

Dragon's Retreat - Ofsted Outstanding!



Alexandra's Story: Finding Strength, Support, and Joy



Alexandra is a joyful, loving 10-year-old girl who brightens the lives of those around her. She has Weidemann Steiner Syndrome, a rare genetic condition with only 1500 diagnosed worldwide. Alexandra's case is severe, with challenges like being non-verbal, unable to walk independently, and having poor muscle strength and tone. She also has hypertonia, hypermobility, generalized epilepsy, now controlled with medication, and type two Chiari Malformation.

Alexandra needs full time care, she does not sleep very much as has difficulty staying asleep and falling asleep. The lack of sleep is one of the biggest challenges for the family with Alexandra often only sleeping for a couple of hours each night. Over time, this has caused mental and physical exhaustion for her parents and burn out for her mother Cassandra.

Despite the many struggles she faces, Alexandra is a beautiful and loving child; she lives in the present. She enjoys music, and dancing, she loves water and gets so much enjoyment as she learns to swim. Her great sense of humour and contagious laugh bring so much joy to her family!

With so few children having the same syndrome as Alexandra, it has been hard for her parents to find other families facing similar challenges and prognosis for the future. The lack of support and resources in their local area has been especially tough and the family feel very isolated.

However, discovering We Are Beams has been a lifeline. Beams' accessible hydrotherapy swimming sessions provide Alexandra with a therapeutic outlet—warm water soothes her painful joints and muscles while allowing her to build strength and confidence.

Beams short breaks activities has helped alleviate some of the loneliness Alexandra feels, especially during the holidays. The ability to interact with other children has given her a sense of belonging, which is invaluable for her development and well-being.

Recently, Alexandra's mum, Cassandra, has joined Beams' Parent Support Group, giving her the opportunity to connect with other families facing similar challenges. Having a network of support has helped her navigate the complexities of raising a child with a disability and given her hope for the future.

Cassandra is so grateful to have found support from Beams,

"Beams is an excellent charity and really excels giving families as much support including the respite at Dragon's Retreat. We are extremely grateful to be joining this family and hope to connect more with other parents too. Thank you all so much for your empathy and hard work we appreciate it!"

BIG Summer Raffle

WIN OUR TOP PRIZE **£1500**

Just **£2** to enter

Every ticket will go towards supporting disabled children and their families

ENTER NOW

www.wearebeams.org.uk

Beams
Supporting disabled children & families
RCN 1054129

2024 WINNER CHILDREN'S CHARITY

The Big Summer Raffle is a great way to support Beams and every £2 will make a real difference.

Family Advice

Family Advice has been the usual hive of activity. During the past few months we supported 22 families at our Family Advice drop In Clinics, 64 families received individual support at our office in Hextable, or at external meetings, and our helpline processed 868 enquiries from parents.

We have completed our first new and updated Cygnet Parenting Programme. This was well received as it has many additional information resources to share on Autism. If you are interested in accessing this training programme then please do get in touch as more sessions are scheduled for the coming months. Please remember that Parents can also pop into our weekly advice clinics each week in Dartford, Gravesend and Sevenoaks, no appointment needed.

Whilst the world of navigating support for children with SEND remains challenging, it is very easy to overlook those positive moments that can be around any corner. Ric, the young man in this picture has navigated many bumps in recent years, however the bumps he may be facing going forward are going to be very exciting. This 'smile' moment, reminds me why I love my job.

Tracey Sams – Family Advice Manager



Big Lottery, Community Fund supports Family Advice Service

The Big Lottery have confirmed that they will help to part fund the Family Advice Service at **We Are Beams**. The funding is for three years and will support parents in need of advice on their child's education, transport, benefits, EHCPs, confidence when dealing with disability issues and parents will be equipped with a coping strategy tool box.

Tracey Sams, Family Advice Manager said, "We are delighted that the National Lottery Community Fund has confirmed three year funding once again. They believe that we offer an essential service to parents and children under our care. Also we would like to thank all players of the National Lottery, without them the money would not be there to invest in supporting disabled children".



Beams

Supporting disabled children & families

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 RESPITE

2705

ENQUIRIES TO OUR FAMILY ADVICE TEAM

69

PARENTS ATTENDING CYGNET PARENTING PROGRAMME

497

PARENTS SUPPORTED IN 1-1 CLINICS

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

PROFIT FROM PAYROLL SERVICE = **£91,609**

450

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SUPPORTED AT ANY ONE TIME

Direct Payments Service has now moved to new supplier.

The Beams Direct Payment Service Kent County Council contract has now transitioned to a new corporate provider. The team has transferred over 1,000 families accessing a Social Care Direct Payment, and over 100 families who access an Education Personal Budgets to People Plus Group.

Since April 2007, Beams have supported around 3,800 families to access support for their allocated Direct Payment, or Education Personal Budget. Team members have grown from the original two who worked hard on developing the foundations of the service, increasing to the current number of thirteen staff, so we could further develop and go on to meet the substantial demands for the support.

With very few exceptions, the Beams Direct Payment Service achieved excellent feedback when asked about parent experience and we are often overwhelmed by comments made that recognise the valuable support available.

Beams has been a wonderful place to 'work'.

*'I have always had excellent support from
We are Beams'
'You have been so incredibly helpful'
'Thank you for your amazing help'
'Thank you so much for all you've done for
our family'*

All of the Direct Payment Team comment that, although extremely busy, what achieved brought us personal satisfaction and the connections with families, professionals and colleagues that we built over time have been meaningful to us.

It has been an honour to be a part of such

a wonderful Charity, and to contribute to something impactful. We sincerely wish all of the families supported by us, past, present, all the very best for the future, and would like to thank each one for allowing us the privilege of coming to 'work' each day.

Other services at Beams continue to be available, and ready to support families. Please do make use of these, and continue to support the Charity for the future.

A heartfelt sign off from me, Tracy, as your Direct Payment Service Manager and all of the Team: Carla, Cassie, Deborah, Denise, Jo, Lianne, Maddie, Michael, Paula, Sara, Simone and Sophie. We hope this is, a 'see you again' rather than a goodbye.

Where would we be without Panoramic Designs?



How can new parents find us other than with our website? Our lovely new design has been made possible with the voluntary support of Sanjit Bansal from Panoramic Design based in Rochester.

Established in 2010 Sanjit has been designing beautiful websites, providing great service and value for money for clients across a broad range of industries. We were lucky enough that Sanjit chose to work with Beams to make our designs a reality and supported us with a recent update to make the website easier to navigate. This has saved the charity thousands of pounds that can now be spend on our children. Thank you Sanjit.

www.Panoramicdesign.co.uk

Harry's Hydro pool

We received a wonderful donation of £6000 last June from Water Babies. This income enabled us to hire the use of a private Hydro Pool to offer swimming and fun time in the water for some of our children with a high level of need. These children are not able to use mainstream pools.

Mehmet, father of one of our children said, "My son really loved the pool and has become more confident and willing to enter the water, this experience has been invaluable to our family. Thank you Beams for this opportunity"



Remembering someone special with a gift in their memory

Helping to raise funds for a cause close to a loved one's heart can be a very positive way to celebrate their life

Giving In Memory to We Are Beams

- ✿ Donating in memory instead of flowers
- ✿ Funeral collections
- ✿ A regular in memory gift
- ✿ Leave a lasting legacy in your will

However you decide to support us, we will be happy to help fundraising@wearebeams.org.uk



Beams Thankathon

The Fundraising Team recently spent the day visiting and calling our supporters and Corporate Partners to thank them for supporting Beams. It was a fantastic day catching up and showing our appreciation and gratitude to you all!





Short Breaks Brilliant Adventures: Slime, Sports, and Splashing Fun!

Shortbreaks team celebrated springtime fun with 10 activities over the Easter Holidays. 76 children accessed the activities and we welcomed 15 new young people!

There was a brand new trip for Beamers to Woodlands sports centre. The day was filled with exciting sensory play, including magical wizard-themed arts and crafts and the always-popular slime-making! Other exciting escapades included splashing fun at Chatham Water Sports, outdoor activities at Lower Grange Farm, and wild wonders at Howletts Wildlife Park. Full details of all the upcoming Shortbreaks activities visit- www.wearebeams.org.uk

Recent Quotes from Short Breaks Survey

"The activities give my child a sense of belonging and he doesn't feel judged"

"The Activities stop my son from being socially isolated and gives us a well needed break"

"The playschemes gives my daughter a chance to make friends and try new things. It also gives me a bit of respite and a chance to give my younger daughter all of my attention"



Inspired Expressions Art Auction raises £2600

Beams, recently presented Inspired Expressions, a brand new online art auction.

From captivating photographs and innovative digital art to stunning woodwork, intricate sculptures, and beautiful handcrafted pottery, the auction displayed a diverse range of artistic expressions.

The auction raised **£2600** with all proceeds going towards Beams vital support services.

A Community that cares!

A huge thank you to Tina & Lewis from the Horse and Groom a local pub and restaurant that is a great supporter of Beams.

They kindly offered a truly special experience as an auction prize at our Beams Ball last year: a home-cooked meal for four. This personal touch was a wonderful way to support Beams.

We are so grateful for their generosity, and everyone had a fantastic time enjoying the incredible food.



Brokerage

We have been exceptionally busy over the last few months attending a number of promotional events and making some very useful contacts, which are leading us into an exciting phase of development for the service.

Emma has settled well into her role and has become a highly valued team member. Her role is to concentrate on developing person centred plans for young people, although she has been supporting with the management of Direct Payments in the short term too.

We are just embarking on a pilot programme with a number of our clients which we hope (and anticipate) will become a fantastic opportunity to help our clients to achieve the goals and outcomes which are identified in their person centred plans.

We are also excited that Sophie Fellows has joined the team and as the dedicated Brokerage Management Case Worker.

As with any new business, developing this service has been at times in equal measures, difficult, stressful, exciting, invigorating and challenging but we are entering a new phase of partnership working, which, we are very, hopeful will produce the service we envisioned at the outset, that supports both our clients and Beams' long term goals.

Nicolas Hamilton Revs Up Inspiration for the children at Beams

British racing driver Nicolas Hamilton, known for his incredible achievements in the British Touring Car Championship despite living with cerebral palsy, recently met with children from We Are Beams charity for a special press event.

The event, held at Brands Hatch, gave the young attendees the rare opportunity to meet the racing star, explore his specially modified car, and experience the thrill of live superbike action.

As the half-brother of Formula One World Champion Lewis Hamilton, Nicolas shared his unique journey of overcoming personal challenges, showing the young people that



determination and passion can lead to success on and off the track.

One lucky child, George, even had the chance to interview Nicolas for his own social media page.

For the children and young people at Beams, seeing Nicolas' success despite his disability served as a powerful reminder that anything is possible no matter the obstacles!

We Are Beams Receives £27,500 from Phoenix Fun Events



Beams are delighted to have been chosen by Phoenix Fun Events as their charity of the year and have received a generous donation of £27,500!

Phoenix Fun Events is a fantastic group of friends, including renowned broadcaster Angela Rippon, who established the group to combine fun and fundraising for worthy causes. All members are volunteers, and every penny raised from their events goes directly to supporting their chosen charities.

Leave a Legacy - Make a Difference

Legacy giving, or leaving a gift in your will, is a meaningful way to create a lasting impact and support a cause close to your heart. For charities across the UK, these gifts provide vital funds to ensure their work continues for future generations.

By including a charity such as We Are Beams in your will, you help secure a brighter future for the causes you care about. It is a way to make your values live on, ensuring your kindness and generosity have a lasting effect.

Legacy gifts are simple to arrange and can be a percentage of your estate.

Even 1% could make a difference, a set amount, or a specific item.

Contact Caroline Brinkman

E: caroline.brinkman@wearebeams.org.uk

Springing Into Action: New Adventures at Dragon's Retreat



It has been an exciting and fulfilling start to 2025 at Dragon's Retreat. We started the year by celebrating Chinese New Year, exploring a variety of arts and crafts, and having lots of fun with sensory play.

With the weather improving, we are also giving our garden a spring refresh and preparing to plant some fruit and vegetables. As always, the young people are eager to lend a hand!

World Book Day was another recent highlight. The young people embraced the opportunity to dress up, and we spent plenty of time reading stories together.

At Dragon's Retreat, we are dedicated to helping the young people build important life skills. One of the ways we do this is through creative cooking sessions in the kitchen, where our Support Workers guide the children in preparing delicious meals.

Once the meals are ready, everyone gathers around the big dining table to enjoy the food together, helping gain social skills.

The young people are always working on these skills during their time at Dragon's Retreat, and they receive certificates to celebrate their achievements.

We have just had our Ofsted visit and was awarded **OUTSTANDING!** This is a great achievement as we are the only independent short break provider in the county with this accolade.



Ofsted
Outstanding
Provider

Get involved!

Diary of Events

Hyde Park 10K

Saturday 7th June

Lace up your running shoes and join Team Beams at the Hyde Park 10K

Cost: £30 (min sponsorship £170)



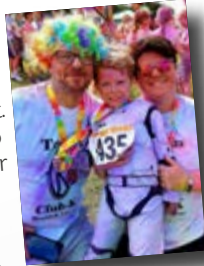
Messy Dash

Sunday 6th July

2025 brings a bigger, better, and unexpected twist. With two waves of messy fun, you won't want to miss it. Prepare to run through slime, colour, water and more. Fun for the whole family.

Venue: Dartford Central Park

Entry: £15 Adult £12 Child (12-17 years) £8 Child 11 years and under £40 Family (2Ad & 2Ch)



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



Visit Beams for a sensory experience

We would love to welcome you to We Are Beams for a tour of our 6-bedded respite unit, sensory room, and garden. You can experience first-hand the vital care and support we offer. It is a great opportunity to see the impact of our work and the difference we make in the lives of the children and families we support

CORPORATE CORNER

Thank you to our Corporate Partners who support Beams, we could not do it without you.

Could you support an event? There are a number of different sponsorship opportunities available and all sponsorship income is used to cover the event costs, making sure that all money raised goes directly to support the disabled children and their families. **If you are interested in sponsorship opportunities or would like to support Beams, please get in touch: fundraising@wearebeams.org.uk**



Magrock Ltd

Over the past three years, Magrock Ltd has been an incredible supporter of We Are Beams, contributing more than **£6,000** in sponsorship. Their ongoing commitment helps ensure that every penny raised at our events goes directly to supporting disabled children and their families.

Magrock's team members and their families have fully embraced the spirit of Beams events, participating and having fun themselves. Most recently, they ensured that everyone at Messy Dash was covered from head to toe in fun and mess!

We are incredibly grateful for their continued support!

Staff from John Lewis Bluewater recently presented a generous cheque for £1,500 to Beams!

The donation was the result of a staff vote, with the impact Beams has on local disabled young people—many of whom visit Bluewater—playing a key role in the decision. John Lewis has been a long-standing partner of Beams, supporting us through volunteer days in our garden and making generous donations over the years. We are thrilled to continue this partnership and deeply appreciate their ongoing commitment to our cause!



We would also like to thank the following businesses for their support. South Eastern Railway Community Fund, Beazley Management Limited, Magrock Ltd, Broadditch Farm Shop, Lexus Sidcup, Endurance Business, John Lewis Bluewater, Plumbase Orpington, Arnold Clark Automobiles Ltd, Big DrInks Limited, Burttons Solicitors, Coca Cola Enterprises Ltd, Gallagher Insurance Brokers, County UK Lighthouse Safety, LP Energy Associates, M3 Consulting, Macfarlanes LLP, TK Maxx and Homesense Foundation, Barclays Bank, JB Autos, MCA, FLR Spectron

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