



Annual Review 2018-19 Autism Berkshire

Delivering Positive Change

Autism Berkshire is the leading autism charity in the county, with almost 30 years of experience of delivering high-quality services for autistic people of all ages and their families.

The highlight of 2018-19 was our partnership with Reading Buses as the company's 2018 Charity of the Year. More than £11,700 was raised to support our services as a result.

The charity's financial position remains stable and was further strengthened during the year thanks to a generous legacy donation by the late Wallace Beakhouse, from Tilehurst. He was in his 70s when he was diagnosed as autistic, after

wondering for most of his life why he felt different from other people.

All the support and advice, 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 positive difference to the lives of autistic children, young people and adults in Berkshire and their families.

Please read on to find out more about Autism Berkshire's services and achievements in 2018-19 and about how you can get involved and support our work.



Talking sense about autism.

Helpline: 01189 594 594

www.autismberkshire.org.uk



Developing New Approaches

With an established range of advice, support and leisure services for autistic people and their families available across Berkshire, 2018-19 was a successful year for Autism Berkshire.

We continued to see a significant number of new service users, many referred by health, education and social care professionals, but also people who had found out about us through other avenues.

Social media, particularly Facebook, is an increasingly important point of first and continued contact with service users. The number of people following Autism Berkshire's page on the site grew by 39%, from 1,800 at the end of March 2018 to 2,500 a year later.

Demand for places at our workshops for parents and carers remained at a high level and we launched a new workshop in the autumn about Emotional Self-Regulation, offering parents strategies to help their children to manage their own emotions.

This new workshop was supported by the East Berkshire NHS Clinical Commissioning Group, which, along with its counterpart in the west of Berkshire, continued to fund our support and advice services for families with autistic children or with children on the waiting list for autism assessments.

The Games Club in Reading and CAYP Group in Bracknell remained popular with children, along with trampolining sessions in Reading and Bracknell, supported by BBC Children in Need, and the Lego Club at Woolhampton in West Berkshire. Older teenagers and young adults continue to transition to the Level Up games club in Reading.

Special activities laid on for children during the summer of 2018 included a Lego workshop day with professional 'brick artist' Kevin Hall, and a family picnic in Reading's Forbury Gardens, pictured. At this event, our team was supported by young volunteers from the National Citizen Service, who ran games and activities for children during the event.

However, there were some changes to children's services, due to reduced funding from the NHS and councils, with the youth groups in Slough, Windsor and Wokingham no longer operating.

Our social groups for adults, the 197 Club in Reading and Bear With Me in Maidenhead, continued to see high levels of attendance for both regular meetings and special activities, such as trips to go bowling, to the theatre, or canoeing on the River Thames.

During the year, plans were made to set up a new social group in Slough, in conjunction with the borough council's autism

What service users say about Autism Berkshire

"A very well-presented, interactive and person-centred day."

- A parent who attended an Understanding Autism workshop

"Both speakers were extremely helpful and easy to talk to. Thank you so much!"

- A parent who attended a Managing Anger workshop

"Very informative and the presenters were excellent – knowledgeable and approachable."

- A parent who attended an Understanding Autism workshop

"It was great to meet so many other parents who are trying to cope with similar issues."

- A parent who attended a Meeting Sensory Needs workshop

"I learned a lot, as the area is new to me. I had limited understanding, but now know much more."

- A parent who attended an Understanding Autism workshop

"It was good to hear people sharing their experiences and things they have learned."

- A parent who attended an Understanding Autism workshop

"Your benefits adviser Kevin Jackson is a godsend – he knows his stuff."

- A parent helped by our Benefits Service



In Numbers 2018-19

£42,235	in back payments won on appeal for benefits service clients
2,500	people follow our Facebook page
1,500	Berkshire Autism Alert Cards in use
1,350	people follow us on Twitter
800	people attended our Family Fun Days
198	Home Visits were made by our support workers
168	cases handled by our Benefits Services

team. It was planned to launch this group early in the summer of 2019.

We were also pleased to support the launch of a new group in Reading for people who have received autism diagnoses as adults, called Being Us. It builds on the Being Me post-diagnosis courses run by Dr Trevor Powell, head of Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust's adult autism diagnosis service. We received funding for its meetings from Reading Lions Club and the Women's Asperger Circle.

Alongside support, advice and leisure services for autistic people and their families, we continued to work to improve awareness and understanding of autism in communities across Berkshire, including planning a conference called All About Autism, to take place in Slough at the start of April 2019, on World Autism Awareness Day.

As part of our partnership with Reading Buses, as their Charity of the Year, we provided autism training for the company's staff, including drivers, office and depot staff.

Other organisations to benefit from our expertise were Reading Museum and the Museum of English Rural Life, part of the University of Reading, as they prepared to launch relaxed opening sessions for autistic visitors.

We held a sell-out speaker event in Bracknell in October, where autism advocate Dean Beadle told people to be positive about autism in a talk about his journey from a difficult childhood to a successful career as an autism trainer and speaker.

Fellow autism trainer Richard Maguire had a similar message when he spoke at Autism Berkshire's annual general meeting in November. He said simple adjustments could help autistic people to perform well in school, at work and in other situations.

The AGM also saw a change at the head of the charity, with Ewan R Duncan stepping down as chair of the trustees after three years. He was succeeded in the role by Richard Fleming, from Taplow, an associate director in a City of London financial firm.

Giving his final chairman's report, Ewan said that the charity was much better placed financially and organisationally than in 2015 and could have confidence moving forward, although securing funding remained a constant challenge.

Autism Berkshire's high organisational and safeguarding standards were recognised in September 2018 with the award by Slough Council for Voluntary Services of their Slough Quality Protects scheme platinum award, making us the first voluntary organisation working in the town to achieve that status.

Benefits Service

Delivering for clients

Autism Berkshire's Benefits Service underwent two major changes during 2017-18 – expanding to offer representation at appeal hearings and advice appointments in Slough – so 2018-19 represented the first chance to see the impact of these over a full year.

The number of cases dealt with by our expert adviser, Kevin Jackson, pictured, in 2018-19 was 168, compared with 119 in 2016-17.

Of these, successful outcomes for the clients were achieved in 143, with 19 appeal tribunal cases yet to be settled at the end of March 2019. A total of £42,235 in back payments of benefits had been secured for clients through appeals at that point.

Due a similar number of cases awaiting tribunal decisions at the end of 2017-18, a full picture for that year was not available until early 2019.

Of 135 cases handled, there were successful outcomes for clients in 122 – a success rate of 90%. Back payments won through appeals totalled £86,103. One tribunal case for 2017-18 had still to be heard at the end of 2018-19.

Funding from the Slough SPACE community advice and information project, led by Slough Council for Voluntary Services, was renewed at the start of 2019. This pays for the costs of benefits appointments for borough residents at the Shelter office in the town centre.

With the increased workload and a large number of requests for representation at appeal hearings and tribunals, proposals for an expansion of the service, including extra staff, were set to be progressed during the coming year.

Information about Autism Berkshire's Benefits Service is available on our website or from our office.



Fundraising

In what continues to be a challenging financial climate, a diverse funding base is key to our ability to raise money to support our services.

Public sector bodies, including the NHS and most of Berkshire's major councils, continued to support our services in 2018-19 but an increased emphasis was put on seeking support from other grant-making bodies.

In addition, we benefited from two Charity of the Year partnerships, with Reading Buses and the Sainsbury's supermarket at Winnersh.

The partnership with Reading Buses covered the calendar year of 2018 and raised a total of £11,720, including the proceeds of the company's annual open day in July 2018 at its Great Knollys Street depot and a skydive by bus driver Darcey Harrington.

The partnership with Sainsbury's at Winnersh ran into the 2019-20 financial year, so the final fundraising total was not known at the end of the 2018-19 period. A team of Autism Berkshire staff and volunteers collected £875 in donations for packing shoppers' bags on the Saturday before Christmas.

We were chosen as the main charity to benefit from the 2018 Englefield Run, organised by the Rotary Club of Reading Abbey and Tadley Runners, and received a cheque for £3,370, with plenty of athletes turning out despite some unseasonal wet weather during the August Bank Holiday weekend.

Individual fundraising efforts are another important source of funds.

Mike Coventry, the husband of Gemma Coventry, our former home visit support worker in Bracknell, was another person who took to the air to raise money, making a skydive from 14,000ft despite being afraid of heights. He collected £1,575 for us in sponsorship.

One fundraiser with a more down-to-earth approach was 18-year-old Becka Adams, pictured, from Bracknell, who ran her first-ever half-marathon in her home town in May. She raised £800 in sponsorship to thank us for our support for her family after her younger sister Jessica received an autism diagnosis in 2014.

The sisters' father Paul raised another £130 for us by organising a dress-down day at his workplace, BCA car auctions' head office in Farnham

- Information about how to get involved with fundraising for Autism Berkshire is available on our website or from our office.



Thank you

To our funders and supporters

- Alchemy Foundation
- AWE Community Committee
- Berkshire Community Foundation
- Big Lottery Fund
- Bracknell Town Council
- Braywick Nurseries, Maidenhead
- Crowthorne Parish Council
- Donation in Memory of Tracy Stringer
- Gerald Palmer Eling Trust
- Grace Trust
- Holy Spring Infant & Nursery School, Bracknell
- Legacy from the estate of the late Wallace Beakhouse
- Maidenhead Advertiser Cracker Appeal
- Paypal Charity Fund
- Reading Abbey Rotary Club
- Reading Children's & Youth Voluntary Services
- Reading Lions Club
- Sir Jules Thorn Charitable Trust
- Thames Valley Police Property Act Fund
- Theodore Roussel Memorial Trust
- Woodroffe Benton Foundation
- Women's Asperger Circle

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
- Slough SPACE project
- BBC Children in Need
- National Lottery Awards for All
- Reading Buses
- BBC Children in Need

Financial Summary for 2018-19

Total Income	£280,500
Grants and Subscriptions	£154,500
Donations and Fundraising	£126,000
Expenditure on Charitable Activities	£187,600
Fundraising costs	£12,400
Governance costs	£2,200
Excess income taken to reserves	£78,300
Reserves carried forward to 2019-20	£126,800

For 2019-20 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

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