



# OUR YEAR

2019



## JAH DAN AND PEARL

I moved in with Pearl when I was 15, and I was pretty anti-social, but she was immediately warm and patient and it was clear that she cared. Living with Pearl has given me a chance to get away from all the dangerous situations I was getting myself into, and to reflect on my life decisions. She has given me a safe, non-judgemental and supportive home where I can relax and focus on my future.

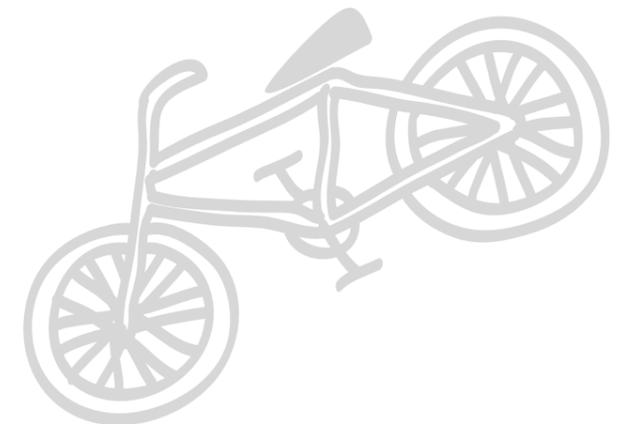
**Jahdan**  
TACT young person



# OUR YEAR 2019

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## FOREWORD FROM ANDY ELVIN CEO

### 2019 was another busy year for TACT.

In April we undertook a partial merger with Supported Fostering Services (SFS). This has given us a new Kent service and nearly doubled the size of our South London service. We have been thrilled to welcome the excellent SFS carers and staff into the TACT family and we look forward to building on their many successes. Owing to the presence of commercial fostering agencies in the sector, it has become harder for charitable services to hold their own, and so merging with like-minded organisations is a sensible option. It also ensures that prospective foster carers have the commonly preferred choice of fostering for an IFA that is a charity.

Welcoming SFS into the fold has also meant that we now have a superb education service. Our Head of Education has wasted no time in engaging with TACT's teams across the UK and working closely with foster carers to ensure that all of our children are receiving the education they need to achieve their potential. Sadly, given the continued austerity, schools' budgets are very tight, which can mean monies earmarked for our children are sometimes not spent in a way that fully benefits them. We are now much better able to challenge this as well as ensuring all of our children have a place in school or a high-quality alternative provision. This work is constant, but the way in which our staff and carers have embraced the new service and worked so positively with our Head of Education is transforming our ability to support our children's education. A key future objective will be to challenge the lack of ambition we sometimes find professionals have for our young people; we want to help children in care to achieve everything that they can.

Our children and young people remain at the centre of all that we do. We are delighted that our new TACT Connect service is now established. We launched it in

2018 to stay in touch with all of the children and young people we have ever cared for or will care for in the past, present and future. This service is being co-designed and produced by our care experienced adults and our foster carers, so that it meets the needs and requirements of our foster children as they move into adulthood. Key issues are social isolation and loneliness, and we are working on programmes and initiatives to address them. Underlying TACT Connect is our view that any decent parent knows what their children are doing at 25, 35, 45 and beyond. TACT wants to make sure that we will be there to celebrate successes, offer opportunities to get involved and to lend a helping hand where needed. We are very grateful to the Rank Foundation for supporting this new venture.

I'd just like to take this opportunity to thank all our foster families, adopters and staff for the incredible and selfless work they do day after day, year after year. The love, compassion, expertise, stability and commitment our staff and carer families offer children is truly inspiring. And of course, our fantastic children and young people are pretty inspirational themselves.

**Andy Elvin**  
CEO



## CHAIR OF TRUSTEES

2019 has seen TACT continue its mission to improve the lives of the young people and children in our care. This is primarily done through the day to day efforts of our dedicated foster carers and staff, who work tirelessly on the front line where children's needs are understood and met. It is these people who deserve our gratitude for the positive impact they have on vulnerable children and young people's lives each and every day.

We awarded our first tranche of the 25 for 25 grant - part of the £25,000 for 25 years program, which funds new, innovative ideas from our children, carers and staff for projects which aim to improve outcomes for children. Thank you to State Street Corporation for funding this. This year we awarded 25 for 25 grants to:

- A leaving care/life skills course scheme to improve our young people's cooking skills and give them a taste of the catering industry.
- A cultural big weekend - trips to cultural centres to broaden the horizons of our young people.
- TACT's got Talent - a cross-TACT talent competition to encourage all children and young people to showcase their skills.
- Life coach - supporting one of our care experienced adults to train as a life coach and then utilise her experience to coach other young people leaving care.
- Birth children residential - a dedicated trip for the birth children of families who foster. These children are often overlooked, and it will allow them a positive opportunity to engage with others with similar experiences

The board has decided that we will continue this grant giving program on a yearly basis. Thank you to the State Street Corporation for agreeing to continue funding it in 2020.

In April we merged with Supported Fostering Services in London and Kent, adding 68 children, 70 foster families and 18 staff to the TACT family. We also gained a high-quality Educational Support service that we have been able to roll out across the whole of TACT. We are already seeing the benefits of this in improved outcomes for our children.

The Board and the Management have also been busy developing TACT's new three-year strategy, and as you would expect, it will provide a clear focus on improving outcomes for children, supporting our foster carers, investing in our people, and continuing to be an innovator in the sector.

Leon Farrer stood down as member of the board this year due to being relocated overseas for his work. I would like to take this opportunity to thank him for his contribution and commitment to the organisation. We will continue to feel his presence for years to come.

Finally, I would like to pay tribute to the courage and resilience of children in the care system, they have often seen the worst in humanity and have every right to feel let down by society, however they continue to pick themselves up and just get on with it. We should take inspiration from them and ask ourselves every day, what more we could be doing for them.

**Matthew Doyle**

Chair of  
Trustees



# HEADLINES



## NORTH WEST

Our young people in the North West revamped their own dedicated space within TACT's regional office by decorating it, donating items and choosing new furniture. TACT's Trustees granted £1000 towards the project.

## YORKSHIRE AND NORTH EAST

TACT Yorkshire partnered with TACT North West to offer a Skills4life course for their young people. The course covered topics such as gang culture, knife crime, personal hygiene, sexual health and alcohol. TACT Trustee and care leaver Leanne Ellis shared with the group her experiences of being in care and leaving care. The teenagers participated in lively debates on the issues raised.

## EAST LONDON

Children's social care professionals from Berlin, Germany visited TACT's East London office as part of a research project about fostering of teenagers across Europe. The group met with TACT staff and CEO Andy Elvin to discuss the differences in fostering between Germany and the UK, and the potential of using foster carers as parenting coaches to help children remain with their birth families.

## SOUTH COAST

Our South Coast team held an awards day at Avon Tyrrell Activity Centre for carers and young people, to celebrate the positive milestones they achieved during the year. The day was topped off with challenges over the high and low ropes courses and a treasure hunt for young people.

## LONDON AND SOUTH EAST

Independent fostering agency SFS has merged with TACT, growing our London and South East service to an impressive 83 children and 73 foster families.

## EAST MIDLANDS

TACT East Midlands has been rated Outstanding by Ofsted for its work with foster carers, children and young people. Ofsted stated that '[TACT] provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. Their actions contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people.'



## WALES

Care experienced young people from TACT Wales made a short film about their experiences of being in care. The film gives a positive insight of the young people's qualities and resilience and is a homage to their former foster carers who have clearly meant so much to them in their lives.

## SOUTH WEST

South West team organised a number of activities for young people throughout the year including an art workshop, a summer trip to Thorpe Park and a BMX session.

## BIG WEEKEND

In August, 50 young people from across TACT gathered in the beautiful surroundings of Wootton Creek on the Isle of Wight to take part in the annual Big Weekend. Activities included zip wire, ladder course, abseiling, kayaking and a game of bowling in the evening. All the young people, carers and staff in attendance agreed that it was a fantastic experience, with young people challenging themselves, conquering their fears and making lasting friendships.

## WEST MIDLANDS

TACT West Midlands held their Foster Carer Appreciation End of Year Ball in celebration of the hard work and dedication of their carers. The evening consisted of dinner, DJ, magician, photo booth, and a raffle which raised funds towards activities and equipment to support children and young people.

## SCOTLAND

TACT Scotland celebrated its 10th birthday in the summer with an event for staff, carers and children at Blair Drummond Safari Park in Stirling. Long standing staff and carers were presented with flowers and everyone enjoyed specially made anniversary cakes. Following the party, foster families went on to explore the safari park.

## PLAY THERAPY SERVICE

As part of our dedicated adoption support, TACT offers Theraplay service for adoptive families. Theraplay has helped children and their adoptive parents to build better relationships and trust through fun, playful activities. Big thanks to BBC Children in Need for continued support of the service.

## TACT ADOPTION SUMMER PARTY

Twenty families attended the TACT adoption summer party with children aged 1-16 years enjoying fun outdoor activities such as trying out their circus skills. Everyone enjoyed catching up with old friends and staff, and relaxing on the grass with the background sounds of a steel band.

## KENT

As a result of the merger with foster agency SFS, TACT now also has a thriving service in Kent, that has a strong record for providing long term placements. TACT has also gained a high-quality Education Support service that is being rolled out across the whole of the organisation.

## POLICY AND CAMPAIGNING



TACT regularly campaigns to improve policy affecting children and young people in care across the UK.

### LANGUAGE THAT CARES

In March, we published Language That Cares, which aims to change the language of the care system. We sat down with young people in care and listened to what they had to say about the vernacular that is used with them and about them, and how it makes them feel. The result is a glossary of words and terms that is available as a free resource for anyone working in the care system.

Language that cares is very much a collaborative effort, led by TACT, and the charity's children and care experienced young people, with contributions from 15 local authorities and organisations.

It is not an absolute list of all words used in the sector, and does not represent everyone's view. However, it promotes a much needed evaluation of the way we communicate and engage with our children and young people. As language evolves and changes so will Language That Cares.

TACT would like to acknowledge the vital role that local authorities and other organisations have had in the development of Language that Cares and we hope that more will join us for the second and further editions.

For the second edition, we want to continue to raise awareness and further the discussion around young people's perspectives on language commonly used in the care system. In order to keep the momentum going from the first edition, we are bringing the voices of our young people to the forefront; that is, listening to the young people directly.

TACT is planning to utilise a multimedia approach in the second edition, including video recordings of the young people themselves talking about their thoughts and feelings on words they consider to be problematic and offering preferable alternatives. With this approach we hope to engage a wider audience on the issue, promote the use of more empathetic language, and ultimately enhance the relationship between young people and the care system as a whole.

### MANIFESTO FOR FOSTER CARE

Ahead of the General Election, TACT called on all Britain's political parties to step up and make children in care, foster carers and care experienced young people an important part of their election promises. To that end we produced our own manifesto which offered actions that we urged all parties to implement to transform the life chances for children and young people in care.

#### TACT CEO Andy Elvin said:

"TACT's Call to Action highlighted what government and local authorities should be doing to fulfil their responsibilities as corporate parents. Children and young people's voices should always be heard in the design of policy for the care system. Unfortunately, far too often the state is not a good enough parent."

Some of the actions we called for were automatic delegated authority for foster carers and a waiver of university tuition fees or an offer guaranteed apprenticeship for care experienced young people.



## TACT CONNECT

TACT Connect, our innovative service for care experienced people, has made fantastic progress since it began in 2018, and now has an impressive community of care leavers that support and celebrate one another, while keeping in touch with TACT.

Leaving care is a challenging time for young people, especially as many will not have the help of a supportive family network and the support of professionals seems to evaporate almost immediately. TACT Connect offers the chance to be part of a lifelong community where members can meet others, learn and access new skills and get support in reaching their aspirations throughout their adult life. By becoming a member, care experienced adults will become part of a local and national community, where they will automatically receive newsletters packed full of helpful advice and shared experiences, invites to events and meet-ups, free memberships pack, access to the mentoring scheme, and opportunities to be involved in shaping TACT Connect and its services.

#### TACT CEO Andy Elvin said:

"It's important as a parent that you stay in touch with your children throughout their lives. The state can be a not so great parent because once people have left care, it doesn't know what's going on in their lives. So, TACT Connect is our way of addressing that."

Right from the start, the development of the scheme has been guided by care experienced people, they have taken a prominent role in tailoring the service and are also responsible for creating all the content for the TACT Connect newsletter, which was launched in March.

In February, work began on the "Peer Mentoring" scheme by providing training to prospective care experienced mentors. The scheme allows those who have left care to mentor 15-16-year-olds to additionally support the young person to prepare for adulthood, by offering their own experiences and learned wisdom.

In April, TACT Connect was officially launched at an art gallery in Birmingham where TACT care leavers displayed works of art that they had created themselves with the theme of "message to my younger self". Mark Riddell – National

Advisor for Care Leavers attended the event and was impressed by the scheme and the young people he met.

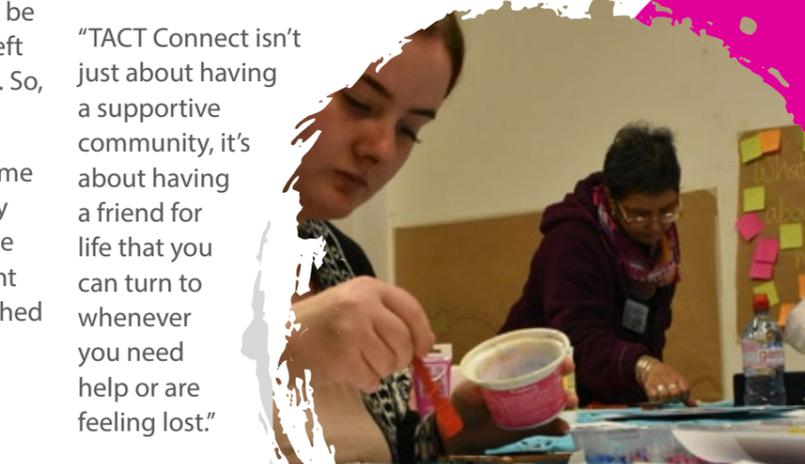
#### Mark Riddell said:

"Initiatives like TACT Connect are important because they are led by the voices of care experienced young people. This is a new concept and it would be good to see similar work happening elsewhere in the country. We need to be ambitious about how we support care experienced people, and TACT Connect is a really good starting point."

TACT Connect has been piloting its "Enabling Grants" scheme, which offers financial help to TACT Connect members to reduce the barriers that are often put in the way to both education and employment opportunities, that would enable care experienced people to reach their potential. Statistics show that care leavers aged 19-21 are three times less likely to be in either education, employment or training compared to their peers.

#### TACT care leaver Samantha summed up the scheme:

"TACT Connect isn't just about having a supportive community, it's about having a friend for life that you can turn to whenever you need help or are feeling lost."



# OUR STORY

## RONDA AND ROD

TACT Foster Carers since 2014 - Scotland

We started to think about fostering thanks to Rod's colleague who fostered, and spoke about the rewards of fostering regularly. We kept thinking "we could make a difference to these children's lives too". As I didn't work due to a health problem and none of our five children lived with us anymore, I had plenty of time on my hands and the thought of doing something so worthwhile prompted us to go for it.

We came across TACT online and everything about them felt right and the fact that they were a charity was even better. We had read a lot about some independent fostering agencies and we felt really uncomfortable with the fact that they were profiting from children in care.

We filled in our details online and the very next day we got a call. From there on, it was an efficient and smooth process to get us to a panel, although it did feel rather intrusive at times. However, we knew that there are good reasons why the process is in-depth. We built up a great relationship with the assessing social worker, so much so that we still keep in touch today. Most people, including ourselves, feel anxious about going to the panel but it was actually quite enjoyable and all the panel members made us feel very welcome and at ease.

We were approved in January 2014 and our first child arrived in March. It is hard to describe the feeling you get from the time you agree to look after a child to when you meet them for the first time. We jumped each time the phone rang. It is a mixture of excitement and nervousness, but we just reminded ourselves how these children must be feeling, and that put everything into perspective.

We have cared for a variety of children ranging in age from six months to eleven years. Each one of them has been a different experience, some harder than others, but we feel we have had a positive impact on all of them. It is an amazing feeling to see this "stranger" enter your home and to watch the progress that they make.

Having two dogs certainly helped, as all the children seemed to talk to them, even if they didn't talk much to us, and it helped them settle in during those first few anxious days. We have also had great support from our daughters who have loved getting to know the children, and the children enjoyed talking to someone younger who can possibly relate better to the way they are feeling.



We are currently caring for an eleven-month-old baby boy which has been the hardest thing to do so far, but also the one that has given us so much back. He was initially very quiet and unsettled, but he is now a happy little boy. Our daughter Ashleigh gave birth to her own baby boy ten months ago, and now our grandson and foster son have become the best of friends, helping each other develop, which is lovely to watch.

We are not looking forward to this little boy leaving as we have bonded closely with him. Saying goodbye to the children is always difficult for us but almost all the children we have cared for have moved on to permanent homes which is a positive outcome. Whenever possible, we try to keep in touch with the children or with their new foster carers to see how they are doing. We formed a lovely relationship with the last child we have cared for before the baby and even after he moved on to another placement, we have attended his Sunday football matches on quite a few occasions.

I would say to anyone who is thinking about fostering that it won't be easy and at times you might find yourself wondering what you got yourself into, but the positives far outweigh the challenges. I can guarantee fostering will be the most rewarding thing you have ever done.

## TACT IN THE NEWS

TACT regularly appears in the media, here are some of the year's highlights...



TACT foster carer, Pearl, and care leaver Jahdan, who continues to live with Pearl through a Staying Put arrangement, spoke to The Guardian about the mutual rewards of fostering.



TACT care-experienced young person and budding broadcaster Iqra paid a moving tribute to her foster carer, Natalie, on the BBC Radio 5 Live's Emma Barnett show.



TACT carer Sally-Anne talked to Jeremy Vine on his Radio 2 programme about the rewards of becoming a foster carer at just 22 years of age. Sally-Anne told Jeremy that her first foster child was a 15-year-old girl and that the small age gap was actually beneficial.

TACT care-leaver Shannon and her former foster carer Marian spoke to ITV News about the strong bond they continue to share and the challenges that Shannon faced when leaving care.



TACT foster carers Leanne and Nathan and their former foster son Fanso, an asylum-seeker from Mozambique, spoke to BBC Radio Sheffield about the benefits of fostering.

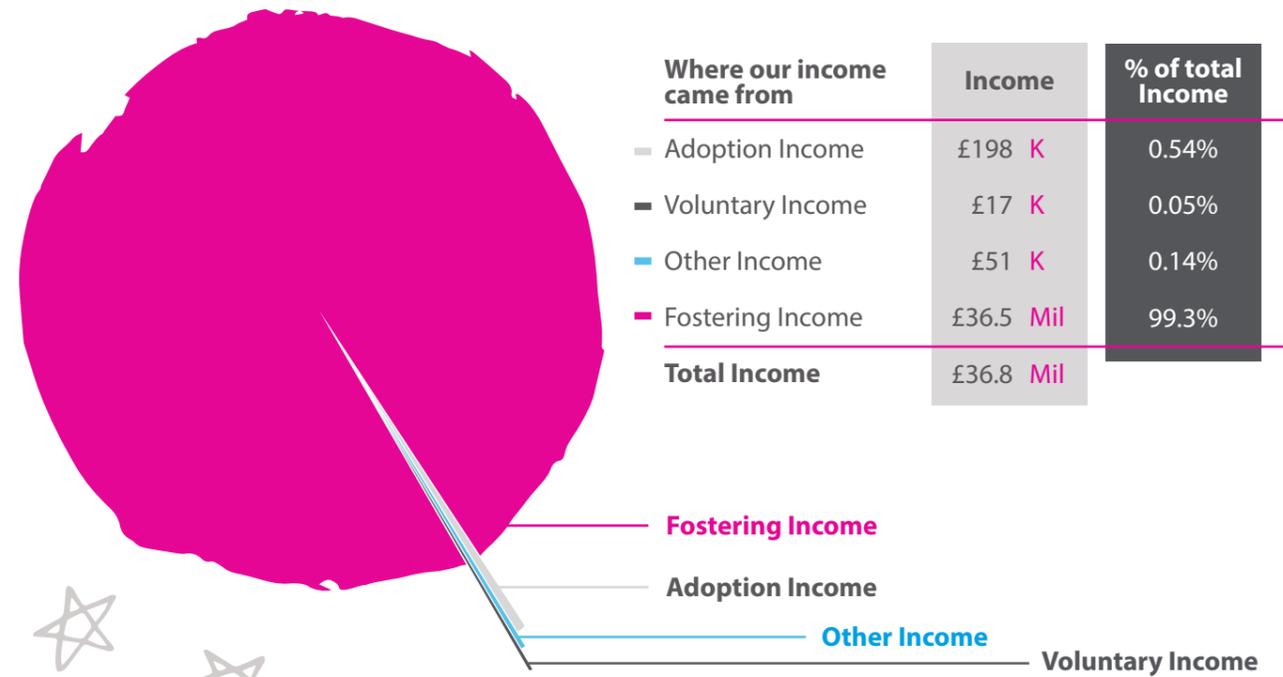


BEST magazine featured a lovely article about TACT foster carers Gary and Colin and their former foster daughter Elizabeth, who describes the transformative effect they had on her life.



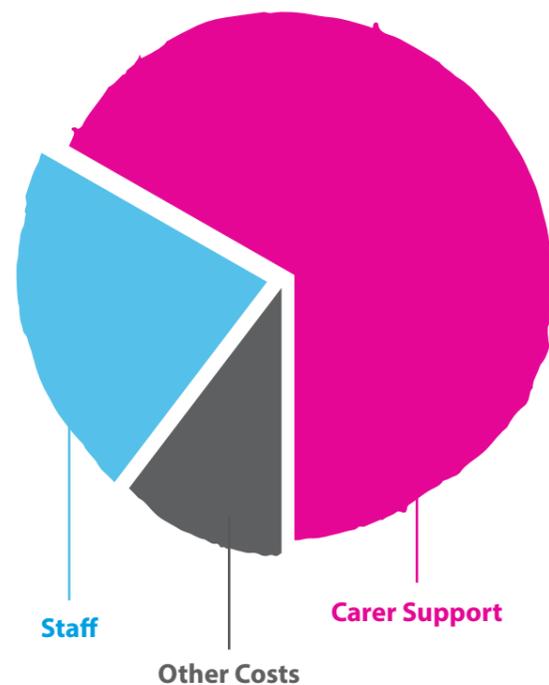
# FINANCIAL REPORT

**TOTAL INCOME**  
£36.8 MILLION



## WHAT WE SPENT OUT INCOME ON

What we spent our income on	Cost	% of total Costs
Staff	£8.7 Mil	23.1%
Carer Support	£25.1 Mil	66.7%
Other Costs	£3.9 Mil	10.2%
<b>Total Costs</b>	<b>£37.7 Mil</b>	



**TOTAL INCOME** £36.8 MIL  
**TOTAL COSTS** £37.7 MIL  
**DEFECIT** -£930 K

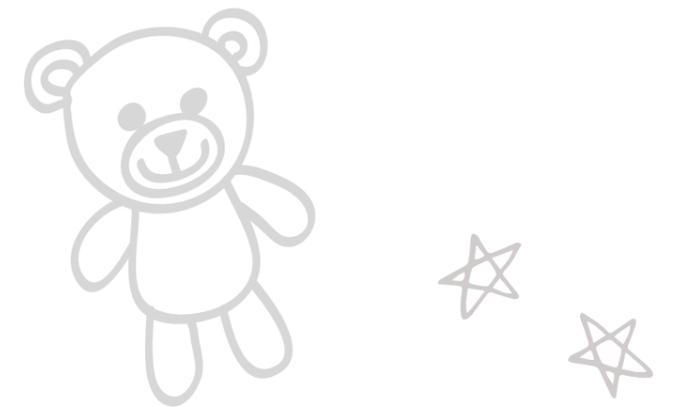
# MY STORY

## REBECCA

### TACT care-experienced person

I never imagined when I was growing up that I would one day own my own business. I went into care at the age of 14, having suffered years of abuse while living with my family. My initial experiences in the care system weren't good and I always felt like the odd one out, but then TACT placed me with an amazing foster carer called Angela, who was like a second mum to me. She taught me so much and helped me to grow more than anyone else has. She helped me to understand how I could be myself, and not let my past experiences define me and control my life.

She never pushed me to talk but was always there for me when I needed to talk through any issues. Even when I started to behave in a silly way towards the end of my time with her, she never once lost her temper and always just tried to support me. It's really important that foster carers are patient and go at the speed the child wants, and I'm really grateful that Angela gave me the time to develop and work through things at my own pace.



Through living with Angela, I came to experience what it was like to live in a happy, loving family. She gave her foster children a real experience of family life by taking us on lots of fun days out and holidays. Foster children don't need expensive things, we just need to be shown what being in a family is like.

These experiences gave me the best possible chance to thrive in my adult life, and I now own my company called Four Paws that walks, trains and provides day-care for dogs. I employ one person full-time, have two volunteers and given an opportunity for 8 others to go on to do amazing jobs elsewhere, which I'm really proud of. Our aim is to help owners with their pets and to provide a loving service and to help them feel safe and secure with their animals in our hands.



I'd grown up around dogs and always knew that I wanted to make a career out of working with them. Like any amazing mum, Angela helped me to believe that I could achieve any goal I set myself as long as I put the effort in and to never give up on what I believed in.

My advice to others who are about to leave care is never give up. Even when things seem dark and you

feel as though your life isn't going anywhere, just keep going because I promise that one day everything will make sense. You have a great opportunity ahead of you and it's your choice what you want to do with it. So, think hard about your decisions and don't rush into anything. Most importantly, do what's right for you.

# THANK YOU

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.

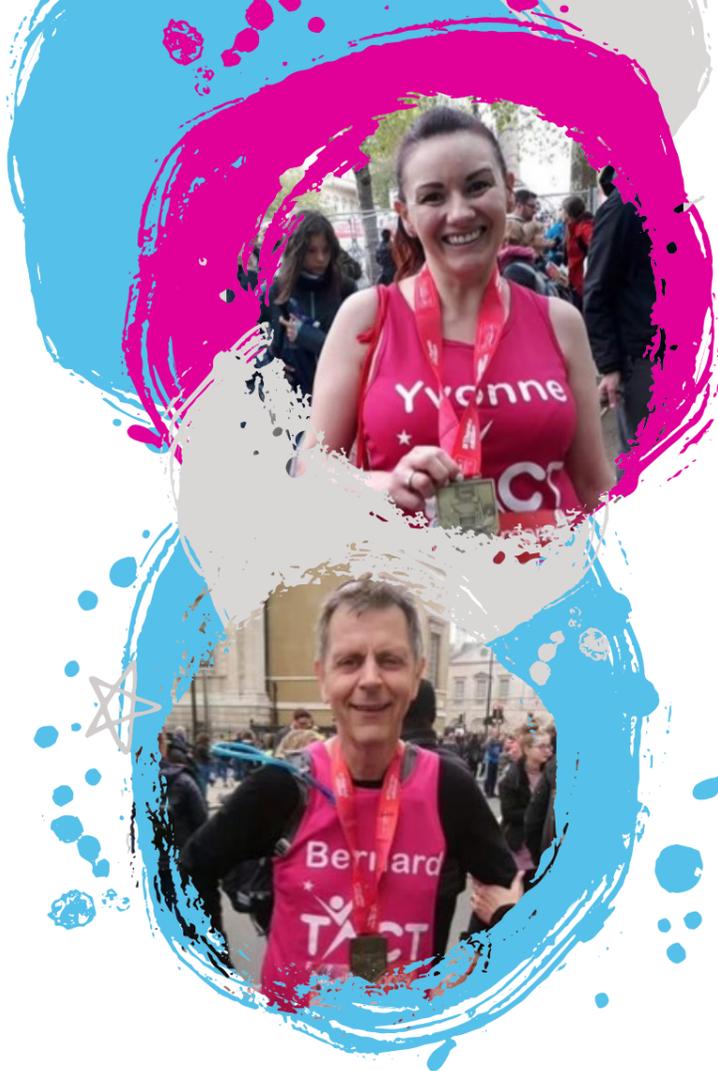
We are extremely grateful to all the amazing people who took on the huge challenge of running the London Marathon to help raise funds for children and young people in TACT's care.

This year we received major donations from State Street Corporation, BBC Children in Need, the Rank Foundation and Department for Education. Before Christmas, Z Hotels kindly donated 57 gift boxes filled with toys, board games, stationery and books. The gifts were given to children in TACT's care at our Christmas Party. We also received a donation of 60 children's bike helmets from the company Manu & Lalo. We are also grateful to our individual donors who continue to support children and young people in our care.

# WHERE THE MONEY WENT

Our voluntary income is restricted to projects for children and young people and in the last year has enabled us to provide:

- **Our fantastic Theraplay 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**



# SUPPORTERS AND TRUSTEES

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.

**Trustees:** Matthew Doyle (Chair), Phillip Woodman (Vice Chair), Leanne Ellis, Lisa Waterman, Martine Bond, Mary Griffith Jones, Matthew Horton, Andrew White, Owen Evans

**Patrons:** Lorraine Pascale, Baroness Howarth of Breckland OBE

**Ambassador:** Solomon O.B.

**Fundraisers:** Michelle White, Yvonne Sutherland, Jackie McQueen, Dawn McQueen, Annie McKenzie, Bernard Dishman, Sarah Dally, Rhys Davidson

**Major Donors:** State Street Corporation, BBC Children in Need, Rank Foundation, Department for Education, Z Hotels, Manu & Lalo



# OUR STORY MARTIN AND JAMES

**TACT Foster Carers since 2017 - Scotland**

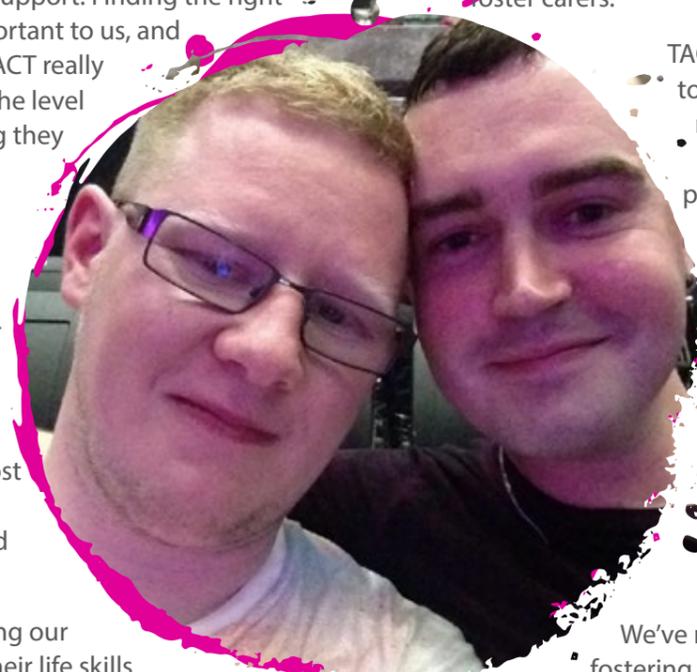
Although we aren't able to have children of our own, we always felt we could provide a child with a stable home full of love and support. Finding the right agency was really important to us, and after lots of research TACT really stood out because of the level of support and training they offered.

Before starting the application process James and I had some anxieties over whether being a LGBT couple would be a barrier to us fostering, but TACT assured us that the most important thing is that we could offer love and support to a child.

It's been amazing seeing our placements develop their life skills and see their personalities blossom. One of our biggest achievements was seeing a child who had previously struggled at school become more

settled and get really involved in school life. It was a very proud moment watching him perform in the school show.

Before he was fostered by us he had attachment issues and difficulty trusting people. Helping him to build trust with us was one of our biggest challenges and greatest success so far. He would sometimes push us away and it was difficult to see this young man isolate himself. Slowly but surely we broke down his barriers. As much as we were teaching him life skills, we were learning as well, and becoming better foster carers.



TACT has been amazing to us. There is always a member of staff on the end of the phone to provide support when needed, and we're fortunate to have a great relationship with our supervising social worker. TACT's training has helped to build our confidence and allowed us to meet other foster carers who we can share experiences with and help support each other.

We've really enjoyed the whole fostering journey, which has so far led to some incredibly rewarding and proud moments, and we have learned so much about ourselves.

**TO FIND OUT MORE PLEASE  
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