



ASPIRE

The Autism Spectrum Association of Ireland



Autumn NEWSLETTER 2025

Made by autistic people, for autistic people and community

Dear friends,

It has been a very busy and rewarding season here at Aspire. Our team has been working hard to ensure that autistic people and their families feel supported, represented and celebrated at every level.

This autumn, we were delighted to take part in an ESF study trip to Brussels, strengthening our European connections and learning from best practices across the EU. We also proudly hosted a stand at the EU Autism Congress, where we had the opportunity to meet so many inspiring individuals and organisations. The launch of the Congress at the Mansion House, hosted by As I Am, was another highlight.

Aspire joined FASD Ireland's important awareness event, reinforcing our commitment to intersectional advocacy and partnership. Meanwhile, our programmes have been in full swing with the much anticipated return of our Drama programme, alongside the continuation of our wonderful art classes, which bring such creativity and joy to our community. We are also very proud of our HSE Cooking Programme, which has supported participants in building practical life skills, confidence, and independence in a welcoming and supportive environment.

Nationally, the publication of the new National Disability Strategy marks a significant step forward for rights and inclusion, Aspire will continue to engage with this process to ensure the voices of autistic people remain central.

As we move into the final months of the year, I want to thank all of you our members, partners, and supporters for being part of Aspires journey. Together, we are making meaningful change and building a more inclusive future.

Warm regards,

Linda Blake
Chief Executive Officer



ASPIRE RESIDENTIAL

DUBLIN MOUNTAINS HIKE WITH ASPIRE RESIDENTS

On Saturday 17th May, Colm, Ruan and Neill took on their most adventurous walk of the summer so far, a **16km hike into the heart of the Dublin Mountains**. Their aim was to summit the peaks of Kilmashogue and Fairy Castle.

It was also one of the hottest days of the year so far, extra water bottles were packed along with sandwiches, fruit and some energy bars. Leaving the house at 11.30am, the walk started by going through **Marlay Park**. Colm fancied an early stop to have lunch so a quick stop was had at a picnic bench beside the Wicklow Way café.

From Marlay Park, a very steep walk up **Kilmashogue Lane** led to the access trail and the first approach to Kilmashogue Mountain. The higher they climbed, the views of Dublin became more and more spectacular.

Although everyone's legs were getting tired, the view of the summit could be seen and this gave everyone an extra boost of energy to keep climbing upwards in the scorching heat.

Their perseverance paid off, Colm, Ruan and Neill reached the top of the mountain at 4.30pm. All that was left was to walk back down to the house and have dinner. Although everyone was tired, they all agreed that they had had an amazing experience and would definitely do it again in the future!



ASPIRE RESIDENTIAL

FAREWELL AND EXTENDING A WARM WELCOME

We're saying a heartfelt goodbye to two wonderful members of our residential team: **Molly** and Gulimire.

Molly has returned to the U.S. to begin her exciting new career in psychology, and Guil mire is off to the U.K. to pursue her psychology degree. Their kindness, dedication, and impact will be deeply missed, and we wish them every success on their journeys ahead.

At the same time, we're delighted to welcome **Joan** and **Tara** to the team!

We're excited to have them join the Aspire community and look forward to the new energy and experience they'll bring to our residents.

MOLLY



GULIMIRE



TARA



JOAN

PROGRAMMES AND SOCIAL GROUPS



HEALTHY FOOD
MADE EASY



LEARN MORE

IN SEPTEMBER, ASPIRE PARTNERED WITH THE HSE TO BRING THE HEALTHY FOOD MADE EASY PROGRAMME TO THE AUTISTIC COMMUNITY — A 6-8 WEEK COURSE FOCUSED ON PRACTICAL COOKING AND NUTRITION FOR ADULTS (18+).

WHERE IT HAPPENED

CLASSES TOOK PLACE AT THE SPADE ENTERPRISE CENTRE KITCHENS, RIGHT BESIDE ASPIRE DESIGNS HQ, AND PROVED TO BE A GREAT SUCCESS. THEY WERE LED BY A QUALIFIED CHEF, WITH AN ASPIRE TEAM MEMBER PROVIDING SUPPORT THROUGHOUT.

WHAT PARTICIPANTS BUILT:

- CONFIDENCE IN COOKING SIMPLE, NUTRITIOUS MEALS
- A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF NUTRITION AND PORTIONING
- SKILLS IN LABEL READING, MEAL PLANNING, AND BUDGETING
- KNOWLEDGE OF FOOD SAFETY AND PREPARATION
- HEALTHY HABITS THAT FIT INTO THEIR DAILY ROUTINES IN A SENSORY-CONSIDERATE SPACE

Be first to know about our 2026 cooking classes — email us at info@aspireireland.ie

A note on photos: Most participants chose not to appear in photos, so this update featured our amazing chef Darren. Thank you, chef for making the kitchen a welcoming, confidence-building space!

PROGRAMMES AND SOCIAL GROUPS

COFFEE & TALK ☕

COFFEE & TALK SOCIAL GROUP

1st Tuesday of each month

📅 Sept 2, Oct 7, Nov 4,
Dec 2

🕒 6:30 TO 8:30 PM

📍 Third Space Café,
Smithfield, D07 P440

MORE INFO
info@aspireireland.ie
089 465 2026

ASPIRE
Designs



OUR COFFEE & TALK SOCIAL GROUP CONTINUES TO OFFER A FRIENDLY RELAXED SPACE TO **CONNECT, SHARE, AND UNWIND**

IT'S A GREAT CHANCE TO MEET OTHERS IN THE COMMUNITY

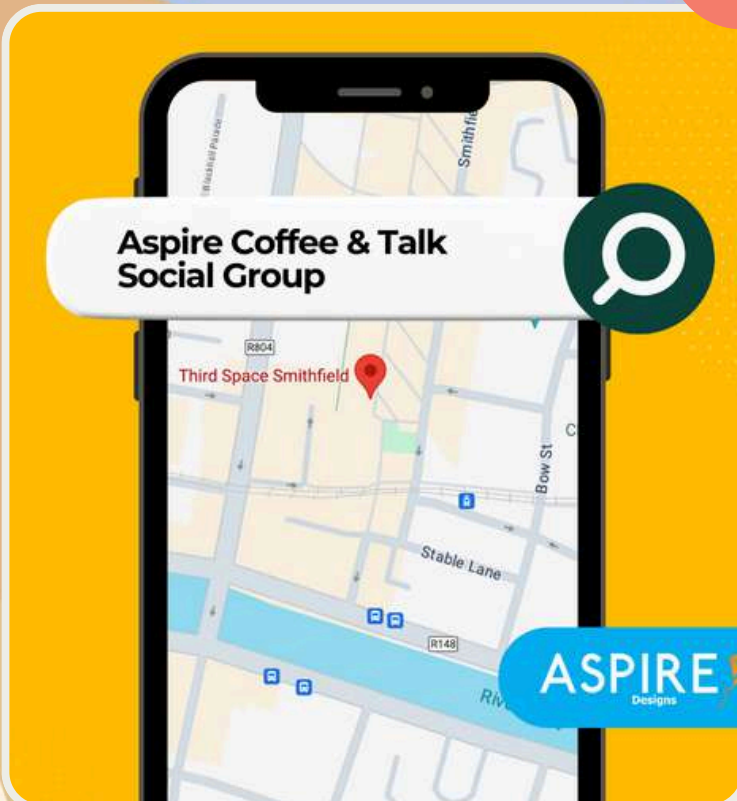
HAVE REAL CONVERSATIONS, AND SIMPLY BE YOURSELF.

JOIN OTHERS WHO JUST GET IT



**Next Time
Tue, Nov 4, 18:30**

People are free to stim away with no fear of judgement. The group is for autistic people only but if people are nervous coming into the group, it's okay to bring a person who is not autistic to help them feel more comfortable.



TEEN DRAMA

CREATIVE DRAMA ART CLASSES 🧡💜

OUR **CREATIVE DRAMA CLASSES** FOR AUTISTIC TEENAGERS ARE BACK FOR THEIR SECOND TERM, BLENDING FUN, EXPRESSION, AND SELF-CONFIDENCE THROUGH MOVEMENT, STORYTELLING, AND CREATIVITY.

LED BY ROSEY HAYES, THESE CLASSES CREATE A SUPPORTIVE SPACE WHERE AUTISTIC TEENS CAN EXPLORE COMMUNICATION, CONFIDENCE, AND CREATIVITY AT THEIR OWN PACE.

We're now gathering expressions of interest to open new classes for children and adults in 2026.

If you or someone you know might be interested, get in touch, we'd love to hear from you.

🧡💜 **CLICK BELOW TO HEAR WHAT OUR FABULOUS TEACHER, ROSEY, HAS TO SAY ABOUT THE CLASSES!**


Supporting autistic individuals to build:

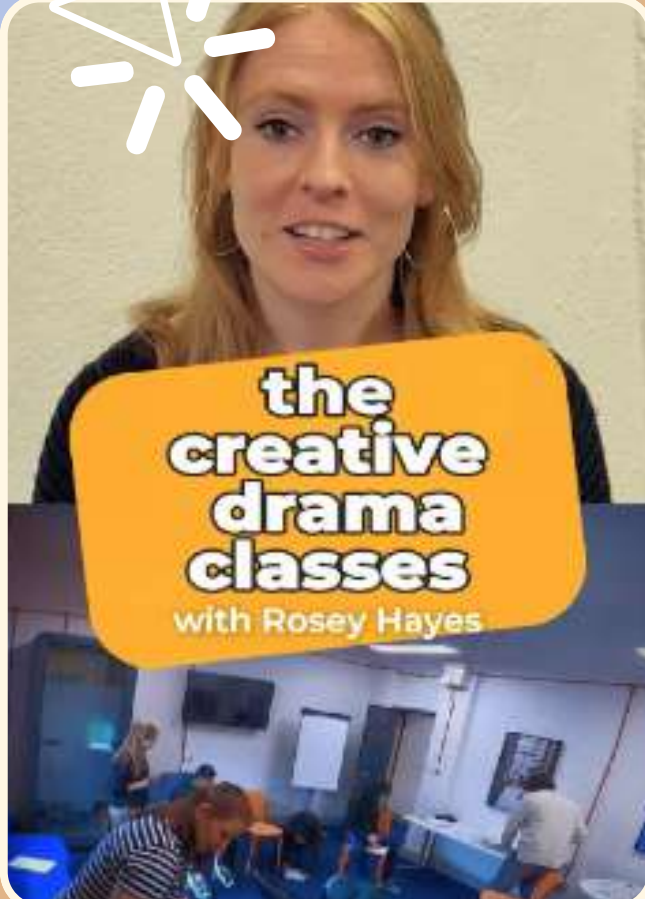
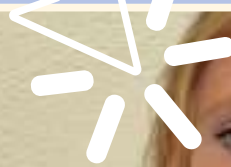

Confidence, Expression, Social Skills & Self-Esteem

Led by theatre facilitator & director *Rosey Hayes*

Small classes - by design

reach out today
info@aspireireland.ie

ASPIRE Designs 



Be first to hear when our Creative Drama Classes return in 2026 email us at info@aspireireland.ie

LEARN ABOUT WORKPLACE INCLUSION WITH ASPIRE IRELAND

MANY WORKPLACES REACH OUT TO US FOR GUIDANCE ON CREATING MORE INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENTS, AND WE'RE ALWAYS GLAD THEY DO.

THAT'S BECAUSE MANY INCLUSIVE ACCOMMODATIONS DON'T JUST SUPPORT THE PERSON WHO ASKS FOR THEM, THEY MAKE THE WHOLE ORGANISATION STRONGER.

SEE BELOW FIVE SIMPLE WAYS YOUR COMPANY CAN START BECOMING MORE INCLUSIVE TODAY.

5 WAYS TO MAKE YOUR COMPANY MORE INCLUSIVE

USE CLEAR SIMPLE LANGUAGE

Avoid vague directions.

Direct, straightforward communication removes ambiguity and helps everyone understand what's expected. For autistic individuals, it reduces stress and builds trust. Think "Next, do this" instead of "You might want to..."

PROVIDE WRITTEN INSTRUCTIONS OR VISUAL AIDS

After giving instructions, **follow up with a checklist, bullet points, or visual aids.** This is especially useful for people who process information differently or experience working memory challenges. A simple follow-up email can be a game-changer.

MAKE AFTER-HOURS EVENTS OPTIONAL

Social situations can be exhausting or overwhelming, especially in unfamiliar environments. Labelling **social events as optional** (and truly meaning it) allows employees to engage on their own terms, without pressure or fear of exclusion.

BE APPROACHABLE

Being approachable means more than just being available.

It's about showing warmth, empathy, and patience, especially when someone communicates differently or needs time to express themselves. **Build trust** by listening without rushing or judging.

NORMALISE ASKING FOR SUPPORT

Saying something like **“Feel free to let me know if you need help with anything”** goes a long way. It shows openness and tells someone they’re not alone.

It also helps people feel safe to reach out, especially those who might worry that asking for help could be seen as a weakness.

THE TRUTH IS

A truly inclusive and positive workplace isn't just built by policies or HR, but shaped by how we **treat each other, day in and day out.**

BE PART OF IRELAND'S INCLUSION MOVEMENT, ONE WORKPLACE AT A TIME

email us at info@aspireireland.ie to learn how



UNDERSTAND AUTISM WITH ASPIRE IRELAND

OUR POPULAR SOCIAL MEDIA SERIES ON AUTISM UNDERSTANDING HAS FOUND A NEW HOME RIGHT HERE IN OUR NEWSLETTER.

IN THIS EDITION, WE EXPLORE:

- ✦ MASKING VS. BEING YOUR AUTHENTIC SELF
- ✦ OBSESSIONS VS. SPECIAL INTERESTS

THESE REPRESENT THE QUIET, EVERYDAY REALITIES THAT SHAPE HOW AUTISTIC PEOPLE MOVE THROUGH THE WORLD. THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN HIDING AND BEING SEEN, BETWEEN BEING JUDGED AND BEING CELEBRATED.

MASKING

Masking is when autistic people try to **hide** their **natural traits** to fit in.

This might mean **copying** others, **forcing** eye contact, or **hiding** stims.

It takes a **lot of energy** and can lead to **stress** and burnout.



AUTHENTIC SELF

When an autistic individual can **express** their traits, behaviors, and needs **without fear** of judgment.

Expressing stims, avoiding eye contact, or seeking sensory input are examples of the authentic self expression.

Understanding and acceptance help people feel safe, confident, and well.



VS

***Masking** often means suppressing natural behaviours or feelings to fit in – forcing eye contact, mimicking tone, or pretending to cope when sensory overload hits. It can help someone get through the day but often comes at the **cost of exhaustion and anxiety**. By contrast, being one’s authentic self means feeling safe enough to drop that mask, to communicate, stim, or rest in ways that feel natural and honest..*

When it comes to obsessions and special interests, the key difference is how they feel. Obsessions are often unwanted and hard to manage, driven by anxiety or stress. Special interests, on the other hand, are positive and fulfilling. Deep passions that bring focus, joy, and comfort. For autistic people, they can be a source of learning, purpose, and pride.

SPECIAL INTERESTS

Many autistic people have **strong interests** in specific topics.

These interests can bring **joy, comfort**, and a sense of **achievement**.

They also help develop **skills** and can even lead to **careers**.

Supporting these interests builds **confidence** and **connection** with others.



VS

OBSESSIONS

Obsessions can feel more **intense** and **harder** to manage.

They might take over daily life and leave **little space** for other activities.

Interrupting them can lead to **frustration** or **anxiety**.

Helping set gentle boundaries can support **balance** and **wellbeing**.



THE DIFFERENCES CAN BE SUBTLE, BUT UNDERSTANDING THEM HELPS US ALL GROW IN EMPATHY AND AWARENESS. EACH NEW INSIGHT BRINGS US CLOSER TO CREATING SPACES WHERE AUTISTIC PEOPLE FEEL SAFE TO BE THEMSELVES.

WHEN WE TAKE THE TIME TO UNDERSTAND, THINGS CHANGE. WE BEGIN TO LISTEN DIFFERENTLY, TO RESPOND WITH MORE CARE. AND THAT'S WHAT REAL INCLUSION IS ABOUT.

NEW SERVICE OFFERING: STRENGTHS-BASED LIFE COACHING

When we asked our community about life coaching, more than 70% of you told us you'd love access to peer-led, strengths-based life coaching.

We listened.
We made it happen.

The response has been incredible, and we're now **fully booked**.



To join the waiting list,
email info@aspireireland.ie



Places for the programme are very limited to ensure each participant receives individualised, tailored support.



WHAT EMPOWERMENT CAN LOOK LIKE?

OUR 30 YEARS OF EMPOWERMENT CAMPAIGN IS STILL IN FULL SWING, FROM FUNDRAISERS AND RAFFLES TO MEANINGFUL REFLECTIONS ON WHAT **AUTISTIC EMPOWERMENT** CAN LOOK LIKE IN EVERYDAY LIFE.

I don't say yes to everything anymore. Protecting my energy helps me stay well.

This is what **EMPOWERMENT** can look like

41

TRA 400

41

TRA 400

For a long time, I didn't know how to say what I needed.

Now I do, and I'm not afraid to ask anymore.

This is what **EMPOWERMENT** can look like

ASPIRE
The Autism Spectrum Association of Ireland

41

TRA 400

Before my interview, we practised the questions again and again. I didn't feel silly, I felt prepared

This is what **EMPOWERMENT** can look like

41

TRA 400

Celebrating
30 Years of Autistic
Empowerment



This is a collective expression of what true autistic empowerment means to our community

EMPOWERMENT WALL

ASPIRE

What does autistic empowerment mean to you?

**We asked.
Here's what people said:**

I think empowerment looks like allowing an autistic person to be exactly who they are meant to be.

Harry Potter movies, 'cos everyone's got their own struggles, but they always find a way through. That gives me hope.

Empowerment can simply mean being able to say, "This doesn't work for me," or "I prefer this way", without fear or the need to over-explain.

"Unwritten" by Natasha Bedingfield

Autistic empowerment to me means self-help; Learning to unmask and to stop the internalised ableism, accepting that it's a disability, accepting any necessary accommodations available.

"This is me." from The Greatest Showman

Empowerment means having people around who respect our communication differences and give time and space for self-expression.

YOUR STORY BELONGS HERE.
CLICK TO JOIN THE EMPOWERMENT WALL.

Answer: **What does autistic empowerment mean to you?**





VISIT OUR *30 YEARS* *ANNIVERSARY* PAGE



aspireireland.ie



ASPIRE

The Autism Spectrum Association of Ireland



RECENT EVENTS

ASPIRE AT THE 14TH EUROPEAN AUTISM CONFERENCE

It was a tremendous honour for Aspire to exhibit at the 14th European Autism Conference in the RDS from the 11th to the 13th of September.

AsIAM did a fantastic job organising the event. Being part of such a prestigious international event allowed us to connect with people from across Europe and beyond, each bringing their own perspectives, experiences, and approaches to supporting the Autistic community.

The atmosphere of collaboration and shared purpose was truly inspiring, and we were delighted to exchange ideas, learn from others, meet friends again that had been made at other events and have them see the work we are doing in Ireland. Meeting so many passionate individuals and organisations reminded us of the strength and diversity of the global Autism community, and we are grateful to have been part of those conversations.



We are also humbled by the overwhelming support we received during the conference. The large amount of funds raised over the three days is a testament to the generosity of those who engaged with us, and we are committed to reinvesting every cent back into initiatives that directly benefit our community.

Whether through expanding services, developing new programmes, or amplifying the voices of autistic people, this investment will allow us to continue growing our impact and ensuring meaningful support is available where it is most needed. Aspire is deeply thankful to all who visited our stand, shared their insights, and helped us strengthen our mission through both dialogue and tangible support.



RECENT EVENTS

ESF+ STUDY VISIT IN BRUSSELS

As part of the WorkAbility Project, Aspire Ireland joined an ESF+ Study Visit in Brussels to exchange best practices and explore inclusive employment programmes with our host organisation.

Louise, Linda, Debbie and Gustavo had the opportunity to:

- ◆ Learn how Ferme Nos Pilifs structures and delivers inclusive employment initiatives on the ground
- ◆ Explore hands-on solutions that support young disabled people into meaningful work
- ◆ Exchange knowledge on training and long-term support models
- ◆ Build relationships with other organisations working toward inclusive employment
- ◆ Share Aspire Designs' work with the WorkAbility Programme, showing how creativity and inclusion can go hand in hand

We're grateful to have been part of this exchange. We brought back fresh insights and ideas to help strengthen Aspire's mission.



→ LOUISE, DEBBIE, LINDA, GUSTAVO



RECENT EVENTS

HIQA LEARNING EVENT

ON OCTOBER 1ST, ASPIRE ATTENDED THE HEALTH INFORMATION AND QUALITY AUTHORITY (HIQA) LEARNING EVENT ON GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT IN THE DISABILITY SECTOR.

THE DAY FOCUSED ON THE VITAL ROLE OF PERSONS IN CHARGE AND PROVIDERS IN OVERSEEING DAILY SERVICES, WHILE EXPLORING HOW EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE DIRECTLY IMPACTS RESIDENTS' EXPERIENCES.

IT WAS AN EXCELLENT OPPORTUNITY TO SHARE LEARNING WITH PEERS AND REFLECT ON HOW STRONG OVERSIGHT HELPS ENSURE SAFE, HIGH-QUALITY SUPPORT.



RECENT EVENTS

FASD IRELAND EVENT

ON **SEPTEMBER 9**, ASPIRE WAS PROUD TO ATTEND **FASD IRELAND'S EVENT** — FOETAL ALCOHOL SPECTRUM DISORDER IN IRELAND: WELLBEING, LIVED EXPERIENCE, AND THE NEED FOR CHANGE.

DID YOU KNOW IRELAND HAS ONE OF THE HIGHEST RATES OF FASD IN THE WORLD, YET STILL LACKS PROPER SUPPORT?

THE POWERFUL STORIES SHARED HIGHLIGHTED STIGMA, MISDIAGNOSIS, AND THE URGENT NEED FOR NATIONAL FRAMEWORKS, CLINICS, AND TRAINING.

AT ASPIRE, OUR MISSION CENTRES ON **EMPOWERMENT, INCLUSION, AND ADVOCACY** FOR NEURODIVERGENT AND AUTISTIC INDIVIDUALS, AND WE PROUDLY EXTEND THAT MISSION TO THE FASD COMMUNITY.

WE JOIN THE CALL FOR A **NATIONAL FASD CLINIC**, ACCESSIBLE DIAGNOSTIC PATHWAYS, AND COMPREHENSIVE EDUCATION FOR TEACHERS, HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS, CARERS AND THE PUBLIC ALIKE.



Did you know **Ireland** has one of the **highest rates** of FASD in the **world**, yet still **lacks proper support**?



There is an urgent **need** for a **dedicated national FASD** clinic to **provide** early and accurate **diagnosis**

On Sept 9, Aspire was proud to attend
FASD Ireland's Event

Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder in Ireland: wellbeing, living experience, and the need for change

Greater **awareness** and **education** are **needed** for teachers, healthcare professionals, carers, and the public

Stigma and misdiagnosis continue to impact families and individuals across the country

Aspire stands with the FASD community
We join the **call** for a **National FASD clinic**, better diagnosis, and comprehensive education

RECENT EVENTS



MANSION HOUSE – AUTISM EUROPE CONGRESS

WE WERE DELIGHTED TO ATTEND THE **OPENING OF THE 14TH INTERNATIONAL AUTISM EUROPE CONGRESS** AT THE MANSION HOUSE, KINDLY SUPPORTED BY **DUBLIN CITY COUNCIL**.

A HUGE CONGRATULATIONS TO **AUTISM EUROPE** AND **ASIAM** FOR BRINGING THIS INSPIRING EVENT TO LIFE ❤️

+ ON THE AUTISM EUROPE CONGRESS



RECENT EVENTS

ASPIRE DESIGNS AT THE SOCIAL ENTERPRISE AWARDS 2025

AS ONE OF THE WINNERS OF THE SAME AWARD IN 2024, IT WAS FANTASTIC TO SEE THE INCREDIBLE INNOVATION SHOWCASED BY THIS YEAR'S WINNERS.

PROUDLY SUPPORTED BY THE ICE, THE EVENT WAS ONCE AGAIN A CELEBRATION OF CREATIVITY, COMMUNITY, AND SOCIAL IMPACT.



FAREWELL TO ASPIRE DESIGNS MANAGER, LOUISE GREENE

Wishing a fond farewell to Louise Greene, our Business Manager and Mentor, as she embarks on a new professional journey.

Louise, thank you for your time, energy, and guidance at Aspire Designs.

Your leadership and dedication have been invaluable to us.

You brought so much to Aspire and you'll always be part of our story.

IN THE COMMUNITY

OUR 30 YEARS RAFFLE CONTINUES!

YOU STILL HAVE A CHANCE TO WIN CREATIVE AND AMAZING PRIZES WHILE HELPING ASPIRE CHANGE AUTISTIC LIVES FOR THE BETTER.

EVERY TICKET HELPS US RAISE VITAL FUNDS THAT ARE TRANSLATED INTO ASPIRE'S AUTISM SERVICES, INCLUDING COACHING, EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT, ADVOCACY, TALKS, PEER-LED SOCIAL GROUPS, TEEN GROUPS, FAMILY SUPPORT, AND MORE.

**BE PART OF
SOMETHING BIGGER**



ASPIRE IRELAND 30 YEARS RAFFLE



**WIN GREAT AND CREATIVE PRIZES
WHILE SUPPORTING AUTISTIC
EMPOWERMENT!**

IN THE COMMUNITY

The National Human Rights Strategy for Disabled People 2025–2030

NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS STRATEGY FOR DISABLED PEOPLE 2025–2030

ON 3 SEPTEMBER 2025, THE IRISH GOVERNMENT LAUNCHED THE NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS STRATEGY FOR DISABLED PEOPLE 2025–2030.

SHAPED BY OVER 2,000 CONTRIBUTIONS, MOST FROM DISABLED PEOPLE THEMSELVES, THE STRATEGY HIGHLIGHTS FIVE KEY ACTION AREAS:

- ◆ **INCLUSIVE EDUCATION**
- ◆ **EMPLOYMENT**
- ◆ **INDEPENDENT LIVING & PARTICIPATION**
- ◆ **WELLBEING & HEALTH**
- ◆ **TRANSPORT & MOBILITY**

WE WELCOME THIS PROGRESS – BUT WHAT HAPPENS NEXT WILL DEFINE ITS TRUE IMPACT.

 [LEARN MORE → CLICK HERE](#)

BUILT ON 5 KEY PILLARS

1 | INCLUSIVE LEARNING AND EDUCATION

2 | EMPLOYMENT

3 | INDEPENDENT LIVING AND ACTIVE PARTICIPATION IN SOCIETY

4 | WELLBEING AND HEALTH

5 | TRANSPORT AND MOBILITY

Delivered through:

A **Programme Plan of Action** every 2 years

Clear timelines and responsibilities
Public progress reports

Oversight by:

- Cabinet Committee on Disability
- Delivery and Monitoring Committee
- Disability Participation and Coordination Unit
- Joint Oireachtas Committee on Disability Matters

The Strategy supports delivery of the Autism Innovation Strategy (2024)

*"It is **vital** that the needs of **autistic people** are accounted for within the National Human Rights Strategy for Disabled People 2025-2030 as Ireland's overarching framework for action on disability." (p. 46)*

"Autistic people will be included in an integrated way in progressing the rights of all disabled people in the progressive realisation of the UNCRPD."

Progress will be tracked alongside the core programme plans

FUNDRAISING

STEPHEN'S FUNDRAISING CHALLENGE 🏃

AFTER BEING RECENTLY DIAGNOSED AS AUTISTIC, STEPHEN FOUND THE SUPPORT OF THE AUTISTIC COMMUNITY DEEPLY HEARTWARMING.

IN JANUARY 2025, HE CHALLENGED HIMSELF TO RUN HIS FIRST 5K IN YEARS, AND WAS SURPRISED BY HOW MUCH IT HELPED HIM REGULATE AND FIND BALANCE.

BUILDING ON THAT MOMENTUM, STEPHEN TOOK ON THE KILKENNY HALF MARATHON LAST SEPTEMBER TO RAISE FUNDS IN SUPPORT OF ASPIRE'S MISSION.

THE RACE HAS NOW BEEN COMPLETED, AND WE COULDN'T BE PROUDER!

♥ [CLICK HERE](#) TO READ MORE ABOUT HIS JOURNEY

CONGRATULATIONS, STEPHEN, ON THIS AMAZING ACHIEVEMENT, AND THANK YOU FOR HELPING US CONTINUE EMPOWERING AUTISTIC INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES ACROSS IRELAND.



Medieval Marathon

**Journey to
30k for Aspire**

fundraising



**Join others fundraising for Aspire
email info@aspireireland.ie**

FUNDRAISING

HELL & BACK FUNDRAISING CHALLENGE 🍷

WE'RE THRILLED TO JOIN HELL & BACK 2026, IRELAND'S TOUGHEST PHYSICAL AND MENTAL ENDURANCE CHALLENGE!

YOU CAN NOW FUNDRAISE FOR ASPIRE WHILE TAKING PART

HERE'S HOW:

- 1) VISIT [IDONATE.IE/EVENT/HELLANDBACK2026](https://idonate.ie/event/hellandback2026)
- 2) CLICK "FUNDRAISE FOR THIS EVENT"
- 3) SELECT ASPIRE IRELAND AS YOUR CHOSEN CHARITY
- 4) SHARE YOUR PAGE AND INVITE FRIENDS TO SUPPORT YOUR CHALLENGE!

More about the event: hellandback.ie/winter





STORIES FROM THE SPECTRUM

AUTISM POEM BY ROSS

TODAY, I FELT CONFIDENT

YESTERDAY, I FELT SCARED.

TODAY, I FELT EVERYONE LOVED ME

YESTERDAY, I FELT THAT NO ONE CARED.

WHEN I LOOK IN THE MIRROR

I LIKE WHAT I SEE.

BUT SOMETIMES, I HATE WHAT'S ON THE INSIDE.

MY NEED FOR PERFECTION AND MY OCD.

I HAVE BEAUTIFUL EYES

AND A FANTASTIC LONG-TERM MEMORY

BUT SOMETIMES, I SAY THE WRONG THING

AND WONDER HOW I CAME THIS WAY TO BE.

I HATE ME, I LOVE ME

THOUGH I'M GOOD AT SO MANY THINGS.

I'M NOT GOOD AT FRIENDSHIPS THOUGH

BUT AT LEAST I'M ABLE TO SING.

I STEAL HEARTS

AND I BREAK THEM TOO

BUT DRINKING COFFEE AND WRITING POEMS LIKE THIS ONE

IS THE BEST THING THAT I DO.

STORIES FROM THE SPECTRUM

WILLIAM OLIVER

Hello everyone, it is that time again. The juvenile heron has been coming to our house more frequently and we have still been feeding it pork chops. It is now slightly bigger than when it first came to our home. It has had a few close calls with the local cats who have tried to prey on it and seagulls who have tried to bully it over the pork chops. As the heron has gotten older over the past four months it has been able to better stand its ground and defend itself against both the seagulls and the cats.

There are two seagulls that our on our roof every day. One is a parent and other is a fledgling chick that is only starting to learn to fly. The chick constantly screeches for food, and the parent must fight other seagulls and crows for whatever it can find to feed the starving chick.

Two cats have adopted us and other people along the street. They are mainly looking for food and on occasion rubs. The male cat is a bright orange, and the female is a mixture of black, white and brown.

I have completed the Lego T-rex that I was making. It took me about a month to make it. The model came with twenty-five bags full of pieces. I went through one bag per day. I did it this way so that I would not exhaust myself. Contrary to what some may believe a task such as this requires full concentration since many pieces in a single bag are identical and can be put in the wrong position if placed incorrectly due to fatigue or simply focusing on one part of the assembly at the expense of another. Ultimately it was an endeavour worth doing and at some stage I look forward to making another Lego model, probably some sort of ape monster or a shark.

During a two week break away from the office and work, I went to three beaches and a forest trail to find a peace of mind. The beaches that I visited were at Skerries, Balbriggan and Greystones. The trip to Skerries was particularly memorable because it was at this beach that I had for the first time in over ten years place my feet in the seawater. It had been so very long since I felt the seawater against my bare skin. It gave me a great and strange euphoria that stayed with me for the rest of the day. I took photos of the beach and small harbour in Balbriggan.

During my time in Wicklow, I went to the Avondale Forest walkway, the arboretum and the winding tower. It is from the top of the winding tower that I took a few pictures of the surrounding mountains.

I recently went to the National Art Gallery. It has been years since I have been to that place, and I decided to indulge myself in seeing what was new and old. My favourite painting there was The Opening of the Sixth Seal by Francis Danby. I also went to Glendalough on a day trip.

I am currently two thirds of my way through Salem's Lot. The story is honestly better than I thought it would be. This is because my only experience with the story was through film and television. There was much that was left out that would have make the adaptations better. When I am finished with this book, I will move onto Tales from the Loop and The Electric State

That is all that is going on with me that I have to say for now. Until next time, goodbye for now

THE ILLUSION OF PURPOSE

The idea of purpose is very present in Western civilisations as a form of objective for how lives should be. Some of us live chasing it, but we don't really know what it is.

It's like saying the meaning of music is its final chord, or that the dance only matters in its final move. Look around you: the trees, the animals, the river that flows. Do they look like they're making such an effort to live life?

It's almost an insult to tell someone they have no purpose, or a shame to say we haven't found ours yet. For some, purpose is real and it drives them, but I wonder if we should give it as much weight as society does.

In some Eastern traditions, purposelessness is seen as wisdom, not the absence of meaning, but the presence of peace. It's seen as a virtue, not a flaw. Forcing purpose, they say, only pulls us away from true harmony.

They already understood something we still struggle to grasp: that maybe purpose doesn't lie in the end, but in the journey.

Most of us are just pretending we know what we're doing — playing roles and chasing meaning — yet few are brave enough to admit that. Still, we keep busying ourselves, as if doing could protect us from the truth that simply being is enough.

I often think of **autistic individuals who seem “purposeless”** from an outside view. They're immersed in their worlds, often going nowhere in appearance, and yet if you look them in the eyes, you'll see a **light so bright that you wish you had it yourself.**

Maybe their “no purpose” way of being is where we'll arrive if we're lucky enough: a place where life doesn't need to prove itself, but simply be. In that quiet state, they might already live what we spend our lives searching for.

Gustavo Lazarin, 2025

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WORKING?

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WHAT KIND OF
SUPPORT REALLY
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EXPERIENCE
MATTERS

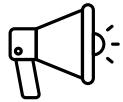
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The Autism Spectrum Association of Ireland



CALL OUT!



New Social Group Autistic Adults 40+

We're excited to announce the formation of a new Social Group at our Smithfield offices, created specifically for autistic adults aged 40 and over.

This group aims to foster connection, community and support in a relaxed and welcoming environment

Interested in joining or volunteering to help run the group?

Please email: info@aspireireland to sign up or learn more!

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FRIENDS OF ASPIRE

Thank you to all the incredible individuals and organisations who generously supported Aspire this year. Your kindness and dedication have made a tangible difference in the lives of many. We're also immensely grateful to those who have supported those we have referred to them, for their unwavering commitment and passion for making a positive impact in our community.

Pobal	RBK Accountants	Dublin City Council
HSE	CourCon/CCL	DWM Cards
Specialisterne	Get a Gardener	Phoenix Radio
Screen Ireland	In Good Co/McKenna	Cartoon Saloon
Tusla	Michael Bowe	Lighthouse Studios
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AsIAM	Ausome Training	Alex Koster
ADHD Ireland	Employability	The Rediscovery Centre
Dyspraxia Ireland	Irish Cancer Society	Third Space Cafe
Dyslexia Ireland	Botanic Pottery	The Wheel
Inner City Enterprise	Google	AIB
South City Partnership	Yellow Harbour	DBS
Ultra Fusion Group	Carmichael	TU Dublin
Fiona O'Donnell Mindfulness	Snowflakes	Tesco Community Fund
Kennedy Health & Safety Group	Neuropride	Accenture
Middletown Centre for Autism	Ahead	Accenture Song
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Disability Federation of Ireland	Skerries Mills	Wolfe Group
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NOW Group	Inside EU	The Wayfinding Centre
Jasmina Troshanska	Houses4Autism	Christian Sweeney
Voices for Autism Advocacy and Action	Adam Sweeney	National Talent Academy for VFX
	Blue Firefly	National Talent Academy for Animation

**THANK YOU FOR STAYING
CONNECTED WITH US!**

**WE'LL SEE YOU IN OUR
FINAL NEWSLETTER OF
2025!**

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This newsletter was made by autistic people, for autistic people and community



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