

DASH
Discovering Autistic Spectrum Happiness
Registered charity no: 1202345
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Annual Report

For the period of 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025

This report is for DASH CIO charity number 1202345 which was first set up with the Charity Commission on 16 March 2023. There was no activity in the period 16 March 2023 to 31 March 2024, as reported in a previous Trustees Annual Report.

For the first six months of this period, up to 30 September 2024, there was no activity of any sort. On 1 October 2024 all activities, assets and liabilities were transferred from DASH charity number 1116852. A vesting document is in place to this effect. The financial reporting period remains 1 April to 31 March. As permitted by the Charity Commission we continue to report on a receipts and payments basis.

The asset and depreciation policy has been updated.

The charity will ensure that all grant funding agreements and restrictions will be adhered to. Key stakeholders have been contacted and notified of these changes.

There was a seamless transfer from Charity 1116852 to the new charity 1202345 and operations continued with no disruption.

The old charity will be dissolved at the earliest possible stage.

The charity's purpose remains to improve the quality of life of people affected by autism by raising professional, public and political awareness.

Our Vision is that 'Autistic Adults Lead Happier and Healthier Lives' Autistic adults in our communities to have access to services and social groups that promote understanding, resilience, confidence, and social inclusion.

Our Services

DASH supports autistic adults in Swindon with information and advice. This varies hugely, with some people needing support with welfare rights or employment tribunals. Others benefit from help with employment, including assistance remaining in work with reasonable adjustments, finding work,

volunteer opportunities and building employability skills. We try to ensure autistic people understand their finances, including budgeting and managing their money. With the strong correlation between autism and poor mental health, we work with Swindon Borough Council Public Health team to reduce stress, think about blood pressure, improve access to exercise and maintain a healthy diet and lifestyle.

DASH has several social and activity groups where autistic adults can feel they are amongst people that understand their condition. This gives an opportunity to improve confidence, gain new skills and friends and work towards mainstream activities and groups.

We work closely with other agencies including the police, social care, health, education and employers to help them understand the needs of autistic people.

Our primary aims are to:

1. To promote the mental health of Autistic adults living in the Borough of Swindon through the provision of information, advice, advocacy and support.
2. To promote social inclusion for the public benefit by preventing Autistic adults from becoming socially excluded and meeting their needs by helping them to integrate into society.

Risk

Risks are reviewed regularly at trustee meetings and our risk register is updated accordingly. Trustees are responsible for oversight and ensuring appropriate controls are in place to provide reasonable assurance against fraud and error.

Key activities in the year

All staff were TUPE'd to the CIO on 1 October 2024, thus preserving all rights previously acquired in the unincorporated charity 1116852. Outstanding grants, contracts and liabilities were similarly transferred.

The organisation built on strategy days previously held before incorporation. We encourage ever-stronger collaboration and co-operation with autistic adults in Swindon, and it was good to see a much greater take up of this opportunity. The charity is especially grateful to those who helped the staff and trustees to develop a series of actions that help us to achieve our aims and objectives.

Groups continued to build and grow, particularly the group that meets during the evening. We now have a significant waiting list and hope to start a new group in the coming year. The club members have taken up various activities including pool, table tennis, hikes, running and bowls. Several members have successfully found employment, and one has gone on to university. Whilst sad to see her go, this is an amazing achievement and we're glad to have been part of that journey.

We saw the reintroduction of our annual community day at St Johns Church. An excellent turnout saw people doing a broad range of activities including face painting, henna hands, tombola and crafts. As another opportunity for

service users to co-produce an event, we were grateful for the considerable number of people who were able to showcase their crafts and activities.

We were able to assist several people in their appeals to the Department of Work and Pensions, again achieving 100% success.

We began a new service, to provide wellbeing calls to a small number of people who are otherwise completely socially isolated. Although very much in the initial stages, this looks to be something that we can offer particularly for those who are house-bound.

After a lengthy search, we were delighted to welcome two new trustees to the team.

Plans for the future

There was widespread agreement that the name DASH Discovering Autistic Spectrum Happiness did not reflect the true purpose of the charity, and a competition will be run over the coming period to seek a new name and embed a stronger identity within the community.

A previous service funded by the Big Lottery, the After Diagnosis Journey, was unanimously requested as the most important requirement for the future. Funding will need to be sought to enable this to happen, but it was viewed as an essential programme for those who are newly diagnosed.

A regular information source for people is also being developed. This will enable DASH to have a deeper understanding of its service users as contributors as well as providing them with relevant information.

Working alongside Swindon Borough Council's Public Health team. We are aiming to reduce ill health by considering stress, information provision, exercise and diet.

Our current site may be closed for a considerable period for refurbishment so plans are underway to ensure we can transition to a new venue to continue providing services.