

2.6 CHALLENGE
AND
DECLUTTER + DONATE
FUNDRAISING
INITIATIVES

CORONAVIRUS
ANXIETY
& WELL BEING
WORKSHOPS WITH
AS MENTORING

AUTISM FORWARD
AWARDED
GRANT FROM
NATIONAL LOTTERY
COMMUNITY FUND

INVESCO
LAUNCHES
NEURODIVERSITY
INTERNSHIP
PROGRAMME

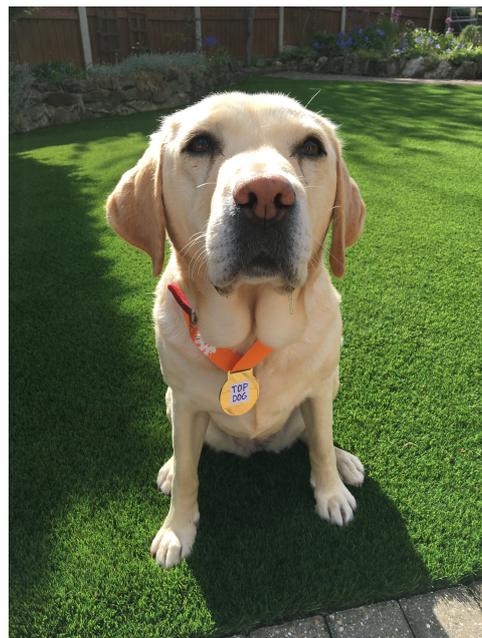
AUTISM FORWARD NEWS

2.6 Challenge & Declutter+Donate Fundraising

Thanks to all those who took part in the 2.6 National Challenge which launched on Sunday 26 April, the date when the 40th London Marathon should have taken place. Instead, fundraisers up and down the country took part in an activity based around the numbers 2.6 or 26 to fundraise for their chosen charity. Our supporters and mentors undertook some fantastic initiatives including 2.6 minute planks, 26 mile bike rides, 26 keepy ups with a golf club and 26km runs.

Our star fundraiser was Yvie the Labrador, pictured here, who walked over 26 miles in a week with owner Becky Leverett, taking in local beauty spots around Cudham, Sparrows Den, Wilberforce Oak and Farnborough and raising over £750 to support our work.

We have also joined the national Declutter & Donate initiative which enables supporters to exchange books, CDs, DVDs, Blu-rays and games for donations to support our work using the Ziffit app. It is 100% free to use, all proceeds are passed on to us and gift aid can also be added. To turn your clutter into a donation to Autism Forward, download the Ziffit app or use this [link](#) which takes you straight to our Ziffit page where you can enter the barcode of your items and arrange for free collection of your items. The perfect excuse for a clear out.



Coronavirus Anxiety & Well Being Workshops

Our mentor partner AS Mentoring are running a series of Coronavirus Anxiety and Well Being workshops via Zoom for small groups of autistic adults to provide support during this time of heightened uncertainty and anxiety. Autism Forward is subsidising the cost of these workshops which explore strategies to cope with anxiety and promote well-being through the current lockdown and beyond and provide an empathetic space for participants to discuss and share experiences.

Further details of the workshops including how to book can be found on the AS Mentoring website via this [link](#).

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Invesco Neurodiversity Internship Programme

Invesco, one of the largest investment management companies in the UK, has recently launched a new Neurodiversity internship scheme which aims to breakdown the traditional barriers to employment that autistic and other neurodivergent people face by adopting non-traditional interview processes, making adjustments in the workplace and increasing awareness of the recruitment opportunities beyond the traditional candidate pools.

The scheme provides six month paid internships in Finance and Compliance which will give the candidates the opportunity to obtain first hand insight into roles in the asset management industry, gain practical experience, increase their self-confidence and develop a whole range of workplace skills.

Invesco has partnered with Autism Forward's mentor partner AS Mentoring to adapt their recruitment processes and develop a broader awareness programme for their HR colleagues and the functional teams where the interns will be placed.

Lindsay Hudson, EMEA Diversity & Inclusion Manager, commented:

"There is a huge untapped pool of potential talent out there and we need to ensure we can attract people who can help us innovate and create true diversity of thought. With 80% of people on the autistic spectrum unemployed or underemployed, it is important for companies like Invesco to act to improve opportunities and inclusion for neurodivergent people."

Lara Bett who is acting co-chair of Invesco's recently launched Neurodiversity Network said: "I am really excited that we are able to launch this internship scheme as I know how beneficial it will be for the interns, the teams they will be working with and our wider business. I look forward to seeing our colleagues experience first-hand the new perspectives and skills that neurodivergent employees can bring to our teams".

Invesco welcomed their first interns into the firm last month, with remote inductions replacing traditional on-boarding processes, demonstrating Invesco's commitment to the programme despite the current crisis.

Recruitment Roundtable with Adjust Services

Daniel Aherne of Adjust Services will be presenting our fifth Recruitment Roundtable for employers via Zoom on 11 June 2020. The session will focus on understanding the impact of the unwritten rules of the workplace on autistic colleagues, providing insights and advice to help employers better understand this issue and develop a more inclusive workplace where autistic people can thrive.

National Lottery Community Fund

We are delighted to share the news that we have been awarded £9750 by the National Lottery Community Fund to support our on-going work.

These funds will be used to provide specialist mentoring support for autistic job seekers to help them find employment, access training and social activities, and fulfil their potential.

We would like to thank all our supporters and mentors for your support over the last two years which has enabled us to demonstrate the positive impact of our work and our mission to improve employment opportunities and inclusion for autistic people.

The excellent outcomes our grant holders have achieved has enabled us to secure this funding and support more autistic job seekers into work.

This is more important than ever at this time of increased uncertainty and anxiety which adds to the considerable barriers autistic people already face when seeking employment.

