



Impact Report

2023-2024

Changing children's
lives for the better

Contents

- 3 Welcome to Children's Links
- 4 Vision, Mission and Values
- 5 Rachel Aylmer - Chief Executive Officer
- 6 Our Impact and How We Demonstrate Our Values
- 7 Learning - The Toy Library
- 8 Learning - Multiply
- 9 Innovation - Play Scheme
- 11 Innovation - Women in Third Sector Leadership
- 12 Nurturing - Nurseries
- 14 Nurturing - Contact Centres
- 15 Kindness - Families
- 17 Striving For Success
- 18 2023-2024 Insights
- 23 A Fantastic Place to Work
- 24 Helena Kucharczyk - Chair of the Board of Trustees



Welcome to Children's Links



Introduction

Children's Links is a Lincolnshire based charity that works with children, families and communities to change children's lives for the better.



Childcare

We enable the children in our care to learn through play, flourish and reach their full potential. We do this through nurseries, after school and holiday clubs, and a Play Scheme for children with complex needs.



Support for Families

We provide support for separated families to help them build positive relationships.



Play

We run play sessions for children of all ages that provide them with opportunities to try new things, develop their physical, social and emotional skills, increase their confidence and, above all, to have fun.



Community and Workforce

We work closely with stakeholders, parents, children, funders, and the wider community to identify gaps in services and create individual solutions. Our social enterprise, Linking Up Limited (LUL) provides childcare voucher services nationally.

Vision, Mission and Values

Our Vision

To change
children's lives
for the better

Our Values

Learning
Innovation
Nurturing
Kindness
Striving For Success

Our Mission

In order to achieve this,
we work together to:

- Help children reach their potential
- Build confidence and resilience
- Have a lasting impact

Did You Know?

We have been working to
improve the lives of children,
young people and families for
over 25 years - we celebrated our
25th year as a charity in 2023!



Rachel Aylmer - Chief Executive Officer

“Despite the challenges facing the sector, our team has continued to deliver high quality services during 2023-2024. As Chief Executive I hear stories every day about how our staff are helping the children, families and communities they work with and I am pleased this report enables me to share just a few of these, showing how we put our values into practice to deliver a positive impact.

Nothing in this Impact Report could have been achieved without the dedication and passion of our staff and volunteers, the support of our Trustees or the help of the many partners we work with.

I would like to thank them all for enabling us to achieve what we have, and say how much I look forward to working together in the future to change children's lives for the better.”



In their own words

“NucleusHR are thrilled to be chosen to be the outsourced HR supplier to Children’s Links.”
- Toni Robinson, Founder of Nucleus HR



Our Impact and How We Demonstrate Our Values

Our report shares some of the successes we have had during 2023-2024. We highlight the positive impacts that Children's Links has made to children, young people, families and communities' lives.

This report primarily focuses on how we demonstrate our core values through the impactful work we undertake.

Our Values

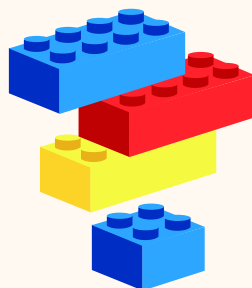
Learning
Innovation
Nurturing
Kindness
Striving For Success



“Kindness is a language
that the deaf can hear and
the blind can see.”
- Mark Twain



Learning



The Toy Library - Lincoln

Our Toy Library in Lincoln provides a safe, affordable space for families with young children to play and learn. With an extensive range of toys available for hire, it supports children's development and offers opportunities for community engagement.

Recently, it expanded to include a sensory room and specialised equipment, and it also hosts the Lincoln Supervised Contact Centre.

In their own words

"Such a warm and welcoming place, everything is easily accessible. Staff are lovely, just a great environment!"

"The Toy Library is the only place I can come with my sons on my own! It is very safe and accessible and the staff are fab and understanding!"



Learning **MULTIPLY**



Empowering Numeracy with Multiply

The Children's Links Training Team hosts a fun, friendly, and relaxed project for adults lacking confidence with numbers. Through the government-funded Multiply programme, we cater to adults without essential numeracy skills, offering flexible, free courses.

Our informal games allow participants to make friends and develop new skills. Our 'Nursery Numbers' course aids parents in nurturing their children's early maths skills, whilst also enhancing their own knowledge.

With half of England's working-age population exhibiting primary school-level numeracy skills, our courses play a pivotal role in addressing maths anxiety and building confidence. Dedicated to accessibility, our team ensures tailored support for participants with diverse needs, including hearing and visual impairments.

In their own words

"Thoroughly enjoyed learning new skills -
I have more confidence"

"I have really enjoyed these sessions, I have
been able to join in with the group. In the past,
other tutors haven't taken the time to try and
provide me with things to let me join in."
- Blind Participant

Nursery Numbers RummiClub



Innovation

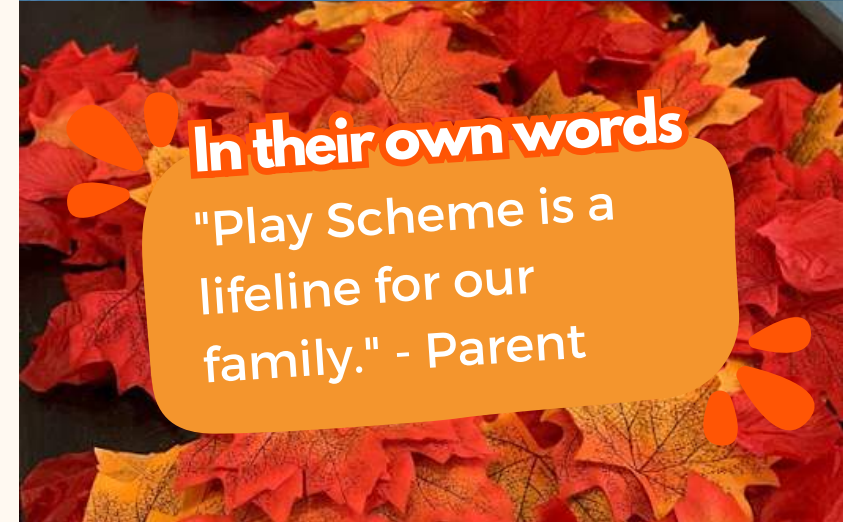
Scunthorpe Play Scheme for Children with Complex Needs

Our Scunthorpe Play Scheme has seen remarkable success thanks to our dedicated sessional staff and strong partnerships with families, schools, health services, and North Lincolnshire Council.

Despite the diverse and complex needs of the children involved, our focus remains on promoting participation, fun, and personal growth through a variety of sensory activities ranging from music to arts and crafts.

Run by Children's Links since 2015, the specialised Play Scheme provides a safe and stimulating environment for children during the Easter and summer holidays, ensuring enjoyment and stimulation for all participants.

The positive feedback received about the Play Scheme reflects the essence of Children's Links – a beacon of innovation, inclusivity, and support for children with diverse needs and their families.



Jack Marshall - Making a Difference at Play Scheme

Jack Marshall's inspiring journey from a Play Scheme participant as a child to an integral team member as an adult exemplifies the transformative power of inclusivity and dedication in the work that we do. Despite the challenges posed by Moebius Syndrome, Jack's resilience and determination have made him an inspiring force.

His childhood experiences at the Play Scheme developed his social skills and confidence, shaping his approach to working with children today. Jack's personal and professional growth through this project underscores the rewarding and transformative nature of our initiatives. He encourages individuals with similar backgrounds to consider involvement in programmes like Play Scheme, emphasising the positive impact on children's lives.

Amidst Jack's remarkable journey, it is crucial to acknowledge the supportive role of Children's Links - we provided an inclusive environment where Jack could thrive. Without our support, Jack might not have had the opportunity to showcase his skills and positively impact the lives of children with complex needs.

For the full story on Jack's inspiring journey, visit childrenslinks.org.uk



Innovation

Women in Third Sector Leadership – WTSL

The Lincolnshire Women in Third Sector Leadership (WTSL) initiative, funded by The National Lottery Community Fund and hosted by Children's Links, aims to improve the resilience of women leaders in the third sector over a three-year period, starting from August 2022.

The purpose of the WTSL Network is to provide a mutually supportive environment for women from third sector organisations. We have successfully brought women together who find themselves isolated, not only due to their role as female leaders, but also due to the dispersed rural nature of Lincolnshire.

Currently, the network boasts 120 members.

Participation in the WTSL Network has proven invaluable for members, offering opportunities for connection, conversations, exchanging ideas, and engagement in events. 2023's conference stands as a testament to the impact of the network - as one member expressed, taking the time to engage with fellow leaders provided a cathartic experience and a valuable opportunity for meaningful dialogue, ultimately enhancing their leadership journey.



In their own words

"It got some real conversation going and I mean deep, meaningful conversation. The afternoon was cathartic, so a big shout out to those who joined and provided a safe space where we were able to let the guard down."
- WTSL Event Attendee

Nurturing

Our Nurseries

Our nurseries encourage creativity and independence through child-led play, challenging and stimulating young minds.

We provide each child with opportunities to support their well-being and reach their full potential.

For a full list of our nurseries, visit childrenslinks.org.uk

In their own words

"Please continue to raise the bar. You have worked wonders in your setting over the last year and the team should be very proud"

- Early Years Specialist Teacher



Shining Stars - Bringing Learning to Life

Shining Stars Nursery in Wainfleet, Lincolnshire, launched a project to offer educational experiences for local children, focusing on animal encounters and social engagement.

Children observed caterpillars transforming into butterflies and chicks hatching from eggs, encouraging hands-on learning and teaching responsibility skills. The nursery also arranged visits from baby lambs, allowing children to interact with and feed the animals!

The project received positive feedback from parents and children, highlighting the value of hands-on learning in nurturing curiosity and engagement.

To read the full inspiring case study, visit childrenslinks.org.uk

In their own words
“I think I’m more
excited than my
child!” - Parent



Nurturing Relationships at Our Contact Centres

Contact centres play a crucial role in nurturing family relationships by providing a safe and supportive environment for reuniting families. They offer emotional support, guidance, and encouragement to both parents and children as they work towards rebuilding their bond.

Our centres provide a warm and friendly atmosphere where relationships can thrive. We are committed to nurturing relationships and creating a sense of belonging for all who walk through our doors.

In their own words

"Can I have longer with my dad? Because I miss him and like visiting him here"
- Child, Aged 6

"I appreciate your support. I wasn't expecting contact centres to be so understanding and allow me to be a parent" - Parent of 2 Children



Kindness

Successful Partnership of Children's Links and Cafcass for Reuniting a Child with his Father

This story exemplifies the kindness and patience demonstrated by Children's Links in dealing with a complicated family situation.

Children's Links collaborated with Cafcass to reunite a three-year-old child with his father amid high-conflict parental dynamics. Children's Links received a referral in July 2023 regarding a family engulfed in intense conflict, resulting in a two-year separation between the child and his father. Despite serious allegations and the involvement of various agencies, we worked closely with a Family Court Advisor (FCA) to establish trust with both parents and ensure positive contact between the father and child.

Through regular communication and collaborative efforts, Children's Links and the FCA successfully facilitated positive contact between the child and his father. Our commitment to building a rapport with the parents and supporting them during contact sessions played a crucial role in achieving positive outcomes.



Kindness

Successful Partnership of Children's Links and Cafcass for Reuniting a Child with his Father

Testimonial from the FCA, 'L':

"My involvement with Children's Links has been wholly positive. It has enabled a young child to safely reunite with his father, and their relationship is getting stronger with each visit that passes. This particular case has involved an extremely high level of input from Children's Links with both parents and myself, and they have formed an honest and transparent relationship with both parents. Crucially, Children's Links have been required to navigate two parents with extremely differing views about the positive impact contact will have upon their child. They have worked extremely hard when seeking to bring both parents together for the benefit of their son, and their interpersonal skills are impressive."

The successful reunion of the child with his father in the face of high conflict stands as a testament to the effective collaboration between Children's Links and Cafcass. The case study illustrates the importance of tailored, compassionate, and collaborative approaches in navigating complex family dynamics to ensure the best interests of the child are met. Children's Links, through our dedicated Improving Child and Family Arrangements (ICFA) team, continues to make a meaningful impact on families facing challenging circumstances.



Striving For Success

Award Wins and Nominations

Following on from our fantastic ICFA case study, we want to recognise our amazing ICFA Nottingham staff! They were nominated for Charlie's Award for Staff Service at the Inaugural NACCC Awards 2023, recognising their outstanding contribution to the services offered by Children's Links.

We are thrilled to announce that Children's Links also won the "Women's Work Best Partnership Award 2023" at the Women's Work Derby Gala. The team at Women's Work and Children's Links work closely to ensure ICFA families receive high quality professional support to ensure positive differences for children and families.

Enhancing the Nursery Experience

Little Explorers Nursery in Grantham successfully reopened the Lower Toddlers (baby room) in June 2023, enhancing the nursery experience. This initiative has shown remarkable results, with an influx of new babies joining us very soon, indicating a strong demand for our services.

The nursery have also introduced a sensory area which has been a success, serving as a versatile space suitable for all ages. This dedicated area not only provides the perfect space for quieter activities, but also improves children's focus, attention and allows for one-to-one support.

CONGRATULATIONS!

Women's Work Best
Partnership Award 2023



2023-2024 Insights

The Toy Library



Over 1400 children
have used the
Toy Library



100% parent
satisfaction



2023-2024 Insights Multiply



77 learners
supported



100% learner
satisfaction

Lincolnshire Contact Centres



145 parents
supported



109 children
supported



2023-2024 Insights Peterborough Contact Centres



106 parents
supported



77 children
supported

Nottingham Contact Centres



67 parents
supported



45 children
supported

2023-2024 Insights

Improving Child and Family Arrangements (ICFA)



1065 parents
supported



433 children
supported



Childcare Insights Shining Stars, Wainfleet



98% parent
satisfaction

Maple Vue, Aldershot



100% parent
satisfaction

Little Explorers, Grantham



99% parent
satisfaction

Scunthorpe Play Scheme



37 children
supported

A Fantastic Place to Work

We conducted a Staff Survey in September 2023, which received overwhelmingly positive feedback, reflecting the supportive work atmosphere at Children's Links. We strive to make Children's Links a great and supportive place to work. Feedback included -



“Children's Links is a lovely place to work”

“Thank you to Children's Links for being the most supportive organisation to work for. I am really proud of Children's Links and everyone I work with. We are a wonderful team!”

“This is a very friendly and welcoming organisation which appears to strive for high standards and has children and families at the centre of its ethos”

“I can't imagine working anywhere else”

Helena Kucharczyk - Chair of the Board of Trustees

"I have recently taken over as the Chair of the Board of Trustees for Children's Links. When I was approached about the role and looked at the amazing work that the charity does working with children and families, supporting them through difficult times, working with parents to help with their literacy and maths skills and helping to improve outcomes, I knew that Children's Links had the same values as I did and that it would be an honor to work with, challenge and support them as they strive to continue to provide much needed services.

Despite the ongoing challenges that the third sector faces with ever-shrinking available funding and ever-increasing need as the cost of living continues to bite, Children's Links have had a good year, particularly in relation to the work they have done with Cafcass in delivering the Improving Child and Family Arrangements (ICFA) service, where performance and outcomes have exceeded national results.

There is an exciting year ahead with the opening of three new nurseries and an office move, which will keep the team busy, however, I have no doubt that the skilled and committed Children's Links staff will continue to dedicate themselves to supporting children and families through the services they deliver and I look forward to continuing that journey with them."





01507 528300



admin@childrenslinks.org.uk



childrenslinks.org.uk

Company Number: 3484661

Registered Charity Number: 1071058

Company Limited by Guarantee in England and Wales