

BOLSTER COMMUNITY

Get through & get ahead



Impact Report

January 21 – March 22

INVESTORS IN PEOPLE®
We invest in people Silver

Charity No 107382 | Company No 655061



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Our Services

7,008

From Jan 2021 to Mar 2022, over 7,000 people were supported by Bolster Community

FAMILY

Family Support Hub
BAME Family Support
Early Intervention Support Service
Homelessness Prevention Project
Mourne Sure Start
Networking and Information Events
Evidence Based Programmes for parents and children
Workshops for parents
Summer Scheme & Activity sessions for children
Youth Programmes and activities

SENIORS

Mourne Home2Hospital
Slieve Gullion Home2Hospital
Diamond Days

ABILITY

Social Enterprise
Taster Opportunities
1:1 Disability Home-based Family Support
Supported Family Day Trips
Afterschool Activity Clubs
Support Groups for Parents and Children
Bolster Buddy Club
Autism Connect

A message from the Chairperson



Eamonn Connolly
Chairperson, Bolster Community

Welcome to Bolster Community's 2021 annual report. I am delighted to be able to preface a report containing continued exceptional outputs for the beneficiaries of Bolster Community. Especially through the sustained challenges arising from COVID-19 and the cost-of-living crisis, amongst others. These outputs and solutions for the ever-growing number of people that we support were only achievable due to the passionate commitment of the Bolster staff, management and Board members.

I never cease to be amazed by the dedication of our team to address the ongoing needs and issues that arise locally within our community

I never cease to be amazed by the dedication of our team to address the ongoing needs and issues that arise locally within our community. The team are inspirational and regularly "go the extra mile" to make a difference in people's lives. The continued achievements of Bolster do not happen by chance. They are directly attributable to the Bolster team and their key partnerships.

As our society changes so too does its challenges. Bolster has had to innovate, not only to deal with these new and ever-increasing challenges, but also to be sustainable as an organisation, and to meet our community's needs going forward. The visionary leadership of Jacinta Linden, ably assisted by Allison Slater, has seen Bolster develop new services and a social enterprise whilst simultaneously deepening its roots within the community throughout a period of unprecedented uncertainty. Sadly this year we also said goodbye to Pauline Downey, Kilkeel Sure Start Manager, who retired in July 2021. We wish Pauline a peaceful retirement.

I have seen all spectrums of our community cross the door at Bolster. From the most disadvantaged to our leaders, each was welcomed with the same drive to deliver and secure more support on the ground. Over the past year we have looked within ourselves and reached beyond ourselves to help those around us.

Never has what we do been more important. I thank you for your support and I look forward to seeing Bolster continue to provide crucial support in so many people's lives.

300%

During this year Bolster Community provided a 300% increase in Financial Support to Families in Crisis

A message from the CEO



Jacinta Linden
CEO, Bolster Community

Exiting from the lockdowns of 2020, 2021 has involved navigating some difficult challenges and terrain. Around us global uncertainty about Brexit, the protocol, local elections and a possible Russian invasion of Ukraine dominate any reset and recovery agenda.

As always, our focus is on people, place and pound and it's the strength of local and regional partnerships and relationships that has got us through 2021 and in a position to grow and stretch in 2022. Settling into our new home in the Meadow Newry has been a blessing and a welcome change, we have worked hard to develop services and support, that local children, parents and seniors need.

Over the last year we have said sincere thanks and farewell to board member Paul Farquhar and welcomed Michael Doyle and Cathy Hughes who bring distinct and valuable skills to an already strong and committed board of voluntary trustees.

Reflecting on 2021 I recall many highlights including the success of our online "Being Awesome" conference in March 2021 and the resultant development of a new Autism Connect service. Developing the conference format and undertaking the consultation re same was a huge piece of work and thanks are due to Noreen McCumiskey, Dr Liz McMonagle, Ivor Crothers and Barney McNeany from Southern Health and Social Care Trust (SHSCT) for helping deliver on the Conference but also in helping shape the outcomes and recommendations from the research.

It took a lot of time, expertise and patience to explore the research findings of the "Being Awesome Conference" and to produce the Consultation report. I am forever grateful to Albert Hamilton CEO of the CARD group who was integral to getting the report over the line.

In 2021 we also welcomed exciting new work streams on homeless prevention in partnership with the NIHE and we hope to develop this area of work into tenancy sustainability going forward into 2022.



As always, our focus is on people, place and pound and it's the strength of local and regional partnerships and relationships that has got us through 2021 and in a position to grow and stretch in 2022

Later in the year with the help of Siobhan Walsh of Siobhan Walsh Consultancy, our social enterprise team undertook a review of our social enterprise products, including a full packaging rebrand and relaunch in time for the Christmas rush.

Looking back over 2021, I have very fond memories of our volunteers, beneficiaries and team. We had an exceptional year of kindness and support from a range of local churches. Mayobridge Christmas Appeal 2021, Ernie Campbell, staff from the Newry NIHE office, School Principals, the Christmas toy appeal committee and the extraordinary people led by Kerrie at Caring Coins and all of whom came together to make our job much easier – sincere thanks, it takes every one of us stepping up to ensure people are helped. Can I also say a huge thank you to our staff, board and volunteers who never stopped giving their best throughout 2021, you are just amazing!

Looking back over 2021, I have very fond memories of our volunteers, beneficiaries and team. We had an exceptional year of kindness and support.



In August 2021, Bolster Community hosted Permanent Secretary for the Cabinet Office, Sue Gray and her Cabinet colleagues from the UK Government's Levelling Up Unit who came to learn about the challenges and inequalities faced by individuals and families living across Newry and Mourne.

Our visitors heard testimony from parents and children impacted by poverty, poor mental health and saw first-hand how our "hyper local" service and support can make significant differences to those most in need.

Sue Gray, said "It was great to be back in Northern Ireland and made even better by spending time with the amazing team at Bolster Community, and listening to their powerful presentation enabling the levelling up team and I to learn about more about the amazing work of Bolster Community."

Context

In our 2020-2025 Strategic Plan, Bolster Community set out our plan to create better outcomes for children, families and communities across Newry, Mourne and Down. This strategic plan set out a framework for action to be taken by Bolster Community in its advancement of innovative community development and service development. The strategy confirmed our commitment to the principles and practices of community development as a process for positive and collective change and places people, their circumstances and their locality at the core of the change process. Our core values ensure that we commit to being respectful and being alongside our participants as we strive for excellence, supporting all of our citizens to have the opportunity to reach their full potential.

In the following report, we outline how our activities during 2021 met our objectives by promoting the health and wellbeing of children and families.

Like many charities, 2020 and 2021 had been extremely challenging for us. Income reduced as demand for services grew. By revisiting our strategic aims we retained a focus on what was important to us and the communities we support.

7,008
people were supported
by Bolster Community
in 2021!



Mission

To work alongside individuals, families and the community, to support improved opportunity, & health and wellbeing

Big themes

Our big themes for the next five years will focus on supporting those disconnected through

- Disability
- Poverty
- Learning Disability
- Caring
- Bullying
- Mental Health
- Health Inequalities

We will work to support you, using a strengths-based approach, building resilience and linking and connecting individuals, and communities

Vision

A connected community where everyone has access to services and opportunities, enabling them to reach their full potential

BOLSTER COMMUNITY Poverty Support Fund

The Poverty Support Fund aimed to provide support to meet the needs of the most vulnerable families struggling with poverty throughout Newry and Mourne area. The fund was accessed by referral from the Family Support Hub and trusted partners. The fund supplemented existing outward referrals for financial advice, food banks or other community-based support.

£53,000

197

REFERRALS

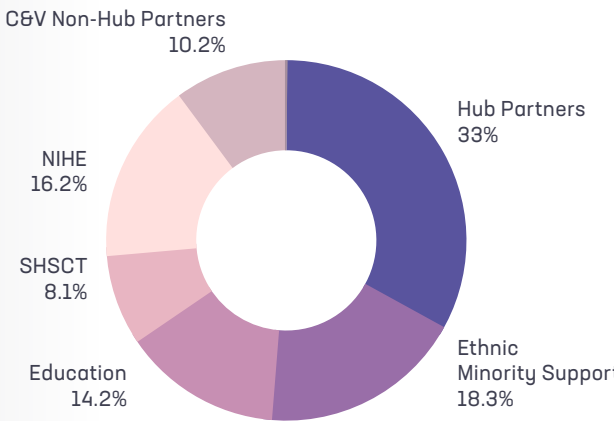
700

BENEFICIARIES

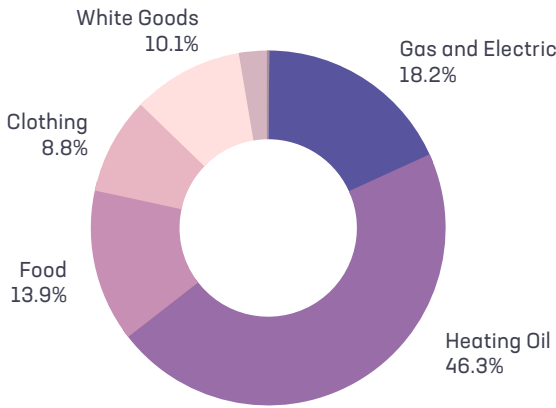
When my husband died tragically, I was so worried. He was the main breadwinner and we had no oil or electric that week. Our Health Visitor made the referral to Bolster and they gave us oil, electric and a voucher for food. It was enough to carry us through a very difficult week until we were able to sort out our finances. It made a huge difference to the stress I was facing.

When our baby was two weeks old universal credits stopped! I was so stressed about keeping the baby warm. Our support worker made a referral to Bolster and we received so much help including a cot, nappies, oil, electric and baby food. They also linked us into the Family Support Hub and we are now registered with Sure Start. I don't feel as isolated now, UCs are sorted and our home is warm and comfortable.

Who made referrals?



What the money was spent on



Aim 1

Bolster Community will provide accessible support via a range of methods to those in a parenting role using current methods on early intervention, ACE aware and Trauma Informed Practice

How much did we do?

£126k

Bolster Community sourced £126,000 of direct financial support for families and individuals living in material poverty

3,090

people availed of early intervention Family support Services

368

children of mixed abilities participated in dynamic play sessions developing resilience and confidence through play

488

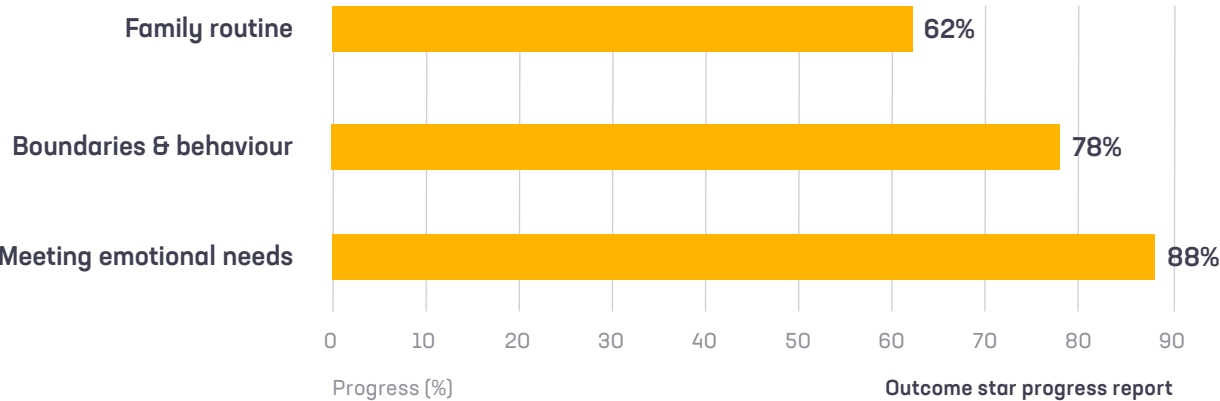
individuals who were at risk of homelessness during 2021 received early intervention support, avoided deepening crisis

How well did we do it?

At Bolster Community, we use Outcome Star to measure the Journey of Change that families travel. Outcome Stars are evidence-based tools designed to support positive change and greater wellbeing, with scales presented in a star shape and measured on a clearly defined 'Journey of Change'. The Outcomes Star is completed as part of conversations between individuals and support practitioners.

www.outcomesstar.org.uk

PARENTS REPORTED IMPROVEMENTS IN



Is anyone better off?

I have a greater understanding that my children are not on their own and I am better at being an understanding parent. I try to practice self-care as I can't focus if I'm stressed. I have taken so much support from the group and feel better equipped to manage the journey ahead.

Mum who attended Parents Plus Special Needs

BARRY'S STORY

“When I moved here, I wasn't sure if I would be able to stay away from trouble. Gemma's help has kept me on the straight and narrow and I am grateful for the time I now have with my daughter”.

Barry moved to Newry from temporary accommodation. He was allocated a small flat which Bolster Community Family Support Workers were able to help him furnish and decorate. Barry has a history of addictions and our Family Support Worker supported him to register for volunteering and activities that will keep him from falling in with old friends.

Barry has some contact with his young daughter and we helped him set up his home so that it was a welcoming space for her. Bolster provided toys, books, DVD's etc and each week the Family Support Worker helped him plan activities that he could do with her when she came to visit.

The Family Support Worker taught Barry budgeting and cooking healthy and affordable meals that he could freeze during the week. Barry is in a very positive place at the moment and spoke of his keen interest in engineering. Our Family Support Worker arranged an interview for Barry at the local college to enquire about courses. Barry was particularly interested in a Level 2 Diploma in Engineering and has registered for next term.

Aim 2

Develop and deliver co-produced health and wellbeing programmes, including workshops and training that support self-care, independence & continuous personal development

All parents can, at some stage, benefit from parenting support programmes. Research shows that early intervention produces better and more long-lasting outcomes for children, however later. Intervention can still be useful, particularly when targeting a specific issue.

At Bolster, we believe that for programmes to be successful they must have clearly stated aims and objectives with measurable outcomes and a structure that can be followed closely and implemented with fidelity by trained staff. Our programmes have a strong evidence base with a clear mechanism of change.

We deliver a range of universal programmes for parents who just need some general parenting advice and targeted programmes that work best for families coping with a higher level of need.

But we don't only deliver programmes for parents! As children struggled to manage the impact of COVID-19, isolation and bereavement, requests for our FRIENDS suite of programmes for children grew dramatically through both our Social Enterprise and Family Support services.

FRIENDS Resilience is a suite of engaging and rewarding resilience-building programmes, that are based on Cognitive Behavioural 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, equip participants with tools to help rise to life's challenges, promote confidence and ability to focus whilst improving capacity to relax and regulate emotions. In the latter part of this reporting period, we saw demand for this programme grow by over 200% and currently have twenty-nine Friends programmes being delivered in schools and community settings.

How much did we do?

1,050

children and young people participated in independence & personal development programmes

178

parenting sessions promoting self care confidence and personal development

How well did we do it?

97%

of participant's reported progress in better understanding their feelings & behaviour

82%

reported progress in feeling more confident about making friends

97%

reported progress around confidence and improved self-esteem

Is anyone better off?

Jimmy is more capable of assessing his emotions in situations. He has learned to take time out when he needs to regulate himself. His confidence has increased from taking part in the programme.

Aileen, Mum of the child who attended Friends for Life

CASE STUDY

Bolster Community designed and delivered a youth leadership programme for participants aged 13-15 living in the Newry Mourne and Down District Council Area. Youth UpFront was funded by the EU's Peace IV Programme, managed by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB) and aimed to support the development of essential skills, build confidence and equip our participants with the leadership tools needed to progress as future leaders, who can step up and contribute to the community.

A total of 120 young people participated in interactive workshops with influential speakers who shared their journeys. Participants also planned and delivered a Community Event to support the older community of Newry, Mourne and Down. On the day, over 400 rural isolated seniors joined in with afternoon tea and dancing via zoom which was all facilitated by the young people themselves.

"I grew more confident with initiating conversations and taking charge. I enabled myself to grow and overcome some really difficult challenges in my life."

David (15), about Youth UpFront

Aim 2

Develop and deliver co-produced health and wellbeing programmes, including workshops and training that support self-care, independence & continuous personal development

Home2Hospital has been funded by Newry, Mourne and Down District Council since 2015 and provides transport to Seniors living in Slieve Gullion and the Mourne areas who have no alternative transport to attend out of area hospital appointments.

Since starting the service, we have provided transport to 2250 appointments to 14 different medical facilities across Northern Ireland, but particularly to cancer units in Belfast and Craigavon.

During the COVID-19 pandemic our volunteer drivers continued to deliver a service ensuring our most vulnerable older people were supported at a time when they most needed it.

How much did we do?

540

older people engaged in health and wellbeing activities combating loneliness and building

How well did we do it?

98%

98% of participants taking part felt more connected to the community because of attending the programmes (programme evaluations)

40,880

Our volunteer drivers covered 40,880 miles transporting vulnerable elderly people to hospital appointments



Is anyone better off?

I have no one else that could have helped me. I didn't know how I would have made my hospital appointment. My physical health is now better as I can make my hospital appointments and my mental health is greatly improved as I don't have to worry about getting there.

Liam on Home2Hospital

CASE STUDY

Tom was diagnosed with cancer and told he would need to travel from his home in Crossmaglen to Belfast five days a week for treatment. A 70-year-old widower, Tom had no way of getting to his appointments. Living in a remote area, it would have been very difficult for Tom to get to the hospital on public transport.

Tom's sister rang Bolster Community, who were able to support the family by putting in a timetable of drivers to take Tom to his hospital appointments three days a week. Tom made all his appointments and had one less thing to worry about.

"It was a relief for me to get to the hospital. It was a weight lifted from my shoulders knowing that I was going to get there. It gave me less stress whilst my treatment was going on."

Tom on Home2Hospital

Aim 3

Continue to nurture and grow strong partnerships and collaborations around shared values and best practice

Bolster Community believe that it is only through effective partnership and working with others that we can create meaningful change. We work closely at a strategic and operational level with statutory and community partners both locally and regionally. The Newry and Mourne Family Support Hub is a partnership of community, voluntary and statutory organisations who deliver services to children and families across Newry and Mourne. Co-ordinated by Bolster Community, the partners are: Southern Health and Social Care Trust, Education Welfare Service, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, Dunlewey Drugs and Alcohol Support, Homestart, Sure Start, Early Years, Womens Aid, Barnardo's, PIPs Hope and Support, School Nursing and Health Visiting and NIACRO.

Bolster Community is the lead body of the Mourne Sure Start project, previously known as Kilkeel Sure Start. Our partners within Sure Start are the Early Years, SHSCT, and HomeStart.

- Bolster Community represent our communities on a range of partnerships including:
- NM&DDC Strategic Stakeholder Partnership
 - Wellbeing Action Partnership
 - Southern Area Outcomes Group
 - Disability Task Group
 - Emotional Health and Wellbeing Network SHSCT
 - Autism Forum
 - Armagh and Dungannon Family Support Hub
 - SHSCT Our Journey Through Disability Task Group
 - SHSCT ASD Forum
 - South Armagh Locality Planning Group
 - Newry Locality Planning Group
 - Newry DEA
 - Age Friendly Strategic Alliance
 - Southern Integrated Care Partnership
 - CO3 - Chief Executive Officers in the Third Sector (Board Member)
 - Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership

How much did we do?

679

families accessed services and supports through the partnership of the Newry and Mourne Family Support Hub

95%

of beneficiaries stated they had more knowledge of services on completion of Bolster Intervention (evaluation reports)

889

families received practical and therapeutic early intervention support through partnership service; Early Intervention Support Service (EISS and Mourne Sure Start)



2,683

In 2021 Bolster Community signposted families to 2683 additional statutory and community supports

How well did we do it?

CASE STUDY

"It is hard sometimes knowing who to turn to. It was so easy to talk to Rita and she instantly knew my concerns and was able to support me through such a challenging time. It is with her help that my baby and I are now thriving and I feel that I am able to overcome challenges as a parent."

Susan was a young mum living in Kilkeel who attended Mourne Sure Start when her baby was born. Rita, her Family Support Worker, after visiting Susan's house realised that Susan was struggling financially to pay her heating and electric bills and coming up to Christmas did not have any gifts for her baby.

Rita applied to the Bolster Community Poverty Fund for Susan and received toys, Home Heating Oil and Electric for Susan. Rita was able to get a home safety check completed for Susan and she attended some of the Sure Start Programmes. Rita was able to use her partnership links within Sure Start to offer Susan additional services.

HomeStart provided a volunteer to help Susan around the house and to provide some company for her as she had limited social connections. Early Years provided Susan with parenting sessions and group activities.

Is anyone better off?

It has been a long road for Abby, who has availed of family support with Bolster staff member Cailin through the EISS service. Since working with Cailin I feel Abby's self-esteem and anxieties have improved for the better. It is great to see her more confident and communicating better.

Sarah, Mum of Abby who received support from EISS

Aim 4

Use a social Enterprise model to maximise income and become a more sustainable organisation

Wow! Wow! Wow! It's been an epic year for our Social Enterprise. Our Acorn products really needed a refresh and in 2021 we began to review and extend our product. Bolster Buddies were involved in an exciting and challenging re-design and re-set process for our new Acorn Scents of Achievement product range. Little did we know back in April 2021, that our new products would end up in a luxury hotel in the heart of South Armagh and thanks to Rachel McGilorm and Storybox NI, take centre stage in a special Saint Patrick's Day consignment to the Northern Ireland Bureau in New York.

With the new product range came some exciting new partnerships and opportunities. In 2021 we were delighted to be selected as the Charity Partner for Killeavy Castle, and thrilled to continue our collaboration with Kehoe Kars Newry and Storybox NI. In January 2022 we began an exciting charity partnership with BEST Property Services in Warrenpoint. In the run up to December, we were humbled to find so many of our supporters, friends and families, including the NI Finance Minister, had used their Spend Local Cards to help our social Enterprise grow.

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.

Looking back, it's hard to forget the long hours of decision-making, and measuring and choosing that went on between our Candlemakers and the staff team to arrive at a brand-new range of fab products, just in time for the busy season of Autumn/winter. With issues emerging everyday about printing and packaging and colour schemes and backlogs and textures we were just thrilled to get all of the work done and prepare for a busy Christmas. To view our full range including diffusers, three-wick candle and 3 votive candle set, check out our website to support us on bolstercommunity.org/shop

But Social Enterprise at Bolster isn't all about candles. This year success through the dynamic framework tender enabled Bolster to provide significant resources to children and schools throughout NI. We have been delighted with the demand for FRIENDS resilience training, and feedback from children, parents and Schools has been fantastic! See page 12 for more information on FRIENDS.

920

social enterprise and activity sessions for adults of mixed ability

62

We attended 62 local fairs and markets selling our Acorn products

5,321

Acorn products purchased

200%

increase in sales of Acorn products in 2021

How much did we do?

Is anyone better off?

CASE STUDY

"Coming to Bolster and making candles has given me a sense of purpose and independence. I love it. I feel so comfortable and fit in. My social outlets have grown as well as my confidence."

Jane was a young lady living with autism that had struggled with mental health issues. After being isolated throughout the COVID-19 pandemic she did not know where her place in society was and had ceased all of her activities. Her social worker brought her to Bolster Community to enquire about Day Opportunities for Jane.

On this visit they learnt of the Bolster Buddy service. This is aimed at reconnecting people with learning disabilities with these in their local community and developing personal independence. Jane was excited at this opportunity and could not wait to begin.

Hi Steven, my good friend bought me a candle made by you and I just wanted to let you know how much I love it. The scent is beautiful and gives off such a gorgeous aroma even when it's not lit. I will be recommending your candles to all my friends and I will certainly have to buy another when this one is finished. Keep up the good work.

Recipient of an Acorn Soy Wax Candle



Aim 5

To communicate effectively for the benefit of our beneficiaries, stakeholders and wider community

How much did we do?

8,500

Bolster reach over 8,500 followers on social media each year

12,500

12,500 connected through our quarterly newsletters

In November 2021, Bolster Community were advised that we had been put forward as one of six best practice case studies in consultation for inclusion in an upcoming Levelling Up White Paper.

Communities Can Conference London March 2021

In March 2021, our CEO was invited to speak at the UK Conference “Communities Can”, hosted by the National Lottery Community Fund UK, where Jacinta shared her perspective on how communities can best recover post-pandemic. The contribution was captured and listed as a Lightning Talk for delegates to share and discuss post-conference. In the Lightning Talk, our CEO spoke of the need for funders to help communities recover by allowing time for recovery, reset and renewal.

The National Lottery UK Board Presentation

In December 2021, it was a great privilege for Bolster Community to be one of only two organisations selected to represent all of the National Lottery funded projects. We were delighted to present to the UK wide board of the National Lottery. In this session, Jacinta showcased how National Lottery funding had enabled Bolster Community to remain alongside vulnerable parents and children. As they coped with the impact of domestic violence, trauma and neglect, from the point of need through to recovery and restart. This interactive session was a great opportunity for the National Lottery Community Fund to hear first-hand how TNL funding directly impacts on people's lives.

Social Enterprise UK - Futures Summit

Bolster Community were delighted to make it to the Social Enterprise UK Roll of Honour. We were blown away to be invited to attend the SEUK Social Enterprises Summit, where our CEO shared the stage with SEUK patron and comedian extraordinaire Chris Patton. Jacinta spoke to Chris live from the virtual stage in Newry to the central stage in London about Bolster Community's role in delivering kindness and support throughout the Pandemic.

Mentoring

Through various community development and business projects including CDHN Elevate, and CO3 Strategic finance project, Bolster Community have been providing mentoring support, advice and guidance to organisations across Northern Ireland. This is a great way to help organisations find strengths and solutions to help achieve their mission and is a rewarding opportunity for our CEO to use her skills and experience to support other Third Sector organisations.

A brief note on lobbying activity completed throughout the year

As Vice Chairperson of CO3, Jacinta represented the Third Sector in a roundtable discussion with the Chief Economist of the Bank of England, where she spoke of the need for a measured recovery so that people and community could find a supported pathway from crisis to recovery. In partnership with colleagues from across the 3rd Sector in NI, Jacinta spoke about the potential that social value clauses and full cost recovery could make to providing alternative income streams and how this could potentially transform lives and take pressure off the NHS.

In mid-March, Jacinta, with colleagues from across the C&V sector met with Sue Grey, Permanent Secretary for Finance NI, and Connor Murphy, Finance Minister, to discuss 3rd Sector funding.

In September 2021, we welcomed the new NIHE, CEO Grainia Long to our HQ in the Meadow and showed her around our training facility in Marcus Street.

In partnership with Inspire and to mark Mental Health Day, we welcomed Tim McGarry and Professor Siobhan O'Neill, Department of Health Mental Health Champion, to celebrate Mental Health Day by getting down to some serious candle making with our Bolster Buddies. Tim was impressed by the skills and comedy genius of our Bolster Buddies and Professor O'Neill heard how they built humour and resilience into their daily activities.



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. To meet the brief, 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 & Adulthood 2021”. The timing of the project coincided with the commencement of restrictions to curb the spread of the COVID-19 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.

The very real outcome is that there are talented and engaging young adults living with circumstances that prevent them from making a valuable contribution to society and enjoying a full and varied life. Autism Connect is a service being designed to offer these adults a safe place to come to live their life. This service is for adults with autism without a mental health or learning disability diagnosis. It is also for adults that are currently awaiting a diagnosis. This service will comprise of 1:1 support for individuals and social hub based on the needs and requirements of the individuals.

Success in Investors in People



Top 15%

Bolster Community ranked 22nd out of 151 charities and organisations within our sector

Your people are committed and dedicated

It was inspirational to engage with a group of people who are so intent on making a difference

Your ethos is rooted deeply in the communities served

Your people are motivated by the desire to make the best possible difference

INVESTORS IN PEOPLE
We invest in people Silver

Our vision at Bolster Community is a connected community where everyone has access to services and opportunities, enabling them to reach their full potential. We believe that we cannot do that without the commitment and knowledge of a dedicated and skilled staff team.

During 2021, we undertook an Investors in People assessment to assist us in reviewing and developing our team. Established in 1990 by the Department of Employment as a national standard of good practice for training and development.

The assessment provides us with a framework to evaluate our current approaches to people management and development, presenting us with a robust analysis of current strengths enabling us to build and sustain a positive culture, where staff feel cared for, listened to and professionally equipped to fulfil their role to the highest possible standards.

In August 2021, we were delighted to be awarded the Silver Award and especially proud of the opening comments on the report:

“Everyone should be extremely proud of Bolster Community’s good practice, values and culture that have helped achieve this award. This achievement is all the more significant following 18-months during which the organisation and everyone within it faced unprecedented challenges. You have a lot to celebrate.” – Stephanie McCutcheon, Investors in People Assessor.

Meet the Team



Management Team	Programmes/ Training & Admin Team	Support Team	Kilkeel Sure Start
Jacinta Allison	Joanne Paula Tracy Justina Jena	Kate Gemma Caroline Liz Cailin Catriona Joanne Noreen Kathy Orla	Brenda Rita Caoimhe Anna-Marie Kerri Crystal Marina Leah

Meet the Board



Eamonn Connolly	Paul Slevin	Connor Sweeney
Martina Flynn	Judith McConville	Michael Doyle
Julie White	Gerry Flynn	Cathy Hughes

Training



Bolster Community continue to invest in their growing team with ongoing training and support for staff and volunteers.

Training is used to improve productivity and performance within the workplace and ensure that people are using the same working processes with improved knowledge of policies and goals.

Staff attended 51 training sessions throughout the year. Upskilling each and every one of our staff and volunteers remains a priority to ensure that our families get the very best services. Training included **Autism Awareness, People Centred Practice, Trauma Informed Practice, First Aid, Managing Risk, Cyber Security, Food Hygiene, Solihull, Circle of Security, Mental Health First Aid, Safeguarding** plus many more!

With the expansion of delivery for the FRIENDS resilience programmes in 2020/21, there were 11 FRIENDS Facilitators trained during this time to deliver programmes in the community and education settings. With a growing need for parenting programmes, Bolster Community have also increased the number of staff trained to deliver Parents Plus Special evidence-based programmes.



1,000

Our team completed 1,000 hours of training

900

children from across Northern Ireland participated in our evidence-based resilience programmes

NIHE Homelessness Prevention Project

How much did we do?

357

357 individuals maintained or acquired new tenancies

193

Adults

164

Children

105

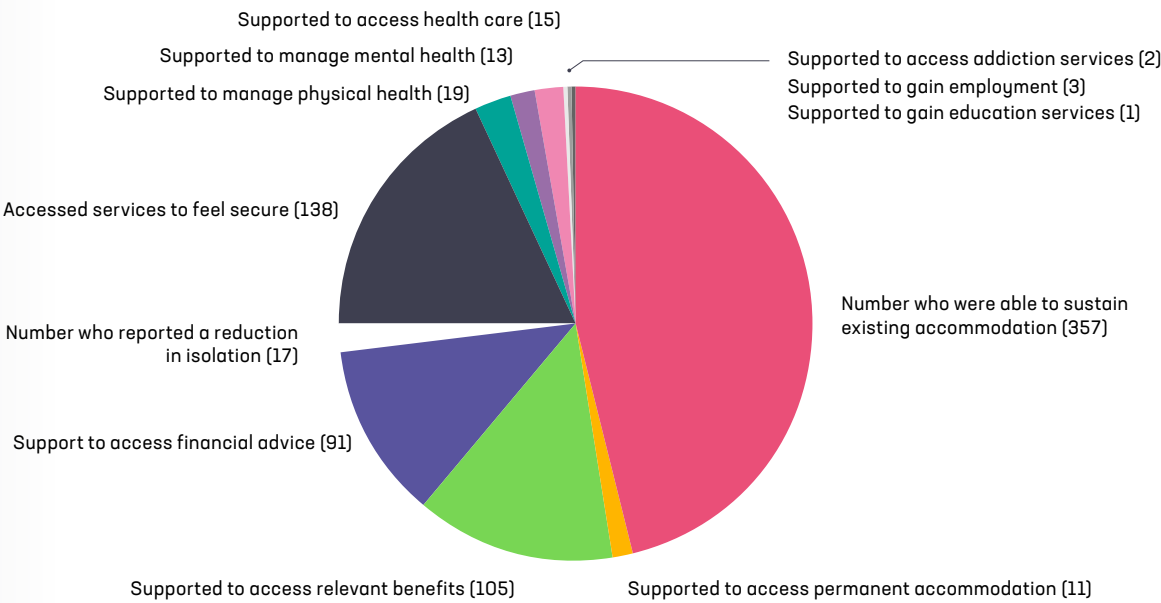
105 tenants supported to access benefits and financial support

Is anyone better off?

I wouldn't have been able to get my new home without your help, I just couldn't cope with the form-filling, so I was just burying my head in the sand.

As a single dad with three girls, I was struggling with keeping on top of everything. The house and garden was a mess and neighbours were complaining. Now I feel I can manage my time and money better and am confident I can keep on top of it all.

Type of support received



Supporters of Bolster Community

Bolster Community, as a non-profit organisation rely on the support of funders, volunteers, advocates, support organisations and donors to support us in our mission. We have been overwhelmed in the last year at the generosity and goodwill of the general public and local businesses, whose continued support has enabled us to continue helping local families through tough times over the past 19 years. We remain, as always, committed to helping people get through and get ahead.

















B°LSTER COMMUNITY

Connect with us



bolstercommunity.org