

Conference Report 2026

We held the conference on 16th/17th July at St George's Centre in central Leeds, which helps to support homeless and disadvantaged people in Leeds.

53 people booked to attend, with 44 booked for Thursday, 43 for Friday. 4 of the Friday attendees declared themselves as neurotypical. Although many attendees were from the North of England, we reached as far North as Aberdeen and had several attendees from the South East and South West of England.

We had a [full programme](#), with a choice of two sessions in most slots, 15 presentations or workshops, including Charlie Hart (Ausome Charlie) giving a keynote talk for us. Most slides will be linked to on our website.

Income from ticket sales -	£5,738.25
Direct venue costs (room hire & catering) -	£3,593
Other expenses -	£924.59
Surplus -	£1,220.66

We cut expenses as much as possible for the event, but even so it was in doubt whether any surplus could be achieved until very close to the event itself. If we can use this year's surplus to go towards next year that would give us more slack in the planning.

Positive feedback was widespread during the conference and on social media. People seemed to enjoy the low pressure and spaced out structure of the day, the stim toys on cabaret style tables, the "information for attendees" we produced, and just being in an overwhelmingly ND space.

Negative feedback was a mixture of minor things, often contradictory to the positive feedback (e.g. people commented negatively about the round tables, the playdoh, and that they felt that more small talk was "expected" of them). Probably the core for negative comments were things that we "made do" with because of financial and support constraints, around high quality AV and subtitling (e.g. the venue provided laptops didn't have up to date software for automatic subtitling), or choices for refreshments (we went for the cheapest possible refreshments and catering options). Inconsistent food labelling for allergens was mentioned, which wouldn't have been the case with a larger / more expensive venue, the charity kitchen struggled with this. Better signposting between rooms, including the quiet room was mentioned, even though all 3 rooms were adjacent to each other with signs on the doors.

The final exercise at the conference asked people to say what they'd like in a future event, these are contradictory as we'd expect from individual respondents, but a few key things:

- Breaks are a nightmare to get right!
- Lots of things people asked for things we'd do with more money! (Better AV support, snacks, breakfast, etc, etc.) There's probably a balance between this and offering support for a wider set of people to come through free tickets and bursaries.
- Opportunity for distinct workshops, if we want, that only need us to facilitate - creative activities, journal / book club, debates, what research people are doing (and find collaborators), etc.

Recommendations for next year:

- Aim to break even at the same numbers as this year, so would need to keep costs very low again
- Try to find a venue further south with easy access to London and the South West, that would be financially viable
- Keep to a small venue, with cabaret seating and rooms adjacent to one another
- Aim to use this year's surplus to finance free places, plus limited travel bursaries, for people otherwise unable to attend
- Consider a creative strand, or just something that throughout that runs separate to the main programme and perhaps results in a creative output for afterwards
- Lots of love for the fidget toys and flexibility / low expectations of a social event, so build on this for any future conference
- Have a fresh sub-committee each year, with 1 or 2 people staying on for continuity, until we build a group of enthusiastic conference attendees who want to build on their experiences