

Draft

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## **Horndean schoolgirl appointed autism charity ambassador**

A talented Horndean schoolgirl has been appointed the first child ambassador of the charity [Autism Unlimited](#).

Nevaeh Dunmore, 12, who is autistic, dyslexic and epileptic, has been gaining praise for her singing since the age of seven when she was chosen as the support act for X Factor winner Sam Bailey's south coast tour.

In April this year, the Horndean Technology College student was invited by Autism Unlimited to perform at the opening of its new autism assessment and diagnosis facility, The Chris Page Centre, in Christchurch, Dorset.

Her stunning performance has now led to the charity inviting her to become its first child ambassador, a role which will see her supporting campaigns to spread positive awareness of autism across the UK.

Nevaeh said: "I was really pleased to sing at the Chris Page Centre launch and really honoured when the charity asked me to become a child ambassador.

"People are often surprised when they find out I have autism, they're like: "No! I don't believe that." But I think my autism is part of the reason why I'm good at singing – it gives me a good ear for a lot of things. When listening back to my music, I notice little things that need changing which most people would typically overlook."

She continued: "Autism Unlimited believes autistic children can succeed in life and works with hundreds of children every year so they can reach their full potential.

"I don't see autism as a barrier either – it doesn't stop me from pursuing my passion of singing. It's an 'extra' which means I'm not just in the crowd – it makes me stand out and more individual and unique than everyone else and I want to help other autistic people feel that way too."

Sophia Grech is an internationally acclaimed opera singer and Autism Unlimited Patron, who was herself diagnosed with autism at the age of 45.

She said: "I met Nevaeh and was bowled over, not only by her talent, but by her wonderful ability to connect with people and inspire optimism and positivity. She is a true ray of sunshine. Her spirit and pride in being autistic is immediate – she was a natural choice as ambassador and I was thrilled that she agreed. She will inspire many autistic children to think big and be proud."

Siún Cranny, CEO of Autism Unlimited, agreed: "Nevaeh is a strong, independent girl with a stunning voice which, as well as making beautiful music, will spread powerful messages to and on behalf of autistic children everywhere.

"We are currently running a campaign called [Autism - It's more than you think](#) – and Nevaeh is living testament to that statement. We are thrilled to have her on board."

Nevaeh's proud mum Michaela Simkins, said: "When Nevaeh received her formal diagnoses for autism, I was relieved. No longer would she have to pretend to be ok, make excuses, feel uncomfortable or struggle with masking her sensory issues and emotions. From that day forward I was determined to support Nevaeh in accessing and achieving all her personal goals. We agreed that autism wouldn't stop her from doing anything, it would just make the journey more of an adventure.

"I am very proud of Nevaeh and her dedication to supporting others is without a doubt very important to her."

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Autism Unlimited employs nearly 500 people across the South of England and provides support to autistic people through education, residential care and supported living.

The charity also owns and operates Portfield School on two sites near Christchurch, which provides specialist teaching and preparation for employment for students aged 4 to 19.

Autism Unlimited's Chris Page Centre seeks to ease lengthy NHS referral times for autism pre-assessment and diagnosis. It also provide adults, children and families with support and advice, as well as signposting to other organisations through its Community Connect provision.

More information on referral to the Chris Page Centre is available from:

<https://www.autism-unlimited.org/support/diagnosis/>

Autism Unlimited would like to hear from autism professionals interested in working with the CPC. Please contact: 01202 483660.

Find Nevaeh on Instagram @nevaehsingerofficial to hear some of her songs.

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Picture captions:

Nevaeh Dunmore with mezzo soprano Sophia Grech, Patron of Autism Unlimited

Nevaeh Dunmore performed at the opening of Autism Unlimited new Chris Page Centre

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