

A Review of Our Year

2023-2024



We support the whole family with the disabled child at the heart of everything we do.



Beams

Supporting disabled children & families

www.wearebeams.org.uk

Allsworth Court, 38-40 St David's Road, Hextable, Kent BR8 7RJ



RCN 1054129

CASE STUDY

Caitlyn's Story



Caitlyn is a vibrant 15-year old who 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 have 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.

Most importantly, Caitlyn has shown increased happiness and independence during her time at Beams which as a teenage 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."

INTRODUCTION

Dear Supporters and Friends,

We are thrilled to share the remarkable impact that our team at We Are Beams has made on the lives of disabled children and families who have accessed our services over the past year.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to each of you who has contributed to this success. Whether you are a supporter, volunteer, trustee, or staff member, your involvement has been invaluable.

It is through your compassion, dedication, and commitment that we continue to bring hope and a brighter future to all those who benefit from our services. Thank you for making a lasting difference.

The difference we make **OUR WORK IN NUMBERS**

402

ACTIVITY DAY
PLACES OFFERED
TO DISABLED
CHILDREN

1767

HOURS OF
CARE OFFERED
TO FAMILIES IN
CRISIS

66

YOUNG PEOPLE
OFFERED
OVERNIGHT
RESPIRE

2705

ENQUIRIES
TO OUR FAMILY
ADVICE TEAM

69

PARENTS ATTENDING
CYGNET PARENTING
PROGRAMME

497

PARENTS
SUPPORTED IN
1-1 CLINICS

1012

FAMILIES IN
RECEIPT OF
A DIRECT
PAYMENT

BROKERAGE
SUPPORTED **27**
CLIENTS TO MAKE
THEIR OWN
DECISIONS

PROFIT
FROM PAYROLL
SERVICE =
£91,609

450

CHILDREN AND
FAMILIES SUPPORTED
AT ANY ONE TIME

CEO/HEAD OF CHARITY

Katrina Adams

The charity sector faces increasing competition for grants, with local authorities cutting back services, leading more families to seek help from Beams.

Another year has passed quickly with a surge in demand for Beams' services. We have grown to meet this need, but the rising costs and challenges in securing funding make the Fundraising team's efforts more critical than ever.

We have hosted key fundraising events and launched a 5-year strategy to strengthen our future, governance, and self-generated income. Thanks to our dedicated team, volunteers, and supporters, we continue to make a meaningful impact.

I would like to thank all those that support us in a variety of ways. We are so very grateful for all that, they do. Team Beams, who include, our staff, volunteers, trustees, children, families and supporters make an incredible difference.

Our Board of Trustees have given their time and skills to ensure that we are a robust charity going forward towards our 30th Year offering care, comfort and hope to thousands of disabled children and families in Kent and Medway.



HOW WE ARE FUNDED

Joanne Fenner FINANCE MANAGER

We Are Beams total income in this year was **£2,125,066** a 4.8% increase on the previous financial year.

Our Funding comes from our commissioned service

- Direct Payment Support Service

Also spot purchase agreements from Kent County Council and other local authorities for

- Dragons Retreat Short Break Service
- Short Breaks Family Support

We also generate income from the

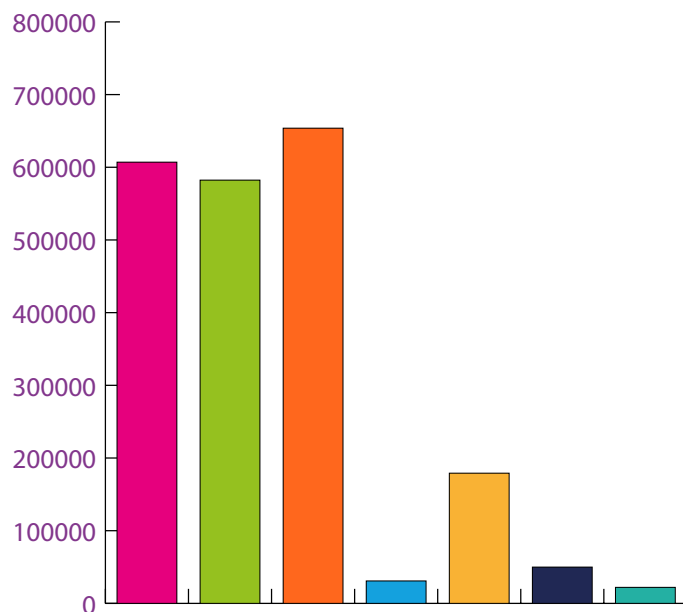
- Beams Payroll Service used mainly by parent's in receipt of a Direct Payment
- Beams Brokerage Service. Whilst this is a new service it is proving to be something that meets a need within the disability community.

Fundraising has had an excellent year with a range of grants from trusts and foundations. Significant grants came from the Big Lottery for our Family Advice Service. The fundraising team have achieved an income of over **£653,772** to enable the work of the charity.

The overall year recorded a deficit of **£51,734** this was mainly due to the loss of planned income from Bank Interest, as a new account took longer than anticipated to open.

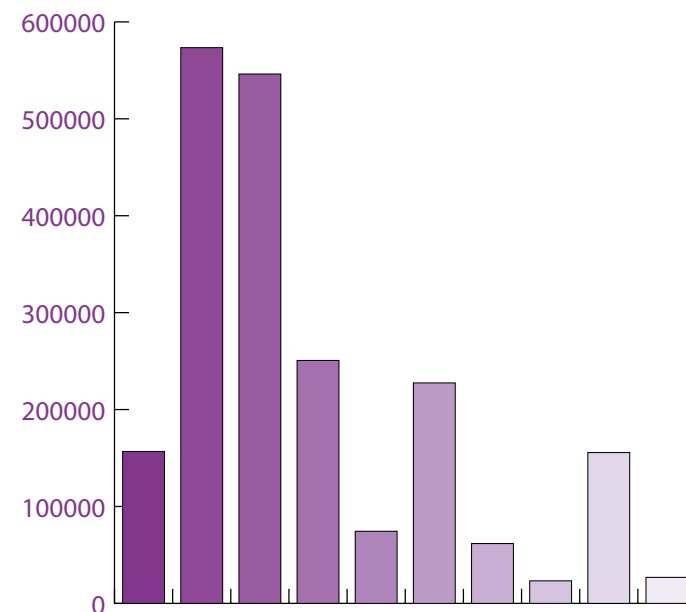
There was a lower income than budgeted for, however this did result in a lower than budgeted expenditure. The Charity continues to have a reasonable financial position, as there is 6 months operating monies (**£585,922**) for our charitable activities held in reserve.

INCOME TOTAL: £2,125,066



Dragons Retreat	£607,015
Direct Payments	£582,304
Fundraising and Grants	£653,772
Brokerage	£30,880
Payroll Services	£179,133
Short Breaks Family Support	£49,920
Other	£22,042
Total	£2,125,066

EXPENDITURE TOTAL: £2,169,459



Shortbreaks	£169,851
Dragons Retreat	£586,535
Direct Payments	£553,701
Fundraising and Marketing	£263,763
Payroll Service	£87,524
Family Advice	£227,494
Brokerage	£74,843
Governance	£23,281
Central Support	£155,626
Professional Fees	£26,841
Total	£2,169,459

FUNDRAISING

Caroline Brinkman

INCOME GENERATION
AND DEVELOPMENT LEAD

It was a challenging year for the team, who worked hard to secure new income and donors despite staff shortages. Luke Cashin, recently promoted to Fundraising Manager, played a pivotal role in driving the team, building new relationships and fostering creative fundraising ideas.

Our capital appeal for the Sensory Cabin raised £39,200 and the result is stunning. So many children have benefitted from this sensory development and it is a delight to see their faces when they access the cabin. The appeals for a community use defibrillator for £1,400 was quickly successful and is now in place outside Beams for anyone local to use.

We hosted 16 fundraising events, raising £61,800, with the standout being the gala ball, which generated £22,444. Guests were impressed with the evening and many joining us again for 2024 Gala Ball.

The afternoon teas are incredibly popular, selling out quickly after promotions, and raising £7,730 this year. Many attendees return for all four events, which have become a much-anticipated highlight of their year.

The Messy Dash was a family fun inclusive day with our Patron David Ribb, Mayor of Dartford and local councillor Jeremy Kite opening the event with colour powder, gunge and glitter. A total of 566 people attended generating £18,200 for Beams children.

Third-party events brought in £71,282, strengthening corporate relationships with a further eight events. The

highlight was the London to Paris Bike Ride organised by Principle Global Investments who joined with their London, Paris, New York and Brussels offices to cycle in support of our disabled children. They raised £24,500. There were four business golf days for FLR Spectron, Kentec, County UK and Bellway generating £32,000 and many new corporate supporters.

We recorded increases in Parish Council donations to £12,000, one legacy for £1,000 and trust funding, at £327,800 which remains our largest income stream and all crucial for sustaining our services.

The outlook for Trusts and Foundations funding is becoming increasingly challenging. Many foundations have tightened their eligibility criteria, with a stronger focus on supporting smaller charities. Additionally, there is a growing list of trusts and foundations that are set to close in 2024/25, which will further limit the availability of funding opportunities for charities.

Looking ahead, we are excited about new campaigns and enhanced reporting through Power BI to track progress more efficiently.

Income for the year was
£653,772

INCOME

Legacies	£1000
Trusts and Foundations	£327,871
Community Fundraising	£83,743
Corporate Fundraising	£103,921
Regular Giving	£17,229
In memory	£7,423
Events	£61,842
Major Donors	£3,125
50/50 Lottery	£6,124
Gift Aid	£24,571
Other	£16,923
	£653,772



FAMILY ADVICE

Tracey Sams FAMILY ADVICE MANAGER

Our advice reduces social isolation, improves the mental health of both parents and their child, gives parents coping strategies, improved education outcomes, and encourages families to develop a support network with others.

Our Parent Advice drop-in sessions remained highly popular, offering easier access to advisors for extremely stressed parents. Support Groups for parents and the Father's Club have high numbers in attendance.

The demand for our Cygnet Parenting Programme is still strong, with a waiting list, though the online booking system has helped simplify the administrative workload.

Education-related queries dominated the helpline, with most support requests focused on this area. We also saw an increase in requests from schools to attend SEND coffee mornings.

Parents have noted that our support has been crucial for their mental health, as access to social care services has become more difficult, with increased school exclusions and challenges in securing appropriate placements. Communication with statutory bodies also remains a key issue for families.

We have noted that cases are becoming more severe and complex with issues surrounding mental health, stress management, domestic abuse and access to services such as CAMHS.



- **Telephone enquiries** 2705
- **Drop in advice sessions delivered** 92 attendees 497
- **Beams support group sessions** 12 attendees 78
- **External support group sessions** 16 attendees 41
- **7 Cygnet parenting programmes** attendees 69
- **2 ADHD workshops for parents** attendees 20

PARENT QUOTES

Family Advice Survey 23/24

“The constant dread that I was failing my child because I didn’t understand her or could help her with things she finds difficult was affecting my mental health. I now feel confident that I know my child and I can help her with the challenges she will face in her life”

*“Beams have been life savers !
Their help has been life changing”*

“They have helped me to feel much calmer and supported about the whole heart breaking situation that my son is currently in. I feel much more focused about what I need to do next to help get my son he desperately needs”

“Compassionate, caring and understanding and gave me some fantastic advice and guidance”

“Very friendly. Made sense of the situation I was in and made it able for me to move forward”

SHORTBREAK SERVICE

Tracey Riley SHORT BREAKS
MANAGER-ACTIVITIES

This year brought a mix of new and classic activities to suit all ages and abilities. Children love to visit Beams during the holidays to make full use of our wonderful garden and new sensory room.

Kidscamp is our service for disabled children who require 1:1 care due to high levels of need. This year, the children enjoyed a day trip to Margate, exploring the beach, arcades, and using fully accessible facilities. Other activities included sensory-focused experiences such as water play, a magical ride on the Santa train, and creative workshops. Sensory activities remain a favourite among the children, helping to engage and stimulate them in ways that promote fun and personal development.

Beamers is our service for children that are more able and they enjoyed cycling at Cyclopark and a TikTok, Tag Active, trampolining and a pottery workshop amongst others.

We placed a strong emphasis on swimming as a crucial life skill. Thirty-eight children, who were previously unable to access mainstream lessons, participated in 10-week swimming sessions led by specially trained instructors. At the end

of the program, each child received a certificate recognising their progress. Many parents reported that their children, having overcome their fear of water, now felt more confident to try mainstream sports venues for continued lessons.

Buzz Club for our young people that are 18-25 had a blast with go-karts and sports activities.

Family events included cinema trips, a Halloween workshop, and relaxed performances of "Wicked" and "Mrs. Doubtfire."

The year concluded with a Christmas party and a London lights bus tour, and trips to the panto ensuring a memorable time for all.

We now have a collaboration with Little Learners, which is for babies, and toddlers and we fund three disabled children to enjoy this sensory play with non-disabled peers at Beams making full use of all facilities.



- **Kidscamp 1:1 Service** - 220 children. 22 sessions provided
- **Beamers** - 123 children 12 sessions provided.
- **Buzz Club 1:1** - 59 young people 6 sessions provided.
- **Family Events** - 11 events took place 756 family members
- **Family support 1:1 Service** - 1767 hours provided for families in crisis or needed extra help at key times.

DIRECT PAYMENT

Tracy Woods DIRECT PAYMENT MANAGER

In the past year, we identified over £2.4 million in unspent funds for KCC and achieved a 96.7% satisfaction rate from parents in a recent online survey

The Beams Direct Payment Service received 230 referrals from Kent County Council by March 2024. Currently, we support the families of 1,012 young people, helping them manage Social Care needs, and assist 65 young people with Education funding via EHCPs. We ensure parents understand Direct Payment responsibilities and assist them in hiring Personal Assistants, enabling access to social opportunities.

We are developing training opportunities for both Personal Assistants and employers through

a collaboration that the team has been working on. This will ensure that Personal Assistants are equipped with the necessary skills, and that employers feel confident in managing their responsibilities effectively. Additionally, as the Direct Payment contract is up for renewal, we plan to tender for it again. We believe our experience and commitment place us in the best position to continue providing excellent service to families receiving direct payments.



The Direct Payment contract with Kent County Council generates,

£582,304

income for the charity

PAYROLL SERVICE

Paul Kennedy DEPUTY HEAD OF CHARITY

The Beams Payroll Service continues to provide exceptional customer service to all users. This year, it was officially registered as a company wholly owned by We Are Beams, allowing all profits to be returned to the charity, maximising benefits rather than incurring corporation tax.

 FOR 2023/24
Income
£179,133


Profit transferred to Beams
£91,609

Although growth slowed slightly, likely due to Kent County Council's budget re-evaluation, steady progress was made, especially with more payrolls that are complex and an increase in Kent Adult Services accounts. The team remains committed to maintaining high service standards.

We are proud of our Ofsted inspection, receiving **“Good”** across all areas

What a fantastic year it has been! We have welcomed many new young people to Dragons Retreat, and it has been wonderful to see them form new friendships while having fun and trying out new activities.

Our focus remains on developing independent living skills such as personal care, communication, and life skills. Activities both on-site and in the community, including seaside trips, have been a hit!

With the growing numbers of young people in our care, we have also expanded our team, welcoming back familiar faces and introducing new ones.

We are proud of our Ofsted inspection, receiving “Good” across all areas. Paul Kennedy, Deputy Head of Charity and I were delighted to have excelled in our first inspection as Responsible Individual and Registered Manager.

We are excited to continue growing and supporting more families.

In total we provided **1105** beds to young people aged 8-18 years

66 young people used the service across the year for a short break

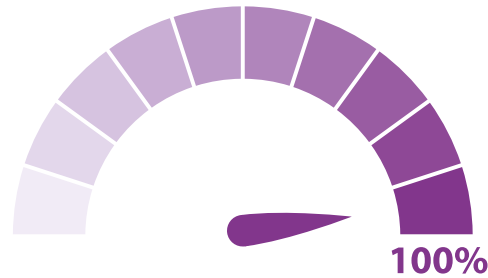
21 new young people accessed the service



DRAGON'S RETREAT PARENT SURVEY 2024



100% of parents surveyed said they strongly or agreed their child enjoys their time at Dragon's Retreat



100% of parents strongly or agreed that their child is supported and cared for well at Dragon's Retreat



100% of parents strongly or agreed that the standard at Dragon's Retreat was excellent



100% of young people said they felt happy at Dragon's Retreat

Parents quotes

"The team at Dragon's are working so well to support my daughter to work towards some independent living skills such as showering and being involved in cooking"

"Our experience of Dragon's so far has been nothing but positive. My daughter is always happy when I leave her there and still happy when I collect her the following day. She has the choice to take part in various activities and is looked after so well"

"My son is always happy to be at We Are Beams. That means they are doing well by him. He still needs some support in life skills to enjoy independent living but a massive Thank you to the team"

The Support Brokerage Service continues to offer essential management to clients aged 16-25 years and receiving Direct Payments from the Local Authority.

We support those unable to manage all aspects of their provision. This includes help with recruiting and managing staff, payroll, and compliance with employment requirements.

We also offer Person Centred planning to young people that are looking towards their future.

We have assisted 27 clients this year, with 21 receiving ongoing support. Despite challenges in sourcing Personal Assistants (PAs) due to limited pay rates offered by the local authority, we have been successful in recruitment and supported our young people.

Person-Centred Planning has progressed well, with 13 plans completed for young people aged 16-25. A new staff member will join in November, allowing us to expand our support to more clients in the coming year. We have attended transition events, working closely with schools and colleges. Positive

feedback from clients highlights the significant impact of this service, with one parent praising the dedication of our broker for making a meaningful difference in their child's life.

This service remains a vital part of our mission, helping young people achieve their aspirations.

We have participated in several transition events at schools and colleges across Kent, offering support to teaching staff and engaging with students through classroom exercises. These activities focus on demonstrating the value of person-centred planning, helping young people take charge of their future. As we move into the new academic year, we are excited to expand our work with an increased number of schools, colleges, and young people, continuing to support their growth and aspirations through tailored planning and guidance.

We have assisted **27** clients this year, with 21 receiving ongoing support



Brokerage generated
£30,880
new income this year



MARKETING

Caroline Brinkman

INCOME GENERATION
AND DEVELOPMENT LEAD

We have won the **“Special Projects Award”** at the 2023 Kent Awards and **“Best Children’s Charity”** in 2024.

Facebook remains the top platform for interaction, while Instagram and TikTok attract a younger audience. Our website saw 100,083 page views and 45,170 unique visitors. With refreshed content and photography, parents have responded positively. Additionally, Emma achieved success with online raffles, raising £9,179, and digital marketing through text messaging.

We received good PR coverage with freelance support from Abby Brindley, Absolutely Marketing, who has been invaluable during periods of low staffing levels.

Partnerships with Kings Hill Directory and Dartford Living have created new opportunities. The local press have picked up our PR stories and are returning for more. This has given us exposure to new beneficiaries and donors.

A digital shop was launched, with results to be monitored in 2024.



TRUSTEE REPORT

Jason Jarvis CHAIR OF TRUSTEES



On behalf of the Board of Trustees, we are delighted that We Are Beams has been voted as the 'Kent Children's Charity of the Year for 2024' at the Kent Charity Awards in September. This gives us immense pride and it is tremendous that all of the hard work and dedicated support by so many across all of the services has been recognised along with the impact our work has on disabled children and families.

I am also pleased to report that during the course of the year, we have welcomed to the Board a number of new Trustees and Advisers who bring new insight and skills to the mix, so we can continue to strengthen what we do and deliver on our future ambitions.

Now more than ever, the community that we support needs us. Inevitably, there are challenges ahead, but we are increasingly well placed to meet these. We look forward to an equally successful 2025!

Thank you to everyone who has supported us, we could not do it without you.
Here are a few of our recent fundraising stories



One almighty pull from the Welling and Bexleyheath community raised **£2000!**



Four Friends conquered the English Channel and raised a staggering **£54,000!**



Beams receive a new 17 seater Sunshine coach from FLR Spectron and Variety Golf



England Wheelchair Rugby league team up with Lighthouse safety for a thrilling game of Wheelchair rugby



Specsavers Team from Crayford and Swanley completed an epic hike up Mount Snowdown



Elite Metal Clay shooting day raises over **£23,000!**



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Beams

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