



Annual Review 2017-18 Autism Berkshire



Moving Forward

Autism Berkshire is the leading autism charity in the county, with 28 years' experience of delivering high-quality services.

During 2017-18, we moved to a new office in the centre of Reading, offering improved accessibility for visitors, while a drive to increase community fundraising activity bore fruit with our selection as Reading Buses' 2018 Charity of the Year in a staff vote.

All the support and advice, training workshops and courses we provide, our social and leisure activities, and our work to raise awareness and understanding of autism in the wider community, are driven by

a single aim – to make a difference to the lives of autistic children, young people and adults in Berkshire and their families.

Whether people are exploring the possibility that they or a family member may be autistic, they are waiting for an autism assessment or they have received a diagnosis of autism, wherever they live in Berkshire, our dedicated team of staff and volunteers is ready to help.

Please read on to find out more about Autism Berkshire's services and achievements during 2017-18 and how you can get involved and support us.



Talking sense about autism.

Helpline: 01189 594 594 
www.autismberkshire.org.uk



Making a Difference

"Thank you so much for all the information and help. I've learned so much and don't feel quite so alone"

- A parent's comment after attending a NAS Autism Seminar for Families on Understanding Autism

"I feel so much more reassured everything is going to be okay"

- A mother who attended a Pre-Assessment Workshop

"It was a brilliant day. Well done everyone"

- A parent's comment after our World Autism Awareness Day 2017 fun day at Bucklebury Farm Park

"Thank you so much for the session at Thames Valley Adventure Playground yesterday, it was a brilliant venue and my son and his friends had an amazing time"

- A parent's comment after one of our regular family fun days at the Thames Valley Adventure Playground

Strengthening Support

After a rapid expansion of our services in the previous two years, 2017-18 was one of consolidation, with a settled range of support delivered to autistic people and their families.

The need to move office during the course of the year provided an opportunity to assess the most suitable location to make it easy for people to visit us.

After assessing several options, a central location at 40 Caversham Road in Reading was selected, with excellent public transport links on the doorstep, unlike our former home off Richfield Avenue. The move was completed at the start of January 2018.

With continued support from the Berkshire NHS Clinical Commissioning Groups, parents and carers were able to benefit from pre-assessment workshops and Autism Seminars for Families at venues throughout Berkshire.

New workshops, for autistic adults and for parents and carers of autistic children, offered advice on staying safe on the Internet, thanks to funding from Thames Valley Police.

Another new development saw two workshops arranged about safeguarding for autistic girls, led by local autism advocate Carly Jones, who has two autistic daughters.

Our advice services remained in high demand. Weekly drop-in sessions at the YES Shop in Slough proved popular with local parents and the service was further improved in January 2018 through funding from the SPACE (Slough Prevention Alliance Community Engagement) scheme, led by Slough Council for Voluntary Services.

Alongside the drop-in sessions, Autism Berkshire's specialist benefits adviser, Kevin Jackson, is now available by appointment to assist families and autistic adults with benefit applications, transfers and appeals. Kevin is also representing people at benefit assessment and appeal hearings. He achieved positive outcomes in a substantial majority of the more than 130 cases dealt with during the year.

Calls and emails to the Helpline, the only autism-specific service of its kind in Berkshire, continued at a high level and Home Visits were also in high demand.

A reduction in grant support from Bracknell Forest Council led to a decision to combine the weekly Bracknell CAYP youth group with the separate NHS-funded fortnightly Bracknell youth group. The merged group benefited from fundraising by parents of the children who attend its meetings, including Peter Slade who walked 25 miles in one day between the venues of four of our youth groups.

The NHS continued to support other youth groups in Slough and Windsor, while council-funded groups met in Reading and Wokingham.

Trampolining and swimming sessions continued to be supported by the BBC Children in Need appeal and we received the news at the end of the year that this funding would continue.

In the run-up to Children in Need Day, BBC Radio Berkshire broadcast live from our office during their breakfast programme, giving an opportunity to promote our work and show how we spend money raised by the appeal. Family fun days for Autism Berkshire members at the Thames

Who

Valley Adventure Playground were well-supported, while a special fun day, for World Autism Awareness Day 2017, held at Bucklebury Farm Park, in West Berkshire, got the year off to a great start with more than 200 people enjoying the event, which was supported by a Big Lottery Fund grant.

Membership of the adult social groups in Reading Maidenhead and Bracknell continued to grow. More SocialEyes and Independent Living Courses for autistic adults were provided in Reading, Maidenhead and Slough.

Alongside service delivery, raising awareness and understanding of autism across Berkshire is an important part of our work.

We supported the National Autistic Society's Autism Hour campaign in October 2017, joining forces with The Oracle Centre in Reading for an event on the morning of October 2, when shops in the centre turned down bright lights and loud music. A dozen volunteers turned out to hold collecting tins and buckets at the entrances to the centre.

We were back at The Oracle for a day during Autism Awareness Week 2018 at the end of March, displaying our 25th anniversary exhibition Autism in Berkshire: Past & Present, and raising funds and another event during the week took us to Broad Street in Reading, with Reading Buses bringing along the bus which bears a special Autism Berkshire livery to mark our charity partnership.

A new development saw a series of short videos commissioned from a professional production company to highlight different aspects of our work. A video was also produced to celebrate the launch of our charity partnership with Reading Buses.

The board of trustees was strengthened at the Annual General Meeting, held in Reading in January 2018, with two new members, Margaret Collum and Richard Flemming, elected. Co-chair of trustees Matthew Cleaver stood down at the meeting due to other commitments, with Ewan Duncan becoming the sole chair as a result.

Our high governance standards were recognised by Reading Voluntary Action in September 2017, when we received their Safe+Sound award after an audit of our operations.

In Numbers 2017-18

1,800	people follow our Facebook page
1,500	new individuals used our services
1,400	Berkshire Autism Alert Cards in use
1,200	people follow us on Twitter
800	people attended our Family Fun Days
167	Home Visits were made by our support workers
136	people were helped by our Benefits Service

Cindy Burke lives in Bracknell with her husband Garry and seven-year-old son James, who received an autism diagnosis at the start of 2017 and is featured in a photograph on the side of the Autism Berkshire bus.

"I first heard about Autism Berkshire when we received the diagnosis letter. There was a bunch of leaflets with information and contacts. I phoned Autism Berkshire and the National Autistic Society the same day.

"I was looking for information. Anything that could help explain to me what the diagnosis meant, help in any form really, and to find out about services and training courses.

"I've been on pretty much all the courses that Autism Berkshire runs, including the Autism Seminars on Understanding Autism, Sensory Needs and Managing Anger.

"They were good and gave me lots of things to come home with and work through - what we had learned and what it all meant. It was also good to be in a room full of people who were in a similar situation.

"After not really knowing anything about autism, they gave me a good starting point to explain what was going on.

"We really like going to the family fun days and James goes to trampolining in Bracknell, which helps to teach him hand-eye co-ordination, moving his limbs in different ways, and focus and concentration, as well as understanding about waiting his turn.

"It's definitely beneficial and he enjoys going. It helps him to blow off a bit of steam and he has made some friends and enjoys sharing time with them."

To thank Autism Berkshire for its help, Cindy has organised a team to take part in a giant inflatable obstacle run at Newbury Showground in October 2018 to raise funds for us.



Fundraising

With continued pressure on the budgets of public sector bodies such as the NHS and councils, less money is being allocated to grants for charities and voluntary sector organisations.



Against this backdrop, money raised by individuals, groups of people and businesses is increasingly important in helping to support Autism Berkshire's services, whether in donations, gifts in wills or fundraising challenges.

Alongside our key partnership with Reading Buses as its 2018 Charity of the Year – which will run into our 2018-19 financial year - a number of our service users helped us through a range of activities.

Kay Syed, from Slough, set herself a mission to raise £100 during Autism Awareness Week 2018 at the end of March – and ended up collecting more than £1,400 through a bake sale for colleagues at BT's London head office, where she works, and donations from family and friends. She wanted to thank us for our support after her four-year-old daughter Zahra, pictured above with Kay, received an autism diagnosis last year.

Members of the Bracknell adult social group undertook challenges to help fund its activities. Steph Guest and Nathan Ross completed an eight-mile sponsored walk in the town in June 2017, collecting £145 in sponsorship and donations.

David Blackburne, who also volunteers at the Bracknell CAYP youth group and is a keen athlete, took part in a Giant Inflatable Obstacle Run at Newbury Showground in October 2017. He enjoyed it so much that he will be back at the event in the autumn of 2018, along with a number of our other supporters. David is pictured below, left, presenting a cheque for the £130 he raised to our autism development worker Garrick Rahal, who co-ordinates the social group.

BAS Fest 2017, held during the May bank holiday weekend at the Nag's Head pub in Reading, raised a fantastic £4,000 for us, but sadly this was the last time it will take place after being a key fundraising event for us for several years. Our thanks to the team at pub for their support over this time.

People are also supporting us by shopping online using the Give As You Live portal, with every purchase generating a donation to our funds. There was a steady increase in the amount raised in this way over the course of the year.



Thank you

To our funders and supporters

- Associated British Ports
- Baylis Media Cracker Appeal
- Bracknell Rocks
- Co-operative Local Community Fund
- Garfield Weston Foundation
- Gerald Palmer Eling Trust
- Heathrow Airport Communities Trust
- McKay Securities
- Nag's Head pub, Reading (BAS Fest)
- Prince Philip Trust
- Purley Players
- RBWM Users Network
- Reading Buses
- Saint Laurence Relief in Need Trust
- Sir Jules Thor Charitable Trust
- Thames Valley Police Property Act Fund
- Theodore Roussel Memorial Trust
- University of Reading
- Waitrose Green Coins
- Wyke Green Masonic Lodge

To our key partners

- East Berkshire NHS Clinical Commissioning Group
- Berkshire West NHS Clinical Commissioning Group
- Bracknell Forest Council
- Reading Borough Council
- Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead Council
- Slough Borough Council
- Wokingham Borough Council
- BBC Children in Need
- National Lottery Awards for All

Financial Summary for 2017-18

Total Income	£270,000
Grants and Subscriptions	£212,600
Donations and Fundraising	£57,400
Expenditure on Charitable Activities	£237,700
Fundraising costs	£16,700
Governance costs	£1,900
Excess income taken to reserves	£13,700
Reserves carried forward to 2018-19	£48,500

For 2018-19 we are forecasting our level of income and expenditure to be matched.



Talking sense about autism.

Autism Berkshire – the working name for Berkshire Autistic Society

Registered office:

40 Caversham Road, Reading, RG1 7EB
Charity no: 1076217, Company number: 3750656

AutismBerkshire @autismberkshire

www.autismberkshire.org.uk

Call: 01189 594 594