

BOLSTER COMMUNITY



Newsletter

AUTISM CONNECT: BOLSTER LAUNCHES NEW SERVICES FOR ADULTS WITH AUTISM

In March 2020, the Southern Health and Social Care Trust commissioned Bolster Community to organise a consultation to gain an in-depth understanding of the wider social issues relating to autism. Bolster Community adopted an approach of a co-designed conduit for change, where health professionals, adults with autism, service delivery organisations, service users and carers could collectively consider the aspects of service and support required and subsequently produce recommendations for a better future. This culminated in an online conference in March 2021 which we branded, "Being Awesome: Autism @9 Adulthood 2021". The timing of the project coincided with the commencement of restrictions to curb the spread of the COVID pandemic, and this affected our implementation plans and the wider context in which people with autism were living. We adapted to the new circumstances and across a series of events spanning the 12 months to March 2021, we were able to gather views of more than 700 people, many from hard-to-reach backgrounds, who participated in the research.



ABILITY
**AUTISM
CONNECT**



What is Autism Connect?

- Autism Connect is a new community-based autism support service for adults with an autism only diagnosis.

Autism Connect can support -

- Anyone over the age of 18 who has a diagnosis of Autism but without a learning disability or mental health diagnosis living in the Southern Trust Area.
- Adults awaiting a diagnosis of Autism living in the Southern Trust Area.

Autism Connect will offer-

- A person centered assessment of need.
- Information and signposting services.
- Assistance with form filling and attending appointments.
- A programme of social enterprise/work taster sessions.
- An informal Social Hub where adults can come together informally to participate in talks, activities and excursions. Activities will be person centered to meet the interests of those attending.
- Opportunities for connection, employment, interview and orientation support.

Whilst this service is available to adults awaiting diagnosis it does not influence the diagnostic process.



For further info email
jena@bolstercommunity.org

WHICH BRINGS US TO AUTISM CONNECT!

My name is Jena Henning, I have been working in Bolster from September 2018. I commenced my role as Training for Life coach and then after a year continued down the path of family support worker. From this, an opportunity became available in Armagh & Dungannon for a Disability family support worker. I continued in this post for over a year. This post is now currently being carried out by my new work colleague, Liz Rand. I am still currently leading on our BEST club project. This is an after-school programme for children with a disability and their siblings which runs over 2 days each week. I have recently been successful in securing a new full-time role as Autism Connect Navigator. I am working closely with our Bolster Buddies to produce a more person-centred service which will promote self-esteem and independence. I am excited to be back working with autistic adults. Our aim is to create a much-needed social outlet where these adults can meet together in a relaxed, informal environment whilst receiving support and sign posting services if needed. At its heart, this will be an informal social hub designed around the likes and interests of people with autism. I plan to offer excursions, day trips, guest speakers and various inclusive activities, while also being able to support opportunities for connection, employment, interview and orientation support.

For more information contact Jena 028 3083 5764 / jena@bolstercommunity.org



Bolster Community proudly announce their Charity Partnership with Best Property Services



Bolster Community is very proud to announce their new charity partnership with local leading property agency Best Property Services. Bolster Community is a charity and social enterprise based in the heart of Newry. We offer practical support for individuals and families, helping them to get through and get ahead. Bolster Community offers a wide range of services across three main categories including Family, Ability & Seniors.

The teams at Bolster Community and Best Property Services have identified synergies within the two organisations which will allow them to work collaboratively on projects. This will be to the benefit of the local communities in Newry, Warrenpoint and beyond.

Jacinta Linden, CEO Bolster Community said: "The Best family run the longest established property agency in Newry and have recently welcomed members of the 5th generation to the family business. The fact that they are a family business, with strong family values at the core of their organisation is very heartening to us in Bolster Community. Everyday in our work we strive to make the lives of local families in need better. We are very excited by the many ways in which we can work with the Best Property Services team to deliver for those local families who need our support. We are confident that Garry, Olivia and the team will be a tremendous support not only to our own team members but also to some of our service clients as we move forward."

Olivia Best, Managing Director of Best Property Services Warrenpoint added: "Best Property Services are delighted to work alongside the incredible Bolster Community. We have been so impressed with the inspirational work they do in the local area and the positive impact this will have on so many lives. As a local business, we had been looking at ways in which we can give back, be more socially conscious and help

support the local community. That's when we discovered Bolster and were instantly struck by Jacinta's warmth and enthusiasm for the charitable work that they do. As a business that deals with housing in the private sector, we wanted to be able to contribute a portion of our sales towards Bolster in support of their efforts to improve the quality of living for so many. We are excited to explore a variety of avenues in which we can work alongside Bolster & look forward to being part of these projects as much as we can."



Our hard working team of dedicated Bolster Buddies remain the linchpin of our Acorn scents range and we continue to be blown away by all their achievements. Their energy and positivity light up our workshop and we are so proud of each and every one of them.

We continue to be busy behind the scenes trying to identify potential new customers and spreading the Acorn scents love far and wide. Thanks to Stephen McClelland NMEA we were made aware of the Newry and Mourne Enterprise Agency's Innovate Accelerate Programme and have been actively looking to expand our reach and sales into a wider export market. In an exciting move our products were selected by Storybox NI to form part of a hamper package to the Northern Ireland Bureau in New York in March 2022. This is an achievement we are incredibly thrilled about!

Building on our charity partnership with Killeavy Castle, and continuing our collaboration with Kehoes Kars, Storybox NI, we are delighted to now be joining forces with BEST Property Services, based in Warrenpoint.

St Colman's Students Partner With Bolster in Preparation for International Women's Day!

Over the course of a week, Emmet, Leo, Paul Og, Daragh, Jeril, Jamie, Thomas and Jack from St. Colman's assisted our busy Acorn candlemakers to produce over 300 candles which were sold at the NMDCC International Women's Day Event on March 11th.

Mr Franklin, Vice Principal of St. Colman's and Mr Mark Doran welcomed the opportunity for a group of students from St. Colman's College to learn about Social Enterprise and charitable purpose.

Conor said, "The candles are finished to such a high standard and make a brilliant gift option. I can see how purchasing a candle means a lot to the team at Bolster. The candlemakers and staff literally pour their hearts into them."

Check out our website and see the full rang of products
bolstercommunity.org/shop



BOLSTER BUDDIES

Our Bolster Buddy service is aimed at helping people with learning disabilities or support needs to reconnect with their local communities as lock-down finally lifts. The service is aimed at promoting independence, building community connections and improving life skills.

Service users will be paired with a Bolster Buddy, an experienced Support Worker, who will assist with planning activities and goal setting. The service user & parent/ carer will agree a plan of what support is needed. Bolster Buddies is a purchased service, which may be eligible for Self-Directed Support from the SHSCT. If you have a social worker, you can check if you meet the criteria for SDS. Bolster Buddies will have the freedom to choose how their support will be provided, however provision of support will be subject to the availability of an appropriately skilled Support Worker.



Costs

The service's hourly rate is based on a requirement for a single support person as follows:

- £12.90 per person per hour
- Any travel for activities required by the Support Worker for transport using their own vehicle during the service is charged at 45p per mile. The start and finish point for calculation is Bolster Office BT35 6UA. Any mileage caps/distance limits required by the bill payer must be advised before the service commences.
- Any other costs during the service that may be incurred e.g. entrance fees, activity costs etc. are paid by the individual for both themselves and a portion for the support worker according to the size of the group in a group setting.

For more information contact Jena 028 3083 5764 / jena@bolstercommunity.org

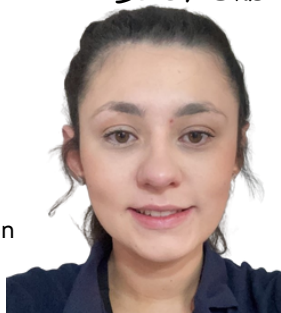
BEST CLUB IS THE BEST!

Best Club is an after-school club for school age children with a disability and their siblings. These sessions are child-led and designed around play to develop resilience and confidence. We are delighted to offer BEST Club to 35 children who attend our weekly sessions. A varied timetable in place sees the children benefit from boxing, dancing, sports, arts & crafts, movie nights plus much much more!! We have a full packed schedule from now to the end of June. We are currently getting excited planning for our summer activities for BEST Club. Over the summer months, we are planning a variety of fun-filled day trips for all of the family!



"BEST Club was able to provide the break that I really needed due to having limited supports at home. It also gives the kids a great opportunity to meet new people and improve their social skills."

Parent of a child attending BEST Club



For more information, contact Orla on 028 3083 5764 or email orla@bolstercommunity.org.

SUMMER FUN @ BEST CLUB

We are excited to offer families registered with BEST Club fun day trips for Summer.

*Where are
we going to:*

Cranfield Alpacas • Butterfly Farm, Maze & Gardens • Mount Panther • Planetarium Armagh Fort Evergreen Warrenpoint



MASTERING MORE PROGRAMMES THANKS TO MACE!!

The New Year has really got off to a flying start within the Training and Development area of Bolster Community.

We have over up on 30 programmes running and scheduled in school and community settings both locally and further afield. The ramp-up in activity is due to Bolster Community recently being awarded the Mace contract for specific interventions with families, children and young people both locally and in areas across NI, including Fermanagh, Derry & Strabane.

MACE (Multiple Adverse Childhood Experiences) Project

What is the MACE project?

Experiences of adversity and trauma occur in almost everyone's life at some point. Sometimes these experiences occur in our childhood when we are more sensitive to trauma and the effect can last longer. How we learn to cope with these experiences can help improve future outcomes for us, the children we care for, our families and friends and the wider community.

The MACE (Multiple Adverse Childhood Experiences) project aims to help children / families who are at risk from multiple adverse experiences (ACE's) in their lives through raising awareness about childhood trauma/adversity and providing nurturing support within our communities. The MACE project aims to provide three categories of nurturing support for families: universal, targeted and specialist.

Under the Mace Project we provide three service interventions. These are the Friends Resilience programme, Parents Plus Special Needs programme and Family Support.

The Friends Resilience Programme is a licensed suite of resilience-based programmes specific to children age 4-7 & 8-12. Based on Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) FRIENDS has been recognised by the World Health Organisation as "the only evidence-based programme effective in reducing anxiety as a universal targeted intervention" (WHO, 2004). It is recognised as best practice for the prevention of anxiety and stress, proven to build social and emotional skills, reduce anxiety, equip participants with tools to rise to life's challenges, promote confidence and ability to focus, improve capacity to relax and regulate emotions."

As such the Friends Resilience programme has been requested by approximately 30 schools to date with an estimated 724 participants due to register. The programme can be delivered either as a universal offering to already established groups e.g., a class in school or more targeted to individual children identified through other services e.g., CAMHS, GPs, Family Support Hubs or Parents who are brought together into age-appropriate groups.

The Parents Plus Special Needs programme is a targeted intervention under MACE. What is Parents Plus Special Needs? (PPSN)

Parents Plus Special Needs programme is a practical, solution-focused and strengths-based programme which supports parents of adolescents with an intellectual disability to manage challenges, improve family wellbeing and strengthen their link with other parents. PPSN is evidence-based and developed in partnership with 13 Disability teams, and in consultation with 97 parents who participated in focus groups. The programme does not concentrate on specific diagnoses or disabilities. Instead, it supports parents in managing issues that are common for families who have an adolescent with an intellectual disability. PPSN was developed as a support for parents who are raising an older child or adolescent with a mild, moderate or severe intellectual disability. Whilst the programme is designed for older children and young adults, elements of it can be used when working with parents of younger children and has been used successfully with parents of children aged 1-8.

Family Support through Bolster is a specialist intervention

Family Support is a targeted early intervention service for families of children aged 0-3 and 11-13 who are facing difficulties. It is anticipated that by intervening both earlier & more effectively Family Support provides a guided pathway to reduce the risk of poor outcomes for families. It aims to strengthen social supports and coping capacities and can also compensate family members for the negative or disabling effects of disadvantage or adversity. Family Support nurtures adult/child relationships and environments to help children develop strong cognitive and emotional skills and the resilience required to flourish. Early intervention and collaborative working are essential to reducing the impact of ACEs and family support will address house-hold dysfunction by improving parenting skills, developing relationships, providing professional support and connecting parents and children with additional services that will alleviate poverty, improve mental health, reduce risk of family breakdown, support parents living with domestic abuse and improve family well being. As a 1-1 intervention family support can be a strong resource to help children overcome adversity within a range of adverse childhood experiences.

We continue to deliver these interventions throughout the year in an attempt to combat the effects of ACE's by promoting the health, development and well-being of children, young people and their families through building on strengths and overcoming difficulties using evidence-based resources. We also continue to deliver our programmes locally in the community with Friends for Life, Fun Friends, and Go Girl programmes all in progress. It has been a challenging start to the New Year but a rewarding one!

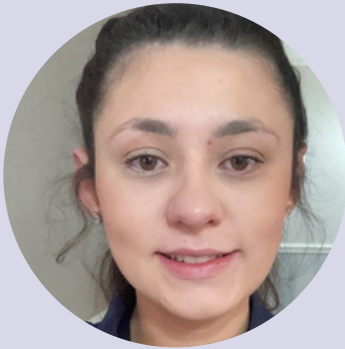


MEET THE NEW FACES @

BOLSTER
COMMUNITY



Orla Flinnighin



I am looking forward to... starting my new role as a family support worker, gaining new experiences, learning, and working with the families.

My idea of a perfect day includes... going for a walk and having a coffee.

My favourite vacation spot is... anywhere sunny.

My spirit animal is... a deer- calm and collected.

Liz Rand



A motto I live by is...

be kind, especially to yourself!

My ideal vacation spot is... any place in Ireland!

3 celebrities I'd invite to my dinner party would be... Aisling Bea (Irish comedian), KT Tunstall (singer, also very witty) and Mark Ruffalo (actor) All funny people who seem to care!



Sarah Fox



I enjoy... reading, writing and hiking. I love being out in nature or grabbing a coffee with my friends, spending time with family, or obsessing over Harry Potter.

My ideal vacation spot is... anywhere in Italy.

Best book I've read recently is... The Outside Boy by Jeanine Cummins.

A motto I live by is... "I did then what I knew how to do. Now that I know better, I do better."
— Maya Angelou

Completion of Diamond Days

We are really grateful to Peace IV and Newry, Mourne and Down District Council for the opportunity to meet and greet so many fantastic people across the Council area. We launched this project in Sept 2019 in Kilkeel and got off to a flying start delivering workshops in Kilkeel, Crossgar, Dechomet and Downpatrick. Although we had to change delivery of our programme to accommodate the COVID 19 Pandemic it did not curtail the passion for this programme.

We met so many kind and considerate older people and it was our privilege to encourage the telling of tales and rekindling of precious memories. We enjoyed reliving their memories and collecting all of their stories.

Working quickly in early 2020 to re-engage with our older people, we felt the full impact of the COVID 19 lockdown on March 23rd 2020. We were unable to host our much anticipated Celebration event but continued to accept memoirs and reflections for inclusion in our Diamond Days collection.

Sadly as lockdowns and shielding for the vulnerable elderly continued throughout 2020 and into the early part of 2021 we had to rethink the project finale. With consideration of those sadly no longer with us and we produced a book of stories as testimony to the honesty, grit and resilience of an amazing bunch of constituents who took part in the programme. Our thoughts are with all of the families and friends who have lost friends and loved ones since the project started.

To view our Diamond Days stories go to:
<https://bolstercommunity.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Diamond-Days-book-online.pdf>



Peace
Northern Ireland - Ireland

**Donairle Ceannair
an tAin, Mhúin
agus an Dúin
Newry, Mourne
and Down**

This Project has been funded by the EU's Peace IV Programme, managed by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB)

Home2Hospital

Home to hospital is a volunteer lead service which provides transport to people over the age of 60, living in the Slieve Gullion and Kilkeel and surrounding areas. The service provides transport to service users who have no alternative transport to their appointments.



Meet Mr Rooney!

Mr Rooney has been using the service for over 2 years. He gave us his experience of how this has benefitted him.

How often do you use the service?

I have been using the service for over 2 years now. I would be a regular user as I need to go to appointments every 6-8 weeks.

Why do you need to use Home to Hospital?

Due to health problems and no other means of transport close to me, I can no longer drive long distances. Some of my appointments can be over 40 miles away.

What benefit is the service to you?

"The service has been an incredible help to me. I arrange the lift with the Bolster Office who then contact the driver for me. The driver will always phone the day before to arrange a time for pick up. On the day the driver picks me up at home and leaves me back after my appointment. An excellent service that I could not do without."



If you know someone who would benefit from this service or would like to become a volunteer driver, please contact Paula on 0283 0835 764 or email admin@bolstercommunity.org for more information.

Bolster Community Receive Vital Funding

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, Bolster Community has experienced a 70% increase in demand for support services, as individuals and families struggle to cope in these challenging times. We have been able to meet this surge in demand and make a difference to people's lives through the dedication of our team, board, partners funders, and local businesses. CEO Jacinta Linden stated, "As income levels dropped and demand for service surged, we knew this was going to be a tough year physically, emotionally and financially. We were delighted therefore to hear that our application to the Department of Communities NI, through Community Finance Ireland, has been approved to help offset our forecasted deficit for year end 2022. A total award of £40,735!!! We are so grateful for this morale-boosting lift!

Sincere gratitude to Minister Harghey, Department for Communities staff and Community Finance Ireland for creating this opportunity!"

Sometimes we all need a little help to get by and when you do, Bolster Community has your back. If you or a family member need help or you are able to help Bolster Community do more good, please get in touch with the team: 028 3083 5764 or info@bolstercommunity.org



Delivered by
THE NATIONAL LOTTERY
COMMUNITY FUND



Department of
Finance

An Roinn
Airgeadais



4 weeks to go until The Daily Mile 10th Birthday virtual bash!

We are encouraging all Northern Ireland schools & early years settings to register for the Daily Mile virtual event on Thursday 28th April. This is a global event to help support children to get moving on the same day! Be part of this wonderful event, register now, you will receive a free downloadable pack to support you on the day.

Register your setting -

<https://www.gorunforfun.com/thedailymile10thbirthday/>

Make sure you tick yes to the terms & conditions to receive your pack!

Let's get NI moving!

#teamSHSCT



Southern Health
and Social Care Trust

028 3083 5764
info@bolstercommunity.org
bolstercommunity.org

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info@bolstercommunity.org
Unit 1 Whitegates Business
Park
Newry, BT35 6UA

5-7 Marcus Street
Newry, BT34 1ET

18 Newcastle Street
Kilkeel, BT34 4AF