



**OUR
IMPACT**

**IMPACT
REPORT**
2024-2025

SOPHIE'S STORY

“The support that they offer is just incredible. It's just a really lovely safe space that they have created there.”

Sophie

Acacia is a Birmingham-based charity offering free, compassionate support to families facing pre and postnatal depression and anxiety, helping them feel understood, valued, and less alone.

We're here to provide a listening ear, practical help, strength, comfort, and hope to parents during life's toughest moments, ensuring they get the support they deserve.

How I felt before Acacia's help

It's the loneliest, isolating place I've ever been in my life. I didn't really recognise how poorly I was. I felt like I just had no light in my soul whatsoever.

I had absolutely no energy for anything, no interest or pleasure in anything. I can only describe it as having this sort of black cloud hanging over me all the time, just sucking the life out of me.

I was in such a low place, I'd lost my confidence in everything, and I thought I was an absolutely awful mother and an awful person that just couldn't do anything at all.

My experience of Acacia's service

Everybody was just so welcoming and kind. My befriender was a kind, friendly listening ear and sounding board. I could just verbalise all of the thoughts and the feelings I was having, even though, you know, some of them were really awful at the time, I wasn't judged, and nobody told me how I should be feeling,

One of the turning points for me was Acacia's Helping Hands at Home. Having them in my home, seeing how it was with my children, and being so encouraging, kind and caring, really gave me the confidence boost that I needed. Following on from that, I've been in group work, which has been lovely, like another step forward, and I'm in a much, much better place now.

The support that they offer is just incredible. It's just a really lovely safe space that they have created there.

And yeah, I'm on the healing path now. I'm definitely so much better. I haven't got the cloud hanging over me anymore, and I feel like my light and spark has come back.



As I reflect on my final year as Chair of Acacia, I am filled with pride for the incredible journey we've had over the past 20 plus years.

Six years after becoming a trustee in 2008, I experienced postnatal depression and anxiety myself after my second child and became really ill, eventually being referred to the Mother and Baby Unit. At the time I thought I'd never get better, but Acacia was there for me as my safe space and with that support and care I recovered and went on to become Chair in 2019.

So, I know that Acacia is more than a charity – it is a lifeline, a beacon of hope for families facing emotional turmoil in pregnancy and early parenthood. Through the unwavering dedication of our staff team and volunteers, we provide not just support, but hope, compassion, and a sense of belonging, to families often feeling isolated and overwhelmed.

One thing that stood out for me when I was ill was how isolating postnatal depression and anxiety can be and how vulnerable it can make you feel. At Acacia we've always had a heart for the most vulnerable families, and an important aspect of our work is to ensure that everyone has equal access to the right support.

As Birmingham continues to grow into one of the UK's most diverse cities, the rise in perinatal mental health challenges presents a pressing concern. With one in four parents now known to be affected across the country, the situation is even more critical for young parents, minority ethnic communities, and those living in areas of high deprivation.

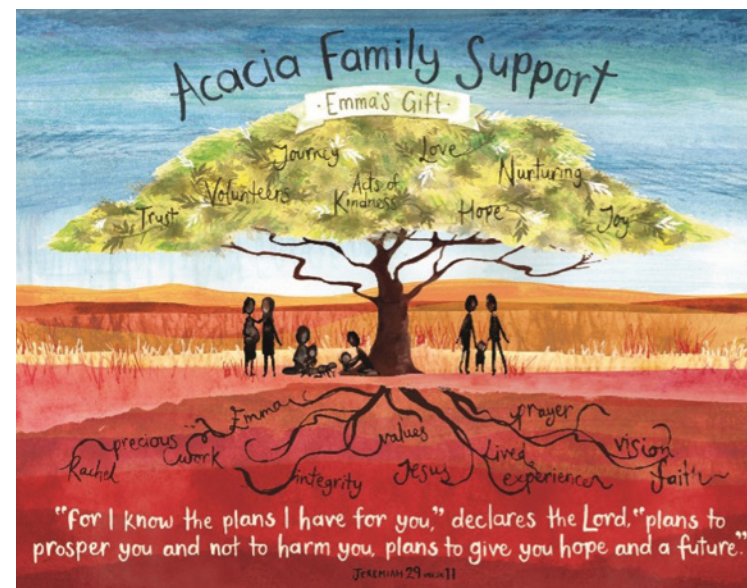
Our mission, rooted in our Christian values of love and service, has always been about ensuring that no family faces this journey alone. As we look to the future, our commitment to reach all families, and especially the most vulnerable in Birmingham, remains stronger than ever. Acacia's work will continue, grounded in faith, with the belief that every family deserves the chance to heal, thrive, and experience the joy of parenthood.

Georgina Dean

Chair of the Board of Trustees

Our Christian Values and what they mean to us

Acacia is built on a strong Christian foundation. We enable people to flourish by experiencing and responding to the love of God which inspires and challenges us to trust steadily, hope unswervingly and love unconditionally. We place equal value on every individual; welcoming people of all faiths and of none. We aim to create supportive, inclusive and energising communities where parents and families can belong, be valued, contribute and thrive.



This artwork was commissioned in our 20th year to celebrate and acknowledge the roots and branches of our work, alongside the scripture that has helped to guide us. It was funded by Emma's Gift, the legacy project that was established in memory after Emma Borg, one of Acacia's founders, passed away in 2018.

THE NEED IS GREATER THAN EVER

1
out of
4

Nationally, one in four mothers now report depression, anxiety, or other serious mental health issues during pregnancy or in the first year after childbirth.* This is an increase from one in five in previous data.

It's even higher in our region. The NHS Birmingham and Solihull Integrated Care Board area has the third highest rate in the country at 27.6% (racing towards one in three).

40%

Suicide is still the leading cause of death for mothers in the year after pregnancy accounting for nearly 40% of deaths.**

Restrictions in the availability of vital mental health care often leads to mothers being left in a vulnerable state, leading to poor bonding between mother and baby, potentially leading to lifelong developmental and mental health problems for mother and child.

(Maternal Mental Health Alliance, 2023)

27.6%
of mothers

Single parents, young parents, mothers from deprived communities and minority ethnic backgrounds are disproportionately affected by maternal mental health issues.

Our vision

A world where every family affected by pre or postnatal mental illness receives timely and effective support close to home.

Our mission

To improve the lives of mothers and families affected by pre and postnatal depression and anxiety.

Our strategic aims

- To provide and promote high quality support services to those affected by pre and postnatal depression and anxiety.
- To equip communities with the skills to deliver support services to families.
- To raise awareness of pre and postnatal depression and anxiety.
- To establish and advance Acacia as the leader in its field.

Our services are effective. They are based on a befriending model of lived-experience and peer support, with a central ethos of 'love and kindness'.

* Perinatal mental health condition prevalence, Office for Health Improvement and Disparities, February 2025

** Maternal Mental Health Alliance, 2023

About this report

This report explores the impact of our work with families in our region and our wider work supporting the sector locally and nationally. It draws on an internal evaluation and analysis of our impact data between April 2024 and March 2025.

The mental health outcomes data in this report come from two clinical measures of depression and anxiety – the PHQ-9 and GAD-7 questionnaires. These are the tools recommended by Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) for measuring these conditions (IAPT manual, 2019) and are also amongst the tools recommended by NICE (NICE, 2011b; NICE, 2012; NICE, 2014; NICE, 2025).

During the year, **180 mothers** completed these 'before' and 'after' clinical measures. Data is also taken from **263 mothers** who received support and responded to direct evaluation questions.

OUR MODEL OF SUPPORT



WHO ACCESSED OUR SUPPORT IN 2024-2025?

During the year

640



families accessed
our support



The families we support experienced
higher than average levels of
disadvantage and deprivation

37%

of our **clients** live in
the **10% most deprived**
areas of England

56%

of **young parents**
using the service live in
the **10% most deprived**
areas of England

SEVERITY

42%

of parents entered with
**severe or moderately
severe depression***

39%

entered with
severe anxiety*

*Based on 2 IAPT and NICE recommended
clinical tools for measuring depression and
anxiety: PHQ-9 and GAD-7 questionnaires.

AGE

31

was the **average age** of all mums, dads and partners entering the service

22%

of mums were aged **24 years or under**

“The welcome pack was really lovely and I felt truly welcomed ... I thought, OK I’m already feeling supported before I’ve even spoken to you. You took the time to listen, really see me, and validate me.”

REFERRALS

38%

were **self referrals**, the most common route into the service

29%

came from **health visitors** and **midwives**

12%

came from the **specialist perinatal mental health** team

21%

came from **other health professionals/other agencies**

22%

of mums referred were **pregnant at the time of referral**

60

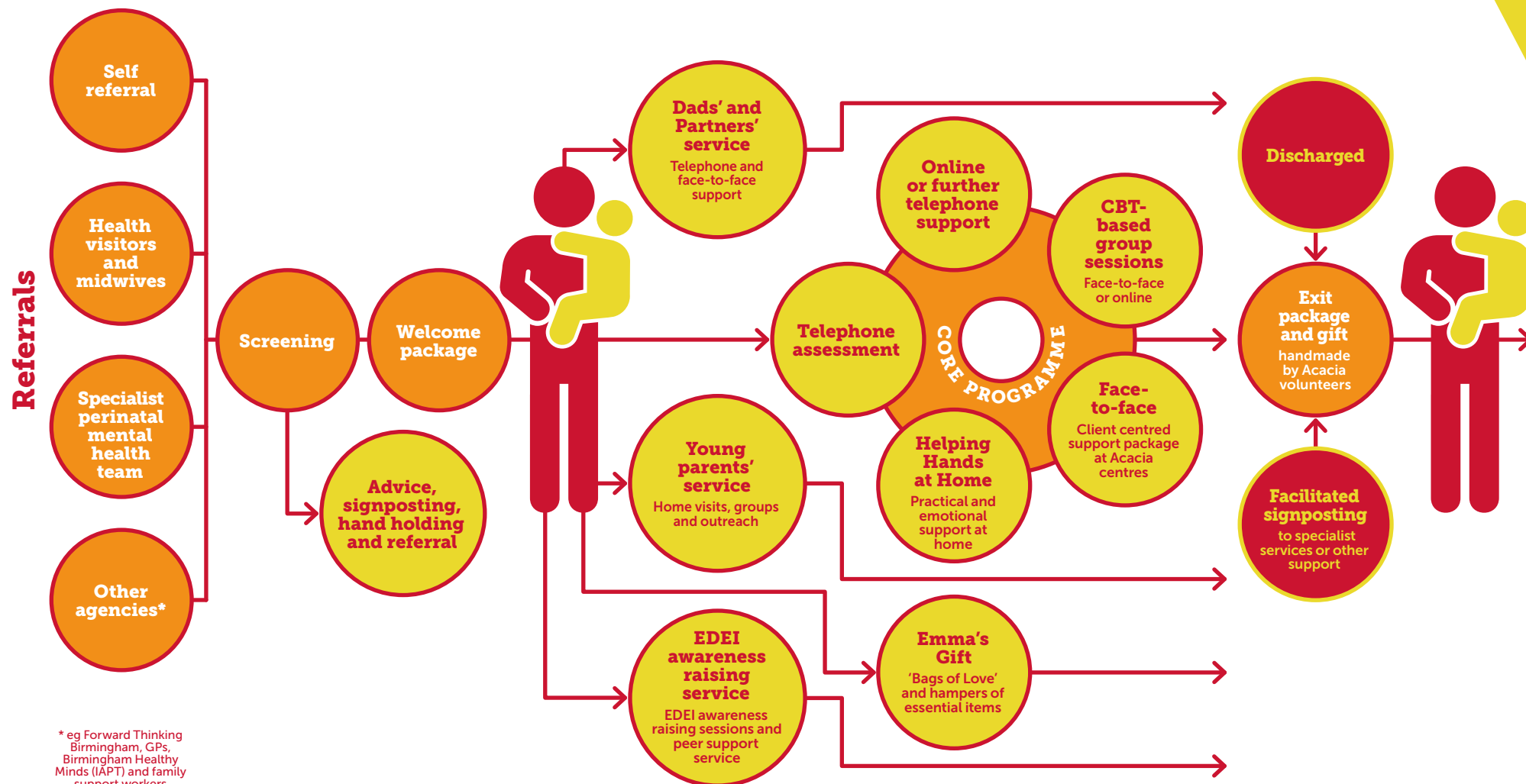
dads/partners were referred and supported

58%

were from **non-white British ethnicities**

HOW WE HELP

OUR SUPPORT JOURNEY



OUR IMPACT

OUR SERVICES SIGNIFICANTLY IMPROVE PARENTS' MENTAL HEALTH

86%

had **reduced** combined
depression and **anxiety**

98%

felt more **optimistic**
and **hopeful**

100%

rated Acacia's services as
good, very good or **excellent**

84%

had **reduced**
depression

99%

felt better
able to cope

99%

would **recommend Acacia**
to friends and family

77%

had **reduced**
anxiety

99%

felt **more**
supported

30

weeks
was the average length of
time spent in service

“All staff at Acacia have been so kind with me and I feel this is an organisation I can really trust. It was so nice to be able to rant and be heard and feel understood.”

“You’ve made such a positive difference in my life, and I’ll always carry that with me.”

SYLVIE'S STORY



“When I did reach out to Acacia, everything completely changed from the first phone call.”

Sylvie

I hadn't realised that what I was going through could have actually been postnatal depression, or more importantly, I didn't want to accept that it was that.

I found myself constantly wanting to talk about how I was feeling, especially as the days went on and on. I spoke to the Health Visitor and I think this was a key moment where I realised as a new mother, I needed more than just one conversation. She referred me to Acacia.

Looking back at it now, especially with my first child, I didn't really have the opportunity to share, and I just kept feeling down and upset and not realising why. I didn't really notice that these were signs of postnatal depression, and I wasn't confident in admitting that I was struggling. The silence, the isolation, made everything much harder to manage.

So, with my second child, I was finally able to recognise that something wasn't right, and Acacia gave me a safe space to voice it. When I did reach out to Acacia, everything completely changed from the first phone call, I felt heard and understood. They didn't rush me; make me feel like just another client or another individual, just another mother going through the same issue.

I received one to one emotional support and group sessions where I learnt early signs to understand my trigger points and self-intervention. At group I became friends with other mothers, and we still go out together with our children.

I think the biggest change is that I'm not feeling alone, and it's given me the understanding, the experience and the confidence to believe that I could go through this if I was to have another child, I know what to do. It helped me reconnect with myself and truly enjoy motherhood to the fullest. Thank you very much everyone.

SUPPORTING PROFESSIONALS

We are an integral part of the local perinatal mental health pathway, recognised for our consistent impact and dependability.

Most of our referrals are made by health visitors, midwives, specialist perinatal mental health teams, and other healthcare professionals. To support our sector we continue to develop a wide range of valuable resources and offer regular training to other services in the pathway. This year we:

Provided

12

awareness raising workshops
delivered to **370 health professionals** and members
of local community groups

Redeveloped our

website

to make **information and resources for professionals easier** to navigate,
and simplified their referral process

“I could
always tell you
really cared
about me and
wanted the
best for me.”

OUR STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

OUR STAFF

As a lived experience charity, we are committed to supporting the wellbeing of our staff and volunteers. We want Acacia Family Support to be an aspirational place to work or volunteer. We believe in going the extra mile for our families and our workforce.

Most of our staff and volunteers have experienced maternal mental health and/or mental health difficulties.

100%

of staff feel that **Acacia's values** guide staff's day-to-day actions

100%

of staff are either **very satisfied or satisfied** working for Acacia

92%

of staff are either **very satisfied or satisfied** with their overall **benefits package**

100%

of Acacia staff said they **feel respected, heard and appreciated** at work

96%

of staff feel like Acacia look after the **emotional wellbeing** of staff

87%

of staff have experienced **maternal mental health** and/or **mental health** difficulties

“I am privileged to work at such a lovely organisation, the care and support provided is invaluable.”

“Acacia is such an amazing place to work and such a valuable service we provide to so many and often saving lives. What a blessing to be part of it.”

85% staff responded to our 2025 staff survey

OUR BRILLIANT TRUSTEE TEAM



Hayley Bowen

Data Protection Manager,
Zurich Insurance



Marie Clare (Dr)

General
Practitioner



Georgina Dean

Chief Financial Officer,
Black Country Healthcare
NHS Foundation Trust



Charmaine Hunter

Matron, Mother and
Baby Unit Mental Health
Nurse, Health Visitor



David Knott

People Change Lead, Ministry
of Justice and Director –
ResourceRight HR Ltd



David Spooner

Consultant
Oncologist

OUR VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers are the heart of Acacia with a strong sense of family, community and connection amongst them. It is inspiring to see how they care, support and encourage one another and the families we support.

76%

of our volunteers
said that their **skills**
had increased

89%

felt that they were
making a useful
contribution to society

84%

felt a **greater sense**
of community

78%

felt **more confident**
with what to do with a
safeguarding concern

92.5% volunteers responded to our 2025 volunteer survey

“ I feel honoured to volunteer for such a wonderful charity and amazing people. Everyone at Acacia makes you feel valued and special. ”

“ It's the most incredible, supportive, caring, considerate group of people I have ever had the privilege to work with. ”

KATE'S STORY



“Acacia isn't just a charity – it's a family. And I feel incredibly lucky to be a part of it.”

Kate, volunteer befriender

Volunteering with Acacia has been one of the most rewarding experiences of my life. From the very beginning, I've felt valued and supported – not just as a volunteer, but as a person.

The core training and ongoing development sessions have been so useful; they gave me the confidence and tools to support mums and families effectively, and I've grown so much personally and professionally as a result.

One of the things that stands out most about Acacia is the way they think about every little detail. From the birthday gifts to the thoughtful Christmas parties, and even the warm welcome at every team meeting – they truly go the extra mile to make us feel appreciated. The annual volunteer appreciation meal is such a lovely highlight of the year. It's more than just a thank you; it's a genuine celebration of the role we all play, and a chance to come together, relax, and feel proud of what we're part of.

What I love most is seeing the difference we make to the mums and families we support. It's humbling and inspiring, and it reminds me why I chose to volunteer in the first place. I've also noticed a real improvement in my own wellbeing since joining Acacia. Being part of such a warm, supportive community has helped me build new friendships, enjoy the social side of volunteering, and feel a strong sense of belonging.

My experience with Acacia has deepened my understanding of the importance of high quality emotional support. It inspired me to enrol on a counselling course, as it sparked a desire to help others more effectively through professional training.

SERVING ALL, SERVING WELL

Birmingham ethnic minorities represent 51.4% of the city's population, making Birmingham one of the first super-diverse cities in the UK.

- Birmingham is often cited as having one of the youngest populations of a major city in Europe, with nearly **40% of its population under the age of 25**. This is significantly higher than the UK national average, which is around 29%.
- Birmingham is **one of the most deprived** local authorities in England. **It ranks seventh** out of 317 local authorities.
- Approximately **43% of Birmingham's population** live in areas within the **10% most deprived** in England.
- Birmingham has **the highest child poverty rates** in the UK where **46% are living in poverty**.

As a result, there is higher prevalence of perinatal mental health (PMH) conditions in these groups than the national average.

- NHS Birmingham and Solihull Integrated Care Board (ICB) has **third highest (27.6%) rate of PMH in the country** compared to the national average.
- PMH need is still higher due to our younger population and higher levels of deprivation. Prevalence can be as high as **40% in teenage parents** and **32% in the most deprived areas**.
- **PMH need may be underestimated** in areas with a higher proportion of females from ethnic minorities, due to recognised under reporting.
- **Black women are still nearly three times more likely to die** in the perinatal period.

All statistics taken from: Perinatal mental health condition prevalence, Office for Health Improvement and Disparities published February 2025 and the most recent Census, Office for National Statistics, 2021, and MBRACE, 2024.

BUILDING A DIVERSE, INCLUSIVE AND EQUITABLE ORGANISATION

Although not all individuals from ethnic minority backgrounds, young parents and other diverse groups have the same experience, there is clear evidence that many experience inequalities in access to appropriate services and support.

Over the past several years we have remained committed, both locally and nationally, to building and maintaining a more inclusive, diverse and equitable service where our team members and the children and families we work with can thrive. We recognise that we still have further to go. On the following pages you can read about some of our progress so far.

A DIVERSE, INCLUSIVE AND

24%

of referrals identified as **Muslim**, the largest religious group and up from 13% in 2020

“ I don't know what I would have done without you at times; uplifting me and making me feel good enough on bad days. You have done more than enough for me. You have always made me feel so heard and understood. ”

ETHNICITY

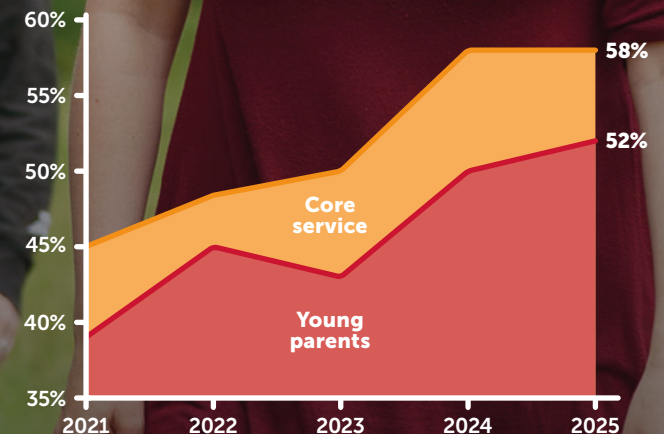
- Overall increase in the number and proportion of **non-white British** referrals – from **45% in 2020** to **58% in 2025**.
- **Non-white British young parent** referrals increased significantly – from **39% to 52%**.

RELIGION

As a Christian charity we strive to ensure that we are welcoming to all:

- Proportionally, **the largest religious group accessing our services is now Muslim**, compared to other religions including Christianity.
- **The number and proportion of Muslims** accessing our services has risen year on year from **13% in 2020 to 24% in 2025**.
- **50%** of those accessing our service expressed **no religious belief**.

New referrals: non white British



EQUITABLE ORGANISATION

“ You have changed my life and really given me a new outlook on health professionals and people in general. You gave me such a positive, calming and open-hearted experience and more, supporting and listening and wiping my tears away when I was really at my lowest. ”

NEURODIVERSITY

- **Simplified referral forms.**
- **Information/communication support** offered at first contact.
- **Telephone referral** for anyone unable to use our referral form.
- **Coloured reading overlays** to help support with both **visual stress and Irlen Syndrome**, often experienced in **dyslexia and ADHD**.

CO-PRODUCTION

- Equality, diversity, equity and inclusion (EDEI) **lived experience expert reference group** to help us in our decision making.
- We are founding members of the **NHS Patient and Carer Race Equality Framework** (PCREF).

RESOURCES

- **Multilingual films**, with **further languages** being added this year.
- **LGBTQ+ focussed** web and printed **resources**.
- New **LGBTQ+ short film** planned this year.

WORKFORCE AND POLICY

- New **EDEI and anti racist policy**.
- **EDEI strategy** implemented through staff workshops.
- **SMART goals** for each team to **ensure EDEI is embedded** in real day-to-day situations.
- **EDEI training programme for all staff** including: anti racism, LGBTQ+, dyslexia, ADHD and autism.

TRAINING

- We introduced the concept of **cultural humility** to our sector in Birmingham, delivering a series of **10 cultural humility workshops** funded by PCREF.
- **National dads' and partners' webinar** featuring lived experience dads including a non-binary autistic parent sharing their experiences.

WORKING NATIONALLY

Acacia's impact extends beyond Birmingham and our grassroots service delivery. We believe *all* families should have access to the help they deserve.

Acacia is one of the two founding partners of the national Hearts and Minds Partnership, a new network of grassroots perinatal mental health VCSE organisations across England. The partnership connects, supports, and celebrates the sector providing shared resources and mentorship to established and emerging VCS perinatal services across the country.

Our work has included:

- Launching a **new website** with an interactive map of local perinatal support services and other help/information for parents and professionals.
- Growing a social network of over **5,000 engaged users**.
- Creating **'Smart Space,' a free online training platform** for VCSE groups, with over 200 individuals signed up.
- **Representing the sector** at key perinatal mental health forums, such as the NHS England Clinical Network and the Maternal Mental Health Alliance.



Hearts&Minds

www.heartsandmindspartnership.org

“Your organisation’s considerate inclusion of access need is inspiring and demonstrates genuine care. Thank you for pioneering this, many organisers across all sectors could learn lessons from your approach.”

Delegate, Hearts & Minds national event

“Strengthening the Roots was a truly nurturing and reflective experience. The atmosphere was filled with warmth, inspiring connections, and a deep sense of shared purpose. I’ve come away with so much to reflect on and feel re-energised in the work we do.”

Delegate, Hearts & Minds national event

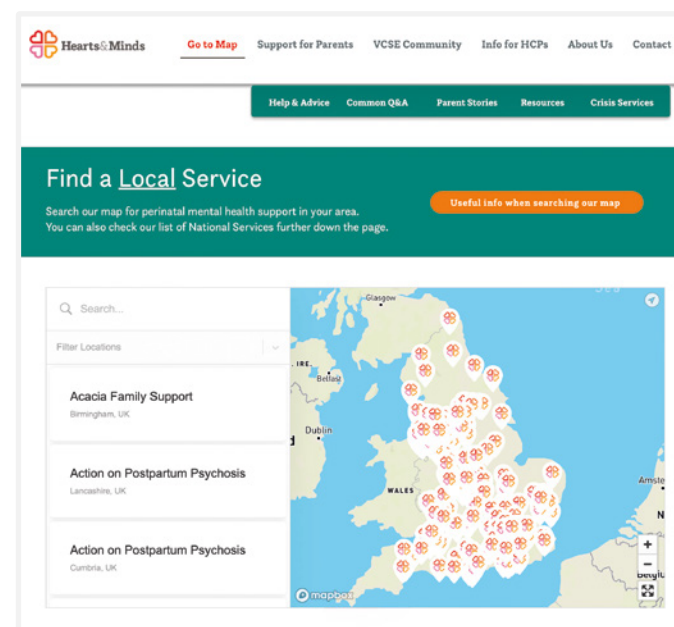


Over the year, Hearts and Minds prioritised the embedding of equality, diversity, equity and inclusion (EDEI) through the Root Maker programme, which introduced six new team members to help diversify our work. With their support, we:

- Increased the **number of services** on our national map to **over 100**, with a focus on EDEI representation.
- Published **six new blogs** highlighting EDEI-focused VCSE services.
- Ran **four ‘Listening Lounges’** to foster inclusive practices within VCSE services.
- Delivered a **national event** in Birmingham, ‘Strengthening the Roots,’ to unite the sector around EDEI.

Next steps

In the final year of current Lottery funding, attention will shift to developing exciting new additional content for Smart Space, our free online training platform, and designing a second (online) national event.



FUNDRAISING

Fundraising big and small is at the core of what keeps us going. As a small charity, we rely on the generosity of our community, local businesses, and supporters.

Every pound raised helps us reach more parents in need, offering them hope, healing, and the support they deserve when they need it most. To all our fundraisers, from the bottom of our hearts we thank you for being part of the Acacia family and for proving, once again, what we can achieve when we all come together.

Here are some of the ways our fundraisers have helped over the last year ...



Sutton Fun Run: 20th Anniversary

To celebrate Acacia's 20th birthday, our biggest-ever team of 30 wonderful runners took on the Sutton Fun Run and together raised a whopping £6,682!

Match funding campaigns

With every pound doubled, our match funding campaigns were a huge success, raising a fantastic £15,628 in total. These campaigns truly show the power of community and how much more we can do when we come together.

BigGive



Our first ever Santa Run

Led by SE Fitness and supported by generous sponsors and the local community, our very first Santa Run raised £2,466 for Acacia and another local mental health charity, Our Place Support.



Live music night

Our first ever live music night at The Rhodhouse, with a fantastic performance from Monkey Business, raised over £3,000 and had everyone dancing the night away!



Young fundraising heroes

Some of our youngest supporters have the biggest hearts! Joshua and Elsie, with the help of their dad, Pete, climbed Mount Snowdon during their summer holidays and raised a fantastic £685. Meanwhile, Beau Trevitt inspired his Taekwondo club to take on a three-hour Sparathon, raising £600. These incredible children remind us that you're never too young to make a difference.



Davina and Euan

Exciting range of events

Our fundraising team plan an exciting range of events throughout the year and we are so grateful to all the willing supporters big and small who readily take them on! From skydives (thanks Davina and Euan) to cycling 100 miles around London to testing your knowledge at quiz nights!



Ride London team



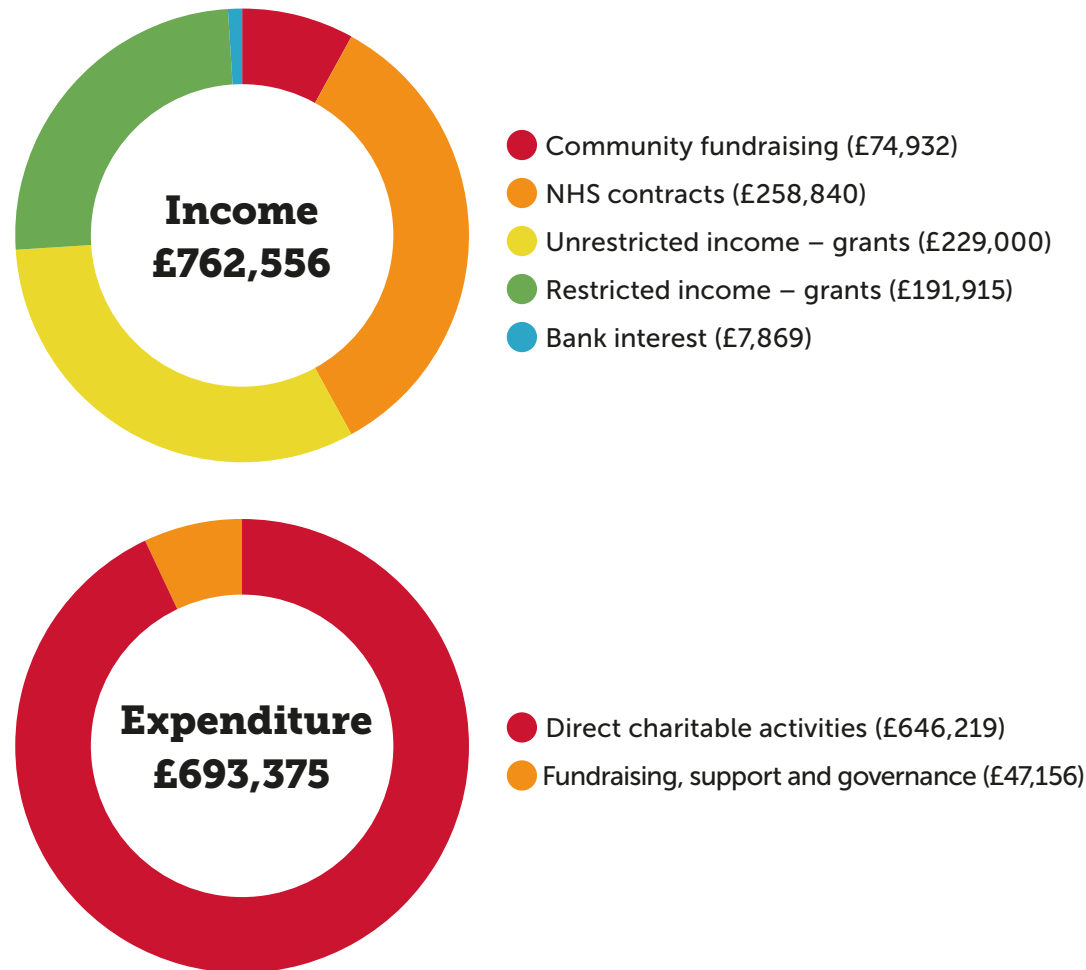
Incredible challenges

From time to time, people get in touch with us after taking on their own incredible challenges, pushing themselves to make a difference for Acacia. A big shout-out to:

- Charlie Skipp (left), who completed the Tough Mudder, raising £735.
- Rob Armstrong (centre), who conquered the Cardiff Half Ironman, raising £525.
- Sam Webb (right), who smashed the Yorkshire Marathon, raising £1,160.

Thank you to our 50+ Monthly Acacia Angels who make regular monthly donations.

OUR FINANCIAL SUMMARY 2024-2025



Surplus from 24/25 is designated to cover known grant and contract reductions throughout 25/26 and 26/27. Further details are available in the 2024/2025 Trustees Annual Report and Accounts.

A huge thank you to our funding partners

Thanks go to all the trusts, foundations and NHS teams who supported us through the financial year. We are hugely grateful for the support we continue to receive from so many. We couldn't do it without you. Thank you.





We had a health scare with my second child and he ended up in hospital, triggering my OCD and health anxiety quite severely.

I quickly became very low and started to neglect myself. It became very debilitating, the anxiety that was with me every single day, every waking moment. If my son got poorly, I would just spiral. It was taking over my whole life, I felt very isolated and very alone, and I felt like no one really understood what was happening to me.

With Acacia, I had befriending sessions by phone. This had a huge impact on me, because it meant that when I was being triggered, when I was really struggling, when I was having the low moods thinking something bad was happening, I wasn't doing a good job and was somehow failing as a mum, I had someone to talk about it to. My befriender was really kind and understanding. She was also able to give me coping strategies to use the next time I was spiralling and having really overwhelming thoughts.

This made a huge difference to me. I began to write down what I was thinking and see it clearly in front of me so I could rationalise some of the intrusive thoughts, understanding that these moments wouldn't last forever, and I would get through this just like I had got through it before.

Group work was also hugely beneficial for me, seeing other mums who were struggling in similar ways and realising that we were all doing a better job than we realised. We looked at different topics each week, and we worked through how we would cope with those things. Speaking to other mums made me feel a lot less isolated and alone.

I'm now at a point where I never thought I would get to. Having Acacia take the weight off my shoulders helped me to bear a load that was crushing me, so that I'm able to cope with things so much better now.

“Having Acacia take the weight off my shoulders helped me to bear a load that was crushing me.”

Sam



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 @acaciafamilysupport

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