

We are Beams

**Minutes of the
29th Annual General Meeting**

Held on
Friday

10th October 2025 at 12.30pm

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

TRUSTEES PRESENT: Jason Jarvis (Chair) Neil Johnston (Vice Chair), Rosie Neale , Sue Crocker, Mark Walker, Jenna Wells Terri Cox Katrina Adams (Company Secretary/Head of Charity) taking Minutes.

IN ATTENDANCE

Beams Staff - Luke Cashin, Tracey Riley, David Adams ,Paul Kennedy, Jennie Branch, Tracy Whitehead, Bal Dhillon ,Jo Fenner , Teresa Arnold, Lucia Zammit, Sara McAllen, Magda Sarzynska, Tracy Woods,

Cllr Rosanna Currans ,

Full attendance List available

1	Welcome: Jason welcomed everybody to the meeting. Jason introduced the formal part of the meeting
2	Apologies: , Andy Garrett Cllr Brian Garden Cllr Alan Cecil Laura Trott MP Dr Lauren Sullivan MP , Jim Dickson MP, Lady Barbara Ramsey, Cllr Beverley Fordham Stephen Garnett
3	Minutes: The Minutes of the Meeting held on Friday 11 th October 2024 were: i) accepted as a true and accurate record and ii) signed by Jason Jarvis iii) Matters Arising: None
4	Re-election of Trustees Katrina said that Andy Garrett, Sue Crocker and Terri Cox retired this year on rotation. All have confirmed that they are willing to be re-elected. Neil Johnstone proposed that they be elected, seconded by Rosie Neale. All AGREED. Jason asked if there was anyone present who wished to stand as a Trustee. Graham Price came forward Proposed by Sue Crocker seconded by Terri Cox ALL AGREED

5	Directors Report and Accounts Katrina gave a summary of the Accounts for the year 2024/25 Total Income £2,480,058 (an increase of 16.7% 2023/24) Total Expenditure £2,307,136 (an increase of 6.3% 2023/24) Net Surplus £162,168 The amounts held are Restricted Funds £ 525,562 Unrestricted Funds £ 206,977 Reserves £ 732,539 Katrina confirmed that as the Beams Payroll Service is now a limited Company, wholly owned by We are Beams their profit was gifted to the charity without incurring any corporation tax liability <u>Adoption of Accounts</u> Neil Johnston recommended the adopted Accounts to the Meeting, seconded by Jason Jarvis All AGREED. <u>Adoption of Auditors:</u> Neil Johnston proposed that Kreston Reeves be adopted as our Auditors for the year 2025/26 seconded by Marl Walker. All AGREED.
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Annual Review

Katrina spoke about the year.

The Short Breaks activity service remains a very busy and oversubscribed service Tracey and the team look for new activities, challenges and interesting places for the children to attend. Days out included bowling, abseiling, high ropes, cycling, water sports amongst many others. We held 10 family events during the year attended by just under 600 people.

The Short Breaks residential service Dragons Retreat has continued to add more children to its attendees to grow. 72 children used the service totalling 133 beds during the year. This represents an 82% occupancy for the 270 nights we were open. Many hotels would be envious.

At the Unannounced Ofsted Inspection Visit in February 2025 we were delighted that for the first time we were awarded an Outstanding grade for the service. The overall experience and progress of children was graded Outstanding. The effectiveness of leaders and managers was also graded Outstanding. As you would expect we are very proud of this achievement and it is a great credit to the professionalism of Robin the Registered Manager, and the entire team to be recognised as the outstanding service we have always known they are. For those of you who are not aware we are inspected annually by Ofsted Social Care and unlike schools we do not know they are coming until they ring the doorbell, which is quite daunting and makes the result such a proud one.

The Family Advice team continue to see record numbers of requests for support, 2500 new telephone requests for support alone. We held 35 Support groups alongside 117 weekly clinics across Dartford, Gravesham and Sevenoaks. Advisors also facilitated 1to 1-support meetings, school meetings and a full programme of training for parents. Over 80% of the requests from parents is around Educational support and information, which is indicative of the issues within Kent regarding SEND.

Sadly, following a procurement process the Direct Payment service was transferred to a new provider after 18 years. The bid we submitted reflected the quality of service we wanted to provide and was within the available affordability range. However a national privately run company submitted a lower bid and therefore were awarded the contract. 10 of our 13 staff were transferred under TUPE to the new provider. However, I am pleased to report that Tracy Woods who managed the DP service returned to Beams after 3 months as our new Commercial Delivery Manager

The Support Brokerage service, now renamed Supporting Independence Service managed by Karen Dorling has been busy with both Support planning, and managing Direct Payments for those identified as needing additional support. Karen has been developing our new service –Empower Me and hopefully this time next year, I will be telling you all how wonderful and successful it has been.

The Beams Payroll service continues to grow with over 970 employers using them to provide their payroll. 2024/25 represented the first full year as this trading as a limited company wholly owned by We Are Beams. As reported earlier the profit of just over £121000 is gifted (free of tax) to the charity.

Fundraising to deliver our services is vital. Whilst some of our services are commissioned or purchased, we are still very reliant on the fundraising team to bring funds in. Caroline and the team generated over £814000, which was over their fundraising target by 15% a great achievement. Funders, particularly Trusts and Foundations, are placing greater scrutiny on charity costs and are increasingly focused on learning, adaptability, and how charities are embedding diversity, equity, and inclusion.

The team have developed great links with individuals and businesses many of whom are here today thank you to you all who support us so generously.

After 10 years with us, Caroline left in July to take on a new challenge. Luke has taken on the Interim role for fundraising and marketing and is well supported by the team.

As we have previously noted We were delighted in September 2024 when we were named Best Children's Charity in Kent at the Annual Kent Charity Awards for the 3rd time in 6 years. I could not have been prouder of the amazing and special team at Beams that make awards like that achievable. As ever I am very grateful for the work, commitment and dedication that they give that now entitles us to be called multi award winning !

Behind the scenes, much of the 24/25 year for the Trustees, Paul and myself was working on the sustainability of the Charity into the future. Many meetings were held reviewing strategy, aims and what our families need.

The outcome of this will be some substantial changes to the structure of the Charity and a focus on generating income from those services that we can sell to others. I mentioned earlier the Commercial Delivery Manager role; this is part of our strategy for sustainability. Tracy is now marketing for example the Payroll Service to other Charities and small business. She is looking at National tenders for areas that we have expertise in that we can deliver remotely. We are developing a training plan to offer support to employers in understanding neurodiversity and strategies for them to support their employees. These are skills that we have and can generate an income for us. The board have had to be mindful that many charities have not survived the last 5 years and if Beams is to continue then we must look to generate our own income alongside that raised by Fundraising. Charities cannot just put their hands out anymore.

We are currently working towards having two further CIO's (Charitable Incorporated Organisations) within the We Are Beams structure. This is to separate the work we do for Children from the services for Adults. It is our intention to expand the services for Adults and this will enable us to do this without affecting the vital work already in place for children.

I am not sure if any of you saw the Panorama programme earlier this week, it highlighted how difficult life for SEND parents is now. It is no secret that Children's social care and education regarding SEND is in crisis and many believe it is on the verge of collapse. Whatever the future it remains essential that Beams be here for parents to turn to in the future.

I would also like to thank our trustees who give their time voluntarily to oversee the charity and provide the scrutiny and challenge that ensures I am doing my job! Their support is so valuable and if I forget to say so often, enough I am very grateful.

	The last year has been challenging for me personally. I want to thank both the staff and Trustees for their care. As always, the management team were very understanding and I have been overwhelmed by their support and love during this time. I do need to thank Paul, who has had to pick up the reins and ensure that business as usual carried on. He has been a great strength over this time and only lost patience with me occasionally. 2026 marks the 30th Year of the Charity so watch out for the celebrations!
7	Speakers – Parental experience Two parents Matt & Natalie spoke about their experience of support from the Charity. Matt spoke very passionately about the difference it made to him as a father and how it changed for the better his family life. Luke shared a Case Study from a parent regarding her child Spencer. Paul read a piece from a family regarding the support they had received from the Supporting Independence service. Maggie Hirsch said that she wished to thank the staff for their support to her son and the difference it had made to their family. Jason thanked them all for the amazing contribution they make.
8	Any other business Cllr Dean Truder said that he was very impressed with the Charity and its services. He announced that the Reform KCC councillors across the 3 districts were making just under £5000 available to us as a Grant from their members' funds. Bernie Hannon (Chair Kent PACT) said that she wished to thank Katrina and We are Beams for their support to Kent PACT. She stated that over the last 3 years Katrina had provided support and advice, without which she did not believe the parent forum would have survived.
9	Closing Remarks Jason thanked all those who had attended for their support of the Charity. He thanked those that had spoken shared their experience with the meeting. He thanked the trustees for their continued work and support. Jason thanked all those who donate and fundraise for Beams to ensure our valuable work continues. Meeting closed at 1.30pm