



When you wish  
upon a star

# Our Impact 2025

[whenyouwishuponastar.org.uk](https://whenyouwishuponastar.org.uk)

# An Open Letter From the CEO



When I joined **When You Wish Upon a Star** in June 2025, I knew I was stepping into a charity with a proud legacy of creating magical memories for children living with life-threatening illnesses. What I could not have fully anticipated, however, was just how deeply those moments of magic would stay with me, and how profoundly the people behind them would inspire the journey ahead.

Over the past months, I have had the privilege of meeting so many extraordinary children and their families. I have listened to their stories, shared in their laughter, and witnessed firsthand the power of a wish. These experiences have been both humbling and energising. Alongside them, I have spent time with our dedicated staff, passionate supporters, and committed partners, each one playing a vital role in bringing joy during some of life's most challenging moments.

**This report celebrates what we have achieved together in 2025: Big smiles, unforgettable experiences, and meaningful support delivered to families across the UK. These are moments that matter, moments that remind us why we exist.**

And yet, as proud as I am of what this charity continues to accomplish, I am equally aware of the growing need around us. There are still so many children and families who could benefit from the joy, respite, and hope that a wish can bring. The demand is increasing, the challenges are evolving, and the responsibility we carry has never been greater.

That is why I see this moment not only as a time for reflection, but as a call to action.

Since my arrival, I have been inspired by everyone I have met on this journey. It is their strength, their generosity, and their belief in what we do that has reinforced my determination to lead this charity into an exciting new phase. A phase where we build on our legacy, expand our reach, deepen our impact, and ensure that no eligible child misses out on the magic they deserve.

There is so much more to do.

And, importantly, there is so much more to come.

Together, we will continue to dream bigger, reach further, and create even more moments that families will treasure forever. Thank you for being part of this journey with us, whether as a supporter, a partner, a volunteer, or a member of our incredible community.

With gratitude and warm wishes,

**Joe Williamson**  
Chief Executive Officer  
When You Wish Upon a Star



# Who We Are and What We Do

When You Wish Upon a Star is a UK children's charity dedicated to creating magical, life-changing experiences for children living with life-threatening and terminal illnesses. At the heart of everything we do is a simple but powerful belief: every child deserves joy, hope, and the chance to make precious memories with the people they love most.

Our work goes beyond a single experience. We aim to support the whole family, recognising the challenges they face and the importance of creating time together that feels special, uplifting, and full of possibility. Through collaboration, compassion, and creativity, we continue to evolve our services to meet the needs of every child we serve.

## Our Services

Each wish child can access all three of our services within two years of their first experience, ensuring ongoing support, joy, and meaningful moments for the whole family.

## Wishes

A wish is a deeply personal experience, designed around the individual child's interests, dreams, and needs. From meeting a hero to visiting a dream destination, each wish is carefully created in partnership with the family to ensure it is meaningful, memorable, and truly magical. Offering families a chance to step away from the challenges of illness and create lasting memories.

## Treats

A treat is a large-scale, shared experience delivered in partnership with another organisation, bringing together multiple wish families for a day of joy and connection. These events are thoughtfully designed to create a sense of community, where families can relax, have fun, and meet others who understand their journey.

## Opportunities

Opportunities are gifted experiences provided to the charity at no cost, allowing families to benefit from unique moments they might not otherwise access. These can include tickets to events, special visits, or one-off experiences generously donated by partners and supporters.



**"It gave us time to spend together as a family, it gave us hope and it made us feel special and needed when we felt so disconnected with the world."**

– Parent



# Our Values

Our values are the principles that define how we operate.

We offer hope

We are trusted

We are compassionate

We seek to inspire

We craft memorable experiences



# Our Year in Numbers

**750+**

Wish children, siblings and parents engaged in our services

**8**

Treats and Opportunities

**83**

Wishes granted

**£141,366**

Total Gift in Kind

**£460,000**

Total investment into Wishes

“

Thank you so much for providing Daisy and us as a family to be able to forget about daily life of medications, hospital appointments and illness and just enjoy time as a family.”

– Daisy’s Mum Sophie



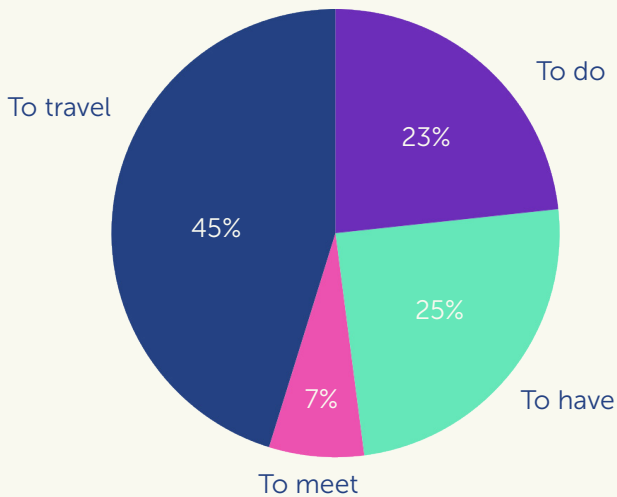


## Wishes

Every wish is individually designed with the child and family, offering meaningful experiences that provide joy, respite from illness, and lifelong memories.



### Wishes by Category



“Having the wish granted at that time almost felt like it helped give closure for us as a family. It reminded us how far we’d come; how lucky we were to be able to participate in such a special weekend, and gave us optimistic outlooks where we’ll try to live life to the full and take nothing for granted.”  
– Parent

# The Return of Disney Wishes

In 2025, When You Wish Upon a Star proudly reintroduced Disney Wishes, enabling three families - the Gap, Taylor and Cunningham families - to experience the joy and magic of Disney together. The return of Disney Wishes marked a significant milestone, offering families of children living with life-threatening illness the opportunity to step away from daily medical routines and create lasting, joy-filled memories during an incredibly challenging time. For the Cunningham family, the chance to share the experience together was especially meaningful. Simone Cunningham, Mum of Edie and Ivie, reflected on the importance of this shared moment, saying: "We were so excited when we found out that When You Wish Upon a Star was arranging a joint wish experience so the whole family could travel together."

Families travelling to Disneyland Paris were supported by the charity's team throughout the first 24 hours of their wish. This dedicated on-site support ensured experiences ran smoothly from arrival, removing the pressure of planning and logistics and allowing families to fully immerse themselves in the magic. By creating a supportive environment, families were able to focus on spending precious time together and making unforgettable memories.

For the Taylor family, the accessibility and inclusive design of the experience had a profound impact. Paul Taylor shared how the wish allowed their child, Stevie, to fully enjoy Disney in a way that met individual needs: "Stevie absolutely loved the themed areas, accessible rides and the ice-cream parlour within the village. For us, the whole experience was amazing as it allowed Stevie to enjoy the magic of Disney in an environment designed around her needs. The trip provided a rare opportunity to step away from normal life, with all the routines of medical appointments, and focus on creating joyful memories as a family."

The successful delivery of these wishes in 2025 demonstrated the powerful role that moments of joy, escape and connection play for families facing serious illness. Building on this impact, When You Wish Upon a Star secured match funding from ALB Giving for Disney Wishes in 2026, ensuring that future families would continue to benefit from high-quality, meaningful experiences and that the reach of each wish could go even further.

Together, these Disney Wishes reaffirmed the charity's belief that joy matters-and that shared experiences can bring comfort, hope and lasting positive impact at the most difficult times.

[Click here](#) or scan the QR code to see Laura's magical Disney Wish come true!



# Wish Stories



## Yasin's Manchester United Wish

Yasin wished for a chance to escape the reality of cancer treatment and immerse himself in the magic of Manchester United. His Wish was revealed in style by United legend Edwin van der Sar. Thanks to the generosity of the Barrie Wells Trust, Yasin enjoyed a VIP matchday experience as Manchester United claimed victory. The moments kept getting better as, at full-time, Yasin received the surprise of a lifetime - meeting star players in Bruno Fernandes and Senne Lammens.



## Mason's Strictly Backstage Pass

Mason's Wish took him behind the scenes of one of the nation's most-loved TV shows, BBC's Strictly Come Dancing. Spending the day at Elstree Studios, Mason met his heroes, explored the inner workings of the show, and experienced the excitement of the famous Strictly set. The Wish was made even more special thanks to the support of our amazing ambassador, Ellie Leach, who helped bring this unforgettable day to life.



## Madeleine's Dua Lipa Concert

Madeleine's magical Wish took her to London to see her favourite pop star, the incredible Dua Lipa, live in concert. Alongside the excitement of the show, Madeleine and her family enjoyed exploring the capital - taking in iconic sights like Buckingham Palace, enjoying ice cream and slushies, and relaxing on boat trips in the park - before dancing the night away at the concert.

"We had the most wonderful time, away from hospitals and together as a family. It was a very special treat for all of us, and we are so grateful for it." - Madeleine's Mum Jen



## Freya Meets Ant and Dec

Freya's Wish created a weekend full of unforgettable moments, centred around a special meet and greet with long-standing supporters of the charity, Ant and Dec. Freya travelled to London with sibling Eve, Mum Denise, and Dad Ryan. The family enjoyed a special meal at the Hard Rock Cafe, explored the sights of London, and then traveled to the Hammersmith Eventim Apollo for an amazing private meet & greet with Ant & Dec chatting all about Britain's Got Talent and their visit to London.



## Treats and Opportunities

Treats and Opportunities provide shared events and gifted experiences that bring wish families together, offering joy, connection, and respite. Delivered with partners or generously donated, these moments give families access to meaningful experiences and memories they might not otherwise have.

**Alton Towers**

**Arc Cinema Day**

**Lapland**

**Modball Silverstone Day**

**Nottingham Forest**

**Polar Express**

**Winter Wonderland**

**Wishmas Ball**



*"The opportunities you give families like ours is unbelievable. We had the most amazing time and are so very thankful to you all."*

– Parent



# Fundraising Highlights



## Lapland Ball

The ALB Giving Lapland Ball raised an astonishing **£151,040**, delivering truly life-changing impact. This extraordinary support funded a chartered flight to Lapland for 25 families last Christmas. Families enjoyed reindeer and dog-sled rides and event got to meet Santa Claus himself! We are deeply grateful to ALB Giving, Arran Bailey, and all who supported this magical evening.



## Nuthall Christmas Lights' 25-Year Legacy

Nuthall Christmas Lights concluded their inspiring legacy by raising **£20,912** during the 2025 Christmas period! Thanks to the dedication of Tony, Wendy, and Adam, over a million visitors have helped create magical wishes for children with life-threatening illnesses. Their long-standing commitment will continue to brighten young lives for years to come.



## Edinburgh's Generosity

Thanks to the generous giving of winter festival visitors and supporters, Edinburgh's Christmas and Hogmanay raised a **£11,560!** Delivered in partnership with Unique Assembly, this funding will help us continue granting unforgettable wishes and supporting families when they need it most.



## LDC Quiz Night

The LDC Quiz Night in support of When You Wish Upon a Star has become a standout event in the fundraising calendar, bringing people together for an evening of fun, community spirit, and generosity. In November alone, the event achieved an incredible milestone, raising over **£21,000**. Thanks to the continued support of participants, sponsors, and organisers, the quiz night has now raised more than **£120,000** overall since 2018, a remarkable achievement that reflects both the dedication of everyone involved and the powerful impact of coming together for a meaningful cause.

## Mandy's Guinness World Record

To spotlight When You Wish Upon a Star, trustee and long-standing supporter Mandy Sims achieved a Guinness World Records™ title for the Fastest Half Marathon Dressed as a Star (Female)! Inspired by her daughter's wish, Mandy has supported the charity for years - raising an incredible **£40,658** to help make magical wishes possible.



**"Our wish has made me determined to fundraise so that other families can benefit from the amazing wish experiences you give."**

**– Stevie's Dad Paul**



# Thank You to Our Partners

At When You Wish Upon a Star, the life-changing moments we create are only possible thanks to the incredible support of our partners. Their generosity, commitment and belief in the power of a wish help us bring joy, hope and happiness to children and families facing some of the most challenging times of their lives.

Through funding, expertise, time and collaboration, our partners enable us to say “yes” to more wishes and deliver experiences that create lasting, treasured memories. From moments of laughter and escape to precious time spent together as a family, the impact of their support extends far beyond a single moment of magic.

We are proud to work alongside partners who share our values and understand the importance of joy, connection and hope. Your support sends a powerful message to families living with life-threatening illness: that they are not alone, and that their moments of happiness truly matter.

To every organisation and partner who supports us - thank you.



AC Wollaton  
ALB Giving  
Aldi  
Alton Towers  
Andy Okay  
Apollo Homes  
Arc Cinema  
Bee Ethical  
Bluebell Wood  
Box4Kids  
British Esports  
Buckles Law  
Carla Whittingham Photography  
Chase Tipis  
Crowne Plaza Hotel Nottingham  
CYB3R  
East Midlands Chamber  
Eaton Golf Club  
Edinburgh Christmas  
Emma Cameron Foundation  
Fly Norse  
Give Kids The World Village  
Hype  
Idiliq Resorts  
ITISON  
Lapland Safaris  
LDC  
Magic Breaks

Mellors Group  
Modball Foundation  
Monopoly  
Motorpoint Arena Nottingham  
NCT  
Newcastle United Foundation  
Norse Atlantic  
Nottingham Forest  
NTU  
Nuthall Lights  
Parkers  
PING Golf  
PNP Events  
Prestonfield House  
Raffle House  
Rowan Campbell-Pilling  
Ryder Levett Bucknall  
Saint Promotions  
Scottish Fire and Rescue Service  
Sheffield United Community Foundation  
TUI  
TX Odds  
Unique Events  
Wilkes Law  
Wizz Air  
XMA  
Young Lives vs Cancer



# Get in Touch

At When You Wish Upon a Star, we believe that connection is at the heart of everything we do. Whether you are a family seeking support, a healthcare professional, a supporter, or a partner looking to work with us, we would love to hear from you.

## Families and Professionals

If you are a family caring for a child living with a life-threatening illness, or a medical professional supporting an eligible child, our team is here to help. We understand that reaching out can feel overwhelming, and we aim to make the process as simple, compassionate and supportive as possible. You can contact us to learn more about our wishes and eligibility criteria, ask questions about applying for a wish, or discuss a child's individual circumstances in confidence. Our experienced team will guide you every step of the way.

## Supporters, Fundraisers and Volunteers

From fundraising and volunteering to corporate partnerships and events, there are many ways to support When You Wish Upon a Star. If you would like to get involved, have an idea to share, or want to learn more about how your support can make a difference, we would be delighted to hear from you.

## Corporate and Partnership Enquiries

We work closely with businesses, trusts and foundations to create meaningful partnerships that change lives. If you are interested in supporting our work through sponsorship, match funding, employee fundraising or long-term collaboration, our partnerships team would be happy to discuss opportunities with you.

## Stay Connected

You can also stay up to date with our latest news, wish stories and impact by following us on social media and subscribing to our communications.

## How to Contact Us

You can get in touch with When You Wish Upon a Star by:

Email: [head.office@whenyouwish.org.uk](mailto:head.office@whenyouwish.org.uk)

Phone: 0115 979 1720

Social Media: @whenyouwishuk

Website: [whenyouwishuponastar.org.uk](http://whenyouwishuponastar.org.uk)

All enquiries are treated with care, respect and confidentiality, and we aim to respond as promptly as possible.





When you wish  
upon a star



Charity Reg: 1060963