



Beams wins Kent's Best Children's Charity 2024

We Are Beams were thrilled to have been awarded Kent's Best Children's Charity Award 2024 at the Kent Charity Awards hosted at the Corn Exchange, Rochester in September. The competition was high this year with many other worthy charities taking part in the event.



Caitlyn's Story

Caitlyn, 15 was born extremely premature at just 26 weeks. As a result of a severe brain bleed and other complications, she now faces multiple challenges, including cerebral palsy, epilepsy, visual impairment, autism, sleep disturbances and severe learning difficulties.

Her condition requires 24/7 care, leaving her parents exhausted and limited in their ability to spend time with her sister Hollie who is 10 years old. Caitlyn's additional needs significantly affect the family's daily life, making it difficult to plan outings or enjoy family time.

The family were referred to Beams by their social worker, and for the last few years Caitlyn has enjoyed day trips to the farm and the seaside, providing much-needed respite for her parents.

Additionally, Caitlyn's time at Dragon's Retreat overnight respite has been crucial for the family's well-being. These short breaks allow Caitlyn's parents to catch up on sleep, recharge and spend quality time with Hollie.

Caitlyn is happy at Dragon's Retreat and this has enabled the family to plan activities that are enjoyable for Hollie.

Most importantly, Caitlyn has shown increased happiness and independence during her time at Beams which as a teenager is so important for her to experience.

There is so much love within the family for Caitlyn and although they face significant challenges and, an uncertain future due to Caitlyn's complex medical needs, with Beams by their side, the family strive to maintain a positive and fulfilling life

Caitlyn's mum Gina is so grateful to Beams and their vital care services.

"Without the support from Beams I absolutely dread to think where we would be! We have been in crisis before and it was not a good time for us. Beams has given us much needed respite, we are able to plan activities that Caitlyn could not cope with and I am reassured knowing the staff are more than capable of meeting Caitlyn's needs."

The Big Christmas Raffle is a great way to support Beams and every £2 entry will make a real difference to disabled children and their families



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We Are Beams Messy Dash a Soaking Success



Held at Dartford Central Park, the fully inclusive event saw runners, walkers, and wheelchair users of all ages, some in fancy dress, wigs, and decorated t-shirts navigate a course filled with gunge stations, glitter showers, and water guns!

The event started with a fun warm-up led by David Ribí, actor, television presenter and patron of Beams.

Local fundraisers, including many families supported by We Are Beams, joined the fun

In a gloriously messy display of community spirit, over 700 participants tackled the We Are Beams Messy Dash on Sunday, July 7th raising an incredible £18,000.

and the Mayor of Dartford Councillor Andy Lloyd had the honour of starting the race and presenting medals to all participants. Thanks to the participation of our fantastic community and the generosity of our Headline sponsors, Dartford

Borough Council, Magrock, Bell Group, and Dartford Living, all proceeds from this event will go directly towards our vital care services, including Family Advice, Respite Care, and Summer Play Schemes.

Visit www.wearebeams.org.uk for forthcoming events



Get involved!

Diary of Events

Pottery Evening

28th November
Spend a fun evening with friends and family while painting a piece of pottery. All equipment is included!
Venue: Your Pottery Barn, Hartley
Cost: £30 (adults only)



London Landmarks

6th April 2025
Join Team Beams and run London's central half marathon through Westminster and the City with a stunning landscape of iconic landmarks.
Entry: £65



For more information and to sign up to any of these events visit www.wearebeams.org.uk/events-challenges/



We Are Beams Auction

AMAZING PRIZES TO BE WON!



Lots of prizes to be won...
VIP Peter Kay tickets



Private chef dining
in your own home



Bidding closes on
Friday 8th November



Help make a difference today, for a brighter tomorrow for disabled children. All proceeds to go to We Are Beams



To bid, scan the QR code or call 01322 668 501 x5
www.wearebeams.org.uk



CORPORATE CORNER

Beams have been really lucky to have recently been supported by some incredible Corporate Partners. If you are interested in sponsorship opportunities or would like to support Beams, please get in touch fundraising@wearebeams.org.uk

Elite Metal

London-based steel supplier, Elite Metal Group, raised an incredible £23,000 for We Are Beams at their clay shooting day. Elite Metal chose Beams as their charity of the year due to the positive impact the charity has had on one of their team's family. Clients and friends of the business joined for a fun day of competitive clay shooting, followed by dinner and a charity auction. The evening concluded with a heartfelt presentation by Jon, Elite's Senior Contract Manager, about raising a disabled child. Jon's son, Noah has benefited from Beams through Family Advice, days out and respite overnight care. Jon's speech highlighted the significant impact charities such as Beams have on families with children who require extra support.



Specsavers

Fundraisers from the opticians in Crayford and Swanley presented Beams with a giant cheque for £1,206 after completing an epic hike up Snowdon (Yr Wyddfa). The intrepid team of ten from Specsavers in Crayford and Swanley undertook the challenge to raise funds to provide opportunities for young people with disabilities and to improve their life skills. The weather wasn't on their side but once at the summit they managed to celebrate and get a brief glimpse of the view across Snowdonia!



We would also like to thank the following businesses for recent donations and support: Elite Metal Group, Kentec Electronics Ltd, Microsoft UK, Beaverbrooks Bluewater, The Happiness Box, Jackman Insurance Services Ltd, Lock and Co. Hatters, Kent Electrical Solutions, Fox Estate Agents Ltd, Thomson Snell & Passmore LLP, MidexPRO, Bellway plc, Paula's Florist, County UK, Plumbase Orpington, FLR Spectron, Variety Club, John Francis MEP, My Purchasing Partner.



Have you seen our new film?

Our new short film captures the joy, resilience, and community spirit of Beams. Please take a look on our YouTube channel @wearebeams5879. Thank you to everyone who featured and to our Patron David Ribí whose powerful voice has brought our mission to life!

One almighty pull for Beams from local heroes



A group of 36 determined individuals from the Welling and Bexleyheath community have raised an incredible £2000 for We Are Beams by successfully pulling a 32-tonne truck a staggering two miles from Welling to Bexleyheath.

The incredible feat of strength and determination took place as part of the Uniformed Services Day celebrations. Over 5000 spectators lined the streets to witness this incredible display of community pulling together.

The event was the brainchild of Barry Saunders from Welling Town Business Associates, who was inspired to support We Are Beams after visiting the six-bedded respite unit and learning about the support Beams provide for disabled children in the local area.

Barry was joined by representatives from Bexleyheath Bid, British Army, London Fire Brigade, Metropolitan police service, Maritime Radio, Deamonink Welling, Local Councillors and MPs and Bexley Borough Council providing the event with a real sense of local community

Direct Payment Service

The Beams Direct Payment Service supports 1,520 parents across Kent, empowering them to manage their child's social care needs, and 80 families to access education funding through EHCP provisions. Over the past year, 133 children started using allocated Social Care support, helping families employ Personal Assistants for disabled

children. Additionally, 19 young people accessed Education Direct Payments for EHCP support.

To apply for Social Care payments, contact your social worker or call 03000 41 11 11. For education-related Direct Payments, inquire during your child's EHCP assessment or contact IASK at 03000 41 3000.

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Family Advice drop in for parents and carers

For several years now the Family Advice team have been facilitating advice drop ins each term week in three venues across North Kent. The drop ins are held in community venues, bringing advice and expertise right in to the heart of the

community. They are staffed by both family advisers and parent volunteers, and provide a safe, non-judgemental space to discuss any matters related to parenting a child with special educational need and disability.



One of Beams parent volunteers said:

"I found the knowledge and help offered by the Family Advice Service invaluable as a parent trying to navigate the SEN system. You are often left feeling lonely and at a loss - the team are amazing at giving parents the tools to feel empowered on such a daunting journey."

I give up my time weekly to volunteer at such a worthy charity but in truth I gain much more in meeting other parents who were just like me 6 years ago. We, as a family are indebted to Beams and all they have done and still do for us to this day"

If you would like to speak to a member of our Family Advice Service, please feel free to pop along to any of the regular sessions which are listed on our website www.wearebeams.org.uk/family-advice/

The England Wheelchair Rugby League Team recently teamed up with Lighthouse Safety and We Are Beams for a thrilling wheelchair rugby match held at Medway Park.



As one of the only full-contact disability sports, it is little wonder wheelchair rugby has been one of the biggest hits at the Paralympic Games over the last ten years.

This charity match displayed the athleticism and teamwork required in wheelchair rugby, by both disabled and non-disabled players.

Six members from Lighthouse Safety took part plus Luke Cashin, Beams Fundraising Manager and the event raised over £1,200 which will all go towards Beams vital support services.

New Sunshine Coach for Beams providing smiles for miles!

We Are Beams are incredibly grateful to have received a new 17-seater Sunshine Coach from FLR Spectron and Variety Golf.

The Sunshine Coach will enable Beams to take disabled children and young people on day trips, outings, allowing them to explore new places, create lasting memories and enjoy the same experiences as their peers.

The Sunshine Coach was presented to the charity at the FLR Spectron sponsored Golf Day on the 11th September. Over 100 golfers participated in the event, contributing to the fundraising efforts that made this incredible gift possible.

Variety Golf believe every child has a right to live their best life and reach their full potential, whoever they are and they have funded 5,800 Sunshine Coaches across the UK to date.

The fully accessible coach complete with wheelchair access and ramp will positively impact the lives of many disabled children and allow Beams to continue to provide holiday play schemes and day trips for children and young people that would otherwise not be provided with these opportunities.



Shortbreaks Summer of Fun and Friendship



The Shortbreaks team had an incredible summer filled with exciting activities and family events.

The children and young people explored new and exciting venues, including Timbertops Equestrian Centre, MSE paintball, and Your Pottery Barn. These activities were a huge hit and we are already planning to return.

The summer party was a resounding success, and everyone

enjoyed a private screening of "Despicable Me 4" at Bluewater. The Shortbreaks team hosted an open session at Allworth Court, inviting families and friends to explore the garden.

Some of our Beams families had the opportunity to use a Hydro pool for young people that need

a warmer environment and could not easily access or manage in a mainstream pool.

There are plenty of exciting plans in store for the winter. The annual Christmas party and pantomime are returning, along with another exciting cinema trip and tickets to Circus Starr's in January.

For information on all Shortbreaks forthcoming events visit www.wearebeams.org.uk



Summer Adventures at Dragon's Retreat

The summer at Dragon's Retreat was action packed. From splashing around in the paddling pool to engaging in sensory play, there was fun for everyone!

There were plenty of outdoor adventures like water fights and exploring local parks. The young people got messy with shaving foam and slime plus sensory play with frozen ice blocks. Everyone had a go at Yoga and tried new Olympic

and Paralympic-themed sports in the garden. There were outings to the beach, zoos, and of course delicious fish and chips! It was a fantastic summer filled with laughter, friendship, and new experiences



Artist Anna-Marie Buss who donated this wonderful piece whilst visiting Dragon's Retreat, our overnight respite unit in Hextable.

Inspired Expressions

Calling all artists!

In February 2025, we will be holding an online art auction to raise vital funds.

Whether you are a budding painter, a skilled sculptor, or a passionate potter, we are looking for artists to join Inspired Expressions and donate a piece of artwork.

Every brushstroke, every sculpture, every piece of pottery made will raise vital funds to support our vital services for disabled children and families.

You have until Monday 2nd December to register your interest.

Register at www.wearebeams.org.uk/inspired-expressions



Four Friends conquer the ultimate challenge of swimming the English Channel for Beams!

A very brave group of friends have taken on and completed the 4-man relay across the English Channel! This courageous feat has raised a staggering £40,000, which will all go towards Beams vital care services. The English Channel is a unique and demanding swim, considered by many to be the ultimate long distance challenge.

The swim started from the beaches of Dover and ended 21 miles and 12 hours later on the French coast. Stuart, Kevin, Tom and Ryan who are not experienced swimmers tackled choppy cold sea conditions, passing vessels, marine life and plenty of seasickness and the risk of hypothermia.

Their motivation? To support Rupert, Stuart's son who lives with Autism.

Rupert is 10 and loves water and everything Disney, he is very energetic, loving and has a cheeky sense of humour. His day-to-day life is challenging he is non-verbal and requires extra support including his personal care.

His parents and the rest of the team hope the funds raised will enable children like Rupert to enjoy fun days out, and activities.



Joshua's Journey at Beams

Congratulations to Joshua Adams who was presented with his ten year service award at Beams.

Joshua, who has a diagnosis of Autism, attended and benefitted from Beams services having attended after school clubs and play schemes from the age of seven. He then volunteered at the clubs and became a sessional worker for our Shortbreaks Service at eighteen. Tracey Riley Short Breaks Manager is so proud of Joshua's achievement.

"Joshua has a real empathy and understanding of children and young people with Autism and ADHD. We are so proud that he also is now a qualified teaching assistant in a SEN school. What an achievement!"

Legacy

If you are thinking of writing your Will, you could consider leaving just 1% of your wealth to Beams. It will make a difference to the children in our care.

For more information contact Caroline Brinkman 01322 668501.