



# Our Year in Review and Impact Report

2017-18

Empowering children and young people with additional needs to develop the skills to live independently and reach their potential.



## Chairman's Foreword

I am delighted once again to report on the work of Autonomie. It has been an exciting time for everyone involved; participants, volunteers, parents and the new staff employed with the help of the Big Lottery Fund.

The highlight of the year must be the news of a grant from the Big Lottery. We received an offer of a grant of £340,000 under the programme Empowering Young People. This programme supports young people at risk of mental health issues and we made a strong case that the young people we work with who are experiencing complex disabilities, are at high risk of suffering from poor mental health.

Our new programme will support 40 young people per year for three years and will be called "WHAT NEXT?", reflecting the absence of support for these young people on leaving school. Our existing programme "Freedom2Choose" continues to offer young people fun activities independent of families. These skills-based activities support learning and development, whilst promoting independence. Young people help plan and deliver the programmes through participation in the Youth Forum.

We have also had a number of sleepovers at Lilac House giving the young people an opportunity to experience Independent Living in a safe environment.

With the support of the Big Lottery Fund and as part of our application we are able to extend support to parents and carers. Being able to offer practical support such as free counselling, pamper evenings, discussion groups and an opportunity to have some time away from the caring role, is essential to keeping these young people supported.

I would like to thank everyone who has helped make our programmes a success; thank you to our staff, volunteers, committee members, the staff at South Belfast Area Partnership and of course all our funders.

Finally, it was of a time of great sadness for everyone at Autonomie when one of our founder members and Youth Forum Chair passed away suddenly. Matthew was an inspiration to all who knew him. He had a huge passion for leading a full life and is missed by all his friends at Autonomie.

Paul Jeffers  
Chairman  
27th June 2018

## HIGHLIGHTS



We received a £340,000 grant from the Big Lottery Fund's Empowering Young People Programme to launch a three-year pilot project called 'What Next?'. Based at Lilac House (*Linked Independent Living and Advice Centre*) this programme delivers practical support to help disabled young people transition more successfully into adult life.



We gave young people a chance to try independent living at Lilac House. The sleepovers provided them with a chance to gain independence in a safe environment.



Young people performed the Autonomie Musical Extravaganza. The result of weeks of committed rehearsing, making props and planning.



Our Youth Forum has given young people a chance to lead. Young people have been involved in planning and delivery of all our programmes.



We received grants of £20,000 (*Henry Smith Foundation*) and £7,800 (*Arn Foundation*) which supported our social activity & skills development programme Freedom2Choose.



We supported parents and carers by offering them practical support which included free counselling, pamper evenings and group discussions.



"A safe place for young people to enjoy themselves, make new friends and do what every other young person should be doing." - Parent

"Freedom2Choose has given my daughter confidence. She now talks to others which she did not do before it." - Parent



## Gary's story

Gary (25) is a participant and volunteer at Autonomie. Gary volunteers two days a week at Lilac House as part of Millennium Volunteers Programme. He has completed 100 hours of volunteering - Impressive! On accepting his MV100 Award, Gary said: "I am ecstatic, I didn't think I'd do it."

Gary is now committed to reaching 200 hours of volunteering to achieve his MV200 Award and "become a regular volunteer like everybody else."

As part of his role at Autonomie, Gary meets and greets visitors, makes tea and coffee and helps Marie with cleaning duties, "this helps me learn new skills."

Gary also helps plan our programmes. "I helped Robert plan the 'Boys' Night In' at Lilac House, I also volunteer at Freedom2Choose - it makes me feel accomplished."

"I am thrilled at my achievement getting a good job like this here at Lilac House. Lynne makes a negative a positive. When my suggested volunteering role at Belfast City Council fell through Lynne helped me get a role here."

"It has taught me how to believe in myself and gave me great qualifications and the extra push when needed. All the staff are brilliant and they make you feel an extra bit special because they sprinkle the sunshine on the Autonomie circle."

## HIGHLIGHTS



As part of our work to actively promote the development and delivery of high-quality work we regularly listened to many voices. We heard directly from the young people, parents and carers about their experiences. Our programmes were planned using this insight and input from young people that attended our Freedom2Choose Programme.



We hosted a drama workshop encouraging young people to develop trust and friendships. The session was facilitated by Patricia Downey - a specialist in Youth and Drama.



We welcomed 4 new members of staff - now part of a team who deliver the "WHAT NEXT?" Project in partnership with Big Lottery Fund's Empowering Young People Programme.



We opened refurbished toilet and shower facilities at Lilac House. The improvements were carried out with help from the Big Lottery Fund.



We were presented with a generous cheque of £1132.14 by the Co-op Local Community Fund.

A new way to support our work! Amazon makes a donation to us on your behalf at no extra cost to you each time you shop at AmazonSmile.



As part of our 'Keeping Safe' themed Freedom2Choose Programme, young people participated in a 'Keeping safe online & in the community' workshop facilitated by the PSNI.



"It's great fun and I love making new things. I love that my mum and dad don't have to stay" - Young person

## But we know that there is still much that we need to do. That's why in 2018-19 we will:



Establish a Toy and Resource Library and enable families to short-term loan a variety of sensory toys and equipment to aid their child's development.



Pilot a Toddlers Group. One day a week our professionally trained facilitators will offer support and educational sessions. Toddlers will get a chance to explore a variety of sensory toys available at our toy library.

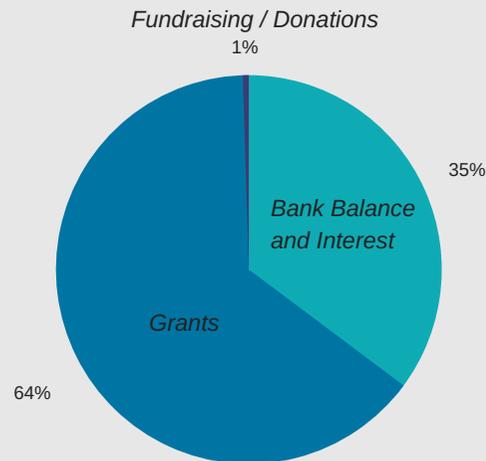


Expand our careers advisory service with our dedicated career officer in order to support more young people and parents. We will engage with educators, mentors, business and networks.

## Financial overview

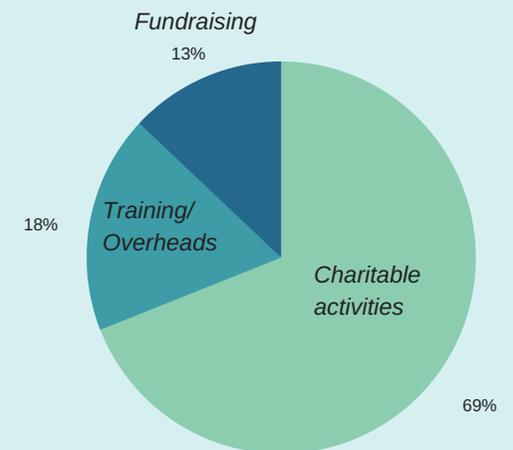
### Income

Our total income for 2017-18 was £95,169.89. This was possible thanks to the generosity of all our supporters over the past 12 months. Our goal is to use their support as effectively as possible to ensure that every child and young person with additional needs can reach their potential.



### Expenditure

In the last year our total expenditure was £45,024.90. Of this, 69% was spent on delivering our life-changing charitable activities.



## Thank you to our supporters

We would like to thank the following organisations, foundations and partners, and many others too numerous to mention, for their support during 2017-18. It is thanks to their investment that we have been able to help young people with additional needs to reach their potential and lead fuller, happier lives.

### Trusts and Foundations

- Big Lottery Fund (Empowering Young People)
- Henry Smith Foundation
- Arn Foundation
- Enkalon Foundation NI
- TBF Thompson
- Hedley Foundation
- Lidl Community Works
- Co-op Community Fund

### Partner organisations

- Finaghy Youth Centre
- South Belfast Area Project
- Education Authority



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Northern Ireland Charity Commission Registration Number 100421

**Patron:** Oliver Jeffers

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