



3-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN 2022-2025

Celebrating Autism in Greater Manchester by creating opportunities, and providing a sense of personal freedom and choice.

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Strategic Plan

Our Objective

To promote the welfare of children, adolescents and adults variously diagnosed as having autistic spectrum disorder (conditions).

Our Goals

Our mission is to create communities of support across Greater Manchester for people on the autistic spectrum which enable personal and professional development, and to focus on unlocking potential, creating opportunities and giving our members a sense of personal freedom and choice.

Our Values

- Our Members and Service User community lie at the heart of what we do and why we do it
- Each Member or Service User deserves and receives a tailored, empathic, person-centred approach
- No matter how disadvantaged the Member or Service User may be, they will receive the best and most consistent service and support we can provide
- We will treat Members, Service Users and each other with respect
- We will empower and support each other
- We aspire to the highest possible standards and aim to be the best we can
- We are positive, active and self-motivated

Background information

I AM was set up in 1968 as a support group for parents of children with ASC. It was previously known as the Autistic Society Greater Manchester Area (ASGMA).



From these beginnings, over 50 years ago, we have grown and developed our services to become a highly respected and creditable autism support charity (Reg No 1089527).

In 2020 the charity re-branded and changed its name from ASGMA to the trading name of "I AM Celebrating Autism in Greater Manchester" (I AM). This was to reflect our change in dynamic and to shift focus from the negatives of autism towards a more positive view that better reflects who we are and our mission as a charity. We have always been and remain a lifeline of support for many.

What we do

- One-to-one, personal centred support for ASC individuals
- Outreach Support for ASC individuals
- Provide group based social and leisure activities.
- Advice and Information Service
- Support for Parents
- Training and consultation

Achievements

I AM has been in existence for over 50 years, this alone is an achievement. During this time, it has doubtless overcome many challenges and the fact that it continues to provide support to the autistic community of Manchester is something to be proud of.

I AM has risen to the challenge of building back from the pandemic. Since the ending of restrictions in July 2021 I AM has rebuilt its level of activities that support our members.

Raising the profile of I AM through our social media channels has been a key achievement. I AM is now a more visible charity.

I AM's members are at the heart of the organisation. A survey of our members identified that 100% of respondents felt that I AM provided a safe space, appealing activities and was value for money. Additionally, 100% of respondents felt that being a part of I AM had a positive impact on their lives and improved their wellbeing.

The greatest achievement of I AM is doubtless its ability to support its members, even when they are in crisis. We have supported individuals who have been in extreme social isolation but who now feel a part of a community, we have seen individuals meet and exceed their aspirations.

Conclusions

The feedback we receive demonstrates that we make a positive difference to the lives of autistic people.

The evidence that we have shows that we are a strong and resilient organisation with a good reputation that provides both value for money and a highly expertise and professional service.

Like many charities we are restricted by the funds that we have available. A key aspect of our future strategy must therefore be that ensure that we have sufficient funds to continue to run our vital services.



For the next 3 years we will aim to consolidate our existing services and look to extend and develop our services, provided there is sufficient funding available, in order to support as many individuals with ASC as possible.

Key Objectives and Activities

In the following section, each area of operation is identified, and specific objectives identified for the next 3 years.

Membership

Being a membership organisation enables us to bring together individuals who have shared objectives.

Objectives

- Maintain I AM's membership levels
- Continue to raise I AM's profile to encourage new members

Group Activities (children)

Social and leisure group activities for children are a core service provided by I AM. They continue to provide a safe and supported environment where individuals with ASC have opportunities to learn, develop and practice social and communication skills, make friends and build confidence and self-esteem in a safe environment.

Objectives

- Continue to offer and provide Youth Group services so long as it remains cost-effective or cost-neutral to do so
- Explore the potential to expand the provision of I AM Youth Groups in other geographical areas across Greater Manchester
- Develop a wider range of activities for Youth Group members

Group Activities (adults)

Social and leisure activities for adults are a core service provided by I AM. They provide an opportunity for individuals over the age of 18 years to form social connections in a safe and supported environment.

Objectives

- Continue to offer and provide Adult Group services so long as it remains cost-effective or cost-neutral to do so
- Explore the potential to expand the provision of I AM Adult Groups in other geographical areas across Greater Manchester
- Explore opportunities to develop new groups

One to One Support and Outreach Support

Many individuals with ASC require individualised and tailored support to achieve their aspirations. Whatever the individual's aspiration I AM will build a plan that is co-produced with the individual and their family, where applicable, to work towards achieving these goals.

Objectives

- Continue to offer and provide one to one support services so long as it remains cost-effective or cost neutral to do so
- Increase the amount of one-to-one support provided to individuals

Parents/ Carers Support

Prior to the pandemic I Am provided support sessions for parents. These provided an opportunity for parents of children with ASC to connect with each other and share their experiences.

During the pandemic I AM demonstrated its ability to adapt to the rapidly changing landscape by offering free online support and advice sessions for parents including opportunities for them to network.

Post pandemic a face-to-face Support Group for parents has been restarted. Historically this type of work sits at the very heart of I AM's foundations.

Objectives

- Continue to provide support to parents/carers
- Explore new ways of delivering support for parents/carers

Advice and Information Line

Our free advice and information line is delivered via the telephone and email. It deals with over 250 contacts per month. The volume of contacts has grown and continues to grow. We provide an expert and supportive listening ear for many who have nowhere else to turn including those in crisis.

Objectives

- Continue to ensure funding is secured for the Advice line
- Trial how information and support can be given in different ways

Fundraising

This is a key area of operation for I AM upon which its survival depends. Over the most recent period some work has gone into developing this area of operations and improving efficiency.

Objectives

- Continue to review the fundraising landscape for opportunities from a variety of sectors and apply for such opportunities
- Maximise small giving through a variety of channels

Communications and Marketing

Significant work has gone into this area of operation over the last 2 years that has resulted in a significant increase in our profile.

Objectives

- Continue to grow our presence across social media channels
- Continue to communicate effectively with our community

Website

The website will continue to need focus and attention both in terms of providing an attractive “shop window” that reflects I AM appropriately and as a source of up-to-date information.

Objectives

- Review and update website content to ensure it reflects the I AM brand appropriately
- The relevance of website content is reviewed to reflect key issues in the wider ASC space

Operations and Governance

The operational aspects of the charity support the good work that it does. They are underpinned by the policies of the charity.

Objectives

- Ensure that I AM is operating efficiently within appropriate legal frameworks across all areas

Staffing

The staff of I AM are its most important asset. It is therefore vital that staff are treated fairly and appropriately.

Historically I AM has not made great use of volunteers to support its activities. There are, however, many areas where utilising the skills of volunteers could be beneficial.

Objectives

- Ensure that there is sufficient staff capacity to deliver services
- Develop a base of volunteers to support with various I AM activities

Review

We are living in changing times both economically and socially. As a consequence, we will review these activities and plans annually so that they can be modified where necessary. Wherever possible we will seek to take advantage of opportunities arising during the coming three years which will enable us to achieve our strategic aims.