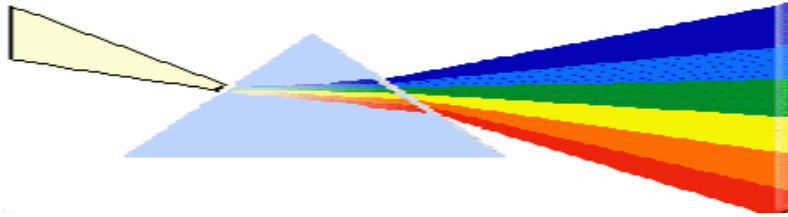


*D.A.S.H.*  
*Discovering Autistic Spectrum Happiness*  
Registered charity no: 1116852



Supporting Adults with  
Aspergers Syndrome



Annual Report  
2008 - 2009

# Supporting Adults with Aspergers Syndrome

Dash's charitable aim is:

**“To promote the mental health of adults of working age with Aspergers Syndrome and other high-functioning autistic spectrum living in Swindon through the provision of information, advice, advocacy and support.”**

DASH held it's inaugural meeting in August 2006, registered as a local charity in November 2006 and appointed it's first permanent member of staff in February 2008.

## **DASH Trustees and officers:**

Chair: Philip Hunt  
Secretary: Anne Billingham  
Treasurer: Ceri Evans-Ford  
Ann Mooney

## **Staff Members:**

Co-ordinator (part-time): Denise O'Sullivan  
Administration Assistant (part-time): Adam Smith  
Employment Support Worker (part-time): Julie Welsh  
Social group facilitator: Dan Bond (sessional) from August 08  
Volunteer support: Gill Robinson (sessional) from October 08

## **Advisory members of the Committee** (in alphabetical order)

Anne Bilimoria (SCAAS)  
Sally Grubb (Farleigh College)  
Clare McNally (AWP NHS Trust)  
Oriana Morrison-Clarke (Swindon PCT seconded to The Priory)  
Geoffrey Sparks  
John Woodcock (Stonham)  
Clive Weston (Swindon PCT)

## **Volunteers** (in alphabetical order):

Derek Billingham  
David Brady  
Derek Clark  
Tom Evans  
Paul Grubb  
Glen Jefferies  
Gill McCombie, Julie Mercer and Karen Taylor from Zurich;  
Adam Smith  
Geoff Sparks  
Naomi Vincent

## Supporting Adults with Aspergers Syndrome

In our third year we have strived to be responsive to the needs of adults with Aspergers, as a community based source of information, help and support.

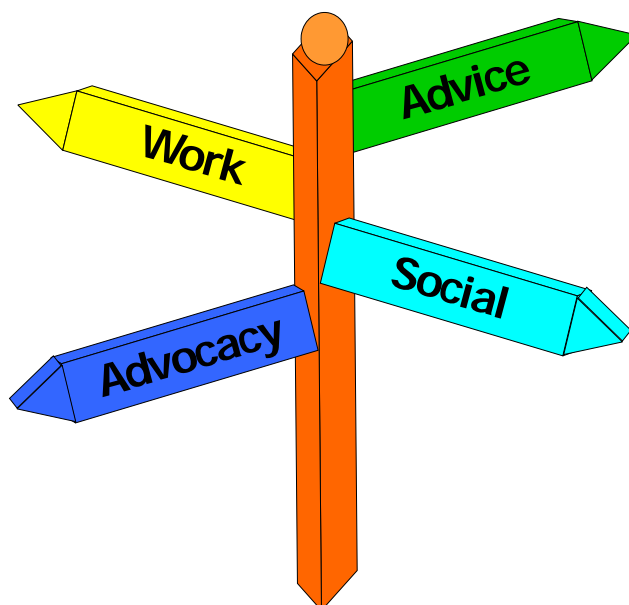
With the appointment of staff and the recruitment of volunteers we have been able to develop the depth and range of services we can offer. We have continued to offer the weekly support and discussion group and have supported the development of the weekly non-buildings based social group. We are grateful to both Clare McNally and Sally Grubb for sharing the facilitation of the open access monthly workshops exploring personal strategies for living with AS.

The appointment of an employment support worker has had a positive impact in helping to identify the hopes and aspirations of members and in breaking down some of the real and perceived barriers to accessing opportunities and achieving personal goals.

In autumn we rebranded the Nectar Superstore as The Swindon Wildflower Nursery and much winter work was provided making trugs and seed packets as well as keeping production of the plants going, to support a very successful spring marketing campaign.

During the year we have improved our quality assurance systems to help 'measure the difference' we are making to the lives of individual who engage with our services.

We have involved our members in all aspects of shaping and planning future services that are needed to meet their needs and to help 'close the gap' in statutory provision.



Our staff team holds an enormously diverse range of skills and experience that add value to the services we offer. Our sincere thanks to all our staff, volunteers, members, supporters and funders for all their commitment to DASH throughout 2008-09.

# Supporting Adults with Aspergers Syndrome

Priority: raising awareness of the needs of adults with Aspergers

## **Our achievements:**

- The compilation and distribution of " A directory of services for adults with Aspergers living in Swindon" in October 2008;
- The launch of the Volunteers Recruitment Pack;
- Information provided on TWIGS open days, fund-raising event by Ten in a Bar in the Arts Centre and via Swindon Volunteers;
- Submissions to the thematic review of Supporting People in respect of the housing needs of people with Aspergers;
- The instigation of a register of people living in Swindon diagnosed with an Autistic Spectrum condition;
- Delivery of a presentation to the Joint Commissioner of health and social services (July 2008);
- One to one meeting with Swindon South MP, Anne Snelgrove at DASH and correspondence with Swindon North MP, Michael Wills;
- Attendance at a reception at the Houses of Parliament by invitation from Dave King, editor of Swindon Advertiser, with opportunity to meet with Anne Snelgrove and network with Hants NAS;
- Highlighting the needs of adults with Aspergers within the context of Local Area Agreement 2 to secure a community grant from Swindon Borough Council;
- Meeting with Hants NAS as pioneers of the Autism Alert Card;
- Offering support to SCAAS in taking forward the launch of a Swindon and District Branch of the National Autistic Society;
- The planning and preparation of a 'professionals' training workshop to raise awareness amongst practitioners in health and social care, housing, vocational services and the criminal justice system on World Autism Awareness Day, April 2<sup>nd</sup> 2009.

## **Our disappointments:**

- No follow up to meeting with joint commissioner;
- No progress towards a local assessment and diagnostic service for adults in primary care (ie adults approaching their GPs);
- Reduced budget for Supporting People floating housing support services.

# Supporting Adults with Aspergers Syndrome

Priority: Supporting People in DASH

## Members achievements in 08 -09:

- o 15 people attended the support and discussion group;
- o 1 member helped co-facilitate the support and discussion group;
- o 12 people in contact with DASH were either in employment or actively seeking work – paid and unpaid;
- o 1 member sustained a supported employment role in DASH;
- o 1 member became a trustee and chair of DASH, representing DASH on numerous occasions;
- o 14 people attended the monthly workshops;
- o 9 members contributed to The Swindon Wildflower Nursery enterprise;
- o 9 people received advocacy support;
- o 8 people attended the social group;
- o 2 members were commissioned externally for their skilled craftwork;
- o 3 members completed College courses;
- o 1 member completed a WEA course.

“Before having a diagnosis I used to think I can never change or make friends. Now as I begin to understand myself better, I know I can learn and develop the skills to change”

“DASH is a good place to start practicing interacting with new people. I am practicing starting conversations”

“Previous to my diagnosis I was prescribed anti-psychotic medication and anti-depressants. I no longer need any medication”

“The discussion group is good as it helps to hear other people talk who have experienced the same or similar to me and to hear how they overcame their problems”.

“It is a safe place to learn about Aspergers”

# Supporting Adults with Aspergers Syndrome

## The Swindon Wildflower Nursery



### **The Swindon Wildflower Nursery**

In February 2008, DASH received a small grant to set up an area for growing wildflowers. TWIGS kindly let us use a small parcel of land within their grounds. We purchased a greenhouse, some staging, some compost and pots – and we were off!

Seeds and advice were provided by John Ball from wildFlowers And Butterflies (FAB). Several people diagnosed with Aspergers and high functioning autism became volunteers and within the first 12 months were able to produce in excess of 2000 high quality wildflowers.

The primary purpose of the enterprise is to generate income to support DASH members access appropriate supported volunteering and employment opportunities as a vehicle for developing their social and work skills. The secondary purpose is of course to increase native wildflowers and the population of insects, butterflies and bees that they support, in our own local community.

Without the time or resources to attend plant sales and horticultural shows we became aware of the need for a marketing strategy. We successfully applied to Zurich skill share programme and fortunately their marketing team responded – enthusiastically and with great skill.

The membership scheme was launched in March and with more and more people becoming aware of the benefits of wildlife friendly gardening and the beauty of including wildflowers within their planting schemes, our expectations have been exceeded.

# Supporting Adults with Aspergers Syndrome

## DASH Social Group

Dan Bond was first put into contact with DASH by Voluntary Action Swindon. DASH was aware of the need for a social group but unable to decide how to develop this; Dan on the other hand, had plenty of experience of supporting people with Aspergers, great motivation to get a social group up and running but felt daunted by the prospect of needing to set up a charity, organise insurance etc as a pre-requisite. So we worked together and the result has been a weekly social group affiliated to DASH since February 2008 that creates the opportunity for adults with Aspergers to meet and converse.

An optional activity is often incorporated into these sessions which is decided upon by the members of the group. It also creates the opportunity for larger social events to be organized such as meals out and day trips as well as the opportunity for the members to form friendships with other members. The forming of friendships in turn enables them to organize their own social activities outside of the group. The aim of the group is to not only enable friendships to form, but to also enable self confidence and social skills to develop.



**Volunteering**

Volunteers have made an enormous contribution to supporting DASH activities in 2008 – 09 which in turn helps adults with Aspergers to develop their own self confidence, improve their work and social skills and enjoy social activities. Approximately 50% of our volunteers have Aspergers themselves and act as positive role models.

In return we hope DASH volunteers feel valued, develop their own skills and understanding and feel good about themselves.

## Summarised Financial Statement for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2009

<i>We are grateful to the following organisations that have supported us in cash and kind during the year</i>
Rotary Marriot Charity Ball
Swindon Borough Council for a Grass Roots Grant
Awards for All Lottery programme
Zurich – with help in kind from its marketing team as well as a grant
AASDASS
Ten in a Bar
TWIGS, The Priory and Swindon & District Bee-keepers Association for help with accommodation

Income & Expenditure	2008 - 09
<b>Restricted income :</b>	
Grants	£18, 970.00
Donations	£1,545.00
<b>Unrestricted income:</b>	
Fees for services	£150.00
Fundraising through plant sales	£417.00
Interest	£82.00
<b>Total income</b>	<b>£21,164.00</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>	
<b>Direct charitable costs:</b>	
Project costs	£14,368.00
Premises costs	£1,135.00
Management & administration costs	£1,705.00
Depreciation:	£453.00
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>£17,661.00</b>
<b>Balance Sheet</b>	
Assets (equipment)	£1,360.00
Bank balance	<b>£12,521.00</b>
<b>Net Assets:</b>	<b>£13,881.00</b>

### ***D.A.S.H.***

*Discovering Autistic Spectrum Happiness*

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