

Cruse Bereavement Care Bedfordshire Report to Leighton–Linslade Town Council



The purpose of this funding was to enable the training of more Bereavement Support Volunteers to support people living in Leighton Buzzard.

We aimed to:-

- Recruit a minimum of 2 new volunteers a year
- Support clients from Leighton-Linslade over a 4-year period

What we achieved

- In 2021/22 we received **22 new referrals for individual or group support** from Leighton Buzzard, which coincidentally was the same as in the previous year. These figures do not include people from the area who have called our helpline and have had one off telephone support, without it going to a referral for Telephone/video and email support.
- As in the previous year, the Covid-19 pandemic meant that we were unable to deliver any of our face-to-face services safely. Therefore, we continued to provide regular telephone/video and email support to bereaved people ensuring they are not alone in their grief during this difficult time. In addition, several online groups were run during this period. Staff and volunteers are being supported remotely, and all Bereavement Volunteers receive training via webinars and receive support and supervision remotely.
- We recruited 8 new volunteers in 2021/2022. As they are all volunteering remotely, all our volunteers are able to provide support to the Leighton Buzzard and Linslade areas.

Expenditure

The grant is continuing to be used as a contribution towards volunteer recruitment & training. We estimate it costs £120 to train a new volunteer via webinar which includes costs for the trainer and administration support.

Future development

We are grateful to have the continued support of Leighton Linlade Town Council with the development of bereavement services in the town. Our next volunteer training course starts shortly - May 2022.

Over the past year, the leading cause of death experienced by our callers has been cancer, with Covid-19 as the second most common bereavement. In addition, many of our clients over the past year have experienced a sudden or traumatic death by suicide; accident; heart attack and included several homicides. Following a traumatic death, clients can experience strong and frightening emotions. Some also experience haunting images or flashbacks. With the support of experienced bereavement volunteers, for most people these feelings do become less intense over time.

Alongside ongoing remote support, we continue to offer immediate support, information and advice over the telephone to those who call our branch. We have found over the pandemic that through working remotely, we have generally throughout Cruse, been able to support a greater number of clients. Therefore, we will be continuing to offer remote support to the majority of our clients but are now reintroducing some face-to-face services, including groupwork.

We have also revamped our 'Understanding Your Bereavement' session and introduced a new online client support session. This is offered to clients when they first call our helpline and consists of a presentation lasting about 30 minutes which is followed by the opportunity to speak with others who have been bereaved in breakout rooms, facilitated by our trained and experienced volunteers. For some clients this one session is all they need to help them to understand how their grief is affecting them and to normalise these feelings.

Feedback from clients in 2022

"I'm not a talker but I did talk. It's because of Cruse as I just bottle it up. I feel I have said things I would never have said to anyone. I am grateful for that."

"I felt I just needed to talk to a someone who was not a family member... I was very satisfied with all the help and understanding I received."

***Babs McDonald, Service Delivery Co-ordinator,
Cruse Bereavement Support Bedfordshire
April 2022***

"Wanted Fun" Leighton Buzzard

Project Overview

'Wanted Fun' Leighton Buzzard term-time social club is for autistic young people without a learning difficulty, but high levels of anxiety aged 10-17 years. This group is run fortnightly for 2 around hours on a week day evening for autistic young people in and around Leighton Buzzard. Last year Autism Bedfordshire ran 18 sessions at our Leighton Buzzard facility with 28 young people attending.

**Last year, Wanted Fun Leighton Buzzard provided
36 hours of support to young people**

The Need for Wanted Fun

Autism is a lifelong disability which affects the way a person thinks, communicates and understands the world around them. People on the autistic spectrum face many issues, from the persistent challenge of trying to 'fit in', to frustration at not being able to express how they feel, to daily crippling anxiety because they cannot make sense of what is happening around them. They commonly develop stress-reducing behaviours that can make them appear strange or unruly, evoking disapproving responses from the public.

Autistic teenagers without a learning difficulty, but high levels of anxiety are particularly vulnerable because whilst they may have average or above average intelligence, they struggle with social relationships, expressing themselves and coping with things outside of their normal daily routine. Many say that they want to socialise and have friends but they are often ridiculed or bullied by their peers because of the way they behave.



Often they perceive that "no one understands them" and they feel excluded from society. Their confidence and self-esteem deteriorate as a result and they stop trying to socialise. Sadly, all too often, they go on to develop depression and other mental health problems.

These young people need a place where they can go and be accepted for their differences and not judged for their social difficulties. They need opportunities for social development, confidence building, learning how to work together, skill development and learning strategies to cope with some of the issues they face such as bullying.

How Wanted Fun Addresses the Need

Wanted Fun allows these young people to access social, educational and recreational activities in the same way as everyone else but with the support of trained staff and volunteers who understand their needs and anxieties. For some, Wanted Fun is the only place they go to other than school or home.

The young people are actively involved in choosing and planning activities which gives them a sense of responsibility and ownership of the group. They learn how to work together, share ideas and make decisions. Activities on site include team games such as football and basketball, cookery, music, talent shows and quiz nights. The young people also organise trips out including going swimming, ice-skating, bowling, eating out and visiting parks and museums. They learn valuable life skills such as money handling, time-keeping, travelling on public transport and coping with crowds and noise.



Outcomes and Impact

Reduced Isolation

100% of the young people have made friends through Wanted Fun Leighton Buzzard

67% of young people feel less isolated since coming to Wanted Fun

100% Wanted Fun makes a difference because I don't feel so alone or isolated

Impact

"She loves to be social and Wanted Fun gives her the opportunity to be social"

"If she's happy, our family is happy and strong"

"He very much looks forward to Wanted Fun sessions, and checks the calendar to see when the next one will be"

Improved confidence, social skills and resilience in the community

72% of the young people said since coming to Wanted Fun, they feel a lot more confident talking to others more easily

100% said they feel a lot more confident since attending Wanted Fun

100% said they like coming to Wanted to Fun to chat and socialise with other young people

Impact

"I come to Wanted Fun to have fun and see my friends "

"I see others outside of group and chat to them, we hangout and have sleepovers"

"The best thing about coming to Wanted Fun is it's all about having fun"

Expenditure for Wanted Fun Leighton Buzzard 2021/22

BUDGET EXPENDITURE	Cost
Direct costs	
Activities on site	
Materials & equipment	£194
Activities off site	£181
Venue hire	£364
Refreshments	£325
Field staff travel, mobile phones and training	£371
Field staff wages	£2,264
Volunteer expenses	£0
DBS checks	£85
Damages & Gratuities	£0
Childrens Services Team	£4,940
Management & Admin	£3,592
Direct costs	£12,315
TOTAL Office expenses/overheads	£1,932
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	£14,247

INCOME	Budget
Secured	
Central Bedfordshire Council SLA	£1,128
Henry Smith	£2,220
Geoff & Fiona Squire	£500
Wixamtree	£5,000
Strangward Trust	£1,000
Amateurs Trust	£2,000
Joan Wilkinson Charitable Trust	£520
Casey Trust	£750
Leighton Linslade TC	£829
Shanley Foundation (WF's)	£300
TOTAL INCOME SECURED	£14,247

Thank You For Your Support



Charity number: 1100722

Suite B1, 1 Hammond Road, Bedford, Bedfordshire MK41 0UD

www.autismbedfordshire.net

Tel: 01234 214871

Email: enquiries@autismbeds.org

