

BOLSTER COMMUNITY

Newsletter



BOLSTER COMMUNITY WELCOMES SUPPORT FOR AUTISM CONNECT PROGRAMME

Autism Connect, is a social hub for individuals over 18 years, with or waiting on an Autism diagnosis. It is run by Bolster Community and supported by The Southern Health Care Trust.

Bolster consulted with young autistic adults, families, carers, educators, healthcare and consultants, who all pooled their collective knowledge. Our consultation showed deep frustration with under-resourcing and the lack of prioritising for adult autism services.

What became clear was that most Autism services are designed for people who have autism and also a learning disability or mental health diagnosis, but few services are suitable for people with autism without a learning disability or mental health diagnosis. Adults with autism were invited to shape and co-design a service and opportunity that was of value to them, Autism Connect was created!



"This club is a lifeline for my 24-year-old daughter. It is her only social outlet. She usually struggles in groups, but regularly tells how much she loves her fellow club members and enjoys their company. She's building up trust with others and expressing herself through group activities. As parents, we can't emphasise too much our appreciation of the staff and their autism-centred approach. No other such club exists in our area, and it's vitally important that this invaluable resource is supported in all ways possible".
Parent of Autism Connect member.

Jacinta Linden, CEO at Bolster Community commented;

"Autism Connect has been welcomed by a fantastic group of young adults who join weekly to meet like-minded individuals, combat isolation, learn new skills, and embrace social outings together. Over the past 12 months, we have seen a tremendous surge in confidence among our adults, enabling them to tackle everyday challenges and contribute to their local community. We are delighted the Southern Trust has recognised the value of this service for young adults.

"There is of course still much more to do for adults with Autism but the recent passing of the Autism Amendment Bill by the NI Assembly in March 2022 brings renewed hope and focus for the future. In particular, this Bill introduces the requirement for a cross departmental autism training strategy and regional consistency for the provision of adult autism services throughout Northern Ireland, both of which are greatly needed and very welcomed."

Dr. Ivor Crothers, Clinical Director Psychology Services SHSCT, stated;

"The outcomes shown in this project, demonstrate that the pilot has provided clear positive improvements for the participants in terms of meaningful activities, communication skills, relationship building, and emotional wellbeing. These outcomes are certainly to be commended and the importance of the noted improvements in confidence and self-esteem in particular for this population should not be underestimated. Indeed, the project is an important reminder to us all in these uncertain times that when we feel connected, understood, and supported, we are empowered to be the best version of ourselves."

When and where?

Every Thursday, 7pm - 9pm at Whitegates Business Park, Newry, BT35 6UA

To find out more or get involved with Autism Connect, get in touch with Orla at 028 3083 5764 or visit us bolstercommunity.org.

EMPOWERING AUTISTIC VOICES

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JOIN US AS WE EXPLORE THE CHALLENGES FACED BY AUTISTIC ADULTS

Our keynote speakers will give an insight into understanding autism, breaking into employment and overcoming social barriers with autism. Hear personal stories from young adults as they dispel the myths of Autism.

THURSDAY 4TH MAY

Canal Court, Newry
10.30am - 3pm



www.bolstercommunity.org

REGISTER NOW



Scan the QR code or
visit our website to
register

International Wo/men's Day @ UUU

On Tuesday the 7th of March Bolster's pioneering CEO, Jacinta Linden, and Project Support Worker, Sarah Fox, attended Ulster University's International Women's Day event. Both took part on the panel and had much to say about the theme of embracing equity. There were many thoughts from all panellists and plenty of conversation from both the said panel and a very eager audience.

Key takeaways include, first and foremost, be comfortable about being who you are. The world would be a very boring place if we were all the same! Second, be compassionate to yourself and others. Ask people what they need rather than assume all experiences are the same, and third, to quote Jacinta: "Having a social heart and a business head is key in helping embrace equality in the workplace."

We, at Bolster, understand that varied support for every individual is vital. From service users, to staff, to volunteers, every unique individual with unique circumstances deserves unique support.

A sincere thank you from Bolster Community to Ulster University, Nancy Brown and Jo Watson for the invitation. It was a privilege to be apart of this. Happy International Women's Day from everyone at Bolster Community!

#EquityForAll #EquityandEquality #UWomensNetwork



Congratulations Jacinta!

Congratulations to Jacinta Linden, our CEO and team leader who has been named in the NatWest #Wise100 2023 leading women in social enterprise!

The WISE100 recognises the most inspiring and influential women in social enterprise, impact investment and mission-driven business. Well deserved!

#SE100 Pioneers Post Social Enterprise Northern Ireland



Congratulations to Jacinta Linden, our CEO and team leader who has been named in the NatWest #Wise100 2023 leading women in social enterprise!

Newsletter funded by:



Southern Health
and Social Care Trust

100 days and counting!



Meet Kirsty, our new Communications and Marketing Manager.

Kirsty joined us in January and we are excited to have her on board. Kirsty has worked with various charity organisations and we're confident that she will be an asset to the team. With a passion for working with young people and providing them with new opportunities, Kirsty is a Girl-guiding Leader in her spare time and when she can she is out getting the steps in!

To quote Kirsty, "Bolster brings something very special to the table. Although a small team, I have already seen how hard staff work to support the local community, thinking outside the box and going above and beyond. It's not work. It's passion for people!" She continued, "I have been making my way around all the different areas of work Bolster does. From meeting families to art sessions at Best Club. I even had a go at candle making! But what I am looking forward to most is sharing more about who Bolster are and what they do. I am so incredibly happy to be a part of this team and to share the stories that we see in the local community. Every story matters and every voice too. Bolster is here to give a voice to those who need it most."

To get in touch with Kirsty, email her at comms@bolstercommunity.org



Southern Health
and Social Care Trust



Heard first time

Access & Information Service for 65+



Access & Information Service

028 3756 4300

access.information@southerntrust.hscni.net

9am - 5pm, Monday - Friday



Bolster Community enhance their popular GO GIRL! Programme, thanks to partnerships with WOMEN'STEC and CTS.

Bolster's GO GIRL! is an 8-week programme which aims to give every girl an opportunity to become more self-aware and recognise their own strengths and abilities. Too many teenage girls struggle at school with issues such as bullying and involvement in unhealthy friendships and relationships just to fit in. So often, these things can result in negative self-talk, low self-esteem and poor body image.

The programme explores the following themes:

- Identity - healthy ways to develop our own self-identity.
- Self-esteem & confidence - how external influences can impact how we feel about ourselves.
- Communication - effective communication styles, how to be heard.
- Relationships - characteristics and behaviours of a healthy and unhealthy relationship/friendship
- Peer pressure - negative and positive and how these impact us.

This programme's principal aim is helping teenage girls make better-informed choices, build resilience and develop their own identity and self-worth.

Thanks to our new partnership with WomensTEC and CTS this has allowed us to extend the programme offering participants the opportunity to spend two sessions in the WomensTEC workshop, challenging traditional roles, pushing boundaries and learning new skills. Girls learned basic DIY skills and how to use and handle tools. They developed newfound confidence and skills by making and designing their own storage rack.

The girls enjoyed a final celebration event visiting Watchtower adventure centre for paintballing, followed by food and a celebration ceremony. Well Done to our Go Girls!



BOLSTER
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WOMEN'S
TEC

Abilities, not just dis-abilities.

Northern Ireland has the lowest rate of employment for people with disabilities in the UK and the disability employment gap is the HIGHEST in the UK (44%) by a significant margin. Almost a quarter of a million (243,000) working-age adults in Northern Ireland are disabled - just over one-fifth of the working-age population! This also means that disabled people in Northern Ireland are at increased risk of living in poverty. What can we do to help make a change in the lives of people with disabilities in Northern Ireland? What steps can we take as a business, as a community, as individuals?

These are the precise questions Bolster Community's Allison Slater and Sarah Fox were asking at the "Trust Inclusion" event. This event, held at Ulster University's new Belfast Campus, involved a myriad of people from varying backgrounds of expertise, including lecturers, students, HR professionals, business owners and the Department of Communities. All in the room were joined in one simple but passion-fuelled mission: to co-design and discuss strategies for more inclusion in the working world. It was a full day of statistics, discussion, real-life stories and learning.

An event that Bolster's Head of Operations and Development, Allison Slater, has described as "an encouraging day that has given us lots to think about. These statistics are not new to us as we see the impact of unemployment and disability everyday; so many of the people we support through our Ability services would thrive in employment that is not available to them. This is a vital discussion to be having and we can all do more." Bolster Community are proud to be a part of this Ulster University and Department of Communities co-design, and eager to build upon and advocate for disability both within and outside of the working environment.

Exciting times lie ahead, and Bolster Community will be here every step of the way.



Star Bites 57 to welcome more members!

What a year it has been so far! We opened our Star-Bites 57 door on 9th May 2022, welcoming previous and new Bolster service-users to come join us for a light bite to eat, a hot drink and a friendly atmosphere. The group meet twice weekly, and we ensure that everyone is made to feel welcome.



To ensure that the café is inclusive, we dedicate a Monday and Wednesday for adults and Thursday for parents and children. This allows the children to play freely and enjoy their space, as well as creating some free time for the adults. From arts & crafts, playing with toys, or just chilling out with a movie, there's plenty to keep the children occupied, and parents are free to seek support from the Star-Bites 57 staff.

The Star-Bites 57 café has a private room to enable adults to benefit from a listening ear and seek support confidentially. Many of these issues often relate to Social Security Benefits, Housing, Health queries, Transport problems, Settlement Status, Financial debt, and many more. We deal with these issues accordingly, either by signposting to the relevant agency or directly dealing with it first-hand. No two days are the same in the Star-Bites 57 café, but one thing is for sure, the atmosphere is always good and the banter flows freely. There is a great sense of trust within the café. As a regular attendee stated, "I love it here, it's my safe place."

To find out more please contact Joanne on 02830835764 or joanne@bolstercommunity.org

Celebrating at the National Learning Disabilities and Autism Awards!

We are delighted to announce that Bolster Community where shortlisted in four categories as finalists at the recent National Learning Disabilities and Autism Awards 2023!

Congratulations to everyone!

- Employer Award - celebrating an exceptional employer committed to their employees and delivering an excellent service to their users.
- The People's Award - 'Our day' opportunities for young adults with learning disabilities was recognised for exceptional care and personal development.
- Newcomer Award - Orla Flinnighan, Family Support Worker was nominated for her consistent 'can do' attitude.
- Support Worker Award - Noreen McConville, the young people's favourite support worker! The maternal figurehead in Bolster; a cup of tea and a listening ear is never far away.



Bolster Community celebrates success at Co3 awards!

Congratulations to Eamonn Connolly, our Chair, who won Highly Commended in the C03 Leadership Awards - Trustee of the Year. Thank you, Eamonn for your outstanding contribution to Bolster, helping us to support many families and individuals in Newry and beyond.

Bolster also received Highly Commended in the Team Up and Save The Day category. Our Go Girl programme empowers women and girls to explore non-traditional career paths e.g., plumbing, joinery, and electrician. For this project Bolster Community partnered with WOMENSTEC to introduce local women and girls to DIY and construction skills. A Newry-based facilities management company (CTS) also joined our forces, bringing together the private and third sector to create social impact.

Jacinta Linden, CEO at Bolster Community commented: "It was wonderful to attend the C03 Leadership Awards and pay tribute to those individuals and organisations making a positive impact in our sector. A huge congratulations to Eamonn, a well-deserved award recognising an exceptional leader who is driving positive change in the community sector. Also, to our partners WomenSTEC and CTS, we are proud to be working with you to support women and girls as they discover new opportunities."



Promoting Wellbeing / Access and Information Service

Joanne from Access and Information called about my GP referral for services to support me at home. She was willing to listen, her tone of voice and manner of how she spoke was refreshing. She explained the referral process and reassured me there was no pressure to agree to anything I did not want. She was supportive and made me feel better by just listening.



Bolster Community showcase their social enterprise to the British Irish Council

Jacinta Linden, CEO at Bolster Community was proud to showcase their social enterprise, Acorn Scents to a room of representatives from the British Irish Council (BIC). Membership of the Council comprises of representatives of the Irish and UK governments, Northern Ireland Executive, Scotland, Wales, Guernsey, the Isle of Man, and Jersey. It aims to provide a forum where members can have an opportunity to consult, co-operate and exchange views with the hope to agree common policies or common actions in areas of mutual interest for the benefit of all.

What's New in May and June?

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

Our Special Needs Programme provides parents with support to manage behavioural 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. 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 (May 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: 8 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.

Every Monday and Thursday
Time: 10am - 1pm
Location: Marcus St, Newry

TOTS & TEA

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

Tots and Tea is a group of friendly mums and children who are all on the first steps of their journey through disability.

Time: 10.00am
Location: St Malachy's Primary School, Carnagat, BT35 8PJ



Find out more:
bolstercommunity.org

INTERESTED IN REGISTERING FOR AN UPCOMING PROGRAMME?

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

ACORN

SCENTS OF ACHIEVEMENT

Bolster Community and Killeavy Castle Estate continue charity partnership for 2023



Killeavy Castle Estate is thrilled to announce the continuation of its partnership with the local charity Bolster Community in 2023. A Newry-based charity and social enterprise, Bolster Community work alongside individuals, families, and the community to support improved opportunity, health and well-being for those who need it. The charity provides several of these services in the Slieve Gullion region in which Killeavy Castle Estate is located, giving the partnership great synergy and reflecting the values of Killeavy Castle Estate. This places a huge emphasis on supporting local! Speaking about the partnership, Sales and Marketing Manager at Killeavy Castle Estate, Terry Kelly said: "Killeavy Castle Estate is proud to support Bolster Community and the fantastic work that they do. Bolster Community's commitment to giving back and supporting the local community, and it's commitment to sustainability with regard to its Acorn products, strongly align with the values of Killeavy Castle Estate and we are looking forward to partnering with the organisation for a second year." Acorn, the social enterprise element of Bolster Community, creates scented products including candles, fragrance diffusers and wax melts which are all handmade in Northern Ireland by a community of young adults with additional needs.

As part of Killeavy Castle Estate's partnership with Bolster, it commissioned Acorn to create a signature range of scented products for use across the property at Killeavy Castle Estate with Acorn spending a year developing a unique scent. 'Gullion Oaks', which captures the essence of the nature and relaxation of the estate and the Ring of Gullion that surrounds it embodies this perfectly. The 'Gullion Oaks' range of products is available for guests to buy at Killeavy Castle Estate with profits from the sales being reinvested into support programmes to help vulnerable individuals and families throughout the Newry, Mourne and Down region.

Commenting on the idea behind the commissioning of a scent from Acorn, Duty Manager at Killeavy Castle Estate, Michael Sheppard said: "Scent-ology is a smell reminding you of a place, a person, or a memory. Certain smells evoke recall and nostalgia, like the smell of your Granny's kitchen or the way a perfume can remind you of a certain someone.

"We wanted to create a signature scent that would remind people of Killeavy and we worked with the guys at Acorn to develop this, which resulted in the creation of 'Gullion Oaks.' This scent is used throughout the hotel and we hope that it will invoke feelings of relaxation and contentment with our guests and visitors."

Jacinta Linden, CEO of Bolster Community added: "It has been a pleasure working with the team at Killeavy Castle Estate this past year, bringing the 'Gullion Oaks' range to life and having the opportunity to bring the Acorn brand to a whole new audience of guests and visitors at Killeavy Castle Estate. We have achieved so much this year and we are really excited about what this year has in store for our partnership."

To celebrate the continuation of the partnership, Killeavy Castle Estate hosted members of the team from Bolster Community, including some of the Acorn candle makers at the estate. Here, they enjoyed afternoon tea, by way of thank you for all their hard work to date.

