



Annual Review

April 2023– March 2024

ALL ages

ALL conditions

ALL family members

www.sensationall.org.uk



Our charitable aim

SensationALL was founded to provide therapy-based activities and support services for individuals of **ALL** ages, **ALL** conditions and for **ALL** their family members.

No diagnosis is required prior to entry.

2023-24 has been a record breaking year with over 500 new individuals registering with us in order to access our support - that is more people than in any other year!

In total this year, we held 573 sessions for neurodivergent and people with complex conditions of ALL ages. Those sessions resulted in 2,789 participations from more than 540 different individuals.



"The fact a diagnosis isn't required is a massive plus! Otherwise my family would still be struggling with no support."

Parent of a service user

2023-24 activities



57

**children's
activity sessions**

59

**'Chill-OOT'
self-regulation
sessions**

"Sessions often have 1-to-1 support or very low ratio of staff to service user which is brilliant. The staff are fantastic at what they do."

Parent of a service user



36

**Play sessions for
children 0-10 and
their families**

**Thank you to our main funders who
contributed to cost of running these sessions:**



91

**social groups for
children and teenagers**

Social opportunities

The world is not designed for neurodivergent people and many feel they have to 'mask' their behaviour and true self to fit in or conform.

We want SensationALL to be a place where people with additional needs feel they belong and are safe to be themselves.

Making friends and building relationships is a huge factor in self-esteem and overall wellbeing. We all need social networks in our lives so we can be valued, supported and enriched.

SociALLise is the name of our series of inclusive social groups for youngsters with additional support needs. These groups bring youngsters of all ages together to have fun, make friends and build social skills.

The importance in having a safe place where you are accepted without judgement cannot be underestimated. So many of our young attendee's say SensationALL is the only place they can relax and be themselves..

SociALLise groups are available for primary aged children, teenagers and young adults every week during school term. In 2023, we were able to increase the number of sessions to 5 each week to accommodate more youngsters in both Westhill and Aberdeen.

We hope in the near future to be able to increase the timetable further to meet the demand on waiting lists.



The difference we make

We asked parent/carers whether coming to SensationALL had a positive effect on their young person, almost everyone said 'yes'...

confidence
89%



happiness
92%



feeling included
92%



New adult support

We aim to support neurodivergent people throughout every stage of their life, from early years right up to adulthood. In late 2023, thanks to funding from the Scottish Government's Autistic Adult Support Fund (via Inspiring Scotland), we were able to expand our support for adults with some new services for ages 18+.

The number of adults seeking a diagnosis of Autism or ADHD later in life has grown rapidly in recent years and many of our registered parent/carers were telling us that watching their child's behaviour was a 'light-bulb' moment making them suspect they have a condition of their own. But adults face a lengthy wait for assessment and are left struggling to navigate social and work life without the practical tools they need.

We created weekly support groups to be a safe place where they could meet others in similar situations to share experiences and feel part of a community. With our practitioners on-hand to give invaluable knowledge and advice they can learn more about their conditions and be empowered to overcome obstacles in their lives.

19
sessions for
neurodivergent adults

34
advisory &
information sessions

Supporting the whole family

We are committed to sharing our knowledge and expertise so parents, carers and the wider family feel better equipped to support their loved-ones.

Our on-demand advisory consultations are available whenever families need help to overcome specific challenges (such as sleep patterns, eating habits, sensory issues, behavioural problems etc.). Caring for someone with complex needs can be daunting - we aim to reduce stress and worry by giving families practical tools and strategies to use in everyday life so they feel more in control.

The regular support groups we hold bring carers together in a friendly environment so they can compare experiences and access a community of people facing similar challenges. This is invaluable for parents and carers to reduce their feelings of "carrying the weight alone".

Through our range of training workshops we offer information with families so they can learn more about the conditions their loved-ones have and the insight we share can be life changing for them.

40
parent/carer
support groups

20
training
workshops



Personalised support

A young service user was referred to us for 1:1 support by his school due to poor mental health. Initially, he would say things like “I get bored of me”, “I’m not good at anything” and “I feel lonely”. These negative thoughts and low mood were having a detrimental effect on his life as he was struggling to be in a room with other children or interact with peers.

Being in the classroom resulted in high anxiety and stress levels which triggered a flight response, and he was reacting in a defensive, sometimes aggressive manner to try and leave. Crisis point was reached when he told teachers “It would be better if I wasn’t here”.

During games of ‘Dungeons & Dragons’ or playing with Lego our practitioner worked on his self-esteem by reinforcing positive affirmations.

By incorporating his choices and preferences into activities, he felt in control and safe. Our practitioner realised the way to connect with him was by playing his version of Dungeons & Dragons as he was more comfortable interacting in his fantasy world.

During gameplay she could introduce different discussions and role play using the characters which enable him to open up without feeling exposed. Over time he slowly come out of the fantasy world and started to associate his feelings with real life demonstrating his improvement in emotional awareness.

Teaching him about his energy levels and giving him tools to use when emotions became too ‘big’ resulted in positive improvements in his behaviour.

The change in him has been amazing! He now is able to attend school and has even transitioned to secondary school which would not have been possible without our intervention.



"I used to behave like that [angrily], now I walk away when I'm annoyed and chill myself out."

Working with schools

We are an approved supplier of Flexible Learning Pathways programmes with Aberdeenshire Council for school pupils from across the region.

This service is designed to give pupils in mainstream schools with identified additional support needs, time outside of the classroom so they can access emotional and behavioural support.

Many neurodivergent children struggle to cope in classroom settings as the environment isn't suited to their sensory needs.

Often their inability to sit still, focus and interact in the same way as their classmates can mean they are labelled as badly behaved, disruptive and, can result in them attending part-time or not at all.

We provide a outlet where these youngsters are able to learn about themselves and have positive experiences in a relaxed learning environment. Through games and activities of their choice we teach practical strategies and tools they can use in everyday life.

The result is improved resilience in group or classroom settings leading to them feeling able to overcome any negative associations they have with attending school.

16
schools from
across the
northeast of
Scotland accessed
our support for
pupils



Pioneering new approaches

The NHS Aberdeen City Test of Change (ToC) is a Scottish Government funded initiative aimed at improving services for young people who are neurodivergent. The pioneering project ran from October 2022 until the end of March 2024.

SensationALL contributed to this pilot scheme by providing the expertise and skills via our Clinical Consultancy Manager who joined the Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) of health professionals tasked with designing a novel approach to better supporting young neurodivergent individuals within schools.

The team were embedded within one Aberdeen primary school and its associated nursery to provide direct assessment and intervention support to children, their families and to the school.

Teachers identified children who regularly became disregulated in class (all of whom were found to be neurodivergent) for whom the MDT would provide direct assessment and intervention.

Outcomes of placing specialist clinicians within the school were significant with benefits to the children and their families as well as the teaching staff.

Benefits of the in-school approach:

- Children were observed in a more natural environment and, were more likely to be themselves
- Variations in behaviour could be observed across different times or situations
- Clinicians gained a fuller picture of a child's presentation opposed to an assessment in a clinic
- Assessment was more timely/'fast-tracked'
- Some previously missed neurodivergent conditions were identified
- Parent/carers had reduced anxiety as they felt they had a better understanding of their child



Rebekah's story

Parenting can, at times be a difficult prospect for everyone but, when children have additional needs their parents face challenges with everyday tasks and situations that can be exhausting and difficult to cope with.

One of our families, who found SensationALL after struggling to cope with the prospect that all four of their young children have Autism wanted to share their story.

Each of Rebekah's children have different sensory and behavioural needs which makes parenting extra challenging and going out in public is not an easy thing for them.

Thanks to our family soft-play sessions, they can all come together to enjoy quality time in our soft play and sensory facilities. Plus, their eldest Kaleb, has benefited from attending Chill-oat, our self-regulation programme that promotes emotional awareness for youngsters and teaches them coping strategies for when they are overwhelmed.



Community engagement

Community is at the heart of what we do at SensationALL!

Not only are we committed to creating a supportive community for our families and service users but also to being a responsible member of our local community in Westhill, Aberdeen and across the northeast.

In 2023-24, we strengthened our connections with organisations including the Westhill & District Rotary Club, Westhill Men's Shed and Westhill Shopping Centre (we even took part in their Christmas Light's switch-on).



Becoming a Volunteer Charter Champion



SensationALL has signed up as a **Charter Champion** with Volunteer Scotland!

The contribution of volunteers is integral to our service delivery and over the years, thousands of hours have been donated to us. We consider each volunteer to be an asset whose contribution cannot be undervalued!

The Charter's 10 principles supports us in creating an environment where every volunteer is welcomed, supported and has a positive experience so they will want to come back time after time!

Volunteer opportunities with us range from supporting our services during our play and activity groups, to fundraising, to gardening and DIY.

Corporate volunteers

A special thank you to all the employees of local business who came onsite to volunteer at The Old Schoolhouse to help us with jobs we simply don't have the time to do!

Thank you to the corporate companies who volunteered in 2023-24 including **RSM, Quorum, Geoactive, Technip** and **FES**.



In total, we benefited from over:

350
volunteer
hours

Thank you to all our volunteers!

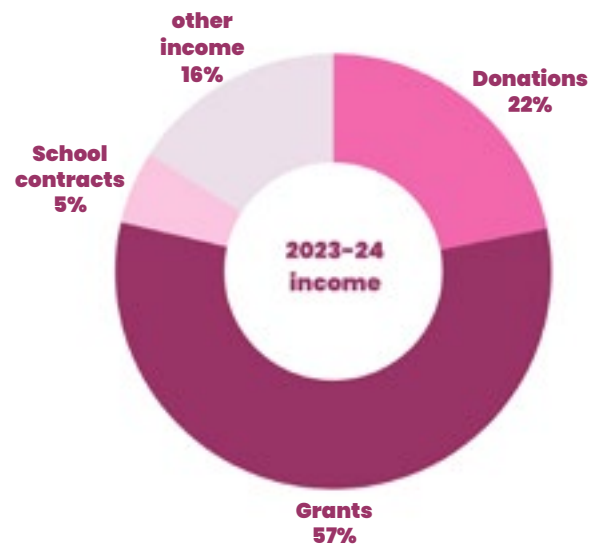
Fundraising

The charity has continued to strengthen relationships with key funders and has been incredibly grateful for grants towards service delivery costs which allows us to heavily subsidise entry fees for attendees.

Capital funding has also been secured from the Just Transition Fund, Seven Incorporated Trades of Aberdeen (Widows Fund) and the Garioch Area Initiatives Fund (Aberdeenshire Council) to replace our boiler at the Old Schoolhouse in February 2024.

We were delighted to see corporate donations growing year-on-year with continued support from **RSM, Fulcrum, ADW** and **STATS Group** as well as new support from several local businesses including **ESWL** and **Retek** who made significant donations from their fundraising activities. Their support is hugely appreciated by the team and makes a real difference to our ability to support families across the northeast.

Finally, our own fundraising events have generated more donations than ever before! The pinnacle of the fundraising calendar is our annual ball and in 2024 this dinner dance increased in both guests and income with almost £30,000 raised. This was largely thanks to sponsorship from **Jellie Foundation, Oilenco** and **Global Port Services**.



**With thanks to the board
of trustees:**

- Susan Kay
- Tom Pates
- Theresa Roper
- Stuart Bews
- Darren Aggasild
- Nick Pickering
- Dominic Kite
- Rhona Atkinson

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