PERINATAL MENTAL HEALTH

ACACIA

FAMILY SUPPORT

Our impact

2025/2026



Carmen

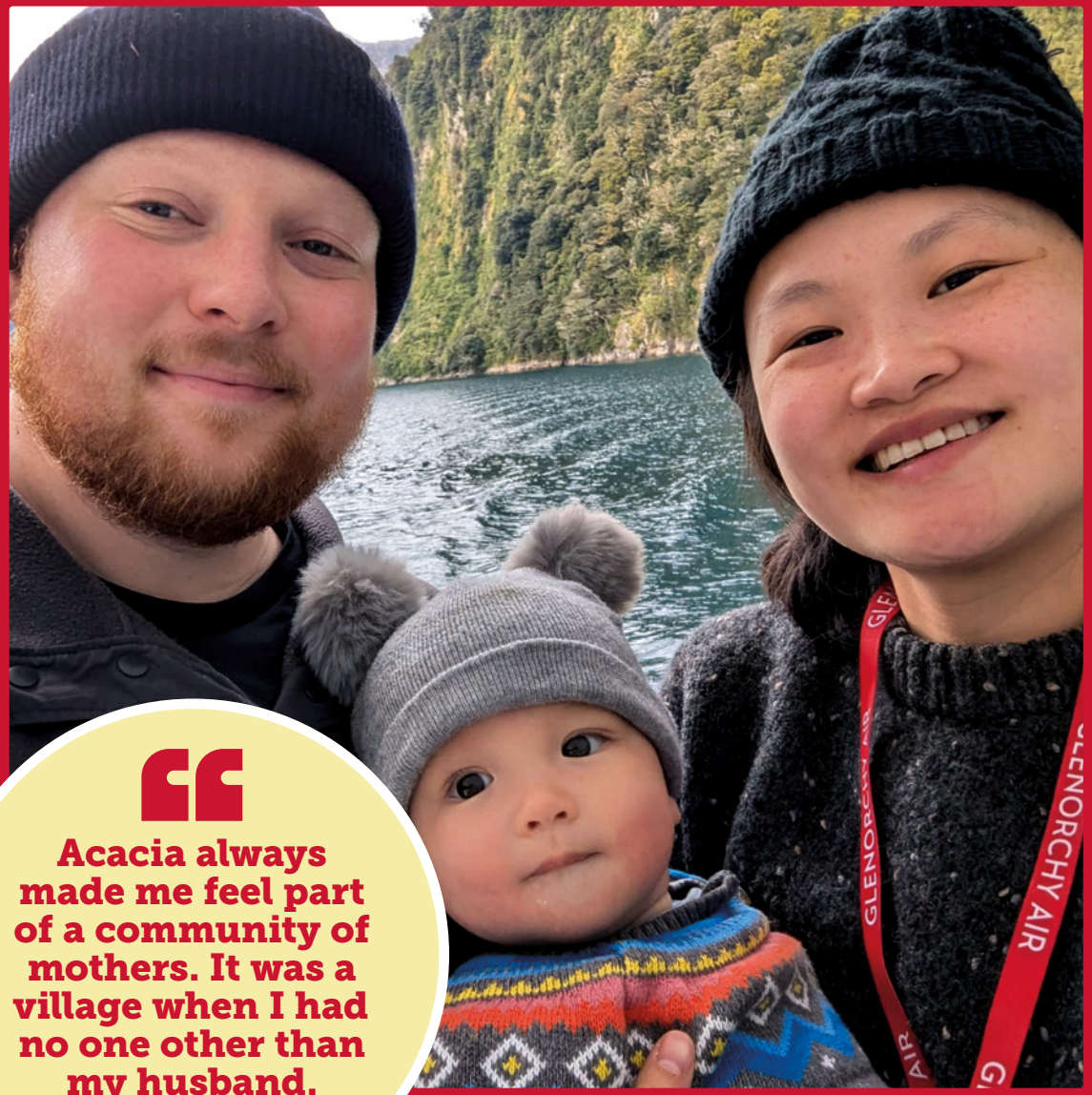
"From the very beginning, I found the transition into motherhood extremely difficult."

"I was unprepared for the loss of identity and routine as well as the unrelenting demands of childrearing. This was all compounded by the messages I got from society that this was meant to be the happiest time of my life. I found it extremely difficult to share how difficult I was finding it with other mothers, health visitors and my husband."

"I started going to Acacia very early postpartum and started off with befriending sessions before moving onto group CBT. These sessions were very tearful as I started to offload and explore the challenges of being a new parent. I was finally able to talk honestly about my feelings to someone who didn't judge, was empathetic and genuinely cared about me. Having a crèche available at Acacia was also invaluable. It gave me space to breathe, digest the sessions and time to fill my cup."

"The volunteers at Acacia always made me feel part of a community of mothers. It was a village when I had no one other than my husband. Meeting other mothers at Acacia made the recovery journey a lot less lonely and helped me understand that there wasn't anything 'wrong' with me not being able to cope."

"Acacia has been a critical part of my recovery from postnatal depression. I will always remember and be forever grateful to everyone at Acacia. Thank you so much."



> **"Acacia always made me feel part of a community of mothers. It was a village when I had no one other than my husband."**

Challenge and resilience

Welcome, from our Co-Chairs

This year has been one of both challenge and resilience for Acacia.

Like many charities across the country, we have faced a difficult financial environment, with increasing pressures on funding alongside growing demand for our services. As trustees, we have had to make some very difficult decisions to ensure that Acacia remains sustainable for the future. One of the saddest consequences of this has been saying goodbye to valued members of our team whose commitment, compassion and dedication have helped shape the service that so many families rely upon. We are deeply grateful for their contribution and the difference they have made to countless lives.

Despite these challenges, what continues to inspire us is the unwavering devotion of our staff and volunteers to go the extra mile for every individual who comes through our doors. At Acacia, we know that no two families are the same. Every person's experience, circumstances and needs are unique, and we are committed to ensuring that everyone feels seen, heard and valued.

Most times, the best support is our own befriending, listening and wellbeing support services. At other times, it means connecting individuals with specialist help that is better placed to meet their needs. Our partnerships and our internal supplementary services, including Helping Hands at Home and Emma's Gift, enable us to provide practical, emotional and holistic support to families at times when they need it most.

This year also saw the launch of Becky's Gift, a fitting tribute that supports parent-infant relationship nurturing.

“What continues to inspire us is the unwavering devotion of our staff and volunteers to go the extra mile for every individual who comes through our doors.”

As we reflect on the year, we are reminded that while financial pressures may shape the environment in which we operate, they do not define us. What defines Acacia is the compassion and care shown by our staff, volunteers, supporters and partners.

On behalf of the Board of Trustees, we would like to thank everyone who has supported Acacia throughout the year. Your generosity, commitment and belief in our mission enable us to continue making a meaningful difference to the lives of parents and families across our communities.

Together, we look forward to the year ahead with confidence, purpose and hope.



Hayley Bowen
Co-Chair of the Board of Trustees



David Knott
Co-Chair of the Board of Trustees



Our Christian values

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.

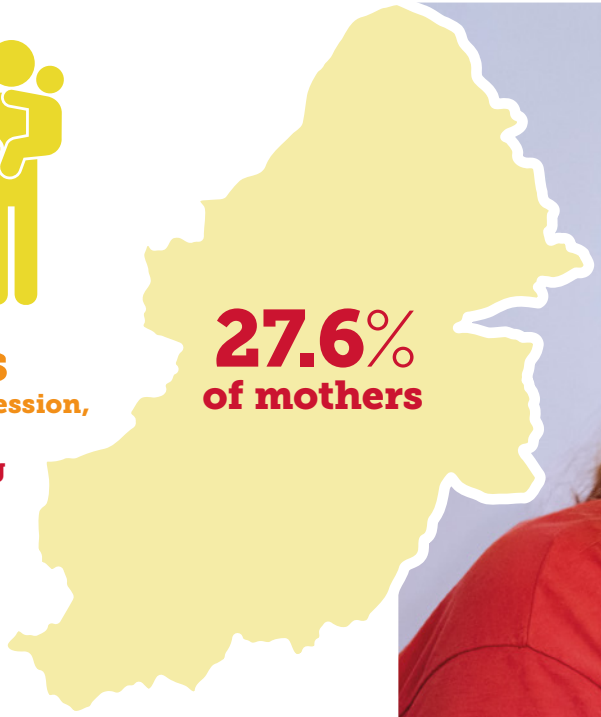
Environmental responsibility

We recognise the connection between the climate and environmental crises disproportionately affecting those who have contributed least to pollution and who are the least resilient to being able to mitigate against these crises. So, we are playing our part in reducing the impact that our activities have on the environment. We are doing what we can to manage and reduce the waste and emissions generated through our service delivery and to promote positive climate actions.

The need is greater than ever



1 in 4 mothers
nationally now report depression, anxiety, or other serious mental health issues during pregnancy or in the first year after childbirth.[1] 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).

Suicide is still the leading cause of death for mothers in the year after pregnancy, accounting for nearly 40% of deaths.[2]

40%



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

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)

1. Perinatal mental health condition prevalence, Office for Health Improvement and Disparities, February 2025
2. Maternal Mental Health Alliance, 2023

About Acacia Family Support

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'.

Acacia is a Birmingham-based charity providing free, compassionate support to families experiencing pre and postnatal depression and anxiety. We help parents feel understood, valued, and less alone during what can be one of the most challenging times in their lives.



Everything we do is guided by our ethos of valuing every mum and dad who comes to us. We are committed to doing all we can to ensure they receive the support they need. Sometimes that support comes directly from Acacia, and sometimes it means helping families access other services that are better suited to their needs. Whatever the situation, we're here to make sure no one falls through the cracks.

We offer a listening ear, practical support, comfort and hope, walking alongside parents and families through some of life's most challenging moments.

Our range of services enables us to wrap personalised care around every individual. By taking the time to understand each person's unique circumstances, we are able to provide compassionate, tailored support that surrounds them with understanding, encouragement and reassurance – an Acacia embrace that ensures no one has to face their journey alone.

In this Impact Report, we will shine a light on some of the additional services that make Acacia unique. These are the added-value elements of our support that often make so much difference, helping people feel seen, supported and ensuring that they're connected with the right timely and appropriate support when they need it.

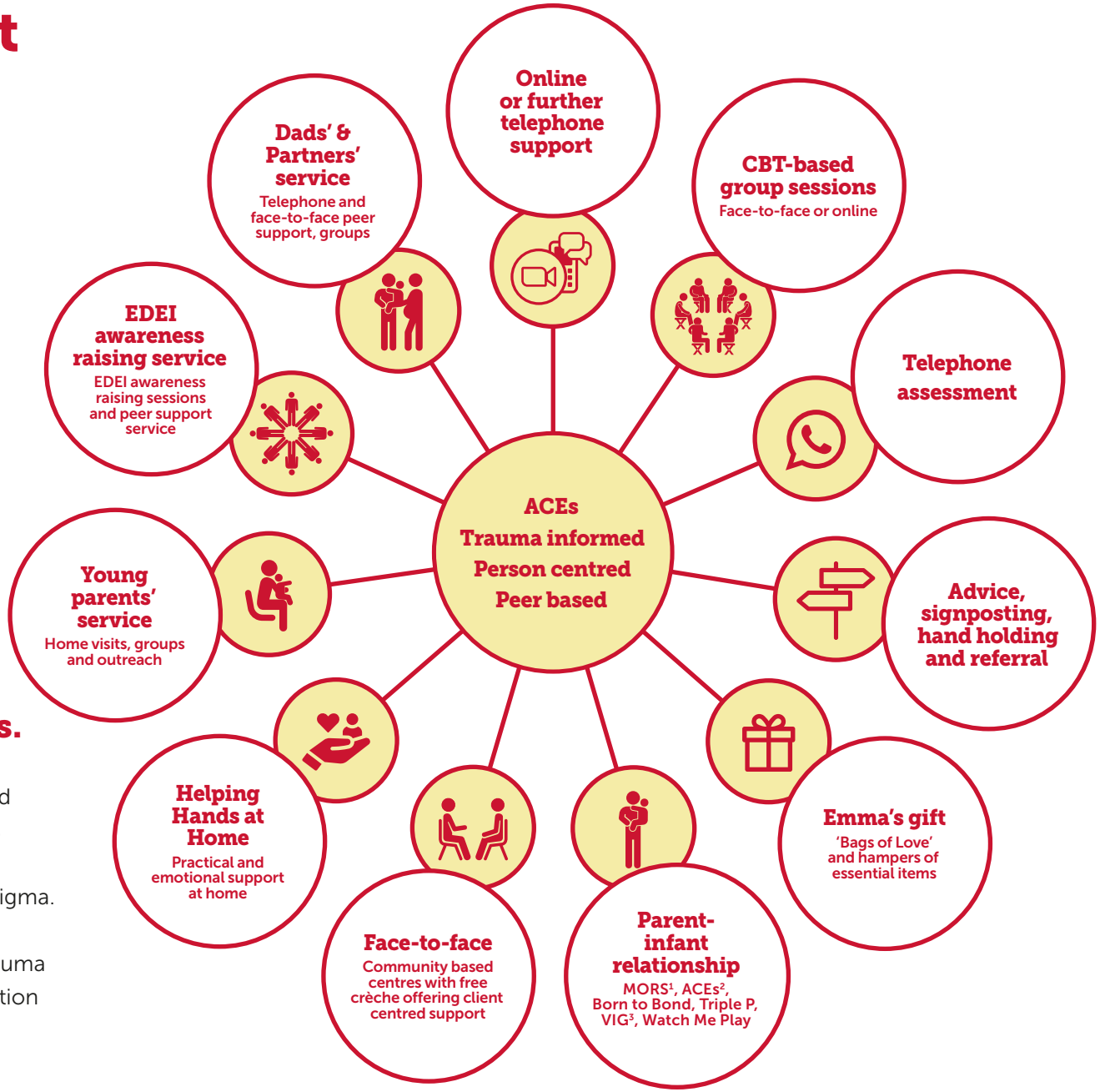
Our model of support



Our trauma informed approach is consistent with our central philosophy of recognising each person's uniqueness. Our integrated model of support is designed to identify and address a person's complex and interconnected psychosocial needs.

Lived experience is a cornerstone of this approach. Shared experience enables us to come alongside mums and dads in a way that reduces barriers, sharing experiences to help normalise perinatal mental health problems and reduce stigma.

All client facing staff at Acacia now receive Thrive LDN Trauma Informed Practice training up to gold level. As an organisation we are systemically committed to these principles.



1. Mothers' Object Relations Scale.
2. Adverse Childhood Experiences.
3. Video interaction guidance.

What does trauma informed mean?

This approach is coherent with our Christian ethos because of the value it recognises in each individual, shifting the focus from, 'What is wrong with this person?' to, 'What happened to this person?' It is built on six core principles:

Core principles

- **Safety:** Prioritising physical, emotional, and psychological safety for everyone.
- **Trustworthiness and transparency:** Building clear, honest, and reliable relationships.
- **Empowerment and choice:** Giving individuals a voice and respecting their choices.
- **Collaboration:** Sharing power and making decisions together rather than top-down.
- **Empowerment:** Validating personal strengths and supporting self-efficacy.
- **Culture and diversity:** Actively respecting diversity and moving past biases or stereotypes. This sits comfortably beside Acacia's cultural humility approach.

"The staff at Acacia are so kind and friendly. They made me feel so welcome. The kindness shown to me and my baby is something I won't ever forget."

Who we supported

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 2025 and March 2026.

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, **191 clients** completed these 'before' and 'after' clinical measures. Data is also taken from **228 clients** who received support and responded to direct evaluation questions.

In 2025-26



618

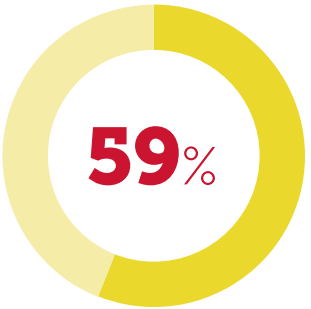
families accessed our support



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

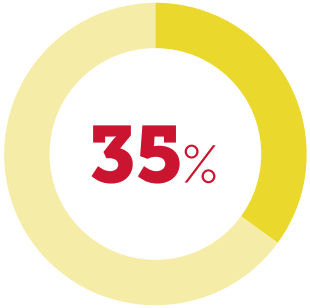


of our **clients** live in the **10% most deprived** areas of England



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

Severity

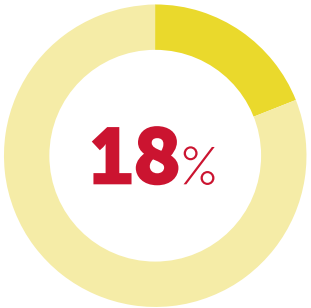


of parents entered with **severe or moderately severe depression***



entered with **severe anxiety***

Age

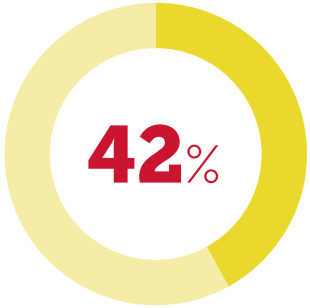


of mums were aged **24 years or under**

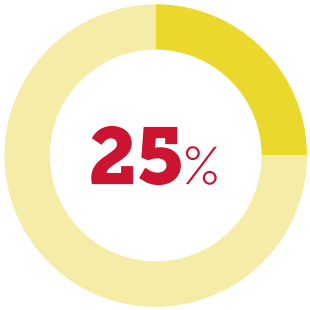


the **average age** of all our mums, dads and partners

Referrals



self referrals, the most common route into the service



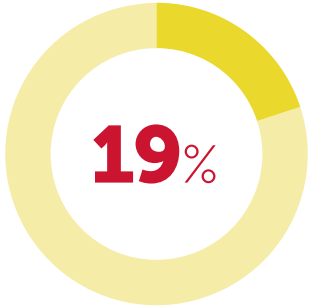
health visitors and **midwives**



specialist **perinatal mental health team**



other health professionals/ other agencies



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



were referred and supported

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



Referrer feedback

Each year we use a survey to get feedback from all referrers who have referred to us in the previous 12 months. This feedback also feeds into our planning, and changes are made in response.

100% rated our services as good, very good or excellent.

"Very supportive, going above and beyond and very effective working with the younger demographic of parents."

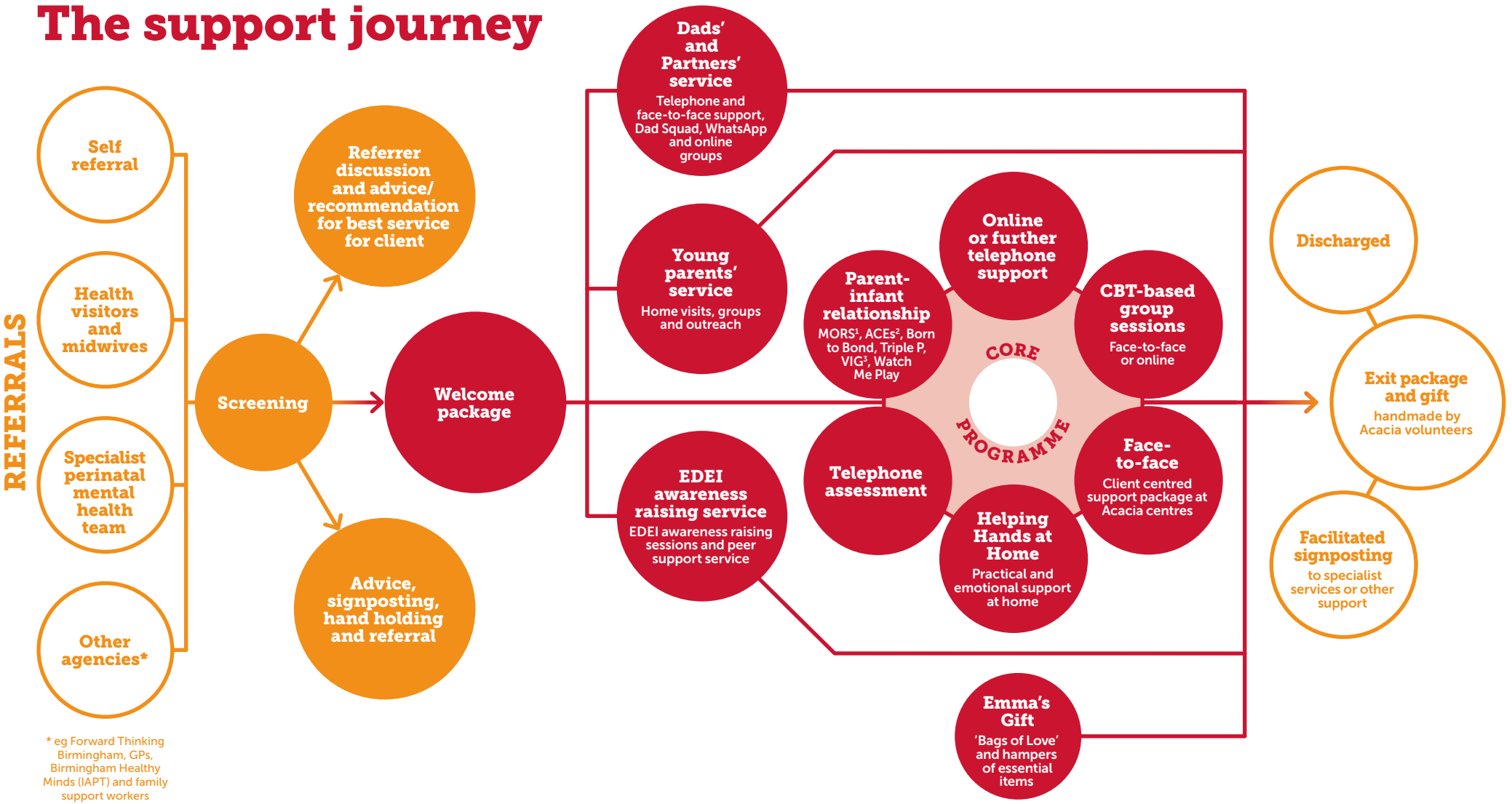
"Women and birthing people always speak highly of support provided by Acacia."

"Gave clear reason why not suitable and took initiative to refer mum to another service."

"Excellent communication with our team following referrals and on discussing care for patients. Good knowledge of our team and criteria."

How we help

The support journey

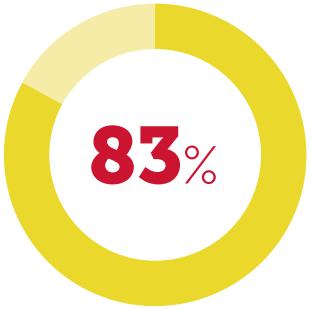


1. Mothers' Object Relations Scale.
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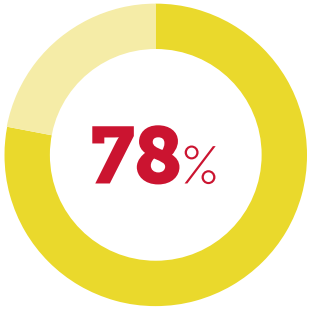
Our impact

Our services significantly improve parents' mental health

> **Acacia has been a critical part of my recovery from postnatal depression. I will always remember and be forever grateful to everyone at Acacia.**



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



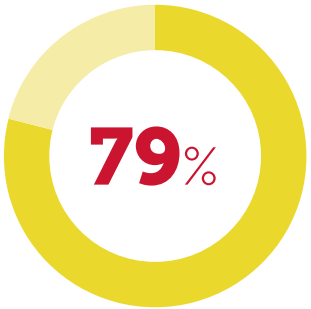
had **reduced anxiety**



felt better **able to cope**



the average **length of time** spent in service



had **reduced depression**



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



felt more **supported**



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



would **recommend Acacia** to friends and family

Kara

"Being a young mum came with challenges I wasn't fully prepared for. I was dealing with postnatal anxiety and depression, and at times I felt really isolated and judged."

"I often felt like I was behind in life, like maybe I'd made the wrong decisions, and I felt like I had to hide how much I was struggling, especially being such a young mum with two children."

"Acacia completely changed that experience for me. From the moment I joined, it didn't feel like a service, it felt like a family. They gave me practical resources, emotional support and most importantly the confidence to believe in myself again. The staff and volunteers are so understanding and down to earth. There is no judgement at all, just genuine support from people who listen and truly understand what you're going through. For the first time, I felt like I could speak openly without fear of being looked down on. I wasn't made to feel like I was failing as a mum. Instead, I was supported and guided."

"It also gave me connection, I met other mums who understood exactly how I felt, and I've made friendships through Acacia that I know will last a lifetime."

"Acacia has helped me so much as a mother and as a person. It made me feel normal again at a time when I felt anything but and reminded me that asking for help is not a weakness. The impact they've had on my life is something I'll always carry with me. They come into your life for a short time, but the strength and confidence they leave you with lasts forever. Acacia helps carry the weight of things that can feel too heavy to carry alone."

"There's a saying that a flamingo loses its pink when it becomes a mother, and in many ways that reminded me of myself, but Acacia is what brought my pink back."



"There's a saying that a flamingo loses its pink when it becomes a mother, and in many ways that reminded me of myself, but Acacia is what brought my pink back."

Our workforce



As a lean organisation, our greatest investment is in our people.

Increased financial pressures resulting from reduced funding expected during 2025-2027 has led Acacia to commence a restructuring programme, including changes to roles and responsibilities and voluntary redundancies, with the aim of reducing expenditure and ensuring Acacia's future sustainability.

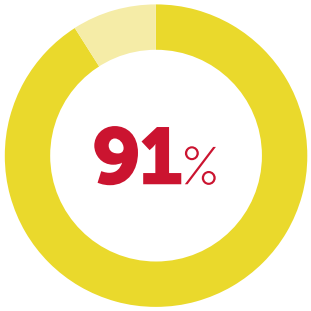
These decisions were made with great care and only after exploring every possible alternative. Our priority throughout has been to protect the breadth and quality of the services we provide, ensuring that families continue to receive the timely, compassionate, individualised support they rely on.

This has also provided an opportunity to review our services, increasing efficiencies and identifying ways to strengthen and further enhance our holistic offer to meet the evolving needs of the families we support, enhancing our focus on strengthening the whole family. This includes increasing our provision of integrated parent-child relationship interventions.

We are confident that these changes have created a more sustainable organisation that is responding well to advances and developments in perinatal and infant mental health.

We had 27 paid staff (mostly part-time) and 46 regular volunteers.

(at 31 March 2026)



of staff have lived experience of perinatal and/or another mental health condition



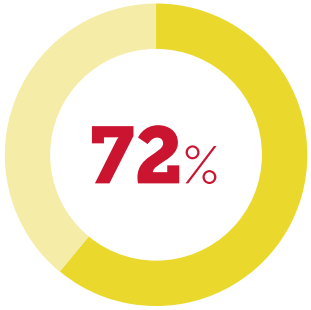
of **volunteers** receive a full package of Acacia externally validated **training relevant to their role**



of staff and volunteers receive **level 1/2 safeguarding and domestic abuse training**



of eligible staff receive **adult/child safeguarding training to levels 3 and 4**



of volunteers have lived experience of perinatal or other mental health issues



of **client-facing staff** receive Thrive LDN **Trauma Informed Practice training** up to Gold Level (3)



of client-facing staff and volunteer befrienders also receive **level 2/3 adult/child safeguarding training**



of case workers receive external individual and/or group **clinical supervision and case file review**

What our staff say

As a lived experience charity, we remain committed to supporting the wellbeing of our staff and volunteers.

Most of our staff and volunteers have experienced perinatal mental health or other mental health difficulties.

We want Acacia Family Support to remain an aspirational place to work or volunteer. We believe in going the extra mile for both our families and our workforce.

Restructuring inevitably means job losses and much change. We have tried our best to minimise any distress and the results from our most recent annual staff survey, which is anonymous, are encouraging in this regard. 88% of staff responded to the survey.



> **I feel heard, whether that's on a professional level or personal level. I can talk openly and feel my needs are being met. I feel valued and appreciated.**

> **Acacia is an amazing place to work. Thank you.**

> **Thanks to everyone, especially those involved in the restructure, for handling a difficult year with compassion and kindness.**

> **A culture that welcomes and is embracing of all. Strong values of love, kindness and compassion for families provided by a strong and caring team of volunteers and staff. A good place to be and work.**

> **My manager is consistently encouraging, helpful, and supportive, and she genuinely cares about my wellbeing.**

Our 2026 staff survey results



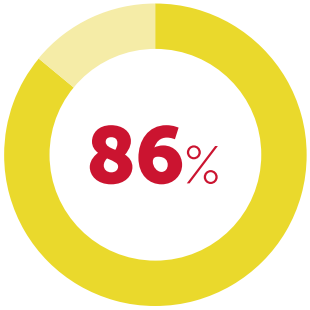
of staff are either **very satisfied or satisfied** working for Acacia



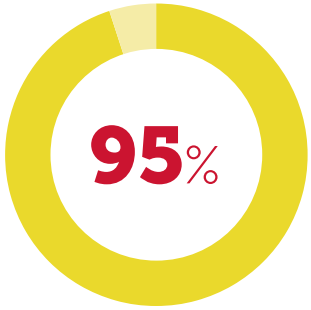
of staff feel aligned with **Acacia's mission and ethos**



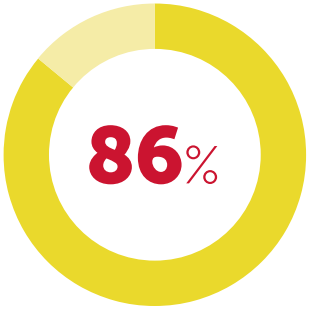
of staff feel that **Acacia's values** guide staff's day to day actions



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

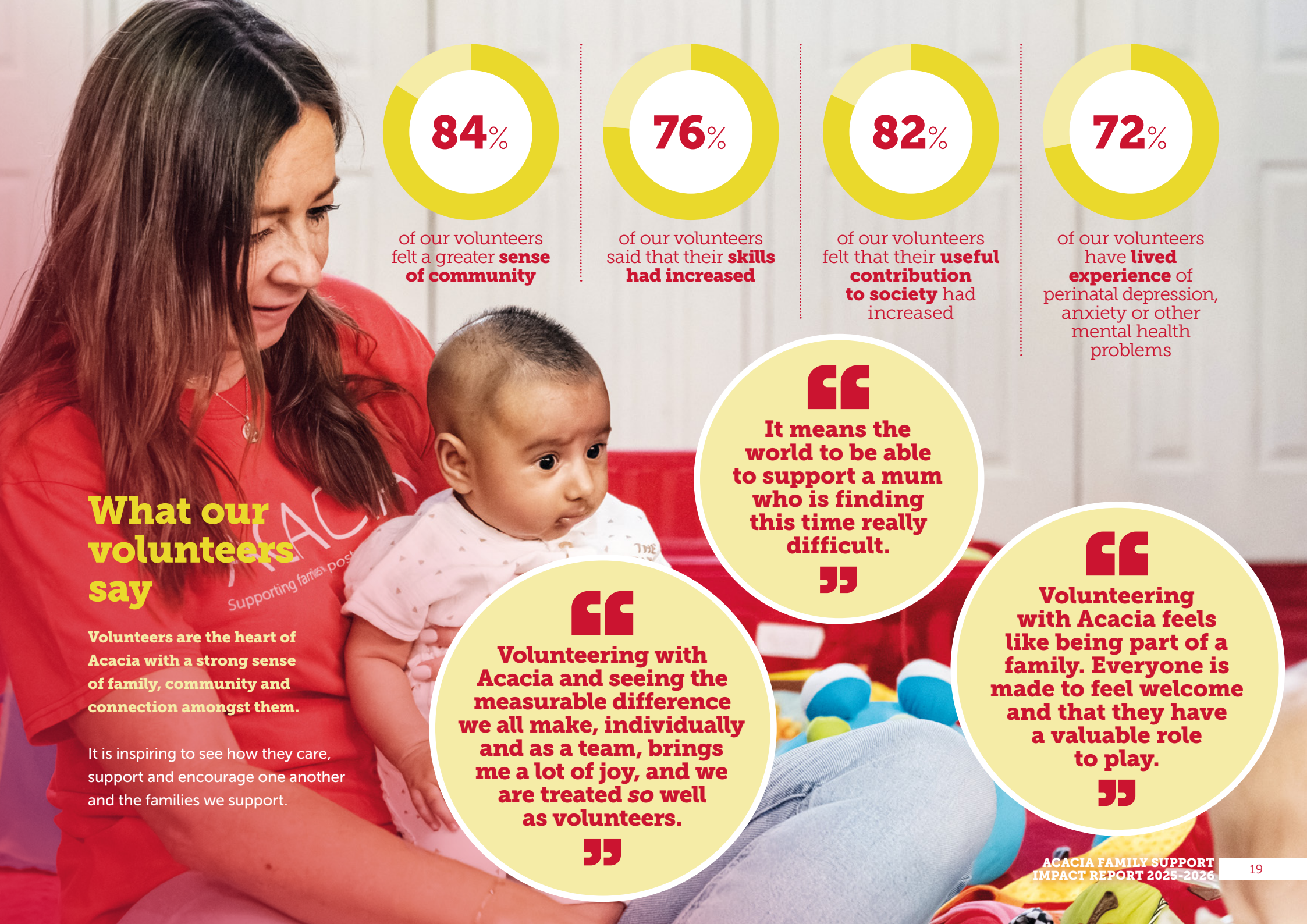


of staff feel that Acacia looks after the **emotional wellbeing** of staff



of staff said they **feel appreciated** at work

"I really appreciate how good Acacia staff are at openly giving positive feedback towards their colleagues ... it creates a strong feeling of positivity and support which makes for such an enjoyable environment/ culture to be part of and always know I can turn to any colleague for help."



84%

of our volunteers felt a greater **sense of community**

76%

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

82%

of our volunteers felt that their **useful contribution to society** had increased

72%

of our volunteers have **lived experience** of perinatal depression, anxiety or other mental health problems

What our volunteers say

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.

> **It means the world to be able to support a mum who is finding this time really difficult.**

> **Volunteering with Acacia and seeing the measurable difference we all make, individually and as a team, brings me a lot of joy, and we are treated *so* well as volunteers.**

> **Volunteering with Acacia feels like being part of a family. Everyone is made to feel welcome and that they have a valuable role to play.**



Cece

"I honestly do not know where to begin. Thank you, for giving me the space to serve. And thank you to the entire Acacia team for the love, love, love."

"From celebrating my milestone birthday, to the socials, to the overwhelming support shown when my daughter was hospitalised, I have felt genuinely cared for. Acacia has never just been an organisation to me; it has felt like a community filled with warmth, compassion and grace."

"I came in with personal expectations of what I hoped to give, in the process, I gained so much more than I expected. Acacia has changed the way I approach motherhood, my marriage and even everyday life. I have learned the importance of gratitude over complaint. I have learned to be patient with myself and to focus on solutions instead of limitations. I have become less judgmental, because I now understand more deeply that people carry burdens differently. I have learned that my struggles are not mine alone, and that there is comfort in shared journeys. Most importantly, I have learned how to truly listen, not simply to respond, but to make people feel seen, heard and cared for. I came to give, but I also came away having gleaned so much."

"Recently, I accepted a new job offer. There is still a lot to navigate and settle into, but I feel it is the right step for me and my family at this time."

"Thank you all for allowing me to be part of something so meaningful. Thank you for the lessons, the kindness, the patience, the encouragement and the love. Acacia will always hold a very special place in my heart."

Cece
Acacia volunteer

"Gives me such a great feeling: helping those who are going through something I can relate to, being part of an amazing group of people. Hope to be able to continue forever."

"It's an honour to be a part of such a lovely team."

"Volunteering with Acacia is a very rewarding part of my life. I always look forward to my Acacia day. It has enriched my life immensely, and I'm proud to share Acacia's work with others."

Offering hope

Finding the right path, together

No two journeys are the same. To meet people where they are and respond to their individual needs, we must be flexible, adaptable and open to whatever support they need in that moment.

Over the years, listening to our clients, Acacia has developed an interconnected network of internal services, external pathways and validated approaches to help us do just that. Together, these enable us to support the emotional and practical needs of mums and dads which in turn supports the parent-infant relationship and infant mental health/development.

The following pages highlight how some of these services and pathways come together to support the families who place their trust in us and reflect the compassion and care at the heart of everything we do.

Nurturing families

Helping families to flourish and thrive

Nurturing Families is the new name for our internal supplementary practical support services.

Helping Hands at Home (HH@H) was our founder Emma's original vision, providing practical support in the home for parents, and in some cases acting as a stepping stone into centre-based support. It combines a home visit with three to four practical visits – such as cleaning, cooking, recipe planning or simply holding the baby – which can be vital for mums feeling overwhelmed by the demands of motherhood alongside mental distress.

HH@H has flourished and grown to include Emma's Gift, Holding the Baby and our new Becky's Gift, greatly expanding the support we offer to parents. Together, these practical services focus on small acts of kindness and on the wellbeing and nurturing of both parent and infant. They are accessed through our internal referral pathways.



"I thought that the initial contact, assessment and pack with teabags, etc, was excellent. It made me feel positive about the fact that I'd reached out for help. I also feel that the team were very proactive in supporting me in ways specific to me. Helping Hands at Home and signposting me to other relevant support organisations."

Parent-infant relationship

The connection between parental perinatal mental health and infant mental health and development is well documented.

Babies are deeply connected to the people who care for them, and their early experiences of being comforted, understood and responded to help shape their developing sense of safety, relationships and emotional regulation. This is why supporting parental mental health is not only about the wellbeing of the parent themselves – it is also an important part of giving babies the best possible start in life.

With the right support, parents recover enabling them to build stronger relationships with their child, creating a positive foundation for lifelong emotional wellbeing.

Acacia incorporates a range of validated tools and models in our support including MORS and Watch Me Play to help us to assess and nurture the parent-infant relationship.

Our service restructure and service-wide review has provided us with the opportunity to identify and roll out several further parent-infant approaches (Born to Bond, Triple P, PIIOS*). Our approach is always to integrate aspects of these models/tools into our interventions adapting them to each individual's needs.



"Having a free crèche available at Acacia was also invaluable. It gave me space to breathe, digest the sessions and time to fill my cup."

* Parent-Infant Interaction Observation Scale

Dads struggle too

If the family is to be happy and healthy, both parents need to be well. Dad Squad provides dads' stay and play support groups across Birmingham that provide support for dads/partners whilst encouraging parent-infant interaction, bonding and growth. In addition we offer WhatsApp support groups for dads and individual one-to-one peer support.

Adverse Childhood Experiences

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) strongly predict a higher risk of perinatal mental health issues. Women with a history of early trauma face increased rates of depression and anxiety during pregnancy and after childbirth. We incorporate this model into our assessment and person-centred approach.

> **Your flexibility to work with me and adapt to what I've been struggling with, such as phone calls and online group instead of face-to-face because of my OCD made all the difference. You've made me feel less isolated. I'm so grateful.**

> **They always accept referral and if they don't they call and email with rationale and advice. Always friendly. Good, informative service.**
>
> Health visitor

Supporting professionals

We are an established, integral part of the local perinatal mental health pathway.

Established for over 20 years we are recognised for our consistent impact and experience. To support our sector, we continue to develop a wide range of valuable resources for professionals and offer regular training, advice and awareness to other services in the pathway.

We have regular visits to our centres from professionals and trainees such as health visitors and midwives.

9 awareness raising workshops delivered to **320 health professionals** and members of local **community groups**

579 emails plus **550 phone calls** to referrers to verify and discuss referral, provide advice and update on client journey

58% of **referrals** came from **health visitors, midwives, specialist perinatal mental health team** and/or **other health professionals** like GPs

Referral

Our approach is simple: to ensure that every person and family referred to us finds the right support. Through a comprehensive screening, referral and assessment process, we take the time to understand each family's circumstances, needs and priorities.

We provide person-centred support and guidance that is meaningful and effective, helping each individual access the most appropriate services and ensuring they feel listened to, supported and cared for every step of the way.

Online and social media

We maintain a strong online presence, offering ongoing advice and encouragement. All clients are added as members of our various WhatsApp support groups and we provide online virtual support options for groupwork, etc.

Pathways

We have developed a range of internal and external pathways to ensure that access and support is easier, quicker and more efficient to and from external agencies eg Specialist Perinatal Mental Health Teams, Health Visitors, Family Hubs.

Safety Net

From 2026 all self-referrals who have been referred and/or signposted to other services will receive follow up calls to ensure that they have engaged with an appropriate service and if not, to provide further support and advice/referral to ensure they don't fall through the cracks.

Equality, diversity, equity and inclusion

We continue to focus on removing barriers for diverse families and communities by an ongoing programme of development and integration of targeted resources and communication aids. For example: multilingual films; LGBTQIA+ specific guides and resources; neurodiversity communication utilities; availability of interpreters.

Acacia groups

Peer support groups are a vital aspect of good effective nurturing support. We provide a range of formal and informal support groups:

- Summer stay and plays.
- Centre based CBT groups.
- Young parents' groups.
- Online CBT group.
- Walk and talk.
- Coffee shop.
- Dad Squad.



Muz

"Attending the dads' group has helped me with a few different things I'm constantly struggling with and I've left feeling in a better place from the experience."

"I've managed to find a space to build my confidence and bond with my child and it's given me the opportunity to be amongst other dads who have opened up about some of their own struggles and provided a forum to share stories and experiences that made me less anxious about certain aspects of parenting knowing these are all normal feelings and thoughts shared by other dads."

"It's been nice to see other actively involved dads spending one on one time with their children and having my child play and interact with others whilst I've been in the background chatting away with a dad and getting to see my child from a different point of view."

"The environment was very relaxed and that made me comfortable enough to feel in a safe space and enjoy the moment rather than worrying about a million other things while being out the house with the little one."

DAD SQUAD

PLAY TOGETHER. GROW TOGETHER.

Young parents' group

"Every aspect of the service has been amazing. So, refreshing to receive a service like this, no judgment, feel so sane after talking and being given the opportunity to talk – you are so refreshing."

"I felt that every little thing served the purpose it was intended for. I enjoyed one-to-one at the beginning to help me open up and I really learnt loads of coping mechanisms and useful info about understanding my emotions doing the group work."

Rakhee



"After having my baby, I found myself in a place I never expected to be. Instead of feeling happy and fulfilled, I felt low, overwhelmed, and disconnected."

"Postnatal depression crept in quietly but deeply, and I began to struggle with feelings of guilt, anxiety, and isolation. I kept thinking I should be coping better, which only made things harder."

"Looking back, the support actually began during my pregnancy with phone befriending. Having regular calls scheduled at times that worked for me made it feel manageable and accessible, even on difficult days. It gave me something to hold onto – a consistent, understanding voice that helped me feel less alone before my baby had even arrived."

"After birth, the befriending support continued to make such a difference. Having someone there just to listen, check in, and sit alongside me without judgment helped me feel seen and supported. It wasn't about fixing everything instantly, but about having consistent, compassionate support when I needed it most."

"Helping Hands was also an amazing part of the service. At first, I felt like I didn't deserve the help – like other women were more worthy than me. But the staff helped me realise that I was just as important as anyone else. That shift in how I saw myself meant so much."

"The CBT based group gave me practical tools to understand and manage what I was feeling. It helped me recognise unhelpful thought patterns and gently challenge them, making things feel more manageable day by day. For the first time, I felt like I had some control again and a way forward. "Meeting other mums who felt the same way was incredibly powerful. Being in a space where I didn't have to pretend, where others truly understood how I felt, lifted a huge weight. It normalised my experience and helped me let go of so much of the shame I had been carrying."

"What made it even more meaningful was knowing that the facilitators had experienced postnatal depression themselves. That gave me a deep sense of trust and reassurance – they weren't just supporting us professionally, but from a place of real understanding. It made me feel safe, heard, and hopeful that things really could get better."

"I'm now in a much stronger place. I feel more like myself again — more connected, more confident, and able to enjoy moments with my baby that once felt out of reach. Recovery hasn't been instant but, with Acacia, I've found my way through."

"If you're struggling, please know you're not alone – and that the right support can truly change how you feel. You will get there. It takes time, and that's okay."

Sabah



"When I first came to Acacia, my daughter was around seven months old and I was struggling with my mental health."

"I went from being so excited to finally have my baby in my arms to suddenly being underwater trying to hold my baby above the surface while I was being pulled under the tide."

"I was drowning in my own thoughts, I was so negative and unkind to myself and I felt like I was letting myself and everyone else down. I was sure that I had already ruined my baby's childhood and that I should give up - and she couldn't even hold her own head up at this point! I was full of anger and frustration and am ashamed to say I let it overtake me at times."

"Taking that first step with Acacia felt daunting, but from the moment I arrived, I felt welcomed. What stood out most to me was how kind, compassionate and understanding everyone was. I never felt like a patient or a problem that needed fixing. Instead, I was treated as a person, a mum, and an individual with my own identity. Even the small gestures, like being offered a cup of tea and toast, helped create a comfortable space."

"The weekly befriending sessions were extremely helpful. Having someone who listened without judgement and helped me work through my struggles made a huge difference. The coping strategies and support I received helped me begin to see a way forward."

"After this, the group sessions began and I was so nervous to start them due to my social anxiety. Not only did I learn more techniques for managing negative thoughts and depression, but I also met other mums who truly understood what I was going through. Sharing experiences, supporting one another and building friendships helped me feel far less alone. Even since leaving Acacia, I am still friends with the mums from the sessions and we talk and meet up regularly."

"Acacia gave me the support, understanding and tools I needed during a very difficult time in my life. I will always be grateful to the staff, volunteers and fellow mums who helped me regain confidence and hope for the future. I won't ever forget how kind you all were and how you all made me feel included and like a whole person again."

"I am so grateful to have found Acacia Family Support when I needed it most. Thank you so so so much to the whole team at the Northfield Centre."

Our national focus

Acacia's impact extends beyond Birmingham and our grassroots service delivery. We believe all families should have access to the support they deserve. Acacia is one of the two founding partners of the national Hearts & Minds Partnership, a network of grassroots perinatal mental health VCSE organisations across England.

The Partnership connects, supports and celebrates the sector by providing shared resources and learning opportunities for established and emerging grassroots services.
Our work has included:

- Creating and maintaining a membership of local perinatal support services across the country.
- Developing and maintaining a website and searchable interactive map alongside other resources and information for parents and professionals.
- Facilitating 'Trusted Spaces', both online and in person, to bring the perinatal mental health voluntary sector community together for shared learning and connection.
- Creating 'Smart Space', a free online training platform for VCSE organisations, with more than 300 individuals signed up.
- Developing a reputation as the 'Voice of the Sector', providing representation at a national level.

Hearts and Minds is now approaching the end of its second three-year funding phase. Alongside our core work streams, this phase has focused on embedding equity, diversity and inclusion at the heart of the Partnership through the Root Maker programme, with six freelance team members helping to diversify the voice and direction of our work.



> **The Hearts & Minds Partnership community provides a space where we can all share experiences, reflect on our practice and learn together, which will continue to strengthen the sector, ensuring that we are providing accountable, safe and effective services for our beneficiaries.**



> **Really bowled away by the Hearts & Minds Partnership's module: 'Making Roots' – a super useful and practical guide to welcoming families inclusively and facilitating difficult conversations in perinatal mental health spaces.**

Over the last 12 months, the partnership has:

- Expanded and diversified our England-wide digital map, which now features more than 130 services.
- Completed a series of six 'Listening Lounge' workshops – interactive online spaces where participants can learn how to genuinely nurture equity, diversity and inclusion within their VCSE services.
- Co-created new EDEI content for Smart Space, including podcast-style discussions, bite-sized lived experience videos, resources, and 'Making Roots', a module focused on embedding EDEI within grassroots perinatal services.
- Designed and delivered the day-long webinar, 'Branching Out', featuring representatives from across the sector, showcasing the custom-made video, 'Gathering Growth', which highlighted grassroots voices, and spotlighting our new Smart Space content.

Next steps

Hearts & Minds is now focused on securing continuation funding, developing a sustainability programme, and ensuring a lasting legacy for the work already achieved.

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, 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.

Facing the challenge together

In response to growing financial pressures, our team have been working hard to find new ways to raise the funds we need to plug the gap.

For the first time ever, we ran a fundraising campaign around Mother's Day, raising money while shining a light on postnatal depression and anxiety and the importance of Acacia's work. The campaign helped us reach new audiences, raise awareness and even featured on BBC and ITV news! A huge thank you to MIH Group for their support in bringing the campaign to life.

The challenge didn't end there. We continue to explore new and sustainable ways to raise income, build partnerships and secure the funding we need for the future.

And, as always, our fundraisers continue to blow us away. From taking on incredible physical challenges to sponsoring our events, our supporters go above and beyond for Acacia. Every pound raised helps us be there for parents when they need us most. We couldn't do it without them.

Here's are some highlights from the year...



London Marathon

Clare Whalley took on the London Marathon for Acacia, crossing the finish line and raising an incredible **£2,743**.



Snowdon Trek

Kate Whitlam, Georgina Humphries, Kate Curry and Claire Ambridge braved the Welsh weather to tackle Snowdon, raising an amazing **£1,420**.



Royal Sutton Fun Run

Our Acacia team, including Bambams Preschool Birmingham, Libby, Andy, Thomas, Kate and Noah, took on the Sutton Fun Run and raised **£705**.



100km Brecon Beacons Challenge

Tom took on an incredible 100km run through the Bannau Brycheiniog (Brecon Beacons), finishing in 4th place in just 12 hours 57 minutes and raising **£555** for Acacia.



Triathlon

Cath, Emma and Kate took on a 750m swim, 20km cycle and 5km run in Sutton Park, raising an incredible **£1,260** between them.



Toyota Community Fund

The Toyota Community Fund donated **£2,000** to Acacia, helping us continue our vital work supporting parents experiencing perinatal mental health difficulties.



JLR Christmas Giving

We were delighted to be chosen by JLR employees for their Christmas Giving scheme, receiving a generous **£2,500** donation for Acacia.



Sutton Santa Run

SE Fitness chose Acacia as one of its charity partners for the Sutton Santa Run, which raised an incredible **£5,569** for Acacia and Our Place Support, supported by sponsors The Health Insurance Group and Browns Restaurant.



Skydive

Katie from Bambams Nursery bravely took to the skies for Acacia, completing a skydive to raise vital funds for local families.



Walmley Primary School

Walmley Primary School brought the community together with a Coffee Morning and Pyjama Day, raising a fantastic **£350** for Acacia.



Acacia Quiz Night

A huge thank you to everyone who came along to support our quiz night, and to the brilliant volunteers who helped make the evening possible.

A huge thank you to our Acacia Angels

Our monthly donors provide vital, ongoing support that helps us be there for families when they need us most. We're so grateful to every one of our Angels.

Just £5 a month can make a huge difference

A huge thank you to our funding partners

In today's evolving and challenging fundraising landscape, support from our trusted partners is more vital than ever.

We have worked proactively to build and strengthen relationships with our Trust and Foundation partners over the past financial year.

We are deeply grateful to them all, whose generous grants have sustained our work. It is thanks to their commitment, we can continue delivering vital services to the families who need us most.

> **Acacia always provided reassurance and encouragement that things I was doing were good things. Being able to talk about difficulties and challenges and hearing from my peer support worker about his experiences, his empathy for my experiences and his advice and links to support was brilliant.**

Finance

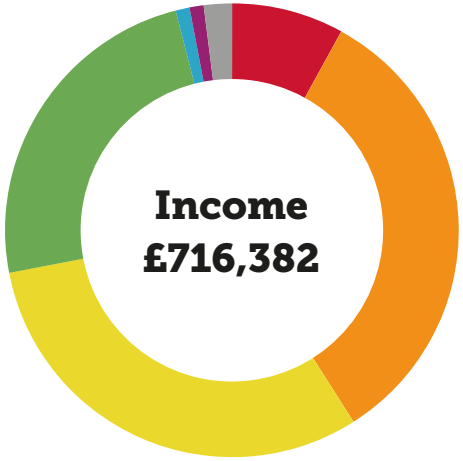
Navigating a challenging financial environment

2025/26 has been a financially challenging year for Acacia Family Support. Like many organisations across the voluntary and community sector, we have experienced a difficult funding environment, with reductions in grant and contract income, including the loss of support from several longstanding funders, alongside increasing operating costs.

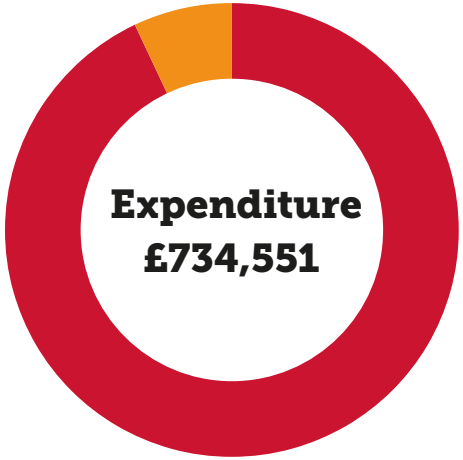
Throughout 2025/26, we have taken proactive steps to reduce non-staff costs, increase our fundraising efforts and secure new sources of funding to replace some of the income that has been lost. Despite these efforts, reductions in fundraising, grant and contract income have contributed to a deficit in 2025/26.

The financial pressures facing Acacia are expected to continue throughout 2026–2027. In response to this, we are continuing to take steps to manage costs, secure new funding and strengthen our financial sustainability, while protecting the services that families rely on. This has meant we have had to make some difficult decisions, including reducing staffing levels during 2026/27.

Further details can be found in the **2025/26 Trustees' Annual Report and Accounts.**



- Community fundraising (£59,454)
- NHS contracts (£252,437)
- Unrestricted income (£225,702)
- Restricted income (£168,472)
- Gift Aid (£1,729)
- Trading activities (£1,462)
- Bank interest (£7,126)



- Charitable activities (£685,132)
- Raising funds (£49,419)

Lauren



"I probably should have reached out to Acacia sooner. I was struggling with my sense of self after having my daughter, and that was impacting greatly on my mood."

"I found the befriending sessions extremely helpful for venting my frustrations, and my befriender has helped me identify patterns in my thinking and behaviour which I can now look out for in my everyday life – things like being overly hard on myself and not communicating my needs clearly enough. My mood improved very quickly, and I now feel in a much more positive and stable place."

"Helping Hands at Home has also been highly beneficial, as it gave me the space and time to reclaim some of the hobbies I'd been struggling to make time for."

"I definitely feel more like myself since accessing Acacia's services, and for that I am immensely grateful."

Lauren's Poem

(abridged)

Motherhood is magical, they say,
The realising of a dream,
But it's also stitches and swelling and soreness,
Prescription haemorrhoid cream,
It's hobbling down the stairs in tears
And dreading going to the loo,
It's needing your partner to help you get dressed
And sanitary towels bigger than you,
It's a gaggle of strangers inspecting your nethers,
Spectacular bladder leaks,
Wondering how on earth you're supposed
To be back to normal in just six weeks,
It's memories of beeping monitors,
Of torturous, hellish pain,
Wondering if you have the will or desire
To ever go through it again.

It's exhaustion to the point of delirium,
Feeling drunk with none of the buzz,
It's managing to push through and function
Somehow despite the severe brain-fuzz,
It's trying to meet your own bodily needs,
To safeguard your mental health,
Doggedly clinging to the frayed ropes
Tethering you to your sense of self,
It's days spent encamped on the sofa,
All hobbies put on hold,
Lamenting the loss of freedom
If the unvarnished truth be told,
It's major emotional whiplash,
Moods that can turn on a dime,
It's nursing bras and button-down shirts,
One boob out most of the time.

It's hundreds of hours spent gazing
At your baby asleep on your shoulder,
Making lists of the places you plan
On taking them when they're older,
It's dozens of cute little outfits,
Noting the changes week on week,
It's marvelling while tracing your fingers
Over a perfect curve of cheek,
It's settling in on the sofa
For another cuddle-filled day,
It's knowing you'll never be able
To care about work the same way,
It's staring at those tiny fingers
Sweetly curled around your own,
A solemn vow to always be there
Long after they are grown.

Motherhood is magical, they say,
The realising of a dream,
But it's also stitches and swelling and soreness,
Prescription haemorrhoid cream...

"I definitely feel more like myself since accessing Acacia's services, and for that I am immensely grateful."

"My mood improved very quickly, and I now feel in a much more positive and stable place."

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