



Bristol Autism Support

Our Organisational Overview: Purpose, Mission, Vision, Values and Aims November 2019

Who we are

Bristol Autism Support (BAS) is a registered charity, number 1186287, that provides desperately needed support and information to parents and carers of autistic children. We primarily support parents and carers prior to their child's autism assessment and for some time after they have achieved a diagnosis for their child.

Having a child with autism can be very isolating. Friends and family may not understand, or want to understand the condition and may abandon the parent / carer. Due to the nature of the condition, their child, and thus their family, may not fit in with traditional society and this may lead to isolation and even mental health issues for the parent / carer.

Our goal is to improve outcomes for autistic children by providing their parent / carer with information, support, signposting to other organisations and connecting them with other parents / carers. By supporting parents / carers, we help them to become better at supporting their autistic children.

Our Charitable Purposes

1. The relief of those in need by reason of disability

In this case, autistic spectrum disorders. We provide specialist, in-person (also online, email and telephone) support, advice, guidance and informal counselling for parents and carers of autistic children. Our work takes place in Bristol, but anyone from any local authority may access our support. The majority of the people we support are new to autism and are frightened about the future(s) of their child(ren). They may feel isolated, as life changes dramatically when a person realises their child is autistic, and may suffer from poor mental and/or physical health as a result. Our purpose is to reduce fear, worry and isolation and improve confidence and mental health. We do this by:

- Running a variety of support group meetings at various times and on various days of the week. In 2019 we have provided in-person support to 367 parents and carers. Of this number, 216 were new to Bristol Autism Support.
- Organising wellbeing activities such as pamper days and emotional resilience workshops
- Organising family activities such as socials and family meals
- Supporting solo parents who are alone due to family breakdown or death of a partner
- Connecting parents and carers with volunteers who can help with specific issues
- Providing a ready-made community of families with autistic children for new parents/carers to become a part of. This is especially important as a person's own friends and family may reject them out of ignorance about autism.
- Providing training and information, as detailed below.

2. The advancement of education

We provide training and specialist information to parents and carers of autistic children about parenting and caring for children with autism spectrum disorders. Raising an autistic child involves a very steep learning curve. Deep cuts to health, education and social care funding has made supporting autistic children a 'DIY' job for parents/carers. Parents/carers must quickly become advocates for their children to get them crucial health and education support. Our purpose is to ease and facilitate this process as much as possible by 'fast-tracking' the essential knowledge required to support autistic children. We do this by:

- running a specialist 6-week course and other individual courses. Attendees to our 6-week course report, on average, a 63% increase to their confidence in looking after their autistic child
- organising specialist talks, workshops and events
- maintaining a comprehensive website with a large amount of specialist information
- providing in-person, email and telephone support where we share specialist information
- Hiring speakers to help parents/carers gain more in-depth knowledge of different aspects of autistic spectrum disorders

In the main, our work directly benefits parents and carers. However, this has a ripple effect as often a parent/carer supported by us shares what they have learned with their partner, friends and/or family and uses their new knowledge to support their autistic child. Further still, information gained through our support can be used to inform and raise awareness with education professionals, medical staff and others who work with the autistic child of the parent/carer.

3. The advancement of community development through the promotion of volunteering

We offer many opportunities for volunteering with Bristol Autism Support. These include:

- General volunteering, eg setting up / clearing up support group meetings
- Mentoring opportunities for parents further along in the autism journey to support parents and carers new to autism
- Specific opportunities for people looking to gain new skills, such as public speaking, training, marketing, fundraising and event management
- We support people in gaining NVQ certifications in advice and guidance and counselling
- Offering internship opportunities for local students

We regularly advertise for volunteers and are often approached by individuals who want to help us. Anyone may volunteer with us. All volunteers go through a formal vetting process. The benefits of our volunteering scheme include:

- Volunteers gain new skills which they can use for other volunteering or employment opportunities. We provide specialist training for our volunteers, and volunteers learn quite a lot from each other as well.
- A feeling of making a difference to the parents and carers we support
- Confidence gained by uncovering hidden talents
- High value for our funders in that volunteers allow us to do more work with less money
- Parents/carers benefit from the wisdom of volunteers with more experience of raising autistic children
- Letters of reference to help secure employment or other volunteer roles

Our mission, vision, values and aims

Bristol Autism Support's **mission** is to provide high quality, face to face support and the latest correct, useful and crucial information, at the right time, to parents and carers of autistic children in Bristol. We provide a safe haven and a community for Bristol's autism families in order to reduce isolation and improve mental and physical wellbeing.

Our **vision** is to nurture, empower and connect parents / carers in order to improve outcomes for Bristol's autistic children.

Our values

Caring: we care deeply about how the issues facing parents / carers of autistic children impact on mental and physical health

Community-minded: we know that providing our service users with a strong, social community can support and promote good mental and physical health

Confidential: we never share information given to us by parents / carers or professionals with anyone

Independent: we are an autonomous, independent organisation. We are not affiliated with any other charity, organisation or public body.

Local: based in Bristol, we have personal knowledge of available support and the specific issues faced by parents / carers in our area

Welcoming: we believe the need for support is self-defined; a diagnosis of autism is not necessary to access support from BAS

Non-discriminating: our support is available to everyone regardless of race, religion, gender or gender identity, sexuality, disability, age or any other distinction

Non-judgmental: we do not judge anyone for their views or actions with regards to autism or the care of their autistic child

Fair: we do not allow negative discussions about health or education professionals or public bodies, as opinion is very subjective and potentially unfair to those professionals

Flexible: we aim to provide a wide range of support options from our future home base and other locations in order to meet the needs of as many parents / carers as possible

Our aims

Inform: we continuously gather new information about support, benefits and autism and share it with our community. We train parents / carers new to autism on how best to support their child and themselves. We also provide external autism and neurodiversity awareness training to inform the wider world about these conditions.

Support: we support our service users through meetings, training, advocacy

Connect: we provide a wide range of opportunities for parents / carers to connect, form friendships and be part of a community of understanding people

Empower: we strive to provide the latest, relevant and necessary information for parents / carers so that they can make informed decisions about their child's care and education

Opportunity: we provide a wide range of volunteering opportunities that help volunteers gain new skills that could be used to gain employment

Collaborate: we work with other providers and organisations to provide new and novel support options for our service users

Learn more and contact us:

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