

# OUR YEAR 2014-2015



"My TACT carers are the only family  
who have ever treated me as they  
would their own."

TACT, young person



# CONTENTS

04

Introduction

06

Headline news

08

Fostering achievements

10

Focus on Adoption

12

Power of play

13

Children and young people's activities

14

Thank you

16

Commissioning

17

What young people think

18

Financial report

19

Supporters and trustees

# FOREWORD BY ANDY ELVIN, CEO OF TACT

## Heroes of the state

TACT is a charity that exists to achieve excellent outcomes for children and young people in care across England, Wales and Scotland. We do this by offering high quality fostering and adoptive families.

Our strengths are the fantastic, altruistic, dedicated and committed people who come forward to foster and adopt with us. Our role is to nurture and support these wonderful people and to ensure that the children placed with them experience a loving, consistent, safe and permanent placement that helps transform their life chances. They are, as Lord Laming recently said "Heroes of the State".

TACT works tirelessly to recruit, train and support our foster carers and adopters. We employ experienced and highly skilled social workers and children's resource workers to ensure that every placement receives the dedicated support required to look after the children in our care. As a charity we know that every single penny we receive for our services or through fundraising goes into providing an outstanding service. This includes high quality and cutting edge training for our staff, foster carers and adopters to ensure that our children receive the best care possible.

We also work closely with fellow charities, central government and local authorities to improve the system for all looked after children; for example we were heavily involved in the design of the Staying Put policy and we continue to work to improve how it is being enacted.

These are challenging times with the contraction in public spending. However, TACT continues to fight for those children for whom the state is the parent to ensure that the circumstances they have come from do not go on to define their life chances. We are developing new and innovative ways of working with local authority partners and would welcome the opportunity to expand this. We are also developing our fundraising activities so that the children we care for get all of the opportunities that those from more privileged backgrounds enjoy.

TACT successfully look after some of the most vulnerable children and young people in the UK. Permanence for children comes in many forms and TACT offer adoptive, long term permanence foster care and, increasingly, foster carers who take special guardianship orders. We firmly believe in working towards the right permanence solution for all of the children and young people who come into our care.

Through the care and opportunities we provide we see our children and young people go on to achieve their potential. If you wish to join or support us please get in touch.



# GEOFF KNOX, CHAIR OF OUR TRUSTEES REFLECTS ON THE YEAR

As a charity competing in a market place dominated by “for-profit” fostering agencies, the trustees are proud of TACT’s single-minded focus on achieving excellent outcomes for the children and young people in our care. TACT’s charitable status is a key differentiating factor for us, which we seek to emphasise to our local authority customers and carers at every opportunity.

During the year we recruited a new Chief Executive Officer, Andy Elvin, who has been working closely with the trustees to identify how we can sustain and grow our core activities while looking at ways of diversifying TACT’s revenue streams. Emphasis has been placed on ensuring that TACT is organised to be able to recruit more fantastic foster carers and adopters, significantly increase our voluntary fundraising and work closely with our local authority partners to find new ways we can work together.

The trustees are refreshing TACT’s strategic vision for the coming years, which we look forward to sharing with all our stakeholders once concluded.

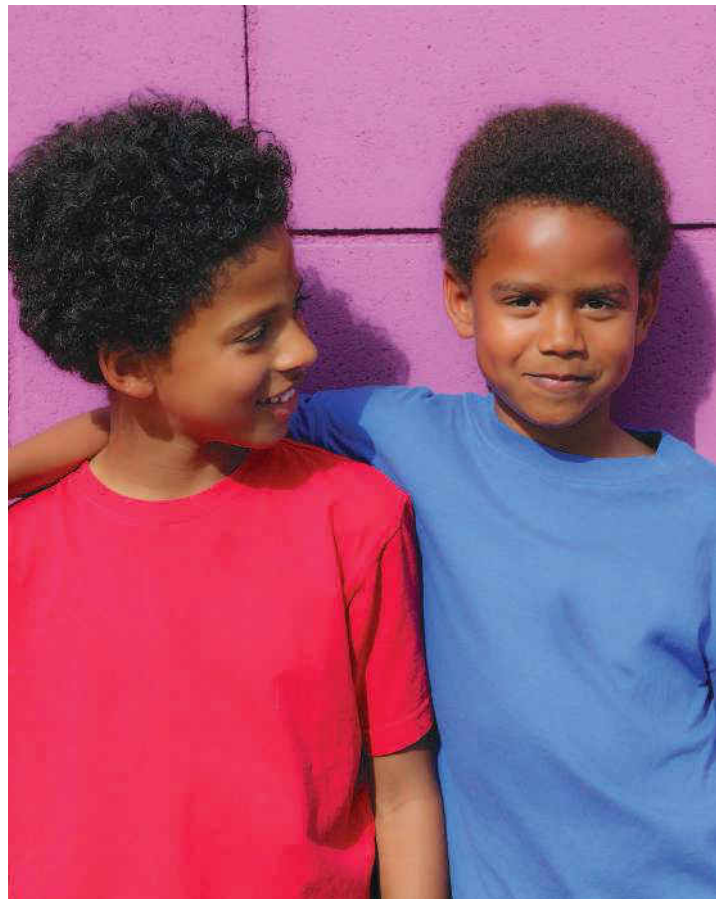
It is gratifying that our finances remain robust and our leverage low, giving TACT the financial flexibility to take advantages of opportunities, should they arise.

The trustees would like to thank everyone at TACT for their hard work and dedication throughout the last year. I am indebted to David Bradley for acting as interim CEO for a period of over a year. We were also sad to say goodbye to Mary Griffiths Jones and Jan Rutherford who retired after many years of excellent service to TACT.

Foremost, I would 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.

I will be standing down as Chair of Trustees at the forthcoming AGM in November, at the end of my third year in the post. I have very much enjoyed working with TACT’s staff and my colleagues on the board and am most appreciative of their support and encouragement throughout this period.

Geoff Knox



# HEADLINE NEWS

Despite the reduction in public spending, TACT continues to successfully provide high quality and well supported fostering or adoptive families for children and young people in care.

In 2014 -15 we:



01

Provided safe, caring foster homes for a total of 1,221 children



02

Had 632 children placed with TACT carers at the end of March 2015



03

Continued to achieve a wide range of externally accredited awards such as the Sunday Times 100 Best Companies and Customer Service Excellence Award



04

Had a total of 554 carer households by the end of March 2015



05

Continued to improve and increase the number of participation and activity events for young people



06

Secured access to enhanced support and advice from an independent clinical psychological service for our foster carers across England and Wales so they can respond more effectively to the challenging and complex behaviour in the children they care for



07

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



09

We achieved Outstanding for 'Quality of Care and Outcomes for Children' in our last fostering Ofsted inspection



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

Care in Confidence - received Big Lottery funding to deliver Fostering Changes to 1500 Wales Foster Carers 'with other third sector partners

# FOCUS ON FOSTERING

In 2014 -15 TACT Fostering:



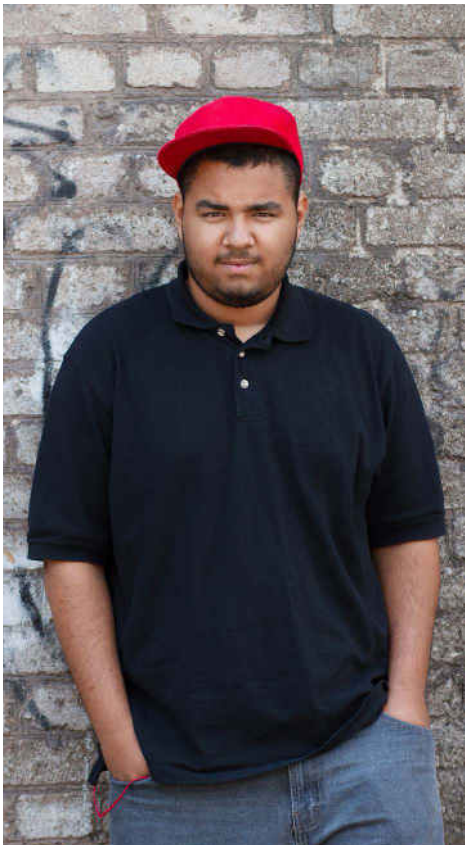
01

TACT East London held a Carers Awards Ceremony to acknowledge and celebrate their hard work and dedication to improving the lives of children and young people in care



02

Implemented 12 'Staying Put' placements, allowing young people to stay with their foster carers until 21 years old



04

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



03

TACT West Midlands held a foster carers conference focusing on their achievements and those of the children and young people in their care



05

TACT Cymru ran a Tutor Club to support young people taking GCSEs, giving them confidence, and encouragement to carry on with further education

# MY STORY...



tactcare.org.uk

**"My husband and I realised early on that we couldn't have children, so we threw ourselves into our work and accepted that we would probably never be parents. But something was missing from our lives, we had love and time to share, so we decided we would like to foster children."**

We approached TACT as it was a not for profit organisation. The staff were incredibly positive and knowledgeable and very passionate about helping the children, we therefore couldn't wait to start our road to becoming foster carers.

Whilst the amount of personal information about us required during the assessment process felt intrusive, we were as honest as we could be, as this would enhance our chances of being matched with children who were right for us. Our panel date came and with the help of our TACT social worker we breezed through it.

Soon after becoming TACT approved foster carers we got our first placement – two bouncing boys under the age of three. We loved every minute of that placement which made our house busy, noisy and happy. The difference in those boys in a short space of time was phenomenal and we felt that along with the social worker and help from TACT we had given them a better chance in life and they were allowed back home to mum.

Then along came a little girl, again we saw a huge difference in her, and our first Christmas with a foster child in placement was a joy to behold. Once again, we had successfully done our duty, and she went back to mum.

During that placement we agreed to take on another child – J, a shy and withdrawn two and half year old girl, who didn't speak. We got down to providing the loving care that she needed, overcoming her food issues and speech problem, and alleviating her fear of being left alone. Every day came a new achievement, she was our little superstar. The plan for J was adoption, it had never been our intention to adopt, as we wanted to help lots of children. But she was special, we wanted her as much as she wanted us, so we asked if we could be considered. Once again TACT was so helpful and supportive and we began the adoption process.

During this time, Baby A - J's half sibling, was born. The plan was to put Baby A into foster care and then either return her to mum or put her up for adoption. We wanted to foster Baby A, and then if the plan was to adopt we wanted to keep the children together. The local authority was not sure that the baby should be placed with us, as if the plan for Baby A was not adoption it may have a negative effect on both children. However, we were not convinced and our TACT support social worker persuaded the local authority to allow us to foster Baby A. We will be eternally grateful to TACT for that, as we eventually adopted Baby A.

Our family is now complete, we have two lovely girls who are loved, and give so much love, and we will always be in debt to TACT for helping us to make that happen, not just for us, but our whole family - our parents are now grandparents, brothers and sister are now aunts and uncles".

# FOCUS ON ADOPTION

In 2014 -15 TACT we:



01

Found permanent new families for 16 children in care



02

Provided Power of 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

Achieved a good Ofsted inspection for our adoption service



05

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

# OUR STORY...

A silhouette of a man carrying a young child on his shoulders. Both have their arms raised in a gesture of joy or triumph. They are standing in a field with some dry grass and small plants visible at the bottom. The background is a warm, golden-yellow sky, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. The overall mood is hopeful and celebratory.

tactcare.org.uk

**"Chris and I always knew we might find it difficult to conceive naturally due to an illness that I had suffered in early adulthood. When our attempts to conceive were sadly unsuccessful we decided to consider adoption. It was a long journey to become parents, and we experienced challenges along the way, however, we have happily just brought our children home.**

With fantastic support from TACT, we found the adoption assessment process fairly straight forward. We attended the adoption panel who considered our application and recommended us as suitable to adopt a child. The panel was made up of a number of people who have adoption in their background either personally or professionally. It was a less daunting experience than we thought it would be, as they were welcoming and friendly and we were supported at the panel meeting by our social worker. We then worked with our social worker to complete the assessment process within the necessary six month timescale. The process made us really think about parenthood and the challenges we might face. We reflected on our lives and parenting, and also evaluated our reasons for wishing to become parents.

Chris and I took time in considering children so as to find the perfect match for us. Originally we came to adoption thinking that we wanted to adopt a sibling group with at least one very young child to complete our family. However, after careful consideration we realised that we could offer a loving home to children aged up to seven.

When we saw our daughters' profiles we felt an instant connection. The girls were coming to us with complex histories, but we felt they were the right fit for us and vice versa. The first time meeting our daughters Chris and I felt very emotional, and we knew we had made the right decision. We now feel like the pieces of our family have finally come together. It is still early days, but we are relishing our new life - showing the girls their new home town, taking trips to the theatre and aquarium. They are also enjoying the quiet time, snuggling up on the sofa to read a story, and even learning how to knit.

We love our daughters and would not change our decision for anything".

# POWER OF PLAY

In 2014 -15 we:

Supported by  
 **BBC**  
**Children in Need**

01

Thanks to Children in Need funding, TACT is able to run our Power of Play therapeutic service for children and their adoptive families



02

Offered home play support to all adoptive families in the early months of placement



03

Provided Theraplay sessions for adoptive families needing further support with attachment



04

Featured our therapeutic play service on the BBC Children in Need television appeal night



05

Put on 'Power of Play' workshops for adopters before and after placement and opened up these to families from South London Adoption Consortium (SLAC)



06

Decorated and refurbished the room used for adoption support groups, therapy and crèche on training days

# CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE ACTIVITIES



01

TACT East London took carers, children and young people on a Family Fun Day to Butlins, Bognor Regis



02

TACT West Midlands organised the Little Weekend for children aged 9 – 13 at an activity centre in Shropshire



03

TACT Cymru organized two action packed activity weekends – one for 11-14 year olds and the other for 8-12 year olds, at Llangrannog Urdd Centre in West Wales



04

40 young people from across the UK participated in the Big Weekend – a fun packed outdoor pursuits weekend in Shropshire. As well as providing lots of new challenges for the young people, including zip wiring and learning circus skills, the weekend helped to strengthen their social skills and enabled them to share their experiences of being in care with each other



05

In Scotland, Fischy Music helped young people in care and the birth children of their carers use music to express their feelings and thoughts. This involved a sing song using instruments such as triangles, guitars and drums to warm up, followed by recording a DVD of the young people singing a song that expressed how they were feeling

# THANK YOU!



01

Progressive Media Group chose us as their charity of the year. The money they raised bought Home Starter Packs for TACT care leavers



02

Our thanks goes out to all the amazing people who ran, cycled, swam and undertook other activities to raise money for TACT. From running the London Marathon to the Spartan Races, our supporters have gone the extra mile to help provide children with a brighter future



03

TACT is very fortunate to have the continued patronage of TV chef and bestselling cookery writer Lorraine Pascale. A care leaver and adopted child herself, Lorraine knows only too well the issues a child in care faces. Her knowledge and experiences make her a wonderful advocate and she is committed to working along-side TACT to raise awareness of the challenges facing fostering and adoption

# THANK YOU!

**04**

We are grateful to all the trusts, funds and foundations that have generously supported a wide variety of enriching activities for children and young people including art groups and residential weekends

**05**

Our biggest thanks of all go to our amazing foster carers and adopters for their tireless dedication and enthusiasm - providing children and young people with safe, nurturing homes, celebrating their achievements no matter how large or small, and promoting health, education, social interaction and community involvement. Thanks to them, many children and young people have been given the opportunity to enjoy a brighter future

# COMMISSIONING

TACT works with more than 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 effective a service we provide. In 2014-15 we:



01

Maintained or improved our position on the tiers set and reviewed by a local authority as a method of selecting the fostering agencies they are most likely to work with



02

Were successfully awarded new contracts enabling our growth into the areas of Somerset and the North East



04

Received positive feedback from local authorities about our approach to placement fees and our assistance to them in managing the financial pressures they face



03

Were successfully awarded the renewal of contracts in areas where we have strong growth – Fife, Cambridgeshire, Suffolk, Essex, the North West Consortium, Birmingham, Worcestershire, Warwickshire, Coventry



05

Developed and extended our range of placement choices including parent and child, residential to fostering, young people on remand for offending behaviour and children at risk of going into care

# WHAT YOUNG PEOPLE THINK... AND WHY IT'S IMPORTANT TO US

To help TACT deliver better fostering services, we interviewed 84 young people (aged 9-18) in the care of TACT foster carers across England, Scotland and Wales to find out how they feel about the care they receive, their relationships with their foster carers, and their aspirations for the future. **The key findings of the What Young People Think report are below:**



95%

of young people  
feel part of their  
carer's family...

## ...BECAUSE THEY'RE INCLUDED

"My TACT Carers are the only family who have ever treated me as they would their own."  
(17, Female)



96%

of young people  
we spoke to...

## ...TOLD US THEIR CARER MADE THEM FEEL GOOD ABOUT THEMSELVES

- They help them to understand and manage their feelings and behaviour
- They take their opinion into account
- They offer praise, support and encouragement
- They care and make them feel important



94%

of young people  
we spoke to...

## ...FEEL ABLE TO EXPRESS THEIR OPINIONS ABOUT THINGS THAT MATTER TO THEM

## How we spent it

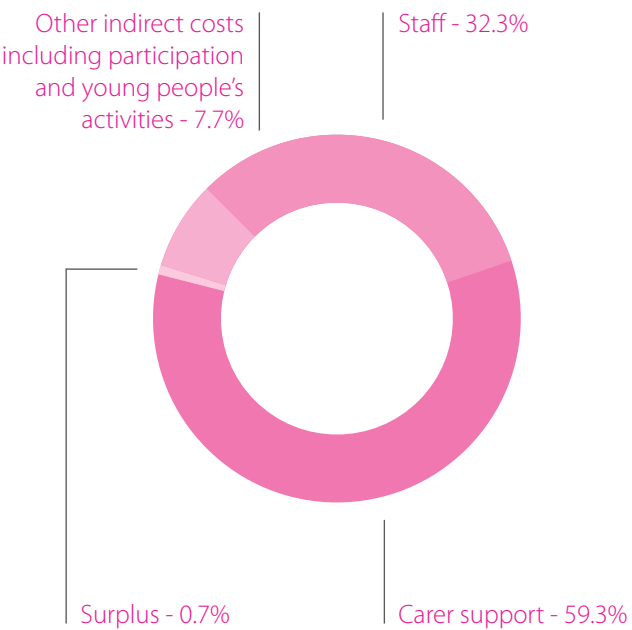
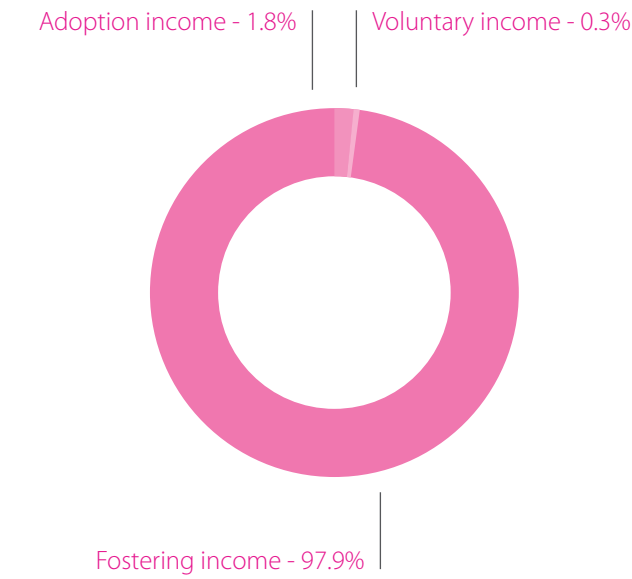


Over half of the money we earned (59.3%) was spent on carers – recruiting, training, payment and ongoing support. The balance went on other indirect costs including social work support for foster carers and adopters, and children and young people participation and activities.



We spent part of this year's surplus on increasing allowances to our carers in recognition of the extraordinary work they do.

## TACT's income and expenditure distribution



# SUPPORTERS AND TRUSTEES

As a charity, TACT is proactive in generating voluntary fundraising income to support excellent outcomes for the children and young people we care for. This income is spent on a variety of activities and services, which enrich our children's lives and raise their aspirations

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:

- Our fantastic therapy service for adoptive families
- A number of regional activity days throughout the UK
- Our annual Big Weekend for young people
- Regular art sessions in North and 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
- Additional educational support for young people to assist in exam preparation

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 2014 -15

Geoff Knox (Chair), Jon Fayle, Ada Grindley, Deborah Jones, Joan Lawton, Ann Lee, Gillian Santi, Philip Woodman, Mariam Shaffique-Khan, Louise Hale, Lisa Waterman, Melanie Foster, Mercy Morrison.

## TACT Patron

Lorraine Pascale  
Baroness Howarth of Breckland OBE

## Individual Donors

Yewande Erinle, Joanna Van Tijn, Claire Dundas, Stephen Smith, Rachel Gaughran, Stuart Lewis, Gregory McAusland, Mark Peel, Mr and Mrs Agnew, Justin, Mrs J I Galbrath, Mrs PO Sinclair, Joao Luis Moraes, Ms Helen Massil, Mr and Mrs Eady, Mr and Mrs Chappell, Homayon Zeary, Mr T Redman, Charles Turner, V J Thomas, Lauren Webb, Pragna Gandesha. In memory of Isla Holden.

## Fundraisers

Amanda Pitt, Steve Crank, Ellen Shepherd, Hannah Freeman, Hazel Davies, Jonathan Bottomer, Kathy Lewis, Lee Burrows, Lowri Branwen Jones, Joshua Toogood, Mike Adamo, Mike Vaughan, Philip Dunne, Rachel Kells, Tony Forzoni, Tracey Marsh, Robert Marsden, Peter Dracup.

## Trusts, Foundations and Corporate supporters

BBC Children in Need, The Albert Hunt Trust, The Eveson Charitable Trust, The Helianthus Charitable Trust, The Lynn Foundation, The Montgomeryshire District Fund, The Oakdale Trust, The Ravensdale Trust, Santander Foundation, Maud Elkington Charitable Trust, Jack Petchey Foundation, HSBC, Dr Guthrie's Association, CB & HH Taylor 1984 Trust, Fujitsu Midlands and Wales, BP Foundation, Pragna Gandesha, Baron Davenport's Charity Trust, Barclaycard, BP Foundation, C & T Matrix Ltd, West Mercia Probation Service, Progressive Digital Media, Waitrose Community Matters, My Favourite Voucher Codes.



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