



BORDERS **A**SPERGER & **A**UTISM **G**ROUP **S**UPPORT

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Chairman's report 2015

Thank you to everyone who has given support, encouragement, practical and advice and support and motivation to me and the Committee. Thank you to all members, new and existing, who continue to promote what we do, why we do it and encourage people to accept autism.

- ▶ Thank you to **Duncan and Hazel** for their commitment to Autism and the Borders over the years, and we wish them, and their family, well in their retirement from BAAGS.
- ▶ Thank you to **Craig** at the **Golden Lion** for offering us the use of the Keg, free of charge, to host our Monthly get-togethers, their welcome has been exceptional. And for the numerous hours he spent on the phone/emails and private messages to ensure the smooth running of the Autism Acceptance & Awareness day -without his input and involvement that day would never have happened!
- ▶ Thank you to the **Staff** and **Committee** of the **Focus Centre** in **Galashiels** for free use of their rooms to host our free legal appointments for carers – also thanks to **Morison's Solicitors** and **Russell Laughland** for being so informative, available and willing to advise for free. **Alan Ainslie & Berwick Computer Services** for keeping our website information up to date and accurate – and for all the proof reading!!! **Kevin Wyse & In-house Design** for the excellent service and design of the many documents he does for us...not once has he failed our requests. **Neil Dickson** for his valued guidance and auditing expertise in keeping our accounts in accordance with the numerous rules and regulations we are bound to. To the **Southern Reporter, Border Telegraph, Border Events, Gala/Hawick/Peebles Life** magazines and **TD1 Radio** who have given us maximum publicity and promotion for everything we have done.
- ▶ **Training** = very successful training seminars had taken place throughout the year. Sexuality proved to be the topic to get everyone talking! Lynne Moxon delivered a short workshop around Personal hygiene – we certainly haven't been afraid to delve into the unspoken world of autism! We were very fortunate to receive the final years' funding to continue with our Employment and Autism programme, and we kicked off hosting our conference on Mental Health & Employment– with over 70 people. Presentations from Shirley Barret (Samaritans), Dr Fergus Douds (Consultant Psychologist) and Helen Pratt (Individual with Autism) highlighted the areas and situations which could arise in the working environment and could lead to extremely upsetting and poor mental wellbeing, including suicidal thoughts and feelings. Excellent feedback from all delegates was, once again, highly commendable and encouraging.

Patron: GEORGE KENNEDY

▶ **Scottish Government** – had awarded us £5,000 for year 3 of the **Employment Project**...our promise to continue to inform business owners, employers, employees, supporting agencies and all others that the skills an autistic person has in abundance can benefit the working environment immensely. The extra £6,000 awarded to specifically highlight Acceptance & Awareness was an added bonus and enabled us to organise, in co-operation with Craig Reid (Golden Lion) the first Autism, Acceptance & Awareness Day, and evening, event. This resulted in an all-day Craft Fare and children's' activity day followed by a Gangsters and Molls themed night...entertainment for all age groups, all ranges of the Spectrum and the wider community. The response to these events has given us the motivation to begin planning ahead for 2016; April 2nd will be the Borders Autism Awareness Day!

The Review

Donations via fundraisers have rolled in thanks to the hard work and commitment of Andy Monk, the Blind Tiger in Bury, Dan Regan and Scottish Public Pensions Agency. Cash for Kids donated £1,000 to enable us to offer free holidays breaks for up to three families who are facing extremely difficult times – already one family has had the benefit of this offer and the whole family, especially the children, were delighted and over whelmed with the unexpected gift.

The various shops and pubs who have continued to display our collecting cans and encourage their staff and customers to donate their loose change has been another great boost to our income – which has allowed us to maintain the caravan and keep the cost of the holidays/breaks to a minimum. Some expenses we cannot avoid due to Haven's legislation, but thanks to the generosity of our supporters we are able to cover those costs and not pass it onto the families.

The Year Ahead

Seminars and Roadshows – concentration is on raising awareness of Autism and the many aspects of an individual's life which autism plays a significant part in causing anxiety!

▶ Thank you to the owners of the **Golden Lion in Galashiels** who have made us all feel so welcome and comfortable to host our meetings and appointments – we have plans forming to host small workshop type events for members and the Keg is the ideal location to use!

▶ **Thank you** to our **members** who continue to be a very important reason for BAAGS to continue in existence, and to the people who continue to phone, email and come to our meetings to ask for advice, encouragement and guidance – you are why BAAGS exists.

▶ Thank you to Catherine for joining our committee and for helping to push BAAGS forward with new ideas and energy. Thank you to Kenny and Karen who have accepted our invite to become authorised signatories on our accounts and to advise and guide us in the areas of their expertise as and when required. It now ensures that we any three from two persons can authorise payments, two of whom are members of the Group but not committee, therefore offer and impartial view and watchful eye on our accounts.