

Application Form 2025 : Entry # 14927

Part A - General Information

Organisation

The Transforming Autism Project

Organisation Type/Structure

Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO)

Theme/Nature of Project

Medical, Health and Social Care

Charity Registration Number (if applicable)

1173134

Project Name (if same as Organisation Name, please leave this blank)

Playcademy: Empowering parents to help autistic children thrive

Name of Lead Contact

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How did you find out about the Awards?

Google/Search Engine Search

Website

<https://transformingautism.org/>

Social Media Handles (Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram etc):

<https://www.facebook.com/transformingautismuk/>  
<https://x.com/transformingaut>  
<https://www.instagram.com/transformingautismproject/#>  
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC1BH-7XOtUE8nsmNj0TLeug/featured>  
<https://www.linkedin.com/company/transforming-autism/>

Part B - Project Proposal

Project Mission: A snapshot of the project's intention (50 words max)

"Playcademy" tackles the crisis in care for young autistic children. Our "Early Intervention Programme" combines video therapy with remote coaching, providing discreet advice to parents as they play. It enhances communication, reduces anxiety, and raises sensory awareness, allowing parents to access on-demand support without requiring formal diagnosis for their child.

Situation (250 words)

Autism influences how people perceive and engage with their surroundings. It is a lifelong neurodivergence affecting social communication, interaction and interests, often characterised by restricted or repetitive behaviours. The scale of the challenge in supporting autistic children is vast. In 2024, the Children's Commissioner warned that hundreds of thousands of children in England, including those with autism and ADHD, endure unacceptably long waits for diagnosis (often 2 years or more). Parents face multiple barriers in getting support, often leading their children into crises." Since the covid-19 pandemic the number of children waiting for an autism assessment has risen by 306% with 1 in 4 parents waiting over 3 years for support for their Autistic child. The problem gets worse year on year. The system places so much emphasis on assessment that without it children are left unsupported, leaving them at greater risk of both social and school exclusion. Studies reveal additional disparities: 75% of autistic girls remain unidentified, boys are diagnosed 10 times more often, and children from ethnic minorities and poorer backgrounds face longer wait times and less access to support. In trying to resolve the issue recent recommendations are concentrating on 3 areas: building effective partnerships between healthcare and education professionals, improved CPD for teachers and healthcare professionals relating to understanding and awareness of autism and place-based formal partnerships at ward level to address the autism crisis

Complication (250 words)

The issue we face is that the opportunity to address individual concerns associated with a child's autism during the formative years, when meaningful, long-term life-altering changes can be achieved, is being missed. Support for Autistic children in the UK relies on parents getting an autism diagnosis for their child and yet waiting times for a diagnosis increase. In December 2024 the waiting list for autism diagnosis rose to 212,964 a 23% increase in one year and 100% increase in 4 years. The Children's Commissioner herself says we must move from a diagnosis to a needs led system but to date support is still only provided post diagnosis. Psychiatrists report that the lack of support is greatly affecting education and personal lives. Whilst some International providers in Israel and Switzerland are successfully implementing early interventions for autistic children involving the whole family in the UK we are not taking advantage of the critical neurodevelopmental window in early childhood. Instead of children waiting years for a diagnosis and for behavioural issues to become more pronounced, responding to parents' initial concerns with effective interventions would be far more beneficial. Initial attempts to solve the issue are beginning to focus on schools and partnerships but parents who can get involved even earlier than schools are being overlooked. University research studies, the chair of the Autism UK Alliance and Transforming Autism's founder, clinicians, therapists and families say this must change. Transforming Autism has the clinicians and the passion to demonstrate how empowering parents can start to tackle the crisis in autism care.

Solution (250 words)

We believe "Playcademy" addresses the care crisis for young autistic children. Developed by our clinical therapist, Nicholas Krueckeberg, alongside a Clinical Advisory Team of therapists, parents, and specialists, your support will enable Transforming Autism to refine and pilot this model. Our team has already created the clinical framework and outlined technical needs. We will evaluate Playcademy's effectiveness compared to our established First Steps Programme, delivered face-to-face in family homes. "Playcademy" integrates video intervention therapy with remote coaching. A clinical therapist connects via video link to the family's home, using audio earpieces to discreetly support parents as they play with their child. Therapists give parents prompts, helping them use autism-specific techniques to enhance interactions. Video reflection sessions allow parents to observe their child's cues and responses, fostering better understanding and enabling parents to adapt their approach.

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The pilot involves:

- Identifying 10 families from our waiting list and partner referrals (Nov/Dec 2025)
- Training therapists on the clinical model (Nov 2025 – Jan 2026)
- Finalising resources (Nov 2025 - Jan 2026)
- Delivering and monitoring the programme (Feb - Aug 2026)
- Evaluating outcomes and sharing findings (Sept 2026)
- Reviewing the programme and planning rollout (Oct 2026)

Goals include:

- Improving communication, play, and interaction levels in autistic children.
- Helping parents create environments that reduce their child's anxiety and frustration.
- Enhancing parental understanding of sensory experiences and their effects on family interactions.

This method of intervention would allow more parents of young autistic children to receive timely support, surpassing the limitations of in-person therapy.

Part C - Wider Support

A key part of the value of being shortlisted for, or winning, an award is the network of partners that becomes available to help you. With that in mind, how would the Stephen Lloyd Award network of partners' support be beneficial to your project? (250 words max)

As a small but growing and ambitious charity your network of partners would be extremely beneficial to Transforming Autism. With the exception of our therapist team, clinical specialists and Part time CEO many of our operational functions including HR, finance, marketing, monitoring and evaluation, communications and IT are delivered by volunteers. We would like support and advice with our marketing and business development to help us grow and to implement strategic development and marketing plans. We would particularly welcome support with social media and extending our reach. As we accelerate and scale up our social impact we would also welcome support on demonstrating this impact. As much bigger organisations become increasingly interested in our programmes we would welcome support on collaborating with larger organisations whilst ensuring we maintain oversight of how our programmes are delivered and run and not dominated or overshadowed by larger partners. Finally advice on diversifying our income channels would be welcome as we are heavily reliant on grants from trusts and foundations.

Part D - Financial Justification

How do you propose to spend the winning funds of £25,000 (50 words max). Please provide a general idea.

We would spend £10000 on the clinical lead; £9000 on a Psychotherapists and Occupational therapist, £3000 on monitoring and evaluation and £3000 on Project Management.

Part E - Supporting Information

Governing Documents: Where relevant, please upload any recent charity accounts and governing documents as attachments.

- [Transforming-Autism-Annual-Report-and-accounts-2024.pdf](#)

Team: We would like to learn a little more about the individual or team invested into the project. What are your individual credentials? Is there a story behind how you or your team all came together to support the project? (75 words max)

Nicolas Kruckeberg has 25 years of experience specialising in early intervention for children on the autism spectrum, focusing on interactional play and affect regulation. He helped set-up the FIAS-Therapy-Centre for Early Intervention in Autism at the University Psychiatric Clinic (UPK) in Basel, Switzerland and later founded per:spectrum consultancy to provide training and support for clinicians and educators. He will work with Guy Shahar Transforming Autism founder, Tracy Peer CEO and Arianna Pulsoni lead therapist.

YouTube Video, if you'd like to add one

https://transformingautism-my.sharepoint.com/personal/nicolas\_krueckeberg\_transformingautism\_org/\_layouts/15/stream.aspx?id=%2Fpersonal%2Fnicolas%5Fkrueckeberg%5Ftransformingautism%5Forg%2FDocuments%2FProject%20%40%20Transforming%20Autism%2Emov&referrer=StreamWebApp%2EWeb&referr...

Additional References: You are welcome to provide a list of up to 5 links with any relevant supporting material or visuals, as further reference

https://transformingautism.org/the-critical-role-of-early-intervention-and-the-future-of-support/  
https://transformingautism.org/about-us/testimonials/  
https://transformingautism.org/resources/transforming-autism-the-book/  
https://dev.transformingautism.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Strategic-Plan-Final.pdf?  
\_gl=1\*1nlfbo4\*\_ga\*MTE5ODA5MjM1Ni4xNzQyMzg0OTQx\*\_ga\_E44Q3FBCBV\*cZE3NDcyMzY2NjQkbzEzJGcxJHQxNzQ3MjM2ODQzJGowJGwwJGgw