

# Children & Young People's Services

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



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01234 350704 (helpline) | 01234 214871  
(enquiries)



[www.autismbedfordshire.net](http://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.

## We Provide:

Skills  
Courses

Summer Activity  
Schemes

Helpline  
Service

Personalised  
Support

Workshops &  
Training

Sports & Leisure  
Opportunities

Youth Groups &  
Family Activity  
groups

## Meet the Team



**Liz McTernan**  
Children's Services  
Director



**Amy Gavin Birch**  
Children's Services  
Manager



**Samantha Pollock**  
Personalised Support  
Manager & Keyworker  
Lead



**Lynsey Ahmed-Murray**  
Development & Projects  
Officer



**Naomi Charlton**  
Data & Marketing  
Officer



**Peter Tysoe**  
Assistant  
Development Officer



**Kaitlin Thomson**  
Project Support  
Officer



**Sandie Allen**  
Personalised Support  
Keyworker

# Our 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). Sessions are 1.5hrs (9.45-11.15 or 11.30-13.00)



## Wanted Fun



Wanted Fun is a fortnightly youth club group which provides social opportunities for autistic young people aged 10-17 years accessing mainstream education with 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, cinemas, trampoline parks, and laser tag.



There are five Wanted Fun groups across the county, (Bedford, Biggleswade, Flitwick, Luton and Leighton Buzzard).

Due to their popularity, some groups currently have waiting lists so please call 01234 214871 to register your interest in these groups.



## Girls Group Youth Club



The Girls Youth Club is a fortnightly activity group based in Dunstable for autistic girls aged 10-17. It aims to build confidence, self-esteem, support friendships and develop communication skills. Each session offers a variety of activities based on the interests of attendees.

Please be aware this group is for Central Bedfordshire residents only.

## Farm Project

Autism Bedfordshire, in partnership with Animal Edge Farm, provides a bespoke experience for autistic young people who are out of school or finding mainstream education unmanageable. This project offers these young people a weekly 1:1 hour long private visit where they can interact with animals, spend time in nature, and try activities tailored to their interests.



Our Farm Project creates positive experiences within a safe, nurturing environment. It offers autistic young people a therapeutic oasis to be themselves, build confidence, improve their self-esteem, and develop their independence outside of school.

The service is person-centred and is led by the young person and their family in developing their support plan, enabling them to achieve their aspirations and be part of their community.

This support can be funded by local authorities, schools, health providers or privately. Please be aware that an eligibility criteria is in place and access to this provision is subject to availability.

Please call 01234 214871 or email [enquiries@autismbeds.org](mailto:enquiries@autismbeds.org) for more details.





# Summer Activity Schemes

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.



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

- **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 lower support needs. Ratio of support is approximately 1:4.



## 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 can include:

- Family Farm Days
- Exclusive Soft Play Sessions
- Exclusive Swimming Sessions
- Trampolining
- Tennis
- Rugby
- Online art courses



For current information on additional services see our [website](#) and [Facebook page](#). To stay up to date with information on news and events, sign up to our e-newsletter [here](#) or sign up via our [website](#).

## Skills 4 Success (S4S)

This is a project for 16-19 year olds with lower support needs and provides a variety of bespoke skills courses to support learning and development alongside social opportunities within the community.

We offer a smaller, quieter environment for learners one day a week that 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.

Social activities are also based around young peoples interested and have previously included paint-balling, bowling, footgolf, cinema, badminton and museum visits.



### Courses available include:

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

## Helpline Service - 01234 350704

Our helpline service is available Monday -Friday 09:00-17:00 for 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 and Carer Training & Support

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

## Women & Girls

A workshop providing information about the differences often found in the 'female' or 'internalised' presentation of autism. Information on resources and strategies to support autistic women and girls will also be explored.

## 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.



## Demand Avoidance

A workshop providing information about the demand avoidant presentation of autism, including the role of anxiety and how to prevent/manage demand avoidant behaviours.



## Sensory Processing

A workshop exploring the relationship between autism and sensory processing, including resources and strategies to support sensory difficulties and their impacts.

## Anxiety & Behaviour

A workshop to explain the impact of autism on regulating behaviour, offering advice on how to support autistic individuals of all ages, including managing difficult situations.

## Communication

A workshop providing information on communication challenges, as well as different communication tools and approaches, such as social stories and visual resources to aid communication.

## Autism, Diet & Sensory Needs

This workshop provides an opportunity to learn more about: the relationship between autism and diet; the impact of sensory processing differences; and useful resources and strategies to support diet issues.

# Practitioner Training

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

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



Visit our website or click [here](#) to view our full training brochure and find out about future dates. Training can be booked through our website or by emailing [training@autismbeds.org](mailto:training@autismbeds.org)

## Education Consultancy

This service can be accessed by practitioners 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 with the school environment
- 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 practitioner 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

## Helplines

**01234 350704**

Open Monday-Friday 9:00-17:00 for information, advice and guidance on all matters relating to autism.

## Website

<https://www.autismbedfordshire.net/>

Information on 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/AutismBedfordshireFB>



Twitter

[@autismbeds](https://twitter.com/autismbeds)



Instagram

[@autismbedfordshireofficial](https://www.instagram.com/autismbedfordshireofficial)

Children's Services: [@abchildrenservices](https://www.instagram.com/abchildrenservices)

Adult Services: [@adultservicesautismbeds](https://www.instagram.com/adultservicesautismbeds)

## 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 or click [here](#).



**Autism**  
BEDFORDSHIRE

**Registered Charity No. 1100722**

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