

INTERVIEW TRAINING
WITH AVATAR JO
- JOB SUCCESS
FOR
AUTISM FORWARD
CLIENT

REPORT ON
AUTISM FORWARD'S
CURRENT COHORT
EMPLOYMENT
OUTCOMES

AUTISM FORWARD
CLIENT
LAUNCHES
HER OWN
ETSY STORE

ASM REPORTS ON
AUTISTIC JOB SEEKERS
PROGRAM,
JOBS CLUB AND
WOMEN AT WORK
GROUP

AUTISM FORWARD NEWS

Autism Forward Outcomes

Autism Forward is currently supporting 125 autistic job seekers, with over 60 individual grants awarded since April. Employment figures for our most recent cohort (April-June 2025) are 52% in voluntary or paid employment, with 26% of those now in paid employment. This is particularly impressive as these clients have only had a few months' support and many have never had paid employment or were long term unemployed.

We continue to support job seekers from previous years who have not yet reached their employment goals. Employment figures for the 2024-25 cohort are 77% in voluntary or paid employment or in full-time education or training, with 58% in paid employment. Outcomes for the 2023-24 cohort are 86% in voluntary or paid employment, with 68% in paid employment. We have also received excellent feedback from our clients again this quarter. The examples below illustrate the value of the specialist nature of the support we fund, particularly from our mentors who are autistic themselves, which is crucial for autistic job seekers who struggle to access support that takes into account their individual strengths and challenges.

Autistic Nottingham client

I really valued the autistic-friendly counselling and job coaching I received with Phil. He took the time to understand not just my career goals but also the way my autism shapes how I work, and he tailored the sessions accordingly. What stood out most was his ability to break down complex situations into clear, practical steps that I could apply straight away. Phil's approach was supportive without being patronising, and he always made space for my perspective while offering thoughtful, constructive guidance. Thanks to his coaching, I feel much more confident about presenting my strengths to employers, navigating workplace challenges, and building a career path that feels sustainable for me. Phil created an environment where I could be honest about difficulties, but also celebrate progress, which made a huge difference.

AS Mentoring client

Mentoring brings the opportunity to 'externalise' everything that an autistic person deals with when considering employment (there are so many things!). We greatly benefit from having someone impartial and understanding of our condition to bring context to things, challenge unhelpful patterns of thinking that we may not be aware of, identify strengths that we may not be aware of...and of course it's encouraging, motivating and brings a degree of accountability. It has helped me not to give up!

**AUTISM
FORWARD**

Avatar Jo Interview Training

Autism Forward has been working for a number of years with the Avatar Jo role playing service which enables our autistic job seekers to undertake interview practice with the team at Avatar Jo.

We fund practice sessions for Autism Forward clients seeking to improve their performance at interview, which can be particularly challenging and stressful for an autistic candidate. Many employers fail to understand how difficult it can be for autistic candidates to respond to certain types of question and anxiety can become overwhelming.

At the end of each practice session, the candidate receives immediate feedback on their interview performance and a recording of the interview to review with their Autism Forward mentor. We are delighted that one of our Spectrum Career Coach clients has recently secured a paid role in their chosen field after using the service. Our mentor and their client comment as follows on the service:

Mentor: *I referred to Avatar Jo to give my client additional support with practicing interview skills. Whilst I had practiced interviews with the client, they know me well and it does not mimic a real life interview situation. I also wanted to gain a fresh perspective for my client on what they are doing well and what they can approve upon. The client was happy to share their interviews with me, so that we could reflect on their feedback together.*

Following the Avatar Jo interviews, my client had a real interview two weeks later and performed amazingly. I have no doubt that utilising the additional practice, reflecting on the feedback and taking that forward to the interview, supported them being offered the job.

Client: *I found my experience with AvatarJo to be very helpful and informative. The actor I worked with, Chrissie, was really friendly. Her friendly personality helped to put any anxiety I had about the mock interviews to rest. I was able to confidently answer the questions that she asked me.*

The three things I found helpful from my AvatarJo sessions was that firstly, you get feedback from the actor right after the interview. This helped me to understand what I did well and areas for improvement. Secondly, the sessions are recorded. This means that you can re-watch the interviews and do your own evaluation of them. Finally, some of the questions that Chrissie asked me were difficult and forced me to think of an answer on the spot. I found this to be quite helpful since it would help in an actual interview that I had two weeks after my second AvatarJo session.

I highly recommend using AvatarJo. It helped me immensely with improving my interviewing skills, which helped me to successfully get into a job.

Autism Forward client's Etsy store

We were delighted to hear that one of WayMakers Devon's AF clients has launched an Etsy store to explore self-employment, saying:

"I have always enjoyed making and creating. As I was going through mentoring, I saw some videos pop up on Youtube about designing and selling digital resources to sell through Etsy so thought I'd give it a go.

With my experience in Canva, I have designed a range of seasonal products and educational resources available as a digital download. More Christmas products will be released soon.

I taught myself how to set up an Etsy shop, design a shop logo, write listings and design promotional photos.

Sales have been slow going, but I'm gaining a lot of experience and learning about how to best market my shop."

Do check out The Cosy Hoglet Etsy store using this [link](#).



ASM Reports on Autistic Job Seekers Program, Groups & Workshops

Thank you to Autism Forward for funding two work-finding groups for AS Mentoring over the past year, both of which have now come to a close.

We know how isolating job hunting can be, particularly for those who are more marginalised or socially isolated. Our goal was to create a place where participants could feel a sense of belonging and acceptance while also picking up practical tools to support their employment journey.

The two groups - **Autistic Job Seekers** and the **Job Club Drop-In** - provided a safe and welcoming space where unemployed autistic people of all ages could meet monthly to share experiences, develop job-finding skills, celebrate small wins and progress, and hear from guest speakers, including experts from IDEX Consulting, Autism Forward's Charity of the Year partner. We saw members go on to secure employment within the year - always inspiring to witness - but the greatest achievement from our perspective was seeing people grow in confidence, open up about their challenges, and support one another along the way. Here is some of the feedback:

"I have enjoyed each session so far, they have been helpful for gaining tips on employment. I keep coming back to this group because it's informative and a community for autistic people. I haven't felt uncomfortable in any session. I am using the websites provided and reading the slides given in the emails. I like the meditation at the start of the group, it's helped me look into guided meditation in my own life. I enjoy the guests who provide lots of great information"- A

Although we are no longer running these specific groups at AS Mentoring, there are still plenty of opportunities for support and connection. We continue to offer specialist neurodiversity employment consultants who help people get neurodivergent into work and thrive in their roles, alongside a range of workshops and groups which can be found on our website [here](#).

In particular, there are a few places still available on our **Women in Work group (WiW)** which is due to start in November/December 2025, to be held on Zoom on a weekday and a time decided by the members. The group is designed for up to 12 autistic women who seek to connect with others and engage in virtual discussions. It offers a supportive space to explore the unique experiences of being an autistic woman in the workplace, share tips, strategies, and personal stories, as this feedback from a previous group shows:

"I've loved being a part of the WiW group. Being a neurodivergent individual in a workplace full of neurotypical colleagues can be incredibly challenging and you can feel like the only sober person at a party. Spending time with women who share that bizarre reality, swapping stories and strategies, has been empowering."

"The Group facilitator's knowledge and gentle encouragement has really helped me understand myself and learn to advocate for my needs at work."

The group will meet once a month for a 2-hour session, where members will discuss a variety of topics selected by the group. Additionally, there will be time for casual conversation and connection. Membership is for one year, 12 sessions in total at a cost of £35 per session or can be funded by current workplace support funding. Please contact workshops@asmentoring.co.uk to express interest. Places will be offered on a first come first served basis.

More info here: <https://asmentoring.co.uk/women-in-work/>

