



**Bath Area Play Project**  
www.bapp.org.uk (01225) 832479

**NHS**

**Bath and North East Somerset  
Clinical Commissioning Group**

**Bath & North East  
Somerset Council**

**S-O-F-A**  
SUMMER OF FUN ACTIVITIES 2014



“My face ached so much because I couldn’t stop smiling all summer”

## **Background**

Bath Area Play Project are a voluntary organisation and registered charity established in 1979 to facilitate and provide a range of services working directly with children, young people and their families as well as support for the wider sector in B&NES.

As an organisation we have a strong inclusive ethos with most services open to all or targeted at specific groups of children and young people i.e. disabled children.

The SOFA (Summer of Fun Activity) programme is a unique service which BAPP piloted in 2006 using funding from the BAPP Trustees Development Fund and the Local Network Fund. The Pilot proved to be so successful that an application to the Lottery through B&NES secured funding for 3 years from 2007 to 2010. Since 2011 the project was funded initially through the Aiming High for Disabled Children initiative and then continued to be funded by B&NES through Short Breaks for Disabled Children commissioning and is currently funded through an Inclusive Holiday Playscheme contract from 2014 to 2016.

## **What makes an inclusive provision truly inclusive?**

### **Critical Ingredients**

The organisation delivering and providing the service is trusted and known to families as this helps parents and carers to know that their vulnerable child is going to be cared for appropriately by high quality staff who young people often already know.

All staff are playwork or youthwork trained or have experience working with disabled and./ or non-disabled young people to a minimum level and are able to think creatively about offering the same activity to a range of children with differing abilities.

Staff embrace disability rather than shies away from it, have a positive “can do” attitude which is the vein which flows throughout the SOFA programme.

SOFA is provided in an environment that is young people friendly with young people in control of what they choose to do; free flow indoor /outdoor space with a range of age appropriate activities on offer to participate in where they are based in a building. Where provision is primarily outdoors due to the nature of the activity, all activities are inclusive and services are fully accessible with instructors understanding the inclusive nature of the programme through excellent communication with the SOFA Development Worker prior to and throughout the programme.

The young people primarily market the service themselves; 40% of those using SOFA14 found out about it from friends or siblings recommending with 20% returning after using the year before, 35% through the SOFA leaflet/flyer and 5% from using other BAPP services or it being recommended to them.

This year we saw a small reduction in numbers applying overall with 132 participating in the SOFA14 programme, however a greater percentage of more vulnerable and disabled applicants.

### **Methodology & Reach**

Young people who were on the scheme last year are invited to be part in the participation group with a mix of disabled and non-disabled young people who are interested in being involved in the development and organisation of the SOFA programme ensuring that it is young people-led.

They were offered the opportunity to come together for a pool party which took place before the planning element of the programme commenced to gel as a group and get to know each other as well as speak to other young people directly who have used the programme before.

The Participation group gives young people the autonomy to make decisions about what activities to purchase etc as described later. Disabled/non-disabled young people are treated as equals. Parents are reassured about the perceived risks which children and young people may be subject to and BAPP worked hard to encourage/ allow parents to send their son/daughter to SOFA with 18 young people using an inclusive provision for the first time ever with SOFA14. The SOFA Development Worker visits Secondary Schools throughout B&NES providing information directly to students usually at lunchtimes in schools. Information is also provided to parents at Special School Coffee Mornings which together with excellent working relationships with Parent Support Advisors, SENCos and some teaching staff. The Development Worker also liaises with Social Care, R2K, Mentoring Plus, Compass, Disabled Children's team and other agencies working with vulnerable and disabled young people.

This year we saw a small reduction (20%) in numbers applying overall with 132 disabled and non-disabled young people participating in the SOFA14 programme, however a greater percentage of more vulnerable and disabled applicants. Those that took part therefore were able to have a greater number of days allocated than on SOFA13 with an average of 5 days attended by each young person. 17 Disabled young people who have previously only ever accessed targeted provision, used SOFA with parents stating that they weren't aware that the complex needs and behaviours of their young people could be accommodated.

45% described themselves as disabled or having additional needs or a statement of educational need. Parental feedback indicates young people had a 100% increase in physical activity over the summer period compared to previous summer holidays and a noticeable increase in well-being due to appropriate interaction with age appropriate peers engaged in positive activities and wider friendship groups.

There was almost a 50/ 50 mix of young people by sex (49% female / 51% male) compared to previous years where there has been a much higher proportion of male participants and may be a good indication of a better range of activities and a more inclusive choice. Geographically we are reaching more young people from more rural areas 49% who attended came from out of Bath with the most noticeable increase coming from the Midsomer Norton/ Paulton area.

More young people are feeding back that they hear about SOFA from school or through friends (40%) as we were much more proactive in ensuring schools were visited and spending time amongst the pupils to inform adequately. We attended several coffee mornings within schools open to parent/carers which were reasonably well attended and had consultations at some youth settings at Odd Down and Southside. We were also involved with post 16 students at both Fosse Way, Hayesfield , Three Ways and Wellsway through small group participation. However parents of young people with disabilities are still hard to reach and we need to look at ways of forming and maintaining connections within schools that support young people with LD and or disabilities so we can build better relationships and links with these families. Young people feedback that the reasons they did SOFA ranged from "Because I was lonely" to making friends, or just to have fun over the summer.

Whilst there were some great outcomes, the diversity of the group had an impact as a whole and non-disabled users expressed they felt an obligation to take on the role as carer/supporter and felt uncomfortable about the perceived public impression of them personally. However by the end of the summer at the Fun day, many of these perceptions had faded, with increasing friendships developing

and young people supporting. We will continue to monitor this and ensure that the promotion is more inclusive

## Participation

One of the unique elements of the SOFA programme is that young people are involved in the design and organisation of the whole programme. A group of 12 disabled and non-disabled young people met weekly from March to devise the programme. They looked at the evaluations received from SOFA13 together with developing an understanding of the budget limitations and the need for the programme to be fully inclusive. Some researched various ideas, getting an idea of costs, distance that needed to be travelled and inclusivity.

The group had to work as a team to agree on the balance of activities each week for the programme ensuring that there was something that would appeal each week to different young people. Part of the group's role is also to choose the photographs and colour way for the design of the brochure and wristbands. Wristbands are given to every young person on their first day of the SOFA programme. These are an easy visual for staff to see as well as giving young people a sense of belonging to something unique. The wristbands have the contact Mobile Number on for the Development Worker or Lead Worker for the day, so young people or parents have contact details to hand. They also dismissed an idea that was suggested of having SOFA t-shirts printed due to costs and whether people would wear them.

The group were also strong ambassadors for the SOFA programme, prior to it starting, speaking to other young people in their schools and helping to promote it. During the programme, this continued, with young people behaving well in a variety of public locations, supporting new young people to be included and supporting others who are less familiar with activities and routines.

Being involved in the participation group does not mean that you receive any benefits and places still have to be paid for! We then have a pool of participants ready to plan the following year's scheme.



**S-O-F-A**  
SUMMER OF FUN ACTIVITIES 2014  
For Disabled and Non-Disabled Young People

23rd July to 17th August 2014

FOR AGES 12-16  
16+ if disabled

Bath Area Play Project  
www.bapp.org.uk  
(01225) 832479

CAMPING  
ROLLER GIBBO  
PAINTBALLING  
BUGS BOARDING  
WHITE WATER RAFTING

FISHING  
PLAY OUT, WIGGS  
OUTDOOR COOKING  
HIP HOP/STREET DANCE  
CLIMBING & CAVING

Organised by SOFA Young Peoples Participation Team

Transport provided  
**(01225) 832479**  
www.bapp.org.uk/sofa.htm  
Check out our facebook page for updates

Bath & North East Somerset Council

curo

## Booking Process

Young people choose which days they would like to attend by numbering the days with 1 being their first choice, then 2, 3 etc. We have developed a system which is able to allocate equitably places based on the young people's preferences so all young people will always get at least 1 or 2 days in their top 5. These allocations are then emailed or posted to young people and parents/carers can confirm whether they wish to have all the places. A waiting list is created as part of the system which means that where someone no longer wishes to attend a day offered, the next person on the list is contacted. For SOFA14, the most popular choices were White Water rafting, Paintballing, Fishing, Fun Day and Brean.

## Additional Funding

As part of the wider social inclusion agenda, we strive to identify alternative funding sources which can help increase access to the SOFA programme with subsidies then offered to those that meet the criteria.

This year, **Curo** were happy to continue to support young people whose families were Curo tenants with the cost of attending. Places were able to be offered to 33 young people whose places were subsidised by 30%. Curo featured the SOFA programme in their residents Newsletter prior to the summer as a project they were supporting and Tenant Support Officers had SOFA leaflets which they targeted at families where they felt the young person would benefit from attending.

We also contacted other Social Housing Landlords and made an application to the South West Foundation following **Sovereign Housing's** interest in supporting their tenants' youth access to summer activities. The application was successful however no tenants took advantage perhaps as the notification time was very short due to the funding deadlines.

The **Combe Down Holiday Trust** provided funding to support disabled young people's access to the SOFA programme, enabling 8 young people to take part which without the funding, they would have been unable to.

## Programme



A trip to Cardiff International Centre, **White Water Rafting** was the most popular activity this summer. All 40 young people descended the rapids and experienced the thrills and spills of the white water course. "amazing, best day of my life" .....

They also hit the surf with an afternoon of adrenaline fuelled, indoor fun on the simulated surf machine riding the jets of water using body boards ...It was exhilarating!!



A new venue for **Paintballing** in North Bristol was used which young people researched, did a site visit and much preferred!



**Fishing** is always popular and this summer we went to Century Ponds where the young people had a days angling under the expert supervision of Charles Halliday and his team. Thanks to the generosity of Charles and Fish Wish each young person who attended was given a brand new fishing rod and prizes were awarded to several young people.



A new activity this year chosen by young people was **mountain boarding, grass sledging and stunt scooters** where we travelled to Gloucester and young people were able to try their legs on various moving boards which was challenging but very satisfying!



## Transport

Accessible transport is provided from 6 different pick up points across B&NES; Radstock, Midsomer Norton, Peasedown St. John, Keynsham, South Bath (Rush Hill) and East Bath (Morrisons). We use a mixture of B&NES transport and Private coach companies who provide fully accessible coaches. The B&NES Transport drivers have become almost a part of the staff team, returning year after year and providing a consistent and caring approach, where we can offer a tailored service. We have been able to collect from alternative places in some circumstances and young people can also choose to make their own way to the venue or get taken to the destination by a parent or Personal Assistant.

Young people have fed back that they find the travelling together aspect of the programme the place where they make friends and get to know each other! For some young people, using transport independently was a newly developed skill with 9 disabled young people or having additional needs doing this for the first time.



## Camp at Rocks East Woodland



For many disabled young people they have never spent a night under canvas and this year the SOFA14 programme supported 22 young people to have that experience which for 27% was also the first time they had spent a night away from parents/carers providing their first overnight respite which was very much appreciated.

Young people worked in teams to put up tents, helped cook the evening meal and then enjoyed the games and activities in the woods. As the evening got dark, they soon gravitated back to the campsite where they enjoyed a campfire and even some singing!  
Not a lot of sleep was had but everyone survived and would like to go again.

## Basecamps

Each week there is a Basecamp which are building based activities where young people can choose to be involved in arrange of activities or just focus on one for the day or half day. These are the most popular days with young people new to the programme as they provide an excellent way for getting to know staff and their peers and enable young people to enjoy Henna Tattoos, Music, Clay, trampolining, Cycling, Mocktails, Cooking, Dance and a Pool Party!





## Play Out Wild Day

The Bushcraft session is another one of the more popular days where we take young people into woodland near Farleigh Hungerford which feels very unfamiliar as it is heavily wooded. There are compost toilets and young people enjoyed the freedom of exploring nature, foraging and then cooking bread over the fire. Shelters were built, wood carved and enjoying the fresh air.



The SOFA programme concluded with another fantastic Fun Day using the Bath Community Academy Playing Fields which was attended by over 50% of those who registered for SOFA. The Fun Day is a team event using a series of challenges and obstacles with huge inflatables, lots of foam and games and water fights. For some the highlight of their summer!



## Results/ outcomes

Young people can choose to attend SOFA with a friend but they have to choose the same activities! Young people are often understandably nervous about coming where they do not know anyone however we reiterate that there will be other young people in the same position and staff encourage young people through an inclusive approach to engage in the activity alongside or be buddied with another young person. **Friendships** are made and connections back at school where young people have got to know someone outside of their peer group which in turn gives them increased confidence.

If not attending SOFA over the summer, 60% of young people stated that they would be playing on Xbox, PlayStation, iPad, PC or watching TV, with 15% saying they would be doing nothing, 15% with their parents and 10% with friends mainly at home. The SOFA programme contributes significantly to **reducing social isolation**, supports healthy peer interaction and **increased social engagement** as well as **increasing the amount of physical activity** that young people do. 95% of days offered included active physical activity with 52% of these days being 100% physical throughout the activity.

We have met with parents and young people prior to them booking on to provide reassurance and answer any questions or queries. This is often done successfully over the phone sufficiently for the form to be then sent in. Parents are usually very open about their concerns and explaining the inclusive approach and the **benefits for future community engagement** and understand the importance of inclusive provision.

All families where the young person has an additional need or statement of educational need, are contacted to seek clarity over support needs as these are often unspecified on their forms! Parents/carers have stated that their child's independence skills have increased through using SOFA. Staff work with young people according to their age and ability and so expectations are high and given the opportunity, most young people relish the freedom to make decisions and develop their **independence skills**.

Three months after the SOFA14 programme, young people still talk with great enthusiasm about the experience when we come into contact with them in schools, at youth sessions sharing great memories, of having fun during holidays talking about next year and what they would like to do.

Young people's **negative myths** about disabled/non disabled children **are dispelled** or changes in attitudes towards different groups through peer interaction and appropriate discussions about their needs breaking down pre-conceptions about disability. On SOFA13 when we were caving, a disabled female led the group out of the caves after a non-disabled young person started to panic and new respect and understanding developed.

Parent/carers **receive a break from caring** responsibilities knowing that the young person is appropriately cared for and gives them quality time to spend with other siblings  
Young people accessing targeted provision want to join SOFA through hearing what other young people talking positively about the experience and parents have confidence in the provision to allow this to happen.

132 feedback forms went to every young person who attended SOFA and to each Parent/Carer. So far we have had a 15% return rate with 95% stating that if they weren't attending SOFA they would have been watching TV or on computers/consoles, bored, doing nothing at home.

Parents reported that the SOFA programme had increased their child's level of physical activity hugely with 90% scoring the levels as 8 or above of a scale of 1 to 10. 'Without SOFA activities she would not of had the motivation to do anything physical this summer. Thank you'

95% of parents felt that SOFA contributed to their child being more confident and that they felt more positive about themselves. "He is growing in confidence all the time. The staff / set up and punctuality of the transport put me at ease and they went out of their way to make him feel comfortable."

"BIG THANKS ☺ Without provision like this, our children are much more isolated and would find making friendships with the opposite sex very difficult. Our teenagers need a social life. SOFA is essential!"

In relation to the SOFA programme supporting improved personal and practical life skills, 90% stated that it had done this very well. "Using the transport was a life skill in itself"

"She is still in email contact with a friend she made at SOFA. He is the only person who emails her."



**Quotes from Young people:**

“It gets better every year”

“Brilliant” “My brother has done it for years and I couldn’t wait to try it and I loved every minute!”

“It was a chance to be with friends and make new ones”

“Best summer ever and I now have a girlfriend”

“Can’t wait for next year!”

**Quotes from Parents:**

“Extremely well organised” “Fan-tas-tic!!”

**“Staff listened to my advice on how to deal with her melt downs”**

“the children always came home from SOFA happy and in high spirits”

**“As SOFA is inclusive it enabled my daughter to mix with lots of other children”**

“It gave her the chance to be socially included and to do activities she never would have done otherwise.”

**“Another amazing, action packed programme.”**

”Without this provision our children are isolated due to where we live”

**“I had peace of mind this summer knowing that I didn’t have six weeks ahead of me without a break”**

“My daughter is autistic and finds it difficult to interact but at SOFA she joined in. It really is an inclusive programme.”

**“It has made them confident to interact with a range of ages and children. It was great that all activities could include disabled and non-disabled children and everyone was included at all times.”**

“SOFA provided the opportunity for a young person with complex and profound disabilities to try new activities and due to the flexibility of SOFA they could access it on their own terms.”

