



TRANSFORMING CHILDREN'S HEALTH THROUGH PLAY



ANNUAL

REPORT

AND



FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Year ended 31 March 2025

Starlight Children's Foundation

A company limited by guarantee 02038895
Registered charity 296058 (England and Wales) SC047600 (Scotland)

ROYAL PATRON

HRH Princess Alexandra KG GCVO

CO-FOUNDER

Emma Samms MBE

TRUSTEES

Alain Wolffe (Chair)

Mike Daniels (appointed July 9 2025)

Dr Christopher Evans (resigned July 9 2025)

Paul Gathercole (appointed July 9 2025)

Anna Gawn (resigned 4 April 2025)

Ian Harding

Dr Christopher Kelly

Christian Pau (appointed 10 July 2024)

Abi Robins (appointed 4 April 2025)

Betsabeh Solente (resigned July 9 2025)

HONORARY CHAIR OF FUNDRAISING

Alasdair Hadden-Paton

SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM

Cathy Gilman, CEO

Dr Krutika Pau, Director of Children's Services,
Deputy CEO

James Ronaldson, Director of Finance
(appointed 1 April 2025)

Sarah Woods, Director of Fundraising
and Marketing (resigned 25 April 2025)

Nicky Wade, Director of Finance and
Organisational Effectiveness (resigned 23
February 2025)

Jonny Wright, Director of Income and
Engagement (appointed 2 June 2025)

REGISTERED OFFICE

Starlight Children's Foundation
227 Shepherds Bush Road
London W6 7AU
www.starlight.org.uk
020 7262 2881

AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE

Ian Harding (Chair)

Mike Daniels (appointed July 9 2025)

Cathy Gilman

Chris Kelly

James Ronaldson, Director of Finance

Nicky Wade, Director of Finance and
Organisational Effectiveness (resigned 23
February 2025)

Alain Wolffe

SAFEGUARDING COMMITTEE

Paul Gathercole (Chair) (appointed July 9
2025)

Anna Gawn (Chair) (resigned 4 April 2025)

Jane Backlog (joined 25 April 2025)

Dr Krutika Pau

Laura Walsh

Sarah Woods (resigned 25 April 2025)

DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Alasdair Hadden-Paton (Chair of Fundraising)

Oliver Hardcastle

Olivia McCall

Alexandra Spencer-Churchill

Sarah Woods (resigned 25 April 2025)

Jonny Wright (appointed 2 June 2025)

BANKERS

HSBC, Plc 25 Wigmore Street,
London W1H 0DP

Lloyds Bank, Plc 25 Gresham Street,
London EC2V 7HN

SOLICITORS

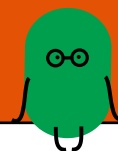
Mayer Brown International LLP
201 Bishopsgate, London EC2M 3AF

AUDITORS

Sayer Vincent LLP, 110 Golden Lane,
London EC1Y 0TG



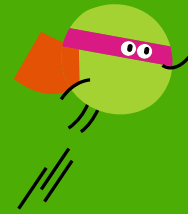
Contents



A message from our Chair	4
Ending avoidable trauma in healthcare	6
Starlight play strategy	8
Insight, evidence and participation	11
We make play possible	16
We make play better	22
We make play matter	26
How we fund our work	29
Our culture and colleague experience	39
Financial performance report	42
Governance	47
Trustees Declaration of Responsibilities	50
Independent auditor's report to the members of Starlight Children's foundation	51
Financial Statements	56
Notes to the financial statements	60



A message from our Chair



No one enjoys medical procedures, least of all children.

From facing everyday vaccinations to the most serious of surgeries and chronic conditions, all children experience varying degrees of apprehension and fear. Feeling scared, powerless, or anxious in healthcare settings doesn't just trigger a child's emotions; it can create traumas that impact treatment success and that can have a life-long impact. Starlight exists to empower better healthcare outcomes for children, through better healthcare experiences.

We put play at the heart of healthcare.

Research shows that traumatised children often don't respond so well to medical interventions. The more negative the experience, the more the body resists treatment, the poorer the outcomes, with echoes persisting long into adulthood. The simple answer lies in soothing a young person's nervous system, so that the child no longer feels terrified and confused, but open and engaged, curious and empowered, a hero in their own health story.

Our prescription couldn't be simpler or more powerful, it's play.

For children, play is a powerful tool for healing. Play reduces trauma, builds resilience, and helps children cope with treatment. It transforms sterile hospital rooms into spaces of comfort, courage and personal control. It makes healthcare not just bearable, but better. The science is clear. The impact is undeniable.

Play isn't a luxury – it's a necessity.

Children's healthcare practitioners are giving everything they have to support the health and wellbeing of our children. But they need our help. That's why Starlight exists. We make play possible by providing the toolkits, arts and crafts and technology where there are no budgets for play. We make play better by supporting the development of the health play community and sharing best practice. We make play matter by having the science to lead thinking on the impact of play and the importance of embedding it into the healthcare system to improve experiences and outcomes for children.

Quite simply play makes it better.

It might be surprising to learn that although we support 940 hospitals, hospices and other healthcare settings across the UK we are team of just 35 people seriously punching above our weight. Working in partnership and collaboration, we are tenacious and resourceful, collating evidence to make sure that decisions are made where they matter the most.



For children, play is a powerful tool for healing. Play reduces trauma, builds resilience, and helps children cope with treatment."



We are delighted that a new toolkit of guidelines and standards, produced by Starlight via a joint taskforce, is being prepared for publication by NHS England in the summer of 2025. These official documents will help to raise the profile of health play services with NHS commissioners and leaders. We hope that this will help unlock the vital funding needed for play resources, as well as set clear standards for how they should be delivered to children.

Our purpose drives every choice that we make and there's no doubt that our team have to work harder for every £ we raise. Expenditure is ever more carefully considered. Like many charities, we feel the pressure of a reduced reserves buffer post pandemic, with the double whammy of an enduring cost of living impact that reduces people's ability to give, while operational costs increase. We continue to look at our cost structure, which is already very tight. However, the opportunities to end our office lease and a restructure in our leadership team arising from vacancies, do mean that once again we will be reducing our cost base in the year ahead.

Through influencing decision-makers and by a strategic and determined approach to securing Gift in Kind, we can also ensure that we optimise impact despite inevitable risks around income in the current environment. At such a challenging time for the sector, it's vital that we continue to find new ways to increase resource to our mission that is not limited by our income and expenditure. That said, in a non-Blenheim Ball year, underlying income has held up well and the early signs are positive from the changes that we made in our fundraising team last year.

This year, the Trustees have taken time to recognise the significant income that the Blenheim Ball raised in March 2024, thanks to the generous support of **Alexandra Spencer Churchill** and her committee. They have also considered the options for lessening the financial uncertainty for an event that is such a significant proportion of income in those years. To date it has taken place right at the financial year end. The Trustees have taken the decision to extend the next financial year to September 2026. This means that we will know the result of the event well before the year end and have time to respond accordingly.

I hope that you are inspired by this report – the progress we have made is only possible because of you. Together, we can completely transform children's healthcare outcomes and remove unnecessary trauma. With increasing pressure on the healthcare system and a turbulent political and economic environment, there's no doubt your support is more important than ever for Starlight.

Thank you.



Alain Wolffe
Chair, Starlight



Throughout this report, the word children represents an abbreviation of babies, children and young people



Play relaxes children and takes their mind off why they're in hospital. It helps reduce children's worries, anxiety and trauma and eases how the family is feeling.

Hamera Elahi, Health Play Specialist, Newham Hospital

Ending avoidable trauma in healthcare

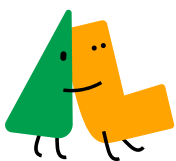


Healthcare is a scary world and feeling scared can make us all less resilient and less receptive to treatment, but it is especially true for children. Children should not have to endure fear, anxiety, loneliness and isolation as part of their healthcare experience.

It's simply not acceptable for children to suffer avoidable psychological trauma.

Starlight is the UK's leading charity for children's play in healthcare. We believe it is vital to empower better healthcare outcomes for children, through better healthcare experiences. We uniquely put play at the heart of healthcare to support mental and physical health during treatment and recovery from illness.

It is easy to think that play can only happen once important treatment is taken care of. But for children, play is central to the way they learn and cope with new challenges, and that includes the challenges of treatment. That's why, at Starlight, we're committed to making sure that play becomes an intrinsic part of every child's treatment and care. We want to create a world where it's official policy that play is integral to every child's medical treatment plan.



It's important that Starlight takes a rights-based approach to our work. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is the most widely ratified human rights treaty in the world. It sets out the rights of every young person aged 17 and under. These rights include children's freedom from discrimination (article 2), the protection and care necessary for their well-being (article 3), their right to be heard and express their views (article 12), their freedom of expression (article 13), enjoyment of good health and access to health care services (article 24), and their right to play (article 31).

Of all the rights enshrined in the UNCRC, children's right to play is one of the most commonly overlooked, undervalued and undermined.

This is especially true in healthcare where **71% of hospitals and hospices have no designated budget for play resources and 85% have no policies or procedures for play**. As a result, traumatic healthcare experiences can have a lifelong impact on our relationship with treatment and care. Starlight estimated in our 2023 *Play in Healthcare Week Report* that **10% of UK adults have mental health problems** because of their negative healthcare experiences as a child.

We know that play improves children's experience of healthcare.

We also know that by making treatment less stressful and more efficient, play saves the NHS vital resources and delivers real economic benefit to an overstretched healthcare system.





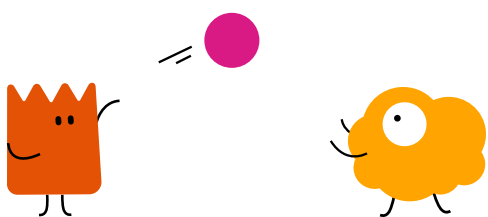
Starlight Play Strategy

Children, like adults, are complex human beings, shaped by their unique circumstances of life, with their own personalities, preferences, hopes, dreams, flaws and fears. But common to all children, is their instinctive impulse to play.

Playing is central to their experience and enjoyment of living.

Seriously ill and hospitalised children are still children with the same rights, needs and wants as any other children, including the right and desire to play.

The importance of play is not valued enough in the UK. We saw during the Covid-19 pandemic and have continued to experience since then, the mental health impact and consequences of children not playing. It's not really surprising then, that the crucial importance of play is often overlooked in healthcare. The current medicalised healthcare model of children's care and treatment consistently neglects the integral role of play to their mental health and wellbeing.





The importance of play in healthcare

- Reduces **anxiety, fear, stress** and even **pain**.
- Helps children **engage and prepare for their treatment** and cope better with procedures.
- **Minimises trauma** and contributes to a better experience.
- Supports children to have some **sense of control**.
- Creates **continuity** with everyday life.

We know that children have a considerable capacity for coping; often more than adults may initially appreciate. However, **children's capability to cope is conditional on their circumstances and the opportunities available to them**. Seriously ill or hospitalised children need help from adults, but this does not make them helpless; they need hope, but this doesn't make them hopeless. Children in healthcare need our compassion, care and support and central to this is their need for support to play in alien and frightening environments.

At Starlight we believe in and support children's capacity to be active participants in their own care and treatment. We recognise that many children want to be involved, listened to and heard. When adults make the effort to communicate with children in more child-centred ways, children have a great capacity to understand and appreciate what is happening to them. They also hold rich, personal and unique knowledge about themselves and their lives which can support adults in their care and treatment. Paying attention to children means we must take the intrinsic and instrumental power of play seriously, not as a nice to have but as integral to a positive experience of healthcare.

Our strategy to end avoidable trauma for children is centred around **insight and active participation from the children themselves**. We also involve the adults who participate in their healthcare experience including parents, play specialists and other health professionals.

By encouraging children to develop their own resilience and coping mechanisms, we can begin to improve individual responsibility for healthcare from an early age, contributing to a more sustainable healthcare system. By supporting adults to rethink their views about children and their childhoods, we influence the value society places on children's play in the healthcare system.

Our strategy is evidence-led and centred around the needs of children which are identified through extensive research and where possible, the participation of children themselves. **The three pillars of our strategy work together to amplify their impact**, to achieve immediate as well as long-term systemic improvements in the experience of children in our healthcare system:



1. We Make Play Possible

Starlight supports health systems and organisations to embed effective play practices, as well as producing a range of resources to put play opportunities right at the point of care. From our wealth of online support materials, to our carefully curated preparation, distraction and play boxes,

to our dedicated community of expert health play specialists, we're working tirelessly to be there as an intrinsic resource at the frontline of children's healthcare. **It's our vision to provide play materials and experts for every child, in every hospital and practice in the UK.**

2. We Make Play Better

Children's healthcare practitioners are busy, overstretched and can be dealing with life or death decisions every day. Starlight is here for them, every step of the way, helping them incorporate play in ways that make their work easier, not harder. We work with those on the frontline, **building capability and sharing best practice with everyone working within children's healthcare**, building young patients' resilience and receptiveness to treatment.

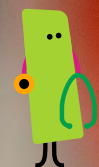
In this way we:

- **Reduce children's feelings of isolation and anxiety in hospital**, enabling them to experience the everyday joys of childhood in spite of the difficult circumstances and strange environments.
- **Support children's sense of agency and psychological safety**, mitigating the risks of mental trauma from painful and stressful procedures.
- **Offer efficiency savings for the NHS**, resulting from children being more cooperative and engaged in their care and treatment.

3. We Make Play Matter

It is easy to think that play happens when important treatment and medical procedures are taken care of. But **for children, play is central to the way they learn and cope with new challenges**. That's why, at Starlight, we're committed to making play matter so much it becomes an intrinsic part of every child's healthcare pathway.

We want to create a world where it's official policy that play is a prerequisite on every child's medical treatment plan. We're here to help all decision-makers understand the importance of play, leading thinking on its potential for positive impact, with the science to back it up.



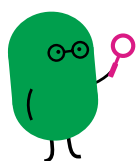
Insight, evidence and participation

Insight and evidence

Thought leadership is needed to help all decision-makers understand the importance of play and this requires the science and the evidence to back this up.

Our **Insight and Impact** team evidence the importance, value and reach of health play more broadly and evaluate the impact and outcomes of Starlight's services. They do this in consultation and collaboration with a number of partners, including researchers and academics, to further broaden our knowledge and understanding of health play, health analytics and health economics.

This year we have developed a new health play outcomes monitoring tool for health play professionals to measure the impact of play on children's engagement and wellbeing. This is being trialed by our funded health play professionals. We will continue to monitor the use and effectiveness of this tool next year as well as support Leeds Beckett University in their independent evaluation of this program of work.



Our research, based on Freedom of Information requests to all Health Trusts and Health Boards in the UK, and CQC data shows that:

The health play workforce across the UK comprises only **1,156 people** in a variety of roles, of which **only 571 are registered** health play specialists (HPSs).

An average ratio of only **one full-time HPS for 3,986 child admissions** to hospital per year.

47%

of HPSs work **part-time** and most do not work weekends.

71%

of settings have **no designated budget for play resources**.

ONLY 15%

of Trusts and Health Boards have **policies and procedures** for play.

A core value at Starlight is to share our insight and knowledge. We do this through presentations, forums, webinars, symposia and reports. Fundamental to our assessment of the need for play services is **a comprehensive monitoring of the state of play across the UK**. The evidence from this research enables us to identify gaps and inequalities in play provision across the UK.

In the coming year we will be updating and re-issuing Freedom of Information requests for our next 'State of Health Play' mapping exercise. **We will be monitoring whether there have been any improvements or developments in health play provision across the UK** since the last report in 2023. Also in the year ahead, we plan to deepen our understanding of how, where and when healthcare-related trauma happens to raise awareness and **prioritise services** even further to where they may be most impactful.





Participation

The UNCRC supports and guides our decisions and choices. Article 12 states that we have an obligation “to engage with children to enable them to form and express their views and to influence our work”. Understanding children’s needs through their participation is central to outcomes from our strategy. We further define participation as children’s agency and active involvement in their care and treatment through everyday play opportunities while they are in hospital and by the support of specialised play practitioners to protect this right during treatment.

While the adults supporting children in healthcare, including play and other health professionals and parents, provide important insight about the experience of children in their care, **it has been our ambition to ensure that children’s own voices are also better represented in our research and insight work, to inform our service offer.**

It was important to intentionally create more opportunities for children to be valued and heard; and to support their agency and build skills, confidence and self-esteem. Armed with this insight we know that **we can create more engaging and accessible services and environments** that will result in better outcomes for children’s health and wellbeing. We can also become more expert advocates on their behalf, representing what truly matters to our young audience.

This year, we went through a consultation process with other UK charities and organisations that have experience of running youth panels, to fast track our learning and avoid possible pitfalls. From this we formed our own approach, which we tested with a focus group of young people and their health professionals.

In June we brought together four passionate 14-17 year olds from across the UK to help us protect children’s right to play and participation in healthcare. Every month, we now meet up as a group either online or in-person to hear their views and brainstorm ideas for new projects, to get more young people’s voices embedded into our work.

In a short time, they have interrogated the Directors about Starlight strategy and plans and reviewed the items in our **Play Well Box**. This box offers resources to support the mental health of children from 10 years old. In a ‘Dragons Den-style’ activity, they pitched their own ideas to design a brand new box. These designs are now directly feeding into the service development of the Play Well Box, led by our Health Play Services team.

The panel has also supported the development of a **video** which highlights the experiences of young people in hospital and the importance of play in healthcare. This was showcased at the start of the Starlight Health Play Symposium to ensure that the influential researchers, practitioners, play advocates and policymakers present had children central to their thinking from the start of the day.

In the year ahead the Youth Panel are devising their own **research project** that will give us an insight into children and young people’s ‘day in the life’ in hospital and other healthcare settings. We will also be building a ‘Youth Hub’ on our website, which will be a dedicated space for children and young people to hear about and get involved in Starlight’s work. As we recruit new youth panellists in Spring 2025, we’ll be keeping in touch with our Youth Panel alumni and growing our movement of young advocates for play.



The economic value of play

For play to really matter in healthcare, we need to create a world where it's official policy that play is a prerequisite on every child's medical treatment plan. Our evidence on the impact of play for children's health outcomes and experiences of healthcare is vital for commissioners and policy makers to **understand the importance of play** being integrated into paediatric healthcare. Equally important in a healthcare system where there is increasing pressure on resources, is to demonstrate the **efficiencies and economic benefits** that the integration of play can bring.

Working with **Pro-Bono Economics**, last year we were able to demonstrate that the use of a Starlight Box could shave off **six minutes** from the average treatment, potentially freeing up the equivalent of **6,500 staff days a year**. This year we have been working closely with healthcare professionals to include simple efficiency measures in our feedback surveys. From the responses that we received, there is convincing evidence of the potential efficiencies that can be achieved with the integration of play into treatment.

The importance of play as a solution to improve healthcare efficiencies, outcomes and experiences cannot be understated. Because of this we are developing a research proposal to conduct a **feasibility study for a randomised control trial** on the economic benefits of play in paediatric dental care. We will be submitting our proposal for funding in the coming year.

As part of developing this proposal, we ran consultations and conducted site visits to different paediatric dental hospitals to understand the need and importance for play in these settings, to inform service development and potential research in this area. Our preliminary findings from our sites concluded that play:

- Helped children refusing treatment to **accept dental treatment**.
- Helped children to **relax** and **build resilience** in treatment.
- **Avoided the need for general anaesthetic** in a small number of cases.

EFFICIENCIES	Q1: 4 APR 24 - MAR 25		
	n	Agreed	%
It made treatment easier to deliver	164	156	95
Less time was needed to deliver the treatment	164	111	68
Fewer attempts were needed to deliver the treatment	164	125	76
Fewer staff members were needed to deliver the treatment	164	105	64
We did not need to administer sedation as a result	164	68	41

The Innovation Award

During the year we launched our new **Innovation Award** in an attempt to surface and share other efficiencies achieved through small and large changes that make paediatric healthcare better. This award aims to highlight the expertise and ingenuity that Health Play Specialists bring to improving children's experience of healthcare as well as their contribution to efficiency and effectiveness.

Tracey Martin, Health Play Specialist at Leeds Children's Hospital, was the winner of the first Starlight Innovation Award for innovative work tackling hospital-based anxiety in children. Tracey designed and created a **VIP Pass (Very Important Plan Procedural Anxiety Support Scheme)** for children and young people with severe and complex procedural anxiety. The Pass is an immediate visual clue to help staff understand that their patient may need adjustments to help them cooperate with treatments such as blood tests and injections.

Tracey had already been writing personalised plans for anxious young patients that parents or carers could show to staff but this had varying levels of success. She created the Pass as a simple solution to the problem. The Pass can be worn on a lanyard and has a QR code which can be scanned by all healthcare professionals. This alerts the team to review the patient's paperwork to better understand why it is so important to make the individual child more comfortable during procedures. This is supported by play-based sessions to help young patients work through their fears and create their individual procedural plan.

The Pass, which was funded by the hospital charity, is also linked to an alert system on patient records, which ensures every health professional knows if their patient has a personalised plan which needs to be read before commencing treatment.

The Pass has already made a big difference to young people in Leeds and surrounding areas. A 13-year-old patient with severe procedural anxiety had been refusing a blood test to check her rheumatology condition for over a year and was in a lot of pain. After plenty of sessions playing at blood tests with the health play specialist, she agreed to have it if she could have it at home cuddling her dog.

A plan was written for community nurses to follow. It was very specific – no mention of needles, blood or veins and the patient especially wanted to know what stage she was at in the procedure with specific phrases she could cope with. The clinicians were made aware of her plan through the VIP Pass and followed the plan for her care. Following the successful blood test she also went on to have an IV infusion in hospital without her dog present and she used the Pass to have a vaccination at another trust.

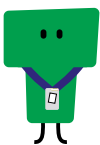
Tracey, who is based in the Paediatric Psychology Department, was delighted to be selected as the winner.



Patients who have play sessions with a health play specialist or psychologist often make excellent progress, but it only takes one negative procedural experience to undo all the patient's trust and ability to cooperate in the future.

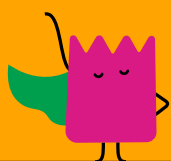
"Patients are more likely to cooperate when they feel safe, listened to and understood. With the VIP Pass patients have the reassurance that their needs will be incorporated into their care and many have been able to have essential treatments that they had been refusing."

"It reduces unsuccessful attempts of procedures, but most importantly it reduces the risk of potential further trauma for a chronically ill patient."





We make play possible



By providing the resources, support and training to protect play we aim to ensure that no child suffers avoidable distress or trauma from their healthcare.

We achieve this by:

1. Providing **impactful physical and digital health play resources** and support for children and their families.
2. **Connecting health practitioners** with each other and with opportunities to learn and improve practice.
3. **Promoting, educating and training** on health play.
4. Increasing and widely sharing the body of **impact evaluation** of health play.

The ultimate solution we seek is for systemic change in healthcare where the importance of play is fully recognised and play services are properly funded, designed and managed to the highest standards. While we work towards this goal, we continue to prioritise delivery of services and support to healthcare settings where they are most needed.

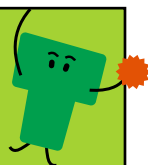


Health Play Services

Our vital Health Play Services are designed to **support health play specialists, playworkers and other professionals** with the resources and support they need to avoid or mitigate the immediate trauma that can be caused by medical treatments and negative hospital experiences.

We do this by providing resources to support play, including toolkits, technology, toys, books and materials, recognising that many health play professionals have little or no budget. We also provide multi-media resources such as videos or leaflets to guide play delivery.

In a recent survey 98% of healthcare professionals surveyed said they rely in part or entirely on Starlight services.



Our boxes of resources support health play professionals to provide everyday play opportunities. They contain toys and activities selected by our experts and increasingly tested with our Youth Panel, to soothe and distract children to ensure

their treatment can be carried out as quickly and effectively as possible. Research informs us that using these resources to support play reduces the stress, anxiety, and trauma of treatment; and can even reduce feelings of pain and reduce the need for unnecessary sedation, creating economic benefits for the NHS.

Children tell us hospitals are scary, and play makes it better.

Applications are received for these planned services and they are allocated based on what we know about the need in that setting, using both self-reported information from mapping data and nationwide population data. All resources are carefully curated through engagement with the sector, children and families and assessed by the Good Play Guide for play value. We evolve these resources in response to the feedback that we receive and the changing needs of the play community. This year we updated the Play Well resource with input from the youth panel, who tested and gave their own feedback on the products.

Kitty's story



Kitty was just six years old when she was diagnosed with a rare kidney disease. Her happy childhood vanished in a heartbeat. Instead of playing in the park or having sleepovers with friends, she faced years of surgeries, painful treatments, and, eventually, a kidney transplant that didn't go as planned. When she began bleeding internally, doctors told us she might not survive.

Throughout this time, we were desperate to ease Kitty's physical suffering. **But nothing prepared us for the emotional pain she would face.** Seeing the spark fade from our happy, vivacious girl was devastating. Starlight gave Kitty a much-needed escape from scary hospital stays. On her very first visit to the children's ward, Kitty was greeted with a gift from Starlight which made her feel far less afraid. Kitty felt different from her friends and, with each admission, I witnessed another layer of her confidence get stripped away. That's where the play professionals come in. They made such a fuss of Kitty as they built her up and put a smile on her face. **They used Starlight's Distraction Box to turn the ward into a place of fun and laughter.** It truly was the best medicine of all.

Starlight made a huge difference to me, too. Looking after a sick child meant I was constantly on high alert and feeling anxious about Kitty's every symptom. But **Starlight let me put my worries to one side, play with my girl, and enjoy being her mum again.** For Kitty, being able to play in hospital wasn't just a nice way to pass the time – **it was absolutely crucial in helping her to recover.** It distracted her from the horrors she experienced, it soothed her anxiety and helped her to bear many gruelling and painful medical procedures."

Debbi, Kitty's mum





Baby Box

Containing tools and resources to support the first years of development through play. We've developed this selection of activities and interactive toys to support play professionals to build relationships with babies and their families.

Sensory Toy Box

From stress balls to push poppers, groan tubes to maracas, our Sensory Boxes are designed to encourage children with additional needs to relax with fun, interactive toys and games to support their individual needs.



Distraction Box

Designed to provide healthcare professionals with a toolkit of resources to help distract and reassure children during procedures and in other stressful situations, including toys, games and puzzles, to help children feel less anxious before, during and after tests and treatments.

Play Well Box

Play Well offers resources to support the mental health of children aged 10 and up. Each Play Well Box is filled with comforting, calming, and one-time-use items designed to help young people unwind and connect, featuring puzzles, games, and a variety of engaging activities. This box is ideally suited for supporting inpatient care.

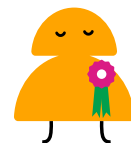
Preparation Box

This box provides play professionals with the tools they need to help explain scary treatments or procedures to children on their level, to ease anxiety before, during or after.

Play Essentials Box

Designed to provide the 'must have' resources on wards and in other healthcare settings, the Play Essentials Box includes:

- Ways to enable children to personalise their bed space, e.g. fairy lights.
- Reward charts.
- Arts and crafts.

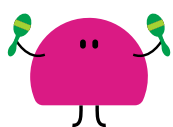


It's important that we recognise key partners who continue to help our resources reach as many health play professionals and children as possible.

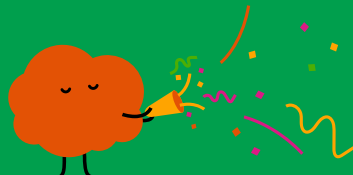
One4Fun has worked with Starlight for many years to ensure that we get the very best value for the resources that we procure for our services. They are also integral to best value stock storage and resource distribution to healthcare settings.

Theo Paphitis Retail Group and **Caran d'Ache** have been generous in their donations of arts and crafts supplies, which are fundamental for the wellbeing of young people of all ages.

In the year ahead we look forward to launching a new service thanks to the support of **LEGO**.



Our achievements this year



We delivered **5,279** health play services that have been **accessed over 1.3 million times** by children and young people in the UK.



Health professionals have provided an overall average rating of **4.8 out of 5 stars** for our box services.

Most notable impacts for the boxes based on 168 survey responses from health professionals:

- **80%** agreed it helped children to feel less anxious/scared about treatment.
- **86%** agreed it increased children's access to play in healthcare.
- **88%** agreed it created a more positive healthcare experience for children.
- **86%** agreed it was accessible to children with high support needs (e.g. neurodivergent conditions such as autism or learning disabilities).



We estimate that our VR headsets were used **almost 2,000 times**. Children and young people reported feeling **less anxious and more happy and confident** when using our VR in treatment. Children and young people who had used VR before tended to start treatment more confidently and less anxious too.

We delivered **14 training sessions** to health professionals. The total number of attendees across all sessions was **150**.



As part of our training package, this year we **developed and delivered training on playful approaches in healthcare for trainers**, these were lecturers at **Chester University**. All lecturers who fed back stated our training:

- Helps others to deliver a **more positive experience** for children in healthcare.
- Helps others to **better support children** in healthcare.
- Helps to **equip others with skills** to alleviate children's anxiety through play.



41 families said our **festive tour** made hospital/hospice **more fun**.

Our funded health play professionals delivered approximately **700 play sessions** in FY2425. **Leeds Beckett University** are independently evaluating this work.

In the first part of the year ahead, we will be focusing on distributing accumulated existing stock while we procure new product for the second half of the year. This will help us to manage the risk around longer procurement lead-times, reduce storage costs at our warehouse and lessen cash flow risk in the first half of the year.



We plan to merge our sensory and distraction resources into a sensory distraction collection and thanks to Gift in Kind donations from the **LEGO Group** we will be launching a **Build & Feel Play Box**. This will be a curated toolkit with LEGO Group and a digital resource for guidance on using the LEGO® sets to facilitate expressing difficult feelings with sensory resources and craft activities. To support our reach and engagement activity and with the aim of increasing awareness of Starlight, we will also be purchasing **Starlight branded toy boxes** to increase our Starlight physical presence in treatment rooms, wards and clinical spaces.



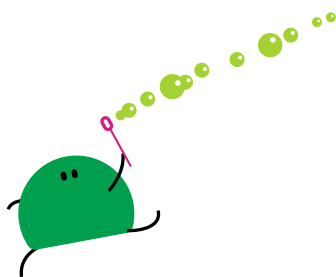


We make play better

As well as ensuring where possible that health play services are adequately resourced with physical items, we also aim to ensure that our services work to the highest standards.

To achieve this, we are creating a health play community that is trained, supported and encouraged to share best practice. We aim to be a voice for this community and the play profession, ensuring that they are recognised for their expertise and vital role in children's healthcare.

This year, we have continued to deepen our understanding of health play professionals and their needs, by working closely with the community in a number of ways. We also value working closely with sector bodies like the **Society of Health Play Specialists**, the **Royal College of Paediatric and Child Health, NHS England** and other relevant partners to ensure that our work is targeted where it is most needed.



We reported last year that we had taken a significant step forward by creating **four Starlight funded health play posts** for a three-year period. These play professionals, each supported by a Starlight mentor, have been supporting the development of centres of excellence in their hospital, hospice and community settings.

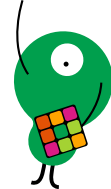
The evidence shows that when health play specialists are central to the multi-disciplinary team in paediatric care, wellbeing and health outcomes are improved.



The direct and continuous cycle of feedback from this programme has provided important feedback for the development of our services and especially in understanding the support most needed by play professionals in healthcare settings. In the year ahead, we will be reviewing what next for the programme as the pilot draws to a close.

This year, in a business case to the Department of Health and Social Care, **we estimated that there is a need for at least 1,000 more health play specialists across the UK.** This is not a viable funding option for Starlight. In reviewing our options for workforce support and development, the insight from the funded pilot has been important in informing and developing the Starlight Health Play Champions Network. This is now a more sustainable approach to the support of the play community for us.





Health Play Champions

Our Health Play Services are designed to support health play specialists, playworkers and other professionals in avoiding or mitigating the immediate trauma that can be caused by medical treatments and negative hospital experiences. We also support the workforce themselves by:

- Creating a community of health play practitioners called **Starlight Champions**.
- Encouraging and facilitating **peer-to-peer support**, sharing best practice and new ideas.
- Offering **specialised training sessions** where play professionals can develop new skills and expertise.

Starlight Health Play Champions play a key role in maintaining relationships between Starlight and other health professionals. They **raise awareness** about the work we do at Starlight and support our mission to use the power of play to make the experience of illness and treatment better for children and their families. There are currently **186 Health Play Champions in the UK** with recruitment ongoing and more targeted recruitment happening among **non-play staff** from disciplines such as nursing, radiography, occupational therapy and from underrepresented regions such as the north and Scotland. These are not funded positions but being a champion enables a **mutual exchange of support, training and best practice**, creating a community of professionals who are equipped to advocate for play in their settings.

We offer Health Play Champions:

- **Products** to trial within their setting.
- Early access to **training** opportunities.
- Regular **networking** opportunities.
- Enhanced Play In Hospital Week **support**.
- Opportunities to **share ideas** with other play professionals.

In return they support Starlight by:

- **Trialing products and projects** and supplying prompt feedback to Starlight.
- Supplying **photo evidence** of the impact of our services.
- Attending regular **focus groups**.
- Sharing **stories of Starlight's impact**.



For me it's about being heard and appreciated for the difference we make on the ward with the families and children."

Nicola, HPS



Sometimes [it feels like] the role we implement is 'just to play' ... however being part of the champions gives me the confidence to go to my management team and discuss with them what we have learnt or observed at meetings."

Anonymous





Professional resources and training

With the vital expertise and feedback of our Starlight Health Play Champions and broader play community, this year we were able to significantly increase the free tools available on our website. By sharing good ideas and best practice these downloadable tools support the efficiency and effectiveness of individuals and teams across the UK.

- For children there are templates for producing **individualised play programmes, reward charts and celebration certificates.**
- For play professionals there are templates to **document a child's development** when in hospital and to alert other teams to when a play professional should be involved in a procedure.

- There are also resources to help play specialists and healthcare professionals at really difficult times like **end of life** and **bereavement** work.

Budgets for education and training are not guaranteed to be available in a stretched healthcare system. We continue to focus on how we can further develop the professional expertise of the play community and this year were able to offer training in a number of areas including **youth mental health first aid; guided imagery; Makaton** and **end of life reflective practice.**

Raising the profile of health play professionals

We believe that health play specialists are extraordinary health professionals who plug vital gaps in treatment and care in hospitals and hospices. They carefully listen to understand the needs of each individual child and make the experience more human and positive for children, young people and their families.

They use play to prepare children for treatment and distract them from stressful and painful procedures. They help them deal with fear and anxiety, cope with pain and regain skills lost through the effects of illness or hospitalisation. They have end of life conversations, calm patients with serious mental health issues, provide snacks for hungry parents and often find themselves trying to raise the money for resources to support their work. They find every way to make all hospital touchpoints with children more friendly and normalise the experience of a hospital stay.

Each year we support **National Play in Healthcare Week** in October, organised by the **Society of Health Play Specialists**, with our **Health Play Awards**. The Awards give much needed recognition for some truly unsung heroes and improve awareness within healthcare and in the national media of the critical role of health play workers and their mentors.



We were delighted that the **Theo Paphitis Retail Group** sponsored the awards again this year and that Theo was able to present the awards himself at a special ceremony in London. **Eloise Lawrence**, from Evelina London Children's Hospital, was awarded Health Play Specialist of the Year 2024 for her dedication to supporting children through hospital procedures. Her work was especially recognised by colleagues in the Paediatric Radiology Department at the hospital.

Dr Arlen Urquia, Paediatric Radiology Consultant at Evelina London Children's Hospital, explained that their young patients can struggle with lying still for images which are essential for their diagnosis and treatment. Because Eloise is able to establish a good relationship with the young people before they are taken into the examination rooms, they are better prepared for what is going to happen, because she has explained it to them in a way they can understand. Eloise has supported the efficiency of some really challenging procedures for young people, for example by supporting MRI scans to be performed without the need for a general anaesthetic.



We make play matter

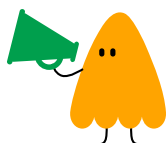


Starlight works across the healthcare system to promote and protect children's play. For this to have the greatest possible impact beyond our direct services, we are increasingly working to inform and influence policy development and implementation at a national level.

This means liaising with ministers, officials and advisors in the **Department of Health and Social Care**, making sure that they have the benefit of our research, knowledge and experience of the importance of play in children's healthcare as they develop future policy and plans for the NHS. We have, for example, met several times with officials who are assisting ministers with the government's new **10-year health plan**; and have also been an influential member of the **Health Policy Influencing Group** hosted by the **National Children's Bureau**, ensuring that health play services were included in its proposed 'roadmap for children's health'. We submitted verbal and written evidence to the **Raising the Nation Play Commission**, which although not a government initiative, is in a position to influence future policy.

To raise awareness of the importance of play with policymakers, ahead of last year's general election we produced a **manifesto** for children's play in healthcare, setting out our policy proposals to grow the health play workforce and increase both the quality and reach of services.

In addition to this work to influence government policy on children's healthcare, we have continued to work closely with the **NHS** and the health play profession to effect systemic change through new guidelines, standards and workforce development. A new **toolkit of guidelines and standards**, produced by Starlight via a joint taskforce, is being prepared for publication by NHS England in the summer of 2025.



Our aim is that these official documents help to **raise the profile of health play services** with NHS commissioners and leaders and therefore help to unlock the vital resources needed to meet the need for them, as well as **setting clear standards** for how they should be delivered to children. In June 2024 we produced our proposals for a strategy to grow and improve the health play workforce to the levels needed to deliver on these new benchmarks.

In the year ahead we plan to promote the new guidelines to NHS commissioners and leaders, aiming to embed play services as an integral component of the design and delivery of paediatric care, and to continue to exercise our influence across Whitehall and Parliament to secure recognition and support for children's play in healthcare from government policy.

'Playing with Children's Health?' – Symposium at the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (RCPCH)

In September, we staged a one-day symposium, supported and hosted by **RCPCH** and in collaboration with the **PEDAL** (Play in Education Development and Learning) play research centre, University of Cambridge. The event involved 20 influential speakers and panellists presenting and debating key issues of research, policy and practice in children's play in healthcare. There was a particular focus, in the context of a new government, on how public policy can be brought to bear on the need for systemic change. The event, chaired by **Kath Evans of Barts NHS Trust** was live-streamed to an online audience of more than 100.

Speakers included senior representatives of **NHS England** and **RCPCH**, practitioners giving case studies from a range of settings, and specialist play researchers from **PEDAL** and the **University of Gloucestershire** each presenting for the first time the findings of their bespoke research projects especially commissioned by Starlight. The keynote was from **Paul Lindley, OBE**, chair of the new Play Commission being hosted by the Centre for Young Lives the think tank/advocacy vehicle established by former children's commissioner, **Anne Longfield, CBE**.



We reviewed our policy campaign (launched before the general election in the summer) setting our policy asks in the context of Labour's historical commitments to children's play, and its ambitious, cross-departmental Play Strategy, launched towards the end of its last period in office. We also set out our broad proposals for a new health-play alliance and the potential for a defining charter for children's play in healthcare. We topped-and-tailed the event with an exposition of Starlight's vision for play and our evolving mission to drive a movement for change in children's healthcare and its culture.



Prioritising play in areas of deprivation

Building on the insight from our 2023 report *Reducing Trauma for Children in Healthcare*, our *Play in Healthcare Week report* in October this year focused on regional disparities in play provision in England. We continued to demonstrate that all children in hospital are at potential risk of negative experiences, which can lead to trauma and mental health problems. We also showed that children experiencing deprivation are at greater risk of medical-related trauma.

Out of the 15.1 million admissions and attendances for 0-17 year olds in England (FY2122):

- Nearly **8.7 million** (57%) were for children experiencing deprivation.
- More than **2.2 million** (26%) are experiencing the highest level of deprivation in England.
- These children are at particular risk of trauma because they are more likely to:
 - Experience **health inequalities** and develop **mental health conditions**.
 - **Attend or be admitted** to hospital.
 - Experience **poorer quality** healthcare.

We further expanded this research into Scotland and found similar trends in Scottish levels of deprivation and health play provision.

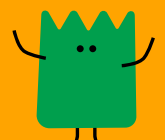
In conclusion, the report reiterated the recommendations from our Play Manifesto produced earlier in the year:

- For health play services to be available **seven days a week**, supported by the creation of **1,000 new posts every three years for nine years** to provide for this.
- Publication and dissemination of **new guidance and standards for health play services across the NHS** should be prioritised, supported by **training** in play for all children's health professionals.
- For **play to be integrated** within the design and commissioning of all children's health services.
- A new role – **cabinet minister for children** – to be created who works closely with the **Department of Health and Social Care** to provide a joint lead on children's play as an essential part of the government's long-term strategy for children's health and wellbeing.

As a result of the findings in the report, we have begun to focus on areas of deprivation that are least well-served by Starlight services as a case for support for Trust funding applications. **The Garfield Weston Foundation** is supporting our work in the North of England.

Our plans for the year ahead: ending avoidable trauma

1. Update our **State of Play mapping exercise** with new Freedom of Information Requests.
2. Research to **deepen our understanding of when and how** children experience trauma in healthcare.
3. Develop our **Youth Panel** with a research-led project and development of a Youth Hub.
4. Launch the **Build & Feel Play Box**.
5. Evaluate our **Health Play Specialist Funded Programme**.
6. Deliver **training** on how to support children through play to multi-disciplinary teams funded by **Rangoonwala Foundation**.
7. Expand our Starlight **Health Play Champion Network**.
8. Continue to advocate for recognition of play in healthcare with our **awards**.
9. **Support parents** to develop their own understanding of the importance of play in healthcare and simple tools to enable play even in challenging healthcare situations.
10. Publish and disseminate **standards and guidance** for play in healthcare.





How we fund our work



Fundraising is the powerful engine that drives all of our vital work for children in healthcare. There's no doubt the fundraising environment has put our Starlight value of "responding to the world around us" to the test on more than one occasion in recent years, through periods of great change and uncertainty.

First through the pandemic when we had to completely rewrite our plans in consideration of what was actually possible without social connection. Then more recently we have restructured the fundraising team to resource areas of growth, while also reducing cost in response to the impact of the cost-of-living crisis.

Through this change, our aim has been to be as efficient and effective as possible. This has been and continues to be a real challenge while we respond to an ever-changing environment; invest in nascent income streams and external cost pressures continue. We have found transparency to be our strength, with funders taking time to understand the context of what we are trying to achieve and understanding that improving return on investment in new areas takes time to build.

The donors who have chosen to work with us have deepened their understanding of the importance of our work and the transformation that is possible, ensuring support is mutually beneficial and long-lasting. As a small organisation punching above our weight, there is a lot to do, but we have confidence and optimism thanks to the important relationships that we have built.

There's no doubt that all charities are working in a highly uncertain environment. This means diversity and a risk-based approach to income generation are vital. We create certainty where we can by playing to our strengths within a small team, resisting the temptation to try to do everything, and keeping our approach as simple and clear as possible.

Our fundraising and marketing strategy

Our fundraising strategy aims to increase income and awareness to ensure that our mission to end trauma for children in healthcare is fulfilled. Across all areas of activity this means that we focus on:

1. Reach

Increasing awareness with the most likely to respond audiences. With small budgets this means that we need to be very targeted and tenacious with powerful content and messaging that can't be missed.

2. Engagement

Attracting interest and consideration with fundraising propositions, products and journeys.

3. Income

Using our powerful ambition and purpose to convince people to support Starlight.

Our emphasis is on high-value fundraising

– philanthropy, events, corporate, trusts and foundations – as this can deliver higher returns relative to the resource invested. But it takes time to develop relationships that deliver results. Our aim is to secure higher value, multi-year donations and partnerships which simultaneously make a vital contribution to the furtherance of our purpose; help us to forward plan and immediately improve the return on investment of our fundraising activity.

In public fundraising we have well-established income from legacies, Individual Giving and sports events. Our long-standing partnership with **Chris Evans's CarFest** sits in this area and has made a vital contribution to income and awareness in recent years.

Our Fundraising and MarComms Mission

To increase income and awareness to ensure Starlight's mission of ending trauma for children in healthcare is fulfilled.

REACH

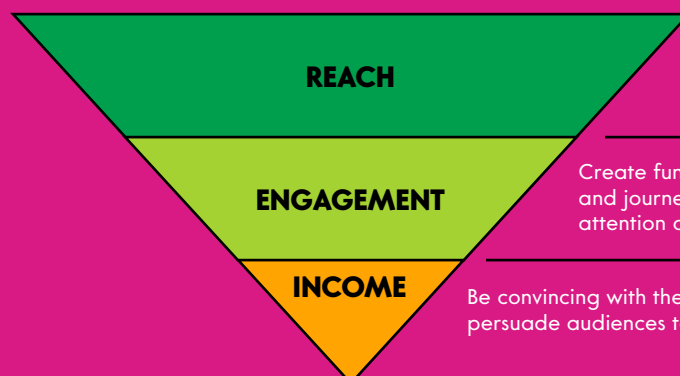
Increase awareness with 'most likely to respond' audiences

ENGAGEMENT

Attract interest and consideration

INCOME

Convince to convert
= £5 million charity by 2027



REACH

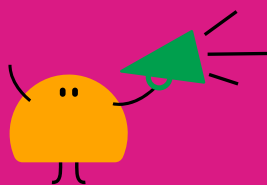
Target our identified market segments with impossible to miss content and messaging

ENGAGEMENT




Create fundraising propositions, products and journeys to attract and maintain attention and interest

INCOME

Be convincing with the story of our purpose to persuade audiences to convert into support



Income risk

	HIGHER RISK
	NEW ACTIVITY <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New events • Development of commercial services
	MEDIUM RISK
	UNCERTAIN <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Trusts and Foundations • Philanthropic donations • Evolution of existing events
	LOWER RISK
	RECURRENT INCOME <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular giving, repeat multi-year Trusts and Foundations, London Marathon, confirmed corporate partnerships and events, legacies

When we view these income streams through the lens of risk, we have a solid base of regular recurrent income, as you would expect risk increases with newer, untested activity. **It is a priority to maintain and grow the recurrent income to enable more long-term planning of our charitable expenditure and enable risk-taking in new areas.**

Through our recent restructure, we also aim to **reduce the uncertainty around medium risk income**. The new, reduced cost, structure enables our Head of Trusts and Foundations to entirely focus on these applications, with an emphasis on high value, multi-year where possible – a significant growth area for Starlight in recent years. The restructure also allowed us to appoint a Head of Corporate New Business to lead development of new corporate relationships and partnerships, supported by a Manager to grow and develop our existing relationships. In addition, we have carved out a philanthropy and events team with a focus on refreshing our portfolio of events to retain existing and attract new audiences as an engagement opportunity for philanthropic support. It's important to note that this was not a Blenheim Ball year, which as a biennial event makes a significant impact on our total income in those years.

By having more certainty and growth in the lower risk areas of income **we aim to create the space to maximise opportunities for developing new partnerships with companies, individuals and trusts** by maximising the potential of our warm networks and creating compelling funding proposals. Our aim is to prioritise game-changing opportunities that could generate significant income.





Our achievements and learning opportunities

Despite some of the hurdles of the economic environment, we have made good progress across a number of areas this year. This is most notable in Trusts and Foundations where the urgency to reduce the trauma of children in a changing and chaotic NHS has proved to be a compelling proposition. A strong performance from **London Marathon** runners and the great success of **CarFest** this year also saw a strong performance from Community and Challenge. We also had strong legacy receipts and maintain a strong pipeline for the year ahead.

We were too optimistic in seeing returns from our restructured team, not factoring in sufficient time for the recruitment to the new roles. That said, while returns were not seen in year for example in corporate fundraising, we have a very clear line of sight to achieving income in the year ahead. We have also had challenges in Individual Giving where initially appeal response rates seemed to be affected by the impact of cost of living, but by carefully reviewing data and business insight we were able to improve this later in the year.

High value fundraising

TRUSTS AND FOUNDATIONS

This year was an exceptional year for Trust and Foundation fundraising at Starlight, with **income 35% over original budget for the year**. Our investment in this area is paying dividends as we begin to build long-term, transformational relationships which can de-risk future years. This year **we have successfully developed multi-year relationships**, with almost £500,000 secured for future years.

We were particularly pleased to secure support from the **Garfield Weston Foundation**, for a project that is continuing into the new financial year. In the Northeast, the insufficient number of health play professionals is compounded by high paediatric hospital admissions, resulting in the highest ratio

of admissions to play professionals. This region also hosts two of the top 10% Acute Trusts with the highest proportion of children from deprived backgrounds admitted to hospitals. To compound the issue, internal data shows the Northeast and Northwest exhibit the lowest average allocation of Starlight services per hospital admission. With the Foundation's support, we are undertaking an important project to work with additional settings across the North of England, equipping more health play professionals with the training and resources they need to improve children's access to play, and improved health outcomes. We are very grateful for their support of this work.



PHILANTHROPY AND EVENTS

It was a special year for the **Starlight Shooting Challenge**, hosted by **Lord and Lady Carnarvon** at **Highclere Castle**, as we celebrated the 20th anniversary of the event. Over the years the event has raised close to £4.5 million which has made a transformational difference for children across the UK. It was also a stand-out **Newbury Race Day** hosted by Nicky Henderson and his committee, thanks to a concerted early focus on sponsorship to cover the costs of the event. Event sponsorship makes a transformational difference to the net result.



Our fundraising restructure enables us now to review our special events portfolio and we are currently shaping plans to improve diversification of our income and increase sustainability. A key element is with our Head of Corporate Partnerships, leading approaches for sponsorship.



It is three years since **Ed Ogden** and his "Team This Way Up" successfully completed the Talisker World Atlantic Challenge for Starlight. This year the intrepid bunch took on the incredible challenge of climbing Kilimanjaro, with True Summit Adventures, accompanied by our Head of Corporate Fundraising **Nic Wilson**. Over a period of eight days, the team climbed 5895m, summiting on 6 February after climbing over eight hours through the night – a challenge of endurance and mental stamina which raised **over £60,000**.



CORPORATE FUNDRAISING

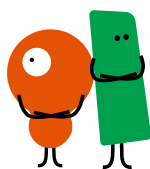
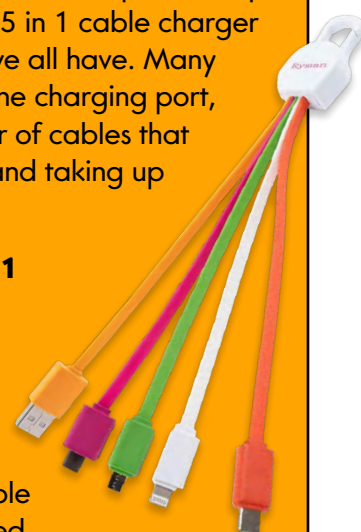
Our partnership with the **Theo Paphitis Retail Group (TPRG)** went from strength to strength with the signing of a new three-year partnership with them. Building on the strong foundations of previous years, through 2024 we actively engaged customers, staff and senior teams with a plethora of fundraising ideas and opportunities. The network of store teams, the backbone of the partnership, stop at nothing to raise an incredible amount of money – with fancy dress, raffles and in store challenges becoming a daily part of their operations.

Despite Christmas being their busiest time in the retail calendar, two dedicated groups of **TPRG** volunteers gave their time to donate, wrap and label Christmas gifts for children in hospitals across the UK in a heart-warming volunteering day. We are also hugely grateful to TPRG for their sponsorship of our annual **Health Play Awards Ceremony** and were delighted when Theo himself joined us for the evening, taking part in a Q&A and presenting one of the awards. We are thrilled the partnership continues into the new financial year and beyond, with exciting new plans already developed. We'd especially like to thank **Sid Raghavan** for his continuing inspirational leadership of this partnership on behalf of TPRG.

Square Mile once again hosted a Golf Day and Quiz, with clients, partners and suppliers. A long-standing partner, we are looking forward to new and exciting events and activations throughout 2025 as we build and grow our work together.

During the year, **Ryman** launched their first cause related marketing product in partnership with Starlight. The brilliant 5 in 1 cable charger tackles the problem that we all have. Many devices don't have the same charging port, resulting in a large number of cables that end up tangled together and taking up space.

This brilliant **Starlight 5 in 1 Charging Cable** features multiple connectors for all iOS and Android devices. It's small, lightweight and chargeable and is perfect for charging multiple devices. It has been greeted with 5-star reviews and is a best-seller, while raising money for Starlight.





Public fundraising

INDIVIDUAL FUNDRAISING

After an initial set back in appeals income earlier in the year, by using insight to consider audience data selection – which included **reactivating lapsed donors**, more **targeted messaging** to warm donors and a focus on **converting one-time donors into regular givers** – results improved as the year progressed. Our challenge is acquisition of new supporters, when we don't have the budgets for more traditional charity methods of donor acquisition. This emphasises the importance of accelerating our understanding and integration of **digital fundraising** into our fundraising mix. Corporate partners that can raise brand awareness for Starlight will also be a priority.

COMMUNITY AND CHALLENGE FUNDRAISING

Central to our success in this area is the continued support from **CarFest** and **Chris Evans**. We've worked hard to contribute to the success of the event by securing pro bono billboards around London to promote the event and drive engagement. We have also supported ticket sales and awareness of the festival as well as ensuring our presence at the event is engaging and entertaining for the festival attendees. Our **London Marathon Team** are truly inspirational and year-on-year go above and beyond with their fundraising and telling the story of Starlight.

LEGACIES

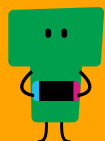
A gift in a will allows supporters to become a permanent part of the Starlight legacy, beyond their own lifetime. Once close family and friends are provided for, every gift to Starlight no matter how big or small, really can help to end avoidable trauma for children in hospital and other healthcare settings. This year we were very fortunate to receive gifts **in excess of £800,000** which really will create a lasting legacy for the families who have lost loved ones. We are especially grateful for these gifts which help to secure the future of our services.



Gifts in Kind

As well as fundraising, we take a strategic approach to how we can leverage additional resource through Gift in Kind. A cross organisational group lead on securing non-monetary gifts that can help to advance our mission through effective partnerships and one-off gifts of goods, services and discounts.

We are grateful to some very loyal supporters of Starlight including **Nintendo**. Their support has enabled an estimated **2.8 million touchpoints over the past five years**, enabling children to have access to gaming which has so many benefits from distraction to providing home comforts.



This year we were especially delighted to instigate a partnership with the **LEGO Group**, thanks to our new Trustee **Christian Pau**, which will enable us to launch a new service to hospitals across the UK in the forthcoming year. The new **Build & Feel Play Box** highlights the therapeutic power of play, using LEGO® bricks to help children express and navigate emotions during their healthcare journey.

Gifts in Kind is a crucial income stream to complement our offering, and in the year ahead we'll be driving forward more strategic relationships that can amplify our impact.

Developing Commercial Services

The sector is currently facing the reality that some of the traditional, very reliable forms of fundraising may not continue to be relevant to audiences going forward. This requires a curious and open-minded approach to planning for the future. Last year we reported that we had been exploring opportunities for generating revenue from our charitable activities. This had involved the pilot of some paid-for services. In the latter part of this year we have begun to explore **providing targeted resources, support and training** for organisations that typically would not qualify for resources from us as part of our charitable activity.

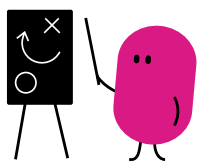
We were fortunate to have some pro-bono support from **Hummingbird Insights** to clarify our understanding of the markets we should prioritise based upon our connections, work we've done and what we already know. We have started to deepen our knowledge of various sectors within the healthcare environment, and our perception of how successful these may be, by opening conversations with key influencers in these markets. Behind the scenes we have taken a light-touch approach to preparing what a paid-for solution may look like. We have also carried out online and in-person training for nursing students with **the University of Chester** – using a train the trainer approach with the tutors, which received excellent feedback.

This approach could expand our impact beyond what we can achieve with our charitable work, taking much-needed play provision to other environments, and progressing child-centred health play with a wider group of people. In the year ahead we will be assessing progress made and the viability of a commercial income stream.



The training was very engaging, showing evidence of how to help a child with a different conditions."

Attendee at University of Chester training



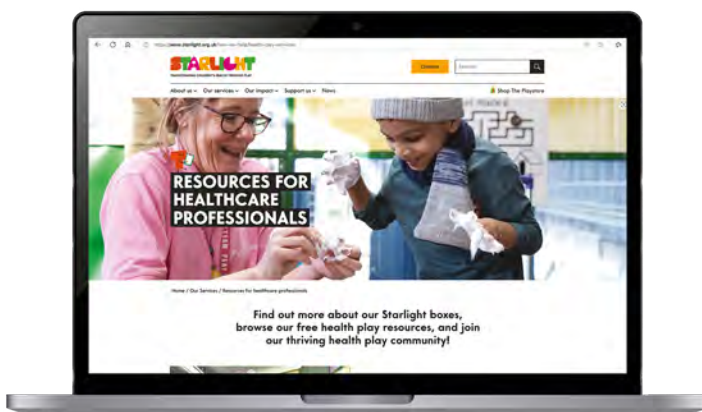


Reach and engagement

During the pandemic we evolved and repositioned Starlight from a wish-granting charity to **a charity that aims to end avoidable trauma for children in healthcare**. The new visual identity element of our brand has worked very well for us but we knew we needed to develop more clarity on the essence of the brand and the language to complete the picture and create an even more compelling case for support in a challenging fundraising environment. This piece of work was concluded in April 2025 and will really help us to have **more cut through in communications, pitches and presentations** in the year ahead.

An important objective for the year ahead is to **improve our media relationships** as our Play in Healthcare Week report did not achieve the national media coverage of previous years. This, despite a good amount of local coverage for our Health Play Award winners. We have key learnings around the content of the report and have also revised the target media we should be aiming for to reach our priority audiences.

Throughout the year significant improvements were made to the Starlight **website** to ensure it is as accessible and user-friendly as it can be. There are also new sections for **families, policy and public affairs** and a **resource hub for play professionals**. Testing around the optimisation of the donation portal has led us to understand we need to **redevelop the donation platform** to ensure we are converting maximum numbers of visitors to donate.



Our priorities for the year ahead

1. Appoint new **Director of Income and Engagement**.
2. Focus on **ROI** from new team structure.
3. Strengthen and cherish our **existing partnerships**.
4. Create **new opportunities** for partnerships, events and Gifts in Kind.
5. Grow **multi-year Trust and Foundation partnerships**.
6. Secure **sponsorship for events** to cover their costs.
7. Develop an **event portfolio** for new audiences.
8. Develop **digital engagement** and fundraising.
9. Grow brand awareness through **media and corporate partnerships**.
10. Develop **celebrity relationships** for partnerships, reach and engagement.
11. Develop plans for **Starlight 40th anniversary** in 2026.



Thank you

Our relationships really matter at Starlight, from our Development Committee led by **Alasdair Hadden Paton** and **Lady Alexandra Spencer-Churchill**; to our event partnerships with Champion Trainer **Nicky Henderson** and **Lord and Lady Carnarvon** at Highclere Castle. Our partnerships with **CarFest**, **Story of Christmas** and **Theo Paphitis Retail Group**; to the thousands of people across the UK who support Starlight with regular donations and the Trusts and Foundations that enable us to plan with confidence. Our work would not be possible without you.

Finally special thanks to our **Director of Fundraising and Marketing** who after nearly six years at Starlight, leaves us for her first charity CEO role. Sarah has fearlessly led us through seriously challenging times for the sector, bringing experience, expertise and a lot of fun to her role. We will miss her, but we are proud that we have been part of her career journey to CEO. Thank you.

Looking after our supporters

Starlight is registered with the Fundraising Regulator and we are committed to meeting the Fundraising Code of Practice. Our fundraising activities are legal, honest, transparent and respectful. We take care of supporter data in line with GDPR and have processes to ensure we only contact those who want to hear from us for fundraising purposes. We also ensure that nobody who appears to be vulnerable is asked to commit to giving. During the year we sent just over 1.5 million communications by mail and email and received two complaints, both of which were resolved without escalation.

Our thanks to our Trust and Foundation funders and our corporate sponsors and partners who have helped make our work possible.

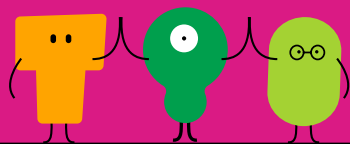
Arcus Infrastructure Partners
 Caran D'Ache
 Crucible Foundation
 Garfield Weston Foundation
 Greendale Foundation
 Khoo Teck Puat UK Foundation
 Lady Rothes Charitable Trust
 Nintendo
 One For Fun
 Red Carnation Hotels
 Roger Raymond Charitable Trust
 Square Mile
 Story of Christmas Appeal
 The Gosling Foundation
 The Lindley Foundation
 The Ogden Trust
 Theo Paphitis Retail Group
 Tubz



Registered with
**FUNDRAISING
 REGULATOR**



Our culture and colleague experience



The year has been one of consolidation for the team, following a challenging period of restructure, experienced by many charities in the current economic environment.

This stability has enabled us to focus on strengthening internal relationships, clarifying roles and expectations, and embedding new ways of working. We are now seeing the benefits of this in the form of **stronger collaboration**, **improved communication**, and **greater clarity** across teams.

We have continued to nurture and strengthen a culture rooted in our core values. These values remain the steady foundation of how we approach our work, how we treat each other, and how we navigate the inevitable challenges that come our way.

During periods of complexity or uncertainty, it is our shared values that serve not only as a reference point but as a living part of our day-to-day practice. Colleagues continue to look to them as a blueprint for behaviour, enabling us to face challenges with a sense of unity and purpose.

The consistency of our values-led approach provides reassurance, fosters trust, and empowers individuals to show up authentically in their work, and understand actions we have taken, even when difficult.

Our values

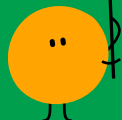
Our standards and the environment we create through our behaviours.

Responding to the world around us



We are inspired by the changes in the world around us. We have the freedom and courage to try something new, always learning and adapting to people's needs. It means trying stuff out, seeing what happens and pushing our boundaries.

Working together for our purpose



We aim high, think big, are imaginative and curious in everything we do. We celebrate our achievements, and we help and support each other when challenges come. We all play our part in our purpose and have fun along the way.

Taking the time to understand



We take the time to understand ourselves and our impact. We actively listen, seeking to learn and understand from everyone's experiences in life. We are open to the opportunities and possibilities this awareness brings to ourselves, others and Starlight.

Trusted to be our best



The trust we have in each other and our purpose guides our decisions, choices, and actions. When we are trusted our confidence grows, we ask for help, and we feel safe to be who we are. In any situation we say 'we' rather than 'they'. Most of all we trust in the Power of Play for children and adults alike.

We think carefully about why people would **choose** Starlight as an employer.

We **take the time to understand** candidates for roles and give them and Starlight the best opportunity to make a conscious decision about alignment of purpose, values, experience and expertise.

We think about what it feels like to **join** Starlight and how we can support and enable colleagues to be their best from day one, living the excitement they felt at interview and feeling valued and having consistency of experience and expectation.

We nurture a **growth** environment enabling colleagues to bring all that they are to our purpose.

We **recognise** and celebrate what matters to ourselves, others and the Starlight culture and we support the desire for **progression** in Starlight and the wider world.

We value each other and are proud to be Team Starlight.

We have also continued the evolution in our approach to performance and development through the embedding of our **Growth, Contribution and Impact (GCI)** framework. Moving away from more traditional performance measures, GCI enables deeper and more reflective conversations that centre on the conscious use of individual strengths and an appreciation of others' contributions.

Early evaluation suggests a shift in tone and substance of these discussions – greater honesty, increased ownership, and more strategic focus on development. GCI has also contributed to tangible outcomes of internal promotions and a clearer picture of how we can harness transferable skills across the organisation to meet our evolving needs. Alongside this, our internal development programme continues to play a key role in building capability and confidence within our team.

In the year ahead, we plan to introduce a mechanism for colleagues to have a consistent opportunity to feedback on culture and their experience of working at Starlight.



Our colleague experience – Moments that matter strategy

In summary, this has been a year where our values have guided us, our people have grown, and our culture has deepened. As we look to the future, we remain committed to an environment where everyone feels supported, developed and connected to a shared purpose.

EQUITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Our commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) goes from strength to strength. Partnering with the **ENEI** (Employers Network for Equality and Inclusion) has given us the opportunity to complete an annual benchmarking exercise of all our practices and given a clear direction of actions. This annual report highlighted the priority of policy and the launch of our new **EDI policy**, collaboratively written with contributions from across the organisation, marks an important milestone.

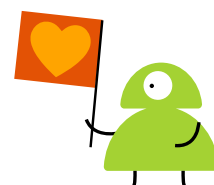
The process itself was as meaningful as the outcome—bringing together different voices, lived experiences and ideas, and ensuring the final policy truly reflects who we are and who we aspire to be. Embedding EDI into our policies, practices and culture is ongoing, but we are proud of the visible steps we have taken and remain committed to continued learning and action.

A SAFEGUARDING CULTURE

At Starlight we prioritise the creation and maintenance of a **safe workplace culture** that values the physical and mental wellbeing of all those that come into contact with us.

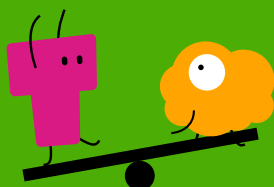
Leading with our values is central to our safeguarding culture, they are the very visible golden thread that runs through all of our decision-making. Our culture must be modelled through action not just words and Trustees and leaders at Starlight are expected to demonstrate behaviours that show what is important rather than expecting colleagues to respond to being told. It is a shared responsibility. We encourage colleagues to challenge the status quo and share areas of disagreement through open and honest conversation. In this way we aim to ensure that all colleagues feel valued and listened to.

Culture comes first, supported by safeguarding policies, processes and training which are regularly reviewed and updated by our internal safeguarding committee and our lead Trustee.





Financial performance report



It continues to be a challenging environment for the charity sector, with considerable economic uncertainty foreseen in the year ahead. The sector is having to make difficult choices to accommodate income uncertainty and cost increases including the rise in employer national insurance contributions. It is clear there are significant changes in service delivery and an increase in redundancies across the sector in small and large charities.

After long periods of reserve spend down through Covid-19 and the cost of living crisis, this puts further pressure on cash flow management and our projections suggest that this will be true for Starlight in the final quarter of the coming year, before recovering post the Blenheim Ball. At first glance our closing reserves of £1.5m can look significant, it is important to note that in fact this represents just four months of typical expenditure.

Our focus is on even more detailed cash flow modelling to ensure that the timing of expenditure is closely aligned to expected income receipts where possible. We are also aiming to bring more income into the first half of the year as it is typically loaded more to the second half.

That said, our income projections are strong for the year ahead with a reduced exposure to higher risk activity and a higher proportion of income committed at the start of the year through multi-year grants.

Performance

In terms of the results presented in the Statement of Financial Activities on page 57 of this report, it is important to note that **this was not a Blenheim Ball year**. The ball is a biennial event which typically contributes c£1m to gross income, this also accounts for much of the difference in fundraising costs.

Income for the year totalled £4.0m (23-24: £4.6m). Despite the many challenges across the sector this year, this in fact means that there was an underlying growth in income with donations (including legacies) increasing by 10%. We were also pleased to maintain significant levels of Gift in Kind of £0.34m with the majority directly contributing to service delivery.

Our nascent income stream from charitable activity took a step backwards this year £6.6k (23-24 £56.8k), after a number of successful commercial projects were delivered in the previous year. We have however started to develop training products which have been very well received and with the confirmation of publication of play standards by NHS England we are hopeful that this may create more opportunities for play audit and training in the year ahead.

Despite the lower level of income this year, cost savings across both fundraising and support costs enabled us to maintain our expenditure on impactful service delivery at £2.5m, close to last year's result (£2.6m), while closing with reserves of £1.5m (23-24 £1.9m) within our reserves policy of £1.5m – £1.7m.

Notes to the accounts show the reduction in the size of the Starlight team during the year. Action is already being taken to further reduce costs in the year ahead with a restructure of the leadership team and salary benchmarking made possible by vacancies arising in the Director team; and the opportunity to move to a smaller office space better suited to our established and successful predominantly hybrid working model.

With strong, less risky income plans, effective use of Gift in Kind to support cash flow pinch points and opportunities for cost reductions outlined, we are realistically optimistic about navigating the uncertainties inherent in the year ahead that we recognise are largely out of our control.

During the year the Trustees recognised and celebrated the importance of the income contribution of the Blenheim Ball in March 2024. They also discussed the challenges of having such a significant event falling in the last month of the financial year. The financial year end is only ever a snapshot at one point in time; funding streams and operational activities are a fluid process. The timing of the event means that there is little opportunity to respond to any upside in terms of increasing charitable expenditure or any downside of reducing expenditure, as illustrated with the adjustments that we made and reported on shortly after the year-end last year.

Because of this, the Trustees have made the decision to **extend the forthcoming financial year to an 18-month period** from March 2025 ending in September 2026. This means that we will know the result of the event well before the year end and have time to respond if needed. It also means that the moment we crystallise results in the Report and Accounts, we are likely to show a more realistic picture of the charity's overall financial situation rather than the distortion of a significant 'point in time' that could be very different within a matter of weeks.

Remuneration policy

The Trustees have overall responsibility for setting the pay and remuneration at Starlight. We are committed to salaries that are fair, transparent, based on market rates within the sector and that enable us to recruit and retain expert colleagues. All salaries are benchmarked every 3 years and again when vacancies arise to allow for different market conditions in the intervening period. The Trustees approve the overall salary budget for the year; any salary uplifts and specifically the remuneration of the Executive Team.



Reserves and reserves policy

As at 31st March 2025, reserves stood at £1.51m (23-24 £1.88m). Expendable reserves (excluding £0.10m tied up in fixed assets used for the operation of the charity) amounted to £1.41m (23-24 £1.78m) of which £0.45m is restricted funding relating to programmes due for delivery after the year end. £0.10m of this restricted funding relates to our Starlight Health Play Specialist programme, with the remainder being to support our other core work in healthcare settings.

We are committed to funding the Health Play Specialist programme until the end of the current financial year and are aiming to raise a further £0.08m of funding for this project. Until these funds are raised the Board has taken a prudent approach and designated reserves to cover the commitment.

All charities are required to consider how much they need to hold in reserves, in light of the scale and nature of the charity's activities. We aim to maintain a prudent reserves level which maximises the funds spent on delivering our purpose whilst ensuring the charity remains viable so it can continue to meet its objectives for years to come. In doing this we consider the funds needed for upcoming plans, taking into account the inherent uncertainties of fundraising, cashflow across the year, and we recognise the need to hold a level of reserves which is sufficient to protect the charity in case of unforeseen circumstances such as the loss of a major event. The Trustees reviewed the Reserves Policy and believe that a reserves level of between £1.5m and £1.7m is appropriate, this currently represents approximately 4 months of expenditure.



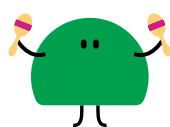
Going concern

The Trustees have reviewed the accounts as well as the charity's budgets and plans for 2026, reserves position up to the date of signing off these accounts and the charity risk register. They have considered the risks, particularly, around fluctuations in fundraising levels. At the time of writing the impact of Trump's imposition of tariffs and the decline in the value of the US dollar cause particular concern for the world economy, and the impact on organisations and individuals. This coupled with low growth estimates for the UK economy, points to the likelihood of increases in individual taxation which may affect propensity to give to charity.

The Trustees acknowledge that as for many charities, the reduction in reserves in recent years, through the pandemic and cost of living crisis, presents challenges. With strong fundraising plans, more detailed cash flow modelling in place and the ability to pause charitable services if required, the Trustees believe that the charity has sufficient reserves in place to absorb these. In addition, sustainable changes in the cost base of Starlight are being achieved through:

1. Changes to the charity structure arising from redundancies at the start of the year (noted in the previous year's report) and vacant positions during the year, this has included benchmarking of Directors' salaries.
2. Reduction in the cost of premises arising from the Landlord breaking the existing lease in order to sell the building from which Starlight currently operates. The market conditions for tenants, post pandemic, are favourable and a combination of lower prices and less office space required as a result of our hybrid pattern of working mean that there is an opportunity to significantly reduce cost base in a sustainable way.

The flexibility of the charity's expenditure model has been proven to allow it to adjust services to meet changes in fundraising levels and the Trustees are confident that the charity can continue to meet the needs of a significant number of children for the next twelve months and beyond. The Trustees are, therefore, confident that the charity should be considered as a going concern.



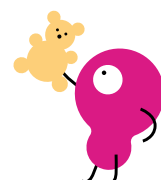


Investment returns and policy

Starlight reserves are largely held to protect the charity in case of unforeseen circumstances and to support the management of cash flow, including payment for events ahead of realising the income return. As a result, expendable reserves are held as cash and cash equivalents. To mitigate the risk of these holdings, funds are split between two leading UK banks.

In the event of an unforeseen increase in reserves, for example from a legacy receipt, the Trustees have an agreed Investment Policy. The policy states that the charity would take a low risk profile attitude to investment of funds not required for immediate financial needs, recognising the need to diversify risk across institutions and asset classes. High risk investments such as traded options, futures, derivatives, and hedge funds are prohibited for direct investment; however, derivatives may be used at the discretion of a Fund Manager to reduce risk within an Investment Fund accounts.

Deposit amounts may only be held with major UK banks, which have specifically been approved by the Board. Funds over and above those required for operating purposes may be held with fund managers in line with the above risk profile. The charity would not permit its funds to be invested in any organisation which conflicts with our mission and aims to avoid investments which could adversely affect its ability to attract either beneficiaries or supporters. Investments in armaments, tobacco or pornography industries are specifically forbidden under the policy.



Principal risks and uncertainties

The Audit and Risk Committee is responsible for reviewing the risks faced by the charity and for agreeing the necessary controls to mitigate those risks. The committee meets at regular intervals and reports to the Board of Trustees. Identifying and managing the possible and probable risks that a charity may face over its working life is a key part of our effective governance. In managing risk, the Trustees aim to ensure that significant risks are known and monitored, to enable informed decisions to be made and timely action to be taken. It also means that we can make the most of opportunities and develop them with the confidence that any risks have been identified and appropriately managed.

The charity continues to review its Risk Register, identifying in detail risks across the business and ensuring plans are in place to mitigate all major risks as much as possible and to monitor those where mitigation was inherently limited. We recognise that while many of the risks facing the charity remain the same, our ability to absorb the impact should they materialise is reduced as a result of lower reserves. We have therefore increased our focus on forecasting and identifying the materialisation of certain risks at an early stage, allowing us to respond promptly.

The uncertain economic environment presents risks to both our fundraised income and our cost base. The fundraising risk is mitigated to some degree by our focus on long-term, sustainable, high value relationships, partnerships and events and the appointment of an experienced team to manage these areas. The increasing cost risk is mitigated in the year ahead and beyond by the end of the current office lease which affords the opportunity for significant savings in future years; amplified by a restructure and benchmarking of salaries in the leadership team that also provide opportunities for sustainable future cost savings.

During the year, a more strategic approach to the procurement of Gift in Kind that is closely aligned to our service provision requirements, provides a better opportunity to continue to deliver impactful services through cashflow pinch points. This enables the Trustees to make decisions to dial up and down cash procurement of services in response to changing circumstances, while continuing to deliver impactful services that support play professionals and improve children's experience of healthcare.

For all organisations safeguarding must be considered a high risk, irrespective of the likelihood of an incident arising. Our safeguarding responsibility extends to everyone who comes into contact with Starlight including our colleagues. Our focus on culture at Starlight is an important mitigation against the safeguarding risk. We expect that our culture is modelled through actions and behaviours not just words. Our colleagues are encouraged to take ownership for the impact of their own behaviours, discuss areas of disagreement and challenge the status quo. In this way we aim to create a safe environment where our colleagues feel valued and where it is safe to report inappropriate behaviour.

The occasions when we work directly with children without other appropriate adults – parents and health professionals – present are limited. Nonetheless safeguarding management remains high on our agenda, with mandatory safeguarding training at regular intervals, specific training around events and regular oversight by the Safeguarding Committee which reports to the Trustees. We are currently recruiting a new Safeguarding Lead Trustee with the experience and expertise to ensure the Trustees are able to manage their shared responsibility in this regard.

During the year we have introduced new mandatory online training across a number of key risk areas including health and safety; anti-money laundering and anti-bribery and cyber security. We continue to monitor cyber security risks and to work with our IT partner to strengthen our systems, processes and training.





Governance



Starlight Children's Foundation is a company limited by guarantee (registered number 02038895) and a registered charity in England and Wales (charity number 296058) and Scotland (charity number SC047600).

Legal structure and purpose

The charity's purpose is set out in its Memorandum and Articles of Association which were adopted on 2nd December 1986. We empower better healthcare outcomes for children through better healthcare experiences, by putting play at the heart of healthcare.

Public benefit

The trustees have taken account of the Charity Commission's general guidance on public benefit when reviewing the charity's aims, objectives, plans and budgets. Starlight's services are designed to support the 2 million admissions of children and young people into hospitals and hospices annually. The evidence of the importance of ending avoidable trauma for children in healthcare; and Starlight's services to achieve; this are set out earlier in this report. We believe children's healthcare services should fully reflect the importance of play to their health, wellbeing, resilience and recovery, and that every child in the healthcare system should have adequate daily play opportunities, appropriate to their condition, supported by dedicated play staff.

Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees, who also constitute the Directors for Company Law purposes, are legally responsible for directing the affairs of the charity. They meet as a full Board usually four times a year and are available as needed in intervening months. All trustees undertake safeguarding training on an annual basis, reflecting our commitment to safeguarding across the organisation. We continue to monitor the skills and diversity of the board to ensure that the charity has governance across all key areas. Three trustees stepped down during the year and the Board has welcomed Mike Daniels, Paul Gathercoe, Abi Robins and Christian Pau as new trustees. Paul has taken over from Anna Gawn as Lead Safeguarding Trustee and Mike has also been appointed to the Audit and Risk Committee.



Committees

Three committees support the work of the Board as a whole, each made up of trustees, the executive and in the case of the Development Committee, external experts.

The Safeguarding Committee is responsible for oversight of all safeguarding matters at Starlight. Paul Gathercole has recently been appointed as the Safeguarding Lead Trustee. The committee continues to review and update safeguarding policies and is focussed on monitoring and advising on all safeguarding matters. Day to day safeguarding leadership responsibilities are delegated to three designated safeguarding leads within the charity, who are also members of the committee. All Trustees and Starlight colleagues renewed their safeguarding training in the autumn of 2024.

The Audit and Risk Committee is chaired by Ian Harding and works with the executive team to oversee, manage and mitigate risks across the organisation. It is responsible for oversight of the risk register, with key risks being regularly reviewed by the Board of Trustees. The committee reviews and discusses key risks surrounding budgets and plans prior to discussion and approval by the Board. It also meets with the charity's auditors at the end of the annual audit process and both they and the Board have the opportunity to question the auditors with and without the presence of the executive.

The Development Committee is headed up by Alasdair Hadden-Paton. Their primary focus is the planning and delivery of the bi-annual Blenheim Ball. Although not a ball year, the committee has started planning in earnest for the 2026 event as well as supporting philanthropic fundraising, generously sharing their networks and making introductions. We are very grateful to the committee members for generously giving their time and expertise.



The Board comprised seven trustees as at 9 July 2025:

ALAIN WOLFFE is Starlight Chair and sits on the Audit and Risk Committee. Currently Director of Superbia Group, a financial services company, Alain is experienced in leading significant change and business growth programmes. Alain has a deep interest in improving healthcare outcomes and experiences for children as the father of a teenager with cerebral palsy.

MIKE DANIELS is Commercial Director for Wates Residential with Board level responsibility for risk management. He and his family have been long term fundraisers for Starlight, with a deep understanding of the challenges in healthcare for children and their parents. Mike will be joining the Audit & Risk Committee.

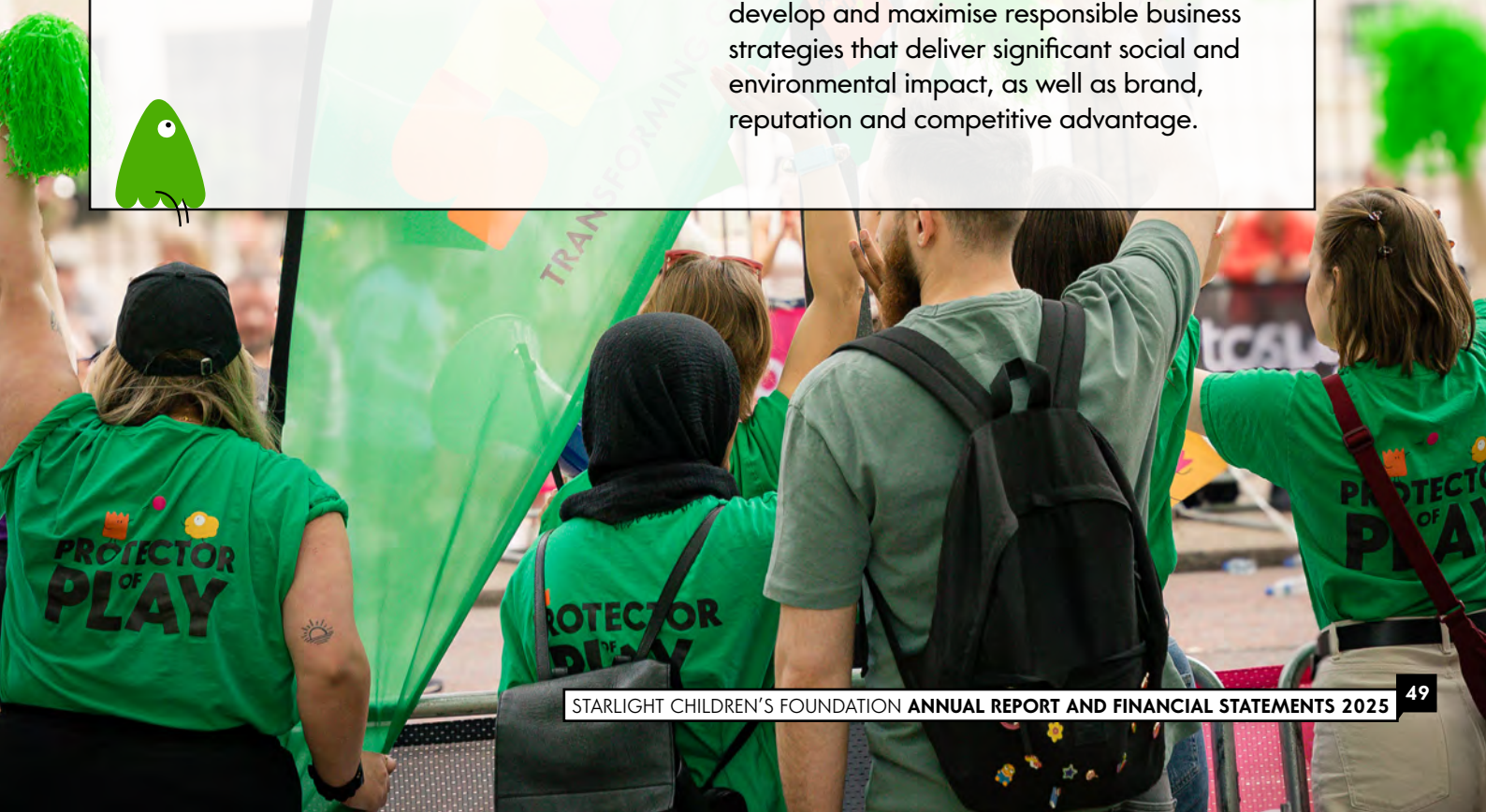
PAUL GATHERCOLE is a safeguarding and social care specialist, having led Children's Services in a number of large UK Children's Charities. He has experience leading and managing safe, high-quality services for children, families and young people in the statutory and voluntary sector, and specialises in practice standards, safeguarding governance, policy and procedures. Paul will chair our Safeguarding Committee.

IAN HARDING is a Managing Partner at Arcus Infrastructure and is an experienced infrastructure professional with particular expertise in renewable energy assets. He brings fundraising, financial and governance expertise to the Board and currently chairs the Audit and Risk Committee.

DR CHRIS KELLY is a clinician research scientist in the health artificial intelligence team at Microsoft, and a paediatrician at the Evelina Children's Hospital in London. He brings experience of children's services in the NHS, combined with an interest in how technology can improve children's experience of healthcare.

CHRISTIAN PAU is VP and General Manager of the LEGO Group for UK and Ireland. He brings experience in strategy, marketing and sales and deep knowledge of the power of play in childhood. For Christian play connects people, relieves stress, and allows people to explore new possibilities and be creative, he is inspired by Starlight's purpose.

ABI ROBINS is Director of Responsible Business at Centrica. She has extensive experience in driving change and leading high impact programmes, partnerships and campaigns in large organisations. Her passion is to help organisations to develop and maximise responsible business strategies that deliver significant social and environmental impact, as well as brand, reputation and competitive advantage.



Trustees' declaration of responsibilities

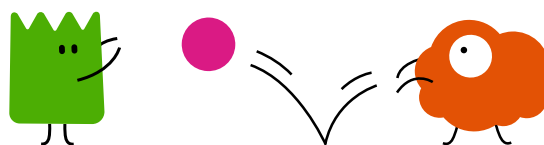
The trustees are responsible for preparing the trustees' annual report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice). Company law requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year. Under company law the trustees must not approve the financial statements unless they are satisfied that they give a true and fair view of the of the charity and of the incoming resources and application of resources, including its income and expenditure, of the charity for the year. In preparing those financial statements the trustees are required to:

- Select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently.
- Observe the methods and principles in the Charities SORP.
- Make judgments and accounting estimates that are reasonable and prudent.
- State whether applicable UK Accounting Standards and statements of recommended practice have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements.

- Prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in business.

The trustees are responsible for keeping adequate accounting records that are sufficient to show and explain the charity's transactions and disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charity and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

The trustees are responsible for the maintenance and integrity of the corporate and financial information included on the charity's website. Legislation in the United Kingdom governing the preparation and dissemination of the financial statements and other information included in annual reports may differ from legislation in other jurisdictions.



Statement of Disclosure to our Auditors

In so far as the trustees are aware at the time of approving our trustees' annual report:

- There is no relevant information, being information needed by the auditor relating to preparing their report, of which the group's auditor is unaware.
- The trustees, having made enquiries of fellow directors and the group's auditor that they ought to have individually taken, have each taken all steps that he/she is obliged to take as a director to make themselves aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the auditor is aware of that information.

The directors' annual report has been prepared in accordance with the special provisions applicable to companies subject to the small companies' regime.

Approved by the Board and signed on its behalf:

Alain Wolffe
Chair of Trustees

Date: July 9 2025



Independent auditor's report to the members of Starlight Children's Foundation

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of Starlight Children's Foundation (the 'charitable company') for the year ended 31 March 2025 which comprise the statement of financial activities, balance sheet, statement of cash flows and notes to the financial statements, including significant accounting policies. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards, including FRS 102 The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

In our opinion, the financial statements:

- Give a true and fair view of the state of the charitable company's affairs as at 31 March 2025 and of its incoming resources and application of resources, including its income and expenditure, for the year ended 31 March 2025.
- Have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice.
- Have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006, the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005 and regulation 8 of the Charities Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2006 (as amended).



Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)) and applicable law. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of our report. We are independent of the charitable company in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in the UK, including the FRC's Ethical Standard and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Conclusions relating to going concern

In auditing the financial statements, we have concluded that the trustees' use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.

Based on the work we have performed, we have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on Starlight Children's Foundation's ability to continue as a going concern for a period of at least twelve months from when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

Our responsibilities and the responsibilities of the trustees with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this report.

Other information

The other information comprises the information included in the trustees' annual report, other than the financial statements and our auditor's report thereon. The trustees are responsible for the other information contained within the annual report. Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in our report, we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon. Our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or our knowledge obtained in the course of the audit, or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If we identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, we are required to determine whether this gives rise to a material misstatement in the financial statements themselves. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact.

We have nothing to report in this regard.

Opinions on other matters prescribed by the Companies Act 2006

In our opinion, based on the work undertaken in the course of the audit:

- The information given in the trustees' annual report, for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements; and
- The trustees' annual report, has been prepared in accordance with applicable legal requirements.

Matters on which we are required to report by exception

In the light of the knowledge and understanding of the charitable company and its environment obtained in the course of the audit, we have not identified material misstatements in the trustees' annual report.

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters in relation to which the Companies Act 2006 and the Charities Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2006 (as amended) require us to report to you if, in our opinion:

- Adequate accounting records have not been kept, or returns adequate for our audit have not been received from branches not visited by us; or
- The financial statements are not in agreement with the accounting records and returns; or
- Certain disclosures of trustees' remuneration specified by law are not made; or
- We have not received all the information and explanations we require for our audit; or
- The directors were not entitled to prepare the financial statements in accordance with the small companies regime and take advantage of the small companies' exemptions in preparing the trustees' annual report and from the requirement to prepare a strategic report.

Responsibilities of trustees

As explained more fully in the statement of trustees' responsibilities set out in the trustees' annual report, the trustees (who are also the directors of the charitable company for the purposes of company law) are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view, and for such internal control as the trustees determine is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the trustees are responsible for assessing the charitable company's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the trustees either intend to liquidate the charitable company or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.



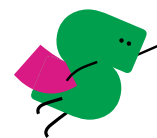
Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

We have been appointed as auditor under section 44(1)(c) of the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005 and under the Companies Act 2006 and report in accordance with regulations made under those Acts.

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

Irregularities, including fraud, are instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations. We design procedures in line with our responsibilities, outlined above, to detect material misstatements in respect of irregularities, including fraud. The extent to which our procedures are capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud are set out below.

Capability of the audit in detecting irregularities



In identifying and assessing risks of material misstatement in respect of irregularities, including fraud and non-compliance with laws and regulations, our procedures included the following:

- We enquired of management, and the audit and risk committee, which included obtaining and reviewing supporting documentation, concerning the charity's policies and procedures relating to:
 - Identifying, evaluating, and complying with laws and regulations and whether they were aware of any instances of non-compliance;
 - Detecting and responding to the risks of fraud and whether they have knowledge of any actual, suspected, or alleged fraud;
 - The internal controls established to mitigate risks related to fraud or non-compliance with laws and regulations.
- We inspected the minutes of meetings of those charged with governance.
- We obtained an understanding of the legal and regulatory framework that the charity operates in, focusing on those laws and regulations that had a material effect on the financial statements or that had a fundamental effect on the operations of the charity from our professional and sector experience.
- We communicated applicable laws and regulations throughout the audit team and remained alert to any indications of non-compliance throughout the audit.
- We reviewed any reports made to regulators.

- We reviewed the financial statement disclosures and tested these to supporting documentation to assess compliance with applicable laws and regulations.
- We performed analytical procedures to identify any unusual or unexpected relationships that may indicate risks of material misstatement due to fraud.
- In addressing the risk of fraud through management override of controls, we tested the appropriateness of journal entries and other adjustments, assessed whether the judgements made in making accounting estimates are indicative of a potential bias and tested significant transactions that are unusual or those outside the normal course of business.

Because of the inherent limitations of an audit, there is a risk that we will not detect all irregularities, including those leading to a material misstatement in the financial statements or non-compliance with regulation. This risk increases the more that compliance with a law or regulation is removed from the events and transactions reflected in the financial statements, as we will be less likely to become aware of instances of non-compliance. The risk is also greater regarding irregularities occurring due to fraud rather than error, as fraud involves intentional concealment, forgery, collusion, omission or misrepresentation.

A further description of our responsibilities is available on the Financial Reporting Council's website at: www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities. This description forms part of our auditor's report.



Use of our report

This report is made solely to the charitable company's members as a body, in accordance with Chapter 3 of Part 16 of the Companies Act 2006 and section 44(1) (c) of the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the charitable company's members those matters we are required to state to them in an auditor's report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the charitable company and the charitable company's members as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

Partner Name: Joanna Pittman

Date: July 9 2025

for and on behalf of Sayer Vincent LLP,
Statutory Auditor, 110 Golden Lane,
LONDON, EC1Y 0TG

Sayer Vincent LLP is eligible to act as
auditor in terms of section 1212 of the
Companies Act 2006





TRANSFORMING CHILDREN'S HEALTH THROUGH PLAY

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

FOR THE YEAR ENDED
31 MARCH 2025



STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES

(incorporating an income and expenditure account)
For the year ended 31 March 2025

		2025			2024		
		Unrestricted	Restricted funds	Total	Unrestricted	Restricted funds	Total
	Note	£	£	£	£	£	£
INCOME FROM:							
Donations	2	2,283,702	535,593	2,819,295	3,010,023	434,937	3,444,960
Value of goods and services donated	2	5,815	336,514	342,329	100,713	238,546	339,259
Legacies	2	807,681	-	807,681	696,626	-	696,626
Charitable activities	4	6,624	-	6,624	56,810	-	56,810
Investments		12,452	-	12,452	37,779	-	37,779
Total income		3,116,274	872,107	3,988,381	3,901,951	673,483	4,575,434
EXPENDITURE ON:							
Raising funds	5	1,884,837	-	1,884,837	2,489,793	-	2,489,793
Charitable activities							
Provision of children’s services	5	1,765,758	701,664	2,467,422	1,911,800	684,001	2,595,801
Total expenditure		3,650,595	701,664	4,352,259	4,401,593	684,001	5,085,594
Surplus / (deficit) before net gains / (losses) on investments		(534,321)	170,443	(363,878)	(499,642)	(10,518)	(510,160)
Net gains/(losses) on investments		901	-	901	(5,273)	-	(5,273)
Surplus/(deficit) for the year		(533,420)	170,443	(362,977)	(504,915)	(10,518)	(515,433)
Transfers between funds		-	-	-	-	-	-
Net expenditure for the year and movement in funds		(533,420)	170,443	(362,977)	(504,915)	(10,518)	(515,433)
RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS:							
Total funds brought forward		1,594,771	281,065	1,875,836	2,099,686	291,583	2,391,269
Total funds carried forward		1,061,351	451,508	1,512,859	1,594,771	281,065	1,875,836

All of the above results are derived from continuing activities. There were no other recognised gains or losses other than those stated above. Movements in funds are disclosed in Note 17 to the financial statements.

BALANCE SHEET

as at 31 March 2025

Company number: 02038895

		2025		2024	
	Note	£	£	£	£
FIXED ASSETS:					
Tangible assets	11		99,501		105,124
Investments	12		2		4,682
			99,503		109,806
CURRENT ASSETS:					
Debtors	13	139,758		560,215	
Stock	14	224,783		215,678	
Short term deposits		284,225		911,164	
Cash at bank and in hand		1,042,640		571,118	
		1,691,406		2,258,175	
LIABILITIES:					
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	15	(278,050)		(492,145)	
Net current assets			1,413,356		1,766,030
Total net assets			1,512,859		1,875,836
THE FUNDS OF THE CHARITY:					
	17				
Restricted income funds			451,508		281,065
UNRESTRICTED INCOME FUNDS:					
Designated funds		34,580		124,000	
General funds		1,026,771		1,470,771	
Total unrestricted funds			1,061,351		1,594,771
Total charity funds			1,512,859		1,875,836

Approved by the trustees on July 9 2025 and signed on their behalf by Alain Wolffe, Chair of Trustees.

STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS

For the year ended 31 March 2025

	2025	2024
	£	£
CASH FLOWS FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES:		
Net (expenditure) for the reporting period (as per the statement of financial activities)	(362,977)	(515,433)
Depreciation charges	35,421	27,515
(Gains)/losses on investments	(901)	5,273
Dividends and interest from investments	(12,452)	(37,779)
(Profit)/loss on the disposal of fixed assets	-	544
(Increase)/decrease in stock	(9,105)	(80,540)
(Increase)/decrease in debtors	420,457	(252,908)
Increase/(decrease) in creditors	(214,095)	(28,383)
Net cash provided by / (used in) operating activities	(143,909)	(881,711)
CASH FLOWS FROM INVESTING ACTIVITIES:		
Dividends and interest from investments	12,452	37,779
Purchase of fixed assets	(29,798)	(10,111)
Proceeds from sale of property, plant and equipment	-	-
Proceeds from sale of investments	5,581	225,766
Net cash provided by / (used in) investing activities	(11,508)	253,434
Change in cash and cash equivalents in the year	(155,417)	(628,277)
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the year	1,482,282	2,110,559
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the year	1,326,865	1,482,282
ANALYSIS OF CASH AND CASH EQUIVALENTS AND OF NET DEBT:	At 1 April 2024	Cash flows 31 March 2025
	£	£
Cash at bank and in hand	571,118	471,522
Money market deposits	911,164	(626,939)
Total cash and cash equivalents	1,482,282	(155,417)
		1,326,865

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

For the year ended 31 March 2025

1 ACCOUNTING POLICIES

a) Statutory information

Starlight Children's Foundation is a charitable company limited by guarantee and is incorporated in England and Wales. The registered office address is 227 Shepherd's Bush Road, London, W6 7AU.

B) Basis of preparation

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) – (Charities SORP FRS 102), and the Companies Act 2006.

The charity also has a wholly owned subsidiary, Starlight General Trading Limited, a company incorporated and registered in the United Kingdom. The company was dormant in this and the previous financial year and therefore consolidated accounts have not been prepared as the difference between parent and group is immaterial.

Assets and liabilities are initially recognised at historical cost or transaction value unless otherwise stated in the relevant accounting policy or note.

In applying the financial reporting framework, the trustees have made a number of subjective judgements, for example in respect of significant accounting estimates. Estimates and judgements are continually evaluated and are based on historical experience and other factors, including expectations of future events that are believed to be reasonable under the circumstances. The nature of the estimation means the actual outcomes could differ from those estimates. Any significant estimates and judgements affecting these financial statements are detailed within the relevant accounting policy below.

C) Public benefit entity

The charity meets the definition of a public benefit entity under FRS 102.

D) Going concern

The trustees consider that there are no material uncertainties about the charity's ability to continue as a going concern. In making this assessment, they consider the charity's budget and plans together with the risk register and levels of reserves, to form a view that the charity can continue to meet its charitable objectives for a period of at least twelve months from the date of signature of the accounts.

E) Income

Income is recognised when the charity has entitlement to the funds, any performance conditions attached to the income have been met, it is probable that the income will be received and that the amount can be measured reliably.

Donations are recognised on receipt or when the charity has received a documented pledge or other formal confirmation which creates a constructive obligation to pay, whichever is earlier.

For legacies, entitlement is taken as the earlier of the date on which either: the charity is aware that probate has been granted, the estate has been finalised and notification has been made by the executor(s) to the charity that a distribution will be made, or when a distribution is received from the estate. Receipt of a legacy, in whole or in part, is only considered probable when the amount can be measured reliably and the charity has been notified of the executor's intention to make a distribution. Where legacies have been notified to the charity, or the charity is aware of the granting of probate, and the criteria for income recognition have not been met, then the legacy is treated as a contingent asset and disclosed if material.

Income received in advance of the provision of a specified service is deferred until the criteria for income recognition are met.

Income derived from charges for charitable services is recognised at the time the service is delivered.

F) Donations of gifts, services and facilities

Donated goods, facilities, and services in the financial statements comprise the provision of services and other gifts to carry out charitable activities, including support and administration services, and include discounts given for such goods and services where these are over and above normal commercial discount terms. These are included in the Statement of Financial Activities at the value of the gift to the charity; a corresponding amount is then recognised in expenditure in the period of receipt or, in the case of stock items donated, in the period of distribution. Goods, facilities, and services donated for charitable activities are treated as restricted in nature, while those donated for support activities are treated as unrestricted.

In accordance with the Charities SORP (FRS 102), volunteer time, including that of the trustees, is not recognised.

G) Interest receivable

Interest on funds held on deposit is included when receivable and the amount can be measured reliably by the charity; this is normally upon notification of the interest paid or payable by the bank.

H) Fund accounting

Restricted funds are to be used for specific purposes as laid down by the donor or have been raised by the Charity for particular purposes. The aim and use of each restricted fund is set out in the notes to the financial statements. Expenditure which meets these criteria is charged to the fund.

Unrestricted funds are donations and other incoming resources received or generated for the furtherance of the general objects of the Charity.

Designated funds are unrestricted funds earmarked by the trustees for particular purposes.

I) Expenditure

Expenditure is recognised once there is a legal or constructive obligation to make a payment to a third party, it is probable that settlement will be required and the amount of the obligation can be measured reliably. Expenditure is classified under the following activity headings:

- Costs of raising funds comprise the expenses incurred by the charity in generating voluntary income from third parties, along with the costs of activities carried out with the intention of raising funds
- Expenditure on charitable activities to further the purposes of the charity and their associated support costs

J) Allocation of support costs

Resources expended are allocated to the particular activity where the cost relates directly to that activity. Salaries and associated staff costs are allocated on the basis of time spent on charitable activities, generating funds, and governance. Costs of support staff are shown separately and allocated to each activity based on estimates of the amount of time spent.

Where information about the aims, objectives and projects of the charity is provided to potential service users, the costs associated with this publicity are allocated to charitable expenditure.

Where such information about the aims, objectives and projects of the charity is also provided to potential donors, activity costs are apportioned between fundraising and charitable activities on the basis of area of literature occupied by each activity.

Support and governance costs are re-allocated to each of the activities on the following basis which is an estimate, based on staff time, of the amount attributable to each activity.

Governance costs are the costs associated with the governance arrangements of the charity. These costs are associated with constitutional and statutory requirements.

K) Operating leases

Rental charges are charged on a straight line basis over the term of the lease.

L) Tangible fixed assets

Items of equipment are capitalised where the purchase price exceeds £500. Depreciation costs are allocated to activities on the basis of the use of the related assets in those activities. Assets are reviewed for impairment if circumstances indicate their carrying value may exceed their net realisable value and value in use.

Depreciation is provided at rates calculated to write down the cost of each asset to its estimated residual value over its expected useful life. The depreciation rates in use are as follows:

- Office improvements: 15 years
- Furniture: 10 years
- Office equipment: 5 years
- Computers: 3 years

M) Listed investments

Investments are a form of basic financial instrument. The charity does not acquire put options, derivatives or other complex financial instruments.

Investments are included at the higher of their market value using the current bid price at the year end and guaranteed minimum value. Investment income is included, gross of applicable taxation, when receivable. Realised and unrealised gains and losses arising on revaluation of investments are included in the Statement of Financial Activities.

Starlight Children's Foundation does, from time to time, receive donated shares which are listed on the AIM market and which are subject to certain time restrictions. Until these restrictions are met the shares cannot be actively traded on the market. The Charity's policy, due to the volatility of these shares is to dispose of them as soon as the time restriction has passed and the shares can be actively traded and sold.

Where such shares are donated and can be valued they are included in the financial statements as fixed asset investments from such time as they can be sold. Shares held by the Charity which cannot be valued owing to the absence of an active market in which to sell them are disclosed in note 12 to the financial statements.

N) Debtors

Trade and other debtors are recognised at the settlement amount due after any trade discount offered. Prepayments are valued at the amount prepaid net of any trade discounts due.

O) Stock

Stock represents goods held pending distribution to service users.

P) Short term deposits

Short term deposits includes cash balances invested in a 32-day notice account.

Q) Cash at bank and in hand

Cash at bank and cash in hand includes cash and short term highly liquid investments with at maturity of three months or less from the date of acquisition or opening of the deposit or similar account.

R) Creditors and provisions

Creditors and provisions are recognised where the charity has a present obligation resulting from a past event that will probably result in the transfer of funds to a third party and the amount due to settle the obligation can be measured or estimated reliably. Creditors and provisions are normally recognised at their settlement amount after allowing for any trade discounts due.

S) Financial instruments

The charity only has financial assets and financial liabilities of a kind that qualify as basic financial instruments. Basic financial instruments are initially recognised at transaction value and subsequently measured at their settlement value with the exception of bank loans which are subsequently measured at amortised cost using the effective interest method.

T) Pensions

The Charity contributes an agreed percentage of the salary to the personal pension plans of permanent employees. For employees who have chosen to join the company pension scheme the pension provider is selected by the employer. Other employees have chosen to select their own pension scheme. All pension schemes are independently administered by, and the funds held by, a recognised pension company. The pension cost charge represents contributions payable by the Charity to the pension funds.

2 INCOME FROM DONATIONS AND LEGACIES

	2025			2024		
	Unrestricted	Restricted	Total	Unrestricted	Restricted	Total
	£	£	£	£	£	£
Donations	1,874,347	535,593	2,409,940	1,766,675	434,937	2,201,612
Fundraising events	409,355	-	409,355	1,243,348	-	1,243,348
Value of other goods and services donated (note 3)	5,815	336,514	342,329	100,713	238,546	339,259
Legacies	807,681	-	807,681	696,626	-	696,626
	3,097,198	872,107	3,969,305	3,807,362	673,483	4,480,845

A total of £839,146 (2024: £533,128) of legacy pipeline which does not meet the legacy criteria is, however, treated by the charity as a contingent asset at March 2025.

3 VALUE OF GOODS AND SERVICES DONATED

	2025	2024
	Total	Total
	£	£
Charitable activities	336,514	238,546
Fundraising	1,785	86,170
Support services	4,030	14,543
	342,329	339,259

As at 31st March £89,029 of donated goods were held in stock (2024: £28,411)

4 INCOME FROM CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES

	2025	2024
	Total	Total
	£	£
Income from charitable activities	6,624	56,810
	6,624	56,810

Income from charitable activities comprises monies received in respect of services provided.

5A ANALYSIS OF EXPENDITURE (CURRENT YEAR)

	Raising funds	Charitable activities	Governance costs	2025 Total
	£	£	£	£
Staff costs (Note 7)	629,460	705,062	-	1,334,522
Direct costs	289,676	604,397	-	894,073
Fundraising event costs	251,576	-	-	251,576
Donated goods and services	3,800	277,989	-	281,789
SUPPORT COSTS:				
Staff costs (Note 7)	391,272	489,078	13,495	893,845
Rent and services	106,414	125,332	4,730	236,476
IT and connectivity	82,284	96,912	3,658	182,854
Marketing and communications	39,599	59,275	17	98,891
Depreciation	15,939	18,773	709	35,421
Other office costs	55,882	65,817	21,113	142,812
	1,865,902	2,442,635	43,722	4,352,259
Governance costs	18,935	24,787	(43,722)	-
Total expenditure 2025	1,884,837	2,467,422	-	4,352,259

5B ANALYSIS OF EXPENDITURE (PRIOR YEAR)

	Raising funds	Charitable activities	Governance costs	2024 Total
	£	£	£	£
Staff costs (Note 7)	702,580	666,081	-	1,368,661
Direct costs	295,762	669,041	-	964,803
Fundraising event costs	495,025	-	-	495,025
Donated goods and services	93,442	248,999	-	342,441
SUPPORT COSTS:				
Staff costs (Note 7)	461,355	506,054	15,182	982,591
Rent and services	155,435	168,664	6,614	330,713
IT and connectivity	89,396	97,004	3,803	190,203
Marketing and communications	86,249	123,655	467	210,371
Depreciation	12,932	14,033	550	27,515
Other office costs	60,336	63,401	49,534	173,271
	2,452,512	2,556,932	76,150	5,085,594
Governance costs	37,281	38,869	(76,150)	-
Total expenditure 2024	2,489,793	2,595,801	-	5,085,594

6 NET INCOME / (EXPENDITURE) FOR THE YEAR

This is stated after charging/(crediting):

	2025	2024
	Total	Total
	£	£
Depreciation	35,421	27,515
Loss on disposal of tangible fixed assets	-	544
Operating lease rentals payable:		
Property	124,642	211,731
Other	7,848	7,848
Auditor's remunerations:		
Audit (excluding VAT, which is irrecoverable)	15,300	14,600

7 ANALYSIS OF STAFF COSTS, TRUSTEE REMUNERATION AND EXPENSES, AND THE COST OF KEY MANAGEMENT PERSONNEL

Staff costs were as follows:

	2025	2024
	Total	Total
	£	£
Salaries and wages	1,893,228	2,000,185
Social security costs	215,932	223,942
Employer's contribution to defined contribution pension schemes	100,983	104,402
Termination payments	18,225	31,723
	2,228,368	2,360,252
Agency and temporary staff costs	10,484	-
Total	2,238,852	2,360,252

The following number of employees received employee benefits (excluding employer pension costs and employer's national insurance) during the year between:

	2025	2024
	No.	No.
£60,000 - £69,999	5	6
£70,000 - £79,999	1	-
£80,000 - £89,999	-	-
£90,000 - £99,999	1	2
£100,000 - £109,999	2	1
£110,000 - £119,999	1	1

The total employee benefits (including pension contributions and employer's national insurance) of the key management personnel were £506,365 (2024: £500,132).

The charity trustees were neither paid nor received any other benefits from employment with the charity in the year (2024: £nil). No charity trustee received payment for professional or other services supplied to the charity (2024: £nil).

Trustees' expenses represents the payment or reimbursement of travel and subsistence costs totalling £0 (2024: £295) relating to attendance at meetings of the trustees. Trustees' indemnity insurance was purchased during the year for £1,318 (2024: £1,318).

8 STAFF NUMBERS

The average number of employees (head count based on number of staff employed) during the year was 37 (2024: 43).

Staff are split across the activities of the charity as follows (full time equivalent basis):

	2025	2024
	No.	No.
Children's services	12	14
Raising funds	10	12
Support staff	13	15
	35	41

9 RELATED PARTY TRANSACTIONS

A total of £28,400 (2024: £15,000) of donated funds without conditions were received from related parties. No restricted donations from related parties were received.

10 TAXATION

The charity is exempt from corporation tax as all its income is charitable and is applied for charitable purposes.

11 TANGIBLE FIXED ASSETS

	Fixtures and fittings £	Office furniture and equipment £	Total £
COST:			
At the start of the year	223,143	100,946	324,089
Additions in year	-	29,798	29,798
Disposals in year	-	(9,878)	(9,878)
At the end of the year	223,143	120,866	344,009
DEPRECIATION:			
At the start of the year	133,885	85,080	218,965
Charge for the year	14,876	20,545	35,421
Eliminated on disposal	-	(9,878)	(9,878)
At the end of the year	148,761	95,747	244,508
NET BOOK VALUE:			
At the end of the year	74,382	25,119	99,501
At the start of the year	89,258	15,866	105,124

All of the above assets are used for charitable purposes.

12 LISTED INVESTMENTS

	2025	2024
	£	£
Fair value at the start of the year	4,680	235,719
Disposal: 20.07.23 32,497.165 units – Charishare Common Investment Fund	-	(225,766)
Disposal: 27.08.24 2,000 ordinary shares – Tesco	(5,581)	-
Net gain/(loss) on change in fair value	901	(5,273)
	-	4,680
Investment in trading subsidiary	2	2
Fair value at the end of the year	2	4,682

INVESTMENTS COMPRISE:	2025	2024
	£	£
32,497.165 units – Charishare Common Investment Fund	-	-
2,000 ordinary shares – Tesco	-	4,680
	-	4,680

13 DEBTORS

	2025	2024
	£	£
Trade debtors	15,000	46,723
Amounts due from associated undertakings	790	790
Prepayments and accrued income	104,269	431,300
Gift Aid debtor	19,699	81,402
	139,758	560,215

14 STOCK

	2025	2024
	£	£
Stock held for distribution	224,783	215,678
	224,783	215,678

15 CREDITORS: AMOUNTS FALLING DUE WITHIN ONE YEAR

	2025	2024
	£	£
Taxation and social security	55,949	72,949
Creditors	93,675	125,188
Accruals	113,426	200,508
Deferred income	15,000	93,500
	278,050	492,145

Deferred income relates to income received for future fundraising events.

16A ANALYSIS OF NET ASSETS BETWEEN FUNDS (CURRENT YEAR)

	Unrestricted	Designated	Restricted	Total funds
	£	£	£	£
Tangible fixed assets	99,501	-	-	99,501
Investments	2	-	-	2
Net current assets	927,268	34,580	451,508	1,413,356
Net assets at 31 March 2025	1,026,771	34,580	451,508	1,512,859

16B ANALYSIS OF NET ASSETS BETWEEN FUNDS (PRIOR YEAR)

	General Unrestricted	Designated	Restricted	Total funds
	£	£	£	£
Tangible fixed assets	105,124	-	-	105,124
Investments	4,682	-	-	4,682
Net current assets	1,360,965	124,000	281,065	1,766,030
Net assets at 31 March 2024	1,470,771	124,000	281,065	1,875,836

17A MOVEMENTS IN FUNDS (CURRENT YEAR)

	At 1 April 2024 £	Income and gains £	Expenditure and losses £	Transfers £	At 31 March 2025 £
RESTRICTED FUNDS:					
Donations					
Hospital programmes					
Health Play Box and equipment provision	14,390	86,768	(104,491)	8,110	4,777
Starlight health play specialists	106,148	171,825	(174,699)	-	103,274
Technology programmes	20,210	6,000	(22,847)	1,890	5,253
Other hospital programmes	101,906	271,000	(141,260)	-	231,646
Family and Community Health Play Services programmes	10,000	-	-	(10,000)	-
Total donated restricted funds	252,654	535,593	(443,297)	-	344,950
Gifts in Kind					
Health Play Box and equipment provision	28,411	290,166	(212,019)	-	106,558
Insights and Impact initiatives	-	46,348	(46,348)	-	-
Total Gifts in Kind held as restricted funds	28,411	336,514	(258,367)	-	106,558
Total restricted funds	281,065	872,107	(701,664)	-	451,508
UNRESTRICTED FUNDS:					
Designated funds:					
Hospital programmes	124,000	-	(124,000)	34,580	34,580
Total designated funds	124,000	-	(124,000)	34,580	34,580
General funds:					
General funds	1,365,647	3,117,175	(3,491,174)	(64,378)	927,270
Fixed Asset Reserve	105,124	-	(35,421)	29,798	99,501
	1,470,771	3,117,175	(3,526,595)	(34,580)	1,026,771
Total unrestricted funds	1,594,771	3,117,175	(3,650,595)	-	1,061,351
Total funds	1,875,836	3,989,282	(4,352,259)	-	1,512,859

The narrative to explain the purpose of each fund is given at the foot of the note below.

17B MOVEMENTS IN FUNDS (PRIOR YEAR)

	At 1 April 2023 £	Income and gains £	Expenditure and losses £	Transfers £	At 31 March 2024 £
RESTRICTED FUNDS:					
Donations					
Hospital programmes					
Health Play Box and equipment provision	28,000	27,480	(43,090)	2,000	14,390
Starlight health play specialists	131,657	188,050	(213,559)	-	106,148
Technology programmes	55,000	5,210	(40,000)	-	20,210
Other hospital programmes	11,968	204,197	(112,259)	(2,000)	101,906
Family and Community Health Play Services programmes	18,209	10,000	(18,209)	-	10,000
HealthPlay Taskforce	10,000	-	(10,000)	-	-
Total donated restricted funds	254,834	434,937	(437,117)	-	252,654
Gifts in Kind					
Health Play Box and equipment provision	36,749	156,117	(164,455)	-	28,411
Family Services programmes	-	18,750	(18,750)	-	-
Insights and impact initiatives	-	63,679	(63,679)	-	-
Other activities	-	-	-	-	-
Total Gifts in Kind held as restricted funds	36,749	238,546	(246,884)	-	28,411
Total restricted funds	291,583	673,483	(684,001)	-	281,065
UNRESTRICTED FUNDS:					
Designated funds:					
Hospital programmes	237,000	-	(237,000)	124,000	124,000
Total designated funds	237,000	-	(237,000)	124,000	124,000
General funds:					
General funds	1,739,614	3,896,678	(4,136,534)	(134,111)	1,365,647
Fixed Asset Reserve	123,072	-	(28,059)	10,111	105,124
	1,862,686	3,896,678	(4,164,593)	(124,000)	1,470,771
Total unrestricted funds	2,099,686	3,896,678	(4,401,593)	-	1,594,771
Total funds	2,391,269	4,570,161	(5,085,594)	-	1,875,836

The narrative to explain the purpose of each fund is given at the foot of the note below.

Purposes of restricted funds

HOSPITAL PROGRAMMES

Donated funds restricted to the various activities within Starlight's Hospital Programme.

FAMILY SERVICES

Donations for our Family Services programme, which provides opportunities for seriously ill children and their families to enjoy time together, with other families, in a safe and fun environment.

GIFTS IN KIND FUNDS

The cost value of items donated to us for use in providing our services. The fund balance represents items received in the year but not yet distributed; these items are held in stock on the balance sheet.

Purposes of designated funds

HOSPITAL PROGRAMMES

The charity has committed to the funding of a number of Health Play Specialists within healthcare organisations for a period of three years (subject to an annual review of impact against objectives). Restricted funds have been raised for much of the project and whilst it is the intention to aim for further restricted funding, the Trustees are designating reserves to cover the full remaining commitment.

FIXED ASSET RESERVE

Some of the charity's reserves are tied up in fixed assets which are used for the purposes of the charity. These reserves are not, therefore, available for use and the charity has now recognised this by the creation of a Fixed Asset Reserve, within its General Reserves. Depreciation is charged to this reserve and fixed asset additions are added to it, with the reserve balance always being equal to the net book value of fixed assets.

18 OPERATING LEASE COMMITMENTS

Amounts payable under non-cancellable operating leases are as follows for each of the following periods.

	PROPERTY		OTHER	
	2025	2024	2025	2024
	£	£	£	£
Less than one year	64,806	216,306	7,848	7,848
One to five years	-	865,224	10,464	18,312
Over five years	-	307,124	-	-
	64,806	1,388,654	18,312	26,160

19 LEGAL STATUS OF THE CHARITY

The charity is a company limited by guarantee and has no share capital. The liability of each member in the event of winding up is limited to £1.



TRANSFORMING CHILDREN'S HEALTH THROUGH PLAY

Starlight Children's Foundation

Third Floor

227 Shepherds Bush Road

London W6 7AU

starlight.org.uk

020 7262 2881



Registered with
**FUNDRAISING
REGULATOR**