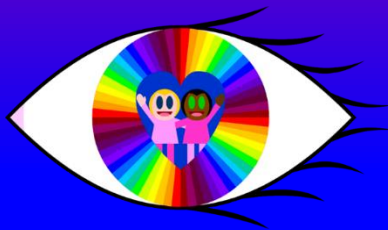


# A Different Perspective CIC

## April 2026

### Issue 19



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Photography by Lauren Smith.

Only 30% of autistic people aged 16-65 are in employment in the UK ~ Office for National Statistics (ONS, 2022).

**Please get in touch:**  
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Hi Everyone,

Welcome to the latest edition of our company newsletter.

Spring has finally sprung! We hope you have been able to enjoy some of the sunny spells. To me, things feel lighter when the sun appears!

We hope you all had a lovely Easter weekend and feel well rested.

Let us reflect on one thing we want to be more present in our lives this season.



#### Autistic Masking Training

Last month, I was invited to run a training session to Autism Champions in North Somerset Council. In this session, I focused on autistic masking ~ defining masking, reasons why autistic people may mask and ways to unmask and strive for authenticity.

Belcher (2022) defined autistic masking as "... disguising aspects of the self to assimilate to others" (cited in Gallarotti, 2024, p. 23). According to Lawson (2025, p. 10), masking is a way of keeping "socially safe". Although not unique to autistic people, masking is a common experience shared by many autistic girls and women. Autistic masking can have damming effects on people's mental health. Not feeling good enough and feeling shame for who we are can lead to stress, trauma and autistic burnout, a chronic exhaustion. Masking our true selves can also lead to anxiety and a disconnect from who we are (Lawson, 2025, p. 10).

Therefore, gradually unmasking is vital. The first step is to unmask to ourselves ~ reflect on what is working, what is not going well and what needs to change. Consider what energises you and what takes away your energy. Connecting to nature or pets before unmasking to a safe person can be helpful. Also, nurturing your passions is key. Seeking out likeminded peers, through online forums or in person groups, could be a useful way of building a safe community.

## Book

### Recommendation



*It Takes All Kinds of Minds.  
Fostering Neurodivergent Thriving  
at School by Rachael Davis,  
Claire O'Neill and Sue Fletcher-  
Watson.*

Focus on "...  
personalisation, not  
normalisation"  
(Morewood, 2026, p. 83).

"Neurodivergent children  
tend to gravitate  
naturally towards each  
other. Shared interests  
and experiences  
increase communication  
... connection, and  
rapport" (McGreevy,  
2026, p. 111).

## TADSS Conference ~ Autism and Friendships Talk

Last month, I was also invited to present my lived experiences and master's dissertation research on autism and friendships. I spoke to around 100 members of staff from special schools across Dorset. I am thankful to Adam, my friend, who assisted in delivering the talk.

To me, friendships are the essence of life; they can be the foundation for self-belief. Although I deeply value my friendships, throughout the years I have found friendships difficult to navigate. Initiating conversation, rejection sensitivity, and significant anxiety are just a couple of the challenges I've experienced in friendships.

Despite this, autistic people can have numerous strengths in friendships. Strengths can include being passionate, thoughtful, reliable, honest, committed, non-judgemental, sensitive and understanding.



Please email me at [differentperspectives98@gmail.com](mailto:differentperspectives98@gmail.com) if you have any questions or would like to book me as a guest speaker. I can present online and in person (online preferred). All my talks incorporate my lived experience and latest research. Previously, I have spoken about my educational experiences (mainstream and alternative provision), friendships, masking, mental health challenges and communication. I can tailor my presentations to suit your audience and specific needs. I look forward to hearing from you!

## Introducing the TriSync Model by Dr Joseph Delaney

Put simply, the TriSync Model is a way of understanding nervous system processes. The model includes the **polyvagal theory** (safety to learn), **autonomic space** (a map of our nervous systems) and **adaptive control** (layers of how our body and brain are built). The TriSync Model has three layers:

**1<sup>st</sup> Layer (Bodyspace)** ~ The foundation of physical safety, somatic awareness and physiological regulation. We feel calm in our body and have our basic needs met.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Layer (Heartspace)** ~ When we feel safe in our body, we can emotionally and socially connect. We can develop trusting bonds and feel safe in our relationships.

**3<sup>rd</sup> Layer (Headspace)** ~ When we feel safe and have positive relationships, we can reflect, learn, problem solve and be creative.

In the TriSync Model, each layer builds upon the previous layer. To access our headspace, we **MUST** be guided through the body and heart space first. Allowing movement breaks, having nutrition checks, ensuring comfortable seating, demonstrating breathing exercises, providing outdoor learning opportunities and sensory resources, having clear expectations and praising effort, enabling project-based learning and encouraging reflection can be useful strategies in supporting learners in schools.

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### Experience of Tai Chi Classes

I struggle in new environments and find it immensely difficult to meet new people. Although, a few months ago, Mum and I began Tai Chi classes at a local gym. I highly recommend this Chinese meditation practice for autistic young people and adults. The slow, gentle movements combined with visualisations and deep breathing exercises, invite space and time for reflection and reinvigoration. The practice can also support the interoceptive and proprioceptive senses ~ being aware of how our bodies feel and where our own bodies are in space. Importantly, Tai Chi has guided me to release tension and anxiety.

Consistently being around likeminded people in a safe space is a way to slowly develop confidence. Our instructor harnesses positive energy, bringing fun and laughter to the group. The class is a non-judgemental space where I can feel free to be myself and make mistakes.

Please take consistent, small steps to invest in your mental and physical well-being. Your mind and body will thank you!

**Please follow me at 'A Different Perspective CIC' on Facebook and X/email me at:**

[differentperspectives98@gmail.com](mailto:differentperspectives98@gmail.com)

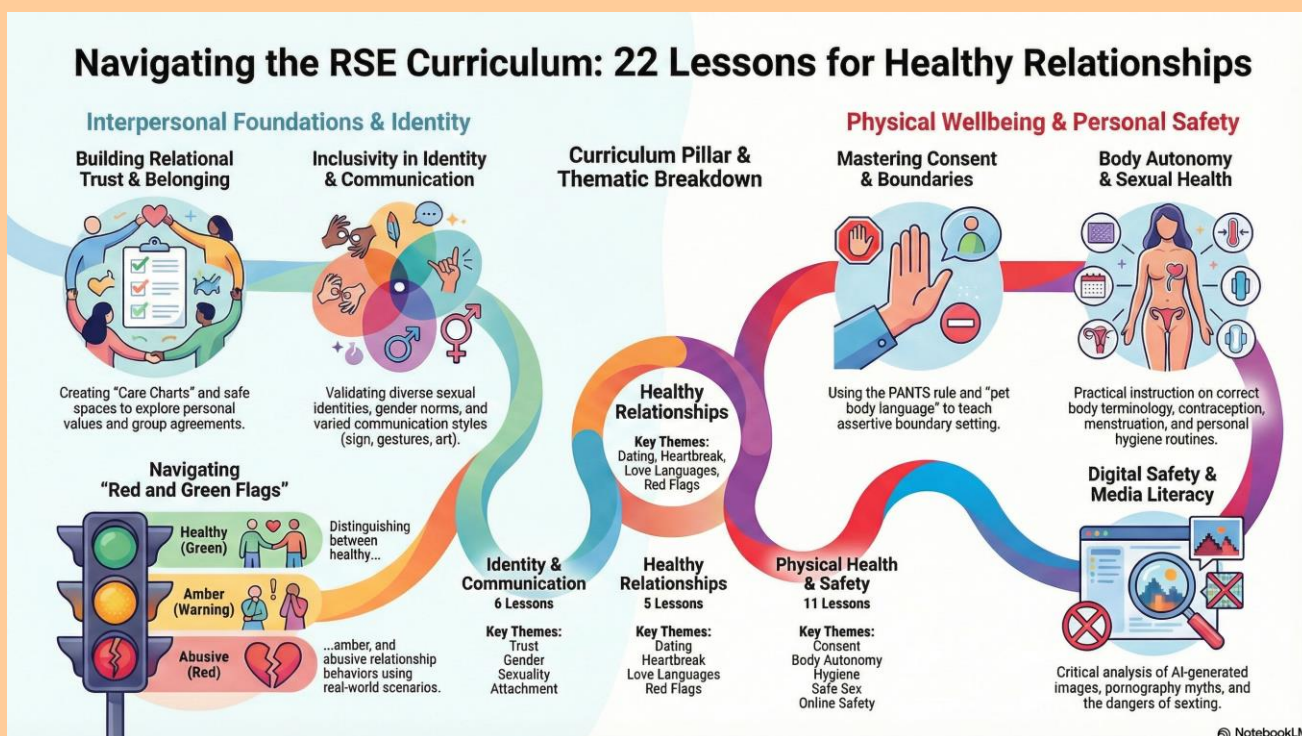
## Update on our Social Group for Autistic People

Recently, our social group have enjoyed a walk around Portishead Marina, a carvery and bowling. We would like to thank The National Lottery Awards for awarding us funding which will contribute towards the running of our social groups. We look forward to organising more activities over the next few months which include the Circus, the Grand Pier, a trip to Bristol Museum and Art Gallery and a train trip to Torquay.



## Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) Resources for Autistic Learners

Below is an infographic I've created based on what I envision inclusive relationships and sexuality education (RSE) sessions to include. In my opinion, important elements of RSE include developing relational safety, understanding consent, healthy and unhealthy behaviours, attachment and rejection and digital safety.



## SEND Reforms Consultation ~ Get Your Voices Heard

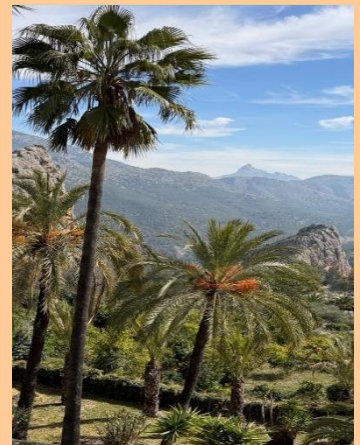
I recently listened in to a legal roundtable with representatives from Special Needs Jungle. They discussed the proposals for those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) in the new Every Child Achieving and Thriving White Paper ([Every child achieving and thriving \(HTML version\) - GOV.UK](#)) and raised fundamental questions about what these proposals will mean for young people, their families and schools.

It was made clear that legal rights do not need to be removed to improve the system. In these proposals, it is considered there will be a major shift in responsibility from local authorities (LAs) to schools, placing undue burden on school staff. To receive support, children will need to fit one of seven categories of need. However, children's needs often cannot be squeezed into a particular category. Terms such as 'presenting needs' can be misinterpreted. A presenting need may not be a child's actual need since they may be masking or may have fluctuating capacities. Additionally, it is unclear who will create such specialist packages for learners. A question was also asked about what will happen to children in education other than at school (EOTAS) and alternative provision (AP). Thus, children may continue to be denied access to education.

Educators, LAs, children, young people and their families are being invited to share their views on the proposed reforms by the 18<sup>th</sup> of May 2026. If you are interested, please see: [SEND reform: putting children and young people first - Department for Education - Citizen Space](#)

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### Photography by Lauren Smith



Please get in touch with our team if you would like more information about our work or would like to get involved with our projects. We would love to hear from you!