



Autism
BEDFORDSHIRE



Children's Services

Improving the lives of
autistic children, young
people and their families
across Bedfordshire



Suite B1, 1 Hammond Road, Elms Farm Industrial Estate, Bedford MK41 0UD



enquiries@autismbeds.org



01234 350704 (helpline) | 01234 214871 (enquiries)



www.autismbedfordshire.net

What We Do

Our services exist to help break down the barriers to social participation for autistic children, young people and their families by providing places where they can go and feel comfortable, accepted and not judged by society. With the encouragement and support of specialist trained staff we help to build confidence, self-esteem, and social skills through taking part in social activities and mixing with others. Furthermore, we support the development of practical skills and independence in order to improve lives and help families feel part of their communities. Our aspirations are for autistic children and young people to have the same opportunities as those who are not on the spectrum and for them to enjoy fulfilled and rewarding lives.

How We Help

Autism Bedfordshire's Children's Services help improve the lives of autistic children, young people and their families across Bedfordshire.

In 2018-2019 Children's Services:

Delivered **223** social activity/leisure sessions for autistic children and young people

Supported **397** parent/carers and professionals through our helpline service

Provided fun activities for **308** autistic children and young people

Enabled **69** siblings to join in the fun

Delivered **75** hours of training to **292** parents/carers

Provided **7,378** hours of short breaks for parents/carers

Meet the team



Liz McTernan

Children's
Services Manager



Sam Pollock

Development &
Projects Officer



Amy Gavin-Birch

Development &
Projects Officer



Kate Osborne

Assistant Development
Officer / Data Officer



Peter Tysoe

Assistant Development
Officer / HR

Children's Services

Loads of Autistic Fun (LOAF)

LOAF is a Saturday morning activity group which the whole family can attend. The sessions provide a safe and inclusive environment for autistic children aged 3-12 years to access a variety of activities including soft play, arts & crafts, cooking, sensory and outdoor play. We also aim to provide parents / carers with a short break during the session whilst their child is supported by trained staff and volunteers.



There are four LOAF groups across the county (Bedford, Biggleswade, Luton & Leighton Buzzard) which run fortnightly during term time from 10am until 1pm.

Wanted Fun

Wanted Fun is a fortnightly youth club group which provides social opportunities for young people aged 10-17 years with Asperger's Syndrome or lower support needs.



Each group has a variety of different activities available depending on the interests of the young people. Activities include cooking, sports activities, board games, computer games, arts & crafts and movie nights.

Regular trips out into the community also take place and provide further opportunities to develop confidence, communication and social skills. Recent trips have included visits to farms, restaurants, cinemas, trampoline parks, swimming pools and laser tag. There are four Wanted Fun groups across the county, (Bedford, Biggleswade, Luton and Leighton Buzzard).

Due to their popularity, all LOAF and Wanted Fun groups currently have waiting lists so please call our office to register your interest in these groups.

Summer Activity Scheme

Our Summer Activity Schemes are based in Bedford and Luton and provide a wide range of onsite activities and community based experiences for autistic children and young people aged 3 to 17 years. Each scheme is specifically designed to cater for the different needs, interests, ages and abilities of those that attend.



Junior Activity Scheme is for autistic children aged 3-9 years, and provides 1:1 support.

Holiday Club is for autistic young people aged 10-17 years with moderate to severe learning difficulties with 1:1 support provided.

Summer Fun is for autistic young people aged 10-17 years with Asperger's Syndrome or lower support needs. Ratio of support is approximately 1:3.



Both Luton and Bedford Junior Activity Schemes have been rated as 'Outstanding' by Ofsted (Luton 2017 & Bedford 2019)



Additional Services

Where additional funding can be secured we aim to offer a variety of autism friendly sport and leisure opportunities around the county.

These often include:

Exclusive Soft Play Sessions - A chance for the whole family to have an active and enjoyable time together

Trampolining - 5/6 week trampoline courses for young people aged 8-17 years

Tennis - 5/6 week courses run from the Riverside Tennis Club in Bedford for young people aged 10-17 years



Please visit our website for more information on our current additional opportunities

New for 2019 - Skills 4 Success (S4S)

This is a project for 16-19 year olds with lower support needs and provides the opportunity to learn and develop their skills alongside accessing social opportunities within the community.

Post 16 education provisions may not always offer full time courses or training, therefore S4S provides alternative options during any free days a young person may have in their weekly timetable. Our skills courses offer a smaller, quieter environment for learning and can be adapted to suit the needs of the individual.

Most of our skills courses will run for approximately 6 weeks and follow a planned scheme of work. We aim to empower the learners, reduce anxieties, build confidence and independence and develop skills which will be transferable as they approach adulthood.

Courses available include:

- Communication and Social Skills
- Money Management
- Pre-Employment and Volunteering
- Travel Training



Helpline - 01234 350704

Our helpline service is available Monday - Friday 09:00-17:00 for both parents, carers and professionals. Our Project and Development Officers are on hand to provide information, guidance and support on all matters relating to autism.

We have a variety of resources and information on;

- Support services across health, education and social care
- Self help guides and information
- Local activities and groups
- Practical tools and resources



Parent & Carer Training

We offer a range of training opportunities across Bedfordshire exclusively for parents and carers both during the daytime and evenings.

Outreach sessions

Outreach offers a 1:1 opportunity for parents/carers to ask our Development & Project Officers any questions they might have e.g. resources, local services, challenging behaviours, rights & entitlements and social opportunities.

First Steps: Parenting a child with Autistic Spectrum Conditions

A 60 minute talk on Autism Spectrum Conditions (ASC) for newly diagnosed families, followed by information on local support services and an opportunity to meet other parents and carers.

Parenting a child with autism and social communication disorders: An Evening Lecture for Parents and Carers

Jennifer Wilson (Principal Psychologist & Autism Specialist) in partnership with Autism Bedfordshire provides detailed guidance to support parents and carers to understand and help manage behaviours consistent with autism.

Autism and Behaviour

This workshop provides you with the opportunity to learn more about: the difficulties autism can cause in managing behaviour; the theory behind behaviour and how we can prevent rather than cure; strategies for managing difficult situations.

Social Stories

This workshop provides you with the opportunity to learn more about: the purpose of social stories as a communication tool; the history and different uses of social stories; tips to creating your own social story.



Autism, Diet and Sensory Needs

This workshop provides an opportunity to learn more about: the relationship between autism and diet; the impact of sensory processing differences; useful resources and strategies to support health and wellbeing when diet is an issue due to sensory challenges.

Professional Training

All professional training is fully accessible to professionals and parents who feel the topic may increase their knowledge and understanding. Topics include:

- Social Stories
- Autism, Women & Girls
- Autism & Mental Health
- Autism & Relationships: A Toolkit for Practitioners
- Autism & Demand Avoidance



Visit our website to see our full training brochure and find out about future dates.

Training can be booked through our website or by calling our office: (01234) 214871.

Education Consultancy

This service can be accessed by professionals or parents who would like assistance in identifying, understanding and supporting young people who may face barriers to their learning and development.


What this service can offer:

- Individual observations
- Sensory environmental audit
- Holistic reports containing clear recommendations
- A focus on all areas including social communication and interaction, flexibility of thought, behaviours, the impact of sensory processing differences and environmental factors
- Advice about possible ways forward for the young person, suggested interventions and targets
- Useful evidence either pre or post diagnosis when seeking statutory support (please consult with your Local Authority to confirm they will recognise such evidence)
- Tailored 'Autism in the Classroom' training for SENCOs, teachers and support staff *

*** Autism in the Classroom training is delivered as part of our professional training programme therefore the cost of this varies depending on the number of delegates.**

Cost/fees: Please visit our website for further details

Information & Support

 **helpline**
01234 350704

Helpline Monday - Friday 09:00-17:00 - Information, advice and guidance on all matters relating to autism.

Website www.autismbedfordshire.net - Information on our services and access to key resources.

e-newsletters Autism Bedfordshire circulates information via different e-newsletters. Please contact us if you wish to receive any of these:

- Pathway - general charity and local information
- Grapevine - Children's Services
- Orchard - Adult Services
- Staff and Volunteers information

Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/autismbedfordshire>

Twitter @autismbeds

Membership In order to access our core services you will need to become a member of Autism Bedfordshire. For further details please visit our website.



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