

BOLSTER COMMUNITY

Get through & Get ahead



AUTISM CONNECT PROJECT SUPPORT OFFICER

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Introduction

Dear Candidate

I am delighted that you are considering the opportunity to join Bolster Community (BC) in this exciting role of Autism Connect Project Support Officer. BC is a practical solution focused charity and award-winning social enterprise, where we strive to make a positive and lasting impact on individuals who might not otherwise get the help they need. Bolster Community and the services we provide to the community has transformed over the past 5 - 6 years into the multi-faceted organisation we have today - supporting people from early years right through to twilight years and everything in between. From humble beginnings, what has been achieved by our small, dedicated team has been truly remarkable. We are a financially resilient organisation operating in a challenging but rewarding social care & education sector. In the last year (April 23 - Mar 24) we have improved the lives of over 9,000 local people.

Inspiration

One of the many key highlights of 23/24 was our 'Empowering Autistic Voices' conference in May 2023 and the exceptional growth of 'Autism Connect' a ground-breaking social space for adults with autism, where autistic adults access support around employment, relationships, education and social connections. This highlight swiftly followed by our successful partnership with statutory colleagues from the Southern Health & Social Care Trust, the GP Federation Multi-Disciplinary Team and our Autism Connect service users (and their parents!) - in the delivery of a successful funding proposal to expand and build on our Autism Connect programme across the Southern Trust for the next 5 years!

Business Strategy

Acorn scents has provided approximately 6,000 hours of support for young adults with mixed ability this year - and provides a place of purpose and pride for our Bolster Buddies. Acorn Scents was recognised in the top 100 Social Enterprises across the UK in 2022, and we continue to grow our offering by bringing out new candle collaborations and securing new Wholesale partnerships.

In October '23, at the N.I. Social Enterprise Awards we were over the moon to be announced winners of both Outstanding Staff Team (AND Best Cross Sector Collaboration with our partners WOMEN'STEC and Connect - Transform - Sustain for the Go Girl programme). Our team work incredibly hard and do amazing work - day in, day out - so it's fantastic to pick up a little recognition along the way!!

We are looking to appoint an Autism Connect Project Support Officer to work closely with stakeholders to co-design and facilitate evening and weekend social groups and activities for autistic adults across the Southern Health & Care Trust region.

If this sounds like you, we look forward to hearing from you.

Jacinta Linden
Chief Executive



OUR VISION

A connected community where everyone has access to services and opportunities, enabling them to reach their full potential.

OUR MISSION

We work alongside individuals, families and the community, to support improved opportunity, and health and wellbeing.

We are Bolster Community

**WE WORK ALONGSIDE INDIVIDUALS, FAMILIES AND THE COMMUNITY,
TO SUPPORT IMPROVED OPPORTUNITY, AND HEALTH & WELLBEING**

Sometimes we all need a little help and when you do, Bolster Community has your back. Bolster Community is a not-for-profit organisation with offices in Newry and Kilkeel. We're a practical, hands-on charity that works alongside individuals, families and communities to help them get through and get ahead.

Since 2004, we've had the privilege of helping countless individuals reach their full potential. From early years right through to later years, we support and strengthen people facing life's tough challenges. Bolster Community (previously known as SPACE NI), has grown from a small campaigning organisation in Warrenpoint, to a key third sector agency providing services, support, training and leadership on community development, resilience and well-being.

Our services are centered around supporting three categories - Family, Ability and Seniors.

Our Family Support Service provides practical and therapeutic support and a range of training programmes for parents and children. As coordinator of the Newry and Mourne Family Support Hub, we help find solutions for families facing physical and mental health problems, family breakdown, parenting difficulties, financial problems and social and rural isolation.

Our Ability services are dedicated to connecting children and young adults of mixed ability to reach for the stars. Our social enterprise, Acorn has a candle and soap factory and an online gift shop, which provides a safe place for our volunteers to feel connected, valued and purposeful. Our Social Enterprise scents products are lovingly handcrafted and all profits go back into supporting our vital work. We have a second social enterprise Bolster Training which supplies a range of evidence-based training opportunities for parents, children and agencies to develop skills and resilience around anxiety and special needs.

Signposting and practical support to older members of the community are delivered through our Seniors services. Comfort Zone is a social group bringing seniors together to make new friends and enjoy some company. Home2Hospital, a driver service for those over 60 that live in rural Mournes and Slieve Gullion, is a lifeline to many.

We are registered as a charity with the Charity Commission of Northern Ireland 107382. We are also a company limited by guarantee registered in Companies House, 655061.

Please note that in order to comply with our Child Protection Policy we will require an employee to undertake a Criminal Records Bureau Disclosure if their role or assistance at one of our programmes brings the employee into regular contact with children.

SENIORS

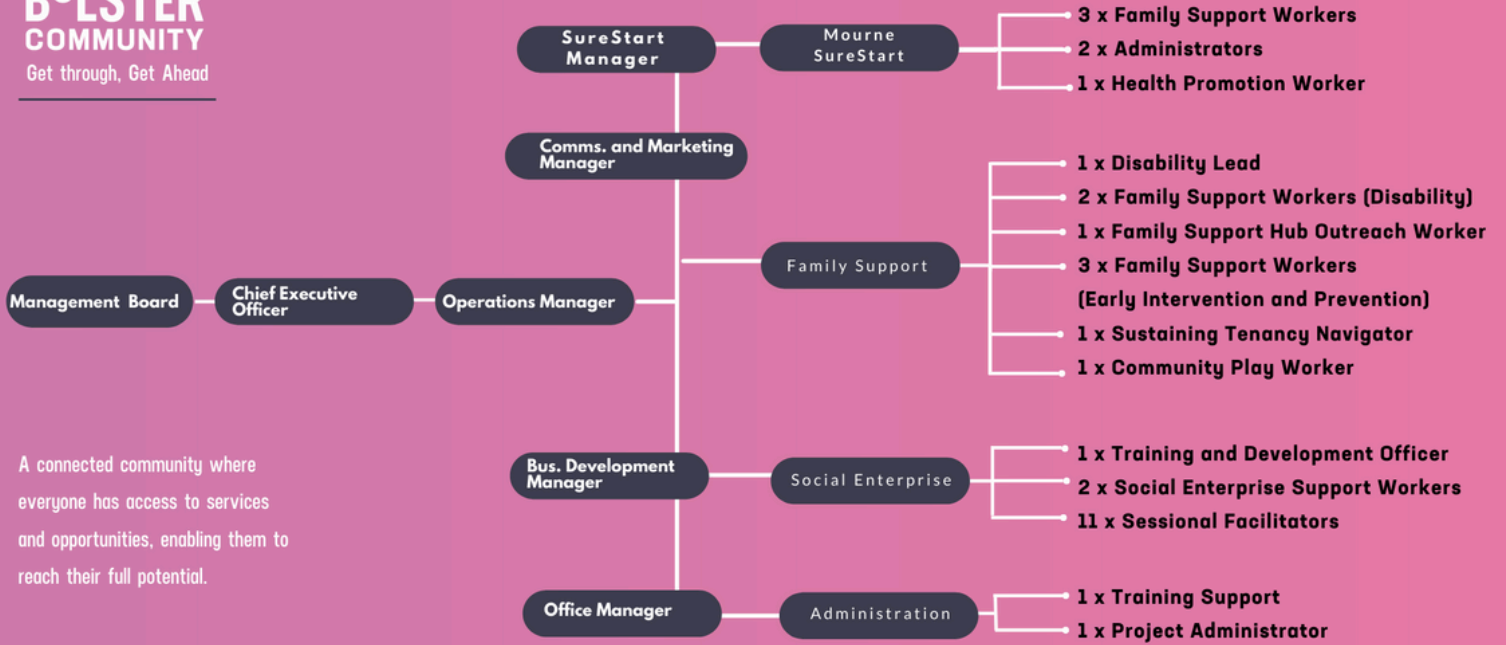
ABILITY

FAMILY

Bolster Community's structure in 2024



A connected community where everyone has access to services and opportunities, enabling them to reach their full potential.



Autism Connect Project Support Officer

Reports to:

Autism Connect Lead Mentor

Responsible to:

Autism Connect Project Manager

Base:

Bolster Community, Unit 1
Whitegates Business Park,
Killeavy Road, Newry, BT35 6EP

Hours:

25hrs

Benefits

- Basic salary: £23,400 (Pro Rata)
- Pension: 6% employer's salary contribution (subject to conditions)
- Annual Leave: 25 days per annum + Statutory Holidays (pro-rata for part-time hours)
- Allowances: travel expenses will be paid according to Bolster Community rates (subject to conditions)
- Health Care: Foresight Health Cash Plan (subject to conditions)

Flexible working opportunities will be considered

PURPOSE OF THE POST

- Successful candidates will be responsible for delivering a high standard of work supporting the project manager and lead mentor to design, plan and deliver the project in line with agreed goals and objectives.
- The Programme Support Officer will work closely with stakeholders to co-design and facilitate evening and weekend social groups and activities for autistic adults across the Southern Health & Care Trust region.
- The social sessions whilst largely informal, will incorporate opportunities for connection, employability and most importantly access support from peers in a safe environment.

KEY DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- To work flexibly, efficiently and responsively to support the needs of autistic adults and their families/carers.
- To work alongside the Autism Connect Mentor in the facilitation of weekly, evening and weekend social sessions.
- To offer emotional support and guidance on a 1:1 basis or through group activities.
- To promote and encourage access to social sessions and navigation service and ensure that barriers for those who find services difficult to access are actively minimised, providing a welcoming service.
- To provide honest, realistic structured support including an initial referral appointment and follow up as required throughout the trajectory of the support required.
- To participate in the co-design and delivery of a programme of universal activities and interests that will enhance the understanding of the service users around the areas of Work, Relationships, Community and Social
- To maintain attendance records and personal development plans on file within the GDPR/governance guidelines and ensure that all information received by individuals is understood, helpful and modified as necessary.
- To seek and record client feedback to understand whether needs are being met and to plan any necessary adjustments.
- To meet regularly with colleagues to review and evaluate the quality and effectiveness of the service.

This Job description is neither exhaustive nor exclusive and may be reviewed depending upon operational requirements and staffing levels

ESSENTIAL CRITERIA CIRCUMSTANCES

1. Means to travel to sites in both Northern and Southern Ireland and flexibility to attend evenings and weekends as required.

EXPERIENCE/QUALIFICATIONS

1. A minimum of GCSE Grade C Numeracy and Literacy supported by ASD awareness or practice qualifications.
2. Or 2+ years' experience supporting adults of mixed abilities to reach their potential.

SKILLS/EXPERTISE

1. Ability to work on own initiative.
2. Ability to manage groups whilst understanding the needs of the individual.
3. Ability to assess and develop support responses in partnership with autistic people, their families, and carers.
4. Excellent written and oral communication skills, with the ability to build rapport, express yourself concisely and appropriately with individuals of varied levels of seniority. E.g. experience communicating with families, service-users & management.
5. Proficient in the use of Microsoft Office (e.g. e-mails & word documents) in a personal or professional setting. (Training on a dedicated CRM system will be provided).

DESIRABLE CRITERIA

EXPERIENCE/QUALIFICATIONS

1. Experience of supporting autistic adults or those with a learning disability.
2. Understanding of boundaries within mentoring and volunteer led support.

Shortlisting will be based on the evidence that you supply on your application to satisfactorily demonstrate how, and to what extent, you meet the above criteria. The Shortlisting Panel will not make assumptions as to your circumstances, qualifications, and experience.

ADDITIONAL TO PERSONAL SPECIFICATION

1. Outstanding communication and interpersonal skills- A skilled communicator who keeps colleagues and clients well informed and communicates proposals, projects and messaging clearly and concisely across a diverse range of mediums, platforms and capacities. Demonstrates communication success in improving business growth across a range of in person and digital platforms.
2. Strong problem-solving ability and creativity- Demonstrates solution focused leadership within their role towards their colleagues, volunteers, clients and customers. Acts as a positive role model and demonstrates examples of nurturing continuous improvement for colleagues and customers alike. Demonstrates commitment to achieving corporate strategic and operational objectives through creative and innovative communications, actions and values led engagement.
3. The capacity to work under pressure- As an ambitious charity and social enterprise, much of the work of the CM will be deadline focused. The successful candidate will need to show they can deliver exceptional results on time within constraints and in line with organisational strategy, policy and procedure. The successful candidate will need to demonstrate previous experience in exceeding the expectations and requirements of clients, and internal and external customers.
4. Project management skills- Demonstrates experience, skills and outcome of previously managed projects resulting in increased sales and income. Demonstrates understanding of time management, and organisational planning to successfully and competently fulfil or exceed the requirements of their post.
5. Good report writing skills presentation and impact measurement skills. Demonstrable evidence of collaboration within and across teams. Develops and encourages effective partnerships and a positive team atmosphere, both internally and externally, to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery based on shared outcomes.

Competencies - Candidates who are shortlisted for interview will be required to demonstrate how, and to what extent, they meet some or all of the competencies listed above during their interview.

The Interview Stage

At interview stage, candidates will also be assessed against the following criteria:

- Commitment to the ethos and values of Bolster Community.
- A high degree of personal and professional credibility to engender trust and inspire external stakeholders.
- Credible and confident communications.
- Exemplary interpersonal skills, able to engage people of all levels, backgrounds and disciplines, and to communicate effectively with internal and external stakeholders to build support for the organisation.
- The ability to think and act strategically, developing practical and creative solutions.
- High self-motivation, creativity and determination, with the ability to take the initiative and problem-solve effectively.
- Tactical awareness and the credibility necessary to operate and communicate at a senior level. These will be required and assessed alongside key roles and responsibilities outlined in the Job Description and Person Specification.



How to Apply

Please complete the application form, ensuring you have included mobile, work and home telephone numbers, as well as any dates when you will not be available or might have difficulty within the recruitment timetable (See 'Timeline' below). The deadline for application is noon on Friday 17th May 2024.

Applications can be made via email to allison@bolstercommunity.org or by hardcopy to Allison Slater, Bolster Community, Unit 1 Killeavy Road, Newry, BT35 6EP. For any further information contact Allison: allison@bolstercommunity.org or 028 3083 5764 if you have any queries about the role or the application process.

Disability

In accordance with the Disability Discrimination Act a person is disabled if they have, or have had, "a physical or mental impairment which has, or has had, a substantial and long term adverse effect on your ability to carry out normal day to day activities".

If you consider yourself to have a disability relevant to the position for which you are applying, please contact Allison Slater so that we can process your application fairly, make any specific arrangements for your interview, and make any necessary reasonable adjustments or adaptations, or provide any aids to assist you in completing the duties of the post if appointed.

Equal Opportunities

Bolster Community is an Equal Opportunities Employer and all applications for employment are considered strictly on the basis of merit. Please complete the Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form <https://forms.office.com/r/Xgwbye4zvg>.

Timeline

Application form to be submitted	Friday 17th May 2024 @ noon
First Interview	Beginning Monday 27th May 2024
Proposed Start Date	Monday 15th July 2024

B°LSTER
COMMUNITY

 **COMMUNITY**
FUND

Connect with us    

bolstercommunity.org