



# Our Impact 2023

Stronger Together

**acorns**  
Your local children's hospice



# Foreword

Imagine for a moment - you've just been told the child you love will not reach adulthood, or will never walk, talk or be able to feed for themselves. It's a feeling that's impossible to put into words.

**Who do you turn to? Who really understands what you're going through?**

**There is hope. Acorns is here.**

We know what you are going through and exactly what you need. We know how to make every day special, building memories that will last a lifetime.

At Acorns, families find the care and support they need today, that will give them the strength for tomorrow.

This care is only possible with the support of our local community. Our partners in the wider healthcare system, our generous donors, fundraisers, customers and supporters.

**Your support means our incredible employees and volunteers can ensure every family has the care they need, today and long into the future.**

It's work that is needed more than ever. There are a growing number of children in our region living longer, with more complex needs. We believe children's hospice care should be available to every single one of them, wherever and whenever they need it.

The stories featured in this Impact Report are just a snapshot of the countless lives we've touched over the past year and the difference we have made. You can read more about the families featured here by visiting [acorns.org.uk/strongertogether](https://acorns.org.uk/strongertogether)

Whoever you are, and whatever role you play in helping us deliver our care and compassion to local families, I thank you from the bottom of my heart.

Trevor Johnson  
Chief Executive



200+

The number of brothers and sisters Acorns Sibling Workers like Jess have supported in the past year.



Sibling Worker Jess having fun with Elizabeth at Acorns

## Oliver's story

In the first weeks of his life, little Oliver was diagnosed with chronic kidney disease. The disease was stage five, meaning it was at its most serious.

It was overwhelming for his parents who found themselves back and forth from hospital for treatment, trying to keep on top of medicines and care. It was constant.

That's when Acorns stepped in. We offered the care the family so desperately needed.

For Oliver's dad John, to have a break was huge.

*"When you're caring for somebody else, sometimes you don't look after yourself. It was nice to recharge and stop the world from spinning for a little bit and get back in control."*

Two years ago, when Oliver was four – John donated one of his kidneys for a life-saving transplant. Thankfully Oliver's health has stabilised, but his family remain forever grateful for the care they have received from Acorns.

*"We're so thankful Acorns exists. I don't know where we would have been without it. Acorns was there when we really needed it. It's an absolute a godsend."*

Read the full story: [acorns.org.uk/oliver](https://acorns.org.uk/oliver)



Oliver at Acorns

757

The number of children like Oliver Acorns has cared for in the past year.



## Cara's story

Like any little girl, Cara's favourite thing is cuddles from Mum. Whenever she hears her mum's voice, she makes it clear she doesn't want anyone else!

When she was born, Cara was very poorly and was rushed back into hospital at just a few days old.

Tests found she had nonketotic hyperglycinemia or NKH for short. Mum Vicky was told to prepare for the worst.

Against all the odds, Cara pulled through and has recently celebrated her first birthday.

*"From being told she wasn't going to survive, to still being here. She's still fighting."*

*"We learned about Acorns while we were in hospital. I admit I was sceptical about it at first, but Acorns is brilliant."*

*"I know the nurses at Acorns can care for Cara properly and I'm so grateful for that. I'm included in everything, every decision, every conversation and I'm never judged. I feel heard."*

*"When the Outreach nurses visit us at home, I get the chance to do simple things like have a long shower. They also know that memories are very important to me so whenever possible, they'll make cards and crafts with Cara that I can keep forever."*

Read the full story: [acorns.org.uk/cara](https://acorns.org.uk/cara)



Cara and children's nurse Katie in the multisensory room at Acorns

1,053

The number of Outreach visits our specialist care teams have delivered to families like Cara's in the past year.

## Marwah's story

Devoted mum Nizet describes the happy day her daughter Marwah arrived. *"She was a perfect little girl, absolutely perfect. Everything seemed normal and we took our baby home."*

Soon however, Mum noticed things that concerned her.

*"I started to notice something was wrong when I was getting her dressed. She screamed every time I lifted her arms. It wasn't a hunger scream, it was pain."*

Numerous hospital visits and tests later, Marwah was diagnosed with hyaline fibromatosis syndrome – a condition that affects many areas of her body, including skin, joints, bones and internal organs.

*"Marwah is not able to sit up or turn over. She can hardly do most daily things. She is on oxygen to support her breathing and at night, we have to get up to turn her every 15 minutes. It's always constant."*

*"Acorns first came into our lives for hydrotherapy. Marwah loves the pool. Every time she has hydrotherapy, she sleeps through, meaning I don't have to keep turning her."*

*"I do all of Marwah's care, but at Acorns I'm able to let go. I get a rest and I'm just Mum."*

*"Acorns is not just a service. It's part of my family now. I'd be lost without Acorns. I think I'd sit and cry waiting and watching Marwah."*

Read the full story: [acorns.org.uk/marwah](https://acorns.org.uk/marwah)

Marwah at home



1,000+

The number of hydrotherapy sessions Acorns has provided for children like Marwah in the past year.



## Luca's story

*"We've got such lovely memories of things we did with Luca. We literally packed a lifetime of stuff into a year because we knew it wasn't going to be that long. I'm so glad we did that."*

Luca was just a year old when he was diagnosed with Tay-Sachs disease, a rare inherited condition that stops the nerves from working properly and for which there is no cure.

Mum Zoe says: "I remember being really overwhelmed by everything. It took a while to get our heads around it. Then we thought, you know what, we need to just kick the hell out of life for him."

*"So, we made loads of plans, did loads of stuff and made loads of memories."*

Acorns helped the family make the most of every day, organising trips and fun, memory making activities at the hospice.

As Luca's health deteriorated, it was suggested the family should come to stay at Acorns.

*"I remember in the middle of the night, they were tending to him and we were on a sofa bed. They said, 'why don't you get him into bed with you'."*

*"I'm really grateful they did that, I really am. I can't thank them enough for just gently telling us without us realising, saying 'this is it, hold him tight'. We were with him when he took his last breath. He died in our arms."*

*"Acorns gave us a memory box. We took a lock of Luca's hair, did some footprints and handprints. Looking at these keepsakes now it feels warm and fuzzy. All the pictures and all these things have happy things attached to them."*

Dad Tony says. "We're eternally grateful for all the support we were given at Acorns. They helped us in our darkest moment."

Read the full story: [acorns.org.uk/luca](https://acorns.org.uk/luca)

# 400+

The number of bereaved family members the Acorns Family Services team has supported in the past year.



(L-R) Ella, Fran, Zoe, Tony and Luca Atzori



## Kavarli's story

*"I remember the day we got his diagnosis – it was the saddest day of my life."*

Mum Samantha was given the devastating news her son Kavarli had MECP2 syndrome, a rare genetic condition. The family were told children with the condition don't live to see three years old.

*"I cried up until his third birthday. Every time he went into hospital, I thought 'is it going to be now? Is this the time?'"*

But Kavarli is a fighter, and this year he'll be 13.

Acorns helps Kavarli and his family live life to the full. Caring for Kavarli is non-stop but we're by his family's side every step of the way.

*"He loves his time at Acorns. He likes the sensory room a lot and enjoys going into the spa. And he loves people, so he loves the attention."*

*"Acorns is really supportive. Especially during those times in hospital when we thought we might lose him. You don't want to cry because you think people are going to get sick of you crying, but never at Acorns."*

*"They're brilliant. If there's anything I need, or any questions I need answering, there's always somebody there to help."*

*"I don't know what life would look like without Acorns. If I didn't have Acorns, I'd struggle to cope."*

Read the full story: [acorns.org.uk/kavarli](https://acorns.org.uk/kavarli)

*Kavarli enjoying a music session at Acorns with Care Assistant Raine*



15,214

Instances of emotional and practical support the Acorns Family Services team have provided in the past year.



# Strength in partnership

Research shows that the number of children with serious, life limiting conditions in the West Midlands and Gloucestershire has increased significantly over the last 10 years and is expected to keep growing.

To meet this increasing need, we know we must continue to develop our strong partnerships with the wider healthcare sector. This is where highly skilled Acorns professionals like Margaret and Christine come in, just two examples of how Acorns is helping make a difference in collaboration with the Palliative Care team at Birmingham Women’s and Children’s Hospital (BWCH).

## Margaret Maye

Acorns and BWCH have a well-established Palliative Care partnership, which Margaret supported in a joint-role over several years.

Margaret played a vital part linking the hospital and Acorns, and although she has now retired from our charity, she still works part-time within the hospital team, coming into regular contact with children and families.

It’s often at the point of diagnosis that Margaret will first meet families, providing support and signposting them to Acorns in their hour of need.

A family member supported by Margaret in hospital says: *“It’s at this point where we’re being told that we have a life limited child...it just floored us. Almost into inaction. Without someone like Margaret, who was the connection between the two organisations, I genuinely don’t know what we would have done.”*

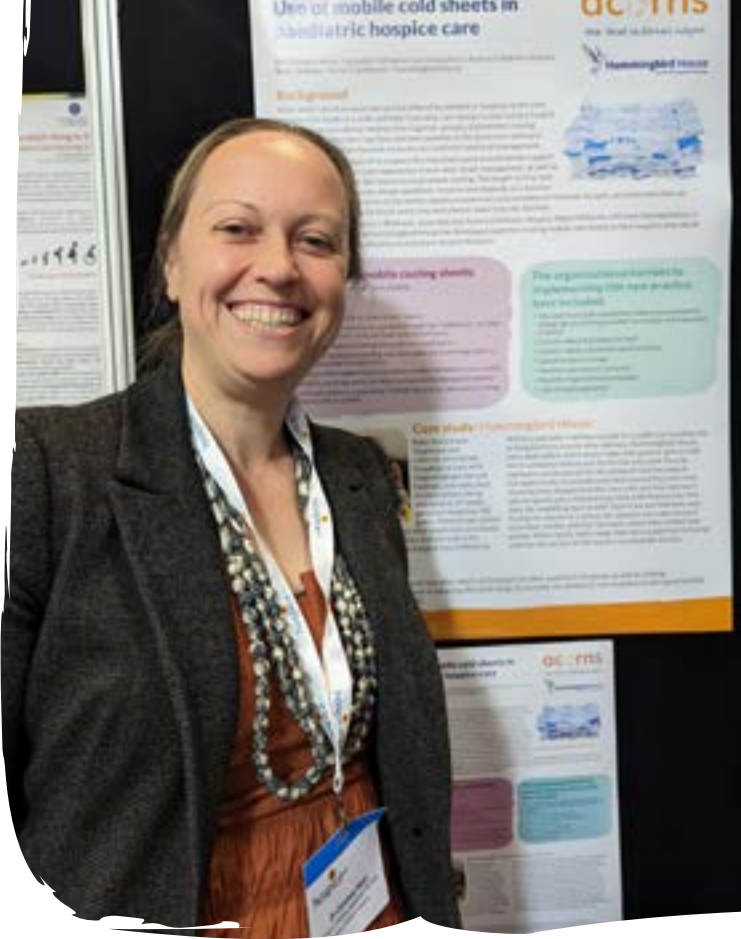


## Dr Christine Mott

Dr Christine Mott, Consultant in Paediatric Palliative Medicine is a key member of the Palliative Care team. In her role, developed jointly by Acorns and BWCH, she is on-hand to provide leadership, specialist support and expert advice.

Christine has helped establish the West Midlands Perinatal Palliative Care Service, a service which is now on course to accept the largest number of referrals for antenatal review in the UK. Significant increases in antenatal referrals to Acorns have occurred as a result.

Christine says: *“Before I started, Acorns had about one to three antenatal referrals a year. As a result of this work, the referrals have significantly increased, to the region of about 46 a year and it’s continuing to increase. There are more deaths in the first year of life than there are in the entire rest of childhood. That is where our work should be.”*



## There for every child

Our partnership with BWCH, and the work of people like Christine and Margaret means we can be there for the growing numbers of families who need all the skill, compassion and understanding our professionals can deliver.

It means these families are given choice and control, their child will be made comfortable at the end of life, and all their clinical, emotional and spiritual needs will be met.

**We are reaching more of these families, every year.**



# Together we are stronger

We're so proud of everything we've achieved over the past year, work which has been recognised at the highest level.

This was the year Acorns made history as the first children's hospice in the world to achieve a **UNICEF Gold** award, recognising our commitment to the UN Convention for the Rights of the Child.

Retail teams in our charity shops continue to scale new heights, delivering vital profits towards our care. Their fantastic work was recognised at the Charity Retail Association Awards, as Acorns came home with **Outstanding Charity Retailer of the Year**.



We were also honoured to achieve **Thrive at Work Bronze Award** from the West Midlands Combined Authority, recognising our commitment to supporting the health, wellbeing and development our people.

Our incredible volunteers continue to give their all in every area of Acorns. Over 1,000 committed volunteers work in our shops, hospices and at fundraising events. We simply wouldn't be able to continue without them.



# A hospice for the future

This year Acorns in the Black Country, in Walsall, reopened following a stunning £2 million refurbishment which has transformed the hospice for children and families.

The refurbishment was only possible thanks to the local community, who donated generously to our Room to Grow Appeal. Thanks to them, the hospice has been modernised, with every little detail considered with children and families in mind.



# Only with your support

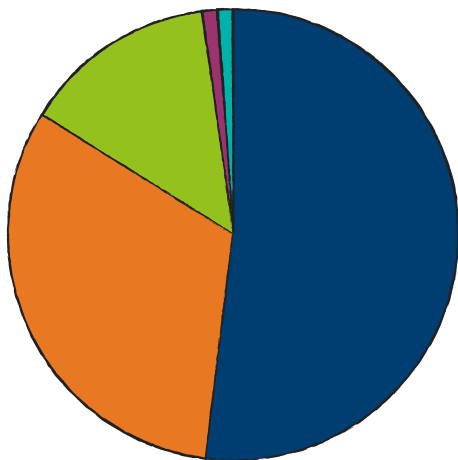
The vast majority of our funding at Acorns comes from the generosity of the local community. Whether it's donations; people taking part in sponsored runs, bake sales or sky-dives; partnerships with local businesses and sports teams; or loose change in collection tins, we are so grateful for your support.





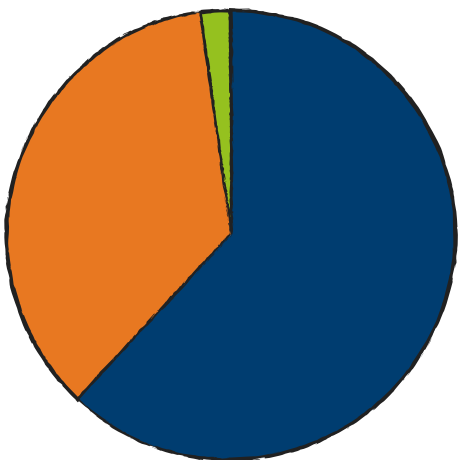
# Strength in numbers

Extracts from our annual report and accounts 2022-2023



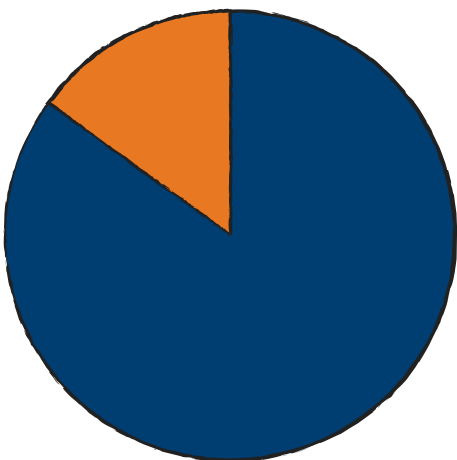
Income

Fundraising income:	£7,554,000	52%
Statutory income:	£4,563,000	32%
Net Retail income:	£2,006,000	14%
Lottery income:	£192,000	1%
Other income:	£107,000	1%
Total income:	£14,422,000	



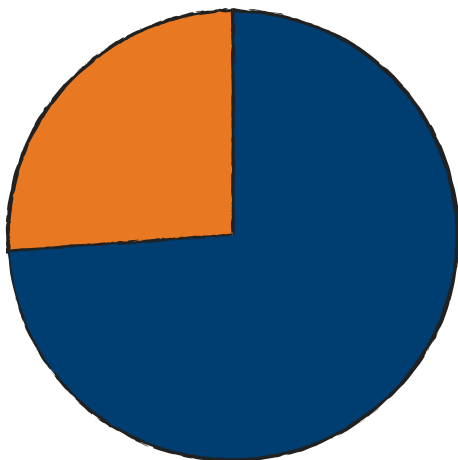
Fundraising income breakdown

Donations:	£4,726,000	62%
Legacies:	£2,688,000	36%
Events:	£140,000	2%
Total:	£7,554,000	



Expenditure

Care activities:	£11,007,000	85%
Non-care activities:	£2,018,000	15%
Total expenditure:	£13,025,000	



Expenditure

Residential care:	£8,133,000	74%
Community care:	£2,874,000	26%
Total:	£11,007,000	

The financial information on these pages is an extract of our audited annual report and accounts for 2022-23. It is a simplified summary of our sources of income and our spending. If you would like more detail about how we did last year, our governance arrangements and our plans for the future, our annual report and accounts are available at [acorns.org.uk/publications](https://acorns.org.uk/publications)

## Surplus for the year after change in investment asset values

Total income:	£14,422,000
Total expenditure:	-£13,025,000
Investment movement:	-£121,000
Surplus for the year:	£1,276,000

Total funds at the start of the year:	£22,381,000
Net surplus for the year:	£1,276,000
Total funds at the end of the year:	£23,657,000





We are there for every child who needs us.  
But it's only possible with your help.

Join the fight for local families:  
[acorns.org.uk](https://acorns.org.uk)

Discover more:



[acornschilrenshospice](https://www.facebook.com/acornschilrenshospice)



[acornshospice](https://twitter.com/acornshospice)



[acornshospice](https://www.instagram.com/acornshospice)



[Acorns Children's Hospice](https://www.linkedin.com/company/acorns-childrens-hospice)



[acornschilrenshospice](https://www.tiktok.com/@acornschilrenshospice)

**#StrongerTogether**

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**acorns**

*Your local children's hospice*