

OUR YEAR 2015-2016





“Lynne my foster carer has been more of a parent to me than anyone could ever be. She’s taught me vital life skills that I wouldn’t have learned from anyone else, such as the confidence to talk to people. Living in a loving and supportive long-term home helped me get good exam results and go to university. Lynne gave me the courage to believe in myself and provided me with the motivation and support I needed to do it.”

Charlie Lain – TACT young person

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FOREWORD FROM ANDY ELVIN CEO

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2016 has been a landmark year for TACT in many ways.

In September we were awarded the contract by Peterborough City Council to run their fostering and adoption services. This is the first time this has happened in the UK, and is testament not only to TACT's great reputation and the professionalism of our staff, but also the care, commitment and skill of our foster carers and adopters.

TACT takes over the service in April 2017 and we are very excited about the opportunity, as well as mindful of the responsibility we have to the vulnerable children who will be in our care.

We have seen the number of enquiries to be foster carers hit record levels this year following the launch of our Business Development Unit. That is excellent news for our future and for the many vulnerable children these new carers will offer safe and stable homes to.

We welcomed award winning poet and former foster child, Solomon O B, as our first Ambassador, which has been a wonderful and inspirational experience for our young people and for Solomon. And we had our first overseas Big Week adventure in France, alongside many other positive activities for our children and young people.

TACT has continued to undertake a wide range of innovative work across the UK, including an edge of care project in Wales, a project caring for unaccompanied asylum seeking children in the South West, achieving permanence through foster care in Scotland, and expanding our service into the North East.

Underpinning all of this vital work across England, Scotland and Wales are our excellent staff and, of course, our amazing and inspirational foster carers and adopters. They have cared for children and young people who are vulnerable, but also full of hopes, dreams, potential and joy. Good foster and adoptive families help children fulfil their potential and enable them to have happy and successful lives



JON FAYLE CHAIR OF TRUSTEES

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This has been an important year for TACT as we continue to develop and sustain our core business, while engaging in new and innovative models for delivering our services to children. I particularly refer to our ten year contract with Peterborough Council to deliver their fostering and adoption services. This is of course a key development for TACT over the last year, and our staff must be thanked and congratulated for their outstanding work in bidding for and winning the contract.

As a charity we invest all our resources into delivering the highest quality services for our children and young people, and work to improve their future life chances. This sets us apart from the many other fostering and adoption agencies that are profit-making businesses with private investors.

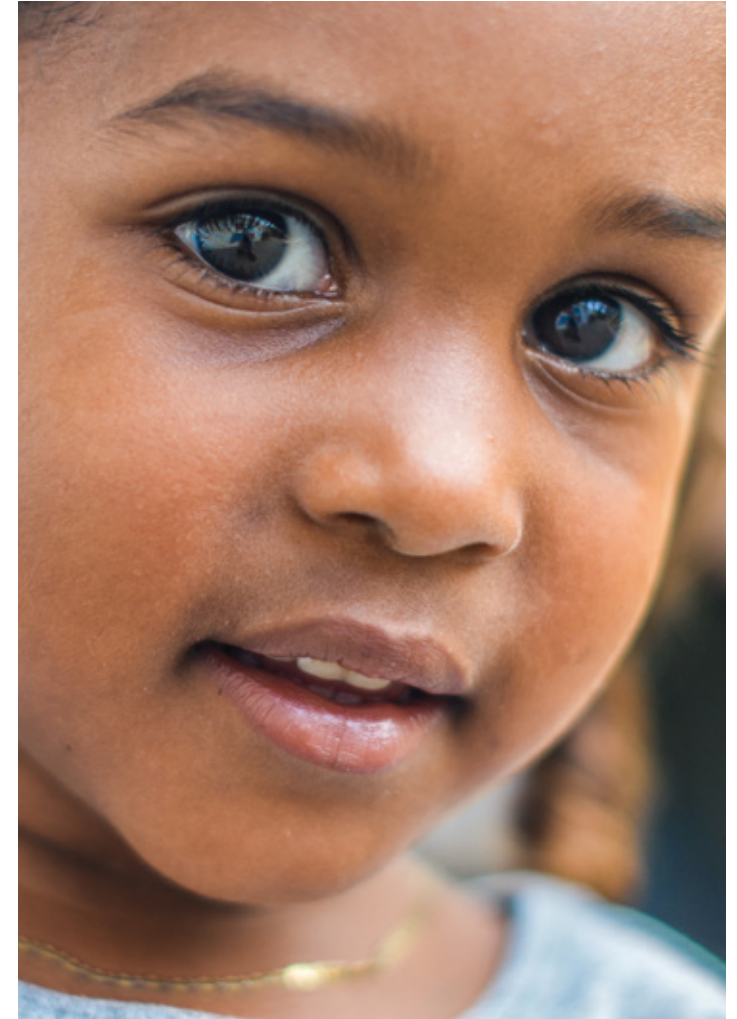
A particular area we intend to strengthen further is the work we do in promoting recovery, healing, and resilience for our children and young people. We recognise of course that all children (and particularly, for this purpose, children in care) are unique individuals with huge strengths and great potential. However, children in care often have serious obstacles in the way of achieving their potential.

It is well known that the most common reason for children and young people coming into care is serious abuse or neglect.

In general terms, the psychological consequences of abuse and neglect are extremely serious. To a greater or lesser extent, children and young people who have suffered abuse and neglect are more likely to suffer from impaired cognitive functioning, impaired capacity to form attachments, feel empathy and make healthy relationships. They are also likely to suffer from poor performance at school, low self-esteem and feelings of worthlessness.

What is most important in promoting healing and recovery from abuse is the provision of safe, affectionate, trusting, long term relationships with trustworthy adults. These relationships must be characterized by a high degree of empathy, warmth and long term commitment. Adults providing these relationships must be carefully selected and have access to high quality specialist training and support. This is what therapeutic care is all about.

Our foster carers never cease to amaze me with their skill, commitment and dedication, with a high measure of stamina and good humour thrown in, that enable them to offer healing relationships to disadvantaged children. Providing these relationships is at the heart of TACT's work and will enable us to achieve our aim of enabling our children to have happy childhoods, going on to live fulfilled and worthwhile adult lives.





01 Provided safe and caring foster homes for 582 children and young people at end of March 2016.



02 TACT foster carers supported 19 Parent and child placements.



03 Since its launch in 2015, our Business Development Unit (BDU), has increased enquiries to foster by 128% and carers under assessment by 73%. The BDU has also supported expansion of our fostering services in the North East, Nottingham, Derby and the South Coast, and worked with Local Authorities to generate new business, maintain existing contracts and monitor TACT's performance.



04 Initiated ground breaking Parallel Parenting Pilot project, involving TACT foster carers acting as coaches to families to enable the successful return home of children from care.



05 44 TACT foster carers have been awarded Special Guardianship Orders (SGO) which transfers parental responsibility to them, although there is generally ongoing contact with the birth family.



06 Continued to deliver high quality specialist training for carers including fostering parent and child placements, first aid, fetal alcohol spectrum disorder and attachment issues.



07 175 TACT staff and foster carers got together from across the UK for a special event celebrating each other's achievements and the work of TACT. It was an informative and uplifting day, featuring plenty of networking, presentations and a rousing performance by TACT Ambassador and award winning poet Solomon O.B



08 TACT and the University of Bath ran a foster carers recruitment campaign for unaccompanied asylum seeking children. It was a finalist in the national Engage 2016 awards for excellence in public engagement.

POLICY AND CAMPAIGNING

TACT regularly campaigns to improve policy affecting children and young people in care across the UK. This year the Children and Social Work Bill has given us the opportunity to raise crucial issues for the children and young people that we support.



01 We have lobbied to amend the Bill to provide care leavers with free university tuition in England and Wales, or a guaranteed apprenticeship. Increasing opportunity for young people leaving care would help narrow the attainment gap.



03 Asylum seeking children who turn 18 face loss of support while awaiting the immigration decision or deportation. At the House of Lords this year we launched Rethinking Social Policy for Asylum Seeking Care Leavers A contribution to the Commons debate on the Children and Social Work Bill, where we argued for asylum seeking care leavers to have parity with their none asylum seeking counterparts.



02 TACT and CoramBAAF co-chair the Alliance for Children in Care and Care Leavers, the body representing all the main charities working in the sector.



04 TACT is actively engaged with the Department of Education stock take of foster care, highlighting the need for placement stability, parity of support for asylum seeking care leavers, regulation of the mixed foster care market, and a national recruitment campaign for foster carers.

OUR STORY...



Rob and Bob foster carer case study

Bob and I had planned for quite a while to become foster carers and purposely bought a bigger house. Soon after we had been cleared to foster we went from zero children to three siblings, which was a bit of a shock to the system, our daily routines changed drastically, and there was an overwhelming sense of responsibility knowing that we had to look after these three little people. The first few weeks were hectic - meeting with the school, social workers, opticians, GPs, dentist etc. Fortunately our families are very supportive and helped us immensely. We were also blessed with working alongside brilliant social workers both at our fostering agency TACT and Local Authority Social Services, they have all helped us so much.

We have four Miniature Schnauzers - Arthur, Betty, Margaret and Mary. At first the children were petrified of them, but now each has a favourite. The dogs have helped them to develop an element of responsibility, as they recognise when they need to be fed and cared for and often act upon this.

Over the past year we have learned that children don't really want materialistic things in life, they would much prefer having time spent with them. By offering them our time and attention they have been able to really blossom as individuals and their personalities have developed so much. We have also found that education isn't just gained in school. Holidays, meals in restaurants, trips to the park or even just visiting friends and family all enable the children to learn new things. Their confidence has developed dramatically through doing these things.

Bob and I absolutely love being foster carers. We both feel an immense sense of pride in being able to have such a positive impact on the lives of children who may have been through trauma. It is hard work, and at times we are faced with challenges, however that is part and parcel of being a foster carer. The children have enriched our lives beyond recognition and we have learned so much over the past year. I would recommend becoming a foster carer to anybody.



01

Found permanent new families for 14 children in care.



02

Delivered pre-placement consultations for six families.



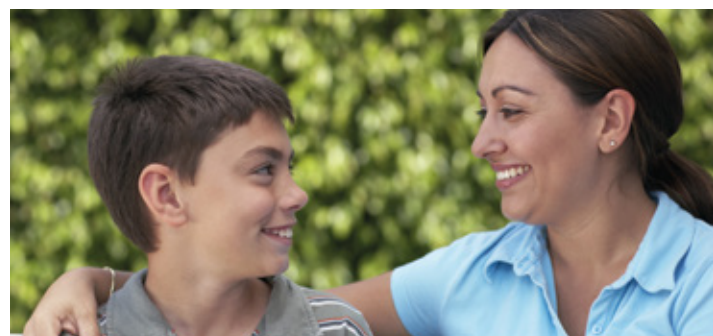
03

Ran well attended black adopter and single adopter groups across the UK.



04

We delivered home play sessions with five families, Theraplay interventions with four families, and Play Therapy/Life Story work with three children.



05

TACT has taken on three contracts with local authorities to carry out assessments and therapeutic support for non-TACT families which is financed by the Adoption Support Fund.



06

We ran two Power of Play training days for 22 approved adopters – some were TACT adopters, and others were from voluntary agencies and local authorities.



07

Worked with the Tavistock Institute to introduce an innovative video-feedback programme for new adoptive and SGO families.

MY STORY...

By Laurie-Claudine

Not much time goes by before I am drawn back to my adoption journey. Whether it's an advert on the back of a bus or a scene in a film.

I have two gorgeous sons, whom I adopted individually five years apart. I was fairly young when I decided that I wanted to adopt, not for some altruistic reason – I just simply wanted to be a mum. It's all I had ever wanted and when I found out that it was possible to adopt as a single person it was like all my Christmas' came at once.

I launched myself head first into the process and didn't look back. My initial process took a little over two years, two cancelled panel dates and one change of social worker to get me to the door of being approved as an adopter. Even now sometimes I am surprised that I didn't give up. I mean don't get me wrong, it did cross my mind to. I had the little diagram from the information evening with the 10 steps on it from enquiry to approval and I could not fathom why there seemed to be so many invisible hoops to jump through in order to get on to the next rung. Finally, the day came when I found out that I had been matched and I was going to be Mummy to the most beautiful nine month old baby boy.

I had always imagined myself with lots of children so it was no surprise that I found myself back on the adoption bus for round two. The experience was so very different to my first. From enquiry to him coming home was just 12 months. He was 14 months old, with a very rare physical disability. For my older son it was instant love and bonding with his baby brother. For me it took a little longer. I was so nervous around him and worried a lot about his condition. However, my amazing TACT social worker gave us so much support and helped set the firm foundations of our family with us.

Both my boys have had difficult beginnings and I have had my fair share of quelling the myth that 'adopting a child from a baby cures all' – I had to earn my second son's trust – it was almost two months before he would even fall asleep in my arms.

I look at my boys often and I cannot believe that they are mine and that I have a family. It is far from perfect, there are tantrums, there are arguments, there are school battles, academic worries, endless form filling, and constant money worries...but deep down there is this absolute certainty that what we have is real. Nothing of worth comes without a struggle, otherwise where's its value? Adoption is not for the faint-hearted and I learnt, and had to let go of, so many aspects of what I thought it would be, in order to get to the heart of what it really is. I have a family to call my own. I am Mum.

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE ACTIVITIES



01 Foster carers, young people and staff from TACT North West enjoyed winter fun at a snow park including racing sleds.



02 TACT Yorkshire organised a picnic in the park, with staff, carers and young people getting together for an afternoon of fun activities.



03 TACT West Midlands continues to host the quarterly Children's Champions meetings, with young people from across the UK gathering to share their views about TACT policy, procedures and initiatives.



04 TACT South West runs a support group for young asylum seekers to help them make friends, share experiences and overcome isolation.



05 Children were given the opportunity to develop their creative skills thanks to art workshops run by TACT Cymru.



06 Swing chutes, a BBQ and tennis were part of a day for children at Beecraigs Country Park organised by TACT Scotland.



07 TACT young people from London and the East Midlands had an action packed Little Weekend with raft building, climbing and laser tag.



THE BIG WEEK

Summer 2016 will be one to remember for our young people as they had an absolutely **unforgettable adventure in France**. After months of planning, 37 of our young people made their journey to the lakeside Opel Coast Adventure Camp in Ardres, France. It was a fun-packed week full of activities, laughter and friendship making.

Ranging in age from 13 to 18, the young people had come together for the Big Week from across TACT's nine regional offices in England, Scotland and Wales. With the common experience of being in care, plus sharing new, exciting and sometimes challenging activities, it was a great way for them to develop their teamwork and communication skills, plus building confidence and self-esteem.

From stand up paddle boarding to high ropes, archery to campfire nights, there was a lot to pack into the week. And having to share tents greatly accelerated the bonding process between the young people, who soon gained very firm and lasting friendships with each other.

16 year old Connor said: "We are all like a lot of pictures that have come together to make a masterpiece."

For many of the young people, the French adventure was their first trip abroad, and it was a great way to have their horizons broadened, experiencing a different culture, language and food.

When not making new friends the young people were kept busy with a wide variety of on-site water- sports and dry land activities such as raft building and climbing. And the camp staff made sure everyone could get involved in doing something, for example, a wheelchair bound young person was able to experience canoeing for the first time, for example.

On the fourth day of the week the young people went to the local market which sold all manner of things such as cheeses, trinkets and delicious hot chicken. It was a great opportunity for everyone to buy souvenirs and practise speaking French.

When the time came to head home back over the Channel, it was agreed by all the young people that they had had a fantastic time, they didn't want to go home, and couldn't wait for next TACT big adventure.



My daughter a refugee

I have been a foster carer for about eight years. Like most people I had seen the news about the plight of migrant children in Calais, so when I got a call from TACT asking me if could give a home to a young unaccompanied asylum seeking girl approximately 13 years of age, I didn't hesitate to say yes.

The day she arrived at my home I opened the door to a thin, pretty, scared looking little girl. I was told she couldn't speak English so I was mindful of my body language and facial expressions. Even if she couldn't understand English she would understand love and affection.

Once the social worker left us, I showed her to her bedroom to unpack and settle in. The next day I took her to the shops to buy her some clothes, when I got her feet measured they were a size five and a half, but she was wearing size three trainers.

Communication was a struggle at first, I found myself miming all the time, and we laughed as I tried to do impressions of a chicken to tell her what was for tea. It wasn't long before she started to speak a little English as she is an exceptionally bright girl and very keen to learn.

For the first two months she could not go to school until she had an age assessment and Home Office interview. She became bored and frustrated, the lack of stimulation gave her too much time to think about her family, and she would often cry and not want to leave her room.

When the interview finally came, she had to go through the trauma of re-counting her epic journey from Eritrea,

East Africa, by foot with a small group of other villagers. Through an interpreter, she explained that they walked through Ethiopia, then Sudan and through the desert, where she was captured by guerrillas who tied her up, burnt her with a lighter and abused her.

While translating this awful story the interpreter openly wept.

The group eventually escaped the guerrillas, and she managed to get on a boat with other refugees, which capsized as it attempted to cross the Mediterranean. Italian coast guards rescued her and treated her for dehydration. Two months later she succeeded in reaching Calais where she spent three months in the camp, sleeping rough and under the constant threat of attack as a vulnerable unaccompanied child. From Calais she managed to jump on a lorry which brought her to England where she was found in a bedsit starving and terrified.

I was so shocked to learn about the horrendous experiences she had been through to get to England, and it made me even more determined to give her a loving, stable home.

She has now started an independent school to help her learn English along with other unaccompanied asylum seeking children, before entering mainstream school. She is feeling excited about her future and making friends. She is loved and feels loved. She laughs a lot, which is amazing considering her experiences. She calls me mummy, and I feel privileged to call her my daughter.

EDUCATION SURVEY

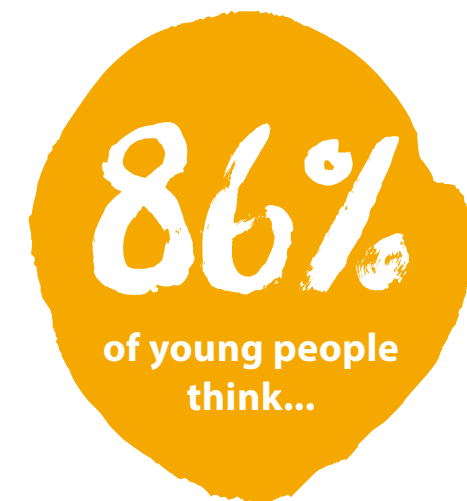
Reaching for the best? Children's Survey: Education 2016

This year the Children's Champions group picked education as the key issue that they wanted us to scrutinise. The education report summarises the views of our young people and foster carers. We will transform their experiences into proposals to improve outcomes for all children and young people in and leaving care. **The key findings of the report are below:**



...FEEL THEIR FOSTER CARERS SUPPORT THEM EDUCATIONALLY AT HOME

"She is amazing. [My carer] helps me with everything; anything that comes up I just need to ask her. She asks me every day how school is and knows what's going on. She goes to every parents' night, stuff at the school, she gets involved. She has talked through [education] plans with me and helped me. She wants the best for me."



...THINK THAT SCHOOL WILL HELP THEM ACHIEVE THEIR AMBITIONS

But 7% replied did not think school would help them and another 7% said they were unsure. Ambitions included nurse, policeman, professional footballer, veterinarian, chef, actress, and business owner

- 75% of foster carers reported that they receive pupil premium, but 35% of this figure were unaware of how it was spent
- 59% of children and young people did not know what pupil premium was "I have no idea what the money is spent on. I would like to choose what they spend the money on.
- 57% of young people were involved in developing their education plan
- 36% were not, and 7% were unsure
- 80% of carers were involved in developing their foster child's personal education plan
- One young person said, "I haven't been to my PEP this year. I would go if I was invited."

ASPIRATION

Our study shows that while many of the young people we spoke to were aspirationally positive, some had low aspirations, as a result of falling behind due to periods of missed education and a lack confidence.

Next to a loving, caring and nurturing home, TACT understands that education is one of the most important factors in determining life chances for children in care.

LORRAINE AND SOLOMON O.B

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Lorraine Pascale

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. In 2016 Lorraine prompted a wave of foster carer enquiries when she appeared on the Lorraine Kelly TV show on behalf of TACT, to talk about the need for more carers for looked after teenagers. She also backed a TACT foster carer recruitment campaign targeting the Dorset area.

Solomon O.B

In 2016 **Solomon O.B – rapper, poet, musician and the 2016 National Poetry Slam Champion**, became an Ambassador for TACT.

Solomon O.B. is himself a former foster child, having been taken into care with his brother Sam and sister Anu when they were all babies. His winning Slam Championship poem – Unorthodox Beginnings, is a celebration of his positive experience of being fostered and a very moving tribute to his foster parents.

Solomon said: “I was honestly a bit overwhelmed when I was asked to be an ambassador for TACT. It’s a big honour but I plan to do the role justice. I really want to provide a strong example for kids in care and change perceptions around what it means to come from the care system. It doesn’t have to be a limiting factor.”

Since taking up his ambassadorship Solomon has performed at TACT’s Children’s Champions meeting and the Away Day for staff and carers and attended award ceremonies in Bristol. He was also the star of a video produced by the Department of Education.

Solomon never fails to inspire foster carers, children and young people in care and TACT supporters and staff. We feel very lucky to have Solomon as our Ambassador



THANK YOU!

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London private members club Home House has made us their charity of the year until Spring 2017, and has already managed to raise thousands of pounds towards the provision of enriching and engaging activities for looked after children and young people.



The Arsenal Foundation - Arsenal Football Club's official charity, is one of a number of foundations, trusts and funds that have generously supported a wide range of activities for children and young people including art groups, residential weekends and Children's Champions.



Our thanks goes out to all the amazing people who ran, cycled, swam and organised special events to raise money for TACT. From cycling across North America to running the London Marathon our supporters have gone the extra mile to help transform the lives of vulnerable children and young people.



Our biggest thanks of all goes to our wonderful foster carers and adopters for their tireless dedication and enthusiasm – providing children and young people with safe and loving homes. Thanks to them, many children and young people have been given the opportunity to enjoy a brighter future.

How we spend it

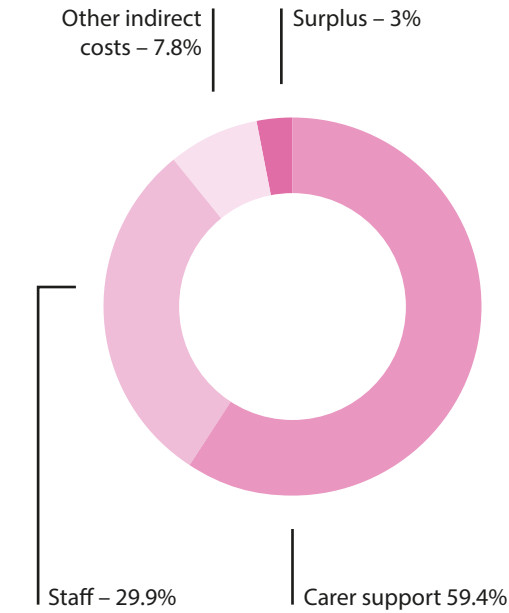
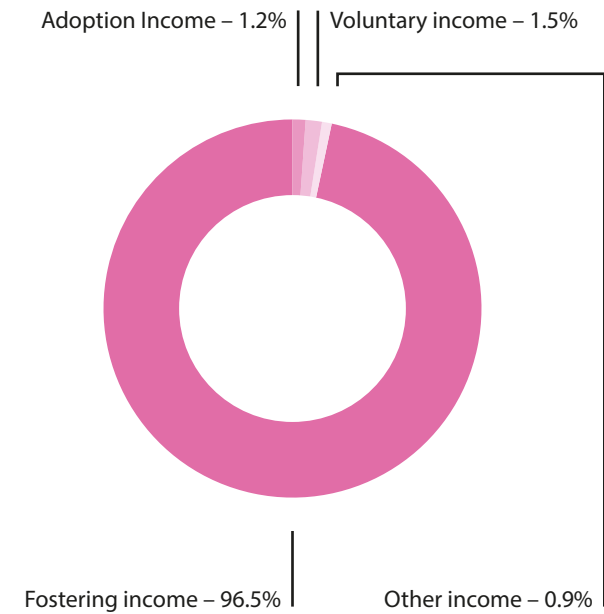


01 Over half of the money we earned (59.3%) was spent on carers – recruiting, training, allowances and ongoing support. The balance went on other indirect costs including our staff participation and children and young people activities.



02 TACT is a charity and takes no profit. We are legally obliged to hold all surplus in reserve or invest in our children and young people.

TACT's income and expenditure distribution



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 lives and raise their aspirations.

- Our voluntary income is restricted to projects for children and young people and in the last year has enabled us to provide:
- Our fantastic therplay service for adoptive families
 - A number of regional activity days throughout the UK
 - Our annual Big Weekend for young people
 - 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 2016
Jon Fayle (Chair) Geoff Knox, Joan Lawton, Ann Lee, Gillian Santi, Philip Woodman, Louise Hale, Lisa Waterman, Michael Thomas, Matthew Doyle.

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Lorraine Pascale
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TACT Ambassador
Solomon O.B

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