



## BOSP (Brighter Opportunities for Special People)

BOSP is a small independent Essex based charity that has been supporting families for over 33 years. Charity Number: 1107392



BOSP's vision is for children and young adults with complex disabilities or life-limiting conditions, and their families to live the best life possible. We improve their lives by providing high-quality, fun, educational activities, and respite care.

In 2022 we were honoured with The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service (an equivalent of an MBE and the highest recognition a voluntary group can receive), recognised in the national SEND (Special Educational Needs & Disabilities) magazine as an example of best practise and 2019 winners of the Pride of Essex Awards.



### Why BOSP are needed

Profound learning disabilities and critical illnesses blight young lives, putting great stress on the family unit. Children who are very ill or have a complex disability, face discrimination and substantial barriers to participation in mainstream activities, resulting in the whole family becoming marginalised and vulnerable to depression, family breakdown and social exclusion.

We provide 17 different activity clubs and support services, weekdays, evenings, weekends and during school holidays for children and young people from birth to 25 years, supporting over 400 beneficiaries. To maximise learning outcomes children are cared for on a one-to-one ratio, with additional specialist medication and behavioural staff being present, ensuring the safety and best care of everyone in the setting.

BOSP aims to offer children/young people with disabilities access to the same activities and opportunities as their peers, allowing them to develop independence, self-esteem and social skills in a supportive environment, whilst their families benefit from the vital break our sessions provide, enabling them to catch up on much needed sleep, spend time with their other children or just have an undisturbed shower or cup of tea.

BOSP's crisis prevention support helps keep families together and children in their homes.

### The changes we deliver

Through various clubs and sessions BOSP delivers the following positive changes:

- increased communication and social skills, as they initiate conversations, follow instructions and make friends
- improved self-esteem and growth in confidence, as they try exciting new activities and challenge themselves
- improved independence, as they make requests and make their own decisions
- improved life skills, as they learn to budget, handle money, travel training, prepare food and learn about the world around them
- Reduced stress and improved well-being in carers through vital respite, counselling, and peer support

### Where we work

Our office is based in Wat Tyler Country Park, Pitsea, with regular club sessions taking place at numerous venues, including BOSP's Skills for Life building in the park, The Pioneer Special School - Basildon and Thriftwood Scout Camp - Brentwood, plus activities that take place out in the community, throughout Essex and the London Borough of Havering.

### Our staff and volunteers

We have 7 part-time and 5 full-time service delivery/planning staff, a bank of 44 specialist sessional Support Workers and 51 volunteers. Many are trained in administering medication and gastrostomy feeds, personal care, disability lifeguarding, challenging behaviour and communication including British Sign Language, Makaton, PECS (Picture Exchange Communication System).

### **How BOSP is funded**

BOSP is self-funded and relies on charitable trusts, donations, and corporate/community fundraising to deliver our services. We have to raise over £500,000 per annum to deliver our vital work. 89p out of every pound is spent on direct service delivery.

### **Why BOSP is different**

BOSP reaches further than the immediate children we support. Most providers only support children with low levels of need, requiring less staff and/or where the parent/carer must stay at the setting. This is less expensive and easier to deliver, as parents remain responsible on site. However, this is not what children or families really need as it is far less effective in achieving positive outcomes and does not deliver sufficient respite. Our social clubs away from the home and main carer deliver results. We have proven that we reduce isolation and empower children with disabilities, whilst providing parents and siblings with the vital break they need.

### **Case Study (\*name change)**

When Alex\* first joined BOSP at 8 years old, he was very shy and insular with little verbal communication and poor muscle tone, affecting his walking. To improve this, he joined BOSP's structured, inclusive activities that target development, including trampolining. Initially when his turn on the trampoline/bouncy castle finished, he would become very distressed, cry profusely and chew his clothes, not understanding that he had to wait whilst the other children took a turn. He has now learnt to communicate his needs and has developed into a child who smiles and is no longer distressed as he understands how to wait his turn, sits reading a book whilst he is waiting, being calm and relaxed. In addition to improved communication, he has learnt important life skills including listening to and following instructions. Alex's confidence has grown greatly, and he now attends our longer respite clubs and activities in the community, away from his family, becoming increasingly independent, whilst providing his family with a much-needed break.

### **Family Testimonials**

"We would have to riot if there was no BOSP, as I don't know how we would cope. We have two disabled children and seeing BOSP's Star on the weekly planner, helps us get through another week."

"This is the only charity locally that can give my daughter with complex medical needs and learning difficulties a fun packed and safe place to play at weekends and school holidays – BOSP are the best."

"BOSP is the only time we get a break from Tom\*. It's the only time we get to spend time alone as a couple and only time we get time on our own together with our youngest daughter. BOSP is a lifeline for us."

"I've made so many lovely friends through the other mums in the preschool group. Just having others to talk to who know what you are going through and having a place to relax with your child."

### **Challenges we are currently facing and our plans for the future**

Like many charities, we are operating in a very tough environment; to deliver effective and sustainable solutions, yet being faced with ever increasing changes in legislation, data protection, safeguarding, HR recruitment, risk assessing and training, which are all essential if we are to be accountable, however this puts small charities such as ours under additional pressure. Having come through the pandemic, we now face a range of new challenges including post pandemic austerity and the cost-of-living crisis, which increases our costs and reduces our income.

With this in mind, our strategy, short to medium term is centred on the consolidation of our development and growth achievements over the past few years, to further diversify our income streams, and continue to deliver a premium service that combines matched care support with a high Support Worker to child/young person ratio, that is safe, accessible and affordable to families, adapting to changing circumstances as required.

### **How can you help us to help more children with complex disabilities or life limiting illnesses**

We would be grateful for any support you are able to give, from funding a specific project, contributing to overheads, such as our rent or Support Worker salaries, choosing us as your Charity of the Year or a monthly donation, all of which helps us to continue to support some of the most isolated and marginalised children.

We hope you find our work to be of interest and worthy of your support. Thank you for your consideration.