



**Ambitious
about Autism**

Impact report
2013|2014

Making the ordinary possible

for children and young people with autism



1 in 100 children in
the UK have
autism





Making the ordinary possible

for children and young people with autism

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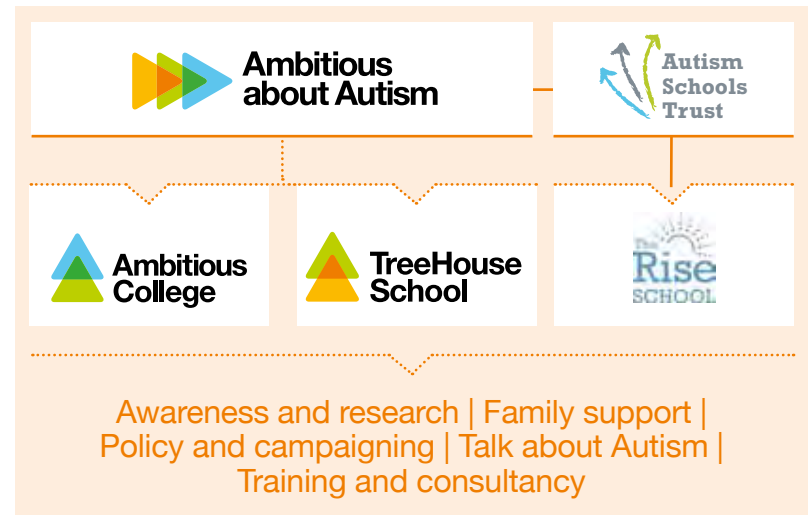
We are Ambitious about Autism

Ambitious about Autism is the national charity for children and young people with autism.

We provide services, raise awareness and understanding, and campaign for change.

Through TreeHouse School and Ambitious College we offer specialist education and support.

In 2013 we set up the Autism Schools Trust in partnership with Dimensions to create inspirational schools that enable children with autism to learn and succeed. The Rise School opened in September 2014 in Feltham, west London.





Our mission is to help children and young people with autism to learn, thrive and achieve.



“ I am very impressed by Ambitious about Autism: it has a focus on helping young people that really speaks to me as a mother, and it has an energy and drive that sets it apart from other charities. ”

Sophie Walker
Author of *Grace Under Pressure*

Parent Patron,
Ambitious about Autism



Jolanta Lasota

Chief Executive, Ambitious about Autism

This report is published at an exciting time as the Children and Families Act is implemented across health, education and social care. The Act presents a once-in-a-generation opportunity for all of us to rethink how we **make the ordinary possible for children and young people with autism.**

During 2013/14 we worked hard to shape the Bill as it moved through parliament, working in partnership with young people and families affected by autism and representing their views to policy makers. In doing so, I am proud to say that we helped protect a number of important rights and instigated a fundamental change to legislation that will enable more children and young people with autism to continue their education beyond school.

This is also an exciting time for our organisation. This year we opened two new services, Ambitious College and The Rise School, delivered via the Autism Schools Trust, which marks an important milestone for Ambitious about Autism.

This report documents the progress that we have made against our three key objectives during the last year:



To create more and better services



Raise awareness and understanding of autism



Influence national policy

We have also included a section on resourcing our impact which details the enormous support we have received. None of this work would be possible without the generosity of our partners and supporters and I would like to take this opportunity to say thank you. It is their time, energy and financial contribution that enables us to support children and young people with autism to learn, thrive and achieve.

Providing more and better services

Good quality local services are vital to children and young people with autism and yet many parents and carers tell us that they are in short supply. Ambitious about Autism continues to provide outstanding provision through a range of services including **TreeHouse School, Ambitious College and The Rise School.**



“Without Talk about Autism I would have faced diagnosis alone and afraid.”

“I came away feeling so much lighter - not feeling so powerless and now not dreading my son's review on Friday - knowledge is power.”

Family Support Seminar attendee

Our impact



80% of parents and carers of learners at Ambitious College said they had made progress in communication, behaviour, social interaction, independent living and work-related skills.

They all rated staff, management and the overall level of service as being **good or very good.**



Our online community, Talk about Autism, continued to provide a lifeline for thousands of families. Two thousand new members joined in 2013/14 to access information and support, generating over 16,000 topics of conversation. This vital service was recognised at the TalkTalk Digital Heroes Awards as an example of how digital technology could be harnessed to bring about positive social change. A recent survey of Talk about Autism members found that:

82% used it at least weekly

84% got the advice and support they needed and rated it as either good or excellent

90% said they would recommend the service

84% said they were better able to support themselves or their child

Our **Family Support events** brought hundreds of parents face-to-face with professionals and legal experts, providing a vital opportunity for sharing information, advice and support. 95% of attendees that responded to our survey rated the events as either good or excellent and 79% said that their understanding of autism and confidence had increased.



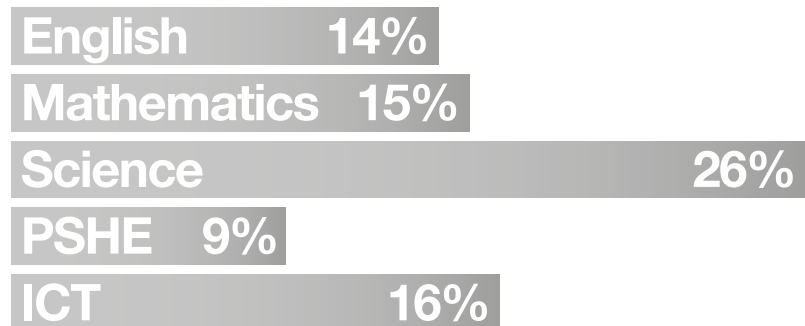
“The expertise on offer is invaluable to give parents information and to empower them to fight for their vulnerable child's needs and rights.”
- Family Support Seminar attendee

TreeHouse School

TreeHouse School is our flagship service for children and young people with autism aged 4-19; it provides education and support to up to 100 pupils and was rated as outstanding in all areas by Ofsted in 2012.

The School continued to offer a rich, broad and balanced curriculum in 2013/14 and our data shows that a greater number of pupils achieved their targets across all areas of their learning.

Percentage increase in pupils achieving or exceeding their targets from 2012/13 to 2013/14:



Being well prepared for adulthood is an important outcome for pupils in their final stage of education at TreeHouse School. All pupils aged 14-19 are offered the opportunity to participate in a wide range of vocational activities and supported in preparing for employment, training or the next phase of their education.

Through work placements pupils become powerful advocates for themselves, showing how they can make a positive contribution to their communities. A wide range of work placements were accessed by TreeHouse School pupils in 2013/14 including Greenwich Ecology Park, PAUL Bakery and new partnerships were formed with high street retailers Sainsbury's and Ryman. **With work placements such as these, the possibility of future employment looks far more likely for these young people.**

Pupils prepared for their next stage of education by completing ASDAN Towards Independence Awards. Pupils in the sixth form completed a total of 86 Towards Independence modules, in areas including Independent Living, Money, Using Transport, Horticulture, Yogacise and Sound, Rhythm and Music.



Pupil voice

As a result of an intensive focus on pupil voice, we have expanded the range of ways we engage with pupils to understand their interests and choices. Choice making has always been an important part of our curriculum, especially supporting pupils to understand the impact of making choices that have longer-term implications.

In 2013/14 we introduced an Options Event for the first time for pupils due to enter the sixth form. This event enabled each pupil to 'voice' their preferences for different vocational pathways to their parents and teachers, and informed the decision making process about which pathways they continued.

In taking this approach we have given pupils a much stronger voice in decisions about their education. It is great practise for the types of decisions that they will ultimately need to make about where they live and work when they leave school. Evidence shows that supporting pupils in this way and giving them more power to shape their future will lead to more successful transitions to adulthood.



“TreeHouse School offers a unique and well-tailored approach to a young person’s overall education. I think it puts much forethought and preparation into supporting its students now and planning for their future.”

Parent of TreeHouse School pupil





Cecilia's story

“ Cecilia is 16 and started at TreeHouse School when she was nine. She had been in two schools prior to that - one mainstream, the other a special school. Both just didn't work for her. Cecilia, who had very little speech at the time, would throw herself on the floor and hurt herself because she didn't understand what was being asked of her. They couldn't help her and didn't know how to communicate with her. The teachers there would say she couldn't do things when I knew she could.

When Cecilia arrived at TreeHouse School, she was still self-injuring. The teaching staff quickly formed a strong bond with her and introduced strategies to reduce this. The teachers understood Cecilia and worked with her strengths and passions to rebuild her trust in them, and in her self. It was only then that Cecilia started to speak more.

TreeHouse is definitely the right school for Cecilia because it makes her believe in her achievements. The staff give her the confidence the others schools didn't. I know Cecilia will always do something if she can; she's a hard worker and a perfectionist. I help by telling her teachers what Cecilia likes so they can personalise their teaching to meet her needs. Since watching the Olympics Cecilia's started doing athletics and hurdling as a hobby and she's becoming good at it. TreeHouse started a competitive sports class for her because of this. The teachers always work at her pace and make sessions interesting for her.

Cecilia's in the lower sixth and she was able to choose her three favourite vocational pathways: horticulture, sport and art. She's always in the garden at home and the school is looking at opportunities for Cecilia to work in a garden centre when she graduates. It's great to think Cecilia could gain employment and play an active part in her local community. We're relieved we can send Cecilia to a school that's aspirational for her.

Cecilia is so happy at TreeHouse School and she's always smiling and giggling. She never says she doesn't want to go to school. She likes being there with her best friends.

Ariane, mother of Cecilia



Raising awareness and understanding of autism

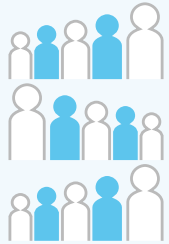
Despite the fact that **autism affects 1 in 100 children in the UK**, awareness and understanding of the condition is still low. In 2013/14 we generated significant awareness in the media and worked with parents, carers and professionals to increase their understanding of autism.

We provided training for over 1,000 parents, carers and professionals.

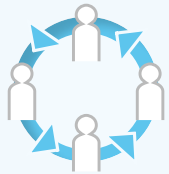
“Fantastic, really helpful and inspiring.”

“A great insight for parents, especially if they have a recent diagnosis for their child.”

Our impact



Our Youth Patrons (15 young people with autism) have been incredibly active, acting as ambassadors for the organisation and ensuring that our work reflects the needs and interests of their peers. Highlights include directing a short film for our Ruled Out campaign, speaking at the campaign launch and creating an exhibition of photography that was showcased on The Guardian website.



In recognition of World Autism Awareness Day we launched #AutismIs, a major online social media campaign that engaged tens of thousands of Twitter users from across the world including Stephen Fry, Kathy Lette and award-winning actor, Luke Treadaway.



We worked in partnership with the UK media, generating articles in national print and broadcast outlets, including features on Sky News and in The Sun, Daily Mirror and Daily Telegraph. Hundreds of articles were also placed in regional and sector titles adding to a combined readership of millions.



Our website had over 294,000 visits for information and support, an increase of 33% on 2012/13.



We provided training for over 1,000 parents, carers and professionals, ranging from general autism awareness courses to specific training on key issues such as behaviour that challenges and social skills. Of those attending bespoke Ambitious about Autism training,

82%

82% said that it had improved their understanding of autism and

over
90%

over 90% said that it had provided them with the tools and knowledge to support improvement of their practice.

Finished at School – Creating a model for the future

Our two year Department for Education (DfE) funded Finished at School Programme is **developing new models of support to enable young people with autism to access education beyond school**. An interim evaluation of the project, written by CEDAR at The University of Warwick, found that the programme has already achieved impact in five key areas:

staff skill
development

person-centred
planning

improved
assessment

improving the accessibility of all
aspects of college life

curriculum
development

Influencing policy

We worked hard to influence the Children and Families Act as it progressed through parliament, ensuring that the needs of families affected by autism were taken into account. This work paid major dividends in 2013/14 as **our work brought about legislative changes that will facilitate better access to support and vital services.**

“You can judge a society based on how it treats those who are different. No more children with autism should be disenfranchised from education.”

Dami Benbow, Ambitious about Autism Youth Patron

Our impact



We achieved our Finished at School campaign's headline aim of creating clearer legal rights to educational support for young people with autism up to the age of 25, through our influencing and the support of our 3,600 Finished at School supporters.



We worked with Government to protect a number of important rights for children and young people with special educational needs, including those on apprenticeships, finding work or accessing accommodation.



At a packed reception in Parliament we launched the Ruled Out campaign to stop children with autism missing out on their education. The campaign generated significant national media coverage and over 2,000 pledges of support in the first month.



Our Ruled Out campaign found that

4 in 10

4 in 10 children with autism have been illegally excluded during their time at school.

20%

20% of children with autism have been formally excluded in the past 12 months.

>50%

Over half of parents of a child with autism say that they have kept their child out of school for fear that the school is unable to provide appropriate support.



Our Schools 2013 Report found that over a third of teachers felt that support for children with autism was becoming harder to access, despite numbers of children with autism in school increasing.



We enabled young people with autism and their families to meet with policy makers and directly influence legislation. This included a meeting at TreeHouse School between the Children's Minister, Edward Timpson and parents, carers and young people.



Dami's story



“ I'm 23 and grew up in London with my family. I was diagnosed with ADHD when I was three and with Asperger's when I was 14. **When I first found out I had autism I thought it meant I had a piece of my brain missing and I went around school telling people that.**

As a child I was very hyperactive and constantly getting into trouble. People didn't know I had autism, they thought I was acting up. I was prescribed Ritalin at six after having problems at school and it helped calm things down a bit. It helped me but I think it helped my parents and my teachers more.

At secondary school I got a little additional help but I think most of it was due to ADHD and not to my Asperger's. I got a lot of support from my English teacher, which made a huge difference during my GCSEs. I left school with one A* GCSE and 11 A grade GCSEs.

In early 2013 I became a Youth Patron for Ambitious about Autism and it's given me lots of opportunities. I've helped to produce a short film for the charity's Ruled Out campaign and spoke to over 200 people at its launch in Westminster, including MPs. I've also got to meet other young people with autism for the first time in my life. I feel comfortable with them and I can talk about my experiences and know they understand.

As a Youth Patron I get to support the charity in many different ways. Recently I was asked to sit on an interview panel, which is a first for me. It was so interesting to be on the other side of a job interview and see how candidates performed. It has definitely given me a good idea of what I should do when I'm next interviewed and now I know how to answer interview questions.

Being a Youth Patron gives me a real sense of purpose and the opportunity to work with some great people. **All I want is for people to realise that there's nothing wrong with having autism and to show them that we are just as capable of achieving great things.** In fact, this week I graduated from Leeds University with a 2:1 in Politics and Parliamentary Studies. What more proof do people need? ”

Dami Benbow, Youth Patron

Resourcing our impact

The impact we are able to achieve is reliant on the generosity of our supporters and partners. In 2013/14 we received funding from a wide range of government, corporate, community and individual supporters, enabling us to **support children and young people with autism to learn, thrive and achieve.**



£300,000

Our partnership with TalkTalk continued to grow, generating over £300,000. The Digital Heroes 2013 event was the best ever and TalkTalk employees demonstrated their creativity and commitment by taking part in a range of events that included cycling, running marathons, dragon boat racing and cricket.



Our partnership with Rapha launched in 2013 with a cycle race of 600KM from Bordeaux to Paris in less than 24 hours. Rapha also hosted an auction of money-can't-buy prizes including lunch in New York with Tour de France winner Greg LeMond. An incredible £200,000 was raised.



£100,000

Ambitious about Autism Ambassador, Luke Treadaway, and director Katy Rudd hosted a one-off performance of The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time. This unique event featured performances from Jude Law and Coldplay's Chris Martin and raised over £100,000.

Almost double the number of people, schools, small businesses and community groups supported our work by participating in events in 2013/14, raising close to £120,000. They jumped out of planes, ran their socks off, baked cakes, sung carols and volunteered at our events. This amazing group of people included Edward Glover, a 71-year-old former diplomat and grandfather to Agnes, who is on the autism spectrum. Edward took on the challenge of a lifetime when he took part in the Virgin Money London Marathon.

Our supporters raised close to
£120,000



“Throughout my career I often ran along the corridors of the Foreign Office to meet Ministerial deadlines, but I had never run a marathon. Every day is a challenge for Agnes. She does not seek pity; she wants to be understood, to be accepted and just fit in.”

Edward Glover

We would particularly like to thank the following for their support:

ACE European Group Ltd

The Band Trust

Big Lottery Fund Awards for All

BBC Children in Need

The Chapman Charitable Trust

City Bridge Trust

Clothworkers' Foundation

Crouch End Festival Chorus

Department for Education

DLA Piper

East Finchley Open

Evan Cornish Foundation

Garfield Weston Foundation

Give-it-Away Ltd

Glendower Preparatory School

Graham Edwards

The Hampstead Wells and Campden Trust

Help a Capital Child (Global Radio)

Henry Smith Charity

Highgate School

Nick Hornby

JAVON Charitable Trust

John Horniman's Children's Charity

Macfarlanes

Nana & Femi Otedola

National Theatre and the cast and crew of The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time

Neil & Alison Ostrer

PAUL UK

Pears Foundation

Rapha

Social Investment Business Investment and Contract Readiness Fund

The Maurice Hatter Foundation

St James's Place Foundation

TalkTalk Group

The Gerald Ronson Foundation

The 29th May 1961 Charitable Trust

Luke Treadaway

Katy Rudd

Nimax Theatres

All our Team Ambitious participants who took on a personal fundraising challenge this year

Sainsbury's Muswell Hill

Virgin Money Giving

The Rotary Club of Highgate, Islington and Muswell Hill



Looking forward



Nick Baldwin

Chair of the Board of Trustees
Ambitious about Autism

As Chair of the Board of Trustees for the last six years, I have seen many exciting developments and next year will see the charity grow still further.

The launch of Ambitious College and The Rise School represents a big step for Ambitious about Autism and will enable us to deliver a vital service to many more children and young people with autism.

Next year will also see the launch of our new website, an online resource that will place the needs of children and young people with autism and their families at its heart. The new site will provide innovative ways to access and share information and shape the services we provide, as well as featuring an updated version of our award-winning forum, which will provide a brand new peer-to-peer support section dedicated to young people with autism.

The support that we offer to young people and their families will be critical as the Children and Families Act is implemented. The Act will change the way that children and young people access support and we will help families to navigate the new system in a number of ways including training, online support and through our campaigning work.

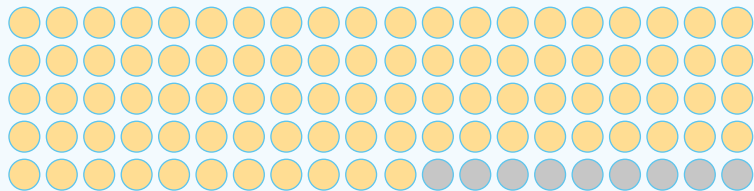
I wish my successor John Constantine and the organisation as a whole every success for what is sure to be an exciting future.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nick". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal stroke.

Financial summary

91p

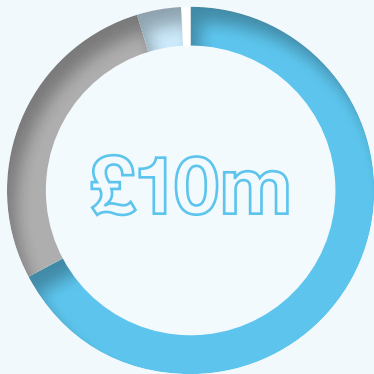
of every £1 that we spend funds services, policy, research and campaigning



The financial summary is a précis of the information contained in **Ambitious about Autism's Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31 March 2014**. It does not contain sufficient information to allow a full understanding of the results and state of affairs of **Ambitious about Autism**.

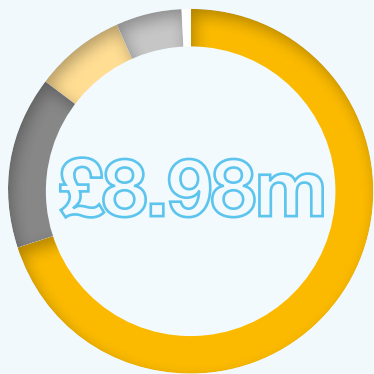
For further information, the Annual Report and Financial Statements should be consulted. They can be reviewed or downloaded from our website at www.ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk and a free copy obtained by writing to Ambitious about Autism, The Pears National Centre for Autism Education, Woodside Avenue, London N10 3JA.

The Annual Report and Financial Statements were approved by trustees on 26 September 2014 and were signed on their behalf by Nick Baldwin (Chair).



Incoming resources (£'000)

▶ TreeHouse School fees and grants	6,743
▶ Voluntary income plus activities for generating funds	2,802
▶ Other services	378
▶ Investment income	77
Total incoming resources	10,000



Resources expended (£'000)

▶ TreeHouse School	6,284
▶ Other services and capacity building	1,381
▶ Costs of generating funds	714
▶ Communications, policy and research	530
▶ Governance costs	67
Total resources expended	8,976

Summary statement of financial activities

For the year ended 31 March 2014

Income and expenditure	Unrestricted funds £'000	Restricted funds £'000	Year ended 31 March 2014 Total funds £'000
Incoming resources			
Incoming resources from generated funds			
Voluntary income	1,778	492	2,270
Activities for generating funds	-	532	532
Investment income	-	77	77
Incoming resources from charitable activities			
TreeHouse School fees and grants	34	6,709	6,743
Other services and capacity building	-	378	378
Total incoming resources	1,812	8,188	10,000
Resources expended			
Costs of generating funds	-	714	714
Charitable expenditure:			
TreeHouse School	581	5,703	6,284
Other services and capacity building	344	1,037	1,381
Communications, policy and research	122	408	530
Governance costs	-	67	67
Total charitable expenditure	1,047	7,215	8,262
Total resources expended	1,047	7,929	8,976
Net (outgoing)/incoming resources before other recognised gains and losses	765	259	1,024
Realised loss on investments	-	(44)	(44)
Net Income for the Year	765	215	980
Other recognised gains and losses			
Unrealised gains on investments	-	18	18
Net movement in funds	765	233	998
Funds at the start of the year	4,836	2,779	7,615
Funds at the end of the year	5,601	3,012	8,613

Summary balance sheet

As at 31 March 2014

	2014 £'000	2013 £'000
Fixed assets		
Fixed assets		
Tangible fixed assets	10,570	10,818
Investments	1,468	1,494
Total fixed assets	12,038	12,312
Current assets		
Debtors	874	301
Short term deposits	1,900	1,900
Cash at bank and in hand	1,891	998
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	(1,096)	(632)
Net current assets	3,569	2,567
Total assets less current liabilities	15,607	14,879
Creditors: amounts falling due after one year	(6,994)	(7,264)
Total net assets	8,613	7,615
Represented by:		
Funds and reserves		
Restricted funds	5,601	4,836
Unrestricted funds:		
Designated funds	1,976	1,589
General funds	965	1,093
Revaluation reserve	71	97
Total charity funds	8,613	7,615



**Ambitious
about Autism**

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