

United Response Impact Report 2016

Over 3,600
staff across
England and Wales

Over 2,000
people supported

£6.7m
new business in
2015-16

**Contracts with over 80 Local Authorities
and Clinical Commissioning Groups**



United Response is a national charity that works with adults and young people with learning disabilities, mental health needs or physical disabilities. We are a community based organisation, working in many localities across England and in Wales. We provide everything from 24 hour care to a few hours of support a week, working in partnership with a range of housing providers and with other professionals in health and social care.

Our mission and vision

Our mission is to ensure that individuals with learning disabilities, mental or physical support needs, have the opportunity to live their lives to the full.

Our vision is a society where everyone has equal access to the same rights and opportunities.

Our values are the “golden thread” that runs through all we do. They set out a clear direction for both how we work and for how this then feels to the people we support, to the people we employ and to the outside world.

We’re all about people. We value our relationships with people we support, our staff, families, partners, and commissioners.

In our work we strive to live the following values:

- Creative
- Strong
- Honest
- Responsive
- United. We’re United Response.



Support that changes with you

Welcome to our impact report for 2016; a year which has seen perhaps unprecedented challenges for the sector in which we work.

We, like others, have seen huge reductions in our funding since the 2010 Comprehensive Spending Review and we know that austerity is set to continue for several years. The introduction of the National Living Wage in particular and wider labour market pressures create huge financial challenges for ourselves and others working in this sector.

Elsewhere, welfare reform and cuts to public services mean that life is increasingly difficult for many people we support.

That said, there is much to be optimistic about. Our services are high quality (with our first CQC "outstanding" rating achieved in 2015) and we continue to grow and to develop our offer to many more people.

A key task for the year has been developing United Response's new corporate strategy for 2016-2020. In the context of these uniquely challenging times, United Response has a clear mission to support people to be in control of their lives, and to deliver safe services and opportunities which transform lives and which change and adapt in response to people's own changing needs and wants. So, our focus has continued to be on ensuring that we remain successful and sustainable in a difficult economic environment. This has included working with commissioners to reduce costs and to increase the number and volume of our services.

Our strategic objectives for the next four years are:

1. To enable people we support to achieve good outcomes;
2. To develop our people and culture;
3. To have a distinctive reputation as a provider and influencer;
4. To continue to grow and develop the organisation;
5. To ensure that we remain financially sustainable.

Our new strategy has been shaped by detailed work by the Trustee Board in consultation with our staff, the people we support, families and professionals, donors, supporters and other key contacts. It is a challenging strategy, but we believe it is achievable. Most importantly, it will enable us to extend our person-centred approach to many more people who need our support: support that changes with **you**.



Maurice Rumbold

Maurice Rumbold
Chair of the Board



Tim Cooper

Tim Cooper
Chief Executive

Start with the end in mind

We provide support to young people in transition to help them explore their options, try out new activities, build their skills and to plan for a future of increasing independence.

Transition – 14-25 years old – is an absolutely key stage of life for young people with disabilities as of course it is for everyone. It's a time to build aspirations, to dream and to start putting plans in place to achieve those dreams. Or, as our Transitions Lead puts it, to "start with the end in mind".

A good support plan for any young person must first and foremost be aspirational and person-centred. It must include not only their qualities and skills, but also the goals they've set their sights on for the future. For example, maybe they want to get on the career ladder, build their social network, or move out of the family home. A successful plan looks at these goals and asks: "How are we going to get there?" This is when the plan looks at the practical, step-by-step process of how to get from A to B and identifies the roles of key people in the young person's life. Some of the things we think about before we start planning are how will the young person be at the centre of their plan? And who else could be involved?

Four important sections in a young person's support plan are:

My Goals. This section identifies both the 'here and now' and future goals of the young person. It starts with their aspirations and dreams.

Working and Not Working. This section helps the young person and family focus on what does and doesn't need to change in preparing for adulthood.

The Action Plan. This part outlines the practical, step-by-step process for achieving the young person's goals. It includes thinking about who will be involved and what education and employment provision is available to the young person.

Check Points. This is the process of reviewing the action plan. Checking progress regularly ensures that the young person is moving towards their dreams and aspirations.



96.7%

of people we support said they feel safe and confident when they are supported to do new things

Sam's story

Sam is a hard working young man who has found it difficult to find work placements due to his disability.



United Response's transition service team knew his passion for cars so they suggested to Sam that he set up his own car wash business. He was very enthusiastic and used social media to advertise his business and was delighted when he got instant enquiries.

The success of this enterprise has made a big difference to Sam and he has proven he is more than able to deliver a service that members of the community will pay for. Sam is now looking to expand his business as he has more requests than he can take on. This will come with more opportunities for Sam to learn from and help him work towards his enterprise being sustainable.



I am very impressed by the quality of United Response staff. They are especially skilled at encouraging our son to develop his skills and independence.

A parent



Supported living

Supporting people to live an “ordinary life” is central to what we do, whether that means care and support for 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, or providing support for a few hours a week on an outreach basis to people living independently or with their families.

We now work with over 80 Local Authorities and Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs). The annualised value of new work in 2015-16 was £6.7M, reflecting significant organic growth, including large contracts for supported living in Nottinghamshire, Lancashire, York, Kent and Cornwall.

This year, we were delighted to receive our first overall rating of “outstanding” from CQC, for our John Street service in Kent:

“The service provided amazing care and support to people to enable them to live fulfilled and meaningful lives. Staff were skilled at ensuring people were safe whilst

encouraging them to stretch their potential and achieve as much independence as possible. People and relatives were very positive about the service they received. Comments included “We are so pleased and satisfied with the care that my relative receives here”, “This place is led well from the top and it spills down to the lower levels extremely well” and “It is an excellent place”.

We were also delighted when our CQC account manager referred to us as “one of our top quality providers” – evidenced by our comparison against the sector as a whole in the ratings system.

81%

of people say they are supported to do new things





Siobhan's story

When Siobhan told us that that she was unhappy where she lived, as she was having arguments with her flatmate, we contacted her Local Authority.

They mentioned another young lady who also wanted to move and said they had suitable accommodation for both of them.

We talked to Siobhan about it and she was keen to meet up so that they could get to know each other. This went very well so we arranged a short holiday to make sure they would like to live together. While away, they planned what to do each day and where they wanted to go together.

We then started to arrange their move, which took time and careful planning to make sure everything was in place. It was a huge success.



I feel safe. I know the staff on duty. Staff help me [with] my money. I go out and spend my own money, and make my own arrangements to travel by train. I visit the bank on my own each week for grocery shopping money. Staff help me with my benefits.

Satisfaction Survey



Breaking barriers

Hand in hand with increasing people's influence is raising awareness of the issues facing people with a learning disability or mental health need. We work hard to break down the barriers that stand in the way of people living an "ordinary life" in their local community.

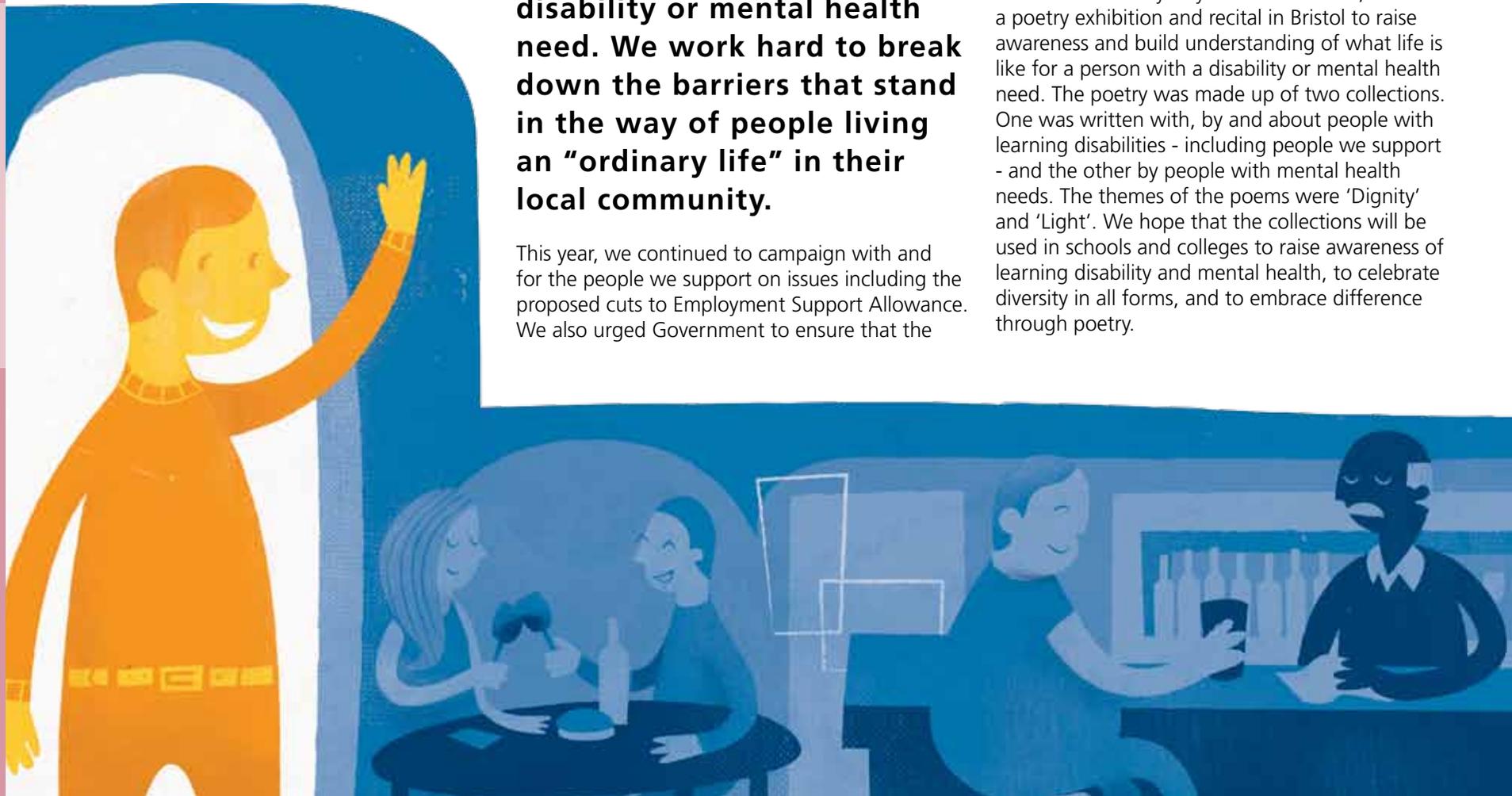
This year, we continued to campaign with and for the people we support on issues including the proposed cuts to Employment Support Allowance. We also urged Government to ensure that the

Work and Health Programme announced in the 2015 Comprehensive Spending Review should be developed in collaboration with disabled people and disability organisations to ensure that the programme really is tailored and personalised for them.

On National Poetry Day in October 2015, we held a poetry exhibition and recital in Bristol to raise awareness and build understanding of what life is like for a person with a disability or mental health need. The poetry was made up of two collections. One was written with, by and about people with learning disabilities - including people we support - and the other by people with mental health needs. The themes of the poems were 'Dignity' and 'Light'. We hope that the collections will be used in schools and colleges to raise awareness of learning disability and mental health, to celebrate diversity in all forms, and to embrace difference through poetry.

81.5%

of people say they are supported to go out and meet people



Amy's story

Previously Amy* had lived in a care home where most decisions were made for her and she had little control over what happened in her life.

Things are now very different for Amy. Her United Response support team has worked closely with her to become more engaged with her life, giving her choice and control over what she does and where she goes. With support, Amy now loves to go bowling, to the cinema and theatre and doing her own food and clothes shopping using public transport. Amy also gets involved with cooking and cleaning and likes nothing more than making coffee for herself and everyone else in the house. Amy has become so confident that she gave an inspiring presentation telling United Response staff about the difference being more independent has made to her life.



I go where I want. Staff support me with this. Holidays, trips, pub, cinema, parks, walks, meals out, church, theatre, Scarborough and Whitby day trips.

Satisfaction Survey



Building confidence

Raising aspirations and supporting people to learn new skills and build their confidence is a core part of our work. As well as working with people in

our supported living and outreach services, we are now developing our offer to provide innovative solutions to a much wider client group.

This includes a very successful programme with York University, where we provide support to students with autism to help them think through their career options, build their confidence and ultimately to move on to get a job. We were delighted when one student, who had previously told us that she was too anxious to be able to get a job in York City Centre, went on to secure – and thrive in – a job in Delhi!

In February 2016, we announced that we would be merging with Devon and Cornwall based charity, Robert Owen Communities (ROC) with effect from 1 April 2016 and with a full merger being completed by 1 April 2017. ROC has been operating for 25 years and now supports some 400 people with learning disabilities with some really innovative skills development and vocational projects under the banner “ROC Wellbeing”. We are delighted to have joined forces with an organisation whose ethos and values so closely mirror our own and are now working together to make sure that we learn from each other and build on what’s best about each of our approaches. We are confident that our combined experience and expertise will make us both stronger and better able to provide excellent services to all the people we support.

71.8%

of families think that their relative is supported to develop and maintain their skills and abilities



Tommy's story

Like many young people, Tommy* had become disengaged and socially isolated since leaving college and was struggling to find employment.

He never went out alone and suffered from anxiety and depression.

When he was referred to United Response his support worker spent time getting to know him, finding out what skills Tommy had, what training was needed and what he wanted to do. They saw he was full of potential but that his self-esteem was really low. They arranged for numeracy and literacy training and, meanwhile, gave him travel training to boost his independence which also got him out into the community so that he could meet new people.

Fast forward to now...Tommy has a job, he is a confident young man, proud of his enhanced skills and he has a full social life!



United Response respond to all aspects of work-related activities. They don't just focus on one thing in isolation as it's a bigger picture. I have increased confidence and have recommended them to other people I know.

Person we support



Almost
1/3

of people we support were engaged in some form of work-related activity (paid employment, volunteering or skills development) with as many again saying they'd like to be.

Supported employment

Supporting people to get a job or engage in work-related activity is a central part of what we do. In the UK as a whole, only 6.8% of people with a learning disability and 15% of people with autism are in paid employment, as opposed to 46.3% of working-age disabled people generally, and 76.4% of non-disabled people.

For a number of years we have run employment services in the North West, Cornwall and Yorkshire. Alongside these specialist services, our supported living services strive to support people to move towards work activities. So we were very pleased when our latest survey of people we support showed that almost a third were engaged in some form of work-related activity (paid employment, volunteering or skills development), with as many again saying they'd like to be.

We held very successful fringe events at both the Labour Party and Conservative Party 2015 annual conferences, to raise awareness about what needs to change to enable more people with learning disabilities and autism to move into the workplace. Raising these issues for us at the Labour Party Conference were Kate

Green MP and Kay Allen OBE who spoke of their extensive experience in working with employers to take on people with a learning disability. Our Political Correspondent, David Allkins, spoke passionately about his struggle to get into the workplace despite excellent A-levels and a good degree, and how his experience might help improve matters for young disabled people today. At the Conservative Party Conference, Dr Tania Mathias MP spoke alongside Aishah Jackson, who we supported into work at Vue Cinemas. Since then, we have responded to various policy consultations and given evidence to the Work and Pensions Select Committee. We will be continuing to campaign on this issue in the coming year.





Ashley's story

Through a referral from Job Centre Plus, Ashley was introduced to his United Response job coach, Kylie. She worked with him on work readiness skills – such as CV-writing and interview skills.

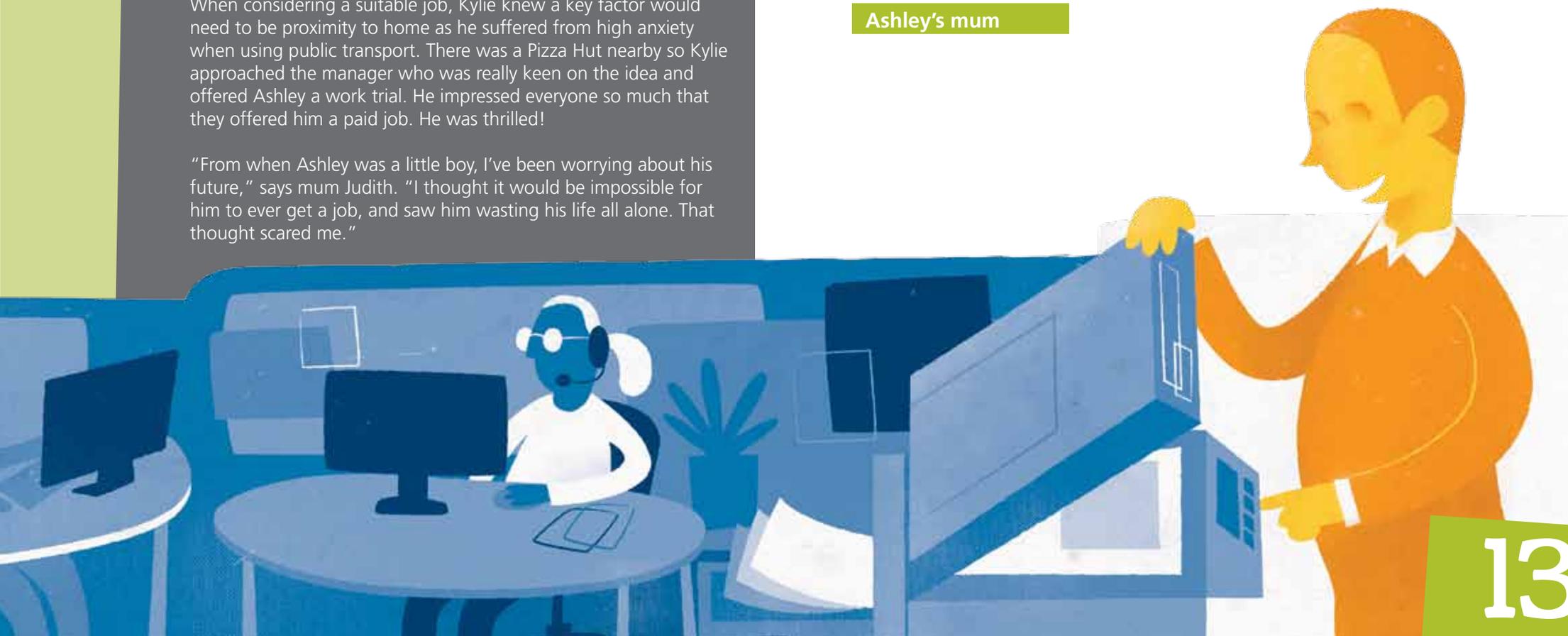
When considering a suitable job, Kylie knew a key factor would need to be proximity to home as he suffered from high anxiety when using public transport. There was a Pizza Hut nearby so Kylie approached the manager who was really keen on the idea and offered Ashley a work trial. He impressed everyone so much that they offered him a paid job. He was thrilled!

"From when Ashley was a little boy, I've been worrying about his future," says mum Judith. "I thought it would be impossible for him to ever get a job, and saw him wasting his life all alone. That thought scared me."



To see him so happy and confident makes me so, so proud. He's even met up with a group of his co-workers in the local park - something he'd never have done six months ago."

Ashley's mum



Tools for independent living

90%

of readers agreed that Easy News was easier to understand than other news sources. Most importantly, after a year of reading Easy News, 78% of readers felt that politics was relevant to their lives, compared to 31% a year before.

A key part of our mission is enabling people we support to exercise their rights as equal citizens. Previous campaigns include Making Money Easier (to provide simple guides to banking and money

management), Easy News and Every Vote Counts, which we ran in the run up to the May 2015 General Election and the EU Referendum in 2016.

Every Vote Counts aims to boost political engagement among people with learning disabilities, and to encourage people with a learning disability to exercise their right to vote. To support the campaign, we published a set of easy read resources about the political system and how to vote, and created a dedicated website to outline what politics

means and how it affects our every day lives. Every Vote Counts was endorsed by the leaders of all the main political parties, emphasising the significance of disability issues to those across the political spectrum, as well as the success of the campaign in gaining recognition of the rights of people with disabilities.

In the run up to the EU Referendum we relaunched Every Vote Counts, with a special edition of Easy News to outline the main issues. We were delighted to receive a grant from the Cabinet Office to promote registration to vote amongst people with learning disabilities, mental health needs, autism and Asperger's. Our messages reached over 2,300,000 people, over 56,000 of whom engaged with our content about voting online. Our campaign led to over 380 people registering to vote over a 20 day period.



Clare's story

Clare*, 42, lives in supported accommodation in London, in her own flat. Although she has limited mobility and uses a wheelchair or walker to get around, she loves to get out and about when she can.

In the past, the information Clare received about voting was very hard for her to understand. She found the Every Vote Counts easy read guides with pictures very useful but preferred the digital version as she does not read. "I think it's sad that people with learning disabilities don't vote because they don't understand what it's all about. It's not fair if people with disabilities can't have their say."

Clare's main political concerns are about improving accessibility on public transport and independence. She would vote for parties that encouraged more independence for people with disabilities.



Thank you from me and on behalf of the students I teach who have enjoyed reading and accessing the news through your publication. It has been extremely useful to allow students with SEN to access news for discussions in registration and literacy lessons.

Feedback from an Easy News subscriber



Using technology

Technology is a key driver in our strategy, both in terms of improving our organisational effectiveness and efficiency, and in delivering better outcomes, choice, communications and independence for the people we support. We have a three year IT Strategy which focuses on the key themes of:

- improved communication;
- improved business systems;
- modern, flexible infrastructure;
- and using technology to support people.

Many people we support have significant communication difficulties and, following a successful pilot, we have now rolled out the use of the MyChoicePad app across the organisation. MyChoicePad brings together proven speech and language therapy techniques to deliver language development via tablet computers that is both effective and measurable. MyChoicePad incorporates the Makaton language programme of symbols and signs but is also compatible with

other symbol sets, custom photographs and audio.

As well as the positive impact this has had for people being supported, staff have found it motivating and are very enthusiastic about it. They found that even after a short time it has made a big difference to the people they are supporting. As one support worker said, "Tom can now do things he was struggling with before. Through the app, he can now say things like hello and tell us where he wants to go. He is less anxious, lonely and frustrated – **people are now speaking his language.**"

95.5%

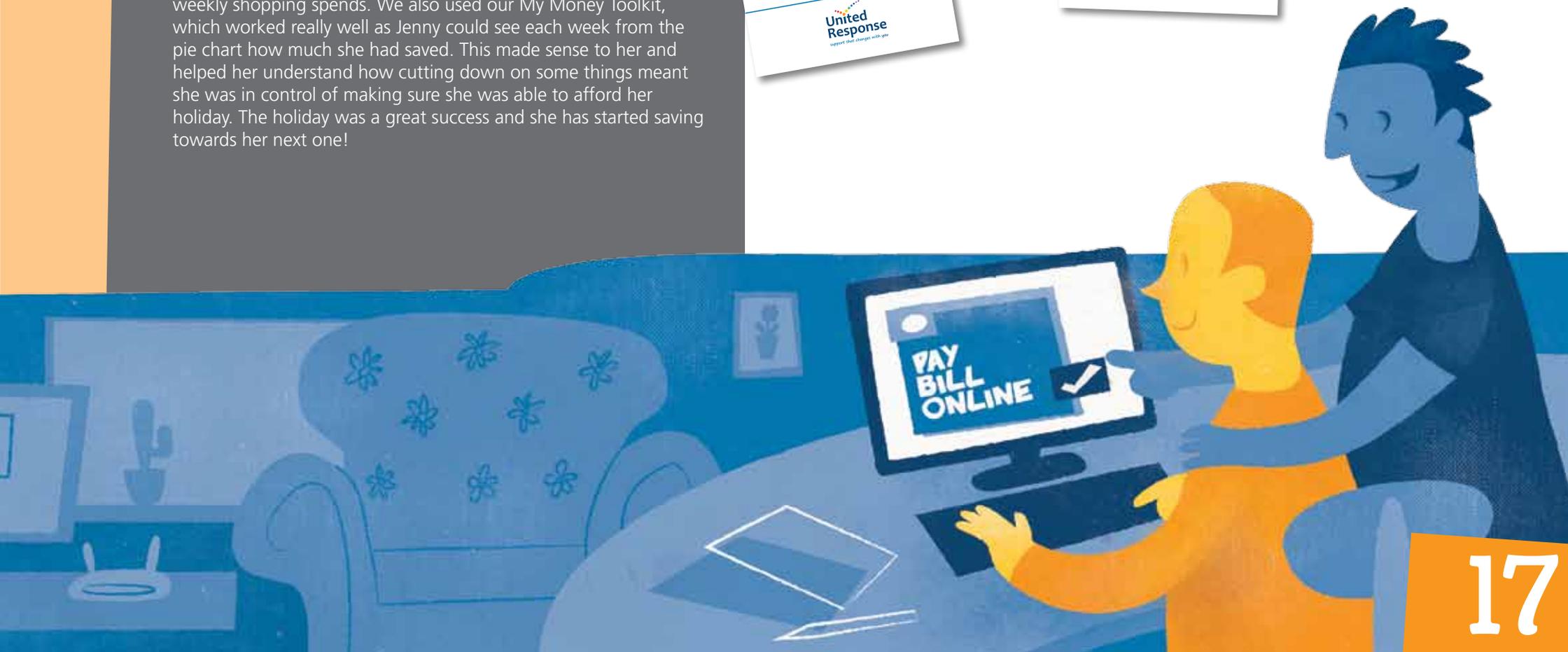
of people we support said that they are happy with how they are supported to pay their bills and save money to buy the things they want.



Jenny's story

We continuously find creative ways to support Jenny* to understand monetary value as everything to her is "£2."

So when she said she wanted to go on holiday with her sister, we worked with her to understand how much she needed to save for it and helped her decide how to reduce some of her weekly shopping spends. We also used our My Money Toolkit, which worked really well as Jenny could see each week from the pie chart how much she had saved. This made sense to her and helped her understand how cutting down on some things meant she was in control of making sure she was able to afford her holiday. The holiday was a great success and she has started saving towards her next one!



Over
68%

of people we support are engaged more than 50% of the time. On average, people we support are engaged 61% of the time compared to the national average of 11%.

Moving on

We have a wealth of experience in supporting people with complex disabilities

– many of whom display behaviour which challenges – to live successfully and happily in their local community. This experience includes supporting people to move out of long stay institutions, including

assessment and treatment units and back from “out of area”.

We have pioneered Active Support and Positive Behaviour Support to make this happen and pulled our expertise into a checklist and other resources to share what works with others. Given this experience, one of the key objectives in our new corporate plan is to provide support to more people with complex needs, building on our excellent reputation as a provider in this area. On this theme it's been particularly encouraging to see a volume of new work in the north of the country, under the Department of Health's Transforming Care agenda, to support people to move from assessment and treatment units and placements outside their home area, back into their own home.



Lenny's story

When we first met Lenny*, who is in his 50s and has autism, he was in a long-stay institution. We supported him to move into his own supported living service.

His staff team spent time with Lenny finding out how he wanted to be supported and the things he liked so that they were able to tailor their support to respect Lenny's need for routine and predictability and ensure he felt safe and supported. Lenny began learning new skills by staff integrating them into the familiarity of his existing routines. He has progressed to the point that he is now fully involved in maintaining his home including washing up, preparing meals and doing laundry. Over the last 12 months staff have successfully reduced his support.



Within 12 months of leaving the unit, we were able to reduce the 2:1 community support (20 hours per week) to 1:1 community support (20 hours per week). Within 18 months, we had reduced his shared support at home from 3:2 to 2:2.”

Service manager



Getting the housing right

Having the right place to live is key to unlocking an independent life for all of us, and of course disabled people are no exception.

United Response has been providing housing on a small scale for many years and, after a review of our approach towards housing, we have made a decision to proactively increase this. At the time of going to press we had almost 200 tenants for whom we provide housing management services, an increase of 7.5% on the previous year. Housing has

been identified as a priority for our new corporate strategy for 2016-2020. This includes supporting our growth strategy and activities more effectively, including being more proactive with developing new and innovative housing and support options, sourcing new housing to meet demand and providing support with the housing aspects of new business.

We are particularly pleased that our student housing model in West Cheshire continues to go from strength to strength, with demand for more places in the pipeline. The project enables students with a learning disability or autism to live away from home with their peers - and with just enough support. They go to the local college, learn independent living skills at

home and attend a work placement once a week. West Cheshire Council itself has recently been chosen as a 'Preparing for Adulthood' demonstration site with a winning bid that included our film of our student house.

Elsewhere, we were very pleased to complete a purchase and major redevelopment in Bristol which has enabled five people with very complex needs to move on from outdated former NHS accommodation to modern supported living, with excellent results.

86.8%

of people said they are happy with where they live and who they live with.



Case study

When United Response started to support four gentlemen with complex physical and health conditions, support staff soon realised that the accommodation they were living in was having a negative impact on their behaviour and quality of life - it was in the middle of nowhere and had a very institutional feel.

With the involvement of family members, health specialists, commissioners, social workers and advocates, a large detached property was found in a quiet residential street nearer to the city. We adapted it into four self-contained flats and each one is adapted to their specific needs.



The house is supported as a single community that plans and does social activities together. Staff recognise that it is our daughter's HOME. Staff are very good at responding to ideas about outings - there is a good social life. Staff and management are very approachable and always give time to discuss problems.

Satisfaction Survey



Community connecting

Supporting people to play a full and active part in their communities is central to all we do. So we were delighted by the continued generous support from the Clothworkers' Foundation of our Small Sparks programme, which aims to help people we support meet people in their local communities.

small grants that people can use to fund community activities, such as setting up clubs, putting on social events, running awareness raising courses for people in the local area, and creating local business opportunities. This year, we were particularly pleased to see an increase in Small Sparks applications directly from or initiated by people we support.

Funded projects this year included a community music group, a Valentine's Ball, a dating event, creative club and a vegetable and flower growing enterprise.

Since 2010, the Clothworkers' Foundation has very generously donated £145,000 to United Response's Small Sparks programme which aims to build lasting links by providing

96.2%

of people supported with mental health needs say they feel safe and confident when being supported out and about.



Case study

Three years ago, our Community Network in Cheriton applied for a Small Sparks grant to put on a pantomime for the local community.



Not only was it a huge success, but it has also opened up opportunities and forged many strong relationships between the people we support and their community.

Among these are the Mayor, five local councillors, the community warden, the local children's centre, several members of the community and the local church where they hold the pantos. Through these relationships, they have been asked to help organise the 'switching on' of the Christmas lights in Cheriton, are always invited to the Mayor's fundraising events and have also been chosen as the Mayor's charity of the year. It's amazing how hosting a local pantomime has led to forging ongoing relationships and opportunities within the community!



My daughter has a wonderful life. She goes on holidays twice a year as well as days out. Also she is supported to do light sports e.g. bowls, and to follow her football team's games.

Satisfaction Survey

Supporting choice

Although we support people across the whole range of learning disabilities, we have particular expertise in working with people with more complex needs – including people who other agencies have not been able to support. We have a strong track record in supporting people to move on and to enjoy a better quality of

life. Crucially, that includes making choices in their life; the kind of choices that many of us take for granted.

Take Lucy*, 25. She has Asperger's Syndrome, and enjoys leading a busy and independent lifestyle, but was struggling with how to juggle work, volunteering and seeing her boyfriend whilst maintaining her own flat. She had begun hoarding things and her parents were concerned she couldn't cope.

Staff sat down and looked at what was and wasn't working with Lucy and her parents, and realised the main reason she wasn't keeping on top of things was because the

routines that had been set weren't fitting in with her lifestyle. She was missing her morning bath on the days she had to rush to go to work, and was skipping chores on the days she was extra busy or tired.

It was agreed to swap the fixed daily rota she had been using with a simple 'to do' tick list, so that Lucy could have more choice and flexibility over when she did things.

Within one month, Lucy's new 'routine' was well underway and her house had become much more comfortable to live in. Lucy is now confident and proud of what she can do herself.

86.5%

of people we support say they make decisions and choices that are important to them.



John's story

John* has a learning disability and Autistic Spectrum condition. He does not cope very well with choices.

We have gradually introduced some small choices into his life around where he goes out and what he eats, using pictures and Makaton signs and symbols. John is capable of indicating what he wants to do or if something in his day is wrong to some extent, using Makaton or by showing his support workers.



You listen to what I want and support me to achieve it, if possible. You treat me as a person and you are Kind.

Satisfaction Survey



Supporting healthcare needs

Helping people to manage their health and wellbeing and to access the care they need is a central part of our support.

We work in partnership with primary and secondary care professionals including GPs and community teams to support people to manage their

medication, to attend health checks and other appointments and to stay healthy and well.

We also support people with a range of severe mental health needs, including psychosis, schizophrenia, multiple personality disorder and severe depression. Our emphasis, where possible, is on recovery and we are committed to early intervention to help prevent more serious problems from occurring.

89.9%

of families think staff deal effectively with medical issues, such as supporting people to take medication and get regular health checks.



Rita's story

Rita* spent many years in a psychiatric unit where she was put on powerful medication as her constant challenging behaviour escalated.

She then had a variety of support placements which kept breaking down. When Rita was first supported by United Response she was constantly anxious and agitated. Her staff team were skilled in supporting people with complex needs and they set about improving Rita's quality of life. Her mother said Rita had been a bright, happy child with a great sense of humour. They all agreed that her medication levels needed to be reviewed and worked with the psychiatrist to implement a three year medication reduction plan. Rita is now calm, relaxed and her sense of humour is back! Her life is full and active and incidents of challenging behaviour are very rare and easily calmed down.



Because of my daughter's complex mental health/ anxiety issues, she often does not feel able to use the skills and abilities she undoubtedly has. However, staff always try to get the balance right so that my daughter feels encouraged to do something but without feeling **PRESSURE**, which would be detrimental.

Satisfaction Survey



My team really appreciate that risks/concerns are communicated in a timely manner and all staff put into practice any advice given. This has resulted in improved health and welfare outcomes for all three clients.

Community Learning
Disability Nurse



Staying in touch

We support people to stay in touch with the people that matter to them and understand the hugely important role families play in their lives.

Being surrounded by family is a natural part of life and so we work hard to include families in support planning and reviews and to learn from the wealth of experience and expertise they have to offer.

Sadly, for many of the older generation we support – particularly those who grew up living in institutions – family ties were lost or severed a long, long time ago. We are always delighted when we are able to support people to get back in touch with long lost relatives – and this year was no exception!

We carry out an annual survey of the people we support, their families, friends and professionals who work with them. This is what families told us in our latest survey:

- Over 99% think we keep people safe
- 93.8% think support is good or excellent
- 91.2% think that staff always treat people with dignity and respect
- 87.7% always feel welcome and listened to when they come into contact with staff
- 85.2% always think their relative or friend is supported to keep in touch with them

92%

of people we support have regular contact with their family.



Maree's story

Maree was reunited with a family she never knew existed after a phone call out of the blue from her long-lost niece.



"Maree had been brought up in an institution and believed that she had no family," says service manager, Heather. "We were shocked but also a bit worried about how she would take the news. We tested the water by asking Maree how she'd feel if she did have a family – would she be happy? She said she would, so we showed her some photos of her brother, John. Maree has limited communication skills but understood immediately who John was and got really excited. A Skype call was arranged so that the family could see and speak to each other for the very first time.

The first face-to-face meeting was amazing. Maree and John gave each other a huge hug and kiss. It felt very natural and was an emotional day for everyone - the family and the United Response staff! Now they stay in contact regularly through Skype and visit each other when they can. And Maree even got to have her first joint birthday party with her brother this year."



The support of United Response has made a real difference to our own lives, as well as Shaun's. Before, we only had our family life; now we have our own lives as well. We know that he's happy doing different things, enjoying life with and without us. That's good to know, as we won't be around forever.

Mum of someone we support



Our people

The support we provide is only as good as the people who provide it and so recruiting and retaining the right staff team is key. So this year, we

launched a new recruitment website and embarked on a project to create a more compelling message about the work that we do and the huge rewards that it can bring.

We carried out a wide ranging consultation with our staff in the development of our new corporate strategy, both through an online survey that went to all staff, and at meetings with our staff representative body, United Voice. Our person-centred values and how supportive we are as an employer were frequently mentioned as positive attributes. However, like other organisations

in our sector, staff salaries and benefits were highlighted as an area to address. We asked our frontline staff what is most important to them in balancing different elements of reward. Take home pay was, not surprisingly, the top priority but to fund this (and to meet the requirements of the new National Living Wage), we have had to consult on other terms and conditions we offer our staff. We will continue to work closely with funders to lobby for the funding we need to pay people properly.

Elsewhere, we continued to invest in staff development in areas including practice development, with the aim of identifying a clear Practice Leader for each type of service, who will be supported well and have access to learning development opportunities through a blended learning model of skill and knowledge acquisition.



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NB: Case studies and pull-quotes used throughout this publication are not necessarily related. *Some names have been anonymised.



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99%
of people we support
feel safe when with
support staff
and
over 99%
of families think
we keep people safe

93.8%
of families think
support is
good or excellent

91.2%
of families think that staff
always treat people
with dignity and respect

93.1%
of people we support
say their support workers
listen and talk to them
about what is happening

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