



Newham Autism Peer Support Groups Testimonials

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Beckton Friendship Club

Group led by Shamilla

My Autistic Journey: From Isolation to Connection

Written by a local autistic Newham resident

As a shy child, I remember feeling lonely. Like many lonely people, it wasn't by choice that I felt this way. I just didn't know what was 'wrong' with me.

Spoiler: There wasn't anything wrong.

Last year, my friends started attending a local friendship group for adults with Autism & other conditions. They informed me about it & at first, I was very hesitant due to past negative experiences in similar settings. However, & quite candidly, it has changed my life for the better.

I spent years attempting to run away from my condition. I'd pretend I was 'normal' (another spoiler: 'normal' doesn't exist). I can remember trying to force myself to go through things I struggle with, trying to fit in & getting absolutely nowhere in life. Making many connections that wouldn't last for the long term.

Being around people who are like me is a giant, giant improvement. I don't feel like I have to force myself to be like others anymore. I can be myself & that feeling is amazing.

I'm so grateful to people who organise & facilitate groups for neurodivergent people. I'm able to make friends I've made through them & we're always happy to have a safe space where we're not judged. I genuinely look forward to our monthly group as we not only laugh & joke, but we also listen & support each other tremendously too.

I strongly recommend attending a group for neurodivergent people if & when you can because I've seen the improvement in not only myself but others in the group too, which is always inspiring to be around.

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[Carers of Autistic Adults Support Group](#)

Group led by Sue

1.

I am a mother of 4 Autistic adult children. I have 2 at home and the elder 2 in supported living.

I also have Autism, I was diagnosed October 28th 2024.

I have been coming to Sue's group Carers of Adult Autistic Children for a while now.

I am very proud of Sue for running this group. Most groups concentrate on young children and maybe teens. But nobody seems to realise Autistic children grow up to be Autistic Adults.

This group offers the parents a Safe Space to discuss our struggles, our hopes for the future, our experiences of Adult Social Care. In fact anything that bothers us as the we are parents who have struggled with the schooling system, the transition from child to adult services and support or lack of support.

I find out information from not just Sue but other carers and their experiences.

I feel completely safe in the group as there is no judgement, just love, support for each other.

The chance to make new friendships and above all..hope for the future♥

We meet at Central Park Cafe and I would like this to be our permanent meeting place as it has a comfortable setting and its warm and cosy.

This group has to exist for not just now, but for the future because...All Autistic Children Grow To Become Autistic Adults.

This group is for Parents of Autistic Adult Children now, then and forever♥

2.

I have been coming to the group for a few months now. We have had little support for my 23 year old daughter throughout her childhood and it has become more difficult as she has become an adult.

It's great to talk to others who are in similar situations and certainly has made me feel less isolated. The group's location in a lovely cafe in the park facilities a relaxed atmosphere.

The group has been particularly useful to me as it helped me to initiate a social care assessment for my daughter and to have contact with social workers and carers' groups.

The WhatsApp group is also a really useful source of information.

Sue facilitates the group really well and has been very welcoming.

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[Autism, work and anxiety peer support group](#)

Formally led by Aisha

1.

I just wanted to say that I have found this space very welcoming and inclusive and non-judgemental. It has helped me and is helping me understand myself but also my daughter who is on the autistic spectrum and so as helped me to look at how I engage with her. Although I was planning to enquire about a referral for myself, coming here has motivated me to put the plan in place rather than procrastinating on the idea and also wondering whether there is any point now. So yes this space has helped me come to terms with autism and I await to attend my assessment. I know either way this place has been very supportive and engaging for me and there are many things I will take away from here.

2.

I have found the Newham Autism, Work and Anxiety Group to be an extremely beneficial and well organised service. Aisha leads the group in a very thoughtful and sensitive and well-informed way. During the meetings everyone is given plenty of time to express themselves, and I have always felt that my voice was heard and understood. There is a lovely feeling of acceptance throughout the group time. Knowing that Aisha is autistic herself is very positive as well, and helps me feel I can open up without fear of judgement or misunderstanding. I very much hope this group can continue for a long time.

3.

How The Autism, Work and Anxiety Peer Support Group has helped me.



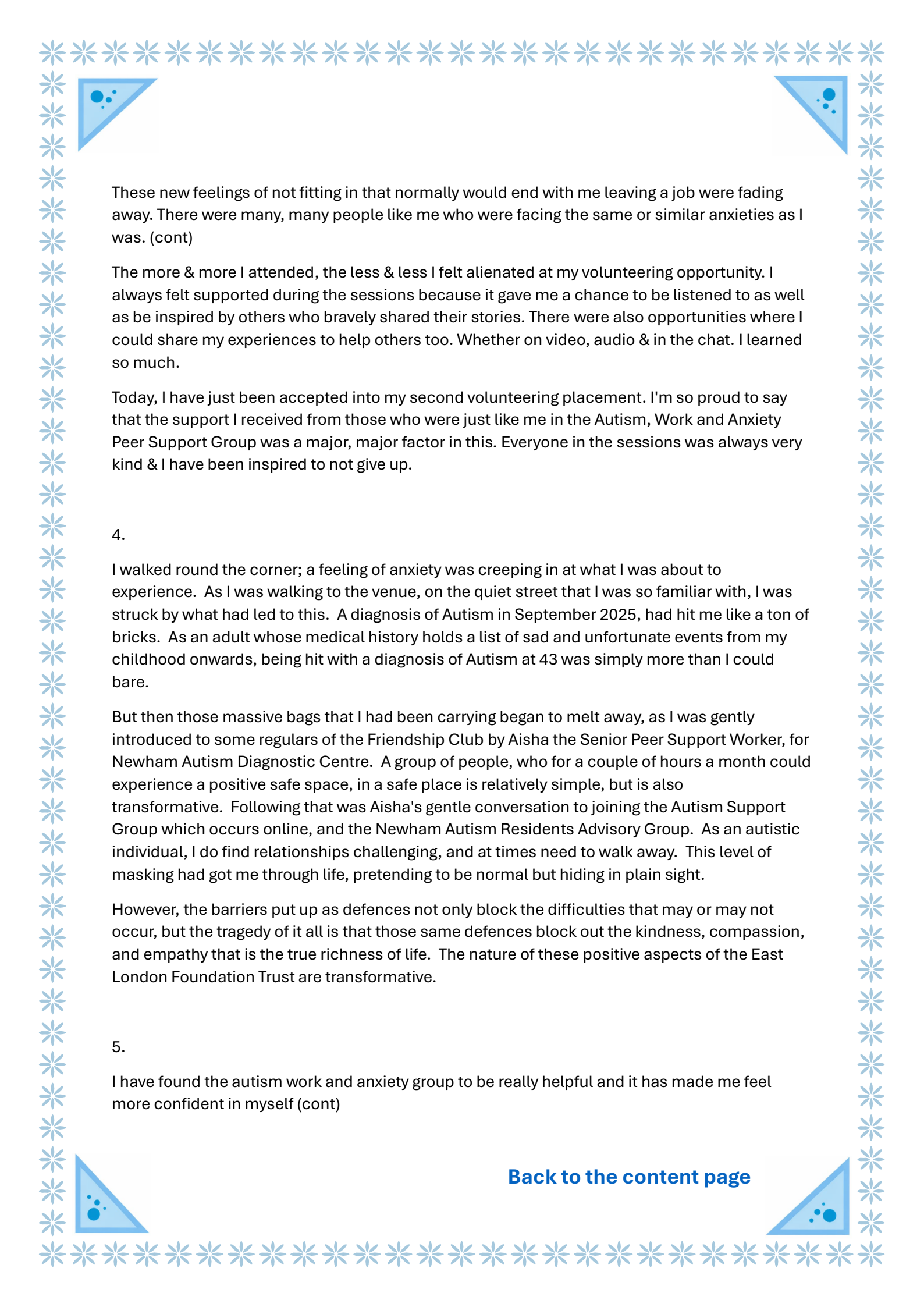
After many years of unemployment I was severely doubting myself. I can remember thinking I was all but done with the workforce. Bad experiences & even worse advice had put me off. In my own mind, I was unemployable.

After a lot of work, support & encouragement I started volunteering at a local food bank. I started to feel myself again. I had purpose for the first time in a very long time.

After a few weeks there, I came across the Autism, Work and Anxiety Peer Support Group from reading the Autism Newsletter. That first session was so crucial to me because it was there I started to realise I was not alone (cont)

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These new feelings of not fitting in that normally would end with me leaving a job were fading away. There were many, many people like me who were facing the same or similar anxieties as I was. (cont)

The more & more I attended, the less & less I felt alienated at my volunteering opportunity. I always felt supported during the sessions because it gave me a chance to be listened to as well as be inspired by others who bravely shared their stories. There were also opportunities where I could share my experiences to help others too. Whether on video, audio & in the chat. I learned so much.

Today, I have just been accepted into my second volunteering placement. I'm so proud to say that the support I received from those who were just like me in the Autism, Work and Anxiety Peer Support Group was a major, major factor in this. Everyone in the sessions was always very kind & I have been inspired to not give up.

4.

I walked round the corner; a feeling of anxiety was creeping in at what I was about to experience. As I was walking to the venue, on the quiet street that I was so familiar with, I was struck by what had led to this. A diagnosis of Autism in September 2025, had hit me like a ton of bricks. As an adult whose medical history holds a list of sad and unfortunate events from my childhood onwards, being hit with a diagnosis of Autism at 43 was simply more than I could bare.

But then those massive bags that I had been carrying began to melt away, as I was gently introduced to some regulars of the Friendship Club by Aisha the Senior Peer Support Worker, for Newham Autism Diagnostic Centre. A group of people, who for a couple of hours a month could experience a positive safe space, in a safe place is relatively simple, but is also transformative. Following that was Aisha's gentle conversation to joining the Autism Support Group which occurs online, and the Newham Autism Residents Advisory Group. As an autistic individual, I do find relationships challenging, and at times need to walk away. This level of masking had got me through life, pretending to be normal but hiding in plain sight.



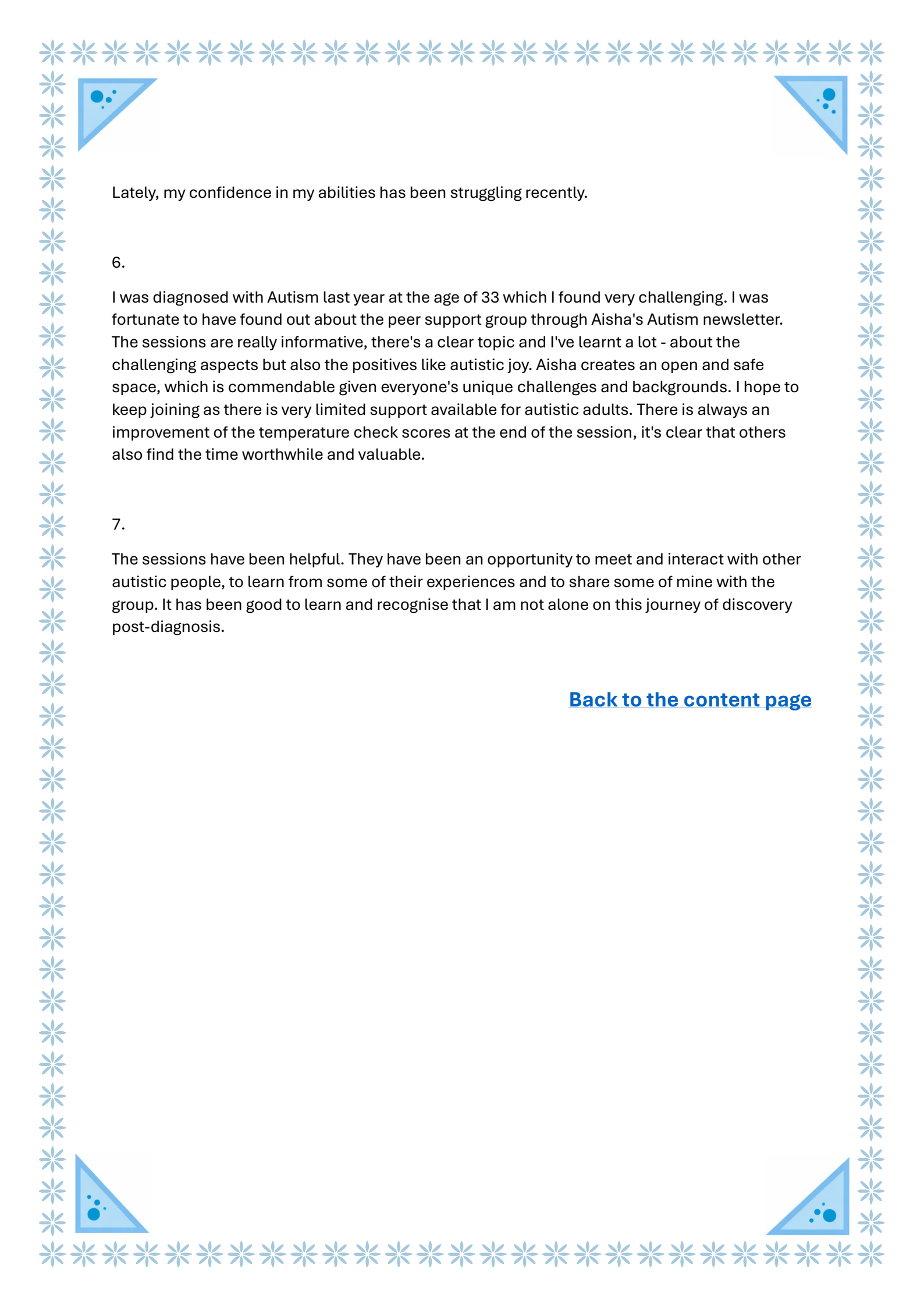
However, the barriers put up as defences not only block the difficulties that may or may not occur, but the tragedy of it all is that those same defences block out the kindness, compassion, and empathy that is the true richness of life. The nature of these positive aspects of the East London Foundation Trust are transformative.

5.

I have found the autism work and anxiety group to be really helpful and it has made me feel more confident in myself (cont)



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Lately, my confidence in my abilities has been struggling recently.

6.

I was diagnosed with Autism last year at the age of 33 which I found very challenging. I was fortunate to have found out about the peer support group through Aisha's Autism newsletter. The sessions are really informative, there's a clear topic and I've learnt a lot - about the challenging aspects but also the positives like autistic joy. Aisha creates an open and safe space, which is commendable given everyone's unique challenges and backgrounds. I hope to keep joining as there is very limited support available for autistic adults. There is always an improvement of the temperature check scores at the end of the session, it's clear that others also find the time worthwhile and valuable.

7.

The sessions have been helpful. They have been an opportunity to meet and interact with other autistic people, to learn from some of their experiences and to share some of mine with the group. It has been good to learn and recognise that I am not alone on this journey of discovery post-diagnosis.

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