





# CHILDREN'S SERVICES ANNUAL REPORT

## APRIL 2025 - MARCH 2026

Autism BEDFORDSHIRE

Charity number: 1100722

*"My first experience attending a session. I thought staff were really compassionate and the session was great for the kids."*

Autism BEDFORDSHIRE

# HELPLINE



Our Helpline service in Bedfordshire actively supports parents, professionals and children. We've experienced an **increase** in calls and emails from professionals seeking advice and are proud to report a response time of only 72 hours.

We also continue to provide support through term-time groups, sports and leisure activities, and community networking events, such as coffee mornings and school visits.

Our common topics this year included:

- **Behaviour**
- **Mental Health**
- **Sensory Processing**
- **Education - support to have needs met**
- **Short Break Services - Summer Scheme/ Additional Services/Groups**
- **Autism Diagnosis**
- **Local Support - needed from schools, local authorities and health professionals**
- **Training and Parent Support**
- **Social Opportunities**

**172.25**

Hours of helpline calls

**726**

Helpline calls and emails taken





# SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media has allowed us to reach out to the public to provide help and resources and we are seeing more and more people engaging with our content, we are also seeing new followers accessing our services as a result of these services being posted on social media.

1,791 Followers

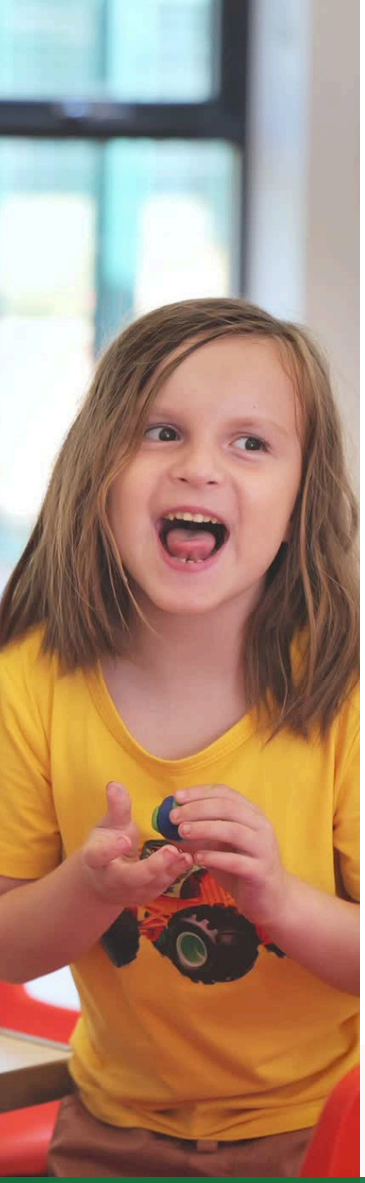
4,422 Followers

911 Followers

**We also circulate information for parent/carers via our e-newsletters**

**Grapevine** – our Children's Services e-newsletter

Our newsletters provides information about autism, our activities and services, and other local/national events and services.



*"Lovely day to include all family members but also safe and inclusive for my child, thank you."*

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# STAY & PLAY
## FAMILY GROUP

Stay & Play is our Saturday morning activity group that welcomes the entire family. These sessions create a **safe and inclusive environment** for up to 20 autistic children aged 3-12 years. Participants can enjoy a variety of activities including soft play, crafts, cooking, sensory experiences and outdoor play.

Sessions are planned by the group leaders, ensuring activities enrich learning and provide opportunities to develop social & communication skills, as well as incorporate the interests of each individual child who comes to our sessions.. Across the county and Milton Keynes, there are five Stay & Play groups located in Bedford, Newport Pagnell, Biggleswade, Luton and Leighton Buzzard. **To accommodate high demand we continue to split the sessions into two 1.5 hour groups.**

**162**
Sessions offered

**243**
Hours of S&P sessions

### WE SUPPORTED

**50**
Siblings

**158**
Parents

**122**
Young People





*"You are a fantastic service and your communication is great."*

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# WANTED FUN YOUTH CLUB

Wanted Fun Youth Clubs offer a social space for autistic young people aged 10-17 with support needs that vary. Due to high demand we have seven clubs located in Bedford, Kempston, Millbrook, Leighton Buzzard, Biggleswade, Milton Keynes and Luton.

Each session provides up to 20 young people with two hours of activities including cooking, sports, board games, computer games, arts and crafts, quizzes and movie nights. Additionally, regular community outings enhance confidence, social skills and communication. Recent excursions have included visits to bowling, cinemas, trampoline parks and climbing venues.

**145**
Sessions offered

**4640**
Hours of respite given

**130**
Young people supported





# GIRLS GROUP YOUTH CLUB

The Girls Group is a youth club located in **Dunstable**. It meets fortnightly for two hours and is specifically designed for **autistic girls aged 10-17**. The group focuses on building confidence, self-esteem, fostering friendships and enhancing communication skills. During each session attendees participate in a variety of activities tailored to their interests. Additionally, the group encourages active involvement in decision-making and planning, including community outings such as climbing or bowling.

**18**
Sessions offered

**540**
Hours of respite given

**15**
Young people supported




# ADDITIONAL SERVICES
## SPORTS & LEISURE ACTIVITIES

Our additional services continue to be as popular as ever. We offer a range of activities from gymnastics to farm visits. Most of these sessions are held during school holidays to provide a short break for families who may be struggling with children being out of school and unable to follow their normal routines. The activities are usually a few hours long each.

Some of the additional services we provided this year included:

Archery

Exclusive Family Soft Play sessions

Exclusive Family Gymnastics sessions

Pantomine

Music Fun

Exclusive Family Swimming sessions

Parkour

Art courses

Exclusive Family Farm days

Our additional services aim to provide children and young people with another social outlet for them to engage with other children and maybe learn a new skill in the process.

**20**
Different types of sports and leisure activities offered

**124**
Hours of sports and leisure activities delivered

**161**
Young people Supported

**76**
Siblings benefitted from taking part

*"The scheme is amazing, with well-planned age-appropriate activities, the environment is relaxed, nurturing and my children always want to be back the next day, they absolutely love it and so many other children we know."*

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# SUMMER ACTIVITY SCHEMES
## SHORT BREAK SERVICE

Our Summer Activity Schemes, located in Bedford and Luton, offered a diverse array of onsite activities and community-based experiences for autistic children and young people aged 3 to 17 across Bedfordshire.

A total of 30 days of scheme ran, providing a variety of activities for autistic children and young people, and respite for their families. The schemes ran between 9.30am and 3pm.

Each of our schemes is specially designed to cater for the different needs, interests, ages and abilities of the children who attend:

### JUNIOR ACTIVITY SCHEMES

Provides 1:1 support for autistic 3-9 year olds, including those with moderate to severe learning difficulties. This scheme ran for 5 days, Monday to Friday.

**45** Young people supported on Junior Activity schemes

### HOLIDAY CLUBS

Provides 1:1 support for autistic young people aged 10-17 with moderate to severe learning difficulties. This scheme ran for 5 days, Monday to Friday.

**44** Young people supported on Holiday Club schemes

### SUMMER FUN

For autistic young people aged 10-17 years olds with support needs that vary. This scheme ran for 5 days, Monday to Friday over two weeks.

**40** Young people supported on Summer Fun schemes



**129** Autistic children and young people were supported

**2953.5** Hours of short breaks were enjoyed by families



*"Thank you, this was an exceptionally well delivered and informative training session."*

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# PARENT / CARER TRAINING

During the year we delivered 7 training workshops for 147 parents/carers either face-to-face or virtually. This training is delivered by professionals in the form of webinars, workshops and in person sessions. A number of parents were booked on the courses as a direct result of helpline calls and emails.

Here are some the workshop we have offered:

- **SEN Law - HCB Solicitors**
- **Sensory Webinar - Faye Clarke, Mood Mechanics**
- **Sensory in the Classroom - Faye Clarke, Mood Mechanics**
- **Autism and Eating Disorders - Emily Nuthall**
- **ARFID - Ursula Philpot**
- **Supporting Your Autistic Teenager Workshop - Sarah Polack**
- **Supporting Sensory Regulation in Schools for Autistic Pupills - PINS Project**

**7**
Courses delivered

**147**
Parent/Carers attended



With thanks to -

HCB Solicitors

MOOD MECHANICS

NHS
Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes
Integrated Care Board



***WE THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT.***

Autism BEDFORDSHIRE

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