

# inspire

Your supporter magazine

Spring 2026



## Achieving goals together

My life. My goals – page 4

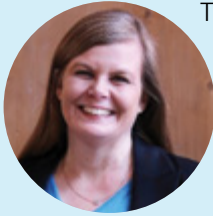
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**The  
Children's Trust**  
For children with brain injury

# Welcome

Marnie



Thank you for your wonderful support. I'm happy to share some of the amazing ways you've helped children in this edition of *inspire*.

It's why we've introduced a new way to set goals, led by the children themselves. It's one example of how we're enhancing and expanding rehabilitation, to make the biggest impact on children's futures.

Everyone has a role to play in helping children live the best life possible. You make sure we can deliver our specialist therapy, which is life-changing for children like Marnie. She was supported by our Community Rehabilitation Service after she had a stroke. Our specialist team enabled her to regain skills and enjoy activities again.

Now spring is here, we're looking ahead with a renewed sense of energy. I'm immensely grateful to all the families featured in *inspire* who want to provide hope and give back, you inspire us all to do more to help other families. Thank you.

When children's rehabilitation goals include the things they enjoy, it's really motivating.



Michelle Martin,  
Director of Fundraising  
and Communications



## Meet the Team

### Rachel Fisher, Project Manager – Estates and Health and Safety


Rachel has been at The Children's Trust for 16 years and experienced a variety of roles, including working directly with the children and now project managing within our Estates Team.


to constructing new buildings.




Rachel is working on plans to invest in our clinical areas and expand spaces for therapy services. "What I most enjoy about my role is the ability to have such a positive impact by enhancing the environment for the children and young people, their families and staff," says Rachel.

Her current job is to make sure we have the best facilities and support services. Her team manages the things we rely on to offer our specialist care, including our buildings, equipment and vehicles. This can be anything from repairing existing equipment

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 [thechildrenstrust.org.uk](http://thechildrenstrust.org.uk)



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 @childrens\_trust

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**“Your belief in us means we can keep doing this work.”**

Mike Thiedke  
Chief Executive

## Making an impact

Every year, supporters like you help us provide specialist rehabilitation, education, care and community services to children and young people across the UK. With your support, we help them live the best life possible after a brain injury has turned their lives upside down.

- Restoring skills.
- Developing new ways of doing things.
- Rebuilding confidence and independence.



## Changing lives

in 2024/25

**406**

children and young people supported overall

**200**

goals were achieved 'as expected' or above

**83%**

were able to return to their family home with no or only minor adaptations

**88%**

of school-aged children returned to their previous educational setting

**92%**

of families would recommend us to friends, family and other parents if they needed similar care or treatment

Read more about the impact you make –

[thechildrenstrust.org.uk/annual-report-and-accounts](https://thechildrenstrust.org.uk/annual-report-and-accounts)



# My life. My goals.

**Setting goals is a key part of rehabilitation. Last year we adopted an innovative way for children and their families to be at the heart of goal-setting: by introducing the F-Words Life Wheel approach.**

As experts in rehabilitation, we're committed and passionate about improving what we do. Putting children at the centre of everything is important too. It's why we adopted the F-Words Life Wheel.

The idea is simple. Children are more motivated to achieve rehabilitation goals when what they're aiming for is relevant. The six words on the F-Words Life Wheel prompt children and families to talk about what's important to them. They can then set goals, based on what matters to them most.

On a scale of 1 to 10, children or their family rate how they feel about goals at the start and end of their rehabilitation. We can measure impact, and the real difference it makes to their lives.

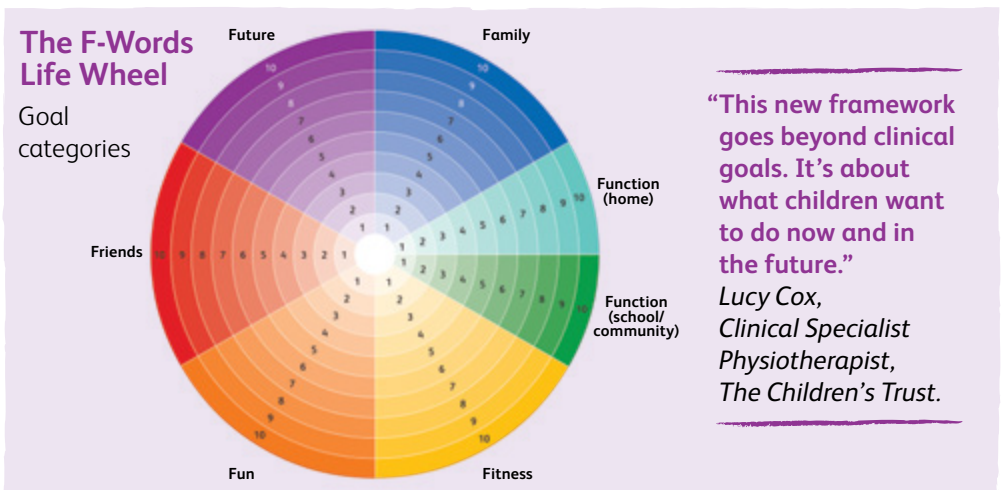
## Encouraging results

Since its introduction we've helped 72 children use the F-Words Life Wheel and logged 510 goals. Children who completed their rehabilitation reported an average improvement of 128% across all goal categories. The most significant gains were seen in 'Future' (185%) and 'Function' (141%).

My Favourite-Words is now an integral part of each child's rehabilitation.

## Sharing expertise

Our team recently shared the positive impact it has had with other professionals, at the Association of Paediatric Chartered Physiotherapists national conference. Now we've been asked to talk about our work at the European Academy of Childhood-onset Disability Conference.



**“This new framework goes beyond clinical goals. It’s about what children want to do now and in the future.”**

*Lucy Cox,  
Clinical Specialist  
Physiotherapist,  
The Children’s Trust.*

F-Words Life Wheel: 2019 Lucy Charles & Arul Hamill Paediatric Occupational Therapy and Physiotherapy Aotearoa New Zealand [www.paediatricot.co.nz](http://www.paediatricot.co.nz)

## How does the F-Words Life Wheel work?

The framework, developed by CanChild and known as the F-Words helps children and families decide what's important to them. They put their goals into their own words. Our expert team develops rehabilitation programmes based on these goals.



Leo working on his goals.

### 1. Family

Relationships and the support network around a child.

*"To help my family by carrying out household chores."*

*"To hold my baby cousin with both arms."*

*"To play Lego with my brother."*

### 2. Function

Everyday skills at home, school or in the community.

*"To paint my toe nails."*

*"To be part of family meal times."*

*"To put my hand up in class and contribute."*

### 3. Fitness

Being physically and mentally active and healthy.

*"To be able to play in a playground."*

*"To be able to follow a dance routine and make dance videos."*

*"To return to swimming."*

### 4. Fun

Doing the things that bring joy and meaning.

*"To use my hands to cook and bake."*

*"To set up and play with my Barbies."*

*"To hold a paintbrush."*

### 5. Friends

Having opportunities to connect and build relationships.

*"To be able to send text messages."*

*"To be able to take part in conversations."*

*"To take turns when playing with my friends at school."*

### 6. Future

Setting sights on goals and dreams, from school to long-term ambitions.

*"To take part in work experience and find the career of my choice."*

*"To take care of myself so I can live independently one day."*

*"To improve my writing so I can reach my potential."*

# Pioneering technology

We use our expertise to support children with complex needs after a brain injury. They may need help to eat or drink again, to move around on their own, to simply play and do the things they enjoy.

We champion the use of technology too. It can help increase the intensity and precision of what we do. This can open up opportunities for early recovery and support children to achieve their rehabilitation goals.



## How technology helps rehabilitation

At The Children's Trust we use different types of technology: **Assistive technology** and **Neurotechnology**.

**Assistive technology** are devices that can help children regain their independence, for example, by helping them with access to computers, gaming and communication. We use technology that tracks eye-movements, as well as specialist switches, joysticks and software that enables engagement in activities and education. Assistive technology will often be used by children long-term. At The Children's Trust we help families make a choice on what they may need going forward.

**Neurotechnology** includes robotics, sensors and virtual reality devices to support personalised and intensive rehabilitation. These include fun and engaging games that support high intensity, repetitive movements, strengthen muscles and develop thinking skills in the context of everyday tasks important to the children.



## Strengthening what we do

Technology can't replace the skills, expertise and compassion of our dedicated team. But it can enhance what we do and how we do it. What matters most is helping children with brain injury and neurodisability to live the best life possible.

### Jonathan Howard, Advanced Practitioner Assistive Technologies

*"My focus is on assistive technology, and the role it has in supporting children with their independence, communication and having fun both during and after their stay at The Children's Trust. Having a range of technology available means we match the right equipment to individual needs."*



“The team just know how to deal with children with brain injuries, it’s so specialised.”

Marnie’s mum,  
Alexis.

## Marnie’s story

Marnie in an occupational therapy session working on fine motor skills.

**Craft-fanatic, outgoing Marnie was six years old when she experienced a stroke, leaving her with a brain injury. Our Community Rehabilitation Service supported Marnie’s return to daily life.**

In August 2024, Marnie, her mum Alexis and sister had been enjoying crafts and playing outside. Later that night, Marnie woke up in distress and fell unconscious. Luckily, Alexis had worked as an emergency nurse. She put Marnie in the recovery position and called an ambulance.

At the hospital, Marnie’s parents, Alexis and Gareth, were completely thrown to hear that she’d had a haemorrhagic stroke. Marnie had surgery to stop the bleeding on her brain. “It took her 12 hours to wake up. That was the real depth of despair,” Gareth says.

As she gained consciousness, Marnie began to make a good recovery. After a month in hospital, she could walk and talk again. It was such a relief when Marnie went home and back to school.

However, Marnie started to struggle with everyday life and was becoming increasingly tired. It was clear that she

needed further, specialist support. She started a rehabilitation placement with our Community Rehabilitation Service. Marnie came to our national specialist centre in Tadworth, Surrey for specialist one-to-one therapy.

Her goals included improving her movement on her left-hand side and helping her manage fatigue. Marnie wanted to be able to do everyday things for herself, like getting dressed, brushing her teeth and enjoying craft activities.

Alexis tells us: “The therapy has been very much tailored to her goals and needs.” Today, Marnie is thriving at school and enjoying the activities she loves.

Thank you for helping children like Marnie.

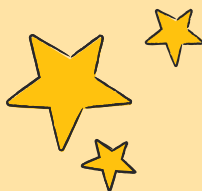
Read the whole story:

[thechildrenstrust.org.uk/marnies-story](https://thechildrenstrust.org.uk/marnies-story)



# Enrichment week

The children we support took part in a week-long programme of enrichment activities during the school holidays.



Zac enjoys a drumming workshop.



Liliana has fun making music.



Zarian greeting animals at the farm.



Emelia meeting the sheep.



Harvey feels the chicken feathers.



Keira gets close to the animals.

Your donations help children enjoy all the fun of childhood.  
Please donate at [thechildrenstrust.org.uk/donate-inspire](https://thechildrenstrust.org.uk/donate-inspire)

# Vital volunteers

When Paul Roe retired from a long career as an accountant, he wanted to do something different and meaningful. A lifelong driving enthusiast, Paul began looking for opportunities where he could combine his skills with his love of being on the road.

A chance visit to our national specialist centre in Surrey led to a chat with our transport manager, about volunteering as a driver. Paul knew straight away it was the right fit. Three years on, he hasn't looked back.

A typical day for Paul might involve driving a young person to a specialist hospital appointment in London, taking children to local activities, or even running errands to support fundraising events.

Beyond the joy of seeing children thrive, Paul has found it's changed him too. "It makes you calmer, more patient, and it puts



**"Volunteering is the most rewarding work I've ever done,"**  
Paul Roe,  
volunteer driver.

everything else into perspective. Whatever else is going on in life, these young people are just so inspiring."

Volunteers are an integral part of who we are as a charity. In 2024/25, 1,519 volunteers supported us in roles ranging from fundraising and retail to school-based and behind-the-scenes support.

## Paul's volunteering highlights



### Memorable moment

Driving a boy home after his stay at The Children's Trust. Seeing the joy and excitement on his face.

*"Those journeys, when you're helping a child go home, are the best."*



### Special moment

Watching a child ride a horse again for the first time after a serious accident.

*"Her mum was in tears. It was just such a privilege to be part of that moment."*



### Funniest moment

Delivering elf hats to 20 schools for a fundraiser.

*"You never know what the day will bring!"*

**Join our volunteer team**  
**We have lots of opportunities!**

Find out more:  
[thechildrenstrust.org.uk/volunteering](https://thechildrenstrust.org.uk/volunteering)



Christopher and Lewis Freeman

**National Doughnut Week**

16-24 May 2026  
Sponsored by CSM Ingredients

## Fantastic fundraisers

National Doughnut Week is a very special week in our calendar. It’s when businesses including bakeries, coffee shops and offices take part, selling lots of delicious doughnuts to raise funds for The Children’s Trust.

The idea was cooked up in 1991 by Director of Dunns Bakery, Christopher Freeman. Dunns Bakery is a renowned bakery in the heart of Crouch End, London. Christopher wanted to use his craft to help children. “Doughnuts are a fun bakery product that almost all high street bakers produce and sell on a daily basis. So the concept of National Doughnut Week was created,” says Christopher.

In 2017 Christopher retired and his son Lewis became the sixth generation baker. Running National Doughnut Week continues to be a family effort with Christopher, his wife Christina and son Lewis all working together to raise money for our charity.

We are thrilled to be supported by National Doughnut Week again this year, marking the 21st year of this sweet partnership! Our thanks go out to Christopher, Christina, Lewis and everyone at Dunns Bakery for their dedicated support. And also to everyone who bakes, buys and eats doughnuts to support our specialist work for children with brain injury.

**Did you know?**

Baking is one of the activities we use in our rehabilitation. It helps children with motor skills, coordination and strength. Following a recipe can support attention span and memory function.



**Dough-nut miss out**  
Please support National Doughnut Week! Every doughnut sold adds up to make a huge difference to the children we support. Find out more [nationaldoughnutweek.org](http://nationaldoughnutweek.org)

# Support our work

Every year, 40,000 children in the UK are left with a brain injury. We're so grateful to our amazing supporters who fundraise to make our specialist care possible.

## Bradley's marathon effort

Bradley Forrest discovered his love of running during the pandemic. Short jogs turned into longer runs and he wondered... 'how far could I go, could I run a marathon?'

He joined our marathon team after hearing all about our specialist support for children from his neighbour.

"Before I was part of the team, I'd just gone out aimlessly for runs. But now I had something to run for. A training app helped me to prepare for the 26.2-mile challenge ahead," Bradley explains.



The night before the London Marathon he proudly pinned his number to his running vest. Next day, he could feel his adrenaline pumping, and the cheering crowds spurred him along. The Children's Trust had a cheer station near the end, giving him the boost he needed to get over the finish line!

"It was a great privilege to represent The Children's Trust and raise money for a very worthy cause."

## Lucky lottery winner

Congratulations to local teacher Alexandra Sebastian, who won our Weekly Lottery. "It was a lovely surprise. I'm planning to treat my grandchildren to something special and also donate some of my winnings," she says.

Through the experience of a friend, Alexandra saw the devastating effect a brain injury can have on a family and has supported us ever since. "It's a win-win," she says.

## Host an open garden

Open your garden and raise vital funds for The Children's Trust.

**Sharing your garden or allotment with others is a wonderful way to raise both awareness and funds for children and young people living with a brain injury.**



Find out more  
[thechildrenstrust.org.uk/open-garden](https://thechildrenstrust.org.uk/open-garden)

# Support more children like Ronan all year round

## Make a regular gift

You can show your support all year round by giving monthly. You'll help us plan ahead and ensure we can support even more families who need our specialist support. It's easy to set up too.

Visit [thechildrenstrust.org.uk/donate-inspire](https://thechildrenstrust.org.uk/donate-inspire)

Call 01737 364 349

Scan the QR code



## Every pound makes a difference

Gift Aid makes gifts go further at no extra cost to you! Help us make the most of your donation by signing up to Gift Aid. Already made a donation? You can still Gift Aid your previous donations of up to four years ago.

Visit [thechildrenstrust.org.uk/gift-aid](https://thechildrenstrust.org.uk/gift-aid)

*giftaid it*



Scan the QR code to set up a regular gift

However you choose to give, your gifts matter.  
Thank you



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