

# ASPIRE

The Autism Spectrum Association of Ireland



# Strategic Plan

2022-2025

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## History

Aspire, The Autism Spectrum Association of Ireland previously known as The Asperger Syndrome Association of Ireland, was established in 1995. By the founding members Des and Treasa McKernan. They supported parents and families for many years through the operation of a helpline service from their kitchen table before moving into a dedicated office space in Dublin city center. They both worked tirelessly to develop the organization, to increase public awareness of Asperger Syndrome and to advocate for the supports needed for AS in Ireland.

The organization has run a residential unit in South Dublin since 2004, operating a person centered model that assists individuals with AS to live as independently as possible.

Aspire is a registered national charity with funding from the HSE that supports the operations of our residential center and the remainder is funded through donations and fundraising. Our ongoing programs are funded on a project basis by the Dormant Accounts Fund and the National Lottery.

Today we do not categorize autism in the same way as we did when Aspire was founded, as a result we are still supporting our Asperger (AS) community but we are expanding our remit to support the broader autistic (ASD) community.

Despite many changes over the years our founding goals still hold true.

## Goals

- To provide information, support and assistance for people who have the condition known as AS or ASD in Ireland, in particular in the areas of diagnosis, education, training, remedial treatment, employment and personal development.
- To promote a support network for families, friends and carers of those living with AS or ASD, and provide a general forum for discussion of associated topics.
- To advocate on behalf of the AS/ASD community and provide them with the tools to advocate for themselves.
- To provide a residential unit for those living with a diagnosis of Asperger Syndrome, that has a person centred approach. Providing independent living skills and the tools required to live the highest quality of life possible.

## Vision

*Our Vision is a world where people with Autism have the same opportunities to work, socialize and participate as everyone else.*

## Mission

Our mission is to provide supports to people with Autism that will help them to fulfil their goals, to provide information to them and their families, and to promote an understanding in the community.

## Values

**Equality:** We believe that people with Asperger Syndrome or ASD have the right to access the same supports, community resources, educational and employment opportunities as everyone else.



**Inclusion:** We believe that people with Asperger Syndrome or ASD have an invaluable insight and should have a voice in decisions regarding what supports they require and how Aspire's message is communicated.



**Promote Understanding:** We believe that a greater understanding of Asperger Syndrome and ASD in the community will lead to greater inclusion and awareness of the unique contribution that people with Asperger Syndrome or ASD can make.



**Achieving Aspirations:** We believe that people with Asperger Syndrome or ASD have the right to choose their own path. Aspire is committed to providing support to individuals and promoting a level of understanding to make this achievable.



**Co-operation:** We at Aspire believe that co-operation is essential to effective long-term development. It allows for communication, collaboration and the collective use of resources to accomplish goals in the Social Care sector, extending the range and quality of supports for people with Asperger Syndrome and ASD.



## ***Strategic Goals***

1. We will ensure that our community have an outlet to help prevent social isolation by developing and deploying a number of social engagement programs nationwide.
2. We will operate at our highest level and achieve best practice in all our areas of governance.
3. We will ensure we continue to operate and expand services to the autistic community, we will explore alternative opportunities to diversify our sources of income.
4. We will create a working environment that fosters an inclusive culture, that promotes wellbeing, team spirit and career development.
5. We will optimise services at Aspire residential by ensuring the premises is fit for purpose and utilised to its maximum potential.
6. We will assess the viability and possible remodel of Aspires's Social Enterprise in order to better provide employment, training and supports to the AS/ASD community.

## Objectives of Strategic Goal 1

*“We will ensure that our community have an outlet to help prevent social isolation by developing and deploying a number of social engagement programs nationwide”*

Review the viability of previous programs. Assess what previously worked and what has potential going forward.

Expansion of adult social groups, move to add option of both online and in person attendance post Covid-19.

The startup of a youth social group support program. That includes the development of a youth autistic group handbook, supports and policy provision.

To work alongside the HSE, Tusla and CALMS in supporting AS/ASD youths and adults and in providing supports and programs to our community.

Construct a survey for our community to allow for their voice and opinions to be heard on the supports they need.

## Objectives of Strategic Goal 2

*“We will operate at our highest level and achieve best practice in all our areas of governance”*

Meet full compliance with all recommendations in a timely manner in relation to our funders and inspectors.

Continuation and completion of internal audits carried out on Governance and best practice in line with the Charities Regulator.

Development of working policy schedule, ensuring all policies are reviewed in a timely manner and inclusive of all areas of Aspire.

Development of audit tools in areas required, working through all HIQA standards to ensure full compliance.

Meet all requirements of grant approvals, ensure compliance, that we meet expectations, deadlines and keep lines of communication open.

## Objectives of Strategic Goal 3

*“We will ensure we continue to operate and expand services to the autistic community, we will explore alternative opportunities to diversify our sources of income.”*

Open discussions with funding bodies on programs, supports required and potential funding.

Keep lines of communication open with allied health care professionals and child and family agencies who have contacted Aspire to collaborate on supports.

Assess available funding streams, secure finances to fund required position to aid in the development of Aspire and the delivery of these services.

The development of a fundraising campaign to assist the expansion of Aspire and provision of services.

Develop and deploy a digital marketing campaign that showcases the work of Aspire and the support opportunities available for the members of the autistic community through Aspire.

## Objectives of Strategic Goal 4

*“To create a working environment that fosters an inclusive culture, that promotes wellbeing, team spirit and career development.”*

Bringing the management and team together, to gain their insight and input into future planning.

Invest in staff, continue to support succession planning with an opportunity for staff to progress in their careers.

Support staff in training as required and within budget remit.

Comprehensive & inclusive handbook that supports staff rights & wellbeing.

Management acknowledgment of work overload and signs of burn out with a right to switch off policy implemented & supported. Wellbeing workshop opportunities.

Create team bonding opportunities for staff, to help create a team that cohesively work together and openly communicate.

## Objectives of Strategic Goal 5

*“We will optimise services at Aspire residential by ensuring the premises is fit for purpose and utilised to its maximum potential.*

Asses premises for necessary house repairs, secure funding to carry out required works on the premises and enlist in procurement process.

Assess Residents needs and potential future needs, taking into consideration Allied Health Care advice if required.

Evaluate the possibility of the expansion of delivery of service by making available an additional space.

New risk assessment to be created and current ones to be assessed on potential impact.

Assess future potential for expansion of premises.

## Objectives of Strategic Goal 6

*“To assess the viability and possible remodel of Aspires’ Social Enterprise in order to better provide employment opportunities, training and supports to the AS/ASD community”*

Review current jobs, reach, structure and future viability of Aspire productions.

Implement a plan that widens our capacity and benefits more individuals in the autism community.

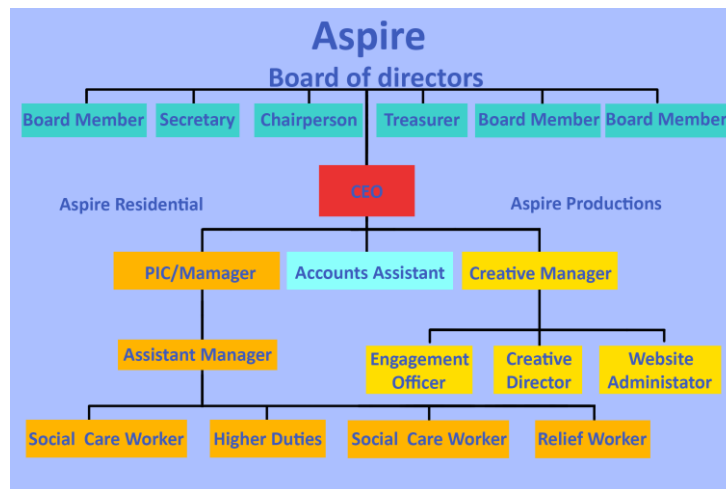
Apply through funding body for support in remodeling the delivery of service to supported employment for AS/ASD Community. That includes a hub of information, supports and social networks.

Nurture current relationships with career development support, to assist autistic individuals develop their skill set.

Strengthen connections with industry leaders and build on business network, relationships and enterprise reputation.



# Organizational Chart



## Service User Testimonies

*“With each year that goes by my experience living in Aspire Residential gets better”*  
Resident.

*“Aspire provided unique services that no other organisation can.”* Service user.

*“The information and support provided by Aspire have helped me and my family to a better understanding of Autism and how we can help my son with the challenges of his everyday life.”* Parent of service user.

## Staff Testimonies

*“Aspire means hope and safety. Aspire is a community that aims to support and help people to reach their goals”.* Aspire Social Care Worker

*“Aspire has made me feel like I’m part of the family. Staff wellbeing and happiness are clearly to the forefront of all that they do. Plenty of benefits and supports throughout! I like working with Aspire. I have an opportunity to develop in my role”.* Aspire Social Care Worker

*“Through understanding of each other’s values, we arrive at mutual respect and support”.*  
Aspire Social Care Worker

*“Working at Aspire comes with having an amazing community of people who you can laugh and cry with, who love to see you grow and flourish”.* Aspire Social Care Worker

*“I had a lot of trouble finding work as many organisations weren’t suited to a person with Autism, which affected my confidence. Aspire gave me a friendly, understanding work environment that allowed me to find my feet”* Aspire Productions staff member