

## Press release: Four NI charities for women and girls to receive UK Government funding

Minister Kris Hopkins today visited one of the charities, Autism NI, which supports individuals with Autism and their families and campaigns to raise awareness of Autism within wider society. The other organisations benefiting from the new tranche of money are Mid Ulster Women's Aid, Foyle Women's Aid and HomeStart North Down.

The news of final funding confirmation follows last week's announcement by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, the Rt. Hon. James Brokenshire MP, that four projects based in Northern Ireland were set to benefit from the Fund. The scheme is set up to help create a fairer, shared society for women across the United Kingdom.

At Autism NI's South Belfast base this morning at the start of Autism Awareness Month, Minister Hopkins donned a blue tie in support of the organisation's 'Wear It Blue' campaign which encourages supporters to wear blue clothing for the day to increase awareness of autism and fund-raise for the charity.

Minister Hopkins said:

"I am delighted to extend my congratulations to Autism NI on their success in the latest round of Tampon Tax funding – and indeed to all four local charities that will benefit from a total of £451,411. The money will support projects that will have a real and vital impact in improving the lives of disadvantaged women and girls throughout Northern Ireland.

"It has been truly inspiring to see first-hand the important work of Autism NI and its impact on the lives of individuals with autism and their families.

"Currently over 6,900 children are diagnosed with Autism in Northern Ireland and this number is increasing steadily. At a time when voluntary and community groups in Northern Ireland face concerns and challenges due to the current political situation, statistics like these – and the real lives of the people and families behind them – vividly underscore the importance of having devolved institutions up and running and serving the whole community."

Autism NI CEO Kerry Boyd added:

"I am delighted that the Tampon Tax Fund has supported such a significant project for the Autism community in Northern Ireland. Many girls with Autism are not diagnosed until later in life and therefore miss out on critical intervention support at an early age. This project aims to bridge that gap through tailored support for females living with Autism so they can fulfil their full potential in life and also give them a voice to advocate their own

needs.”

The money will help Autism NI remove barriers for Autistic girls within the home, school and community environments to support achievement, enjoyment and full participation in a society that respects their rights.