

Kids Together Belfast

Annual Report 2024–2025

Supporting children, young people and adults with disabilities, empowering families and building inclusive communities.

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Chairperson Report

As Kids Together Belfast (KTB) marks 19 years of dedicated service, we reflect with pride on our journey—one defined by resilience, growth, and an unwavering commitment to the children, young people, and families we support. Over the past two decades, KTB has evolved to meet the changing needs of our service users, always guided by the values of inclusion, compassion, and community.

This year, the Board of KTB would like to express our deepest appreciation to our incredible management and staff. Their tireless work and heartfelt support have made a profound difference in the lives of families across Belfast. Their dedication is the heartbeat of our organisation.

We also extend our sincere gratitude to all our funders, partner organisations, and individual donors. Your generosity and belief in our mission make it possible for us to continue offering vital services. Without your support, our work simply would not be possible.

Below is a summary of the funding we received from statutory agencies, which enabled us to deliver a wide range of programs and services:

Funding Source	Purpose
Department of Communities	Salaries, Running Costs, Equipment
EA Youth Services	Salaries, Running Costs, Programs
Pathways Fund	Salaries
EA Pathfinders	Salaries, Running Costs, Programs
EA Pilot	Salaries, Running Costs, Programs
BHSCT	Running Costs, Programs, Equipment
Belfast City Council	Running Costs, Programs
Bright Start	Running Costs, Programs
Fair Play	Salaries

Our Purpose

Our purpose is to promote the benefit of service users who are living with a disability and their family and carers in the Belfast, Lisburn and County Antrim area without discrimination of age, disability, sexual orientation, nationality, ethnic identity, political or religious opinion, by the provision of advice, information, resources, education, recreational activities and support with the object of improving their conditions of life.

Our History

Kids Together has been working to provide services to children and young people with complex needs and disabilities and support to families since 2005. As we have grown considerably in the last 9 years, we have always ensured that any new initiative or funding programme remains aligned to our core ethos and focused on delivering positive outcomes for the children, young people, and families that we work with.

Highlights of the Year

- Supported 568 sessions for children, young people and adults through after-school and holiday programs in July and August.
- Delivered 2688 family workshop sessions on wellbeing, advocacy and empowerment.
- Expanded inclusive play spaces in West Belfast. This included expansion of KTB's green space and equine facilities, developed a music room and upgraded the sensory spaces.
- Trained 30 volunteers in disability inclusion. Including training mainstream youth group leaders in disability inclusion.

Program Updates

RAINBOW EARLY YEARS & PLAY; PRE-PRESCHOOL SPECIALIST NURSERY GROUP

The 2-3 Belfast Wide Early Year Program is run in partnership with Belfast Health and Social Care Trust. We work in partnership with the medical professionals from the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust such as Occupational Therapists and Speech and Language Therapists. Children receive ongoing assessments and developmental support from the therapists and trained staff in Kids Together Belfast. Assessments are made and individualised care plans are devised to identify and support children's specific needs throughout the year. The SLT and OT will visit the playroom setting on a monthly basis and provide recommendations/guidance for staff. They also provide parents with reports from their initial assessments and daily observations from staff.

2592 sessions delivered per year to 18 children

RAINBOW EARLY YEARS & PLAY; EDUCATION AUTHORITY NON-STATUTORY SPECIALIST NURSERY PROVISION

Our Rainbow program operates a specialist nursery setting funded by the Education Authority to provide high-quality early years education for children aged 3–4 with a Statement of Special Educational Needs. The Nursery has a teacher who supports the unique developmental, social, and emotional needs of each child within the setting. The teacher leads the planning, delivery, and assessment of a play-based curriculum in line with the Northern Ireland Preschool Curriculum.

This curriculum, offers a play-based, child-centred approach that supports each child's individual developmental goals. The Teacher, staff and parents work together to great Personal Learning Plans for each child to allow the child to have access to the Northern Ireland Pre- School Curriculum at a pace best suited to the individual. Working in these partnerships with parents, therapists, and education professionals, we create inclusive learning experiences that promote communication, independence, and social interaction. Through a nurturing environment and tailored support, we aim to help every child reach their full potential and prepare confidently for the next stage of their educational journey.

1920 sessions per year for 8 children

FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES

Kids Together Belfast have a Family Support Team made up of 5 dedicated members of staff. The service provided is a 12-week Home Visiting service for families that have children/young adults with Sensory, Learning or physical disabilities and/or Autism or awaiting an ASD Diagnosis.

An example of support provided would be;

- Sleep routines/social stories
- Behavioural management strategies
- Visual aids
- Support in filling out appropriate forms
- Be a listening ear for families
- Liaise with relevant professional
- Signpost to relevant organisation's and support services

576 Home-Visits per year

AFTERSCHOOL ACTIVITIES

Our Afterschool's Program offers a rich and nurturing environment where children and young people with Special Educational Needs can engage in a wide range of tailored activities that support their development and wellbeing. Sessions include structured experiences such as Attention Autism, sensory play, messy play, and circle time, alongside opportunities for

free play, sports, and time in our immersive sensory room. Activities like park visits and group games encourage physical movement, social interaction, and emotional regulation, while sensory time helps reduce anxiety and build tolerance to sensory input. Through these engaging, child-centred sessions, we promote communication, confidence, independence, and a sense of belonging—ensuring each young person is supported to thrive in a safe, inclusive space.

12824 sessions for 5-12-year olds delivered per year

12824 sessions for 12-18-year olds delivered per year

SOCIAL GROUP

The Social Group is a structured program developed to support children and young people with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and/or moderate learning disabilities. The primary aim of the program is to provide a safe and inclusive environment where participants can build meaningful connections with peers who face similar challenges, including difficulties with anxiety, emotional regulation, social communication, and social interaction.

The program offers targeted and purposeful activities designed to support the development of:

- Emotional resilience
- Social communication skills
- Self-confidence and self-esteem
- Practical coping strategies to help manage stress and enhance community participation.

The Social Group provides young people with a dedicated space in which they are supported, accepted, and encouraged to express themselves authentically.

9360 sessions delivered per year

YOUTH ACTIVITIES

Kids Together Youth consists of provision youth and young adults ages 12-18 and 18-25. Our youth club has consistently evolved over the last number of years. Our Youth currently supports young people to access provision and socialise with their peers in an environment that supports their individual needs and encourages their progression through building on their communication skills, group work and participation in a fun, safe and enjoyable environment. The aim of the youth club is to encourage the young people to develop life skills through playing games, socializing with peers, participation in activities and promoting independence when and where suitable.

Our youth have completed Programs including Sensory Yoga, Musical Movement, Multi Sports, Inclusion, Online and Internet Safety, Risk Taking Behaviour, Cultural Awareness,

Diversity Programs, Independent Living Program, Climate Awareness, camping trips and a Social Action project. We have also completed T: BUC programs with partners from other organisations which have included residentials and team building activities.

Our youth have expressed how they feel in the sessions:

“I love coming to the youth because it’s great fun and we get to play games with our friends and do karaoke”

“I love the youth club because I get to see my friends outside of school”

“I love the youth club because we go on trips and have lots of fun”

12384 sessions delivered per year

COUNSELLING AND EQUINE FACILITATED THERAPIES

Counselling Service

Kids Together’s Counselling Service has provided essential emotional and therapeutic support to children and young people with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), learning disabilities, and co-occurring emotional and mental health needs. This service plays a crucial role in promoting mental, emotional, and physical well-being, helping children and young people navigate personal challenges and develop stronger, healthier relationships with those around them.

1:1 talking therapy has made a measurable impact, leading to improved communication and strengthened relationships between siblings and peers. These positive outcomes have been evidenced through client self-reports, parental feedback, and therapist observations, reflecting the meaningful difference this service makes in each young person’s life.

We use a person-centred approach, blending both directive and non-directive techniques to meet each child’s individual needs. Sessions are designed to create a safe, nurturing space where children feel comfortable expressing themselves. A range of mediums and creative tools are used to build trust, encourage openness, and support personal growth.

288 sessions per year

Equine Facilitated Therapy and Activities

Kids Together’s Equine Therapy service has provided essential therapeutic support to children and young people with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), learning disabilities, and additional emotional or mental health needs.

Equine Therapy offers a unique form of 1:1 and small group therapy that combines structured interaction with horses and professional therapeutic guidance. This approach supports participants in developing emotional regulation, social skills, confidence, and resilience. The therapeutic environment allows children and young people to engage at their own pace, feel safe, and build trust — both with the therapist and with the horses.

The service uses an eclectic therapeutic approach, adapting methods to meet the individual needs of each participant. A variety of tools and activities are incorporated into the sessions, including:

- **Grooming and handling horses**, promoting responsibility, focus, and nurturing skills
- **Groundwork and guided riding exercises**, fostering confidence, self-esteem, and body awareness
- **Structured reflective activities**, helping participants identify and manage emotions, practice coping strategies, and set personal goals
- **Collaborative exercises**, encouraging communication, teamwork, and social interaction

288 1:1 session's delivered per year

1536 group sessions delivered per year

TRANSITIONAL LEARNING CENTRE ACTIVITIES

The Transitional Learning Centre has thrived from 2018 until 2025 with 57 serviced users presently availing of this post-school day placement. The purpose of the TLC group is to ensure young adults with disabilities have an appropriate post-school placement where their needs are met and they have a sense of belonging.

The group works hard to remove barriers to access in the local community, ensuring all of our young people are building skills for life, creating lasting relationships and reducing feeling of isolation. We Support 57 service users across 3 sites (Springfield Road and 2 sites at Hannahstown Hill).

The TLC group delivers a wide range of tailored services for adults with disabilities, including skills building and target setting. Skills are individualised and targeted on the needs of the young adults as well as promoting choice and building on independence, creating a partnership working with the service user, their family, professionals and any other relevant persons. The weeks are packed with outings, activities, skills development and other services that all help increase the service user's independence.

13440 sessions delivered per year

PARENTAL SUPPORTS

Kids Together Belfast is able to facilitate safe space for parents/carer's who care for children with disabilities, encourage them to provide support and share their personal experiences with each other if they feel comfortable to do so. Many parents/carer's attending the support groups have shared similar feelings of helplessness, social isolation and poor mental health. Since attending the support groups parents have felt less alone in their struggles from having the opportunity to speak to other parents who understand. Even if their children may not have the same

disability or their children may not be the same age, parents within these groups have empowered and supported each other by showing a listening ear with no judgement.

Our parent support groups are a great way to bring parents together, encourage them to get to know each other and enjoy self-care therapies provided by services within our community. This program involves beauty treatments, a wide range of holistic therapies and team bonding experiences. We also are able to provide free counselling services for any parents and carer's who feel it would be beneficial to them.

Some of the programs so far have involved:

- Coffee mornings
- Reflexology and Reiki treatments
- Massages/Sport Massage
- Facials
- Beauty treatments such as hair, nail and eyebrow appointments
- Art Therapy
- Breathwork and Meditation Classes
- Action Mental Health Workshops
- Team bonding parental high ropes experience
- Cookery Classes
- Parental workshops provided by STRIVE NI
- Goal setting and self-reflection

Our Impact

Rainbow 2-3 Group **2,592 sessions** delivered per year to 18 children

Rainbow 3-4 Group **1,920 sessions** per year for 8 children

Home-Visits **576** per year

Afterschool's **12,824 sessions** for 5-12-year old delivered per year

Afterschool's **12,824 sessions** for 12-18-year old delivered per year

Social Group **9,360 sessions** delivered per year

Youth Group **12,384 sessions** delivered per year

1:1 Counselling **288 sessions** delivered per year

Equine Therapy **288 1:1 session's** delivered per year & **1,536 group sessions** delivered per year

TLC **13,440 sessions** delivered per year

Our Team & Volunteers

We are proud of our dedicated team of staff, board members, and volunteers who make everything possible.

Partners & Funders

We are deeply grateful to our supporters and partners, including Belfast Health and Social Care Trust, Education Authority, Department of Education, Department of Communities, Belfast City Council, The Pathways Fund, T-BUC, Brightstart, Fairplay.



Looking Ahead

WHAT'S NEXT?

- Launch a refurbished All-Inclusive Play Park.
- Expand the Transitional Learning Centre.
- Expand Counselling Services to 19+.
- Expand the Equine Therapy/Activities and Green Space for Horticultural Activities.
- Strengthen Counselling Services through Play Therapy and Lego-Based Therapy
- Strengthen Parent Support networks.
- Advocate for Inclusive Education Policies.
- Prepare for partnership with Radius Housing for a Community Build to expand Kids Together's services.