

BOLSTER COMMUNITY



Newsletter

A Christmas Message from Bolster Community CEO

Looking into 2022 from the comfort of a Christmas glow, I feel it's important to acknowledge and honour what we have been through and the many lessons we've learned this year. In many ways, 2021 was the year we paused and unpicked the frustrations and disappointments of the COVID 19 pandemic, yet we also became more aware of what is really important like the joy of simple connections and the wonder of the good within society.

That said... there was pressure to do better and reach more people in 2021 but there never seemed to be enough time. It felt like we were constantly going back a few steps before moving forward. At times it seemed that in our haste to pack away Christmas 2020, we had forgotten to unravel the lights of Christmas past.

So, what have we learned?

We learned that recovery and reconnecting is slow and steady. We learnt that children and people with a disability cannot benefit from services that do not exist. We learnt that we had to do things differently, we became more resourceful and at times we had to stand up more frequently to have the voices of our participants be heard. We sat with local families wracked with worry about money and it became very clear that it is hard to think big when living small. We grew to know that when you live in poverty you have much less choice over everything in life.

On the positive side, we found absolute joy in the fierce advocacy of the Primary School Principal who demanded help for a family whose child could not attend big School as she had no uniform, education is easy carried, we know but not if you cannot attend school! We saw the joy in the eyes of the children and the relief in parents when their child gained confidence through attending the "Friends Resilience" courses and we felt the camaraderie and value of collaboration from the Family Support Hub partners pulling together to achieve a better outcome for children in need. We felt privileged to be able to ease the load for individuals and families struggling with terminal illness, the heat, nutritious food, uniforms and transport we were able to offer, didn't fix the problem but they eased the path for many.

2021 taught us that partnership is key. Local businesses, local churches, local organisations, local people never shied away from helping others and they continue to ask how they could help!

We learnt that you need people at the top and throughout an organisation committed to improving outcomes for others and we realised how blessed we are to have a fantastic supportive board, committed staff, volunteers & partners that keep on pushing to get more done!

In 2021 we were privileged to have the ear of some really impressive people, we welcomed Sue Gray and her Cabinet Office team into the Meadow in Newry and told of the impact of poverty, the Troubles and the recent Pandemic. We asked Sue and her team to ensure policy creates real change and provides a levelling up opportunity for the hardest to reach in society. We also, as you will read later in the newsletter, welcomed Minister Robin Swan to a celebration hosted by us to celebrate our amazing volunteers from Home2Hospital and our Family Support staff team. We were also keen to acknowledge our strong partnership with the Northern Ireland Health Executive and were delighted to show new Housing Executive CEO Grainia Lona around our workshop and office space.

As Covid-19 and ill health continues to impact our community, those who are struggling need support more than ever. Support looks different now as households

need us to walk beside them for longer. Loneliness continues to ravage the lives of our seniors, who often feel disconnected from society. This inevitably puts a severe strain on families who are feeling overwhelmed and in need of help to get by.

Sadly, 2021 also robbed us of some absolute characters that we got to know and care for through Home2Hospital service. Like their family and communities, we will miss their company and feel their loss deeply.

We really appreciate all of the help, guidance and donations we received from across our community in 2021. If you want to know more about us or what we do, don't be a stranger, lift the phone or drop us an email. If you are thinking this year about donating to a child, please think about the teenager. Too often teens are forgotten in Christmas giving, and yet they are fighting to be heard on so many levels. So, if you would like to make a Christmas donation, please think about purchasing a voucher from the Buttercrane or Sports Direct, or O'Neill's or purchase some toiletries, cosmetics or pyjamas. Working with teenagers, we know too many who go without, so we really need your help to make their Christmas special.

Consider us if you would like to use your Spend Local Card to donate to a local organisation. Help us to help others this Christmas. You have until December 14th to use your Spend Local card so why not buy some fab Acorn Candles and support our #ScentsOfAchievement range made by my young people of mixed ability in our workshop.

In all honesty, we are hoping for a quiet Christmas and healthy New Year for all. We hope that you will keep washing your hands, maintaining your distance and follow the guidance so sometime soon (fingers crossed!) we can all live more fully and freely in what has become our new normal.



Signing over and out for 2021.

Jacinta Linden

CEO Bolster Community

PAVING THE WAY FOR AUTISM CONNECT

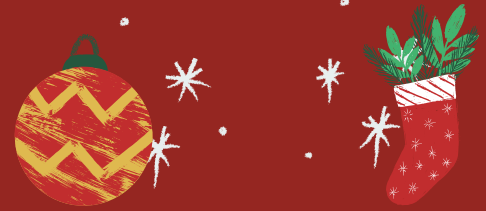
Building on the support we have been providing for adults with autism in our community we are thrilled to announce our newest Abilities service, Autism Connect in partnership with the SHSCT. Funded as a pilot for 22/23, the new service will be rolled out by project lead Jena Henning early in 2022.

Centred around supporting those adults with an autism only diagnosis or awaiting a diagnosis and their carers, the Autism Connect project will allow us to establish a range of support, activities and opportunities for our "awesome" community. Based on a co-design methodology, Autism Connect will provide adults with autism and their carers a highly responsive, individualised intervention based on the recovery model of care. We will also provide information and signposting for those with or without an autism diagnosis and serve as a conduit for those adults between professionals and other service providers. Working closely with a co-production team of professionals and other relevant statutory, community and voluntary sector and independent sector organisations, Autism Connect will roll out a programme of social enterprise/work taster sessions to provide opportunities across local employment and community settings to sample work tasks.

Being Awesome Social Hub will provide informal evening, morning and Saturday sessions where visiting speakers, representatives and adults can come together informally to participate in talks, activities and excursions. Activities will be designed specifically to meet the interests and interests of those attending.

We are currently working with a co-design team of young autistic adults, autism professionals and carers to pull the finer details of this pilot together but already there is a lot of interest and excitement for what is to come!

If you know anyone who may benefit from being involved, get in touch by contacting Jena on 028 3083 5764 or email: jena@bolstercommunity.org



Merry Christmas 2021

& Happy New Year

2022

From
everyone
here at

**BOLSTER
COMMUNITY**



ACORN RECOGNISED AT SOCIAL ENTERPRISE AWARDS

In October of this year, we hosted our volunteers and staff at a glittering Gala Awards Ceremony right here in the Meadow Newry as the Social Enterprise awards zoomed in to our workspace. Chairman Eamonn and Vice Chair Martina joined us to personally thank the candlemakers, staff and volunteers for all of their input over the year. There was fun galore over the evening with lots of light entertainment on the night from Gary Carroll and to be fair Allison Slater, Gary and Kate Cahill gave a rousing rendition of a few meatloaf classics!

Word on the ground is there is a video of Kathy Wilson circulating, where ready to pick up the award for Volunteer team of the year, Kathy poised for success, realises we didn't win and pulls some less than courteous grimaces - worth seeing we are informed! The Acorn candle making team represented Bolster Community well as always and looked glamorous while doing so! Olivia our chief smiler zoomed in suitably glam for the occasion and provided fab vocals to a digital duet with Gary. What a night together with our friends and colleagues was just what was needed!

On top of Acorn's success, this year CEO Jacinta Linden was named in the Social Enterprise Futures roll of honour as one of the Top 6 Social Enterprise leaders in the UK! and Bolster was listed in the Pioneer Post as one of the Top 100 social enterprises in the UK! Go Us



Bolster Community praised by Health Minister for providing vital service



Minister for Health Robin Swann and NM&DDC Deputy Chairperson Oonagh Magennis thank volunteers and staff from Bolster Community for going above and beyond during pandemic

It's not often the Northern Ireland Health Minister pays you a visit to praise your work! Back in September, Bolster hosted a celebration event to celebrate and congratulate our amazing volunteers and Family Support team who have worked tirelessly supporting the most vulnerable elderly and families across our region.

Last year, our Home2Hospital service was heavily relied upon by households across The Mournes and Slieve Gullion areas. It is an absolute pleasure to play our part in helping people get better through attending out of area hospital appointments. Over a number of months, our dedicated community members answered the call, and provided transport to 2250 appointments across Northern Ireland.

Bolster Community CEO Jacinta Linden reflects "I am humbled by the dedication that this small band of volunteers have shown in supporting the vulnerable in our community. At a time when many services were withdrawn, they stepped up to the challenge, not only providing transport but a listening ear to isolated older people during a very frightening time. I'm sure they won't mind me mentioning that many of our drivers are past retirement age themselves but they didn't let that stop them."

Also being celebrated on the day was the work that the Bolster Community Family Support Team carried out, particularly through the lockdown periods. Gemma, Jena, Noreen and Kate delivered food, medicine, educational resources and emotional support to families at a time when it was most needed. Allison Slater, Operations Manager at Bolster Community said, "I am so proud of our team. They made themselves available to families in the evenings and weekends when they were most needed, going above and beyond what was expected of them during the pandemic. When the parents of our young adults with learning needs asked for some face-to-face respite because they were concerned about the young people's mental health; the team got together and came up with a plan to keep everyone safe, remaining compliant with guidelines and still ensuring everyone got some face-to-face support each week and additional group support via Zoom,

At the awards ceremony, Robin Swann, Health Minister, said: "I am delighted to be able to recognise the valuable contribution by all those involved in the transportation of older people to and from hospital appointments and those providing assistance for the most vulnerable families and young adults with learning needs. Very often volunteers are not publicly acknowledged for the vital service they provide so this is a very welcome opportunity to meet and say thank you to our unsung heroes for their unique contribution." Bolster Community are currently offering volunteering opportunities with Home2Hospital services, Family Support services and afterschool activities for children with additional needs. For more information on how we could help you and your family, contact Paula on 02830835764



PHONE FIRST <small>Make sure you PHONE FIRST before going to Craigavon / Daisy Hill Hospital Emergency Departments / South Tyrone Minor Injuries Unit</small> Monday - Friday 9am - 9pm <small>(excludes bank holidays)</small>	 SELF CARE A range of common illnesses can be treated with over the counter medicine. Visit your local pharmacist.	 GP / URGENT CARE GP OUT OF HOURS Your GP can help with general health issues. Urgent Care GPOOH if you cannot wait until your GP reopens.
 PHONE FIRST	 MINOR INJURIES For minor injuries e.g. cuts, sprains, minor burns. South Tyrone, Daisy Hill and Craigavon Area Hospital.	 EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT 24/7 at Craigavon Area Hospital and Daisy Hill Hospital. For serious / urgent medical conditions.

COVID-19 safety

FRESH AIR

Public Health Agency

WE ALL MUST DO IT TO GET THROUGH IT

Newsletter part funded by:

HSC Southern Health and Social Care Trust

<http://www.selfhelpguides.ntw.nhs.uk/southerntrust/>

Programmes & Training at Bolster Community

Our Programmes and Training team have been taking stock and planning for a busy year ahead! Like all areas within Bolster Community, we have learned to adapt and respond to the challenges that the past year has brought to our communities. We were delighted when COVID 19 restrictions eased and we were able to host regular face-to-face programmes in our newly decorated Marcus Street premises!

On the approach to Christmas we are finishing up on 3 programmes. Our "Friends for Life", Neighbourhood Renewal programme, facilitated by Joanne Carragher and Christina Ryan has been meeting Wednesday evenings and is near the end of the 10 week run.

Participants are a lively bunch of 14 children aged 8 to 11 who through fun activities learn how to build resilience, improve social skills, increase ability to cope with stress and fear and grow confidence and communication skills.

Our 'Fun Friends' bunch meet on Thursdays with Valentina Geanina and Claire Kempston as joint facilitators. This is a group of 4 to 7 year olds who through the course of fun, play-based activities are learning skills to relax and self-regulate, engaging resilience skills early on and promoting self-confidence and ability to focus. This is also a 10 week programme, near completion.

Go Girl programme finished up on Friday Nov 19th with a grand finale trip to 'We are Vertigo'. This programme facilitated by Tracy McCartney and supported by Justina MacDonald brought 12 teenage girls together to cover topics such as identity, self-esteem, communication, healthy relationships and goal setting with lots of activity-based learning and interaction. It was a great success, feedback was positive and friends were made.

In Marcus Street under Kate Cahill we hosted a number of Parenting workshops on a range of topics from 'Self-care', 'Supporting your child with anxiety' and 'Managing Challenging behaviours'. These workshops are set to continue into the new year. On 12th Jan we are hosting a 'Making Money and Mind matter' session to promote financial wellbeing. Tracy and Justina our Training and support leads have an exciting suite of programmes, projects and itinerary lined up for 2022. Programmes are proving popular and there are already many waiting lists for many programmes. We have been taking expressions of interest from local schools and hope to roll out the Fun Friends and Friends for Life programmes in the school setting. We have a bank of trained 'Friends' facilitators ready and hope to expand our range of programmes. So, bring it on 2022!



**Southern Health
and Social Care Trust**



Comhairle Ceantair
an Iúir, Mhúrn agus an Dúin
Newry, Mourne and Down
District Council



**COMMUNITY
FUND**

FAMILY

PARENTING SUPPORT GROUP



Being the parent of a newly diagnosed child with a physical or learning disability can be overwhelming. If you are the parent of a pre-school age child with a disability then you and your child would be very welcome at Bolster Community Parent Support Group. The group meet fortnightly in a warm, safe and inclusive environment; where we can offer signposting and advice, support with self-care, friendship or just a listening ear. Come along and meet other parents who are at the start of their disability journey.

**Every 2 weeks on a
Wednesday morning
10.30am-12noon**

**Location:
The Court Rooms
7 Main St,
Markethill,
Armagh
BT60 1PH**



For further information call Catriona
on 028 3083 5764

Bolster Parenting Support for Markethill

On the 20th October 2021 Lord Mayor of Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council, Cllr Glen Barr, and staff from Bolster Community welcomed parents from Markethill and the surrounding areas to a new drop-in group for parents and carers of pre-school children. The project supported by Elaine Mooney, Mark Irwin and Colm McCafferty of the Southern Trust saw Bolster Community's own Caitriona McMullan and Jena Henning take the lead in discussing how best to provide informal, relaxed spaces for parents and carers of children under assessment or diagnosed with additional needs to connect.

Jena told us, "I have been working with families of disabled children from across Armagh for some time, as part of pilot project funded by Southern Health and Social Care Trust. Many of the families have pre-school children who are undergoing assessment for learning or physical disabilities and these parents all say the same thing; that they feel isolated and alone and struggle to find someone who understands what they are going through. When I talked to parents, health visitors, social workers and the team at Bolster about how we could help, everyone agreed that they needed a safe place to meet other parents who were facing the same challenges, talk about their experiences, gain peer support, make friends and have some fun. Bolster Community already run a National Lottery Community Fund project, 'Connections' which offers support to children with disabilities and their parents from across Newry and Mourne and we have just extended the service to meet the need in Markethill and surrounding areas. Over the coming weeks we plan to have some speakers, wellbeing sessions, parenting advice sessions and most importantly lots of conversations and laughs."

Lord Mayor of Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council, Cllr Glen Barr, launched the group, welcoming the parents and children and reflects "It was a great pleasure to be invited to Bolster's 'Connections' Parent's Group in Markethill today, to meet with some of the parents and children from the surrounding areas. I would like to wish them every success with the group as they move forward to support more parents and their children.

One of the parents who attended the sessions said "This is a great opportunity to meet with other parents who are experiencing the same frustrations as I am. I love how the group is small and we have a safe space for the children to express themselves."

What's New for January?

BOLSTER COMMUNITY

FUN FRIENDS

4-7 years old

Fun FRIENDS guides the social and emotional development of children using fun, play-based group activities. It nurtures the child's development by teaching how to engage resilience skills early on.

Start date: 27/01/2022

Time: 3.30pm

Location: Newry

Duration 10 weeks

FRIENDS FOR LIFE

8-11 years old

Friends for Life builds resilience, social and emotional skills in children. It is proven to reduce anxiety, as well as equip participants with the tools to rise to life's challenges.

Start date: 26/01/2022

Time: 3.30pm

Location: Newry

Duration 8 weeks

PARENTS PLUS SPECIAL NEEDS

For parents of children of mixed ability
Parents of children of mixed ability can face significant challenges, especially during the adolescent years. With our Special Needs Programme parents can get support to manage these challenges, improve their family's well-being and strengthen their links with other parents.

Start date: 01/02/2022

Time: 10.30am

Location: Newry

Duration 8 weeks

PARENTING SUPPORT GROUP

For parents of children 11-16

Being the parent of a newly diagnosed child with a physical or learning disability can be overwhelming. If you are the parent of a pre-school age child with a disability then you and your child would be very welcome.

Start date: TBC

Time: 10.30am

Location: Markethill

Every 2 weeks

INTERESTED IN REGISTERING FOR AN UPCOMING PROGRAMME?

Contact: Justina MacDonald
on 028 3083 5764 or
trainingsupport@
bolstercommunity.org

PARENTING WORKSHOPS

'Making Money and Mind Matter'
by Kith & Kin Financial

Dates: 12/01/22

Time: 7.00pm

Location: Newry

Preparing your child for
secondary school

Date: 27/01/2022

Time: 7.30pm

Location: Newry

PARENTS PLUS ADOLESCENTS

For parents of children 11-16

The Adolescents Programme considers how parents can connect with and build good relationships with their teenagers while also being firm and influential in their lives.

Start date: 02/02/2022

Time: 6.30pm

Location: Newry

Duration 8 weeks

GO GIRL

11-16 year old girls

GO GIRL aims to give every girl an opportunity to become more self-aware and recognise their own strengths and abilities.

Themes of Identity, Communication and Relationships are explored in a group setting.

Start date: 22/02/2021

Time: 4pm

Location: Newry

Duration 6 weeks



Find out more:
bolstercommunity.org

All programme dates are
subject to change due to
current Covid-19 restrictions



ACORN

SCENTS OF ACHIEVEMENT

ABILITY

Acorn gets a new look!

Bolster Community is delighted to announce the launch of our fresh and exciting rebranded Acorn Home Scents range. After many months of hard work, tough decisions and lots of trialling and testing, we're so excited to roll out our rebrand right on time for Christmas!

In the refresh, we've kept all of our best-selling scents and added a couple of highly anticipated new additions! The Soy Wax Candles are made from plant wax and contain no added chemicals. We use luxury natural fragrance oils to give a lasting scent. Our products are never tested on animals and with over 90% of our packaging now being recyclable, you'll get peace of mind while you enjoy a delightful scent all day or night long. We've also made sure that every product in the new range is vegan friendly, so they are a perfect gift for the vegan in your family this festive season!

We are thrilled to announce our Charity Partnership with the luxury resort Killeavy Castle. This is a very special partnership for us at Bolster Community and it has been a pleasure to work with Jason, Terry and their team on this emerging project. It is very fitting that Killeavy Castle is based in the heart of the Slieve Gullion area, as this is a region very close to our hearts and where we provide a range of services. Killeavy Castle's commitment to the locality is to be commended. From their passion for sourcing products locally, growing their own produce onsite and not least their endeavour to replant Slieve Gullion to its original glory by planting several thousand native trees in the coming years. Our partnership has been a couple of months in the making and we like to think it looks like a strong match given the connection between our brands - the Killeavy Castle logo of an Oak tree and the Acorn icon which is our social enterprise brand logo. The Acorn is the logo for our Social Enterprise, which is a perfect match to Killeavy's logo, the Oak Tree.

We are planning many interesting endeavours together that will involve the wonderful volunteers we have right across our charity and social enterprise. We also hope to be able to work with Jason and his team in conjunction with some of the services we provide. There is a wealth of passion and knowledge within the team at Killeavy Castle that we are excited to tap into.



Partnerships like this mean the world to us as it allows us to contribute even more to the people that need our services in the Newry, Mourne and Down region. Our Candlemakers are extremely excited to see the Acorn products which they produce displayed for sale in Killeavy Castle. We know that will be a proud moment for them and their families alike. In the words of a famous 14th Century proverb 'From little acorns -Mighty oaks do grow' and that's what we hope for this partnership.

Our new range is available to purchase from Killeavey Castle, directly from us at our Whitegates workshop where each candle is made, or from our website bolstercommunity.org/shop

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BOLSTER
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Newry, BT34 1ET

18 Newcastle Street
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