
Our year 2013-14



“Anything worthwhile comes at a cost. There are a huge number of children who need to be cared for outside of their birth families. Someone has to do it. The children call to us. They touch our hearts. We have always felt the need to respond.”

Eleanor, TACT foster carer

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David Bradley, interim CEO of TACT, reminds us why we are all here

As we look back on another year at TACT it's useful to remind ourselves why we are all here. As staff, carers and trustees we all do different things, but we are united in one aim: to make life for children in care brighter, safer and happier.

Through our dedicated staff we find the best carers for children and young people, ensuring the opportunities in life they deserve are open to them and that they are loved and looked after. Through our training and research we make sure our carers are prepared for any challenges that come their way, and that they themselves are happy and fulfilled in their work.

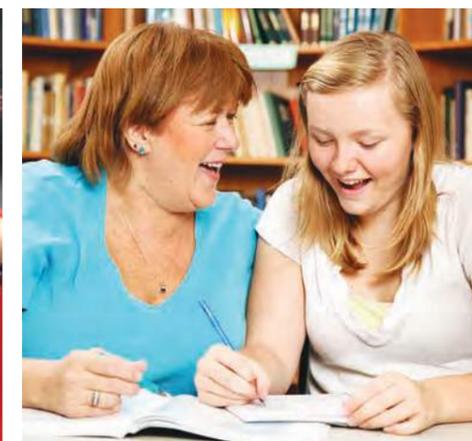
Through our campaigning voice we make a difference to the lives of children in care, and the families that support them, by lobbying government, consulting on policy and speaking up for those who can't. Through our status as a charity we invest all the money we make back into additional services for fostered and adopted children – everything from play therapists and specialist help to Christmas pantos and activity weekends.

When you have such a clear vision – to make life better for the children in our care – it's easy to see why we at TACT work so hard. We're proud of what we've achieved. Enjoy the story of our year and here's to many more successful ones.

David Bradley



Geoff Knox, chair of our trustees, reflects on the year



We're here for children, as David writes. But our excellent work and committed approach is also recognised by local authorities and by our carers. Despite a climate where budgets are being squeezed and competition increases, we continue to grow and prosper, as our headlines on the following page testify.

I, along with my fellow trustees, would like to thank everyone at TACT for their hard work and dedication throughout the last year. We would also like to express our appreciation for TACT's foster carers and adoptive parents, those exceptional people who do so much in helping the young people placed in their care to reach their potential.

Whatever the challenges of the next year, we know that we can rise to them. We look forward to welcoming more children into new, safe, loving homes in the coming year and to continuing to support those already in our care.

Geoff Knox

Headline news

In times of further budget cuts in children's services we have continued our excellent performance, helping ever increasing numbers of children in care to reach their potential. In 2013-14 we:



01 Provided safe, caring foster homes for a total of 1,454 children



03 Approved 111 new carer households



02 Had 655 children placed with TACT carers at the end of March 2014



05 Found permanent adoptive families for 16 children



04 Had a total of 563 carer households by the end of March 2014



06 Implemented evidence based training programmes 'Fostering Changes' and 'Adoption Changes' for all TACT foster carers and adopters



07 Achieved a surplus helping ensure both organisational stability and investment into excellent service provision



09 Were rated 'good' or higher in all our inspections



08 Were central to the successful campaign to persuade the government to allow children in England to stay with their foster families until the age of 21



10 Maintained relationships with over 100 local authorities and continued with our excellent track record in tendering and contracting results

Focus on fostering

In 2013-14 TACT Fostering:



01 Took 183 new carers through 'Fostering Changes' training



02 Piloted 15 'Staying Put' placements allowing young people to stay with their foster carers until 21 years old



03 Held a young person's art exhibition in Cardiff funded by The Ashley Family Foundation



04 Undertook specialist training programmes; such as the BAAF 'Securing Children's Future' course attended by TACT Scotland social workers



05 Involved young people in Children's Champions meetings, enabling them to influence TACT's work



06 TACT South West held an award ceremony for foster carers, with poet Lem Sissay presenting



07 Held a participation and activity day for 40 TACT young people

Eleanor's story...



Eleanor has fostered 115 children since she became a TACT foster carer. As her own children were growing up she took a break from fostering but for the last two years has fostered children with additional needs for TACT. Here she explains why and talks a little about the latest child to join her household.

"Our latest foster child is a thirteen year old girl who is blind, doubly incontinent and with a number of learning difficulties. Initially, she made good progress in her mobility, language and self help skills. However after a fall down the stairs, a CT scan to check for injuries revealed she also had tuberculosis. We had an eight day stay in hospital with me as her only carer followed by a further eight days in isolation at home before she was on the mend.

Before Sarah (*not her real name*) moved in, I spent time with her at her respite care home and in her school. When she moved in I followed what the school were doing and they've noticed the difference in her in the six months she's been here. I think she's much brighter than people give her credit for. Her family simply weren't capable of giving her the care she needed, even with support, so it was eventually decided to move her somewhere else where she could thrive.

People ask why I take on children with special needs. I can honestly say that I would prefer to work with someone who has learning or physical disabilities over someone with difficult behaviour because of the lives they've led.

There are constantly a huge number of children who need to be cared for outside of their birth families – and despite the sometimes huge challenges – someone has to do it. The children call to us. They touch our hearts. We have always felt the need to respond.

Some of the children we've fostered have only spent a few nights in our care, some spent years. We enjoy being part of a process whereby a child goes from us to their forever family, knowing the way we cared for them was crucial in enabling them to settle and have the life they deserve. Caring for other people's children is a way of life for us."

Focus on adoption

In 2013-14 TACT Adoption:



01 Found permanent new families for 16 children in care, primarily sibling groups and BME children



02 Provided play/ Theraplay support for all our adoptive families when matching and placed for adoption



03 Made 'Adoption Changes', a therapeutic parenting programme, available for all TACT adopters, and open for other adoptive families via the South London Adoption Consortium (SLAC)

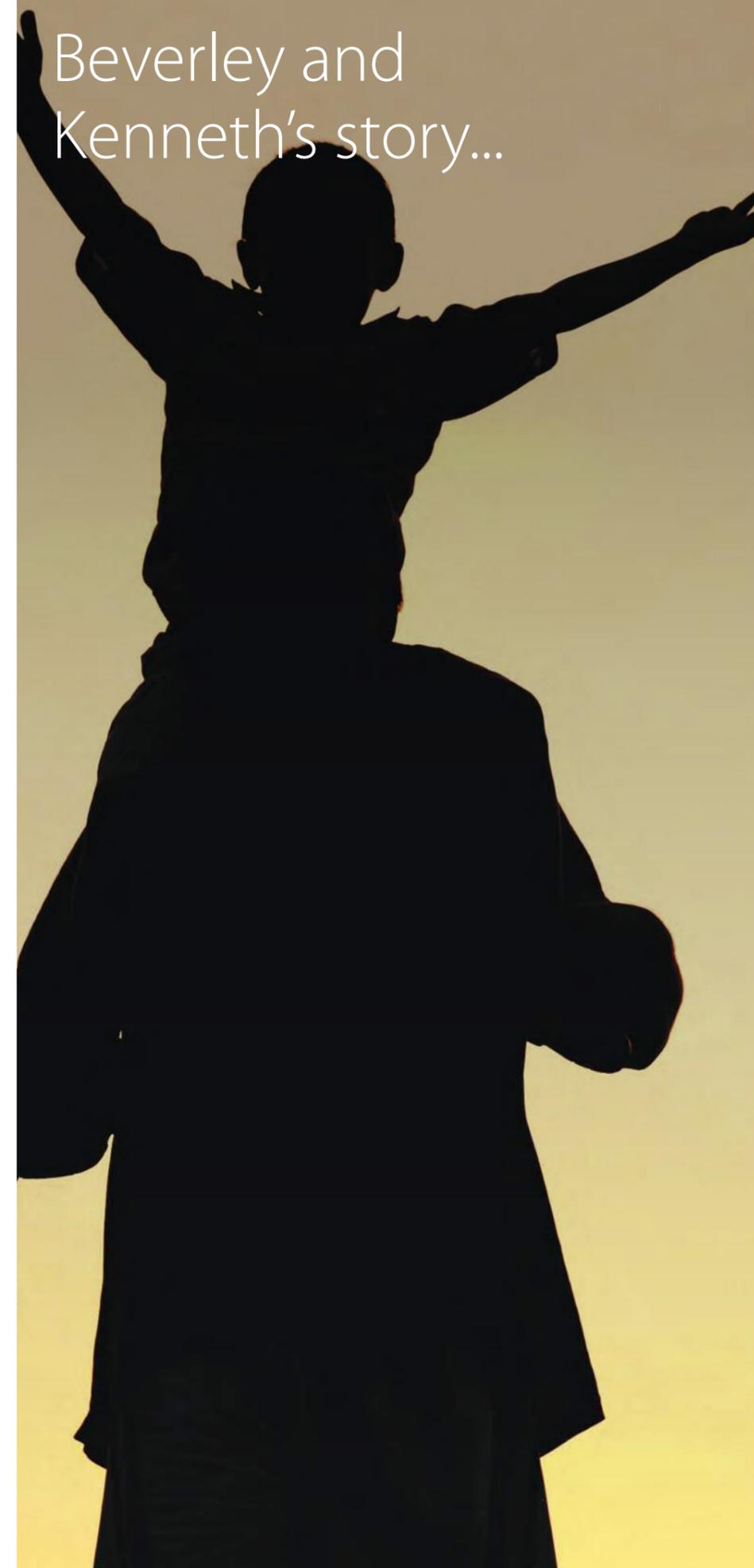


04 Undertook our first 'Power of Play' workshop



05 Put on activities for our adoptive families including our Summer Adoption Party and Christmas Pantomime funded by Lloyds TSB Community Fund

Beverley and Kenneth's story...



When Bev and Ken realised they couldn't have their own children after trying for ten years, they decided that adoption was the answer. Ken had experienced life in care as a child and thought that becoming an adoptive parent would be a good thing to do. They tell us about the adoption process and finally meeting their child.

"The adoption process is an eye-opener. It opened doors for us we thought were closed and made us think more about ourselves and why we wanted to adopt. Things we thought we'd put to bed came back to us but examining them again meant we've dealt with them a whole lot better. The assessment process took ten months, including holidays, we were matched three months after approval and then we met our son three weeks later. The process was really swift.

When we first met our son it was very emotional. It was like the missing part of our family had finally come together. He came to us like a hand fitting a glove. We got a feeling of completeness. In our first few weeks together he spent a lot of time looking at us or in our arms. It was amazing watching him getting to know us. It's changed our whole life, we've had sleepless nights and we have to plan our life a lot more than we did as a couple, but it's all good.

TACT were very gracious and gentle with us from day one. They took care of all our needs. The staff, and how they treated us, made us feel well looked after. We now speak to other people and encourage them to do exactly what we've done."

Focus on campaigning

In 2013-14 we:



01 Successfully lobbied the Government to roll out 'Staying Put' pilots in England so that nearly all young people in care would be entitled to stay with their foster carers until they are 21



02 Produced a film featuring TACT young people which was shown to politicians in the Welsh Senedd. This helped persuade Welsh parliamentarians to decide that young people could stay with their foster carers until 21



03 Put on fringe events on leaving care at the Conservative and Labour party annual conferences



04 Took a group of TACT young people to meet politicians in Westminster



05 Was one of a select group of charities asked by the Department for Education to pre-review statutory guidance



06 Drafted a range of amendments to the Children and Families Bill tabled by MPs and peers of all parties leading to government changes to several clauses



07 Lobbied on a range of other issues resulting in change including an increase to the pupil premium, statutory rights to adoption leave and extension of the role of Virtual Head Teacher

Diana's story...

Diana was taken into care at the age of 12 following emotional and physical abuse at home. After a couple of temporary placements, she settled with Gary and Colin. Now 18, she became involved in TACT's campaign to extend the age of care to 21 for anyone in a foster placement. She explains why she got involved and the impact it's had on her.

"It was with the support of one of my foster dads that I decided to go to the House of Lords and speak up about Staying Put. I knew it would benefit me and many other young people who've shared similar care experiences. Getting involved is a great way of seeing and showing that you are not the odd one out, 'the good for nothing' foster kid and that, like the many young people I got the chance to meet on the day, you do not have to let what you are going through and have been through, affect your future.

Personally I think the age of care should be extended to 24 or 25, when you've had a chance to complete education. I'm not so reluctant to get involved in campaigns now, knowing what a positive experience it is, so maybe this could be the next one!

I'd never thought about leaving care and what would happen afterwards until a social worker came to talk to me about my next steps. We talked about living on job seekers allowance and getting help with a flat; I think I'd only have lasted a few nights living independently! Colin and Gary hadn't talked about me leaving either: they just said I could stay until I was ready to move on. This has meant that I've continued in education, achieving a triple Distinction from my extended diploma and gaining a place at university to study Social Psychology. When I was at home I used to look ahead and only see a future that was black. Now I see one that is much brighter."

Focus on our other work

In 2013-14 we:



01 Secured funding from Children in Need to run a play therapy/Theraplay service for children being adopted through TACT and their new families



02 Were selected by Progressive Media Group to be their charity of the year. The money they raise will be used to buy Home Starter Packs for TACT care leavers



03 Successfully tendered for a Department for Education commission creating new resources for all those working with looked after children. We did this in partnership with Research in Practice (RIP) and Action for Children



04 Delivered Skills for Life training to help our young people prepare for life after care



05 Won awards; for example TACT's Learning and Development Manager Martin Clarke was awarded RIP's 'Link Officer of the Year 2013'



06 Brought a group of TACT's young people to meet our trustees where they proposed a new organisation participation strategy to be introduced in 2014

TACT commissioning

★ tactcare.org.uk

TACT works with over 100 local authorities across the UK. Local authorities will regularly put out tenders to Independent Fostering Agencies like TACT and then grade us according to how good and effective a service we provide. In 2013-14 we:



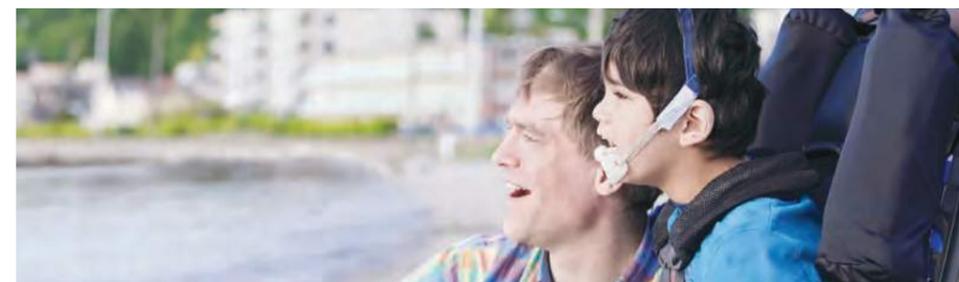
01 Put in ten tenders with individual or groups of local authorities



03 Were ranked in Wales by The Children's Commissioning Consortium Cymru (4Cs) as the number one fostering service on the first tier. This means that TACT are the top rated fostering agency used by the 4Cs



02 Were given the top grading, Tier 1 for nine out of ten contracts



04 Were placed on Tier 1 by commissioning authorities for our specialist services of remand fostering, child and parent placement and fostering children with disabilities



05 Were in 22 formal contractual framework agreements across the UK

Financial report

Where our money comes from, how we protect it and how we spent it.

Where our money comes from



01 We raised £102768 through our fundraising activity to spend on activities and support for young people



02 Despite vigorous competition, we increased our annual turnover by 6%. Our income was £23.1 million, up from £21.8 million last year



03 We increased our adoption turnover from £0.44 million last year to £0.52 million this year



04 We were left with a surplus amount of £0.9 million. We are pleased with this figure, given the price pressures we face and increased costs of recruiting and assessing carers

How we protect our money



01 The Trustees are committed to building reserves as a buffer against emerging financial risks and to make sure we always have a stable base to provide the best possible care for young people. Our reserves have continued to grow and by the end of the year they amounted to £5.0m, up from £4.2m last year



02 Our level of financial risk, measured by gearing, is much lower than 5 years ago – below 30% compared to 80%

How we spent it

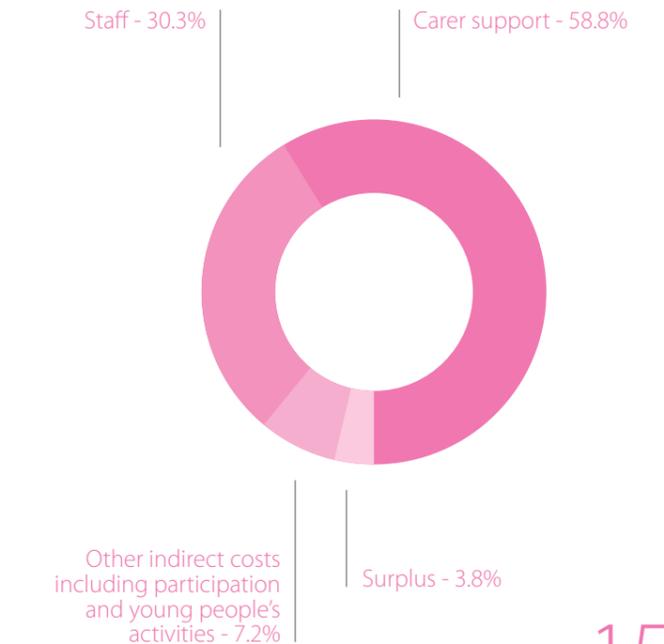
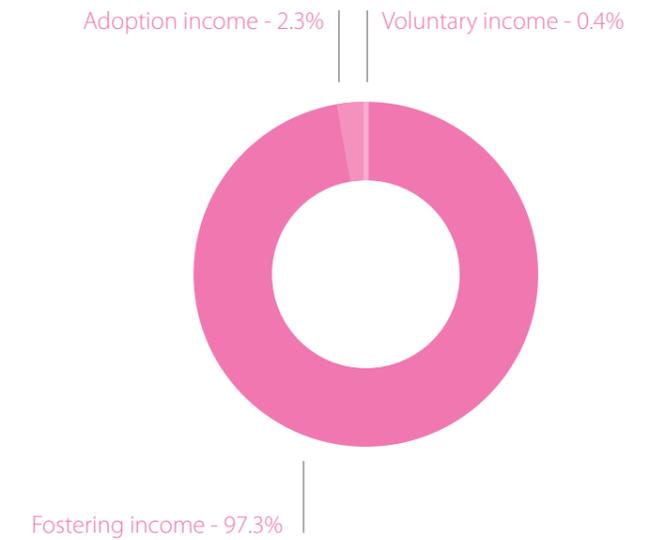


01 Over half of the money we earned (58.8%) was spent on carers – recruiting, training, payment and ongoing support. The balance went on other indirect costs including participation and children's activities



02 With this year's increased surplus (3.8%), we had a greater cash balance. We spent part of this on a 'thank you' payment to our carers in recognition of the extraordinary work they do

TACT's income and expenditure distribution



Fundraising, trustees and thanks

The majority of TACT's income is from service provision and includes the cultivation, training and support of skilled foster carers and adopters. It does not provide for the provision of activities which directly support and enhance the wellbeing of our children.

As a charity we rely on voluntary income to provide these activities. Our voluntary income is restricted to projects for children and young people and in the last year has enabled us to provide:

- a number of regional activities days throughout the UK
- our first national participation day
- regular art sessions in North Mid Wales
- additional group sessions and therapeutic support for foster carers, caring for children with complex behaviours
- individual therapeutic support for children and young people who require additional support
- Skills For Life workshops to support young people in their journey to independence

TACT could not be the organisation we are without support and donations from individuals, corporate partners, Trusts and Foundations. Thank you for your ongoing support.

TACT Trustees 2013 -14

Ada Grindley, Ann Lee, Deborah Jones, Dr. Anastasia Shillingford M.B.E. (Resigned 23/01/2014), Geoff Knox (Chair), Gillian Santi, Joan Lawton, Jon Fayle (Deputy Chair), Mike Edmonds, Philip Woodman, Richard Grove (Resigned 15/01/2014)

TACT Patron

Lorraine Pascale

Thanks to all the people who've helped TACT through donations.

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BBC Children in Need, BP Foundation, Jack Petchey Foundation, Lloyds Community Foundation, Old Esthameians Lodge – Benevolent Fund, Phoenix International Charity, The Ashley Family Foundation, The Kindness Offensive, The Persula Foundation



"When we first met our son it was very emotional, like the missing link in our family was finally being pieced together. He came to us like a hand fitting into a glove. It was the most fulfilling experience. It was a feeling of completeness – a joy."

Bev and Kenny, TACT adopters

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