



Issue 8

Achievements throughout 2025

A Year of Stories, Strength, and Smiles

When we look back on the past year, what stands out most is not the number of grants awarded or the equipment purchased, it's the children and families behind every decision we made.

Every enquiry, every application, and every conversation represents a real family navigating challenges that often feel overwhelming. Behind each request is a story of resilience, determination, and love, parents doing everything they can to support their children, often in circumstances they never expected to face.

It's the child who can finally sleep comfortably in their own bed, waking rested instead of exhausted. Free from pain and discomfort.

The parent who no longer has to choose between paying a bill or buying school shoes.

The family who can attend vital hospital appointments without worrying about how they will get there, or whether they can afford the journey.

Last year, we walked alongside families through some of their most challenging moments. Sometimes that support has been immediate and urgent; at other times it has been steady and ongoing. In every case, our aim has been the same, to listen carefully, respond compassionately, and offer practical support, reassurance, and hope when it was needed most.

The following pages are an example of how, together, we made a meaningful difference.

Helping Children Find Their Voice and Confidence Whilst Supporting Growth

For some children, support meant finding their voice for the very first time. During the year, we were able to provide 22 communication devices, along with tablets, computers, laptops, speech software, and specialist technology, opening doors to learning, connection, and independence, and allowing children to express their needs, share their thoughts, and be heard.

For families, these moments are often deeply emotional. Being able to understand a child's needs, preferences, or feelings can transform daily life, reducing frustration and helping children engage more confidently at home, in school, and within their communities.

These tools do more than support communication, they create connection.



Via Air with Word



Tobii Dynavox AAC Device



An Eyegaze system in use at Wilson Stuart SEN School



An iPad in use at the Priory SEN School

For others, support focused on comfort, movement, and physical development. Through hydrotherapy and physiotherapy sessions, children have been supported to move, strengthen, grow, and build confidence in their own abilities.

Over the past year, we have funded over 70 specialist hydrotherapy and physiotherapy sessions, supporting children with a wide range of complex needs. These sessions help to improve muscle strength, balance, coordination, and mobility, while also easing pain, reducing stiffness, and supporting overall physical wellbeing.

Just as importantly, therapy offers emotional and psychological benefits. In calm, supportive environments, children are able to relax, feel secure, and explore movement in ways that may not be possible elsewhere. Each session helps build trust, confidence, and resilience, empowering children to believe in what their bodies can do, rather than focusing on limitations.

Progress is often gradual, measured in small but meaningful steps. A new movement, improved posture, increased stamina, or a moment of pride after completing an exercise can represent a huge milestone. Every step forward matters, and each achievement, no matter how small, contributes to greater independence, comfort, and quality of life over time.

We've also helped families reach vital medical appointments by covering hospital travel costs. By removing this financial pressure, parents were able to focus fully on their child's health and wellbeing, rather than worrying about how they would manage the journey at an already stressful and exhausting time.



Creating Safety, Stability, and Dignity at Home

At home, support has been about safety, dignity, and comfort. Beds, mattresses, adapted furniture, bathroom refits, flooring, carpets, and specialist equipment have transformed living spaces into places where children can rest, grow, and feel secure.

This year, we also provided desks and chairs, white goods, and essential household appliances, helping families establish safe, functional homes where routines could be rebuilt and daily life could feel more manageable.

These changes often have a ripple effect. Improved sleep, safer environments, and accessible equipment can ease daily care routines and reduce physical and emotional strain for the whole family. What might seem like a single item can restore routine, independence, and peace of mind.



A Safespace Bed

Where families were facing real financial hardship, we responded with practical help including clothing, school uniforms, shoes, vouchers, deposits, and rent. Sometimes the support was life-changing; sometimes it was simply what was needed to get through the week, but every bit mattered, and every family was treated with dignity and respect.

Learning, Sensory Support, and Growing Independence



One of the Acheeva workstations

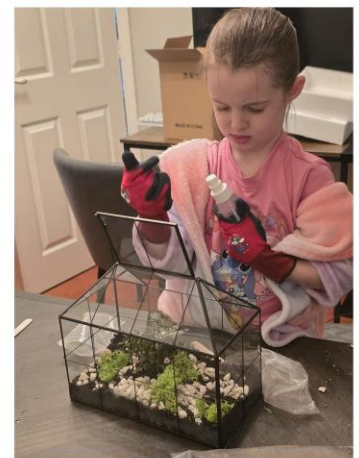
Education and development have remained a key focus throughout the year.

We were proud to fund the purchase of two Acheeva Workstations, alongside additional sensory equipment for four schools. This support has helped create inclusive learning environments where children can feel comfortable, focused, and supported, enabling them to learn, engage, and thrive in ways that are tailored to their individual needs and abilities.



Supplied sensory equipment/soft play

Alongside this, we continued to run our horticultural programme, reaching over 100 children, offering opportunities for learning, calm, creativity, and connection with nature. We were also pleased to continue our photography classes, giving children a creative outlet to express themselves, build confidence, and develop new skills.



We also supplied medical equipment, multiple sensory items, and specialist resources, as well as eight powered wheelchairs and two manual wheelchairs, helping children move more freely, access their communities, and experience greater independence.



Rogue XP & Tri Ride



Tiltrite Chair



Assistance Dog



Q500M Wheelchair

Rest, Joy, and Time Together

Alongside practical support, holidays and respite have remained at the very heart of what we do. Each year, we provide respite breaks for approximately 140 children and their families, offering vital time away during the often relentless journey of childhood illness and disability.

A short break can be crucial to the survival of family relationships. Time away from hospitals, doctors, treatments, and daily pressures allows families to reconnect, rest, and simply enjoy being together. We believe every family deserves this opportunity — not as a luxury, but as an essential form of support.

In 2025 alone, we were able to provide respite breaks for 141 families across our two fully adapted respite homes at Haven's Golden Sands Holiday Park in Mablethorpe. For many, this was the first chance in years to pause, recharge, and spend quality time together in a safe, accessible, and supportive environment designed with their needs in mind.

The park offers facilities suitable for all ages, whatever the weather, and is fully wheelchair friendly with easy access to nearby amenities. Our two respite homes are thoughtfully equipped to meet a wide range of needs, including:

- Wheelchair access ramps
- Hoists in main bedrooms
- Adapted wet rooms
- Lowered work surfaces, light switches, and sockets
- Extra-wide sliding doors and wheelchair access to every room
- Central heating and double glazing



These homes are dedicated exclusively to respite care and welcome children with a wide range of disabilities, illnesses, and disorders. They provide a peaceful, tranquil setting, particularly important for children recovering from operations or managing the emotional challenges that come with complex conditions.

In addition to respite care, we also provided 58 much-needed holidays at Butlins Skegness, supporting families with young children from underprivileged or poverty-stricken backgrounds. These breaks offered precious time together away from medical routines and daily stresses, moments of joy, laughter, and normality that many families rarely experience.



A family at Haven

Child poverty across the UK is rising for the first time in nearly two decades, bringing serious consequences for children's health, education, and long-term wellbeing. Poverty can limit development, restrict opportunity, and have lasting social and psychological effects. We strongly believe that no child should feel excluded from experiences that others may consider ordinary, and that every child deserves the chance to create happy family memories.

While our homes provide incredible respite and holiday opportunities, they rely heavily on ongoing funding to operate.

Essential costs such as site fees, utilities, insurance, maintenance, and repairs must be met year-round. With so many families using our homes, wear and tear is inevitable, and prompt replacement or repair is vital to ensure the homes remain safe, welcoming, and fully accessible for every family who stays.

Thanks to the generosity of our supporters, we are able to continue offering these lifelines to families when they need them most — creating space for rest, recovery, connection, and hope.



A family at Butlins

The Total annual running costs for our 3 Respite and Holiday homes for 2026 will be £38,187.60



Our new respite home for 2026 at Haven

Behind the scenes, we also took an important step forward by purchasing a dedicated charity vehicle. This has enabled us to safely transport equipment, deliver gifts and essential items, support families travelling to and from our holiday and respite homes, and ensure vital resources reach children as quickly and efficiently as possible. It has already become an invaluable part of how we support families on a practical, day-to-day basis.

Creating Moments of Joy and Looking Ahead

Alongside essential support, we've continued to focus on joy, recognising how important moments of happiness and calm are for children and families facing daily challenges. Sensory equipment, toys, calming chairs, hobbies, books, sports equipment, and creative outlets have helped children engage with the world in ways that suit them, building comfort, confidence, and a sense of enjoyment on their own terms.

Our four SEN Days created inclusive, welcoming spaces filled with laughter, understanding, and shared experiences. Designed with care and sensitivity, these days gave children the freedom to be themselves and families the chance to relax in environments where they felt truly understood and accepted.

For many families of children with special educational needs and disabilities, everyday activities can feel overwhelming due to sensory challenges and a lack of awareness or understanding. SEN Days remove those barriers by providing calm, supportive spaces where children can engage at their own pace, without fear of judgement.

Just as importantly, these days help reduce isolation. Families are able to connect with others who share similar experiences, offering reassurance, mutual support, and a sense of belonging. Above all, SEN Days create joyful, meaningful memories, strengthening confidence,



Creating Moments of Joy and Looking Ahead Cont



For children like Toby, our support has been ongoing.

By walking alongside them over time, we help nurture ambition, confidence, and belief supporting futures that once felt out of reach to feel possible again.

Toby's journey shows what long-term, consistent support can make possible

Nottwil Grand Pix 225 - 100m

International classification race, mixed age category. Toby was the youngest in the line up.

London Mini Marathon 2025

London Mini Marathon U17 Male 2025 wheelchair racing champion.

2025 Nantwich 10K

Toby's first ever 10k race, Toby placed 3rd!

Track night Vienna 2025

Toby was invited to race in Vienna to showcase what wheelchair racing is all about.

Toby placed 2nd by 100th on a second. !!

At special times of year, we made sure children felt remembered and celebrated — with Easter treats, Christmas gifts, and moments of magic that brought smiles, excitement, and reassurance to families during times that can otherwise feel difficult.



Sensory Projector for Maryam



Assistance dog for Libbi



Sensory mirror



Our team delivering xmas presents

Impact at a Glance – 2025

Thanks to the generosity of our supporters, throughout 2025 we were able to deliver meaningful, practical support to children and families across the UK:

22 communication devices, including tablets, computers, and laptops - 2 Acheeva Workstations to support learning and development - 8 powered wheelchairs and 2 manual wheelchairs - Over 70 Hydrotherapy and physiotherapy sessions to support comfort, movement, and confidence - Desks, chairs, white goods, and essential household items, - Medical equipment and multiple sensory items supplied to children and schools - Sensory equipment provided to 4 schools Horticultural programme delivered to over 100 children - Photography to support creativity and self-expression 4 inclusive SEN Days, 58 holidays provided at Butlins Skegness - 141 families supported with respite breaks, A dedicated charity vehicle purchased to deliver equipment, gifts, and family support safely and efficiently 2 assistance dogs - Food parcels, Help with Bills, Hospital Travel and much more

Every story in this newsletter is only possible because of the generosity, kindness, and belief of our supporters. You are the reason we can say “yes” when a family reaches out. You are the reason a child sleeps better, communicates more freely, feels safer, and smiles more often.

From all of us at Make Them Smile, thank you for being part of these stories, and for helping us to create so many smiles last year.

Emotional and Practical Support – We're Here When You Need Us Most

Talking through life's challenges can be incredibly healing. At Make Them Smile, we understand the emotional toll serious illness can take—not just on the child, but on the entire family. That's why we offer an Emotional and Practical Support Line, available seven days a week, to provide guidance, reassurance, and a listening ear

Contact Us: Support Line: 0330 1330 870. Mon–Fri: 8:00am–5:30pm - Sat–Sun: 8:00am–12:00pm

24hr Emergency Line: 07725 099 584

General Support: support@makethemsmile.org.uk

Bereavement & Emotional Support:

Kelly McWilliams: kelly@makethemsmile.org.uk - Karen Robeson: karen@makethemsmile.org.uk

You're not alone—we're always here to listen, guide, and support.

You can find more information regarding all our projects on our website: makethemsmile.org.uk If you feel you can help or would like to donate to any of our projects, you can do this by bank transfer direct to our bank account or at any Lloyds Bank, our details are

Sort Code 77-72-25 - Account number 40723568

or alternatively, by visiting our website: www.makethemsmile.org.uk and click on the **donate** button.

Make Them Smile The Business Hive, 13 Dudley Street, Grimsby, DN31 2AW
TEL: 0330 1330 870 - Email: trustees@makethemsmile.org.uk