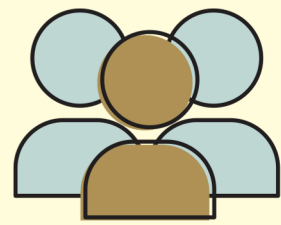


# Koala's three goals for the autistic and neurodivergent community:

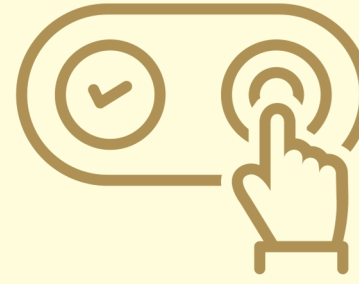
**Sustainable, independent lives**



**Authentic and sustainable Connections**



**Improved Physical and Mental Health**



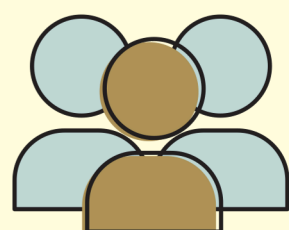
**Community Enabling and Self-advocacy**

**Feeling safe and confident to live life to the fullest**



## We will achieve this by:

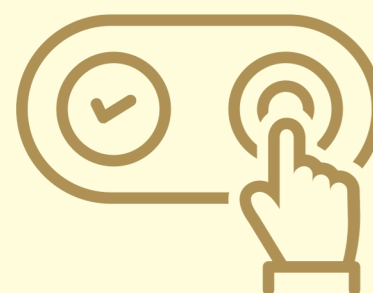
**Sensory-safe, demand-free environments**



**Peer Support**



**Engagement with Social, Health and Wellbeing Services**



**1:1 Support and Training Programmes**

**Supported by those with lived-experience**

# Koala's three goals for the local autistic and neurodivergent community:

## The 3 areas Koala aims to support:

**LACK OF SOCIAL CONNECTION:** Research shows that authentic social connections can decrease the risk of mental health issues in individuals and increase the longevity of life by up to 50%\*. However, many Autistic, neurodivergent people and those with Learning Disabilities (ND) report that there are often too many barriers to accessing social support (often communication and sensory based).

**POOR MENTAL AND PHYSICAL HEALTH:** ND people often struggle with their mental health which, in turn, can impact on executive functioning (EF) and can lead to burnout. EF impacts our ability to carry out simple tasks like eating healthily and exercising. 83% of ND individuals report issues with EF. The ability to create social connections, and accessing training on ND friendly strategies, increases effective EF.

**LACK OF ENABLING FACTORS:** ND people, and their families, are often not enabled to become more independent within their community. There remains a vast lack of coproduction to enable ND people to truly find their place in the world and navigate education, relationships, work and other societal expectations that others take for granted. There also appears to be a lack of self-advocacy and supporting people to become effective self-advocates.

## Koala tackle these 3 focus areas by:

**ENABLING SOCIAL CONNECTION:** Ensuring that our peers groups and training are consistently sensory-safe, demand free and nurturing. This means that ND people are more likely to be able to engage with us. We work with people individually so that they can access our groups, many of whom are severely anxious. This may be as simple as meeting them at the front door or sending them a video explaining the small steps they can take to access a group. We also ensure that our literature is jargon free and accessible.

**IMPROVING MENTAL AND PHYSICAL HEALTH OUTCOMES:** ND people having a safe and nurturing place that they can access will help to boost their mental health - this will then positively impact on physical health.

**ENABLING OUR COMMUNITY:** ND people are encouraged to build the hub the way THEY want it. We run regular polls and surveys regarding new resources and ways that we can run groups. We also promote and facilitate our community to also become volunteers. A key aspect of Koala is allowing ND people to engage with other professionals in a space where they feel safe and supported.

Projects include navigating safe relationships, health and wellbeing, autism training, self-advocacy training and 1:1 support to engage with external support (including medical and authorities).

\* Holt-Lunstad J, Smith TB, Layton JB (2010) Social Relationships and Mortality Risk: A Meta-analytic Review. PLOS Medicine 7(7): e1000316.