

Annual Report 2021-22



Get
autism
working

CareTrade Charitable Trust Registered Charity 1127890

Introduction

This year has been another busy and productive year for The Autism Project. We introduced three year groups this year as a result of holding on to many of our learners that had their 2nd year interrupted by Covid lockdowns.

As well as having 3 year groups, we also introduced our own 'skills for work' curriculum framework called **SkillUp**. This has been created in order to help learners develop the transferable skills they need for work.

In SkillUp, stage 1 learners embarked on a Product Design and Retail project in the first term. This project was completed in collaboration with *Made in Greenwich* shop, where they hosted a pop-up shop for our learners to sell their '**Christmas Sprouts**' pom-poms. The learners made £176 in profit and they decided to spend it on eating out together at Nando's.



Each term **Functional Skills** learners have taken part in a reading challenge. In term 3, the theme was the London 2012 Olympics. Group 1a visited the Olympic Park in Stratford to do some research.

Group 1b took part in a 'Write a letter to your MP' project in which they had to research issues affecting their local area and write a letter to their MP asking for support.

Group 2a helped to plan our TAP Christmas party as part of their money management and budgeting sessions. They worked on their independence skills by doing the shopping for the snacks. The Christmas Party was a huge success, thanks 2a!



Placements

Guy's and St Thomas' 
NHS Foundation Trust


Whittington Health
NHS Trust

Even though the Covid restrictions were coming to an end and life was starting to return to our previous norm, our placements were at an all time low at the beginning of the academic year. The Autism Project's biggest partners are **Whittington Health** and **Guys & St. Thomas' Trust**. The NHS were still recovering from the pandemic and had several restrictions still in place, meaning many of our placements could not go ahead.



Our CareTrade **working kitchen** has continued this year throughout and has been a very beneficial experience for many of our learners. **Ten learners** have had placements in the kitchen, two of which have decided, since being in the kitchen, that Catering is their chosen career path.

We have also created new relationships with several organisations that are now offering our learners placements all over London.

These include:

Lux Gallery

Forest Hill Library

Golden Oldies



We are very thankful that with the hard work of our NHS partners, we are now in a much safer place and placements in the hospitals have returned and are at an all time high!



It was a very busy start to the year for The Autism Project, having our inspection from Ofsted in our first term, as well as being busy re-establishing placements post Covid.

We are very proud to have received an overall **'Good'** from the inspectors with some excellent feedback.



Highlights from the inspection:

'Learners enjoy their supported internships. They have good-quality individual programmes, providing them with challenging and meaningful learning experiences.'

'Learners benefit from attending the small and inclusive learning centre. Tutors create a calm environment for learners. Learners participate enthusiastically in lessons as tutors and job coaches make lessons exciting and interesting.'

'Leaders have high aspirations for learners to move into sustainable employment'

'Learners are encouraged by staff to consider ambitious career prospects'



[Click here to read our full report](#)

Enrichment

The Autism Project learners started a band this year, **UnTapped**, who played a special gig at CareTrade for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee as well as an online recorded gig for *Club Soda*.

They have also spent some time in a recording studio and finished off the year by playing at our summer celebration.

Watch out for UnTapped gigs in 2023!



Left to right: Jordan (keyboard and vocals), Manu (drums, Curtis (lyrics and vocals), Hassan (dancer)



The Autism Project has run several **socials** during term time this year. These have included crazy golf, the Natural History Museum, bowling, picnics and a trip to the Imperial War Museum.

We recognised last year that some learners had not attended any of our half term and summer holiday socials. Many parents told us that they would be really beneficial to their young people, but that they would not attend if they were seen as optional.



The introduction of term time socials has been really fun and has encouraged more learners to interact and find common interests.



Wellbeing

This year our wellbeing programme consisted of various workshops and events that learners could get involved in. Some of these were optional and some embedded into the curriculum.

Learners attended workshops on sexual health and consent, hearing voices, anti-bullying, online safety and fake news.

Learners also celebrated Hello Yellow Day (mental health awareness), Neurodiversity Week, Autism Acceptance Week and Pride month.

Highlights:

- Our wellbeing lead organised visits to learners on placement and facilitated a **wellbeing lunch hour** to discuss healthy eating and confidence building.
- Our wellbeing lead provided 19 ad-hoc **121-wellbeing support** sessions for learners.
- 20% of learners participated in optional **Art Therapy** sessions led by *The Nest*.
- Learners were also given the opportunity to participate in online **yoga sessions** that were delivered by *MahaDevi Yoga Centre*.



"Art therapy was great. I liked to be able to express myself in a nice and peaceful environment."

"I really enjoyed the yoga classes as it has helped me to relax. I enjoyed the sun salutations."



Independence

Learners that were non-independent travellers or those that wanted to increase their travel independence attended a session run by **TfL** and the **British Transport Police**. This session included information on road safety, responding appropriately to attempts at communication from other transport users, stranger danger and personal safety.



'Now I travel to placement on my own. I am proud'

Stage 1 learner

Stage1 learners have been working on their budgeting skills in Functional Skills sessions as well as attending a **money management workshop** delivered by *The Money Charity* to increase their financial awareness and independence.



Careers

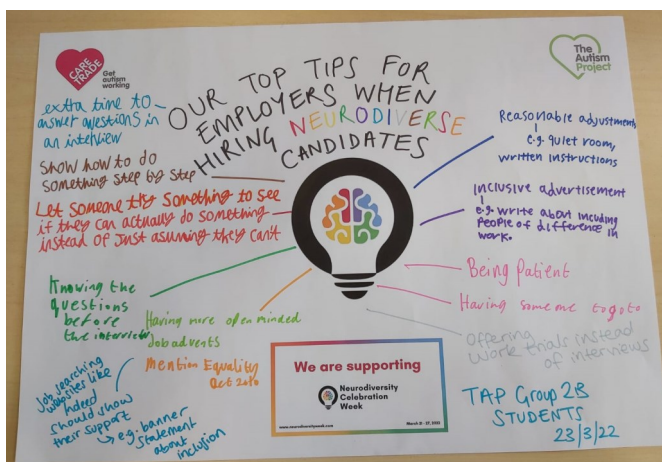
We are extremely proud of our learners for all their hard work in job club this year. Their dedication and resilience to finding and applying for jobs is reflected in their fantastic outcomes.

During **National Careers Week**, stage 2 learners discussed their future aspirations and attended a talk on how to gain ongoing support from the 'Access to Work' scheme if they transition into paid employment.

For **Neurodiversity Week**, learners made a poster to share with employers (see below) and also attended a talk from a TAP alumni where they heard about their experience of finding work, the challenges they faced, and their interview top tips!



TAP alumni talking about their experience of finding work



A poster made by stage 2 learners for Neurodiversity week

Stage 1 learners are now starting to thinking about how they can showcase their skills to employers and have attended a **video CV workshop** delivered by *Divergent Thinking* to prepare them for moving into stage 2. They have also had both a group and 1:1 session with an independent Level 6 trained **Careers Advisor**.

Stage 2 & 3 learners all had opportunities to visit **jobs fairs** around London including a disability confident fair in Croydon.

They attended **mock interviews** with staff from GSTT and Barclays Bank.



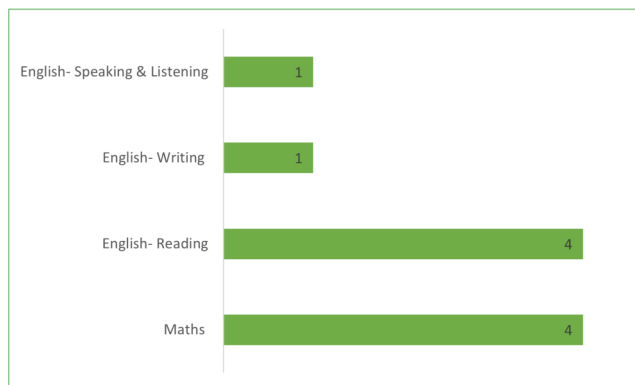
A learner visiting a jobs fair



Outcomes

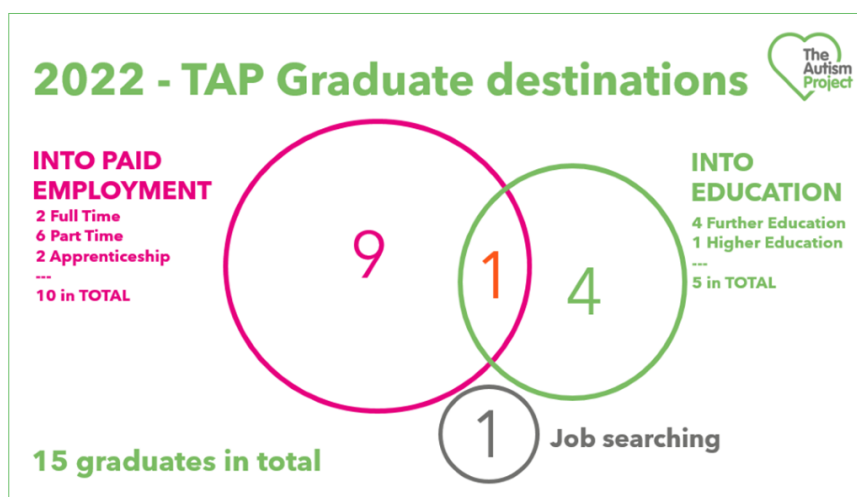
Many of our learners sat their Functional Skills **exams** this year and we are so proud of how hard they all worked. Learners showed great resilience and motivation throughout the year and attended extra revision sessions.

We are extremely pleased to announce that many of them also passed!



Learners who passed their exams this year

As well as many academic successes, we are extremely proud to announce that **60 % of our leavers moved into paid employment/apprenticeships, 27% into Further Education and 7% into Higher Education.**



TAP learner outcomes 2021-22

Our leavers have moved into a number of different industries including childcare, hospitality and administration and they will now be invited to join our **alumni** which includes being invited to regular socials and events.

Our outcomes this year have been incredible and I am extremely proud of all of the learners on The Autism Project! They've all shown great determination and motivation towards their progress, achievements, and next steps.

Mark Finch, Head of Education



A message from our CEO, Karen Edwards

The Autism Project is CareTrade's core programme and demonstrates what we do best. We believe with a passion that autistic people have the right to work, to a career and to lead the lives they want.

The Autism Project (TAP) supports autistic young people (aged 18-25) to build on their individual strengths, increase their skills and confidence and gain work experience so they can decide on the direction they wish to go and take those important next steps.. be that further or higher education or towards and into employment.



This year, 60 % of our leavers have moved into paid employment/apprenticeships, 27% into Further Education and 7% into Higher Education, the first steps on their career path.

National statistics show just 22% of autistic adults are in some kind of paid employment (compared to 80% of non-disabled people and 47% of disabled people).

The Autism Project proves that with the right support, autistic young people want to work and they make great employees.

Working with our host employers is as important as the support we give to our learners. The success our learners experience in their work placements is key to building their confidence. TAP has a strong multidisciplinary team and our approach is always person centred.

One of our first graduates from 2011 is still working at St Thomas' in Ward Food Services. All those in our film Britain's Secret Workforce (2017) are still working and in the words of one manager 'if I could have 20 of George, my job would be so much easier' ... he now has two!

It is time for all employers to be open to increasing the diversity of their workforce and benefiting from the skills and talent of autistic people.

