

HELP BRIGHTON  
MARATHON TEAM  
RAISE FUNDS  
FOR  
AUTISM FORWARD

OVER 74% OF AUTISM  
FORWARD JOB  
SEEKERS FROM  
2024-25 COHORT IN  
EMPLOYMENT OR  
TRAINING

BRIGHTON  
'CULTURE CLUB'  
AND ASM AUTISTIC  
JOBSEEKERS  
PROGRAM AND  
GROUPS

KEEP BRITAIN WORKING  
CONSULTS WITH  
DISABLED AND ND  
COMMUNITY TO  
IMPROVE ACCESS TO  
EMPLOYMENT

# AUTISM FORWARD NEWS

## Brighton Marathon Fundraising Team

Charlie, James, and Kamil, three dedicated medical students, along with Charlie's dad, Neil, are running the Brighton Marathon on 6 April 2025 to support Autism Forward. Their goal is twofold: to raise funds for the charity and to increase awareness of the challenges autistic individuals face in securing employment. The runners explain why they are raising funds for us:

*"I bring a personal connection to the cause, having previously worked to train neurodivergent adults in technology, giving me firsthand insight into the barriers they encounter in the job market. Inspired by this experience, I am committed to advocating for better support systems and workplace inclusion" - Neil*



*"I was introduced to Autism Forward by my dad around the time I decided I wanted to run the Brighton marathon.*

*The idea of combining both seemed perfect, a great achievement in running my first marathon alongside my dad and friends, as well as helping raise money for an incredible cause. Autism Forward does such important work for autistic adults by helping them find work, support groups and push their boundaries. It's a privilege to run for them and with the marathon 6 weeks out and training going fantastically, I can not wait to run!" - Charlie*

*"Autism Forward is an inspiring charity who provide massive support to adults on the autism spectrum. I am very excited to be running the marathon to raise funding for them and the important work that they do." - James G*

*"I think Autism forward provides amazing opportunities for people with autism and spreads awareness, that's why I am running for them!" - Kamil*

Through their marathon effort, Charlie, James, Kamil, and Neil hope to highlight the need for tailored support, ensuring autistic individuals receive the opportunities and understanding they deserve to thrive professionally. Their challenge is not just about fundraising, but about driving lasting change. If you are able to do so, please help the team raise as much as possible by sponsoring them on their [Just Giving Page \(click here\)](#).

## Keep Britain Working Review

On January 29, 2025, the UK government unveiled an independent expert panel dedicated to improving employment opportunities and fostering inclusive workplaces for neurodivergent individuals. Chaired by Prof. Amanda Kirby, the panel comprises of leading academics specialising in neurodiversity. Their mission is to develop actionable recommendations for ministers by summer, aligning with the government's "Plan for Change" to enhance living standards and stimulate economic growth. Prof. Amanda Kirby is extremely well placed to lead this panel, having been a tireless campaigner for the neurodivergent community for many years.

This initiative also complements the "Keep Britain Working" review, led by Sir Charlie Mayfield, which aims to bridge employment gaps and increase disability workforce participation. With 41.7% of disabled people inactive in the labour market, compared to 14.7% of non-disabled individuals, there is a clear need for sustained action to close the gap.

## Autism Forward Outcomes

Autism Forward is currently supporting over 120 autistic job seekers, with over 90 grants awarded since April, making the 2024-25 cohort our largest ever. Employment figures for the 2023-24 cohort are 85% in voluntary or paid employment, with 67% of those in paid employment. Figures for the 2024-25 cohort are 74% in voluntary or paid employment or in full-time education or training, with 50% of those in paid employment and 5% in full-time education or training, which is really encouraging.

Client feedback has also been extremely positive, with 100% of clients confirming that they would recommend the support they have received to other autistic job seekers. The comments below illustrate the depth of support our mentors provide.



### Autism East Midlands client:

*“The mentoring I have received thus far has been exceptional due to the fact that I felt listened to and understood by my advisor. I felt very comfortable talking about the kind of work I want to do without judgement and was given all the necessary support to get to the point that I was able to publish my own book, including having support in getting my book into libraries and bookshops in the future.”*

### Autistic Nottingham client

*“The help and input I have received from Phil has been incredibly helpful. I am making progress that seemed impossible to me six months ago. I also tried approaching the local careers service, and a key worker from the group who diagnosed me - both were significantly lacking. In the former case they clearly had no idea how to handle my being autistic and so it was up to me to 'mask', to appear as non-autistic as possible - this inevitably gets in the way of actually getting help. In the latter case, they treated me as they'd been trained, having no appreciation of, or interest in, individual experience.*

*It has been vital to speak with someone who has been where I find myself, and who understands the difficulties from the inside. I wish careers etc organisations at large had some autistic (or at least neurodivergent) people among their staff, to allow for that common understanding of difficulties. Until then, I am incredibly grateful that this service exists, and to Phil in particular.”*

## Brighton Culture Club

For the last year, Autism Forward has been funding the Tuesday Night Movie Club for autistic job seekers supported by our mentor partner in Brighton, Karen-Anne Manghan. The group has now evolved into a weekly 'Culture Club' and the members share what they are currently enjoying watching, reading, gaming and listening to.

This has given more space for the members to talk about their hobbies - 3D printing was discussed last night and one of the members demonstrated objects they have made and explained the process. One of the members is now living in Africa, which has given a wonderful opportunity for them to introduce their cultural experiences.

Three of the most regular members have all found work, with the peer to peer support helping to improve their confidence and ability to remain hopeful in the face of a challenging job market.

## ASM Autistic Job Seekers Program, Groups & Workshops

Autism Forward has been funding places for autistic job seekers on a number of initiatives from mentor partner, AS Mentoring. This includes a one year program for up to 15 autistic adults who are unemployed and looking to develop skills for entering the workplace. The group engages a variety of speakers, including employed autistic and AuDHD individuals who share their experiences and advice for finding stable and suitable work. The feedback on the program has been very positive:

*"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."*

AS Mentoring has also been running a new Job Club Social, which is a more flexible drop-in space for current Autism Forward clients and other autistic job seekers who join for an hour each month to connect. This serves as a supportive space to reduce isolation and foster a sense of belonging and is also an entry point for people who are on a waiting list for a one-to-one mentor. Again, feedback has been excellent:

*"I have gained wise employment and social etiquette advice, a boost in self-esteem for helping others with helpful advice, life lessons, help in advocacy and job search. It has made me aware of some flaws I need to improve on like organising, not doing a lot of preparation and impulsively falling for the too good to be true. This group has given me a lot of useful advice and support. I felt the hosts were very understanding and compassionate. It was nice to meet and get to know a lot of friendly and awesome people."*

Autism Forward also funds places for autistic job seekers on the Lunch & Learn workshops run by AS Mentoring throughout the year. Topics include AuDHD, Burnout, Reasonable Adjustments at Work, Expanding Social Networks, Energy Accounting and Sensory Integration in the Workplace.

Details of the programs, workshops and groups run by AS Mentoring can be found on their website [here](#).

