

The Talkback

Annual Impact Report

Our work in 2025



Talkback

DEVELOPING A WORLD OF POSSIBILITIES

A Year of Growth, Achievement and Real Change.

Working across Buckinghamshire, Bedfordshire, Milton Keynes and Luton, this year has been one of meaningful progress, connection and personal development for our members. Across all our groups, activities and programmes, we have seen people grow in confidence, learn new skills and build relationships that strengthen their independence and wellbeing. Whether through work experience, creative projects, communication support or community-based activities, Talkback continues to create spaces where every individual is heard, valued and supported to reach their potential.

Our focus remains firmly on achieving outcomes that matter — from increased self-confidence and improved social interaction to greater independence, resilience and community involvement. These achievements are a direct result of the dedication of our staff, the enthusiasm of our members and the commitment of families, partners and supporters who believe in what we do. As we look ahead, we are proud of the positive change we've created together and excited to build on these foundations for an even stronger year to come.

We hope you enjoy reading our Annual Impact Report.

**Personal Development
and Skills.**

**Our year and the
outcomes we
have achieved.**

A photograph of a community event, likely a fete, with people gathered around a stall. In the foreground, a woman with blonde hair in a blue shirt is seen from the back, interacting with others. To her right, a woman with blonde hair and a white shirt is smiling. Further right, a man with glasses and a woman with white hair are visible. They appear to be at a stall with various items on display. The background shows a brick building and green foliage.

Include Everyone Group **Summer and Christmas Fetes and Community Activities**

Summary

The Include Everyone group continued to flourish, bringing members together through shared activities that boost confidence, teamwork, and communication skills. This year, the group successfully hosted two community fetes, a Summer Fete in July and a Christmas Fete in December, both of which not only raised funds but also helped members gain valuable experience in social enterprise.

Across both events, members learned how to choose and create items to sell, how to engage customers, and how to run their own stalls. At the Summer Fete, they showcased crafts, plants, and woodwork items alongside traditional games and fundraising activities. For the Christmas Fete, members made festive decorations, designed wrapping paper, ran a tombola, and operated the ChaTea Café. The money raised funded a group trip to Waterperry Gardens in Oxfordshire, where members celebrated their hard work and enjoyed a day together.

Outcomes

- Increased member confidence and communication skills.
- Successful fundraising and event organisation by members.
- Strengthened sense of teamwork and inclusion.
- Created positive connections with supporters and the wider community



St Mary and St George Horticulture Project and Garden Redevelopment

Summary

The Thursday Outdoor Opportunities group and The Accessible Workshop collaborated to design and build raised garden beds at Talkback's High Wycombe Centre. This project made the space more inclusive and provided members with hands-on experience in horticulture, sustainability, and teamwork.

Outcomes

- Improved accessibility and inclusivity of outdoor learning spaces.
- Enhanced wellbeing and confidence through active participation and shared success.
- Developed practical horticultural skills and environmental awareness.
- Created a lasting, attractive garden space for all members to enjoy.

A young man with dark hair is shown in profile, focused on his work. He is wearing a grey t-shirt under dark blue overalls. On his left wrist, he has a large, black and blue digital watch. He is wearing red safety goggles with black straps. He is holding a yellow pencil and measuring a piece of light-colored wood with a yellow measuring tape. The background is a workshop with wooden shelves and various tools.

Qualifications

NOCN Approved Centre

Summary

Talkback achieved NOCN Approved Centre status and began delivering its first accredited qualification, the Entry Level 3 Award in Carpentry and Joinery, to members of The Accessible Workshop in September 2025. This milestone reflects Talkback's commitment to lifelong learning and skill development.

Outcomes

- Secured accreditation to deliver recognised qualifications.
- Created new opportunities for members' personal and professional growth.
- Strengthened pathways between education, skills development, and social care.

Member Showcase

Talkback's Got Talent

Summary

This year's Talkback Talent Show was a vibrant celebration of creativity, confidence and community, showcasing an inspiring range of performances from our members—from dance and music to drama, comedy and fashion. The event was attended by families, staff, peers and honoured guests including the High Sheriff of Buckinghamshire, Pippa Kirkbride, and Councillor Lesley Clarke, OBE. The day reflected not only the talent and individuality of our performers, but also the dedication of our staff team who supported them to shine on stage. The atmosphere was joyful, welcoming and full of encouragement, demonstrating the life-changing impact of inclusive opportunities to perform, express and belong.

Outcomes

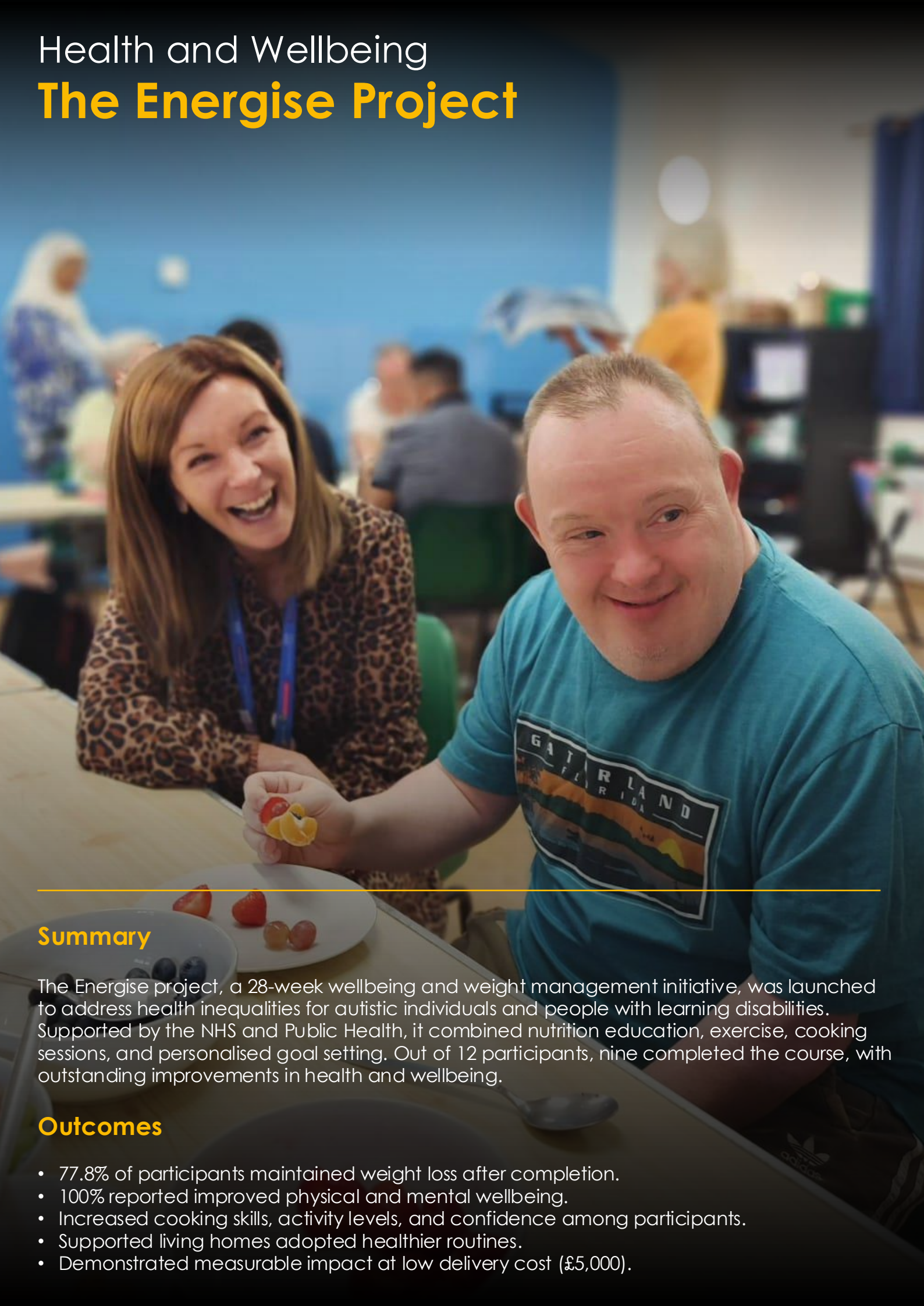
- **Increased Confidence and Self-Expression:** Members showcased their skills with pride, overcoming nerves to perform in front of a large audience.
- **Strengthened Community Connections:** Families, local dignitaries and staff celebrated together, reinforcing belonging and shared achievement.
- **Personal Achievement and Recognition:** Every performer received a medal presented by special guests, celebrating individual effort, teamwork and growth.



Scan to watch
a performance

Health and Wellbeing

The Energise Project



Summary

The Energise project, a 28-week wellbeing and weight management initiative, was launched to address health inequalities for autistic individuals and people with learning disabilities. Supported by the NHS and Public Health, it combined nutrition education, exercise, cooking sessions, and personalised goal setting. Out of 12 participants, nine completed the course, with outstanding improvements in health and wellbeing.

Outcomes

- 77.8% of participants maintained weight loss after completion.
- 100% reported improved physical and mental wellbeing.
- Increased cooking skills, activity levels, and confidence among participants.
- Supported living homes adopted healthier routines.
- Demonstrated measurable impact at low delivery cost (£5,000).

Tuesday Theatre Company

Tackling Modern Slavery through Film



Summary

The Tuesday Theatre Company created a powerful film exploring the issue of Modern Slavery and its impact on individuals with learning disabilities and autism. Working alongside Ultimate Film, members developed acting, production, and technical skills. The film premiered at Cineworld High Wycombe and was later released on YouTube with an educational workbook.

Outcomes

- Developed members' filmmaking, collaboration, and communication skills.
- Raised public awareness of Modern Slavery in an accessible, meaningful way.
- Provided participants with the experience of a professional film launch.
- Extended project impact through online release and educational materials.



Scan to watch
the film

The Accessible Workshop

From Strength to Strength



Summary

The Accessible Workshop exceeded expectations this year, generating over £4,000 in commissioned and direct sales. Despite keeping prices low to benefit local communities and charities, the workshop produced quality items for clients such as Buckinghamshire Council, and Aylesbury Town Council. Thanks to the small profits made, members were also able to benefit directly through our reward scheme, receiving gift vouchers in recognition of their hard work and contribution.

During the year, we were also thrilled to be visited by the High Sheriff of Buckinghamshire, Pippa Kirkbride, who enjoyed a tour of our facilities and commissioned our group to make her a set of planters.

Outcomes

- Achieved strong financial performance while maintaining social value focus.
- Enhanced members' vocational skills and confidence through real commissions.
- Strengthened community partnerships and reputation for quality, affordable work.

Tuesday Theatre Group

Christmas Performance of Aladdin



Summary

On 16th December, our Tuesday Theatre Group delivered another fantastic Christmas performance, bringing *Aladdin* to life at Buckingham Park Community Centre. The show drew a wide audience - including the Mayor of Aylesbury, local schools, nurseries, social workers, parents and the community - and celebrated our performers' creativity, confidence and hard work. Festive stalls, handmade items from The Accessible Workshop, refreshments and a raffle added to the occasion.

We were grateful for the generous raffle donations from local organisations, including Aylesbury Theatre, MK Dons, Smyths Toys, Asda, Hollywood Bowl, The Works, Thomley and the Bucks Goat Centre. Now a much-loved annual tradition, the panto showcases the talent, teamwork and community spirit at the heart of Talkback.

Outcomes

- Growth in Community Engagement: Attendance included civic leaders, education providers and local families, strengthening relationships across the community.
- Increased Performer Confidence: Members demonstrated significant progress in communication, teamwork and stage presence.
- Enterprise: Festive stalls showcased members' creative work and supported opportunities for meaningful contribution and participation.

**Personal Development
and Skills.**

**Member
outcomes.**

Outcomes **Vikram**



“

Vikram is now able to remain in the kitchen for the full length of the Café's opening hours, confidently serving food and using the coffee machine without leaving his post. He has responded positively to the boundaries and visual aids provided, showing improved focus, consistency, and reliability in his role.

Outcomes

Jordan



“ Jordan has shown excellent commitment since joining The Accessible Workshop, developing his woodworking skills and the use of the tenon saw and chisels to produce a range of joints, including mitre and lap joints. He is now working towards his Entry Level 3 Award in Carpentry and Joinery. His improved concentration and focus have been recognised across other group activities, marking a clear step forward in both ability and achievement.

Outcomes

Georgina

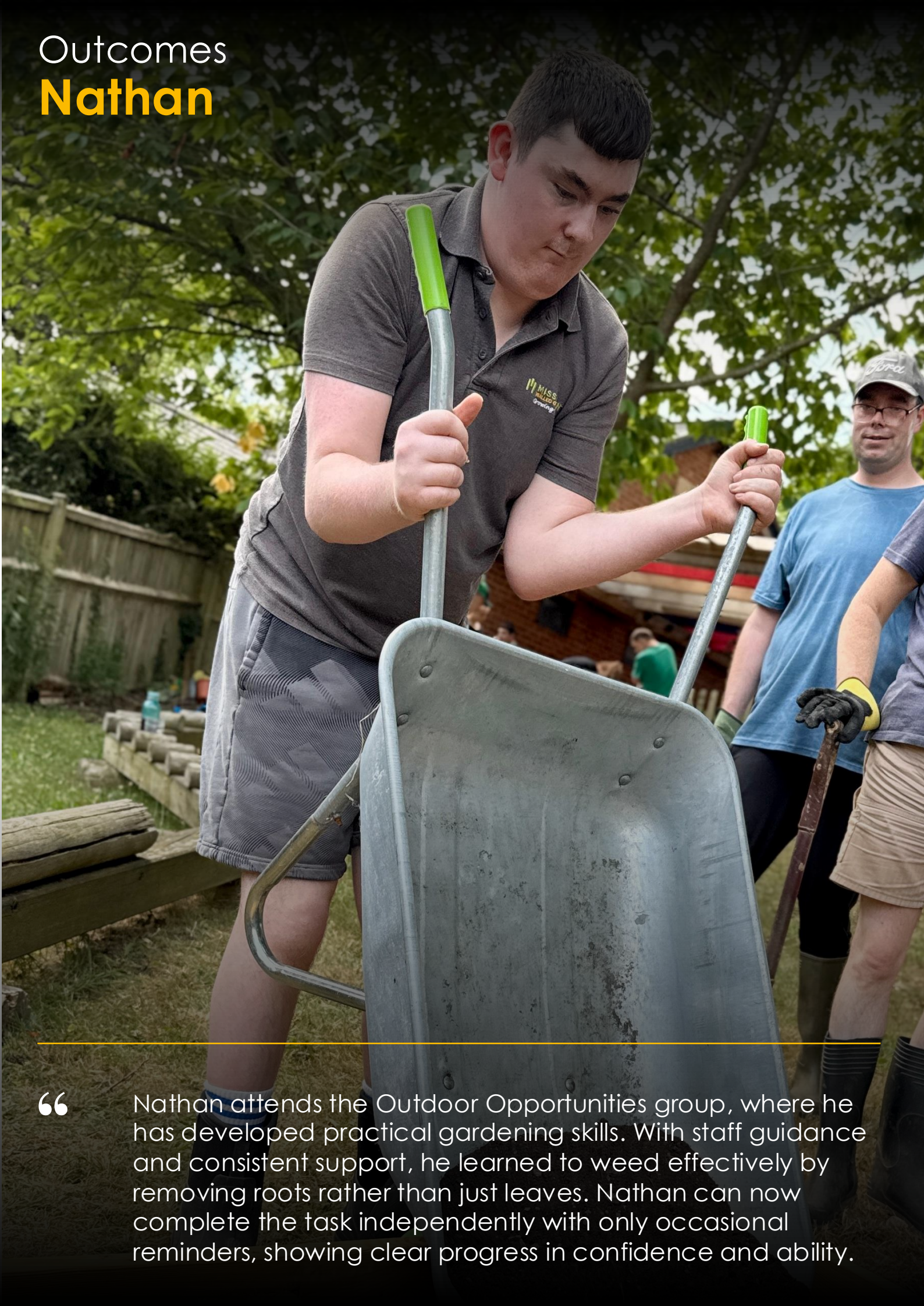


“

Georgina attends the theatre group, where she has made significant progress in building her confidence. With staff support, she successfully completed a non-verbal role in a short film on modern slavery, demonstrating her growing self-assurance. She performed in the pantomime, developing her acting skills through structured practice, showing clear progress in both ability and confidence.

Outcomes

Nathan



“

Nathan attends the Outdoor Opportunities group, where he has developed practical gardening skills. With staff guidance and consistent support, he learned to weed effectively by removing roots rather than just leaves. Nathan can now complete the task independently with only occasional reminders, showing clear progress in confidence and ability.

**Personal Development
and Skills.**

Member journeys.

2022

Actions

Dean joined two skills-based groups and began work experience at the Walled Garden.

Key Outcomes

- Improved independence.
- Built confidence using kitchen appliances.

2023

Actions

Dean continued cooking sessions, travel training and horticulture tasks.

Key Outcomes

- Increased confidence travelling.
- Strengthened work skills.
- Formed friendships and settled confidently into his groups.

2024

Actions

Dean completed a placement at the Food Hub and took part in gardening sessions.

Key Outcomes

- Growing confidence in work settings.
- Improved teamwork.

2025

Actions

Dean began working at the ChaTea Café and took part in the Talkback Talent Show.

Key Outcomes

- Greater self-esteem.
- Increased independence during café tasks.

“

My confidence has grown and I feel more comfortable taking on new responsibilities.

2022

Actions

Oliver joined two groups to build life skills, cooking confidence and social understanding.

Key Outcomes

- Improved emotional awareness.
- Formed meaningful friendships
- Cooking skills development.

2023

Actions

Oliver worked well on developing emotions, communication and relationships through group sessions.

Key Outcomes

- Better ability to express feelings.
- Increased confidence with peers.

2024

Actions

Oliver joined the Community Café project and continued developing his cooking skills.

Key Outcomes

- Improved communication.
- Growing independence in group tasks.

2025

Actions

Worked at the ChaTea Café using the till, tablet and card reader, and completed travel training.

Key Outcomes

- Stronger money skills.
- More confident with customers.
- Able to prepare for and catch the bus independently.

“

I've learned new skills and feel more confident working with customers.

Our commitments

to all our members

1

To provide a supported and safe place to allow you to prepare for the challenges of life.

2

To help you to explore and develop your unique skills and to build self-esteem and confidence.

3

To help you engage with services and employers so you can integrate into local communities and achieve your aspirations.

4

To ensure that each and every one of you has exactly the same opportunities as everyone else.

Your Voice.

Our highlights.

38

members attend our **community social groups** funded by Milton Keynes Council

65

members attended the BLMK NHS Peer support **My Autistic Self** sessions

30

referrals for the **Carers Support Service** funded by Milton Keynes Council

133

members were supported across **Your Voice** in 2025.

Back to nature

Summary

The Back to Nature group in Milton Keynes has enjoyed a vibrant and well-attended year, with members exploring a wide variety of outdoor spaces including lakes, parks, windmills, orchards and zoos. In total, 13 sessions have taken place across the year, with attendance continuing to grow and sessions now regularly welcoming between 7 and 15 members. We are pleased to have seen new members join throughout the year, and we continue to expand our invite list as interest in the group increases.

Members consistently tell us how much they value the opportunity to spend time outdoors, walking and talking together while enjoying the natural environment and the wildlife encountered along the way. The group provides a relaxed and supportive space for connection, fresh air and shared experiences, which many describe as an important boost to their wellbeing.

A highlight of the year was the group trip to Whipsnade Zoo, which took place on a bright and sunny day in October. Members had the chance to see a wide range of animals from across the world and to enjoy stunning views of the surrounding landscape. The visit sparked thoughtful reflection as well as joy, with one member describing the experience as "cathartic" and another sharing how the animals brought "warmth, cuteness and happiness" to the day. The trip was also described as a valuable opportunity for members to come together, step outside their daily challenges and take part in something enjoyable and memorable.



Scan to watch
the group video

Carers Support Service



Summary

In partnership with national family support charity Family Lives, we were delighted to become one of the providers on the new Carers Support Service, funded by Milton Keynes Council, supporting unpaid carers across Milton Keynes. In November, we launched the first of our regular parent and carer forums, creating a welcoming space for carers to meet, connect and share their experiences with others who understand their journey.

Feedback from attendees has been overwhelmingly positive. One parent shared: "Hi Claire, thank you for organising the meeting on Tuesday. I found it very helpful and supportive, and it was really interesting to hear your perspective and that of the other parents. I would be very interested in attending another meeting."

Another carer reflected: "I really enjoyed Monday's session with Family Lives and Talkback. It was very inspiring and insightful. Thank you for pointing me in their direction. Claire is fab and I am learning so much along the way from you all. I love it."

A strong advocate of Talkback and Family Lives, and the current All 4 Inclusion Unpaid Carer of the Year Award winner, also commented: "I have attended two groups facilitated by Claire from Family Lives. They were expertly run, and it helped that Claire herself is a carer, which allowed her to connect easily with others. Carers genuinely connected and resonated with what others were sharing. It was not just about lived experience, but also about sharing information and asking questions. In my opinion, this group has the potential to help so many."



BLMK Autism Peer Support project

My Autistic Self sessions

Summary

A key component of The BLMK Autism Peer Support project is our My Autistic Self groups – designed for adults who are on the autism diagnosis waiting list or for those with a new diagnosis across Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes. The groups provide an opportunity to explore ‘all things autism’ in a safe space. Participants can explore their thoughts and feelings in a way to reduce isolation and foster connections within the groups.

After attending sessions, individuals can choose to develop their community by joining one of our community social groups including our Back to Nature walking group.

With thanks to
our funders



Bedfordshire, Luton
and Milton Keynes
Integrated Care Board

Member voices.

My autistic self.

This service is absolutely essential, and I believe it needs to be expanded. People with autism need support because the world isn't built for us. We're constantly forced to adapt to fit into a societal mould, and that leads to poor mental health and burnout. I experienced this firsthand because I didn't understand how my brain worked or why I was struggling so much. I don't want anyone else to go through that.

If charities like Talkback could also educate schools, businesses, and workplaces, we could encourage small changes that would greatly improve the wellbeing of neurodiverse people in Milton Keynes and beyond. Simon is doing a fantastic job, and I think it's incredible how deeply he cares about this work.

These groups offer a support network and a safe space to share thoughts and feelings, something many autistic people can't do elsewhere. Beyond that, autistic individuals can thrive when placed in environments that suit them. Services like this can help uncover and harness those incredible qualities, benefiting not only individuals but the wider community.

I've had to do my own research into autism to help myself and my daughter, who was diagnosed after years of waiting for an assessment. Honestly, it's been really difficult. When I met Simon and attended the first group session, it was incredibly validating to discuss autism and the challenges we face at home with people who truly understood. We explored how autism presents differently, shared personal stories, and talked about our coping strategies.

I was invited to attend the Talkback group therapy sessions for adults awaiting an autism assessment. I can say with confidence that the sessions were a huge help to me and the other women I met there. We are all still in contact and continue to support each other through the everyday challenges we face.

Simon was so considerate of everyone's individual needs. It was the first time in my life that my autistic sensory needs were acknowledged by someone else. Having autism can make you feel so alone in your own head, but at the group I felt like I was part of something and that was really lovely.

Milton Keynes Umbrella Project



Summary

Since 2019, the ADHD Foundation has installed vibrant umbrella displays in public spaces across the UK, including Liverpool, Aberdeen, and Heathrow.

The MK Umbrella Project is underpinned by the recognition that all people are valid and valuable, regardless of having different ways of engaging in the world. With an installation of 400 umbrellas, the Milton Keynes display was the largest display in the UK to date. Talkback were delighted to be one of the sponsors of the project and signed up to the Milton Keynes Neurodiversity Charter.

Following a visit to the Milton Keynes Umbrella Project at Midsummer Place Talkback's social groups wanted to further highlight the Umbrella project by choosing to decorate their very own umbrellas to express their individuality and identity through art. Using a variety of materials and personal items for inspiration, members found the project both therapeutic and enjoyable.

Smiling Spirit Harry's debut album



Summary

Talkback was proud to support member Harry (DJ H4zza) during the funding process, recording and launch of his debut album, Smiling Spirit in 2025.

Harry revealed 2025 was the year where he realised his dream of having his own material recorded in a studio with a professional producer and singers. His main message is straight from the heart, remember to celebrate the good times and empower people. We remain thankful to Youth Music and their partners as well as Christopher from the Instrument Factory.

Harry said: "My dream project has been made possible by funds from Youth Music and their partners. Talkback supported me all the way with the grant application and so many of the amazing Talkback team have helped me pursue my dream".

**YOUTH
MUSIC**

Music School
THE INSTRUMENT FACTORY



Podcast

Spectrum of Strengths

Summary

The "Spectrum of Strengths" podcast was introduced in 2025. It focuses on unlocking potential in autistic people, discussing lived experiences and challenges with diagnosis and late diagnosis, special interests, life and employment as an autistic individual, all within a strength-based framework that empowers and highlights unique talents.

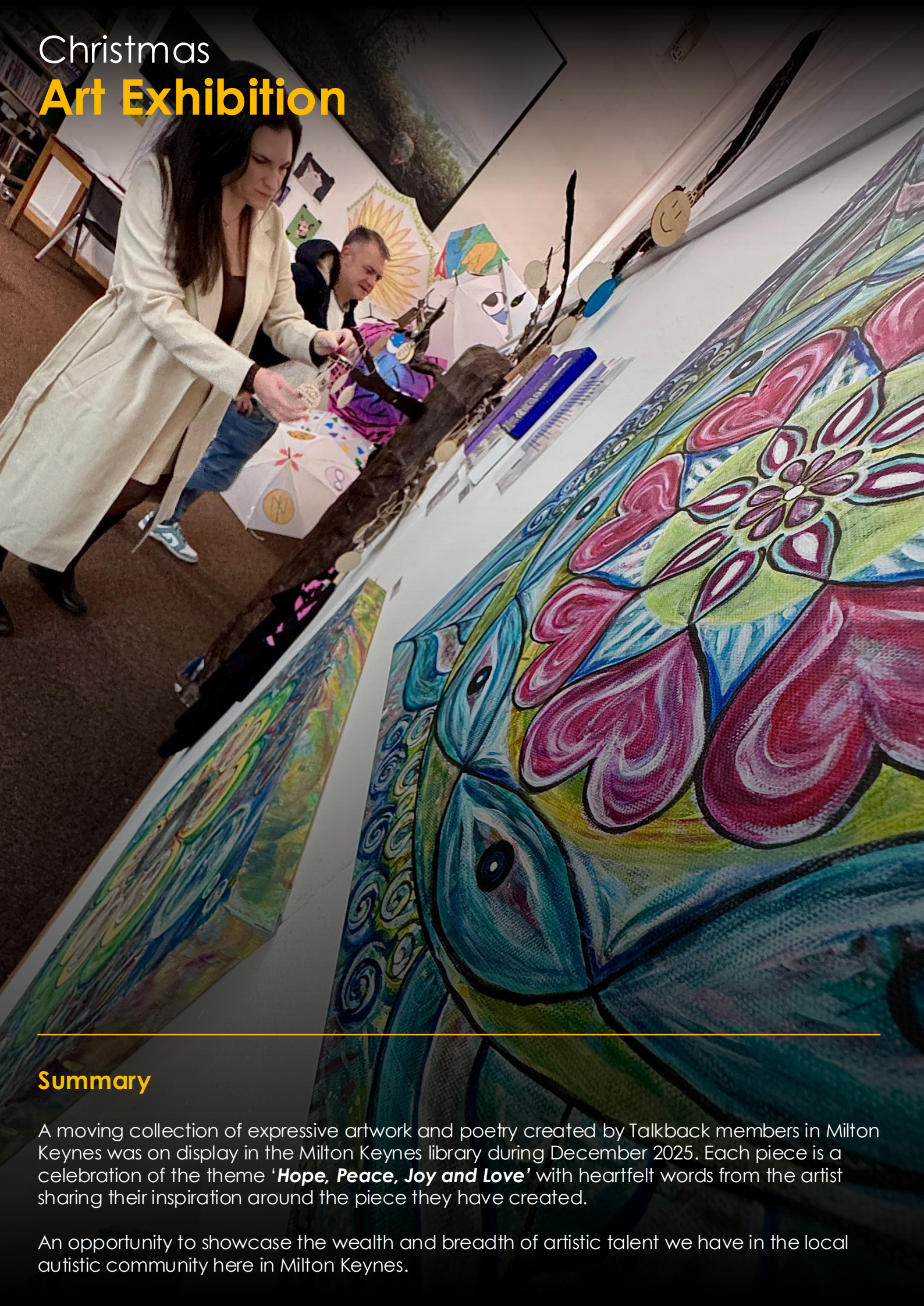
The goal of the podcast is to offer insights, bridge gaps between clinical and real-world experiences, and support others on the spectrum with a strong focus on strength-based approaches to autism.

It is hosted by Grace Spicer, an autistic adult who attended The My Autistic Self course herself. Grace brings personal insight to her interviews with general themes of late diagnosis, managing daily challenges, celebrating individuality and creating supportive environments.

Episodes can be found on

- Spotify (search "Spectrum of Strengths Podcast" or "Talkback UK")
- Facebook
- X (Twitter) @TalkbackCharity, @Talkback_UK

Christmas Art Exhibition



Summary

A moving collection of expressive artwork and poetry created by Talkback members in Milton Keynes was on display in the Milton Keynes library during December 2025. Each piece is a celebration of the theme '**Hope, Peace, Joy and Love**' with heartfelt words from the artist sharing their inspiration around the piece they have created.

An opportunity to showcase the wealth and breadth of artistic talent we have in the local autistic community here in Milton Keynes.

Talkback

DEVELOPING A WORLD OF POSSIBILITIES

Support us



Please scan the QR code to donate today so that we can continue to support people to embrace new opportunities, lead fulfilling lives and actively contribute to their communities

Contact us

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