to progress educationally. I am now studying in college and am confident and ambitious about what I want to achieve in life.

If I had been in the right environment earlier, I wouldn't have had to do so much catching up. If I had stayed in mainstream, I would not have ended up with the qualifications and life skills I have or met my peer group, who I value. I feel sure my mental health would have been adversely affected.

It is so important there are enough places for children in specialist schools and that they are considered a viable option for autistic children and young people. They should not be considered as a last resort.”

Alice is a member of the Ambitious Youth Network.

We are calling for:

- children's and families' rights to be protected
- a transparent, sufficient and responsive funding system
- improvements to support in universal services through national inclusion standards
- an enforceable system of accountability
- a long-term plan for a sufficient and capable workforce
- parity of rights across education, health and social care
- improved support to move from education into employment and independence.

Influencing policy and practice nationally

We work with autistic young people and their families to influence policy and practice nationally to improve their access to excellent education, quality health support and fulfilling careers.

We prioritise our influencing and campaigning activities to reflect the changes autistic children and young people and their parents or carers want, and to focus where we believe we can make a difference. In 2021–22, we focused on getting the SEND Review right for autistic children and young people.

We develop campaigns jointly with the autistic young people we work with, through our Ambitious Youth Network.

Our partnership with the Autism Education Trust

We are proud to be a founding partner of the Autism Education Trust, supported by the Department for Education. Together, we strive to ensure that all autistic children and young people receive the education they deserve.

A panel of Autistic Young Experts aged 16–25, supports the work of the Autism Education Trust working in collaboration with Ambitious about Autism. The panel is made up of 19 autistic young people from across England. This year, we recruited 11 new members to the panel.

The panel provides feedback on a range of topics from exclusions to exam accommodations and speaks at events and in videos about their experiences as autistic young people.





Autism Education Trust Youth Panel: Jessica's story



I am part of Ambitious about Autism's Ambitious Youth Network, where I enjoy attending weekly peer support sessions. I'm also on the Autism Education Trust's Young Experts Panel, where I hope I can make those in education more autism aware.

I feel privileged to be part of such an amazing initiative to improve the understanding of autism in schools, with the aim of making education more inclusive for young people with autism.

I am hopeful that, in the future, being able to access the right support will become easier and the metaphorical 'gold standard' in education.

I would love to see schools make significant improvements to support those with autism who may be more academically able and independent, and not just those with an Education, Health and Care plan and/or learning disability."

Jessica is a member of the Autism Education Trust Youth Panel. The panel, supported by Ambitious about Autism, provides feedback on several topics, from exclusions to exam accommodations, and speaks at events and in videos about their experiences as autistic young people. You can read more about our role in the Autism Education Trust on [page 19](#).

Ambitious Approach

The Ambitious Approach is the educational approach we have developed and adopted to put quality of life at the centre of all we do. It is based upon a learner's indisputable rights to be:

- treated with dignity and compassion
- valued
- listened to
- supported to have the best quality of life possible
- empowered to make choices and decide on how they want to live their life.

The Ambitious Approach has three areas of focus.

- **The curriculum:** In our education settings, the curriculum focuses on equipping learners with the knowledge and skills they need for quality of life. Learning is tailored to support autistic children and young people to live the life they want to lead.
- **Curriculum delivery:** We recruit and train staff in our settings to provide high-quality teaching. This includes having a deep knowledge of the subjects they teach,

specialist knowledge of how autistic children and young people learn best and creating environments that support and nurture physical and psychological needs.

- **Collaboration:** To afford dignity, respect and compassion, young people are placed at the core of a setting so their voices are heard and we can support them in what is important to them. Staff in the settings work closely together, sharing their expertise, to address barriers to learning and support the best possible outcomes.

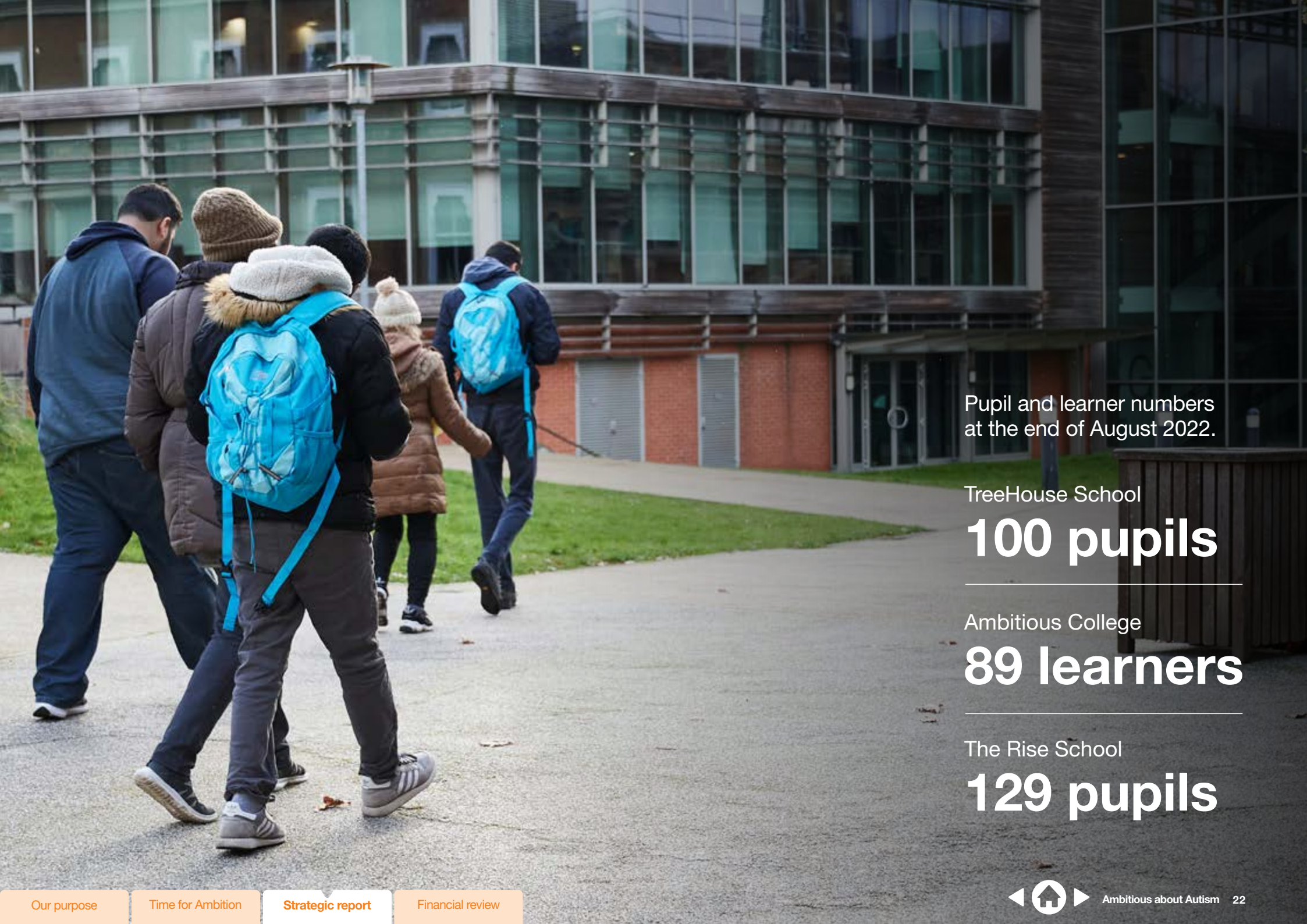
Competency framework and evaluation

We have an Ambitious Approach competency framework that details the skills and knowledge that staff need to have or acquire. We have a comprehensive learning and development programme to support them with this. All staff must attain a standard level of competence to pass their probation when joining the settings.

This year, training and development work to support colleagues in embedding the Ambitious Approach continued to progress well.

We launched a new virtual learning platform, which included a new animated film and content from subject experts about the Ambitious Approach. **(You can read more about staff learning and development at [Ambitious about Autism on page 62.](#))**

The Ambitious Approach evaluation cycle involves collecting data at the start and end of each academic year. This data is used at an individual level, to celebrate positive changes for children and young people and to identify areas for development. The data is also used at a setting-wide level to celebrate progress and development in our education offer and to identify where and how to improve. Each setting has an Ambitious Approach Implementation Team who use this data for their action planning.



Pupil and learner numbers
at the end of August 2022.

TreeHouse School

100 pupils

Ambitious College

89 learners

The Rise School

129 pupils

The Rise School

Head of School: Helen Ralston

The Rise School is a vibrant learning community that equips young people with qualifications as well as communication, social, emotional and employability skills.

Year 11 pupils at The Rise School celebrated excellent exam results this year, thanks to the hard work of pupils and staff. Nine pupils gained five or more GCSEs at grade 4 or above, while one pupil achieved seven GCSEs. Another pupil received the school's first ever GCSE computer science award, a hugely successful grade 8.

This year, all of The Rise Sixth Form students attended vocational courses and followed an ambitious wrap-around curriculum to achieve additional qualifications such as BTEC (Business and Technology Education Council) WorkSkills, BTEC Personal Growth and Wellbeing, and LiBF (The London Institute of Banking & Finance) Finance.

At the end of the year, nine learners left The Rise Sixth Form to transition to a variety of destinations, including employment, a supported internship at pharmaceutical company GSK, apprenticeships and university courses at SOAS, Ravensbourne and Brunel.

The Rise School is rated Good following its last Ofsted inspection.



Dean's story

In January 2022, a crew from Channel 5 News visited The Rise School for a report on the special educational needs system. They spoke to Dean, a sixth-form student who shared his experience of being excluded from primary school.

Dean explained how he felt that many of the teachers and other pupils didn't understand autism or how to support him at school. He went on to praise The Rise School for welcoming and supporting him.

Thanks to The Rise School's help, Dean was able to get good qualifications and go on to do his music course at sixth form.



Spring School

Head of School: **Andy Nowak**

Spring School is set to open in September 2023 in Kingston. The Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust has been working with the Department for Education, Kingston Council and Achieving for Children since 2019 to develop Spring School, which will support up to 90 autistic pupils aged 4–19.

In February 2022, we announced the name of our new school for autistic children and young people. Ambitious about Autism worked with community champions in Kingston and Richmond to create a shortlist of three names that were put to the public. All three had connections to Chessington's local surrounds, its nature and history.

The consultation was promoted in local libraries, shops and newsletters, as well as among hundreds of residents, including local councillors and pupils, who all had their say.

In May 2022, planning permission for the site on the Moor Lane Centre in Chessington was granted and construction got underway. There will be places for up to 36 pupils in the first academic year (2023–24).

Working in partnership with young people, parents and carers, the London Borough of Kingston, local schools, colleges and the wider community, Spring School will create opportunities for autistic young people to develop the academic, vocational and social skills to enable them to transition successfully to adult life as part of their communities.



Supporting children and young people to have the best possible start in life is a top priority for us at Kingston Council... We have long hoped to have an autism-specialist school within our borough.”
Steph Archer, Kingston Councillor.

Feedback on Spring School's name from members of the public.



It sounds positive and bright, not too serious. I feel parents of autistic children already have such a serious world with big words, this brings light and ease.”



I love the connection that spring has to new beginnings, new opportunities and new life being nurtured. I feel this fits well with what the school represents.”



My daughter is autistic and when I read the names out, she said she liked the name Spring School, as she likes springtime.”

TreeHouse School

Head of School: **Joanna Dziopa**

TreeHouse School is a non-maintained special school that was set up in 1997. Based in the Pears National Centre for Autism Education in the heart of a thriving community, it educates autistic pupils aged 3–19 from across London and the Home Counties.

Using the Ambitious Approach to education, pupils receive specialist and personalised support through a dedicated transdisciplinary team of qualified teachers, speech therapists, occupational therapists and behaviour specialists.

TreeHouse School works hand in hand with parents and carers, local schools, community groups and employers to maximise opportunities for pupils to enjoy school, succeed in their learning and transition to a fulfilling and rewarding adult life.

TreeHouse School is rated Outstanding following its last Ofsted inspection.



Pupils at TreeHouse School enjoy a five-day residential trip to the New Forest

This year, pupils from TreeHouse School went on a five-day residential trip to Avon Tyrell Activity Centre in the New Forest.

The pupils who attended all engaged in a range of physical and creative activities provided by both Avon Tyrell and TreeHouse School staff. These included archery, canoeing, climbing, night walks, electric biking, t-shirt dyeing, an Easter egg hunt and a disco.

The pupils also had down time in their lodges, which enabled them to engage in a variety of leisure activities and general independence activities such as making snacks, washing up and housekeeping and self care.

There were so many wonderful moments on the trip. The disco was a firm favourite for pupils and staff alike. There were a lot of spontaneous requests for songs, and all the pupils spent a long time dancing together, enjoying this unusual opportunity for lots of social interaction.



Climbing was another highlight, with all pupils getting involved and enjoying racing their teachers up the climbing wall. One pupil had his first spontaneous communication of the trip to request more turns climbing.

Many pupils on the trip came back wanting more experiences of this kind. Staff, having spent more time with pupils than usual, came away with a better rapport with them. The trip helped pupils build self-esteem because they achieved so much during their time away.

A parent of a pupil on the trip said: **“This trip has been very important for my son, especially for his mental wellbeing. It has given him the opportunity to try out the skills and transfer his learning into real world situations.”**

Ambitious College

Head of College: **Linda Looney**

Ambitious College is a specialist day college for autistic young people aged 16–25.

The college has two Pears campuses co-located within mainstream colleges in north and west London. At each campus, there is a team of dedicated and passionate professionals, including teachers, occupational therapists, speech and language therapists, employment specialists, behaviour specialists and specialist support staff.

Using the Ambitious Approach to education, they work together to come up with learning and support approaches tailored to individuals.

Through a range of partnerships with local businesses, community groups and mainstream partners, the college also offers opportunities to learn in the community.



This combined approach – personalised education, positive support and real work experience – gets results. It enables young people to achieve their goals, fulfil their potential and go on to lead active lives in their community.

Ambitious College is registered as a specialist day college and rated by Ofsted as Good.

Ambitious College celebrates another Natspec Award

In May 2021, Ambitious College was awarded the prestigious Natspec Award in the category of home learning.

The award highlighted the college's innovative and combined approach to home teaching, which ensured students were still engaged with daily learning during the pandemic.

The judges were particularly impressed with the college's personalised approach for each individual learner.

Supported internships

Ambitious College offers supported internships for young people who want to enter employment. In 2022, five autistic young people with learning difficulties secured jobs after taking part in our programme at the Whittington Hospital.

Kelton, Jake, Paige, Michael, Liam* and Daniel gained valuable skills and experience working in various support roles at the north London hospital.

Kelton's dream job has always been to work in hospitality. After gaining confidence during his internship, he applied for a full-time catering assistant job with John Lewis. Kelton attended a work trial and interview at John Lewis Oxford Circus and was successful in securing the role, which started in July 2022.

Jake also secured a catering assistant role in the Whittington Hospital's health records department following his internship.

Three other young people who took part in the programme went on to secure apprenticeships. Paige will take part in a Level 3 Childcare Apprenticeship in a nursery.

Two other interns, Michael and Liam*, secured full-time apprenticeships at the medical equipment firm Medequip.

Meanwhile, Daniel will return to complete two further work rotations at the Whittington Hospital next year as part of the supported internship programme.

Gemma Mullan, who runs our **supported internship programme**, said: **"We are enormously proud of the achievements of our graduating interns, who are now taking their next steps into employment. From securing dream jobs to gaining more practical experience through apprenticeships, our interns are building on the skills they have developed and are ready to thrive and achieve in the workplace."**

*name has been changed



During my work trial, I cleaned the tables, collected the plates and cups when customers had finished and took them to the dishwasher room. The team at John Lewis were really friendly. I am very happy I got the job."

Kelton, Ambitious College supported intern







Employment and enterprise

Too few autistic young people move successfully from education to employment. Only 29% of autistic people are in full-time or part-time employment, the lowest of all disabled groups.⁷

We want every autistic young person to have a good careers education, relevant to their aspirations and strengths. Working alongside them, we equip autistic young people to progress to employment and develop transferable life skills.

Our employability programmes offer autistic people the chance to gain valuable skills and prove themselves in the workplace. We offer employment advice and opportunities to pupils and learners attending our education settings. Our national Employ Autism programme enables paid work experience opportunities for autistic young people aged 18 and over.

In this first year of our Time for Ambition strategy we have made progress against the following objectives:

- Through the Employ Autism programme, we will pilot a model that will facilitate ‘experiences of work’ for autistic young people and support employers to be more autism confident.
- Through evidence gathered from our Employ Autism programme and implementation across our education settings, we will develop a framework of careers education adapted for autistic young people, rolled out nationally to improve practice and policy.

Employ Autism

Our impact:

- 165 young people accessed work experience via network partners, including 79 as part of the Civil Service summer internships programme
- 556 young people received tailored careers information and employability sessions, face to face and online, to prepare them for work
- 40 employer partners offered work experience
- 75 employers received training and mentoring to offer work experience to autistic young people.

The Employ Autism programme in 2021–22 can best be summarised as a year of partnership working – a time of expansion where we have seen the consolidation of our networks.

An important theme was the increased breadth of our offer to autistic young people, not only in the roles available, but also in the opportunities that arose from a wider variety of national strategic partnerships.

The Employ Autism programme comprises internships, training and a careers guidance offer for autistic young people. Our vision for Employ Autism, now in its third year, remains the same: to build a collaborative, nationwide network that collectively has the power to remove the barriers that prevent autistic young people from transitioning from education to employment.

Underpinning our strategy is a commitment to standing with autistic young people and adapting to reflect their needs and the ever-changing external environment.

Our employer partners represent a range of industries including financial services, hospitality, recruitment, transport, housing, charity, health, local government, technology, media, PR and marketing.

Last year, we also reached an additional 10 employer partners through our Higher Education network. We are proud that Employ Autism is now widely recognised across national education and employability networks.

Despite our achievements, the impact of the pandemic continued to be felt, especially in the recruitment of young people. Many returned to education last year, fearing they would not be able to secure a job. However, for other young people, new opportunities arose, with a greater number of Employ Autism participants benefiting from flexible and hybrid job roles.

Some of the programme's most significant strategic partnerships have been facilitated by the Employ Autism Development Board. This is a committed group of sector leaders, passionate about driving a wholesale commitment to neurodiverse workplaces. Alongside this, our Business Ambassador group has maintained a membership of 32 individuals, some of whom have committed to offering internships. New members of the group in 2021–22 included representatives from Capita, Kroll, BP Collins and QBE. The diversity of our membership has increased the expertise offered by the group. (See [page 84](#) for a full list of Employ Autism Development Board members and Business Ambassadors.)



▶ Employ Autism: Lily-Rose's story

“

I am Lily-Rose (she/her), and I was lucky enough to be the first person to intern with JLL on the Meta London account.

The support of Ambitious about Autism was essential in making me feel able to apply for the internship at JLL in the first place. I had previously applied for roles that didn't make any adjustments for autistic people, and I'd found it very disheartening how difficult and exclusive the traditional interview process can be.

I started to think that perhaps I would never be able to gain meaningful experience or get a job because of this. Knowing that the JLL team had received training on how to be inclusive of autistic people, and the adjustments that were made for me, made all the difference.

During my time at JLL, I grew in leaps and bounds. I helped with operations, events, mailroom processes, and as part of the moves and changes team. I gained so much experience, not only in facilities work, but also in social interaction, sustainability projects and presenting.

My proudest moment was presenting to the JLL and Meta team about my internship and all I got from the opportunity.

The team at JLL took me on a journey, from initially being rather terrified about what the world of work meant for someone like me (autistic and queer), to quickly finding so much value and joy in a workplace that saw me for who I am. The team went out of their way to learn how to better accommodate people like me, and we had some excellent external speakers present to the team.

I am overjoyed at how much I have learnt over my internship. My hope going into it was to gain inspiration personally and professionally, to strive to advance my employment skills and know that inclusive workplaces are real.

With the team's help, I not only accomplished all of this, but also gained new dreams, eternal friendships and a renewed sense of joy. I am so excited that other autistic people will get to experience this opportunity as well.”

Careers education in our settings

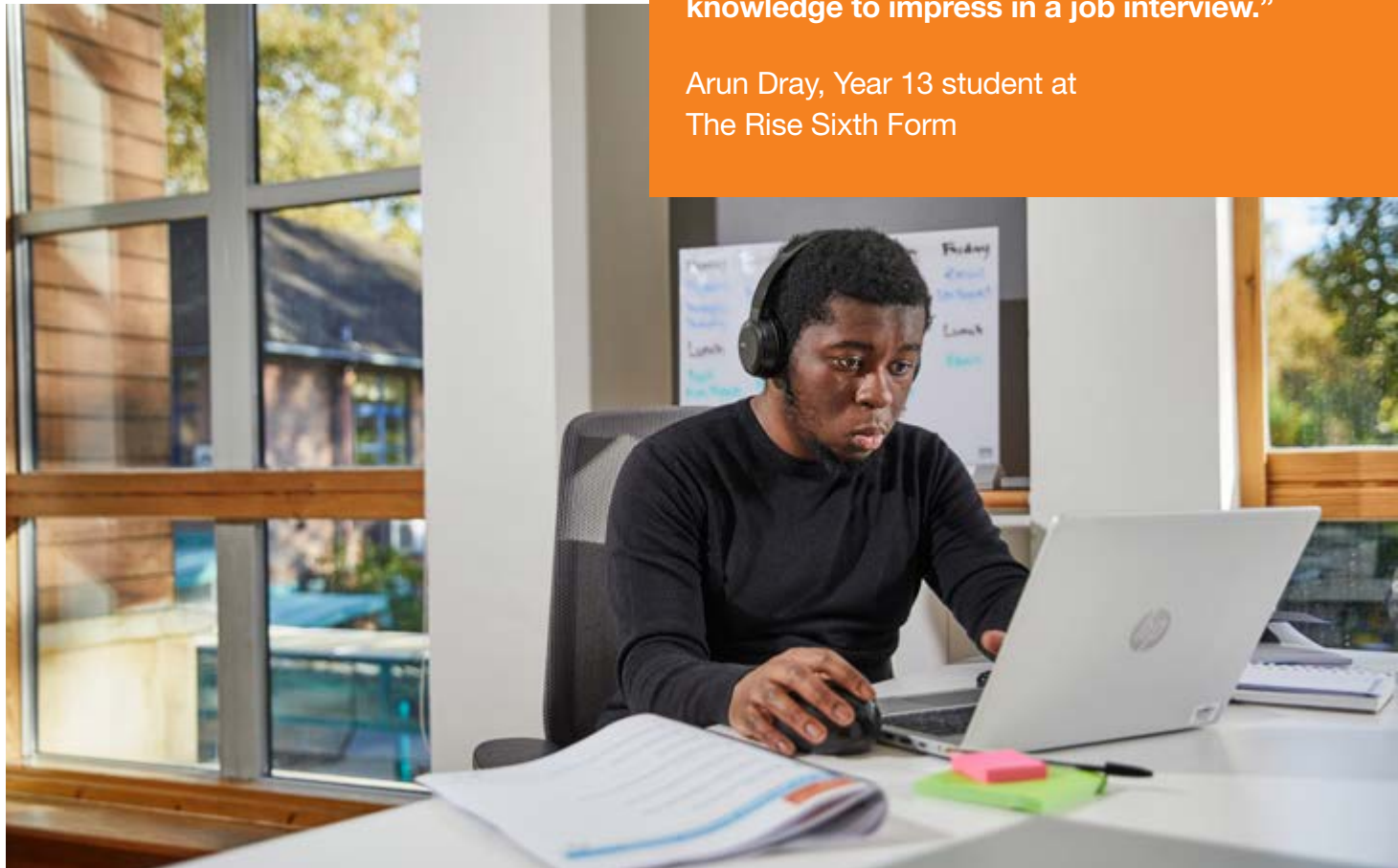
The guiding principle behind our employment and enterprise strategic aim is that we want every autistic young person to have a good careers education at school, and in further and higher education. This includes experiences of work that will equip them to progress to employment and instil transferable life skills.

Across our education settings, we offer careers advice and employability opportunities to pupils and learners. We actively encourage pupils and learners to understand the working world.

For example, learners at Ambitious College can take a 'Preparing for Employment' course to help boost their confidence ahead of work placements.

Last year, pupils at The Rise Sixth Form learned more about how businesses operate and launched a hypothetical phone app, delivering a sales pitch to 'investors' across Ambitious about Autism.

Staff also work closely with pupils and learners to understand their interests and find appropriate work experience placements that suit their needs.



The investors said they would invest in my app and thought it had the correct features to be a force in the market, which I was really pleased with.

I think [the employability course] has definitely improved my chances of getting a job, as I feel I have obtained the required knowledge to impress in a job interview.”

Arun Dray, Year 13 student at
The Rise Sixth Form



Ambitious College learner: **Izzy's story**

Izzy, a learner at Ambitious College, was interested in various work experience opportunities, such as jobs working with children, in a bar or restaurant, or in a salon.

Working with Izzy, the team at the college discussed what work experience might look like and located a suitable nursery near Izzy's home for her to complete a placement.

Initially, Izzy found the placement difficult because of the noise the children made and felt anxious about not fully knowing what she had to do. However, Izzy remained resilient and on her own initiative started to write down her weekly reflections, noting things that had gone well and things that hadn't gone so well.

Through this process, Izzy realised that she found it hard to talk to her manager without a prompt from familiar staff. It was

also difficult for her to figure out on her own what she needed to do next. Izzy discussed this with her manager and chose strategies that she could use to ask for support.

For example, she explained to her manager that she had finished a task and was ready for a new one. Izzy established her own goal to ask independently for help or for a new task. She did this in week three but still needed a bit of reassurance. By week four, Izzy was independently asking her manager for more tasks and work.

At the end of the placement, Ambitious College staff met with Izzy, her manager and parents. Her manager noted that as Izzy's confidence increased, her independence improved. By the end of the placement, Izzy did not rely on other staff and completed tasks independently.



Family and relationships

Being connected to others is vital. But, during the pandemic, the support autistic young people and their families received reduced substantially or stopped altogether, leaving many feeling even more vulnerable and isolated than ever before.

Autistic young people and their families have told us they want peer networks alongside uplifting but realistic information tailored to their needs.

In this first year of our Time for Ambition strategy, we made progress in launching an information and support service that will provide tiered support to autistic children and young people, their parents and carers. This included:

- a universal offer of high-quality, relevant, accurate and accessible information and guidance
- targeted support via online communities, co-produced by and for autistic young people, their parents and carers, to access peer support and build connections

- a specialist learner and family support service for autistic children and young people attending our education settings, as well as for their parents and carers.

Information and support

Accessibility is also vital. This year, we continued to add to our expanding bank of resources to support autistic young people and their families.

Our website can be customised to users' preferences, using the Recite Me accessibility tool. We also produced easy-read guides and visual stories alongside practical tips and techniques, toolkits and videos.

In the past year, our website had more than one million unique page views, and our top three resources together were downloaded 56,000 times:

- **Right from the Start toolkit** for parents and carers of young children
- **Transition to employment** toolkit

- Coronavirus resources including guides on getting vaccinated, testing and managing change.

After visiting our website, 84% of parents and carers felt they had better knowledge and skills to support their autistic child or young person, while 83% felt more confident supporting their autistic child or young person.

These figures are consistent with the previous year and an important measure of how parents and carers value and trust our high-quality information.



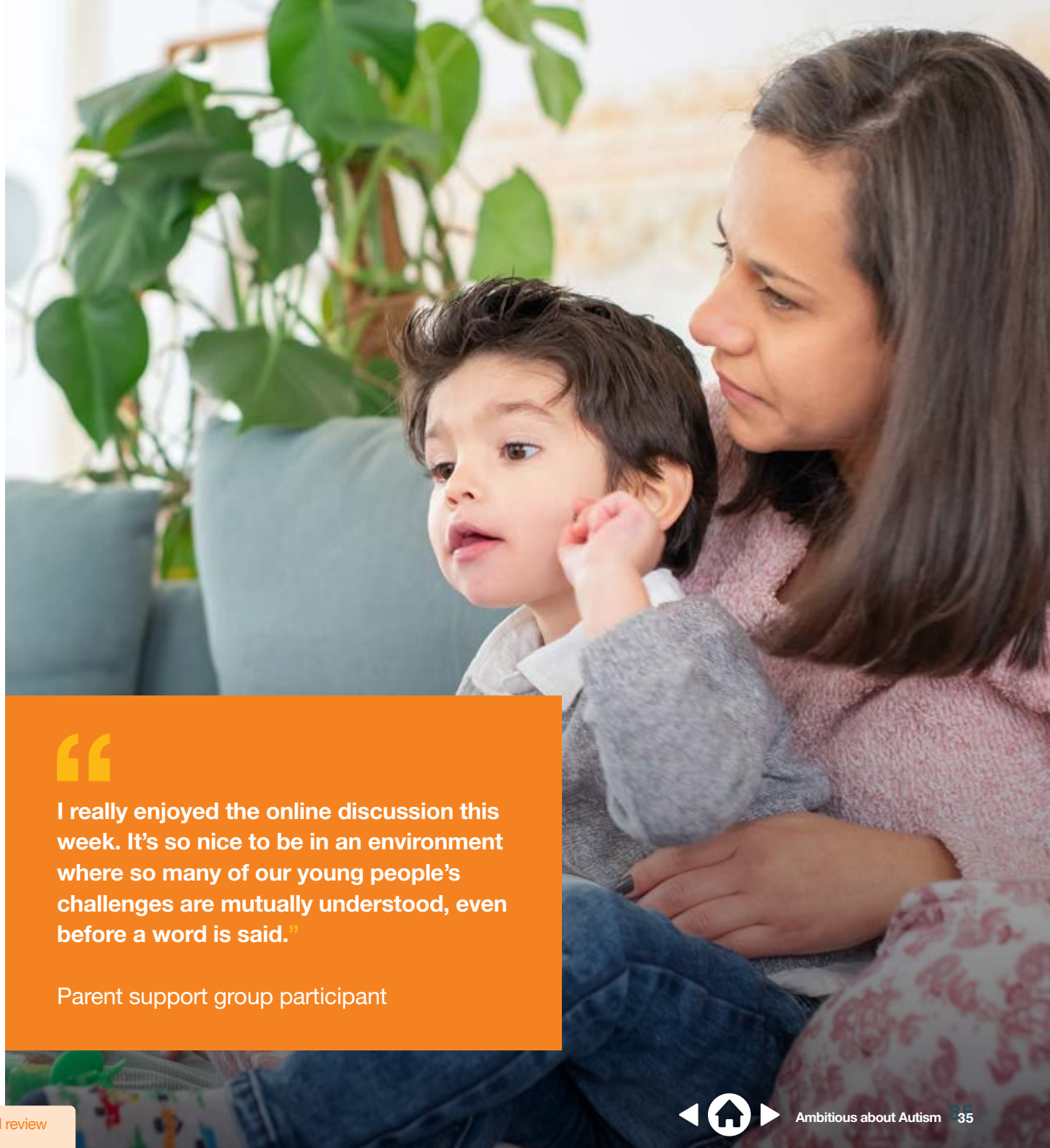
Learner and family support

Our learner and family support team helps the parents and carers of autistic children and young people attending our education settings throughout their journey with us. Over the past year, they have supported 68 young people to transition from our settings to other education, training, employment or other community opportunities.

We provided pupils, learners and their families with bespoke advice, support and guidance to help learners move into higher and further education, complete a supported internship, obtain an apprenticeship or access a meaningful social care placement.

The team also provided welfare support to parents and carers when they need it. In the past year, they have worked on 54 cases involving support, dealing with issues such as homelessness and securing urgent respite care.

The team set up a group that supports parents and carers across our education settings. It is hosted via our Talk about Autism online community. The sessions provide parents and carers with a chance to chat and receive guidance and support.



“

I really enjoyed the online discussion this week. It's so nice to be in an environment where so many of our young people's challenges are mutually understood, even before a word is said.”

Parent support group participant



Learner and family support: **Arran's story**

The learner family support team supported Arran* in his transition from TreeHouse School to further education. Arran is very keen to learn, but occasionally needs additional support to help him achieve his goals.

The learner family support team found a suitable college placement for Arran, but the local authority refused to fund it. They insisted that Arran should settle for a social care package which would have involved carers coming into the family home – something his parents were not comfortable with. The learner family support team worked with Arran's teaching and therapeutic staff and gathered all the data on what he had learnt at school, what he was hoping to learn at his new placement and how a place at college would enable this to happen.

The local authority did not agree with this; however, they did offer to send in an educational psychologist to assess Arran. The assessment took place but there were concerns over the inaccuracy and independence of the report provided by the psychologist.

The learner family support team challenged the parts of the report that were inaccurate and made further representations to correct the report.

The local authority finally agreed to fund Arran's placement at college and a transition plan was agreed with staff at TreeHouse School to ensure new staff could work successfully with Arran.

Arran is now attending college and has enjoyed many of the new activities in his curriculum.

*name has been changed

Talk about Autism online community

Talk about Autism provides a safe online space where parents and carers can speak, without judgement, with like-minded people about their parenting journey.

Talk about Autism moved to a new platform in June 2022 to allow us to grow the community and introduce new features that meet the needs of parents and carers.



Working closely with parents and carers over the past year, we developed a new community platform that supports engagement so parents and carers can be themselves, connect with others, access tailored information and get the latest news that affects their autistic child.

Over the next year (2022–23), we look forward to expanding the Talk about Autism community and launching an exclusive information webinar series that will provide autism-specific advice from experts, parent advocates, and a range of contributors with a professional interest in, and lived experience of, autism.



Talk about Autism is very easy to use and is ideal for me right now, as my son begins his journey to getting an autism diagnosis.”

Parent on the Talk about Autism community

Supporting autistic young people to make friends

After hearing feedback from autistic young people and analysing data from our website, we developed new resources on making and maintaining friendships as an autistic young person.

The resources were co-created with the Ambitious Youth Network, drawing on their own experiences and expertise to create content that really met the needs of young people who might struggle to make friends.

Content included ideas on where to meet new people who share similar interests and tips for conversation starters. We launched the resources in time for World Friendship Day, 30 July 2022.

The resources have been invaluable to autistic young people and were viewed 1,113 times between 1 July and 31 August 2022.



LGBTQ+ resources

In February 2022, we launched our LGBTQ+ resources for autistic young people and their families as part of LGBTQ+ History Month. While there's a spotlight on the LGBTQ+ community during February, we know the importance of highlighting these resources all year round, which we have continued to do.

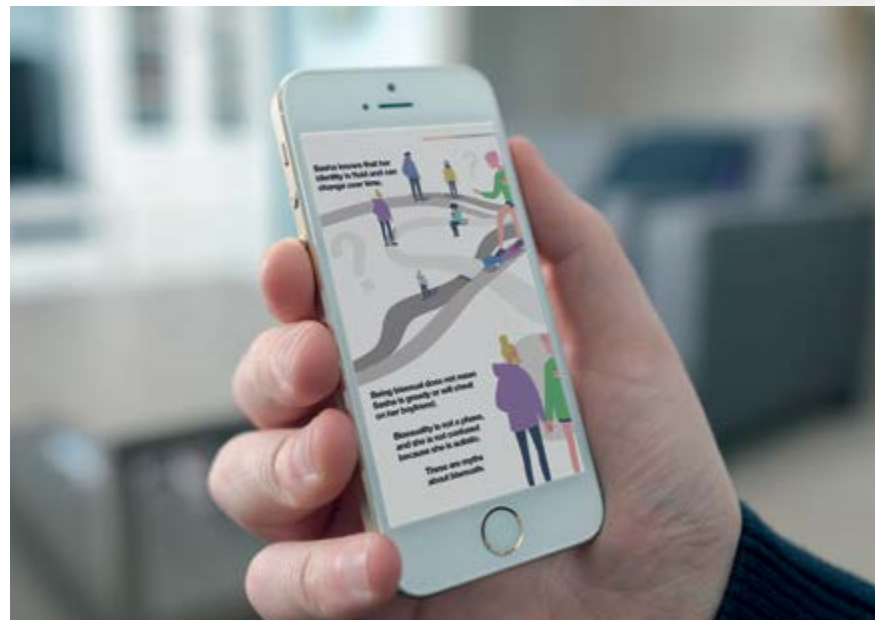
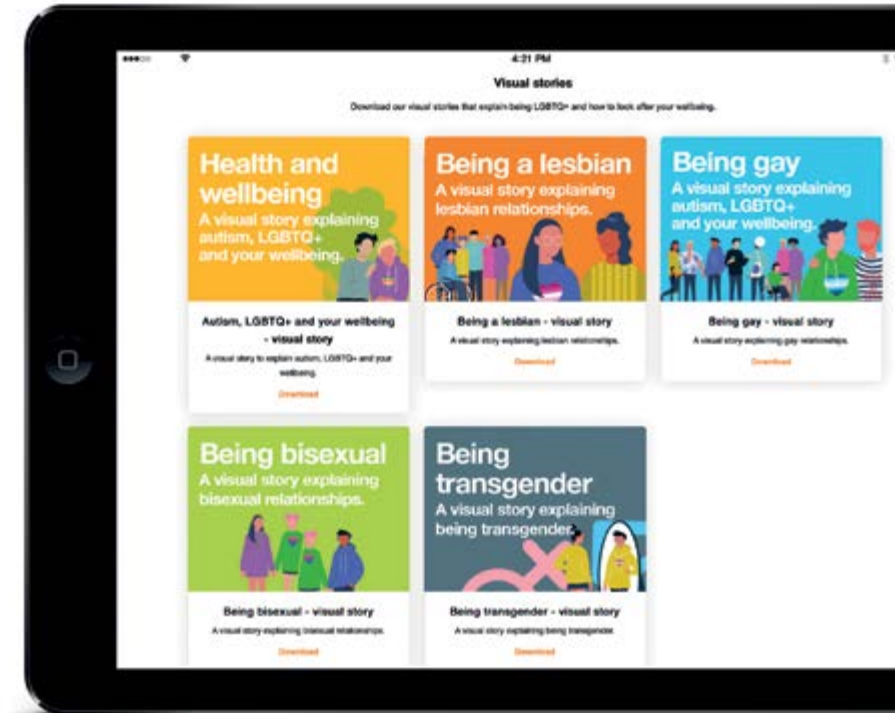
We worked closely with LGBTQ+ autistic young people to create the resources, listening to their experiences and using their insight to guide the project's content.

Since the content's launch, 75.8% of autistic young people who accessed the content said that the resources were extremely useful. The resources were viewed 5,183 times between 1 February and 31 August 2022.

We received positive feedback from autistic young people and stakeholders alike.



AaA has published some new LGBTQ+ resources. It's a great showcase for intersectionality and neurodiverse LGBTQ+ people, with a great focus on young people."



I love your new LGBTQ+ resources!"

Ambitious about Autism returns to the Autism Show

Following a two-year hiatus due to the pandemic, we were able to return to the Autism Show 2022, the largest event in the country dedicated to the autism community.

In June, a team of colleagues from Ambitious about Autism hosted a stand at the ExCeL Centre in London, where they met hundreds of autistic people, their friends, families and carers.

We produced a suite of new resources to showcase our work at the event, including leaflets on our education settings, employment programme and youth network.





Health and wellbeing

Good physical and mental health and wellbeing are essential for an autistic child or young person to thrive. Right from the start, timely diagnosis followed by post-diagnostic support lays the foundations for understanding autism and how to access the right healthcare and support.

Autistic people also need services that support good mental health by reducing isolation and early intervention through signposting to specialist support.

In this first year of our Time for Ambition strategy we have made progress against our objective to pilot a post-diagnostic support service so that all autistic young people can access support to improve their wellbeing during and after diagnosis.





Post-diagnosis support pilot programme

The post-diagnostic support programme was made possible thanks to the generosity of the Bally's Foundation.

The programme aims to improve the wellbeing of autistic young people by increasing understanding and acceptance of their autistic identity.

In the first year of our project, we benefitted from an unexpected research grant from the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR). The grant will enable a world-class team to evaluate the programme and provide an evidence-based approach to determine whether it helps autistic young people.

We hope the research will provide compelling evidence of the project's effectiveness and help influence NHS England to support and commission the model.

In the next phase of the pilot, we will recruit autistic young people to co-produce the online course, establish a reference group of expert partners who can influence change in national government policy and practice, and begin research led by UCL's Centre for Research in Autism and Education, to investigate inequalities in access to post-diagnostic support.

Together, we will develop resources and produce online courses that will be freely available to healthcare professionals and autistic young people, ensuring they get the right support at the right time.

Hospital accessibility

Our longstanding partnership with the Whittington Health NHS Trust has continued to improve the experience of autistic patients and those with learning disabilities visiting hospital for appointments or in emergencies.

As part of a year-long project for the Whittington Health NHS Trust, Ambitious about Autism supported three north London patient groups – Mencap Islington Me Time, The Elfrida Society and Centre 404 – to create new resources for autistic patients and people with learning disabilities.



I want healthcare staff to know who I am. I've had an appointment cancelled nine times. Healthcare staff tried to be honest with me. I hope this project will change things for the better."

Martin, member of patient involvement group

Through joint working with patient groups, we examined the challenges that autistic patients and people with learning disabilities face when visiting hospital for appointments or in emergencies.

Patients told us that they found it difficult to understand some of the unfamiliar medical language used during appointments. They also said they needed enough time to process information during appointments and wanted to feel that healthcare professionals understood their needs.

We launched the new resources during Learning Disabilities Week (20–26 June). These were published on Whittington Health's website and distributed in the hospital and across the community.

Resources included easy-read guides on:

- what happens when you visit the emergency department
- going for a routine operation
- making a complaint or giving a compliment.



Working on this project, together with Ambitious about Autism, has been a fantastic opportunity to improve the experience of accessing healthcare for people with a learning disability. By working together and really listening to people, we have a better understanding of what we were not getting right – we can now change that and ensure everyone has a good experience when they come to our hospital or community sites."

Varda Lassman, Islington Borough and Nurses Lead for Adult Community Health Services at Whittington Health NHS Trust

We also produced an easy-read form for medical staff to fill in and give to the patient when they leave, explaining the treatment they've received.

There are also resources for healthcare staff to help them improve their understanding of autism and the different types of learning disabilities, so they can better interact with patients during visits and appointments.





Active citizenship in the community

Autistic children and young people are at the heart of everything that we do. Inclusion is a cornerstone of our Ambitious Approach and just as important in the community as it is in education or employment.

In this first year of our Time for Ambition strategy we have made progress against our objective to further develop and expand our Ambitious Youth Network nationally to empower autistic young people to connect with one another and influence societal change.

Ambitious Youth Network

In March 2022, we launched the **Ambitious Youth Network**, a new UK-wide online platform for autistic young people. Autistic young people were involved in every stage of the network's development, including user testing and design.

The Ambitious Youth Network offers autistic young people, aged 16–25, a safe and moderated online space to help them understand their autistic identity and reduce the isolation and loneliness that many feel.

Young people can take part in peer support sessions, share experiences, find employment opportunities through Employ Autism, and participate in the work of the charity. There are also opportunities for them to work together and campaign for change.

The online network evolved from the work of our award-winning Youth Council – 14 dynamic young autistic volunteers who have led impactful and award-winning campaigns, including mental health campaign **Know Your Normal**.

Their work and positive example started a ripple effect, leading to an ever-increasing number of young people wanting to get involved.

Demand surged during the pandemic, with the number of young people registering for support increasing from around 50 to 450.



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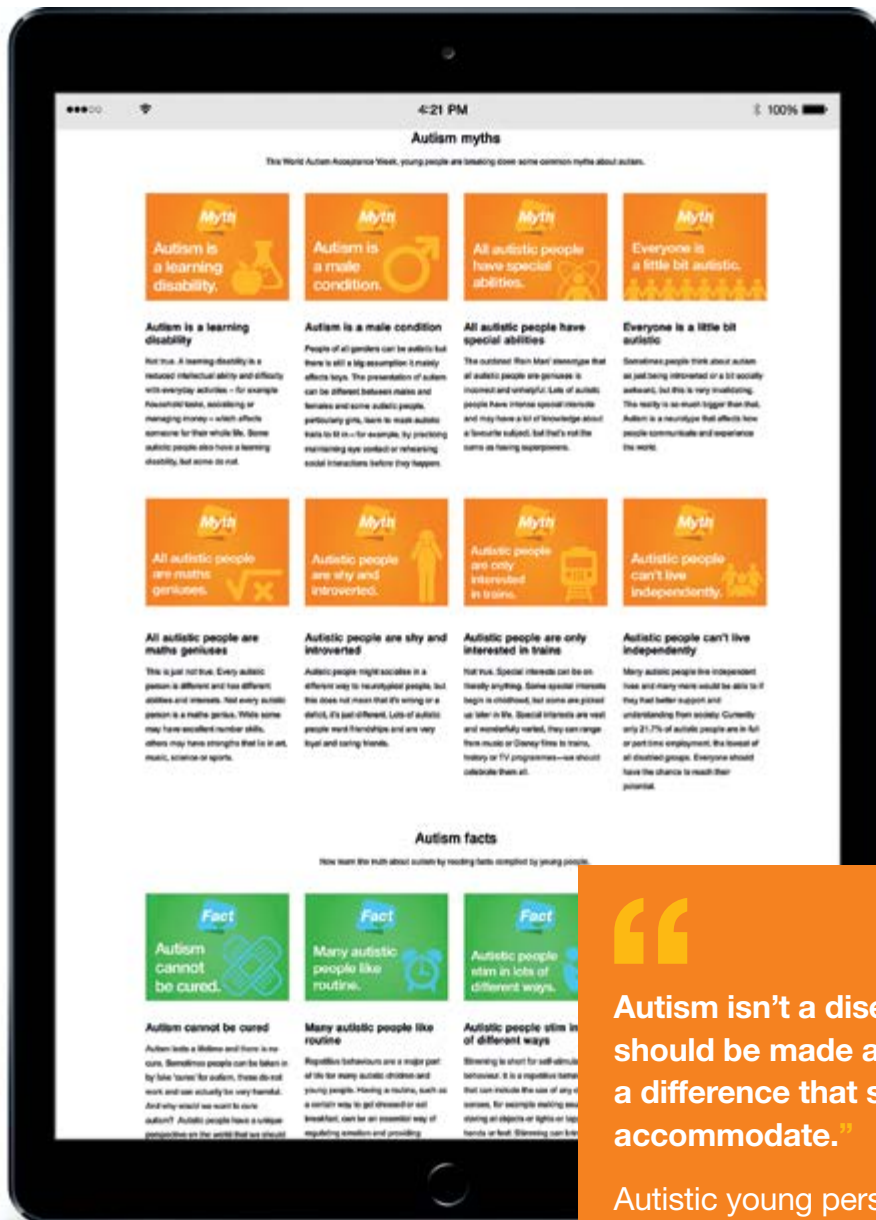
Before I joined, I struggled to take part in group activities and was highly anxious to do so, now I feel much more confident and self-assured in a range of different situations. The network has had a very positive impact on my life because it has given me a strong sense of belonging and enjoyment, and I don't feel as isolated or lonely anymore.”

Autistic young person

“

I've finally begun to understand my autism, and that has made me understand who I am and develop my identity. I have found some friends, too, and I feel I know what my interests are.”

Autistic young person



World Autism Acceptance Week 2022

We co-created our 2022 World Autism Acceptance Week campaign with members of our Ambitious Youth Network.

Autistic young people told us they want to be more accepted by society, which is why in 2022 we focused on autism ‘acceptance’ rather than ‘awareness’.

Throughout World Autism Acceptance Week, across our social media platforms, young people shared common myths about autism to break down misconceptions. They also shared autism facts to increase understanding and acceptance.

Autistic young people also took part in media interviews during World Autism Acceptance Week, including a BBC Radio 1Xtra special about autism.



Our partners and supporters

We have achieved a great deal thanks to our amazing partners and supporters, who continue to enable us to champion rights, campaign for change and create opportunities.

During 2021–22 the coronavirus pandemic continued to cause upheaval and instability, leading to the postponement or cancellation of fundraising events, which are our largest source of unrestricted income.

But thanks to the generosity and dedication of the public, our partners, companies, trusts and other funders, we raised £2,068,000 in 2021–22.

The donations we received funded specific projects and services, as well as our central services, including governance and leadership, people and culture, finance, fundraising, marketing and communications, research and evaluation, digital and IT, and property. These functions provide the strong foundations that enable us to provide projects and services, and fulfill stand with autistic children and young people.

We are grateful to all our supporters, especially those who have partnered with us over many years. This ongoing support provides us with stability and the means to expand and diversify our work in response to an ever-growing need for support. And we are pleased to have welcomed new supporters and look forward to turning their gifts into a meaningful impact for autistic children and young people.

Philanthropy, trusts and foundations

We are grateful to all the philanthropists who support our work, many of whom have made unrestricted donations. These form the bedrock of our organisation, ensuring we can continue to stand proudly with autistic children and young people, champion their rights and create opportunities, while also providing flexibility to adapt in continually changing and uncertain times.

James' story

We rely on the commitment, support and partnership of trusts and foundations, as well as philanthropists, who play a meaningful and strategically significant role in making our mission and vision a reality.

This year, we were fortunate to receive generous donations from leading partners, including Pears Foundation, the City Bridge Trust, BBC Children in Need, Joseph Levy Foundation and the Clothworkers' Foundation.

Together, they have ensured the continued existence and growth of our learner and family support service, a vital programme that is solely reliant on voluntary income.

James (pictured) left Ambitious College in July 2022 to move into social care, but no specialist support was offered. Knowing his need for this, the learner and family support team submitted professional evidence and held meetings with social services to advocate for James and ensure his needs were going to be met.

This resulted in securing the necessary specialist support for James so that he can go into the community, which is something he loves doing.



Corporate partnerships

Our ever-expanding list of corporate partners achieved amazing success, raising vital funds through a range of activities this year. These included sponsorships, staff fundraising, volunteering, pro bono work and support, all while championing neurodiversity within the workplace.

A huge thank you to everyone who got involved.

Legacy gifts

We are grateful to those who chose to leave a gift to Ambitious about Autism in their will and have been lucky recipients of transformative donations. Our generous legators are helping to ensure that we can continue to stand with autistic children and young people well into the future.



Taking on fundraising challenges

Ambitious 220

The Rapha Manchester to London ride took place on Sunday, 19 June 2022. We welcomed 58 riders, some of whom had come from as far as the US and Switzerland to take part in the 220-mile ride.

Led by Rapha founder and Ambitious about Autism supporter Simon Mottram, we raised more than £81,000. Our star fundraiser was Rob Challice from Wasserman Music, who raised over £4,000.

Rapha

London Marathon

After the Covid-related hiatus, it was wonderful to see Team Ambitious runners pounding the streets again at the London Marathon. A highlight was Digby Walker, running in a team of six dressed as Colin the Caterpillar, and breaking a world record in the process. Digby went on to run the Marathon Des Sables, raising a staggering £15k overall – a true Ambitious hero.

Our strategic partners

Pears Foundation

Pears Foundation has been a tremendous supporter of our work and key strategic partner since the early days of our journey. Their commitment and dedication enabled us to develop new services and create opportunities to support more autistic children and young people.

As a founding partner of Employ Autism, the Foundation is helping us build a bridge from education to employment for autistic young people everywhere.

Pears Foundation is also enabling Ambitious about Autism to build organisational resilience through the provision of professional development support, alongside much valued core funding support. Their support for our core foundations demonstrates philanthropic leadership and enables us to maintain stability, innovate and grow.



Marsh McLennan

Marsh McLennan became our three-year strategic partner in February 2021 with a goal to create brighter futures by empowering talent and unlocking opportunities. We are proud of the collaboration as Marsh McLennan's UK strategic charity partner for 2021–23. In the year ending 31 August 2022 Marsh McLennan has galvanized its UK workforce of more than 14,000 people to raise £200,000 through colleague fundraising, directly supporting Ambitious about Autism's Employ Autism programme.

Colleagues have also volunteered their time and expertise to support many aspects of Ambitious about Autism's work, including pro bono support for strategic projects.

Through the partnership, Marsh McLennan has committed to becoming a more autism-confident employer and industry leader by promoting and championing neurodiversity in the workplace.

With support from Ambitious about Autism's consultancy team, Marsh McLennan is developing its own inclusive practices, policies and adaptations to the workplace environment.

Together, we can create brighter futures, and Marsh McLennan is setting a high standard for all other major employers.



TalkTalk

We have proudly partnered with TalkTalk since 2006. They are a leading Employ Autism partner and will welcome five young autistic interns to their workforce in 2022–23.

In spite of the Covid-enforced postponement of the Night of Ambition gala, we continued to benefit from TalkTalk's support to raise acceptance of autism, support campaign development, and broadband connectivity.

In 2021–22, TalkTalk colleagues supported us through staff fundraising – taking part in World Autism Acceptance Week, 220 Your Way and quiz nights. Talk Talk generously partnered with us in October 2022 to host another exciting Night of Ambition.

TalkTalk
Group

Rapha

Thanks to the support of its founder and former chief executive, Simon Mottram, Rapha Racing Ltd has raised more than £1.5m since its first cycling challenge in aid of Ambitious about Autism in 2014.

Through their fantastic innovation, support and friendship, Rapha continues to stand with autistic children and young people through their commitment to delivering a first-class cycling challenge, raising much needed funds.

Rapha



Lead funding partners

Graham and Susan Tobbell

We are delighted to have Graham and Susan Tobbell as dear friends and partners of Ambitious about Autism. Since their first gift in 2016, Graham and Susan have made significant donations towards our work, enabling us to continue growing and diversifying support for autistic young people so they can achieve their ambitions.

Esmée Fairbairn Foundation

Esmée Fairbairn Foundation's multi-year support underpins the work of our dynamic youth participation programme, which develops a co-produced national programme for autistic young people to influence change.

Achievements this year included the launch of our online Ambitious Youth Network, online peer support, partnerships and consultancy, campaigns and resources.



Bally's Foundation

This year, we commenced an exciting new pilot programme focused on post-diagnostic support for newly diagnosed autistic young people. This is thanks exclusively to a two-year grant from Bally's Foundation, which will enable us to develop and evaluate a model of peer support, as well as online resources that will be freely available online.



City Bridge Trust

This year, City Bridge Trust committed a lead multi-year grant to support autistic learners at Ambitious College to move to a positive destination once their time with us comes to an end.

The team's support is absolutely vital to our learners' wellbeing, and we are thrilled to partner with the City Bridge Trust on our joint commitment to support young, disadvantaged Londoners to make positive transitions.



The Clothworkers' Foundation

As a long-standing friend of Ambitious about Autism, the Clothworkers' Foundation has been involved in developing many strategic projects with us since 2006 and transforming the lives of hundreds of autistic children and young people.

During our partnership, the Foundation contributed as lead funder in the original construction of TreeHouse School, to our school renovations in 2021 and as a committed supporter of our family and learner support service at Ambitious College.



Joseph Levy Foundation

We continued developing our Ambitious Approach thanks to the ongoing support of the Joseph Levy Foundation. We embedded our approach across all our education settings and launched the first in a suite of online resources that will share the Ambitious Framework as widely as possible.

This programme brings us ever closer to our goal of having all professionals put autistic children and young people's dignity and wellbeing at the very centre of the support they provide. We could not have achieved this without the Foundation's most generous support and friendship.



MariaMarina Foundation

A committed funder of Ambitious College for the last six years, MariaMarina Foundation has been instrumental in the expansion of the college and has been the lead funder since 2019.

The Foundation's current grant is enabling us to implement an ambitious employability strategy across both campuses, building pathways to employment for autistic young people.



The National Lottery Community Fund

We are humbled by the continuing support of the National Lottery Community Fund. Following their tremendous support for our Covid-19 appeal, this year they committed a further lead grant over three years, this time for our Employ Autism network programme. Their support will enable us to reach many thousands of autistic young people across the country to improve their employability skills.



Santander Universities UK

Santander Universities UK coordinated a £1 million investment in our ground-breaking employability initiative, the Employ Autism Higher Education Network. Just under half of these funds support Ambitious about Autism's work, including the provision of training, research and evaluation, while the rest was used directly by universities to provide paid internships for more than 150 autistic students and graduates, alongside wider careers support.



Smurfit Kappa Foundation

The Smurfit Kappa Foundation has generously supported Ambitious about Autism again as a founding funder of Spring School. Our priority remains the provision of expert autism education to more than 300 children and young people across London and the Home Counties, guided by our proven model of education practice, the Ambitious Approach.

Smurfit Kappa's generous donation will make a real difference to the lives of autistic children and young people by providing the IT equipment needed for digital skills development and playground development within our new school setting.



A huge thanks to our partners and supporters

Ambitious partners

Pears Foundation
Marsh McLennan
Rapha Racing Ltd
TalkTalk Group plc

Lead funding partners

Graham and Susan Tobbell
Bally's Foundations
The Clothworkers' Foundation
City Bridge Trust, the funding arm of The City of London Corporation's charity, Bridge House Estates (1035628)
Esmée Fairbairn Foundation
Joseph Levy Foundation
MariaMarina Foundation
National Lottery Community Fund
Santander Universities UK
Smurfit Kappa Foundation

Ambitious supporters

Aberdeen Asset Management
Ali MacCallum
Apply Recruitment
Atos
BBC Children in Need
Carlyle Group
Chapman Charitable Trust
Charity Extra
Charlotte Warner and Bruno Paulson
Christopher Burt*
Chris Pond
Collaboration Company
Crédit Agricole
CSDS Foundation
CIB
David Astor
Department for Education
Department of Health and Social Care
Elizabeth Stanton
Foyle Foundation
Gavin Sumner
Hornsey Parochial Charities
Hospital Saturday Fund
Jean Levenant
Joanna Healey
John and Clare Coombe-Tennant
Jonathan Andrews
Ketchum
Koral Anderson
Kusuma Trust UK
Laurie Edmans CBE
Lesley Longstone
Lloyds of London
Lucy Nutt
M/Six
Magnus Schoeman



Mark Naughton
Martyn Craddock
Masonic Charitable Foundation
Matt Davis and Eliza Mischon
Matt Hutnell
Michael Clark
The Mulberry Trust
Neil Goulden
Nick Hornby
Paul Disley-Tindell
PF Charitable Trust
Phil Haslam
Philip Noblet
Philippa Stobbs
PIMCO Foundation
Red Brick Road
Richard Hill
Ruth Kennedy
Sarah Gentleman
Simon Clements
Simon Hillson
Simon and Lucy Mottram
Snowbility

Sue Adkins
Tanith Dodge
The Annette Duvollet Trust
The Edward Gostling Foundation
The Forest Hill Charitable Trust
The Harebell Centenary Fund
The Health Foundation (PPP)
The Lawson Trust
The St James's Place Charitable Foundation
The Story of Christmas
The Thompson Family Charitable Trust
The&Partnership
Tim Barber
Tottenham Grammar School Foundation
Tristia Harrison
Dr Virginia Bovell OBE

And all our other supporters, including those who have chosen to remain anonymous.

*signifies a legacy gift

Our approach to fundraising

Fundraising practices

We adhere to the highest fundraising standards, which we recognise to be essential in retaining the trust and support of our much-valued donors.

We pay the voluntary levy to register with the Fundraising Regulator and ensure that our practices comply with the Code of Fundraising Practice and the Fundraising Promise. We are also a member of the Chartered Institute of Fundraising.

We maintain up-to-date policies for: our fundraising code of conduct; fundraising ethics; compliments and complaints; and whistleblowing. We ensure that all team members understand and comply with these policies.

Our Board of Trustees reviews these policies annually, alongside our compliance with fundraising regulations.

Our privacy policy recognises the recent changes and continues to comply with data protection legislation and regulation, and is accessible to all on our websites.

We also ensure that we are compliant with the UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), the EU GDPR, the Data Protection Act 2018 and Privacy and Electronic Communications Regulations (PECR).

In the year under review, there have been no known instances of non-compliance with the requirements of the Code of Fundraising Practice (0:2020–21).

We echo organisational values in our fundraising practice. Through our close adherence to fundraising regulations, scrutiny by the executive leadership team and transparency with supporters, we ensure that we do not unreasonably intrude on a person's privacy; are not unreasonably persistent; and do not place undue pressure on any person to give money or other property.

We also value difference, continually seek to increase the diversity of our supporters and demonstrate inclusivity in all we do. Our fundraising committees proudly include many autistic and neurodiverse members, alongside those with lived experience.

Our fundraising work

Most of our fundraised income is generated through partnerships with individuals who have an interest in our cause, as well as trusts, foundations and corporate partners.

We have also benefited from the generosity of community members and individuals participating in online and in-person events and challenges.

We use third parties to support our fundraising when specific digital platforms are required for fundraising events, for example JustGiving and Givergy.

We do not engage in face-to-face or telephone direct marketing. Our regular giving programme is conducted primarily with our close community. We do not conduct street or public site collections, nor do we have any mass participation activities in place.





Our people

We are ambitious

We are incredibly proud of our people. They do extraordinary work that transforms the lives of autistic children and young people. This year, thanks to the incredible resilience and agility of colleagues across the organisation, we have helped autistic children and young people and their families to start to recover from the pandemic and plan for their futures.

During 2021, the new Covid-19 Omicron variant and changing government rules continued to have an impact on staff providing support to pupils and learners in our education settings. We provided ongoing support and communication to help our education settings colleagues during this challenging period. In spring, as coronavirus restrictions began to relax, we invited our central services teams, who had been largely working at home during the pandemic, to return to use our office spaces.

Although working life has evolved, the after-effects of the pandemic and increases in the cost of living mean that recruitment and retention have become a challenge for us, like they have for many organisations. Being able to recruit and retain the best staff, particularly in our education settings, is critical and therefore this is a priority for us as an organisation.

We are passionate about supporting and developing our staff. In light of this, we have developed a number of new initiatives and support measures for colleagues over the last year, so that we can continue to say with confidence that Ambitious about Autism is a great place to work.

We are open

We developed a pilot hybrid working policy and put together a comprehensive guide for staff, which provided information about what to expect when working in our offices

and working at home. This was particularly important for those who joined us remotely during the pandemic. In autumn 2022, we reviewed staff satisfaction with our hybrid working arrangements with a view to continue to embed this way of working.

The past year has been financially challenging for many with rising inflation and a squeeze on living standards. Following the cost of living pay increase for staff in September 2021, in April 2022, we provided staff with a one-off bonus of £400 in recognition of external financial pressures and to celebrate their hard work and commitment throughout the pandemic.

In August 2022, we also appointed a new Head of Rewards to continue developing our rewards strategy as an organisation.

We work together

Wellbeing

We continued to provide a programme of events and activities to boost staff morale and wellbeing. Auditors, Scrutton Bland, carried out an internal audit in May 2022 on our wellbeing offer. They considered the actions taken to support staff mental health and wellbeing represented best practice when compared to other education clients.

In October 2021, our People team developed and launched a new wellbeing hub on our staff intranet to provide tools and resources to support mental health and wellbeing following the challenges of the pandemic. The hub contains sections for each of our education settings and central services team, with information ranging from employee benefits and financial wellbeing to physical and mental health.

The People team hosted demo sessions to help staff learn how to navigate the hub and also used our internal communication channel Yammer to set up a wellbeing group for colleagues to chat and share tips, resources and sources of support.

Our popular cross-organisational step challenge also returned this year. The four-week 'Big Team Challenge' encouraged teams of staff to work together to stay active and motivated.

In July, we were delighted to bring all our staff together for our annual Staff Awards, which took place in person following our virtual event in 2021. Ahead of the awards, we received a record-breaking 747 nominations from staff members keen to recognise their colleagues' exceptional achievements.

We love learning

Ambitious Leaders

We are committed to nurturing and developing talent within our organisation. Last year, we launched our new learning and development programme, Ambitious Leaders.

The programme was created to support leaders across our organisation and was set up in collaboration with staff from across Ambitious about Autism. It has also been accredited by the Institute of Leadership and Management (InstLM), which means that all participants who successfully complete

the programme will become Associate Members of the Institute of Leadership and Management.

This year, 17 colleagues from our pilot cohort and two subsequent cohorts completed the Ambitious Leaders programme. Additional members of these groups have partially completed and are due to pass in the next academic year. We celebrated the successes of our first graduates at our Staff Awards ceremony in July.

Ambitious Learning

We love learning and, this year, as part of our ongoing work to take our staff learning and development to the next level, we launched a new online learning management system called Ambitious Learning.

This modern and engaging learning platform enables staff to access their learning in one place. It includes clear pathways for induction and compliance, as well as a range of learning topics for staff to access easily. We plan further content for the platform next year.

We have also developed a comprehensive learning and development programme for colleagues to develop the skills and knowledge they require to apply the Ambitious Approach to education. (You can read more about this in the update on [our Ambitious Approach on page 21](#).)

We celebrate difference

Equity, diversity and inclusion

We value and embrace difference. We aim and work hard to ensure that our work is inclusive and that we champion diversity. We understand that to achieve meaningful and lasting change around equity, diversity and inclusion, we need a proactive and comprehensive approach.

This year, we published our Equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) strategy, setting out the high-level action we will take to make our organisation the best it can be. Inclusion is also at the heart of our Time for Ambition strategy, and it is being driven by our board and leadership team.

Our strategy was informed by an independent audit of our organisation's EDI work by diversity consultants EW Group. This included input from focus groups with staff. The audit and feedback we received helped us to develop four priorities and overarching goals, which are set out in our EDI strategy.

These are:

Courageous governance and leadership

A key reflection from our audit was the need for courageous governance and leadership that demonstrably and actively leads on EDI. Our chief executive became our charity's overall EDI champion and has set pledges to champion inclusion which have been shared with the whole organisation. To ensure EDI is further embedded at Board level, Laura Palmer was appointed as the EDI trustee lead.

Inclusive workplace

We are committed to ensuring Ambitious about Autism is a place where people feel a strong sense of belonging and can bring their whole selves to work. In May 2022, we launched three Ambitious staff networks, run by colleagues, for colleagues.

Our staff networks are safe spaces where people can come together to share ideas, support and learn from one another, raise awareness of challenges and channel their authentic voice. They are organised primarily around a special characteristic, shared heritage or life experience. Our first three networks focus on:

- race and ethnicity
- LGBTQ+
- disabilities, neurodivergence and health conditions.

All groups are open and welcoming to everybody, including allies. They were developed by a steering group led by staff members.

This year we also increased our demographic database from 51% to 81% of staff and continued to strengthen our cross-organisational EDI committee.

High-quality and inclusive education and services

We continued to ensure the curriculum and content within our education settings reflects the diverse histories, interests and experiences of the communities we serve. We also continued to work to ensure all our plans, processes, policies and systems for our services take a holistic approach to EDI.

Influencing national work

We continue to stand with autistic children and young people from diverse communities, on a national scale. This includes researching and highlighting the views and experiences of autistic young people and investigating the barriers they face.

We supported young autistic Black people to share their views and experiences on a BBC 1Xtra radio programme about autism.

Monitoring, evaluating and reporting

We continue to monitor, evaluate and report our progress against our aims.

Looking to the future

Over the next two years of our strategy, we will continue to build on our core expertise in education and employability. We will also engage more than ever before in the other areas that are essential for autistic children and young people to lead fulfilling lives, such as having supportive families and relationships, good health and wellbeing, and being active citizens in their communities.

Excellent education



Our overarching aim is that all autistic children and young people have an excellent and inclusive education that enables them to learn, thrive and achieve. Ultimately, this will support them to have a good quality of life, including the realistic prospect of living and working as part of their communities.

Strategic priorities:

- Continue to embed, evaluate and refine our Ambitious Approach, evaluating the programme pilot and publishing the impact and outcomes.
- Continue to develop each of our education settings to meet the evolving needs of our learners, ensuring development plans are in place.
- Further develop our careers education practice and support meaningful transitions and progression for pupils and learners.

- Pursue opportunities to grow the primary provision at The Rise School.
- Consider options with a view to implementing a primary provision growth programme at TreeHouse School.
- Conduct analysis to inform a long-term plan to diversify our offer across both campuses of Ambitious College.
- Open Spring School, our newest purpose-built school, in Chessington, Kingston for autistic pupils aged 4–19 years old.
- Continue to nurture and operate strategic partnerships with the local community of Kingston.
- Assess opportunities in future rounds of applications for free schools with SEND provision and bid where appropriate to the Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust.

Employment and enterprise



Our guiding principle is that we want every autistic young person to have good career education at school and in further and higher education, including experience of work. This will equip them to progress to employment and instil transferable life skills.

Strategic priorities:

- Complete year three of the Employ Autism careers support and work experience pilot programme during 2022–23, with a view to implementing a sustainable offer by 2023–24.
- Implement and evaluate the Employ Autism Ambassadors' Programme.
- Evaluate the Employ Autism pilot programme through research with DARE UK (Data and Analytics Research Environments UK) and University of Bath partnerships.
- Pilot a careers education framework in our education settings during 2022–23 with a view to finalising and launching by 2023–24.

Health and wellbeing



Good physical and mental health and wellbeing are essential components of ensuring that an autistic child or young person can thrive. We know that access to the right support at the right time is essential.

Strategic priorities:

- Launch and evaluate a pilot post-diagnostic support service for autistic young people.
- Develop health and wellbeing content for autistic young people.

Active citizenship in the community



Inclusion is a cornerstone of our Ambitious Approach and is just as important in the community as it is in education or employment. We want autistic young people to be empowered to connect with one another and to influence societal change.

Strategic priorities:

- Continue to develop, grow and evaluate the Ambitious Youth Network online community.

- Launch 'Autistic and OK', our youth participation programme for mainstream schools.

Family and relationships



Being connected to others is vital, and autistic young people and their families have told us they want peer networks alongside uplifting but realistic information tailored to them and their lived experiences.

Strategic priorities:

- Develop and expand our information service and the Talk about Autism online community for parents and carers of autistic children and young people.
- Continue to provide specialist Learner and Family support to our pupils and learners, and their families.

Influencing policy and practice



We will support autistic young people and their families to influence policy and practice nationally, to improve their access to excellent education, quality health support and fulfilling careers. We will use our experience from direct work with autistic young people and families, and work with partners, to maximise impact.

Strategic priorities:

- Conduct influencing work in response to the SEND Green Paper and Schools White Paper.
- Influence practice nationally as partners of the Autism Education Trust (AET).
- Continue to develop and offer a training and consultancy service to external education, employment and health partners.

Strong foundations



Achieving our objectives would not be possible without the strong foundations that underpin our strategic plan. Our governance and leadership, people and culture, fundraising and finances, marketing and communications, research and evaluation, and digital and information technology will align to support the implementation of our strategy.



S172 statement

The executive leadership team and board make assessments and decisions in good faith, considering the potential consequence on stakeholders. In addition, they consider the expected outcomes most likely to promote the success of Ambitious about Autism. The benefit of our pupils, learners and stakeholders is always paramount.

The executive leadership team and the board consider the following:

- The consequences of any decision in the long term. This includes a regular review of our risk register, departmental operational plans and overall strategic plan.
- The interests of our employees, through regular feedback from all-staff meetings, team meetings and individual monthly supervisions.
- The need to foster business relationships with suppliers, customers and others, ranging from prompt supplier payments to regular meetings and communication with local authorities. This includes weekly updates to local authorities with respect to our pupils and learners.
- The impact of the operations of the charity and the Trust on the community and the environment. We have a community representative on all our governing bodies and continue to review our fleet management to achieve further cost savings in terms of running costs and our impact on the environment.
- The desirability of the charity and the Trust in maintaining a reputation for high standards of business conduct. We lead by

example and build a culture of excellence through good recruitment choices and practices, and excellent training.

- The need to act fairly as members of the charity and the Trust. We have combined most of our policies across the group.

Streamlined Energy and Carbon Reporting

Energy and carbon consumption

Streamlined Energy and Carbon Reporting (SECR) is a legislative reporting requirement introduced in 1 April 2019. It mandates that all companies that meet the thresholds must report on their operational energy consumption and associated emissions. The high-level breakdown for the group is as follows:

		kWh	Mileage	tCO2e
Gas	2021-22	407,071	n/a	75
	2020-21	546,995	n/a	100
Electricity	2021-22	715,755	n/a	139
	2020-21	482,779	n/a	103
Transport	2021-22	20,624	21,192	5
	2020-21	16,488	17,974	6
Total	2021-22	1,143,450	21,192	219
	2020-21	1,046,262	17,974	208

Intensity metric

An intensity metric gives us an indicator of carbon performance based on an operational figure of the number service users (pupils and learners), with 312 users emitting on average 0.70 kgCO2e each. This is measured annually and compared against previous years to show progress in reducing our carbon intensity.

	2021-22	2020-21
Number of service users	312	291
tCO2e	219	208
	0.70	0.72

Ambitious about Autism initiatives

This section highlights energy and carbon improvement projects undertaken during the year or those that are currently underway. Monitoring mileage underpins good fleet management and should be more than a data collection exercise. Reducing mileage reduces costs and emissions, and technology solutions will make the process easier and more accurate. We're replacing older vehicles

with more energy-efficient vehicles to achieve further cost savings in terms of running costs. We continue to focus on our fleet management.

We have engaged an external consultant to undertake a Net Zero carbon roadmap audit, which will be completed in 2023.

Calculations

The following figures were used to convert energy to CO2 figures:

	Litre		CO2e	
	2021-22	2020-21	2021-22	2020-21
Gas	n/a	n/a	0.18254 tonnes per MWh	0.18316 tonnes per MWh
Electricity	n/a	n/a	0.19338 tonnes per MWh	0.21233 tonnes per MWh
Fuel	Petrol: 10.6kWh per litre	9.1kWh per litre	Petrol: 0.22719 tonnes per MWh	0.31349 tonnes per MWh
	Diesel: 9.5kWh per litre		Diesel: 0.24115 tonnes per MWh	

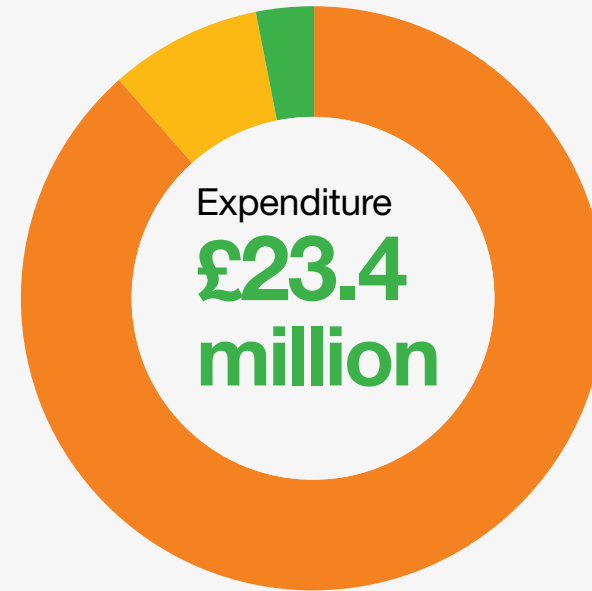
Financial review

Our total income for the year was £24.5m and our overall expenditure £23.4m. Our net assets are £20m, compared with net assets of £16.4m at 31 August 2022.



Income:

- **£21.8m**
charitable activities education services
- **£2.1m**
gifts and donated service
- **£0.4m**
trading income
- **£0.2m**
investments and other income



How our money was spent:

- **£20.7m**
charitable activities education services
- **£2m**
charitable activities external affairs
- **£0.7m**
raising funds

Financial performance

The 2021-22 year, showed strong financial performance, with income increasing to £24.5m from £22.9m in 2021, reflecting growth in the services provided to autistic children and young people. Total expenditure for the year also grew to £23.4m, an increase of £1.8m (2021: £21.6m).

In line with this positive financial performance, free reserves increased to £2.9m (2021: £2.4m), which is slightly above the reserves target range of £1.7m - £2.5m. These funds are available for future development in line with the Time for Ambition strategy, as well as providing resilience against financial pressures. During the year, the charity invested £0.1m in freehold and leasehold improvements, £0.3m on furniture and equipment and £0.2m on computer equipment.

Ambitious about Autism is using an interest rate swap to manage its exposure to interest rate movements with the interest rate fixed at 4% for the NatWest Loan of £1.1m.

Our investment portfolio was valued at £1.8m, a £0.1m reduction compared to 31 August 2021 reflecting challenging market conditions.

Investment policy

The charity's investment policy was approved by the Board of Trustees in July 2022. It aims to produce the best financial return at an acceptable level of risk. The risk profile is agreed with the investment manager and is regarded as medium. The policy is reviewed at least once a year. The trustees have set a target to grow the portfolio by inflation + 3% per annum (after fees) over the long term. This was not achieved in the year due to market conditions.

The trustees have stated within the investment policy their commitment to responsible investing, and aim to make a positive difference on society through the charity's investment holdings.

Over the last three years, investments have increased from £1,750k to £1,762k, which is a gain of 1%.

Investment risk management

The investment portfolio is diversified across a range of instruments to reduce the risk of overexposure to one type of asset. We hold the following instruments: fixed interest, direct UK and overseas equities, cash and property, and managed funds. Note 12 provides further analysis of these assets.

The investments are managed by investment managers appointed by the charity, currently Rathbones Group Plc, which is a reputable FTSE 250 company with net income of £75m in 2021. The risk profile is agreed with the investment manager and is regarded as medium risk.

Risk management practices

Members of the investment committee meet the investment manager twice a year to review performance and discuss market risks. The investment committee reports to the trustees on the risk profile, selection of investment managers and returns achieved.

Reserves policy and going concern

Free reserves exclude restricted funds and designated funds. At Ambitious about Autism, we hold free reserves to mitigate against risks resulting from unexpected drops in fundraising income, a downturn in learner numbers or unexpected short-term increases in expenditure. Our reserves policy is reviewed by the trustees annually and was last reviewed in December 2022.

Based upon an evaluation of income and expenditure risks and working capital requirements, the trustees have agreed that free reserves should be in the range of £1.7m–£2.8m. As at 31 August 2022, free reserves were £2.9m. The additional free reserves will be carried forward to the next financial year, where they will be utilised to support core activities as well as the implementation of the Time for Ambition strategy. The 2022--23 budget shows a year end free reserves position that is within the agreed range. The trustees will continue to monitor the reserves position closely throughout the year.

In addition to the free reserves, Ambitious about Autism has a number of designated funds totalling £6.3m as at 31 August 2022.

These are:

- Fixed assets, valued at £3.9m. Depreciation expenditure will be funded from this fund on an annual basis.
- Buildings maintenance and development fund, which is based on projected 30-year life cycle costs and was established for major repairs to the Pears National Centre for Autism Education. As at 31 August 2022, there was £0.6m in this fund.
- School development fund – a designated fund was created in 2013 for broader school development. The fund had a balance of £5k as at 31 August 2022.
- Covid recovery fund – a fund established in 2020 to provide a contingency against future risks as a result of the coronavirus pandemic, including additional costs or losses in income. The fund had a balance of £0.5m as at 31 August 2022.

- Transformation fund – a fund totalling £1.1m at 31 August 2022, which was established in 2020 to support our Time for Ambition strategy.

The policy of the Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust is to hold sufficient reserves to provide a working balance to mitigate the impact of uneven cash flows; provide a contingency in respect of unexpected events; and plan for potential major items of expenditure, including continued expansion.

Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust funds balances as at 31 August 2022 totalled £9.9m. This comprised nil unrestricted funds, £3.7m of restricted funds (including a £0.3m pension deficit) and £6.2m of restricted fixed asset funds. The funds balance at 31 August 2021 was £9.2m, excluding the £2.5m pension deficit.

The pension deficit has decreased in the year to £0.3m, resulting in year-on-year unrealised gains, which is at risk of reversing in the future. In accordance with the arrangements for a multi-academy trust, the deficit relating

to the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) is underwritten by the Department for Education.

After making appropriate enquiries, the trustees have a reasonable expectation that the trust has adequate resources to continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future. For this reason, it continues to adopt the going concern basis in preparing the financial statements. Further details regarding the adoption of the going concern basis can be found in the Statement of Accounting Policies.

Risks and uncertainties

Risks are managed in accordance with the risk policy approved by the Board of Trustees.

The aim of the policy is to:

- understand as fully as possible the risks being faced
- take appropriate action to manage those risks
- minimise the risk of new initiatives adversely affecting existing work

- accept a higher level of uncertainty, if appropriate, when taking advantage of new opportunities.

Ambitious about Autism has a risk register, which is reviewed annually by the Finance and Resources Committee and the Board of Trustees. Risks are scored according to likelihood and impact. The changes to risks are reviewed termly by the Finance and Resources Committee and Board, alongside the actions being taken or proposed to mitigate the risks.

The table on the next page identifies the five key strategic risks that have been identified by the Board of Trustees and explains how these risks are being managed.

Risk

Mitigation

1

Pupil numbers

Within an uncertain policy environment in times of austerity, there is an increased risk to pupil and learner numbers in our education services, and this uncertainty impacts on our ability to plan.

To manage the risk, we monitor pupil and learner numbers so that we can carefully manage admissions and increase our admission numbers as required. We maintain good relationships with commissioners, ensuring timely assessment dates to enable a fast turnaround of consultations, and support parents and carers through the admissions process.

2

Recruitment and retention

The failure to recruit and retain the quantity and quality of specialist staff poses a significant risk to services operating as planned.

High-quality staff are critical to Ambitious about Autism. We are building our recruitment pipeline, diversifying our approach to recruitment and building relationships with training schools to attract applicants in hard-to-recruit professions. We have several initiatives in place to ensure that our terms and conditions are competitive in a challenging market.

3

Financial risk

The risk that the financial impact of an uncertain economic outlook, and high-cost inflation, impacts negatively on the Trust's financial position.

Regular management reporting and financial re-forecasting is undertaken to understand an up-to-date picture of the Trust's financial outlook and is available to senior management and trustees. Cash flow forecasting is prepared to assess the organisation's ability to meet financial obligations. Reserves balances are maintained to support financial sustainability.

4

Learner related fee income

The risk that fee negotiations with Local Authorities placing learners with the Trust cause cash flow issues and/or have a negative impact on financial sustainability.

Annual fee letters are sent to Local Authorities ahead of the March deadline. Conversations with LAs are held proactively, and any requests for additional information dealt with promptly and openly. Legal advice is sought in a timely manner when debt recovery issues are experienced.

5

Covid-19

That the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic adversely effects our operations and negatively impacts on our financial position including cash-flow.

The organisational response to the Covid-19 pandemic continued to be carefully managed throughout the year, in response to changing government guidelines. The Executive Leadership Team discuss response measures on a regular basis, taking prompt action when needed to minimise the negative impact on the charity.

Legal structures and governance

Governance

Ambitious about Autism (the Company) is a charitable company limited by guarantee, incorporated on 23 May 1997 per Companies House (company number 03375255) and registered as a charity on 2 July 1997 (charity number 1063184). The Company was established under a memorandum of association, which established the objects and powers of the charitable company and is governed under its articles of association.

Ambitious about Autism is governed by a Board of Trustees who also act as the directors of the Company for the purposes of company law.

Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust (the Trust) is a multi-academy trust, a company limited by guarantee and an exempt charity.

It was founded and incorporated on 18 December 2012 (company number 08335297) to support the development and running of The Rise School, and further free schools.

The charitable company's memorandum and articles of association are the primary governing documents of the Trust. The Trust is governed by a board of trustees who also act as the directors of the charitable company for the purposes of company law, and it has members whose duty is to ensure that the board is effectively discharging its responsibilities. Ambitious about Autism is the sole corporate member of the Trust along with four individual members.

A formal governance review was conducted in 2019 supported by an external facilitator with a focus on streamlining and

strengthening governance arrangements across the group. The board and committee structure and membership, articles of association, members agreements, scheme of reservation and delegation, and terms of references were all updated and are now reviewed annually. All changes in relation to the Trust were approved by the Department for Education.

The trustees of Ambitious about Autism and the trustees of Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust are all members of the Joint Group Board Committee. The respective Ambitious about Autism and Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust boards retain responsibility for all matters and delegate a number of appropriate decisions to the Joint Group Board Committee and its subcommittees. This maximises efficiency and impact between the two boards. For

example, where joint policies exist, they are reviewed and approved, where appropriate, by the Joint Group Board Committee. Clear schemes of reservation and delegation are in place for both boards.

Both boards of trustees follow a regular cycle of termly meetings and have at least one away day with the executive leadership team each year, as well as holding additional meetings when required.

The boards are supported by several joint subcommittees as set out below.

- The Nominations and Remuneration Committee oversees governance planning and policy, including trustee recruitment, support and review. It also reviews and agrees remuneration and terms and conditions of employment for the executive leadership team and staff across the Company and the Trust. It meets termly in advance of board meetings.
- The Finance and Resources Committee meets termly in advance of board meetings and is responsible for the general oversight and scrutiny of systems, planning, financial and resource management, and reviewing

internal controls and risk management for the charity and the Trust.

- The Education Committee meets termly and is responsible for our education settings. It also oversees the governing bodies and advisory groups in each service for both the charity and the Trust.
- The Investment Committee, an Ambitious about Autism committee, which reports to the Finance and Resources Committee, monitors the performance of the charity's investment portfolio and meets twice a year.
- The Trust Audit Committee meets termly as part of the Finance and Resources Committee to oversee the annual report and accounts, the audit, the programme of internal scrutiny and compliance with Department for Education legislation for the Trust.

All matters related to the educational performance of TreeHouse School, The Rise School and Ambitious College are examined by their governing bodies. Safeguarding is discussed and considered at every level of our governance.

Management of the charity and the Trust is delegated to the chief executive, who is also the accounting officer for the Trust, and the executive leadership team. The executive leadership team members attend board and subcommittee meetings.

The Ambitious about Autism Youth Council comprised 14 autistic young people aged 16–25 as of 31 August 2022. Members of the Youth Council are encouraged to shape and influence our work and make presentations to the Board of Trustees. Two Youth Council Link Trustees were appointed during the year to ensure a strong link exists between the Board and the Youth Council.

Trustee recruitment, induction and training

The aim of the charity and the Trust is to build a diverse board that has the optimum range of skills, experience and perspectives to ensure that we have the appropriate level of support, scrutiny and oversight.

People with lived experience of autism are involved in the governance and decision-making of the charity and the Trust, including

on the board of trustees, the governing bodies and advisory groups.

The recruitment and induction policy works to promote this goal. New trustees are recruited openly through a variety of channels, including search, advertising and through networks. Once recruited, trustees are supported with an induction programme and handbook in the first few months. As part of the induction process, trustees receive training on issues such as safeguarding, health and safety, and data protection.

The charity also runs a termly training programme for trustees, covering topics such as equality, diversity and inclusion, exclusions and unconscious bias.

The recruitment, induction and appraisal of trustees is overseen by the Nominations and Remuneration Committee. All trustees give their time voluntarily and receive no benefits from the charity or the Trust. Any expenses reclaimed are set out in note 6 to the accounts. ([see page 105](#)).

Charity Governance Code

The principles and recommended practice set out in the Charity Governance Code are regularly discussed by the trustees.

Areas of focus in 2021–22 were:

Equity, diversity and inclusion

The board believes a balance of experience, skills, knowledge and backgrounds is crucial in the composition of the members to provide a variety of perspectives in discussions and enhance decision-making.

We believe that including people with lived experience of autism in our governance and decision-making and on the Board of Trustees is of benefit to the charity and the Trust.

The board is committed to investing in its diversity and appointed four new trustees to the Ambitious about Autism board and two new trustees to the Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust board in December 2021.

The Joint Group Board Committee undertook a skills and diversity audit in July 2022, which showed a diverse Board with a good range and depth of relevant knowledge and experience.

Integrity

The Board continues to comply with the principles of integrity included in the Charity Governance Code. In particular, the annual review of the safeguarding policies and confirmation of understanding of the Keeping Children Safe in Education requirements by trustees as well as regular reviews of the risk register and incidents ensures that the board continually reflects on its responsibilities and those of the organisation.

Engagement with suppliers, customers and others in a business relationship

We have a strong commitment to paying all suppliers within agreed terms.

Our executive leadership team prioritises achieving the best possible outcomes for our pupils, learners and stakeholders. Open engagement with parents, guardians and our local communities is vital to building successful and long-term relationships.

We continue to work closely and collaboratively with local authorities to ensure that outcomes are mutually beneficial, with our pupils, learners and stakeholders continuing to be our core focus. We work hard to establish and maintain good relationships with our wider stakeholders, including our funders and supporters.

Remuneration policy for key management personnel

The Board of Trustees of Ambitious about Autism and the Trust is responsible for defining the executive pay policy. This includes deciding on the salaries of the chief

executive and the executive leadership team. The board delegates this responsibility to the Nominations and Remuneration Committee. The committee reviews executive pay and our total reward strategy for staff.

The group, which comprises trustees and an external expert, meets each term. The committee makes recommendations to the board of trustees for approval. We have an executive pay policy, which sets out our approach to pay for our executive leadership team, how pay is determined and reviewed, and the relative impact on pay across the organisation.

Our approach to pay is underpinned by our principle to:

“Pay a fair salary and reward package to attract and retain skilled and expert senior leaders for Ambitious about Autism and Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust. Salaries and benefits should be competitive within the charity, education and public sectors, proportionate to the complexity of each role and responsibility, and in line with our objectives and affordable.”

The executive pay policy aims to follow a robust, evidence-based process to achieve this principle:

- Take account of pay in similar organisations in the UK charity and public sector markets, but do not compete with salaries in the private sector.
- Monitor salary trends in the charity sector through surveys produced by providers such as XpertHR, Croner and ACEVO, as well as Education and Skills Funding Agency academy schools financial benchmarking reports and, where necessary, commission external benchmarking exercises.
- Ensure performance is reviewed and reported to the Nominations and Remuneration Committee on an annual basis. Apply performance-related pay elements only where required by the relevant market sector.
- Mirror the national standards for professional groups, such as headteachers.
- Take account of the Academy Trust Handbook.

- Take account of the difference between executive leadership team pay and the lowest-paid roles, and median and average pay across the organisation.

Our approach to safeguarding

Safeguarding is everyone’s responsibility within the charity and the Trust. This means our trustees, employees and volunteers are required to ensure that Ambitious about Autism is a safe space.

Our policy and procedures also apply to extended and off-site activities, managed by the charity and the Trust, such as community access programmes, residential visits and work experience placements.

All staff members undertake safeguarding and adult protection training during induction, including whistleblowing procedures, to ensure they understand our safeguarding systems and their responsibilities.

This training is regularly updated, at least annually, and is in line with advice from our local safeguarding adult partnership, Haringey Safeguarding Adults. All staff receive training on the government’s anti-

radicalisation strategy, PREVENT, to enable them to identify young people at risk of being drawn into terrorism and to challenge extremist ideas.

Staff also receive regular safeguarding and adult protection updates (for example, through emails, newsletters, and staff meetings) as required, but at least annually.

All trustees and governors receive annual training about safeguarding, to make sure they have the knowledge and information needed to perform their functions and understand their strategic responsibilities as outlined in part 2 of the Department for Education’s statutory safeguarding guidance, Keeping Children Safe in Education 2022. (KCSiE).

Safeguarding is embedded in our recruitment processes, with at least one person on any interview/appointment panel for a post at the charity or the Trust, required to have completed Safer Recruitment in Education training.

All staff who have contact with young people and families have regular supervisions, and access to external clinical supervisions. These provide staff with support, coaching, and training, promote the interests of young people and allow for confidential discussions of sensitive issues.

Keeping data safe

We are fully committed to protecting the details of all the people we work with and who support us. We continue to make sure we’re always thinking about privacy and how to keep data safe and secure. Staff are required to stay up to date and informed through regular training. We never stop working on this.

Public benefit

Ambitious about Autism works to support autistic children and young people and their families throughout the UK. TreeHouse School supports pupils aged 4–19, The Rise School supports pupils aged 4–18 and Ambitious College supports learners aged 16–25, based on their needs.

Placements of learners are funded by a combination of funding from the Education and Skills Funding Agency and local authorities. Other activities are funded through voluntary income or fees earned from providing a service, for example, providing specialist training or support to parents, teachers and other professionals.

In overseeing the provision of education and the support of children, young people and their families, the trustees of Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust have complied with their duty regarding the guidance on public benefit published by the Charity Commission in exercising their powers and duties.

The trustees have referred to the guidance contained in the Charity Commission's general guidance on public benefit when reviewing the aims and objectives of the charity and in planning its future activities.

Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust's principal object is to advance, for the public benefit, education in the UK by developing schools to make special educational provisions for pupils with special educational needs, or 16–19 academies offering curricula appropriate to the needs of their students.

The Trust opened its first school, The Rise School, in September 2014. In particular, the trustees consider how planned activities will contribute to the aims and objectives set and are committed to NCVO's ethical principles.

Connected organisations

Ambitious about Autism is an active member of the Autism Education Trust, Autism Alliance, British Institute of Learning Disabilities (BILD), Council for Disabled Children, Disabled Children's Partnership, National Association for Non-Maintained and Independent Special Schools (NASS), Natspec, Positive Behaviour Support Alliance and the Special Educational Consortium.

Our education provisions are co-located at Springwest Academy (part of the Tudor Park Education Trust), West Thames College, The College of Haringey, Enfield and North East London and Whittington Hospital.

Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust

The Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust is a separate exempt charity.

Ambitious about Autism is the sole corporate member of the Trust. Therefore, the results of Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust are consolidated into these group financial statements.

Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust will be opening a new special free school for autistic children and young people, Spring School, in Kingston, in September 2023.

The Trust is actively seeking further partnerships to develop more special schools to address a growing need for more specialist education provision for autistic children and young people.

Trustees, advisers and senior staff

Our leadership team and advisers

The trustees of Ambitious about Autism are directors and members of the charitable company. The trustees of Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust are also the directors of the charitable company. They each guarantee to contribute an amount not exceeding £1 to the assets of the charitable company in the event of winding up.

The total number of such guarantees on 31 August 2022 was six. The trustees have no beneficial interest in the charitable company.

Trustees of Ambitious about Autism

Neil Goulden
(Chair of Trustees)

Lesley Longstone
(Vice Chair of Trustees and Chair of the Education Committee)

Elizabeth Stanton
(Treasurer, Chair of the Finance and Resources Committee and Chair of the Investment Committee)

Paul Disley-Tindell
(to 22 July 2022)

Andy Forbes
(from 10 December 2021)

Eduardo Gutierrez-Garcia
(from 10 December 2021)

Helen Jeffries
(from 10 December 2021)

Alistair MacCallum
(to 28 January 2022)

Jack Welch
(from 10 December 2021)

Michael Clark
(from 22 July 2022)

Trustees of Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust

Neil Goulden
(Chair)

Lesley Longstone
(Vice Chair)

Koral Anderson
(Trustee and Chair of the Audit Committee until 31 December 2020)

Michael Clark
(Trustee and Chair of the Audit Committee from 1 January 2021 until 17 November 2022)

Paul Disley-Tindell

(Trustee from 10 December 2021 and Chair of the Nominations and Remuneration Committee, to 22 July 2022)

Elizabeth Stanton

(Treasurer and Chair of the Finance and Resources Committee)

Tanith Dodge

(until 3 March 2022)

Joanna Healey**Lucy Nutt****Laura Palmer**

(from 10 December 2021)

Kumar Tangri

(from 10 December 2021 and Chair of the Audit Committee from 17 November 2022)

Charlotte Warner

(to 15 December 2021)

Members of Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust

Ambitious about Autism**Martyn Craddock****Paul Disley-Tindell**

(until 10 December 2021)

Andy Forbes

(from 28 January 2022)

Eduardo Gutierrez-Garcia

(from 28 January 2022)

Alistair MacCallum

(to 28 January 2022)

The trustees are supported in their work by the president and vice presidents, who all support the work of our charity.

President

Lord Tim Clement-Jones CBE

Vice president

Nick Baldwin CBE**Virginia Bovell CBE****Peter Carroll****John Constantine****Katharine Doré OBE****Karen Edwards OBE****Tristia Harrison****Alex Hatter****Richard Hatter****Nick Hornby****Bruno Paulson****Matthew Punshon****Charlotte Warner****Sid Wells**

Expert advisers

Our team of expert advisers are leading academics, clinicians, lawyers and communications professionals, all with an interest in autism and a passion to raise awareness and understanding. They provide advice and guidance on specific projects and campaigns, all as volunteers. We are honoured to be able to draw on the expertise of:

Judith Barnard**Professor Sir Simon Baron-Cohen****Steve Broach****Leo Capella****Prof Tony Charman****Prof Richard Hastings****Prof Patricia Howlin****Jonathan Meth****Dr Emran Mian OBE****David Nicholson****Nick Peacey****Mark Schmid****Dr Rowie Shaw OBE****Fiona Slomovic****Su Thomas****Richard Townley****Gaby Zein**

Ambassadors

Our ambassadors come from all walks of life, but all share an interest in autism and a passion to raise awareness and understanding. Our ambassadors are:

Niamh Cusack

Kathy Lette

David Mitchell

Sam Holness

Lucy Mottram

Simon Mottram

Jules Robertson

Hayley Ronson

Jon Snow

Luke Treadaway

Parent patrons

Our team of parent patrons are all people whose lives have been touched by autism:

Nicky Clark

Claire Coombe-Tennant

John Coombe-Tennant

Matthew Davis

Eliza Mishcon

Keith Duffy

Charlotte Moore

Claire Ryan

Sophie Walker

Employ Autism development board

Lord Tim Clement Jones CBE (Chair)

Laurie Edmans CBE

Chris Pond

Tristia Harrison

Alistair MacCallum

Nick Medd

Koral Anderson

Sue Adkins

Matt Hutnell

Jonathan Andrews

Katie Vanneck-Smith

Danuta Gray

Sally Cairns

Business ambassador group

Simon Clements (Chair)

Jean Lavenant

Tim Barber

Matt Davis

Marilyn Swinney

Jim Berrisford

Mark Edwards

Ruth Kennedy

Nathan Ott

Dom Hilleard

Neil Patel

Harriet Forrest

Ian Icceton

Paul Cunningham

Magnus Schoeman

Nick Medd

Andrew Mercer

Dan Snape

Richard Jones

Nigel Moralee

Gina Connell

Tracey Dawes

Tom Marchant

Steven Ingram

Gina Connell

Jack Biddulph

Joanne Smith

Michael Korn

Pia Wilkes

Rob Ford

Executive leadership team

The trustees delegate day-to-day management of the charity to the executive leadership team:

Jolanta Lasota

Chief Executive

Vivienne Berkeley

Director of Education

Paul Breckell

Deputy Chief Executive (and Company Secretary from 9 October 2021 to 23 January 2022)

Louise Honeysett

Director of Finance and Planning, and Company Secretary (from 24 January 2022)

Danae Leaman-Hill

Director of Fundraising and Development (to 28 October 2022), Director of External Affairs and Development (from 31 October 2022)

Louise Posocco

Director of Finance and Planning, and Company Secretary (to 8 October 2021)

Helen Spice

Interim Director of Finance and Planning (from 9 October 2021 to 23 January 2022)

Claire Thomson

Director of National Services (from 31 October 2022)

Zoe Weaver

Director of People

Harry Wilkinson

Director of Service Development (until 15 October 2021)

Alison Worsley

Director of External Affairs (until 21 October 2022)

Independent auditor

RSM UK Audit LLP

25 Farringdon Street, London EC4A 4AB

Bankers

National Westminster Bank Plc

13 Market Place, Reading RG1 2EP

Nationwide Building Society

Nationwide House, Pipers Way, Swindon SN38 1NW

CAF Bank Limited

25 Kings Hill Avenue, Kings Hill, West Malling ME19 4JQ

Solicitors

Stone King LLP

13 Queen Square, Bath BA1 2HJ

Farrer & Co LLP

66 Lincoln's Inn Fields, Holborn, London WC2A 3LH

Investment managers

Rathbone Brothers Public Limited Company

8 Finsbury Circus, London EC2M 7AZ

The statement of trustees' responsibilities

The trustees (who are also directors of Ambitious about Autism for the purposes of company law) are responsible for preparing the Trustees' Annual Report, including the strategic report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

Company law requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year, which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company and group as at the balance sheet date, and of the incoming resources and application of resources, including the income and expenditure, of the group for that period.

In preparing these financial statements, the trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently
 - observe the methods and principles in the Charities Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP)
 - make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent
 - state whether applicable UK Accounting Standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in operation.

The trustees are responsible for maintaining proper accounting records that disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charitable company and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006.

Statement as to disclosure of information to auditor

In so far as the trustees are aware:

- there is no relevant audit information of which the charitable company's auditor is unaware
- the trustees have taken all steps that they ought to have taken to make themselves aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the auditor is aware of that information.

The trustees are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charitable company and the group, and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

The trustees are responsible for the maintenance and integrity of the corporate and financial information on the charitable company's website. Legislation in the UK governing the preparation and dissemination of financial statements may differ from legislation in other jurisdictions.

The Trustees' Annual Report is approved by order of the Board of Trustees and the Strategic Report and the Directors' Report required by company law (included therein) are approved by the Board of Trustees in their capacity as the directors at a meeting on 24 March 2023 and signed on their behalf by:



Neil Goulden
Chair of the Board of Trustees

Independent auditor's report to the members of ambitious about autism

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of Ambitious about Autism (the 'parent charitable company') and its subsidiaries (the 'group') for the year ended 31 August 2022 which comprise the Consolidated Statement of Financial Activities incorporating an Income and Expenditure Account, the Group and Company Balance Sheets, the Group Cash Flow Statement and notes to the financial statements, including significant accounting policies. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards, including FRS 102 "The Financial Reporting Standard

applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland" (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

In our opinion the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the group's and the parent charitable company's affairs as at 31 August 2022 and of the group's incoming resources and application of resources, including its income and expenditure, for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice; and

- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006.

Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)) and applicable law. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of our report. We are independent of the group and parent charitable company in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in the UK, including the FRC's Ethical Standard and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities

in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Conclusions relating to going concern

In auditing the financial statements, we have concluded that the trustees' use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.

Based on the work we have performed, we have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the group's or parent charitable company's ability to continue as a going concern for a period of at least twelve months from when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

Our responsibilities and the responsibilities of the trustees with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this report.

Other information

The other information comprises the information included in the Annual Report other than the financial statements and our auditor's report thereon. The trustees are responsible for the other information contained within the Annual Report. Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in our report, we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

Our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or our knowledge obtained in the course of the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If we identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, we are required to determine whether this gives rise to a material misstatement in the financial statements themselves. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude

that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact.

We have nothing to report in this regard.

Opinions on other matters prescribed by the Companies Act 2006

In our opinion, based on the work undertaken in the course of the audit:

- the information given in the Trustees' Report, which includes the Directors' Report and the Strategic Report prepared for the purposes of company law, for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements; and
- the Directors' Report and the Strategic Report included within the Trustees' Report have been prepared in accordance with applicable legal requirements.

Matters on which we are required to report by exception

In the light of the knowledge and understanding of the group and the parent charitable company and their environment obtained in the course of the audit, we have not identified material misstatements in the Directors' Report or the Strategic Report included within the Trustees'/Directors' Report.

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters where the Companies Act 2006 requires us to report to you if, in our opinion:

- adequate accounting records have not been kept by the parent charitable company, or returns adequate for our audit have not been received from branches not visited by us; or
- the parent charitable company financial statements are not in agreement with the accounting records and returns; or
- certain disclosures of trustees' remuneration specified by law are not made; or

- we have not received all the information and explanations we require for our audit.

Responsibilities of trustees

As explained more fully in the Statement of Trustees' responsibilities set out on **page 86**, the trustees (who are also the directors of the charitable company for the purposes of company law) are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view, and for such internal control as the trustees determine is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the trustees are responsible for assessing the group's and parent charitable company's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the trustees either intend to liquidate the group or parent charitable company or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

The extent to which the audit was considered capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud

Irregularities are instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations. The objectives of our audit are to obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence regarding compliance with

laws and regulations that have a direct effect on the determination of material amounts and disclosures in the financial statements, to perform audit procedures to help identify instances of non-compliance with other laws and regulations that may have a material effect on the financial statements, and to respond appropriately to identified or suspected non-compliance with laws and regulations identified during the audit.

In relation to fraud, the objectives of our audit are to identify and assess the risk of material misstatement of the financial statements due to fraud, to obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence regarding the assessed risks of material misstatement due to fraud through designing and implementing appropriate responses and to respond appropriately to fraud or suspected fraud identified during the audit.

However, it is the primary responsibility of management, with the oversight of those charged with governance, to ensure that the entity's operations are conducted in accordance with the provisions of laws and regulations and for the prevention and detection of fraud.

In identifying and assessing risks of material misstatement in respect of irregularities, including fraud, the group audit engagement team:

- obtained an understanding of the nature of the sector, including the legal and regulatory framework that the group and parent charitable company operates in and how the group and parent charitable company are complying with the legal and regulatory framework;
- inquired of management, and those charged with governance, about their own identification and assessment of the risks of irregularities, including any known actual, suspected or alleged instances of fraud;
- discussed matters about non-compliance with laws and regulations and how fraud might occur including assessment of how and where the financial statements may be susceptible to fraud.

As a result of these procedures we consider the most significant laws and regulations that have a direct impact on the financial statements are FRS 102, Charities SORP (FRS 102), Companies Act 2006, Charities

Act 2011, the parent charitable company's governing document, tax legislation and Charities (Protection and Social Investment) Act 2016. We performed audit procedures to detect non-compliances which may have a material impact on the financial statements which included reviewing the financial statements including the Trustees' Report, remaining alert to new or unusual transactions which may not be in accordance with the governing documents, inspecting correspondence with tax authorities and evaluating advice received from internal/external advisors.

The most significant laws and regulations that have an indirect impact on the financial statements are those in relation to the Keeping Children Safe in Education under section 175 of the Education Act 2002, and the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR). We performed audit procedures to inquire of management and those charged with governance whether the group is in compliance with these law and regulations and inspected correspondence with regulatory authorities.

The group audit engagement team identified the risk of management override of controls as the area where the financial statements were most susceptible to material misstatement due to fraud. Audit procedures performed included but were not limited to testing manual journal entries and other adjustments, evaluating the business rationale in relation to significant, unusual transactions and transactions entered into outside the normal course of business and challenging judgments and estimates.

A further description of our responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements is provided on the [Financial Reporting Council's website](#). This description forms part of our auditor's report.

Use of our report

This report is made solely to the charitable company's members, as a body, in accordance with Chapter 3 of Part 16 of the Companies Act 2006. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the charitable company's members those

matters we are required to state to them in an auditor's report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the charitable company and the charitable company's members as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

Hannah Catchpool

Hannah Catchpool
Senior Statutory Auditor

For and on behalf of
RSM UK AUDIT LLP
Statutory Auditor
Chartered Accountants
25 Farringdon Street
London
EC4A 4AB

Date: 30 March 2023

Consolidated statement of financial activities

(incorporating an income and expenditure account)

For the year ended 31 August 2022

	For the year ended 31 August 2022					For the year ended 31 August 2021	
	Note	Unrestricted £'000	Ambitious about Autism Restricted £'000	Subtotal £'000	Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust Restricted £'000	Total £'000	Total £'000
Income from:							
Donations and legacies:							
Gifts and donated services		453	1,545	1,998	96	2,094	2,309
Charitable activities:	2						
Educational services		15,914	189	16,103	5,685	21,788	20,164
External affairs	3	-	29	29	-	29	71
Other income	3						
Trading income		342	42	384	9	393	238
Investment income		169	-	169	-	169	39
CJRS income		-	-	-	-	-	31
Total income		16,878	1,805	18,683	5,790	24,473	22,852
Expenditure on:							
Raising funds							
Fundraising activities		750	-	750	-	750	642
Investment management costs		13	-	13	-	13	13
		763	-	763	-	763	655
Charitable activities:							
Educational services		15,300	555	15,855	4,823	20,678	19,421
External affairs		1,356	626	1,982	-	1,982	1,508
Total expenditure	4	17,419	1,181	18,600	4,823	23,423	21,584
Net Income/(expenditure)/ before other gains/(losses)		(541)	624	83	967	1,050	1,268
Net gains/(losses) on investments		(159)	-	(159)	-	(159)	258
Net gains/(losses) on pension deficit		-	-	-	2,814	2,814	(480)
Net income/ (expenditure)		(700)	624	(76)	3,781	3,705	1,046
Transfers between funds	19	857	(160)	697	(697)	-	-
Net movement in funds		157	464	621	3,084	3,705	1,046
Reconciliation of funds:							
Total funds brought forward	19	8,967	622	9,589	6,778	16,367	15,321
Total funds carried forward	19	9,124	1,086	10,210	9,862	20,072	16,367

Balance sheets

As at 31 August 2022

Company number: 03375255

	Note	Group		Ambitious about Autism	
		31 August 2022 £'000	31 August 2021 £'000	31 August 2022 £'000	31 August 2020 £'000
Fixed assets:					
Tangible assets	10	16,399	16,634	10,267	10,434
Investments	12	1,762	1,878	1,762	1,878
Intangible assets	11	123	103	113	103
		18,284	18,615	12,142	12,415
Current assets:					
Debtors	13	1,213	824	1,145	1,148
Cash at bank and in hand		9,248	8,678	4,687	4,342
Short-term deposits		13	13	8	8
		10,474	9,515	5,840	5,498
Liabilities:					
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	14	(3,712)	(3,819)	(3,082)	(2,845)
Net current assets		6,762	5,696	2,758	2,653
Total assets less current liabilities		25,046	24,311	14,900	15,068
Creditors: amounts falling due after one year	16	(4,690)	(5,479)	(4,690)	(5,479)
Defined benefit pension scheme liability	17	(284)	(2,465)	-	-
Total net assets	18	20,072	16,367	10,210	9,589

Balance sheets (continued)

As at 31 August 2022

Company number: 03375255

	Group		Ambitious about Autism		
	Note	31 August 2022 £'000	31 August 2021 £'000	31 August 2022 £'000	31 August 2020 £'000
Funds					
Restricted funds:					
Ambitious about Autism		1,086	622	1,086	622
Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust		9,862	6,778	-	-
Total restricted funds		10,948	7,400	1,086	622
Unrestricted funds:					
Designated funds		6,261	6,553	6,261	6,553
General funds		2,863	2,414	2,863	2,414
Total unrestricted funds		9,124	8,967	9,124	8,967
Total funds	19	20,072	16,367	10,210	9,589

The financial statements were approved and authorised for issue by the trustees on 24 March 2023 and signed on their behalf by



Neil Goulden

Chair of the Board of Trustees

The notes on pages 96 to 123 form an integral part of these financial statements.

Consolidated statement of cash flows

For the year ended 31 August 2022

	Note	For the year ended 31 August 2022		For the year ended 31 August 2021	
		£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Cash flows from operating activities					
Net cash provided by operating activities	20		2,051		3,698
Cash flows from investing activities					
Dividends and interest from investments		103		39	
Interest payable		(120)		(92)	
Purchase of tangible and intangible fixed assets		(698)		(721)	
Proceed from sale of tangible fixed asset		-		5	
Proceeds from the sale of investments		352		299	
Change on cash held for investment		(45)		27	
Purchase of investments		(350)		(301)	
Net cash used in investing activities			(758)		(744)
Cash flows from financing activities					
Purchase of new loans		-		-	
Repayments of borrowing		(723)		(371)	
Net cash (used in)/provided by financing activities			(723)		(371)
Change in cash and cash equivalents			570		2,583
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the year			8,691		6,108
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the year			9,261		8,691
Cash and cash equivalents consists of:					
Cash at bank and in hand			9,248		8,678
Short-term deposits			13		13
			9,261		8,691

Consolidated statement of cash flows (continued)

For the year ended 31 August 2022

Net debt reconciliation	At the start of	Cash flows	Other	At end of
	the year		non-cash	
	£'000	£'000	changes	£'000
Cash	8,678	570	-	9,248
Cash equivalents	13	-	0	13
Loans falling due within one year	(424)	424	(424)	(424)
Loans falling due after more than one year	(5,340)	300	424	(4,616)
Total	2,927	1,294	0	4,221

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 August 2022

1. Accounting policies

Ambitious about Autism is a charitable group limited by guarantee and is incorporated in England and Wales. The registered office address is Woodside Avenue, London, N10 3JA.

a. Basis of preparation

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) – (Charities SORP FRS 102), the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (March 2018) and the Companies Act 2006.

The financial statements are presented in Sterling (£) which is also the functional currency of the group.

The accounts are rounded to the nearest thousand (£'000).

Assets and liabilities are initially recognised at historical cost or transaction value unless otherwise stated in the relevant accounting policy or note.

b. Basis of consolidation

Ambitious about Autism is the sole corporate member of Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust. Therefore the consolidated financial statements of the charity incorporate the financial statements of the trust, a UK company limited by guarantee (company registration number 8335297) that is also an exempt charity. Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust's results and net assets at 31 August 2022 are consolidated within these accounts on a line by line basis. Intercompany transactions and balances between charitable companies are eliminated. Consistent accounting policies have been adopted across the group.

c. Public benefit entity

The charitable company meets the definition of a public benefit entity under FRS 102.

d. Going concern

The trustees consider that there are no material uncertainties about the charitable company's ability to continue as a going concern. A 12-month detailed budget is prepared from year-end

as well as a higher level five-year finance model. The trustees have a reasonable expectation that Ambitious about Autism and the Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust has available cash to settle liabilities as they fall due and has adequate resources to continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future.

The organisation regularly reviews cash flow forecasts in light of current performance, and assesses whether there is either a need to seek additional financing or repay loans earlier than scheduled. While there were no changes to the financing arrangements during the 2021--22 financial year, two early repayments on a loan facility were made post year-end, reflecting increased financial stability and strong cashflow forecast positions over the next 12 months.

The Trustees do not consider that there are any sources of estimation uncertainty at the reporting date that have a significant risk of causing a material adjustment to the carrying amounts of assets and liabilities for a period of at least 12 months from sign off.

e. Income

Income is recognised when the group has entitlement to the funds, any performance conditions attached to the income have been met, it is probable that the income will be received and that the amount can be measured reliably.

Income from government and other grants, whether 'capital' grants or 'revenue' grants, is recognised when the group has entitlement to the funds, any performance conditions attached to the grants have been met, it is probable that the income will be received and the amount can be measured reliably and is not deferred. Fees are recognised as services are rendered, deferring until criteria are met.

Grant income relating to the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) is recognised under the accrual model. There are no unfulfilled conditions or other contingencies relating to the grant, and there have been no other forms of government assistance from which the entity has directly benefited in relation to the coronavirus pandemic in the year.

School and college fee income received in advance of the provision of a specified service is deferred until the criteria for income recognition are met.

f. Donations of gifts, services and facilities

Donated professional services and donated facilities are recognised as income when the group has control over the item or received the service, any conditions associated with the donation have been met, the receipt of economic benefit from the use by the group of the item is probable and that the economic benefit can be measured reliably.

On receipt, donated gifts, professional services and donated facilities are recognised on the basis of the value of the gift to the group, which is the amount the group would have been willing to pay to obtain services or facilities of equivalent economic benefit on the open market; a corresponding amount is then recognised in the expenditure in the period of receipt.

g. Interest receivable

Interest on funds held on deposit is included when receivable and the amount can be measured reliably by the group; this is normally upon notification of the interest paid or payable by the bank.

h. Fund accounting

Restricted funds are to be used for specific purposes as laid down by the donor. Expenditure which meets these criteria is charged to the fund.

Unrestricted funds are donations and other incoming resources received or generated for the charitable purposes.

Designated funds are unrestricted funds earmarked by the Trustees for particular purposes.

i. Expenditure and irrecoverable VAT

Expenditure is recognised once there is a legal or constructive obligation to make a payment to a third party, it is probable that settlement will be required and the amount of the obligation can be measured reliably. Expenditure is classified under the following activity headings:

- Costs of raising funds relate to the costs incurred by the charitable company in inducing third parties to make voluntary contributions to it, as well as the cost of any activities with a fundraising purpose.
- Expenditure on charitable activities includes the costs of delivering services and other educational activities undertaken to further the purposes of the group, and their associated support costs.

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 August 2022

Ambitious about Autism is VAT registered. As the charity provides a mixture of taxable and exempt supplies, VAT on expenditure that cannot be directly attributed to either type of supply is partially recovered.

Irrecoverable VAT is charged as a cost against the activity for which the expenditure was incurred.

j. Allocation of support costs

Resources are expended and allocated to the particular activity where the cost relates directly to that activity. However, the cost of overall direction and administration of each activity, comprising the salary and the overhead costs of the central function, is apportioned on the following bases which are estimates, based on staff time, of the amount attributable to each activity.

Central function	Main basis for allocation
Leadership	Time spent
Finance	Staff head count
Human resources	Staff head count
IT	Staff head count
Facilities management	Area occupied
General administration	Staff head count
Premises and office costs	Area occupied

Where information about the aims, objectives and projects of the group is provided to potential beneficiaries, the costs associated with this are allocated to charitable expenditure.

Governance costs are the costs associated with the governance arrangements of the group. These costs are associated with constitutional and statutory requirements and include any costs associated with the strategic management of the group's activities.

The management charge for the Ambitious about Autism support provided to Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust is eliminated on consolidation of the group accounts.

k. Operating leases

Rental charges are charged on a straight line basis over the term of the lease.

l. Tangible fixed assets

Items of equipment or groups of items are capitalised where the purchase price exceeds £5,000. Depreciation costs are allocated to activities on the basis of the use of the related assets in those activities. Assets are reviewed for impairment if circumstances indicate their carrying value may exceed their net realisable value and value in use.

Depreciation is provided at rates calculated to write down the cost of each asset except freehold land to its estimated residual value over its expected useful life. The useful lives are as follows:

Freehold land building at Woodside Avenue	50 years
Long leasehold	50 years
Short and long leasehold improvements	over the lease term
Computer equipment	3 years
Educational, office furniture and equipment	3-10 years
Motor vehicles	5 years

m. Intangible fixed assets

Intangible assets are measured at cost less accumulated amortisation and any accumulated impairment losses.

Software development costs are recognised as an intangible asset when all of the following criteria are demonstrated:

- the technical feasibility of completing the software so that it will be available for use or sale
- the intention to complete the software and use or sell it
- the ability to use the software or to sell it
- how the software will generate probable future economic benefits
- the availability of adequate technical, financial and other resources to complete the development and to use or sell the software
- the ability to measure reliably the expenditure attributable to the software during its development

Amortisation is charged so as to allocate the cost of intangibles less their residual values over their estimated useful lives, using the straight-line method. The intangible assets are amortised over the following useful economic lives:

Software development costs	3 years
----------------------------	---------

n. Listed investments

Investments are a form of basic financial instrument and are initially recognised at their transaction value and subsequently measured at their fair value as at the balance sheet date using the closing quoted market price. Any change in fair value will be recognised in the statement of financial activities. Investment gains and losses, whether realised or unrealised, are combined and shown in the heading 'Net gains/(losses) on investments' in the statement of financial activities.

o. Debtors

Trade and other debtors are recognised at the settlement amount due after any trade discount offered. Prepayments are valued at the amount prepaid net of any trade discounts due.

p. Cash and cash equivalents

Cash and cash equivalents includes cash and short term highly liquid investments with a short maturity of three months or less from the date of acquisition or opening of the deposit or similar account.

q. Short-term deposits

Short-term deposits include liquid investments with a maturity of three to 12 months from the date of acquisition or opening of the deposit or similar account.

r. Creditors and provisions

Creditors and provisions are recognised where the group has a present obligation resulting from a past event that will probably result in the transfer of funds to a third party and the amount due to settle the obligation can be measured or estimated reliably. Creditors and provisions are normally recognised at their settlement amount after allowing for any trade discounts due.

s. Financial instruments

The group has elected to apply the provisions of Section 11 'Basic Financial Instruments' and Section 12 'other Financial Instruments Issues' of FRS 102 in full to all of its financial instruments. Basic financial instruments are initially recognised at their transaction value and subsequently measured at their settlement value. Other financial instruments are recognised at fair value with the change in fair value recognised as a gain or loss in the statement of financial activities.

Derivatives are initially recognised at fair value on the date a derivative contract is entered into and are subsequently re-measured to fair value, at each reporting date. Fair value gains and losses are recognised in profit or loss. This has been recognised as expenditure under finance costs.

Borrowings are initially recognised at the transaction price, including transaction costs and subsequently measured at amortised cost using the effective interest method. Interest expense is recognised on the basis of the effective interest method and is included in interest payable and other similar expenses.

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 August 2022

A financial asset is derecognised only when the contractual rights to cash flows expire or are settled, or substantially all the risks and rewards of ownership are transferred to another party, or if some (but not substantially all) risks and rewards of ownership are retained but control of the asset has transferred to another party that is able to sell the asset in its entirety to an unrelated third party. A financial liability (or part thereof) is derecognised when the obligation specified in the contract is discharged, cancelled or expires.

t. Pensions

Ambitious about Autism has a defined contribution pension scheme available to all staff.

On 1 July 2014, and in compliance with Government legislation on Auto Enrolment, a defined contribution group personal pension scheme was opened. Employees were able to join on inception or under the rules of auto enrolment with a deferred period of three months.

Ambitious about Autism also contributes to the Teachers' Pension Scheme. The pension available to teaching staff is a defined benefit, multi employer scheme and the assets and liabilities of the scheme cannot be split out for individual employers. Further information is given in note 17.

The pension costs charged in the statement of financial activities represent the contributions payable by the group in the year to all pension schemes.

Retirement benefits to employees of the Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust are provided by the Teachers' Pension Scheme ('TPS') and the Local Government Pension Scheme ('LGPS'). These are defined benefit schemes.

The TPS is an unfunded scheme and contributions are calculated so as to spread the cost of pensions over employees' working lives with the trust in such a way that the pension cost is a substantially level percentage of current and future pensionable payroll. The contributions are determined by the Government Actuary on the basis of quadrennial valuations using a prospective unit credit method. TPS is a multi-employer scheme and there is insufficient information available to use defined benefit accounting. The TPS is therefore treated as a defined contribution scheme for accounting purposes and the contributions recognised in the period to which they relate.

The LGPS is a funded scheme and the assets are held separately from those of Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust in separate trustee-administered funds. Pension scheme assets are measured at fair value and liabilities are measured on an actuarial basis using the projected unit credit method and discounted at a rate equivalent to the current rate of return on a high-quality corporate bond of equivalent term and currency to the liabilities. The actuarial valuations are obtained at least triennially and are updated at each balance sheet date. The amounts charged to operating surplus are the current service costs and the costs of scheme introductions, benefit changes, settlements and curtailments. They are included as part of staff costs as incurred. Net interest on the net defined benefit liability is also recognised in the Statement of Financial Activities and comprises the interest cost on the defined benefit obligation and interest income on the scheme assets, calculated by multiplying the fair value of the scheme assets at the beginning of the period by the rate used to discount the benefit obligations. The difference between the interest income on the scheme assets and the actual return on the scheme assets is recognised in other recognised gains and losses. Actuarial gains and losses are recognised immediately in other recognised gains and losses. Actuarial gains and losses are recognised immediately in other recognised gains and losses.

u. Redundancy payments

Redundancy payments are accounted for in the period in which the obligation to make a payment arises.

v. Judgements and key sources of estimation uncertainty

In the application of the group's accounting policies, the directors are required to make judgements, estimates and assumptions about the carrying amount of assets and liabilities that are not readily apparent from other sources. The estimates and associated assumptions are based on historical experience and other factors that are considered to be relevant. Actual results may differ from these estimates.

The estimates and underlying assumptions are reviewed on an ongoing basis. Revisions to accounting estimates are recognised in the period in which the estimate is revised where the revision affects only that period, or in the period of the revision and future periods where the revision affects both current and future periods

Key sources of estimation uncertainty

The estimates and assumptions which have a significant risk of causing a material adjustment to the carrying amounts of assets and liabilities are as follows:

- Depreciation: fixed assets are depreciated over the assets, expected useful life.
- Pensions: the pension liability is sensitive to movements in actuarial assumptions such as discount rate, mortality and inflation. Further details are set out in Note 17.

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 August 2022

2. Income from donations and legacies

For the year ended 31 August 2022

	Ambitious about Autism			Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust	Total £'000
	Unrestricted £'000	Restricted £'000	Subtotal £'000	Restricted £'000	
Gifts	403	1,545	1,948	96	2,044
Donated services	50	-	50	-	50
	453	1,545	1,998	96	2,094

For the year ended 31 August 2021

	Ambitious about Autism			Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust	Total £'000
	Unrestricted £'000	Restricted £'000	Subtotal £'000	Restricted £'000	
Gifts	1,018	1,214	2,232	27	2,259
Donated services	50	-	50	-	50
	1,068	1,214	2,282	27	2,309

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 August 2022

3. Income from charitable activities

For the year ended 31 August 2022

	Ambitious about Autism			Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust	Total £'000
	Unrestricted £'000	Restricted £'000	Subtotal £'000	Restricted £'000	
Local authorities	13,685	-	13,685	4,208	17,893
Education Skills Funding Agency	2,229	189	2,418	1,477	3,895
Subtotal for educational services	15,914	189	16,103	5,685	21,788
Autism Education Trust	-	29	29	-	29
Subtotal for external affairs	-	29	29	-	29
Total income from charitable activities	15,914	218	16,132	5,685	21,817

For the year ended 31 August 2021

	Ambitious about Autism			Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust	Total £'000
	Unrestricted £'000	Restricted £'000	Subtotal £'000	Restricted £'000	
Local authorities	12,618	80	12,698	3,883	16,581
Education Skills Funding Agency	2,077	95	2,172	1,411	3,583
Subtotal for Educational services	14,695	175	14,870	5,294	20,164
Autism Education Trust	-	71	71	-	71
Subtotal for External affairs	-	71	71	-	71
Total income from charitable activities	14,695	246	14,941	5,294	20,235

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 August 2022

4. Analysis of expenditure

	Staff costs (note 6) £'000	Direct costs £'000	Finance (incl loan interest) £'000	Human resources £'000	Information technology £'000	Premises and office costs £'000	Leadership £'000	Support costs £'000	Governance costs £'000	For the year ended 31 August 2022 £'000
Ambitious about Autism:										
Cost of generating funds	514	112	6	-	-	16	-	84	19	751
Educational services	9,617	991	-	-	40	867	-	3,987	367	15,869
External affairs	1,156	410	38	-	-	64	-	261	51	1,980
Ambitious about Autism	11,287	1,513	44	-	40	947	-	4,332	437	18,600
Support costs	1,880	351	816	657	169	426	33	(4,332)	-	-
Governance costs	327	28	-	-	-	-	82	-	(437)	-
Allocated costs	2,207	379	816	657	169	426	115	(4,332)	(437)	-
Ambitious about Autism subtotal	13,494	1,892	860	657	209	1,373	115	-	-	18,600
Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust	3,844	517	-	-	-	462	-	-	-	4,823
Total expenditure 2022	17,338	2,409	860	657	209	1,835	115	-	-	23,423

Resources expended are allocated to the particular activity where the cost relates directly to that activity. However, the cost of overall direction and administration of each activity, comprising the salary and the overhead costs of the central function, is apportioned based on staff time, of the amount attributable to each activity.

All Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust support costs are paid through management fees, which are eliminated on consolidation. Any other costs are allocated directly to Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust.

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 August 2022

5. Net income for the year

This is stated after charging:

	For the year ended 31 August 2022 £'000	For the year ended 31 August 2021 £'000
Depreciation	864	860
Amortisation	49	36
Derivative Liability	-	136
Interest payable	120	100
Auditor's remuneration:		
Ambitious about Autism	25	29
Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust	19	19
Ambitious about Autism Teachers, Pension Scheme audit	1	1
Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust annual accounts return	2	2
Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust Teachers, Pension Scheme audit	1	1
Ambitious about Autism other services	2	2
Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust other services	4	4
Payments under operating leases:		
Property	143	134
Equipment	8	20

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 August 2022

6. Analysis of group staff costs, Trustee remuneration and expenses, and the costs of key management personnel

Staff costs were as follows:

	For the year ended 31 August 2022 £'000	Restated for year ended 31 August 2021 £'000
Salaries and wages	14,035	13,326
Social security costs	1,402	1,265
Employer's contribution to defined benefit pension schemes	1,586	1,210
Employer's contribution to defined contribution pension schemes	315	381
	17,338	15,774

The 2021 figures have been restated for Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust to include all costs of the defined benefit pension scheme in pension costs, not just employer contributions.

Redundancy and termination costs (including payment in lieu of notice) of £21k were paid in the year (2021: £49k).

The following number of employees received employee benefits (excluding employer pension and National Insurance costs) during the year to 31 August 2022, between:

	For the year ended 31 August 2022 £'000	For year ended 31 August 2021 £'000
£60,000-£69,999	5	8
£70,000-£79,999	4	3
£80,000-£89,999	3	4
£90,000-£99,999	1	2
£100,000-£109,999	1	1
£110,000-£119,999	1	2
£120,000-£129,999	1	0

The total employee benefits including Employer pension and national insurance contributions of the key management personnel were £831k for the 12 month period to 31 August 2022 (2021: £898k).

Jolanta Lasota, Chief Executive of Ambitious About Autism, was paid an annual salary of £119k to 31 August 2022 (2021: £115k).

The charity Trustees were not paid and did not receive any other benefits from employment with the charity in the year (2021: £nil). No charity Trustee received payment for professional or other services supplied to the charity (2021: £nil).

One Trustee was reimbursed £444.77 of travel and subsistence costs in 2022 (2021: £nil).

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 August 2022

7. Staff numbers

The average number of employees (headcount based on number of staff employed) during the year was as follows:

	For the year ended 31 August 2022 No	For the year ended 31 August 2021 No
Raising funds	8	12
Educational services	374	408
External affairs	26	18
Support	53	39
	461	477

The increase of staff numbers is due to the planned growth across educational services.

The full time equivalent of staff employed during the year was as follows:

	For the year ended 31 August 2022 No	For the year ended 31 August 2021 No
Raising funds	8	13
Educational services	341	375
External affairs	25	15
Support	49	35
	423	438

8. Related party transactions

The charity purchased £1,371 (2021: £3,709) of office furniture from Assman Office Furniture during the year. Assman Office Furniture is managed by the partner of Vivienne Berkeley, Director of Education. At the balance sheet date, the amount has been fully paid leaving a nil creditor balance (2021: nil).

Charlotte Warner, a Trustee of the Trust (until 15th December 2021), is also a director of Tudor Park Education Trust, which runs Spring West Academy. The Rise School holds a contract with the Spring West Academy with respect to the procurement of curriculum placements, provision of caretaker services, grounds maintenance and the car park. During the year, the Trust made payments totalling £29k (2021: £34k) to the Spring West Academy. At the year end costs accrued were nil (2021: nil).

During the year trustees either personally donated or donated through entities where they have significant control a total of £789 (2021: £16,823) to the charity. Of these, no gifts (2021: nil) were restricted donations.

Paul Breckell is an unpaid trustee of NCVO and NCVO Trading Ltd. Ambitious about Autism has booked rooms at The Society Building which is run by NCVO (via NCVO Trading Limited). During the year payments to NCVO were £19,224 (2021: £1,177). At the year end, there was a £265 creditor balance with NCVO (2021: £411).

Services were provided to Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust at a cost of £697k from September 2021 to August 2022 (2021: £617k). These services include Finance, Education, HR, Communications, Facilities and IT support. These are provided at cost and would otherwise need to be procured commercially. The increase is due to the growth in the Rise School. At year end £237k (2021: £267k) was reported under amounts owed by group undertakings (debtors) and nil (2021: £205k) as accrued income (debtors).

9. Taxation

The group is exempt from corporation tax as all its income is charitable and is applied for charitable purposes.

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 August 2022

10. Tangible fixed assets

Group	Freehold land and buildings £'000	Long leasehold £'000	Leasehold improvements £'000	Educational, office furniture and equipment £'000	Computer equipment £'000	Motor vehicles £'000	Total £'000
Cost							
At the start of the year	11,903	6,643	1,728	997	1,147	218	22,636
Additions	20	84	10	346	169	-	629
Disposals	-	-	-	(36)	(60)	-	(96)
At the end of the year	11,923	6,727	1,738	1,307	1,256	218	23,169
Depreciation							
At the start of the year	3,050	718	743	506	869	116	6,002
Charge	241	133	186	100	179	25	864
Disposals	-	-	-	(36)	(60)	-	(96)
At the end of the year	3,291	851	929	570	988	141	6,770
Net book value	8,632	5,876	809	737	268	77	16,399
At the end of the year	8,632	5,876	809	737	268	77	16,399
At the start of the year	8,853	5,925	985	491	278	102	16,634

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 August 2022

10. Tangible fixed assets (continued)

Ambitious about Autism	Freehold land and buildings £'000	Leasehold improvements £'000	Educational, office furniture and equipment £'000	Computer equipment £'000	Motor vehicles £'000	Total £'000
Cost						
At the start of the year	11,903	1,580	812	885	218	15,398
Additions	20	10	346	90	-	466
Disposals	-	-	-	-	-	-
At the end of the year	11,923	1,590	1,158	975	218	15,864
Depreciation						
At the start of the year	3,050	713	375	710	116	4,964
Charge	241	171	77	119	25	633
Disposals	-	-	-	-	-	-
At the end of the year	3,291	884	452	829	141	5,597
Net book value	8,632	706	706	146	77	10,267
At the end of the year	8,632	706	706	146	77	10,267
At the start of the year	8,853	867	437	175	102	10,434

Land (Ambitious about Autism) with a cost of £834,000 (2021: £834,000) is included within freehold property and is not depreciated. The long leasehold (125 years) in the group note refers to The Rise School building.

All recognised assets are used for charitable purposes.

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 August 2022

11. Intangible fixed assets

Group	Computer software £'000	Assets under construction £'000	Total £'000
Cost			
At the start of the period	158	-	158
Additions in the period	61	8	69
At the end of the period	219	8	227
Amortisation			
At the start of the period	55	-	55
Charge for the period	49	-	49
At the end of the period	104	-	104
Net book value	115		123
At the end of the period	115		123
At the start of the period	103		103

Amortisation charge is reflected in the SOFA.

Ambitious about Autism	Computer software £'000	Assets under construction £'000	Total £'000
Cost			
At the start of the period	158	-	158
Additions in the period	51	8	59
At the end of the period	209	8	217
Amortisation			
At the start of the period	55	-	55
Charge for the period	49	-	49
At the end of the period	104	-	104
Net book value	105	8	113
At the end of the period	105	8	113
At the start of the period	103	-	103

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 August 2022

12. Investments

Group and Ambitious about Autism	31 August 2022 £'000	31 August 2021 £'000
Market value at the start of the year	1,850	1,590
Additions at cost	350	301
Disposal proceeds	(352)	(299)
Net gain/(loss) on change in fair value	(159)	258
Market value at the end of the year	1,689	1,850
Cash held in investments	73	28
Total investments held	1,762	1,878

Investments comprise	31 August 2022 £'000	31 August 2021 £'000
Listed securities		
Fixed interest	183	262
Direct UK equities	607	651
Direct overseas equities	628	708
Alternatives - property and managed funds	271	229
Cash held for re-investment	65	21
Cash	8	7
Market value at the end of the year	1,762	1,878

The historical cost of investments is £1,575k (2021: £1,540k).

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 August 2022

13. Debtors

	Group		Ambitious about Autism	
	31 August 2022 £'000	31 August 2021 £'000	31 August 2022 £'000	31 August 2021 £'000
Trade debtors	352	367	320	319
Amounts owed by group undertakings	-	-	238	267
Other debtors	287	104	34	14
Prepayments	276	217	255	206
Accrued income	298	136	298	342
	1,213	824	1,145	1,148

14. Creditors: amounts falling due within one year

	Group		Ambitious about Autism	
	31 August 2022 £'000	31 August 2021 £'000	31 August 2022 £'000	31 August 2021 £'000
Bank loans	424	424	424	424
Amounts owed to group undertakings	-	-	-	-
Trade creditors	344	475	162	441
Taxation and social security	385	357	325	299
Other creditors	55	132	53	100
Accruals	902	669	717	412
Deferred income (note 15)	1,602	1,762	1,401	1,169
	3,712	3,819	3,082	2,845

15. Deferred income

	Group		Ambitious about Autism	
	31 August 2022 £'000	31 August 2021 £'000	31 August 2022 £'000	31 August 2021 £'000
Balance at the beginning of the year	1,762	1,139	1,169	1,077
Amount released to income in the year	(1,762)	(1,139)	(1,169)	(1,077)
Amount deferred in the year	1,602	1,762	1,401	1,169
Balance at the end of the year	1,602	1,762	1,401	1,169

Deferred income as at 31 August 2022 relates to autumn 2022 term fees that were received in advance of the new academic year.

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 August 2022

16. Creditors: amounts falling due after one period

Group and Ambitious about Autism	31 August 2022 £'000	31 August 2021 £'000
Loans to finance the freehold property	3,515	4,148
Loan to finance Ambitious College	1,101	1,195
Derivative Liability	74	136
Balance at the end of the year	4,690	5,479

The charity has a loan from Futurebuilders which commenced in October 2008 and is repayable over 25 years.

Interest is chargeable at 1.25% above the Bank of England base rate. The loan is secured over the freehold land and buildings at Woodside Avenue.

The charity also has a loan from NatWest, in tranches of £1.1m and £1.9m, which commenced in November 2008 and April 2012 respectively. Interest is chargeable at 0.75% above LIBOR and 1.25% above LIBOR respectively until 31st January 2022. From 1st February 2022, both loans are moved to the SONIA rate. One tranche of the loan (£1.1m) is capped at an interest rate of 4%. The loan is repayable from November 2013 over 22 years. The loan is secured over the freehold land and buildings at Woodside Avenue.

Two new loans were acquired in August 2020, £500k from Rathbones and the other £500k from NatWest with both loans charging interest of 2.5% over base rate. The NatWest loan is repayable over 20 years and the Rathbones loan is repayable in 5 years.

The charity is using an interest rate swap option to manage its exposure to interest rate movements on its £1.1m bank loan with NatWest. The agreement was entered into a variable to fixed interest rate swap in February 2011. The option swaps the variable rate of interest for a fixed rate of 4% per annum for the period up to August 2033 with a fair value gain of £50k recognised in the year.

The Rathbones loan has been classified as a long-term loan based on the repayment due date. However, it can be recalled by the lender with one month's notice. Rathbones has formally confirmed that it's highly unlikely that they would request the pay back of the remaining loan balance.

The capital amounts repayable under each loan are:	Within 1 year £'000	2–5 years £'000	Over 5 years £'000
Futurebuilders	267	1,105	1,063
NatWest £1.1m tranche	52	236	464
NatWest £1.9m tranche	93	394	707
NatWest £500k	15	70	377
Rathbones £500k	-	200	-
	427	2,005	2,611

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 August 2022

17. Pension schemes

Ambitious about Autism makes contributions to the Aegon Pension Scheme, The People's Pension and into one employee's private pension scheme. Both Ambitious about Autism and Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust pay into the Teachers' Pension Scheme. Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust also make contributions to the Local Government Pension Scheme.

Contributions to these schemes were £1,275k (2021: £1,183k).

Defined Contribution Schemes

The assets of the schemes are held separately from those of Ambitious about Autism. Pension costs charged in the statement of financial activities represent the contributions payable by Ambitious about Autism for the year.

Teachers' Pension Scheme

Introduction

The Teachers' Pension Scheme (TPS) is a statutory, contributory, defined benefit scheme, governed by the Teachers' Pensions Regulations (2010) and, from 1 April 2014, by the Teachers' Pension Scheme Regulations 2014. Membership is automatic for full-time teachers in academies and, from 1 January 2007, automatic for teachers in part-time employment following appointment or a change of contract, although they are able to opt out.

The TPS is an unfunded scheme and members contribute on a 'pay as you go' basis - these contributions along with those made by employers are credited to the Exchequer. Retirement and other pension benefits are paid by public funds provided by Parliament.

Valuation of the Teachers' Pension Scheme

The Government Actuary's Department, using normal actuarial principles, conducts a formal actuarial review of the TPS in accordance with the Public Service Pensions (Valuations and Employer Cost Cap) Directions 2014 published by HM Treasury every four years. The aim of the review is to specify the level of future contributions. Actuarial scheme valuations are dependent on assumptions about the value of future costs, design of benefits and many other factors. The latest actuarial valuation of the TPS

was carried out as at 31 March 2016. The valuation report was published by the Department for Education on 5 March 2019. The key elements of the valuation and subsequent consultation are:

- employer contribution rates set at 23.68% of pensionable pay (including a 0.08% employer administration charge);
- total scheme liabilities (pensions currently in payment and the estimated cost of future benefits) for service to the effective date of £218,100m, and notional assets (estimated future contributions together with the notional investments held at the valuation date) of £196,100m giving a notional past service deficit of £22,000m;
- the SCAPE rate, set by HMT, is used to determine the notional investment return.

The current SCAPE rate is 2.4% above the rate of CPI. assumed real rate of return is 2.4% in excess of prices and 2% in excess of earnings. The rate of real earnings growth is assumed to be 2.2%. The assumed nominal rate of return including earnings growth is 4.45%. The next valuation result is due to be implemented from 1 April 2023.

A copy of the valuation report and supporting documentation is on the Teachers' Pensions website.

Under the definitions set out in FRS 102, the TPS is a multi-employer pension scheme. The group is unable to quantify its share of liabilities under the scheme and therefore, in accordance with FRS 102 has accounted for its contributions to the scheme as if it were a defined contribution scheme. The group has set out above the information available on the scheme.

The employer's pension costs paid to TPS by Ambitious about Autism in the year amounted to £315k (2021: £299k).

The employer's pension costs paid to TPS by Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust in the year amounted to £198k (2021: £192k).

27 Ambitious about Autism employees were members of the scheme at 31 August 2022 (2021: 31).

22 employees were members of the scheme at 31 August 2022 (2021: 19).

Local Government Pension Scheme

The LGPS is a funded defined benefit pension scheme, with the assets held in separate Trustee-administered funds. The total contributions made for the year ended 31 August 2022 were £420k (2021: £379k), of which employer's contributions totalled £340k (2021: £301k) and employees' contributions totalled £80k (2021: £78k). Contribution rates for employees increase with salary and during the year ended 31 August 2022, the average employer contribution rate was 19%, and for employees a minimum of 5.5% to a maximum of 12.5% of pensionable salary. During the year ended 31 August 2022 no employees took advantage of the 50/50 option, where employees can pay 50% of normal contributions to build up half the normal pension.

Parliament has agreed, at the request of the Secretary of State for Education, to a guarantee that, in the event of academy closure, outstanding Local Government Pension Scheme liabilities would be met by the Department for Education. The guarantee came into force on 18 July 2013.

At 31 August 2021, 64 employees were members of the scheme (2020: 67).

The following information is based upon a full actuarial valuation of the fund at 31 March 2019 updated to 31 August 2022 by a qualified independent actuary.

Principal actuarial assumptions	At 31 August 2022 £'000	At 31 August 2021 £'000
Rate of increase in salaries	3.90%	3.85%
Rate of increase for pensions in payment/inflation	2.90%	2.85%
Discount rate for scheme liabilities	4.20%	1.70%
Inflation assumption (CPI)	2.90%	2.85%
Commutation of pensions to lump sums	50.00%	50.00%

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 August 2022

17. Pension schemes (continued)

Sensitivity analysis for the liability at 31 August 2022		£'000	£'000	£'000
Adjustment to discount rate		+0.1%	0.0%	-0.1%
Present value of total obligation		2,018	2,094	2,173
Projected service cost		253	267	282
Adjustment to long-term salary increase		+0.1%	0.0%	-0.1%
Present value of total obligation		2,095	2,094	2,093
Projected service cost		268	267	267
Adjustment to pension increases and deferred revaluation		+0.1%	0.0%	-0.1%
Present value of total obligation		2,173	2,094	2,017
Projected service cost		282	267	253
Adjustment to life expectancy assumptions		+ 1 Year	None	- 1 Year
Present value of total obligation		2,155	2,094	2,034
Projected service cost		278	267	257

The current mortality assumptions include sufficient allowance for future improvements in mortality rates. The assumed life expectations on retirement age 65 are:

	At 31 August 2022 £'000	At 31 August 2021 £'000
Retiring today		
Males	21.0	21.0
Females	23.5	23.8
Retiring in 20 years		
Males	22.3	22.4
Females	24.9	25.6

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 August 2022

17. Pension schemes (continued)

The estimated asset allocation for the Rise School as at 31 August 2022 is as follows:

Employer asset share – bid value	At 31 August 2022		At 31 August 2021	
	£'000	%	£'000	%
Equities	1,166	64%	953	64%
Gilts	89	5%	69	5%
Other bonds	186	10%	157	10%
Property	93	5%	61	4%
Absolute return funds	251	14%	236	16%
Cash	9	1%	16	1%
Infrastructure	16	1%	-	0%
Total market value of assets	1,810	100%	1,492	100%
Present value of scheme liabilities - funded	(2,094)		(3,957)	
(Deficit) in the scheme	(284)		(2,465)	

The Trust's share of the assets of the fund is less than 1%.

The actual return on scheme assets was a loss of £111k (2021: £191k gain).

Amounts recognised in the statement of financial activities	31 August 2022	31 August 2021
	£'000	£'000
Current service cost	(933)	(684)
Net interest cost	(39)	(24)
Administration	(1)	(1)
Total operating charge	(973)	(709)

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 August 2022

17. Pension schemes (continued)

	2022 £'000	2021 £'000
Changes in the present value of defined benefit obligations were as follows:		
At 1 September	3,957	2,474
Current service cost	933	684
Interest cost	68	42
Actuarial (gain) / loss	(2,954)	653
Benefits paid	10	26
Employee contributions	80	78
At 31 August	2,094	3,957

	2022 £'000	2021 £'000
Changes in the fair value of the academy's share of scheme assets:		
At 1 September	1,492	897
Interest on assets	29	18
Return on plan assets (excluding net interest on the defined pension liability)	(140)	173
Employer contributions	340	301
Employee contributions	80	78
Administration expenses	(1)	(1)
Benefits paid	10	26
At 31 August	1,810	1,492

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 August 2022

18. Analysis of net assets between funds

Fund balances as at 31 August 2022 are represented by:

Group	Ambitious about Autism		Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust		Total funds £'000
	General unrestricted £'000	Designated £'000	Restricted £'000	Restricted £'000	
Tangible fixed assets	-	10,267	-	6,132	16,399
Investments	1,762	-	-	-	1,762
Intangible fixed assets	-	113	-	10	123
Net current assets	1,101	571	1,086	4,004	6,762
Long term liabilities	-	(4,690)	-	(284)	(4,974)
	2,863	6,261	1,086	9,862	20,072

Ambitious about Autism	General unrestricted £'000	Designated £'000	Restricted £'000	Total funds £'000
Tangible fixed assets	-	10,267	-	10,267
Investments	1,762	-	-	1,762
Intangible fixed assets	-	113	-	113
Net current assets	1,101	571	1,086	2,758
Long term liabilities	-	(4,690)	-	(4,690)
	2,863	6,261	1,086	10,210

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 August 2022

18. Analysis of net assets between funds (continued)

Fund balances as at 31 August 2021 are represented by:

Group	Ambitious about Autism		Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust		Total funds £'000
	General unrestricted £'000	Designated £'000	Restricted £'000	Restricted £'000	
Tangible fixed assets	-	10,434	-	6,200	16,634
Investments	1,878	-	-	-	1,878
Intangible fixed assets	-	103	-	-	103
Net current assets	536	1,495	622	3,043	5,696
Long term liabilities	-	(5,479)	-	(2,465)	(7,944)
	2,414	6,553	622	6,778	16,367

Ambitious about Autism	General unrestricted £'000	Designated £'000	Restricted £'000	Total funds £'000
Tangible fixed assets	-	10,434	-	10,434
Investments	1,878	-	-	1,878
Intangible fixed assets	-	103	-	103
Net current assets	536	1,495	622	2,653
Long term liabilities	-	(5,479)	-	(5,479)
	2,414	6,553	622	9,589

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 August 2022

19a. Movement in funds

For the year ended 31 August 2022:	At the start of the year £'000	Incoming resources and gains £'000	Outgoing resources and losses £'000	Transfers £'000	At the end of the year £'000
Restricted funds:					
a) Ambitious about Autism					
Ambitious College	-	292	(217)		75
Education Services projects	100	709	(461)		348
Autism Exchange	151	25	(29)		147
Family Support	29	343	(124)		248
Participation	50	156	(158)		48
TreeHouse School	182	158	(138)	(148)	54
Online Information Support	10	-	(10)		-
Online Youth Support	8	100	(24)		84
IT Equipment	77	22	(18)	(12)	69
Other	15	-	(2)		13
Total Ambitious about Autism restricted funds	622	1,805	(1,181)	(160)	1,086
b) Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust	6,778	5,790	(2,009)	(697)	9,862
Total group restricted funds	7,400	7,595	(3,190)	(857)	10,948
Ambitious about Autism unrestricted funds:					
Designated funds					
Fixed assets	4,014	-	(682)	525	3,857
School development	5	-	-	-	5
Transformation fund	1,182	-	(80)	-	1,102
Covid Recovery fund	668	-	(176)	-	492
Service Development	-	-	(8)	207	199
Buildings maintenance and development fund	684	-	-	(78)	606
Total designated funds	6,553	-	(946)	654	6,261
General funds	2,414	16,878	(16,632)	203	2,863
Total Ambitious about Autism unrestricted funds	8,967	16,878	(17,578)	857	9,124
Total group funds	16,367	24,473	(20,768)	-	20,072

Transfers

£525k has been designated to the Fixed Asset funds to cover the depreciation of fixed assets acquired during the year. This includes £160k of fixed assets funded from restricted income, and £178k of fixed assets funded from the designated repairs and maintenance fund.

£95k has been designated from the Cyclical Maintenance fund to provide for restoration work on the TreeHouse toilets.

£544k has been designated from unrestricted funds to the Covid fund to provide a contingency against future risks as a result of Coronavirus, including additional costs or losses in income.

£100k has been designated from unrestricted funds to the Transformation fund to support our new strategy work.

£451k was transferred from Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust to general funds to reflect the intercompany management charge and salaries recharged to Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust.

£100k has been designated from the Buildings Maintenance and Development fund to provide major refurbishment works at TreeHouse School.

£207k has been designated from unrestricted funds to the service development fund.

£697k was transferred from Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust to general funds to reflect the intercompany management charge.

The charity is using an interest rate swap option to manage its exposure to interest rate movements on its £1.1m bank loan with NatWest. The agreement was entered into a variable to fixed interest rate swap in February 2011. The option swaps the variable rate of interest for a fixed rate of 4% per annum for the period up to August 2033 with a fair value gain of £50k recognised in the year.

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 August 2022

19a. Movement in funds (continued)

For the year ended 31 August 2021:	At the start of the year £'000	Incoming resources and gains £'000	Outgoing resources and losses £'000	Transfers £'000	At the end of the year £'000
Restricted funds:					
a) Ambitious about Autism					
Ambitious College	56	120	(176)	-	-
Education Services projects	137	-	(37)	-	100
Autism Exchange	20	590	(459)	-	151
Family Support	109	121	(201)	-	29
Participation	40	112	(102)	-	50
TreeHouse School	95	456	(120)	(249)	182
Online Information Support	48	-	(38)	-	10
Online Youth Support	122	-	(114)	-	8
IT Equipment	168	39	(93)	(37)	77
Other	114	22	(121)	-	15
Total Ambitious About Autism restricted funds	909	1,460	(1,461)	(286)	622
b) Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust	6,936	5,337	(4,878)	(617)	6,778
Total group restricted funds	7,845	6,797	(6,339)	(903)	7,400
Ambitious about Autism unrestricted funds:					
Designated funds					
Fixed assets	4,086	-	(666)	594	4,014
School development	5	-	-	-	5
Transformation fund	173	-	(39)	1,048	1,182
Covid recovery fund	590	7	(319)	390	668
Buildings maintenance and development fund	724	-	(3)	(37)	684
Total designated funds	5,578	7	(1,027)	1,995	6,553
General funds	1,898	16,305	(14,697)	(1,092)	2,414
Total Ambitious about Autism unrestricted funds	7,476	16,312	(15,724)	903	8,967
Total group funds	15,321	23,109	(22,063)	-	16,367

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 August 2022

19b. Summary movement in funds

Purpose of restricted funds:

Ambitious College	The charity continues its work to develop Ambitious College, London's first specialist day college for autistic young people aged 16–25 including those with learning disabilities. Ambitious College has two campuses co-located within the College of Haringey, Enfield and North East London and West Thames College.
Education Services projects	This fund includes developing and embedding a competency framework for the Ambitious Approach. The Ambitious Approach is our model of education practice, which was designed to be used in our education settings to support autistic children and young people. At its heart, the approach is centred around improving the quality of life of autistic young people while they are in education and ensuring this quality of life continues into adulthood. The framework is being embedded in the charity, and in partner schools and colleges, and includes audit tools, implementation guidance, evaluation protocols, parent toolkits and training materials.
Employ Autism and Autism Exchange	Employ Autism's mission is to ensure that more autistic people can become part of the workforce. The programme acts as a bridge to employment for autistic people by working with employers and careers and employability professionals to increase confidence in autism and neurodiversity, and as a result create opportunities in the workplace. We deliver training, resources and ongoing mentorship to a wide network of partners across the UK and together drive a collective movement for change. The programme comprises the Employ Autism network, the Employ Autism Higher Education network and Autism Exchange.
Learner and Family Support	Our specialist Learner and Family Support team helps the parents and carers of autistic children and young people attending our educational settings throughout their journey with us. We ensure that families have increased knowledge, skills and confidence to support autistic children and young people in their care by providing timely direct advice and support. This includes support at times of transition such as from school to further education, training or other placement, and to adulthood; and advocacy for families to try and secure statutory services such as respite care or social care support.
Participation	Young people are at the heart of everything we do. We listen to them to ensure our work reflects their views and needs. We stand with them and ensure their voices are heard and considered by policymakers and decision-makers, the media and the general public. Through our Ambitious Youth Network, online peer support and project work we bring autistic young people together to tackle isolation and loneliness, understand their autistic identity and have their voices heard.

Purpose of restricted funds: (continued)

TreeHouse School	Funding provided to support a range of specific activities across the school.
Online Information Support	A project to provide vital information online for parents and carers, and empowerment to connect and support each other.
Online Youth Support	A project to provide vital information online for autistic young people, including through a new online community platform for the Ambitious Youth Network.
IT Equipment	This fund supports additional IT equipment and resources for 300 autistic children and young people in our schools and college, so they can access education and support.
Other	Other funds represent a number of small funds.

Purpose of designated funds:

Fixed Assets	This fund represents the net book value of the fixed assets, net of the loans used to purchase them, which are not, by the nature of fixed assets, readily available for other purposes.
Schools development	The school fund has been established to fund school development.
Transformation fund	This fund has been established to support the organisation's new strategy.
Buildings maintenance and development fund	The fund has been allocated to provide for any repairs to and development of the building based on 30-year life cycle costings prepared by external consultants.
Covid Recovery fund	This fund has been established to support the organisation in managing the risks and impact of the coronavirus pandemic.
Service development	This fund has been established to support the growth of existing and new services.

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 August 2022

20. Net cash provided by group operating activities

	2022 £'000	2021 £'000
Net income	3,705	1,046
Depreciation and amortisation charges	913	895
Losses/(gains) on investments	159	(258)
(Gain) on sale of fixed assets	-	(5)
Dividends, interest and rent from investments	(119)	(39)
Interest payable	120	92
(Increase) in debtors	(389)	(21)
(Decrease)/increase in derivative liability	(50)	136
(Decrease)/increase in creditors	(107)	964
(Decrease)/increase in pension deficit	(2,181)	888
Net cash provided by operating activities	2,051	3,698

21. Operating lease commitments

The group's total future minimum lease payments under non-cancellable operating leases is as follows for each of the following periods:

	Property		Equipment	
	2022 £'000	2021 (restated) £'000	2022 £'000	2021 £'000
Less than one year	145	134	8	11
One to five years	511	538	7	19
Over five years	75	147	-	-
	731	819	15	30

The 2021 figures have been restated to take account of the break clause in the lease for The Rise Sixth Form.

22. Capital commitments

At the balance sheet date, the group had no contractual capital commitments (2021: £146k).

23. Legal status of the charity

The charity is a company limited by guarantee and has no share capital. The liability of each member in the event of winding up is £1.

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 August 2022

24. Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust

On 1 April 2017, Ambitious about Autism became the sole member of Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust, a company limited by guarantee and an exempt charity (company number 08335297).

Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust operates independently from Ambitious about Autism and as such Ambitious about Autism has no right or access to the assets (cash and non-cash) of Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust. In the group accounts all income and reserves of Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust are treated as restricted. While both entities operate independently the accounts are consolidated on the basis that Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust is the sole corporate member of Ambitious about Autism.

Balance sheet	2022 £'000	2021 £'000
Fixed Assets		
Tangible assets	6,132	6,200
Intangible assets	10	-
Current Assets		
Debtors	306	159
Cash at bank and in hand	5	5
Short-term deposit	4,560	4,336
	4,871	2,487
Liabilities		
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	(867)	(1,457)
Net current assets	4,004	2,213
Net assets excluding pension liability	10,136	8,513
Defined benefit pension scheme liability	(284)	(2,465)
Total net assets	9,852	6,936
Funds of the Academy Trust:		
Restricted funds		
Fixed asset fund	6,206	6,210
Restricted income fund	3,940	3,033
Pension reserve	(284)	(2,465)
Total restricted funds	9,862	6,936
Unrestricted income funds	-	-
Total funds	9,862	6,936

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 August 2022

24. Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust (continued)

A summarised extract of Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust statement of financial activities for the year:	Unrestricted Funds £'000	Restricted Funds £'000	Restricted Fixed Asset Fund £'000	Total £'000
Income from:				
Donations and capital grants	-	32	64	96
Charitable activities	-	5,685	-	5,685
Other income	-	9	-	9
	-	5,726	64	5,790
Expenditure on:				
Charitable activities	-	(5,289)	(231)	(5,520)
Net surplus/(deficit)	-	437	(167)	270
Transfer Between Funds	-	(163)	163	-
Other recognised gains	-	2,814	-	2,814
Net movement in funds	-	3,088	(4)	3,084
Funds brought forward	-	568	6,210	6,778
Funds carried forward	-	3,656	6,206	9,862

Services were provided to Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust at a cost of £696k from September 2021 to August 2022 (2021: £617k). These services include Finance, Education, HR, Communications, Facilities and IT support. These are provided at cost and would otherwise need to be procured commercially. The increase is due to the growth in the Rise School. At year end £238k (2021: £267k) was reported under amounts owed by group undertakings (debtors) and nil (2021: £205k) as accrued income (debtors).

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 August 2022

25. Consolidated statement of financial activities (incorporating an income and expenditure account)

For the year ended 31 August 2021

	Note	Ambitious about Autism			Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust	Total £'000
		Unrestricted £'000	Restricted £'000	Subtotal £'000	Restricted £'000	
Income from:						
Donations and legacies:						
Gifts and donated services	2	1,068	1,214	2,282	27	2,309
Charitable activities:						
Educational services	3	14,695	175	14,870	5,294	20,164
External affairs	3	-	71	71	-	71
Other income						
Trading income		222	-	222	16	238
Investment income		39	-	39	-	39
CJRS income		31	-	31	-	31
Total income		16,055	1,460	17,515	5,337	22,852
Expenditure on:						
Raising funds						
Fundraising activities		642	-	642	-	642
Investment management costs		13	-	13	-	13
		655	-	655	-	655
Charitable activities:						
Educational services		14,191	832	15,023	4,398	19,421
External affairs		879	629	1,508	-	1,508
Total expenditure	4	15,725	1,461	17,186	4,398	21,584
Net income/(expenditure) before other gains/(losses)		330	(1)	329	939	1,268
Net gains on investments		258	-	258	-	258
Net losses on pension deficit		-	-	-	(480)	(480)
Net income/(expenditure)	5	588	(1)	587	459	1,046
Transfers between funds	19	903	(286)	617	(617)	-
Net movement in funds		1,491	(287)	1,204	(158)	1,046
Reconciliation of funds:						
Total funds brought forward	19	7,476	909	8,385	6,936	15,321
Total funds carried forward	19	8,967	622	9,589	6,778	16,367

We are Ambitious about Autism

Ambitious about Autism is the national charity standing with autistic children and young people.

We believe every autistic child and young person has the right to be themselves and realise their ambitions.

We started as one school and have become a movement for change. We champion rights, campaign for change and create opportunities.



Contact us

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