

BOLSTER COMMUNITY

Newsletter

WHAT A YEAR IT HAS BEEN!

This must have been the fastest year on record! Seems like yesterday I was writing the Christmas 2021 Newsletter & here we are saying goodbye to 2022 & hello to 2023.

It's been a year of challenge & change, we have drawn heavily on the goodwill of our funders, partners, board & staff to ensure we provide the best possible support for our local communities. It's hard to capture all that has happened over 2022, we have sadly said goodbye to some very valued Home2Hospital service users & also shared the joy in ringing the bell at the end of treatment for others. Our Home2Hospital volunteers continue to inspire & impress all of us at Bolster, and we hope to continue to meet the demand for extended service throughout 2023.

Overall, the big theme this year has been the Cost-Of-Living Crisis and Poverty in Northern Ireland continues to provide a challenging context to our work.

Michael Marmot in the New Statesman article October 2022, reports that rising prices are making us ill. The UK is headed towards a "significant humanitarian crisis with thousands of lives lost and millions of children's development blighted", he and his team at University College London (UCL) have warned in their most recent report on fuel poverty. As I look back at our work over 2022, I'm glad we have been able to support growing referrals for services & support but also to acknowledge very clearly that our partners, board & staff team did so with dignity & respect. Marmot refers to how the increasing cost of living crisis has caused people to feel a loss of "dignity". If you can't afford to feed your children, you can't lead a life of dignity," he says. "If you have to beg the landlord for relief because you can't pay the rent on Friday, that's a threat to dignity." This "struggle" to make ends meet has a direct impact on people through stress and its physical and mental health effects.

We have also witnessed the impact of government austerity policies & health inequality amongst local people. As a lack of affordable housing has taken its toll, we have watched growing numbers of local people at risk of homelessness seek help. Our Star Bites 57 Cafe in Marcus Street funded by the NIHE has extended to three days a week & continues to support those most at risk of homelessness. Parents, children, older people come to get advice, food and a listening ear. At Star Bites 57 Joanne, Sarah, Tracy & Justina provide a safe warm place where conversation flows, and children play & chat oblivious to the pressures & concerns faced by those who frequent the cafe.

We are glad to play our part, children as we know cannot benefit from services that do not exist, neither can those crippled by

anxiety, worry or debt. We need a government, we need multi-year budgets and we need the framework to enable our people to move from poverty to wellbeing and have a chance at realising true potential.

One of the highlights of 2022 is the success of the "Autism Connect" pilot, championed by the Southern Health and Social Care Trust partners Noreen McCumiskey, Dr. Ivor Crothers, Dr. Liz McMonagle & implemented by the fabulous Orla Flinnighan & Sarah Fox at Bolster Community. Thursday nights will never be the same! Read more below in the update and don't forget, The Autism Connect guys have found their tribe & there will be no stopping them in 2023!

We have welcomed some new Bolster Buddies to the Social Enterprise candle making team this year & look forward to providing more opportunities to other adults with additional needs over 2023. Thanks to Jenna, Noreen, Kathy, Paula & Joanne for keeping the show on the road.

Our participants have benefitted tremendously from the kindness of many organisations & friends this year, Killeavy Castle, the friends and family of Rosie and Eddie Devlin, Best Property Services, Newry City Runners, Norbrook, Keogh Kars, Deanery Demesne, Caring Coins, Patrick McAliskey, Deli Lites, Fiveways, Donna Clarke, Martha Ashdown, Bernie Faughy and the team at Mayobridge Christmas appeal at Gorman's Bar and Restaurant, we truly appreciate your generosity & kindness. Thank you!

Our funders, board, staff, volunteers' friends & families have once again gone the extra mile to ensure we are able to keep giving our best, thank you & I look forward to keeping you updated on all that's to come in 2023.

Jacinta Linden
CEO Bolster Community



Bolster Community attend Investors in People Awards

Our CEO, Jacinta and HoD, Allison headed of London this month to represent Bolster Community at the Investors In People Annual Awards. This prestigious event celebrated the success of public, private and Third Sector organisations from across the globe and we were thrilled to have reached the Top 10 finalists in the category of UK Employer of the Year (2-49 employees).

IIP is a standard framework which supports organisations to improve workplace culture, employee engagement, communication and work practices and compares your performance at leading, supporting and improving your people and culture strategy, comparing against other organisations in your industry and sector globally.

We would like to thank everyone at IIP for the following kind words: "Everyone should be extremely proud of Bolster Community's good practice, values and culture".

INVESTORS IN PEOPLE®
We invest in people Silver





A Warm Welcome for the Minister of Education and Chairperson of Mourne Sure Start

Jacinta Linden CEO of Bolster Community welcomed Minister for Education Michelle McIlveen, to hear of the Surestart expansion to Annalong, along with Dept. of Education representative Linda Drysdale and Kevin Duggan from the Childcare Partnership.

Kilkeel Surestart rebranded to Mourne Sure Start due to an extension to include service & support to families living in Annalong. In total 709 children & families can now access quality support & service led by the lovely Brenda and her fab team. Bolster Community is the lead partner for Mourne Surestart & the Southern Health and Social Care Trust is the accountable body.

Bolster Community are proud of the work done to deliver Surestart in Kilkeel and Annalong, the amazing work carried out by Brenda and her fantastic team! Thanks for a lovely afternoon and here's to many more!

For more information on Mourne Sure Start contact Anna-Marie or Marina on 028 4176 4718 or email info@mournesurestart.com.

Bolster Community was presented Award from Newry, Mourne and Down District Council

Allison Slater Head of Operations and Development at Bolster Community with Bolster Buddies Tara and Olivia attended Newry Mourne and Down Civic Awards. We were honoured to receive our award for services to the community and humbled to be in the company of so many inspirational people from across the area. Tara and Olivia loved glamming up and getting so many photos taken.

A special thanks to Michael Savage, Chairperson of Newry, Mourne and Down District Council for presenting this award to Bolster Community for services to the community.



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

Social Value in Action: Local business, CTS Projects, partners with two social enterprises to create lasting impact for women and girls



WOMEN'STEC and Bolster Community will provide a community engagement programme of training in DIY/Construction skills, resources and support for local women and girls in the Newry, Mourne and Down area.

A Newry-based facilities management company, CTS, is partnering with WOMEN'STEC and Bolster Community to bring exciting new opportunities for women and girls in the Newry, Mourne and Down area. The partnership brings together the private sector and the third sector to create social impact through a public contract which CTS Projects is delivering for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive.

The exciting new initiative was launched at the Canal Court Hotel in Newry on 30th November. It brought together representatives from the local construction industry, community groups, education and public sectors to launch the partnership and showcase social value in action, highlighting the importance of embedding social value in public procurement to create lasting social, economic and environmental benefits. Connaire McGreevy, managing director and founder of CTS Projects said, "As a business we have always contributed to the areas we work in and this is a new evolution on what we did in the past. We are excited to partner with WOMEN'STEC again, along with Bolster Community in Newry who both provide such essential services to our community and society. As a public sector contractor, it is good to see social value embedded in all contracts which can only mean our entire society will benefit whenever works are completed."

BOLSTER
COMMUNITY

cts

WOMEN'S
TEC

Housing
Executive

Text-A-Nurse to chat about your health concerns



If you are aged 11-19 and are worried or concerned about any aspect of your health and wellbeing send a text to

07507 328057

and chat in confidence with a school nurse.

We are here to help and can offer advice around many health issues including:

Emotional Health & Wellbeing

Self-Harm

General Health

Drugs

Stress & Anxiety

Bullying

Body Image

Alcohol

Sex & Sexuality

Contraception

<https://pha.site/textanurse>

HSC Southern Health
and Social Care Trust

HSC Public Health
Agency

ChatHealth

Department of
Education
www.education-ni.gov.uk

Home2Hospital Celebration of Thanks

Bolster Community staff and Board celebrated the driving force behind the Home2Hospital service- our Volunteer Drivers. Bolster Chairperson Eamonn Connolly welcomed guests to Warrenpoint Golf Club, speaking of the dedication and commitment



of the Volunteers who give up their time to support those living in the local community who struggle to attend out-of-area hospital appointments. Eamonn expressed his gratitude to Newry, Mourne and Down District Council for funding this vital community service over the past 7 years.

During the last year, Bolster Community Volunteer Drivers have ensured that 421 older people, who have no other means of transport, made it to essential medical appointments. Even throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, our Volunteer Drivers remained vigilant but continued to support those in need in our community, especially those living rurally in areas such as Kilkeel and South Armagh. The celebration event was full of laughter and an opportunity for fellow volunteers to catch up. A highlight of the night included the screening of a short film produced by Bolster Community which featured service users expressing their gratitude for the Drivers in their own words.

A special award was made to Majella Baxter, who has been a great friend to Bolster Community over the years, helping to source furniture for many families in need. Michael Savage also acknowledged the tremendous selfless commitment from Anne McArdle from Kilkeel who has been a Volunteer Driver with Bolster Community for 10 years.



POSITIVE IMPACT OF FRIENDS RESILIENCE PROGRAMME AS DELIVERED FOR MACE

Bolster Community have recently published an 'Outcomes and Impacts' report which looked at the impact of the FRIENDS resilience programmes that were delivered across various schools from Jan to Sept 2022 through the MACE contract.

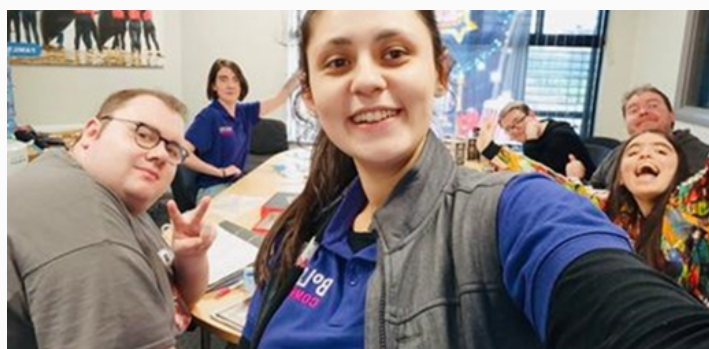
The FRIENDS Programmes are a suite of Australian developed, cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT) based programmes designed to build life-long resilience in individuals, families, schools and communities. Bolster Community became a licensed provider for FRIENDS in Northern Ireland in 2017. We then won a contract under the MACE project (Multiple Adverse Childhood Experience).

This is a project which aims to transform lives through the provision of nurturing support within communities. Under MACE we delivered 23 FRIENDS programmes to 524 children in 17 schools across 3 counties and 2 Health Trusts. Results were extremely positive with 92% of children reporting they feel their confidence and self-esteem had improved and 100% of teachers stating they would recommend the programme again. We are looking forward to the continued rollout of FRIENDS to schools across the locality.



CHRISTMAS CAPERS @ AUTISM CONNECT

What a year it's been for Autism Connect! Our pilot programme has taken an astonishing metaphorical flight beyond what we, here at Bolster Community, could've hoped for. Every Thursday evening, our group meet for tea/coffee, board games and a chat. Our casual social hub creates the perfect atmosphere for making friends, as well as promoting individual wellbeing. But don't get me wrong, it's not all about the coffee and custard creams!



Autism Connect offers sign-posting and support services if needed, as well as outdoor excursions, day trips, guest speakers and various inclusive activities that enable us to support opportunities for connection, employment and orientation support. Our current members have given us the warmest and most positive feedback, a truly priceless Christmas gift to all of us here at Bolster Community. From all of us, we offer everyone involved a sincere and heartfelt thank you.

One regular attendee said of Autism Connect that; "We have waited too long for this. I strongly feel it is exactly what we have all been waiting for." From our Christmas capers to our new year adventures, there's plenty to keep everyone at Autism Connect busy. Throughout December, we plan on helping our dedicated Bolster Buddies by making more of Bolster's iconic ACORN candles, as well as creating Christmas crafts. If you or someone you know is looking for a sign to come along to Autism Connect and see what it's all about in-person, this is your invitation to get in contact with us.

For more information on joining Autism Connect or volunteering with the group contact Orla on 028 3083 5764 or email orla@bolstercommunity.org.



Bolster Hosts Wellness Day for St Joseph's Boys High School Students

On Tuesday 20th September 2022 Bolster Community brought together local youth organisations to St Joseph's Boys High School, Newry for 'Your Youth Your Wellbeing' - a full school day filled with motivational speeches, wellness workshops & resilience challenges.

The day was for Year 8, 9 & 10 and aimed to engage boys aged 11-13 on wellness, positive mental health, motivation and self-care.

Activities on the day included Mental Health and Self Care Coaching from PiPs Hope and Support, Keeping Safe and First Aid Workshop from SHSCT, Physical and Social Confidence Workshop; Drink and Drugs Awareness Session and the most popular sessions of the day, Outdoor Physical Session from Pathways. A special mention to The Magnet Centre, Newry, who kindly donated 250 hygiene packs for each student to take away. Closing up the day, Funk Soul Media brought a creative rap workshop. Some enthusiastic students were invited on stage to have a go at shooting their own rap video with equipment such as Sony cameras, drones as well as microphones. This was a chance to show alternative employment paths for young people in NI.

Tracy, Training & Development Manager at Bolster Community commented, "With the increasing rise of mental health issues in young men we were delighted to host a full wellbeing day at St Joseph's Boys High School."

There were lots of smiling faces while the young men engaged in a full line up of interactive activities for the day. The young men soaked up the words of inspiration from our guest speakers. They learnt about body language and the importance of standing tall and how to present themselves to the world, the value of staying connected to family and friends and promoting self-confidence. "An all-round brilliant day!", one of the students told Tracy.



SUCCESS OF PARENTS PLUS SPECIAL NEEDS PROGRAMME



"My colleague Kate and I have just completed a 7-week PPSN programme in Newry. This programme is evidence-based and focuses on the shared experiences and knowledge of parents. With an amazing group of women who are all parents or carers for children or adolescents with additional needs, they have laughed, cried, and shared their experiences. They have listened and supported each other every week. We hope they continue to keep in touch, something that PPSN advocates. Once again, we are in awe of these strong and resourceful parents and the power of peer support."

Caroline

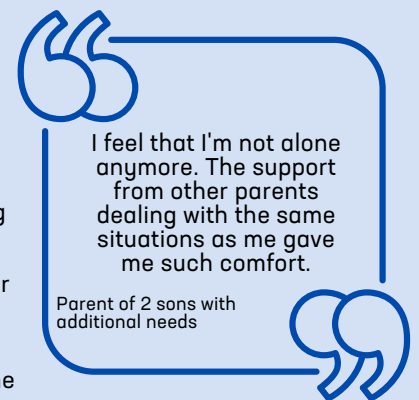
We are delighted to be able to deliver this programme to more parents living in the local area through recent funding from The Community Foundation NI.

Please contact Tracey or Justina for information on any of our programmes at trainingdevelopment@bolstercommunity.org

ParentsPlus
Empowering Professionals to Support Families

The **Community Foundation**
Northern Ireland

HSC Southern Health and Social Care Trust



INPATIENT DEMENTIA SERVICES CONSULTATION

The Southern Health and Social Care Trust has launched a three month public consultation on the future provision of Inpatient Dementia Services in the Trust area.

- The proposed future service model would see the creation of a specialist inpatient dementia unit within the Bluestone Mental Health unit on the Craigavon Area Hospital site.
- The Southern Trust had a stand-alone inpatient dementia assessment and treatment unit on the Gillis Ward, St Luke's Hospital, Armagh. In May 2022, patients in Gillis Ward were relocated to Willows ward, Bluestone Unit, Craigavon Area Hospital as an interim contingency arrangement to ensure patient safety and quality of care when dedicated Consultant Psychiatry cover could not be secured.
- The consultation opened on 3 October 2022 and closes on 23 December 2022.
- Link to consultation documents as follows:
- <https://southerntrust.hscni.net/involving-you/consultations/>

HSC Southern Health and Social Care Trust



We are delighted to be one of the beneficiaries from this year's Newry City Half Marathon and 10k run. A huge thank you to all the organisers and runners involved on the day for your generosity. Given the difficult times we are in, every penny will be put to good use.

What's New in 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: TBC
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: TBC
Time: 3.30pm
Location: Newry
Duration 10 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: TBC
Time: TBC
Location: Newry
Duration 7 weeks

PARENTS PLUS ADOLESCENTS

For parents of children aged 11-16

An evidence-based parenting course promoting effective communication and positive relationships in families with adolescents. This Programme considers how parents can connect with and build good relationships with their teenage children, while also being firm and influential in their lives.

Start date: TBC (Early Jan 2023)
Time: TBC
Location: Newry
Duration 7 weeks

GO GIRL

For teenage 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 will be explored with the aim of helping teenage girls make better informed choices and build resilience.

Date: TBC
Time: 4pm - 6pm
Location: Marcus St, Newry
Duration: 6 weeks

STAR BITES 57

For tenants of the NIHE

Join us for a bite, cuppa and a chat. Catch up on the craic, browse the paper. Our team will be there to help with any form-filling, appointment booking or signposting to local services that you may need.

Next date: Mon & Thurs
Time: 10am - 1pm
Location: Marcus St, Newry
Every Monday and Thursday

TOTS & TEA

For parents or carers of pre-school age children with additional needs

Would you and your child like to meet new friends who are on the same journey? Tots and Tea is a group of friendly mums and children who are all on the first steps of their journey through disability.

Registration date: 06/12/2022
Time: 10.00am
Location: The Early Years Room, St Malachy's Primary School, Carnagat, BT35 8PJ

INTERESTED IN REGISTERING FOR AN UPCOMING PROGRAMME?

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

Find our more:
bolstercommunity.org



ACORN

SCENTS OF ACHIEVEMENT

SET THE SCENE THIS FESTIVE SEASON WITH A UNIQUE 'GIFT THAT GIVES BACK' FROM OUR LUXURY, ETHICAL ACORN HOME FRAGRANCE RANGE.

We know that Christmas is a time of giving, and what better way than to send a gift that reinvests profits back into local people and communities. Not only will our home fragrances fill your space with atmosphere and stunning scents, they help support our wonderful candle makers and Bolster Community's work across Northern Ireland. As you plan and purchase your seasonal gifts this year, choose a present that brings joy to not only the recipient, but which empowers our candlemakers and showcases the power of Acorn. One sustainable gift can introduce the receiver to the exciting world of social enterprise, inspiring hope for the future and providing a true sense of purpose this Christmas season and beyond.



Each Acorn product is handmade in Northern Ireland by our gifted community of young adults with additional needs. We help our candle makers reach their full potential, empowering them to work within a group to feel connected, valued and purposeful. Our wonderful team pour their heart and soul into developing our products. We provide our makers with a 'scents' of achievement and ensure every purchase provides them with pride, purpose and opportunities. By buying social, all profits from your purchase go back into supporting Bolster Community's vital services, which you can find out more about at bolstercommunity.org.

Our products are hand poured in Newry, Northern Ireland. Natural, toxin free, pollutant free, cruelty free and vegan friendly. Developed sustainably and wrapped in environmentally friendly packaging. Within each of our candles, you will receive a card which has been hand signed by the candle maker, allowing you and the recipient to visit our website and find out more about their story and journey, and what Acorn means to them.

OUR LUXURY ACORN HOME FRAGRANCE PRODUCTS PROVIDE AN INDULGENT ATMOSPHERE, GIVING ANY ROOM A CALMING AND COMFORTING VIBE THROUGH THE POWER OF BEAUTIFUL SCENT.



Hand poured in Newry, Northern Ireland.



Natural, toxin free, pollutant free, cruelty free and vegan friendly.



Developed sustainably and wrapped in environmentally friendly packaging.



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