



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) and recognised in the national SEND (Special Educational Needs & Disabilities) magazine as an example of best practice.



Why BOSP are needed – No one thinks they'll need to use an organisation like BOSP

Parents don't expect to have a child with an additional need, a life-limiting illness or that their child will acquire a disability. It is a parent's worst nightmare and the resulting demand on families, along with the chronic lack of support in society if a child has complex physical, learning or health needs, often results in social exclusion, stress and family breakdown. Employment and careers are often lost as one or both parents take on a full-time caring role, with meeting up with friends and family, and meals out or holidays becoming a thing of the past. Children who have a complex disability or who are very ill also face discrimination and substantial barriers to participation in mainstream activities, resulting in isolation and mental ill-health of the whole family.

At BOSP, we aim 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 social 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 work.

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

Our offer

We provide 17 different educational activity respite clubs and support services on weekdays, evenings, weekends and during school holidays for children and young people from birth to 25 years, and their families. These include Saturday and Holiday Clubs, inclusive toddler groups and sensory sessions, hydrotherapy, counselling, peer support, advocacy, after school and youth clubs, family fun days and a variety of clubs in the community for different ages. BOSP regularly supports over 400 beneficiaries. To maximise learning outcomes children are mostly supported on a one-to-one ratio, with additional specialist medication, personal care and behavioural staff being present, ensuring the best care of everyone in the setting.

Where we work

Our office and centre are based in Wat Tyler Country Park, Pitsea. We also deliver regular club sessions in Basildon, Brentwood and out and about in the community, across Essex and the London Borough of Havering.

Our staff and volunteers

We have 6 part-time and 6 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. 87p out of every pound is spent on direct service delivery.

Why BOSP is different

There is a lack of high level (one-to-one & two-to-one) support in the community. Most clubs can only support children with low levels of need which requires less staff, or the parent carer must stay at the setting. This is less expensive and/or 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 to enable them to continue their caring role. For some children, BOSP is the only social activity club they can attend and only respite some families receive.

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.”

“Firstly, thank you for showing us your amazing charity, staff team, and young people. Your work is beyond words, so to say I left inspired, amazed and overwhelmed would not quite cover it.” *(Visit from Active Essex)*

“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 changes in legislation, data protection, safeguarding, HR recruitment, risk assessing and training. These are all essential if we are to be accountable, however this puts small charities such as ours under huge additional pressure.

Despite our successes, this year is going to be particularly tough for BOSP, as demand increases and costs soar, meanwhile available income from grants and contracts reduces due to the economic climate. We’ve worked hard to build up our unrestricted funds with the aim of acquiring larger premises in order to reduce our extensive waiting list of nearly 200 children, but if additional funding from charitable trusts, foundations and the community is not forthcoming, it is likely we will need to use these funds to maintain our existing levels of support instead.

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 core costs or overheads such as our rent, insurance, mini-bus or Medication Support Worker salaries, all of which helps us to continue to support some of the most isolated and marginalised children in the community.

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