

# absolutely Together

Putting Smiles on Faces



We are Absolutely Leisure, a Registered Charity formed in 2009 operating leisure venues across the South of England. Through our charitable work we have provided use of our facilities to local community groups and charities, enabling them to fulfil their objectives or raise funds for their causes. As a result of this work Absolutely Leisure has helped over 100,000 people

In 2017 we made the decision to further our charitable works, with that in mind we started Absolutely Together. Absolutely Together develops our own schemes to help one of the most vulnerable and socially isolated groups in our society- Families that have children with additional needs.



Absolutely Together aims to put smiles on the faces of youngsters with additional needs and their families. These families often experience emotional and practical pressures which restrict the opportunities available to them. This can lead to social isolation, mental health problems and an inability to get their children active.

Many of these families also suffer significant financial difficulties which further restricts their ability to access leisure activities in the community. All family leisure time should be something that is cherished, but for many, it can be an incredibly stressful time.

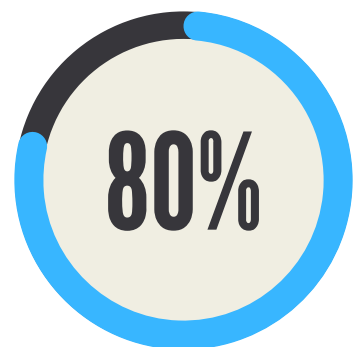
# The Challenge



**800,000**  
Children in the  
UK are born  
with a disability



**40% of families who  
have children with  
additional needs live  
in poverty, making  
leisure activities less  
affordable to them**



**80% of families feel  
frustrated or  
stressed as a result  
of not being able to  
access leisure  
facilities or respite  
care**

## How Our Programmes can help

The recent cuts to local authority funding has further restricted activities available to children with additional needs, meaning the burden of finding activities falls back on to families. Through our own research we have found that our target families have significant issues in accessing leisure provision in their own communities for a variety of reasons.



Of families that have participated in our programmes say Leisure activities are important to their family life



Of families that have participated in our programmes, feel that their access to leisure facilities is restricted in some way as a result of their child's needs

As we all know, family time is incredibly important, research shows that it leads to better functioning, a stronger immune system, better physiology, higher academic marks, a sense of well being and contentment and it prevents mental and physical ill-health in later life. Leisure time is widely recognised as one of the best relievers of stress and anxiety, as well as a great way to improve connections between families. Be that a simple trip to the local swimming pool or a visit to the theatre to see the Christmas Pantomime. Through our programmes we ensure that families are able to access the widest possible range of activities available in their community. We not only provide exciting opportunities for children that have additional needs but also encourage and promote the benefits of families partaking in activities together.



# Together Karting



Our Together karting programme is a unique way for everyone to experience the thrill of driving. For many this is something that may be out of reach, but our specially designed karts allow children with additional needs to take control of as much or little of a kart as they feel comfortable with. We also encourage parents and siblings to get involved so the whole family can enjoy the experience together. Absolutely Together is providing the only programme in the country which provides free access to this unique equipment.

## 1,000 Smiles

Through the 1,000 smiles scheme Absolutely Together provide vouchers for exciting Leisure activities to families that have children with additional needs at no cost to them. Absolutely Together works with partner leisure providers, purchasing vouchers at discounted rates and then distributing them to families in need for free.

## School Programmes



We work with local SEN schools within each of the communities we operate in. We provide free access to unique and engaging leisure opportunities for their students exposing them to experiences that may be out of reach to them. Schools use our facilities as part of their external activities programme but also as a reward mechanism for Students. Feedback from schools has shown that our activities have improved children's concentration levels, co-ordination skills and confidence. We also operate a programme of work experience for these students to help with their transition into adult life, which can be particularly challenging for children with additional needs.



## Our Impact



**95%**

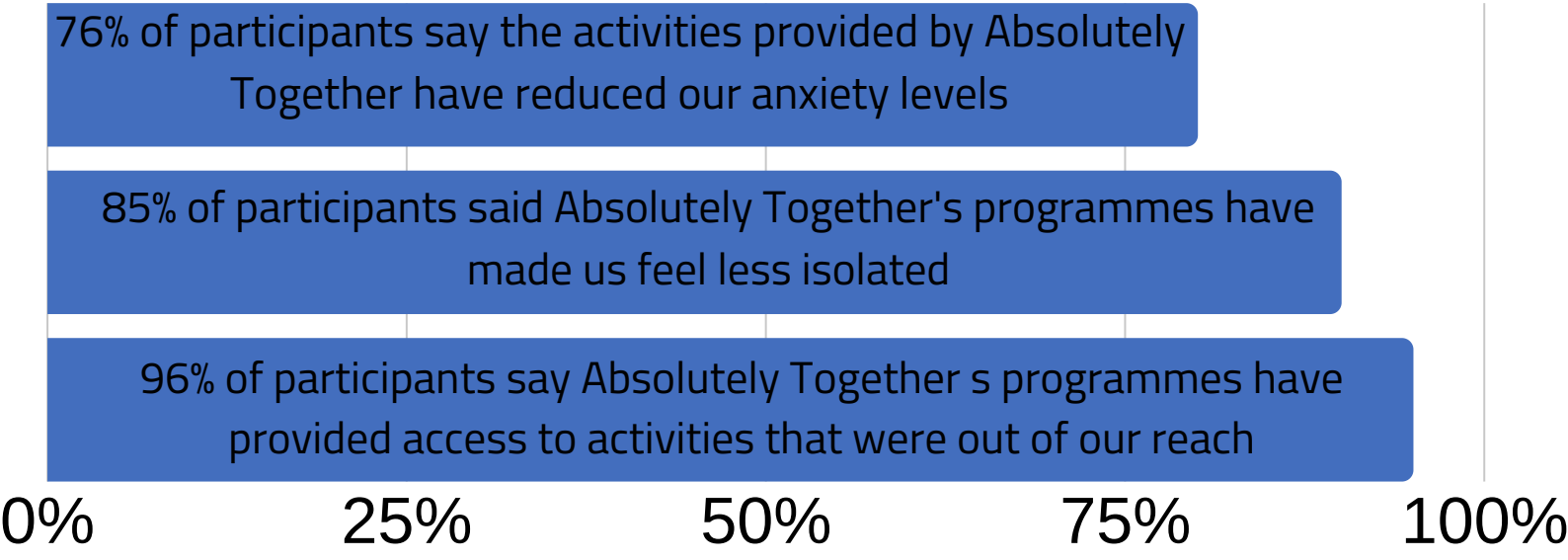
Of the families who have participated in our programme say their access to leisure in the community has improved as a result of Absolutely Together's programmes



**100%**

Of the families who have participated in our programme say their wellbeing has improved and we have put smiles on their faces

## Participant Feedback



76% of participants say the activities provided by Absolutely Together have reduced our anxiety levels

85% of participants said Absolutely Together's programmes have made us feel less isolated

96% of participants say Absolutely Together's programmes have provided access to activities that were out of our reach

0% 25% 50% 75% 100%



## Who We Have Helped

### Amy



We are a family of 3 with a 10 year old daughter called Amy. Amy was born with a rare heart condition which means we spend a lot of time at Great Ormond Street hospital in London. Regular visits to the hospital place significant financial pressure on us and as a result we are unable to do many of the things that we hope to be able to do as a family. Because of her condition Amy is very nervous and finds being separated from her family very difficult, this makes our family leisure time even more important to us but we are so restricted with what we can do.

With Absolutely Together's help we have been able to spend real quality time together which has helped relieve the anxieties we experience in our day to day lives. Amy has really enjoyed the brilliant activities offered and we are going to the pantomime over Christmas which is something that I know she will love.

Thank you Absolutely Together you really have made my family smile.

I am a single mother with 3 children that have additional needs. Toby is 10, Tori is 12 and Amy is 21, they all have very different needs which means I am a full time carer. Finding leisure activities for the children is very challenging as the money i have available to me is quite limited, there has been support from the local authority over the years but this has reduced.

Being unable to provide leisure activities and fun things for us to do together, makes me feel really anxious and guilty that they can't do the things other children may be able to. The activities provided by Absolutely Together have really helped, being able to just go bowling all together was so special, and seeing the family all enjoying themselves together is such a benefit to us. We have even been able to take Toby karting, this is something he has been desperate to do but has always been out of reach for us.

I really feel that through Absolutely Together the mental well being of our family has improved. The activities we have done have really brought us together, reduced my anxiety, helped us feel less socially isolated and definitely brought a smile to our faces.

Thank you so much Absolutely Together.

### Toby, Tori and Amy



## Mason

My grandson Mason is 8 years old and is currently home-schooled as a result of his additional needs. This leads to him being socially isolated, which really inhibits him at this time in his life where interacting and learning from others is so important to his development. My daughter finds it incredibly challenging to keep him occupied due to the financial restrictions she faces which creates more anxiety for both of them.

The activities that have been provided by Absolutely Together have been fantastic for Nathan and his mum, they have really helped with his social interaction skills and helped reduce his anxiety levels. It's so important for a child like Nathan to be active and the opportunities for him are so limited, it's fantastic that a charity like Absolutely Together can help us provide things for him to do, we are so, so grateful.

It's been fantastic for me to see Nathan and my daughter enjoying themselves together with smiles on their faces.

## Ava and Ella

We are a family of 4 with 2 girls. Ava is 13 and has been diagnosed with dyspraxia and is currently being assessed for autism, Ella is 9 and has been diagnosed as autistic and has global development delay.

Organising Leisure activities for our family can be incredibly challenging, we have to plan any activities out thoroughly and are always very anxious about the reactions of others when we are there. It will often take several visits to a new activity before the girls become familiar with surroundings and we can relax, this places quite a financial burden on us and really restricts what we can do.

When we are able to do something as a family it is really special and through Absolutely Together activities we have been able to enjoy some great experiences. Accessing free leisure removes the financial burden and the anxiety of worrying whether the children will be OK. Sometimes it really feels like a battle but when you have a good day it's fantastic for the family.

It's amazing that Absolutely Together exists to help people like us, they really have put smiles on our faces and I hope that we can enjoy more activities with them in the future.

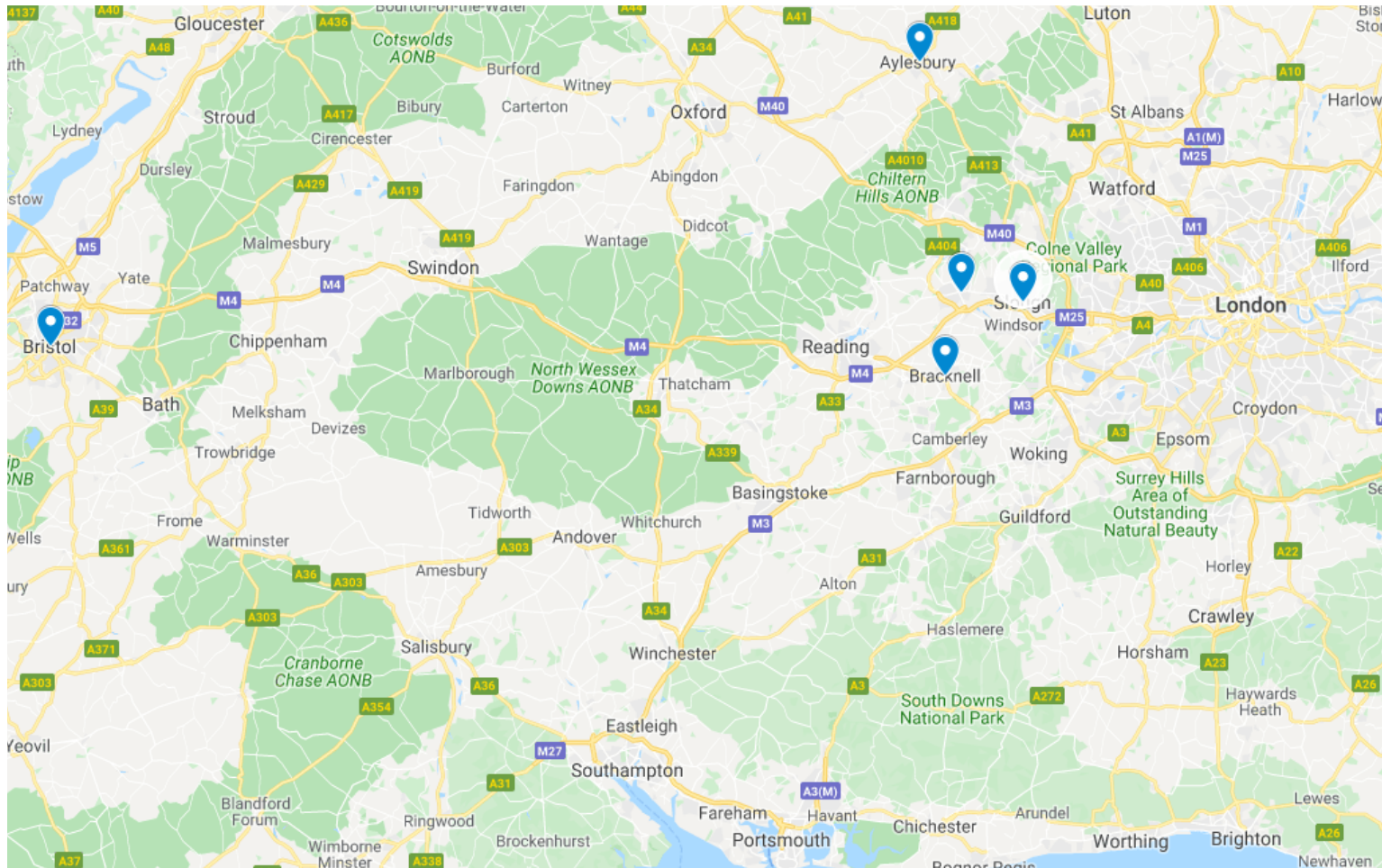
### **Nathan Deacon- Head of Corporate Parenting Buckinghamshire County Council**

I wanted to send you a brief note to let you know how grateful we are for your help in creating a successful and much-appreciated Christmas party for our fostering families.

It has been a pleasure to work in partnership with Absolutely Together across the foster carer recruitment events that you have assisted us with over the past months. It's great to see an organisation like yours considering the needs of SEN families at your venues.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Absolutely Together for connecting our current foster carers and their families with opportunities of premium family outings at such a wide network of entertainment and sports venues.

## Where we Operate



We are committed to providing programmes in each of the communities that we operate in. Our facilities cover Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Bristol . As our charity grows we will provide activities in more communities across the UK.

All Absolutely Leisure activities provide a minimum of 2hrs of our peak time exclusively to Absolutely Together Programmes, ensuring that families in need can access our facilities when they most need them.



