



AIMING HIGHER
Supporting families with disabled children

Aiming Higher Big Lottery Community Fund Annual Report 2023



Registered Charity Number: 1144664



Table of Contents



03	Introduction
04	Performance Summary
07	Reaching Resilience Project
09	Case Studies
11	Services

12	Financial Information
14	Activities
16	Social Media Statistics
17	Developments
18	Moving Forwards

Introduction

Aiming Higher Charity is based in Blackpool and supports families with disabled children across the Fylde and Wyre Coast. Our centre on Church Street in Blackpool allows us to provide a range of fantastic facilities, including a soft play area, a sensory room, under 5's activities and a safe accessible venue for festive and celebratory parties, all organised through the Direct Services project. The Reaching Resilience Project is also based on Church Street, where a small team of Support Workers deliver person centered holistic support for individual families who are facing the difficulties and challenges associated with having a child with additional needs.

"I have received fantastic support and I have really enjoyed coming in, the advice and help has been so good. Thank you"

Aims and Objectives

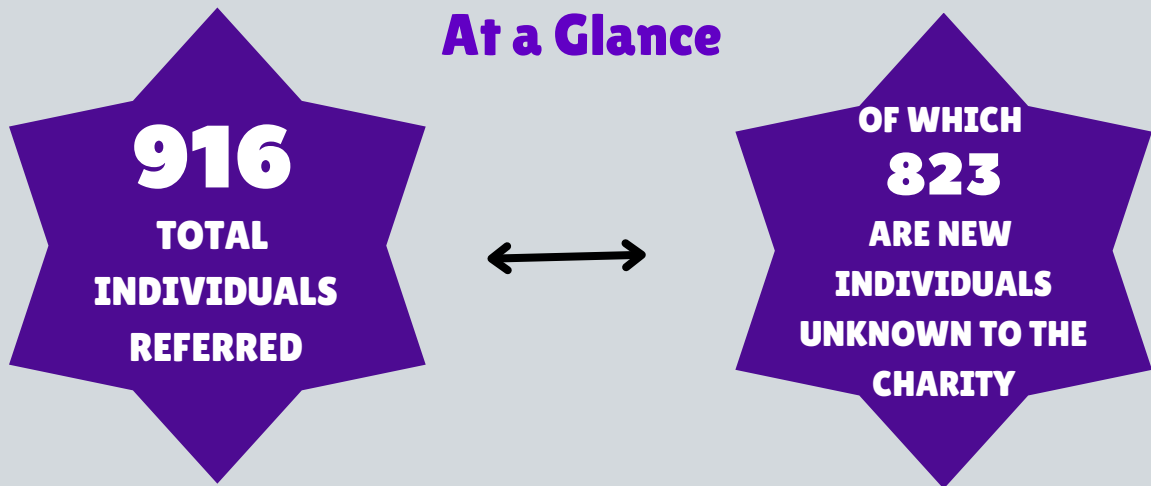


Aiming Higher Charity is dedicated to providing a much needed service to parents and carers of disabled children in Blackpool, Fylde and Wyre. We are very proud of the services we provide and have great success meeting the outcomes from the following aims and objectives:

- To improve family's overall wellbeing.
- Completing early interventions with families to prevent crisis situations.
- Reduce isolation for families.
- Creating more resilient parent/carers and children/young people.
- Providing effective short term interventions.

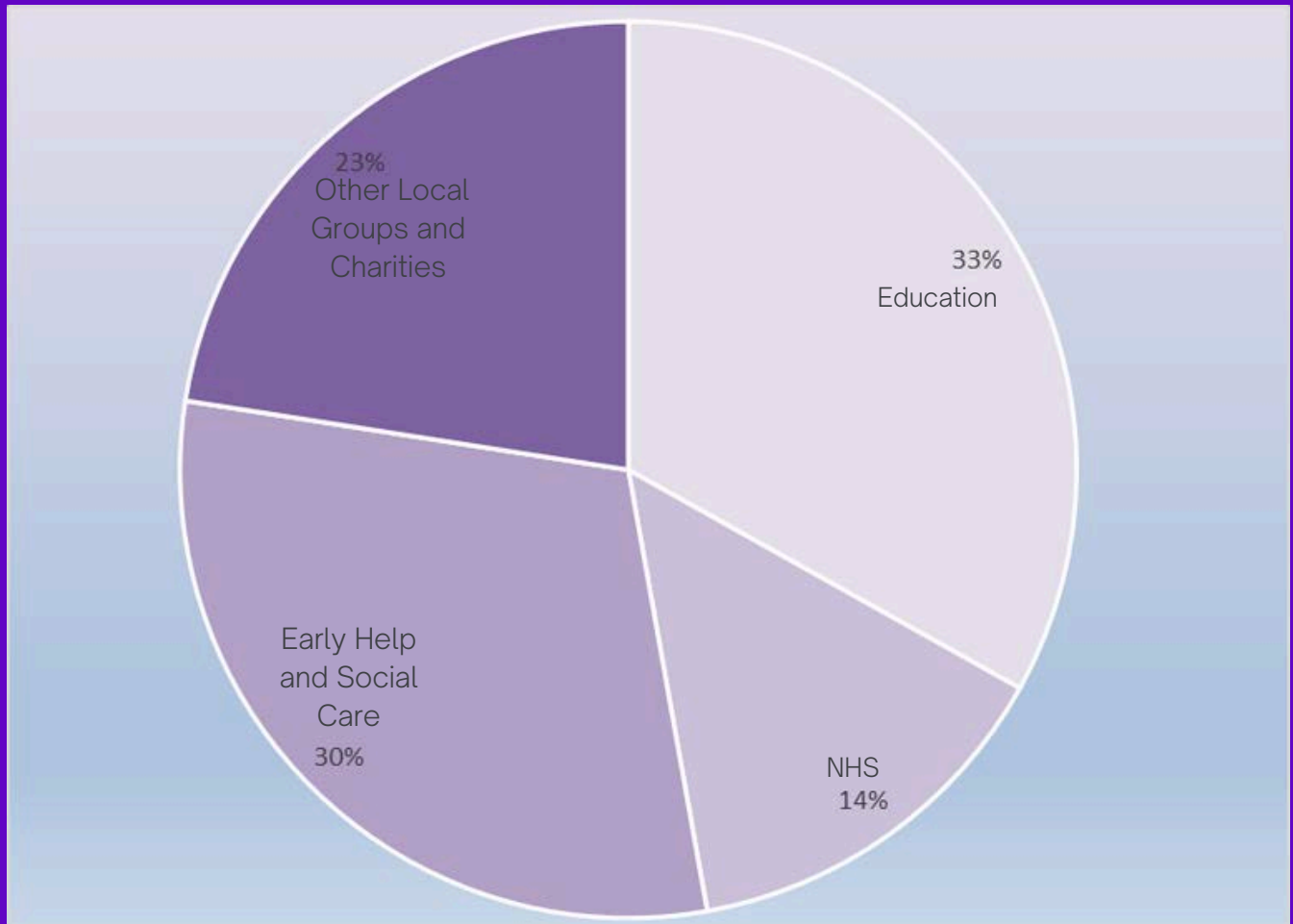
REACHING RESILIENCE PROJECT JANUARY – DECEMBER 2023

At a Glance



Professional Referral Types

Below is a chart depicting where our professional referrals come from in the community. In education, our referrals are from schools, nurseries and home school support. Education, early help and social care cover the majority of professional referrals received. The majority of professional referrals received are related to education, early help and social care. This is sometimes attributed to the services dedicating time to interacting with children and families, during which they identify issues and determine the need for additional support.



Parent Quote

"Thank you Aiming Higher! I've had a year of fun :-) :-) :-) I've grown in confidence through attending the Friday "Coffee & Chat" sessions and workshops you've provided..

The whole family have enjoyed the family days out over the year, because of you, you have enriched our lives and brought us closer as a family... I can't thank you enough!!"

REACHING RESILIENCE PROJECT JANUARY - DECEMBER 2022

Support provided to families.

357

Home visit
family support
sessions

222

Family support
sessions held at
Church Street
Centre

266

Hours of support
through phone
calls

88

Hours of visiting
schools



349

Hours of working
in partnership
with outside
agencies

1339

Emails between
families, support
workers and other
professionals
involved with
support.

49

Hours of one-2-one
sessions with
children

144

Meetings attended
by families with a
Family Support
Worker



Reaching Resilience and Family Support

The Reaching Resilience Project offers a bespoke support service for families with disabled children. Our Family Support Workers deliver personalised support packages catering to each family's needs, enabling the whole family to build on existing resilience skills moving forward.



Our Family Support Workers complete a strength based initial assessment with the family, identifying where successes have been achieved and where more support is required in the following areas: Diagnosis, Health and Social Care, Education, Finances, Emotional Wellbeing, Housing, Community and Isolation. From this information, a robust support plan is devised, identifying where further assistance is required and how this can be implemented.

Families are supported on a one to one basis for anywhere between 3 and 12 months, with support plan reviews taking place every 3 months.



We have helped families access grants and benefits worth **£9,846.04**. These include DLA and PIP claims, family fund applications, Bereavement Support Payment, Carers Allowance and other financial support.



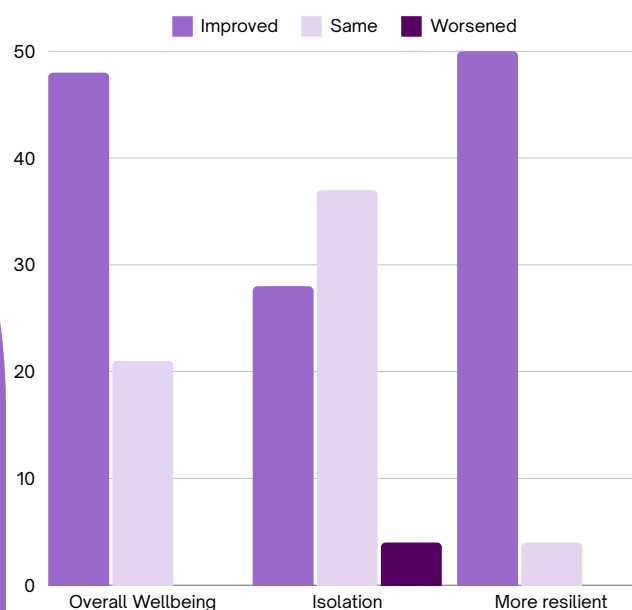
Aims and Objectives



We continue to remain focused on providing early intervention to families with a disabled child and supporting them to achieve positive outcomes. Through offering targeted interventions, regular support plan reviews as well as information and advice, the Reaching Resilience Project aims to support families to feel less isolated and more resilient overall. We aim to empower parents, carers, young people and children to have their voice heard and feel valued, thus creating a healthier and more resilient community.

To measure this progress, we record information through our online system which enables us to gather statistical data and monitor the project's success.

Our initial family assessments establish the level of support required through using a robust assessment and scoring system. The chart below shows a vast improvement with families overall wellbeing and developing resilience skills, following family support. Many families have improved isolation however, we have established families with a disabled child do not feel included in wider society as a whole due to societal views and judgement.



For this to change, families need to feel included in society through education, activities and accessibility. Parents/carers have relayed to us about general society requiring more awareness of disabilities to reduce judgement and create a more inclusive society.



"I've learned a new way to parent as never had a child with disabilities before. School understands a lot more now with your help. The trips have been a life saver at times we wouldn't be able to go if it wasn't for Aiming Higher. It's been good to have someone to talk to. Thank you, I really appreciate it."

Case Study

Please note all Names have been changed in the following case study.



When I originally contacted Emma, she informed me the family had just been made homeless. When I went to meet the family, they had their belongings in bags and did not know where they would be staying that night. I gathered the information of other professionals involved and contacted the family's social worker to inform her of the family's current crisis. Through multi agency working between myself and the social worker, we contacted the housing team. Emma and her 3 children aged 9, 6 and 4 (all with additional needs) had to attend the housing office to await an emergency placement for that night.

Emma was eventually placed in a hotel in Blackpool. I completed an emergency food shop to provide the family with basic food to help them for a few days. I continued with light emotional support and advising Emma of steps moving forward regarding support.

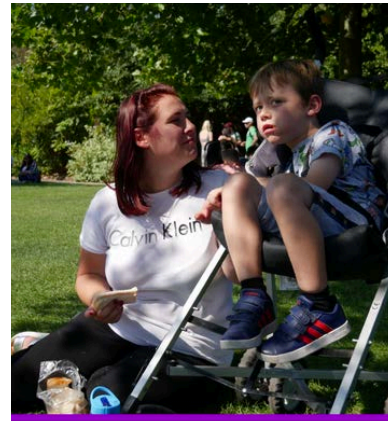
Emma moved into a private rented four-bedroom home in Blackpool a few weeks later, Kensington Foundation were contacted to see if support could be offered for furniture for the family. I set up a multi-agency meeting with professionals involved to find out what support they could offer and to make sure work was not being duplicated.

Once Emma and the children had settled into their new home, I was able to complete the initial assessment. Support was mainly financial, which included DLA and family fund. There were still ongoing issues with transport, especially with Emma struggling to get the children to school with the school being in South Shore and Emma's new home being based in the center of Blackpool. There were also concerns about Oliva's well-being and mental health.

While supporting Emma to apply for DLA for Thomas, Emma realised all the supporting documents required were with another professional. These were posted back to Emma, and the DLA application was completed.

Emma had on-going issues with getting the children to school, I provided a supporting transport letter for this and attended multiple meetings with the school to try to come up with solutions.

Thomas was granted transport from the council, but Emma still had to take Oliva and Samuel on the bus to school at the same time. Emma was struggling with managing all three children's behaviors and felt she was not meeting their basic needs, this was then affecting her own mental health. I sent in a referral to our counselling service which Emma now attends weekly.



Case Study cont....

Please note all Names have been changed in the following case studies.



“Little Boost” funding was provided to support Emma with topping up her gas and electricity when she was struggling financially. I also provided the family with a heating pack which included an air fryer, Oodles, hats, gloves, and a portable heater. I also signposted Emma to green doctor for extra support and advice on how she could make her home more heat friendly.

Support was provided through home visits and attending multi-agency meetings. Early help became involved with the family at this time and were going to focus their support on making the public transport runs easier for Emma.

While Emma was granted direct payments through the council, Emma struggled to find a suitable PA. Emma is now being supported by the direct payment team to find a suitable PA.

During a meeting it was discussed that the family’s early help worker would take on completing 1:1 sessions with Oliva to support with mental health concerns.

When support came to an end, certain issues were still ongoing such as transport, Emma has Sendiass involved and is looking at transferring Samuel and Oliva to a school closer to home. As Thomas gets council transport this will make the school run a lot more manageable for Emma as public transport would not be needed.

Emma still has concerns regarding Oliva’s mental health, but this is being supported by Michelle’s 1:1 sessions and school are speaking with a mental health nurse who attends every few weeks to see if they can offer any additional support, or signpost Emma in the right direction.

Emma’s resilience has improved throughout support she has been able to provide the children with a safe home environment, she is moving the children’s school to help her be able to manage the school runs easier and she is actively searching for a PA to assist Thomas. Emma regularly attends her counselling sessions here at Aiming Higher which is helping her mental health and wellbeing.

Through intensive support, Emma has managed to get to a place where she is happy with closure to go ahead as she recognises all she has achieved over the past months. Emma is a regular attender of our monthly activities and coffee & chat. Emma’s final assessment scores improved immensely.

A quote from Emma following support....

“Thank you from the bottom of my heart for ALL your valuable support. I really don’t have the words to say how much I appreciate your help over the last months. You have been rocks at very uncertain times to our family. I was a complete mess and broken that first day I met you. I was lost. You were sent to us that day, true angles you are. I’ve felt relaxed around you which has allowed me to grow in strength. You’ve helped build my confidence, allowing me to gain an understanding of my family’s needs and through that, I’ve learned to advocate and be steadfast. Now we’re set free and building ourselves a new home and a new life with new adventures. You have been a big part of that journey. I will be forever grateful to you and Aiming Higher as a whole.”



Coffee & Chat

We have organised our coffee & chat sessions by extending invitations to various service providers to deliver informative presentations, as well as incorporating creative sessions to engage parents and carers. At every session we provide complimentary breakfast and beverages.

We provide a free monthly Workshop where parents/carers are able to gain and/or learn valuable skills while sometimes having great fun. Workshops have provided first aid skills, information and the opportunity to create a Will for a huge reduced price. Our Lego Workshop taught parents/carers skills of roles and having fun at home with their children.

Counselling

In the last year our student counsellors have completed 117 counselling hours for our adult clients. One of our counsellors is now fully qualified and wanted to remain with Aiming Higher on a voluntary basis. We currently have our qualified counsellor and a student counsellor. We are also in the process of recruiting another student counsellor to complete their placement hours with us. This will also help support our current waiting list of 18 clients.

 <p>PARENT/ CARER SESSIONS</p> <hr/> <p>SEPTEMBER -DECEMBER 2023</p> <hr/>	<hr/> <p>SEPTEMBER</p> <hr/> <p>FRIDAY 1ST CRAFT SESSION</p> <p>FRIDAY 8TH SPEAKER FROM UNITED UTILITIES</p> <p>FRIDAY 15TH FIRST AID WORKSHOP</p> <p>FRIDAY 22ND SPEAKER FROM DISCRETIONARY SUPPORT</p> <p>FRIDAY 29TH COOKERY</p>	<hr/> <p>OCTOBER</p> <hr/> <p>FRIDAY 6TH SPEAKER FROM BLACKPOOL CAB</p> <p>FRIDAY 13TH WILLS WORKSHOP</p> <p>FRIDAY 20TH SPEAKER FROM CAMHS</p> <p>FRIDAY 27TH HALF TERM - NO SESSION</p>
<hr/> <p>NOVEMBER</p> <hr/> <p>FRIDAY 3RD COOKERY</p> <p>FRIDAY 10TH SPEAKER FROM TRAMSHED</p> <p>FRIDAY 17TH LEGO WORKSHOP</p> <p>FRIDAY 24TH SPEAKER FROM CAMHS</p>	<hr/> <p>DECEMBER</p> <hr/> <p>FRIDAY 1ST SPEAKER FROM SOLO PARENTS UNITED NORTH WEST OFFICIAL</p> <p>FRIDAY 8TH CHRISTMAS CRAFT SESSION</p> <p>FRIDAY 15TH HYGGE CHRISTMAS WORKSHOP</p> <p>FRIDAY 22ND & 29TH CHRISTMAS HOLIDAYS - NO SESSIONS</p>	<hr/> <p>CONTACT US</p> <hr/> <p>FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT OUR SOCIAL MEDIA PAGES, EMAIL US AT INFO@AIMINGHIGHER CHARITY.ORG.UK OR CALL 01253 206447</p> <p>ALL SESSIONS INCLUDE REFRESHMENTS AND RUN FROM 9.30- 11.30AM AT AIMING HIGHER CENTRE. MUMS, DADS, STEP PARENTS, FOSTER PARENTS AND ALL IN A PARENTAL ROLE WELCOME.</p>

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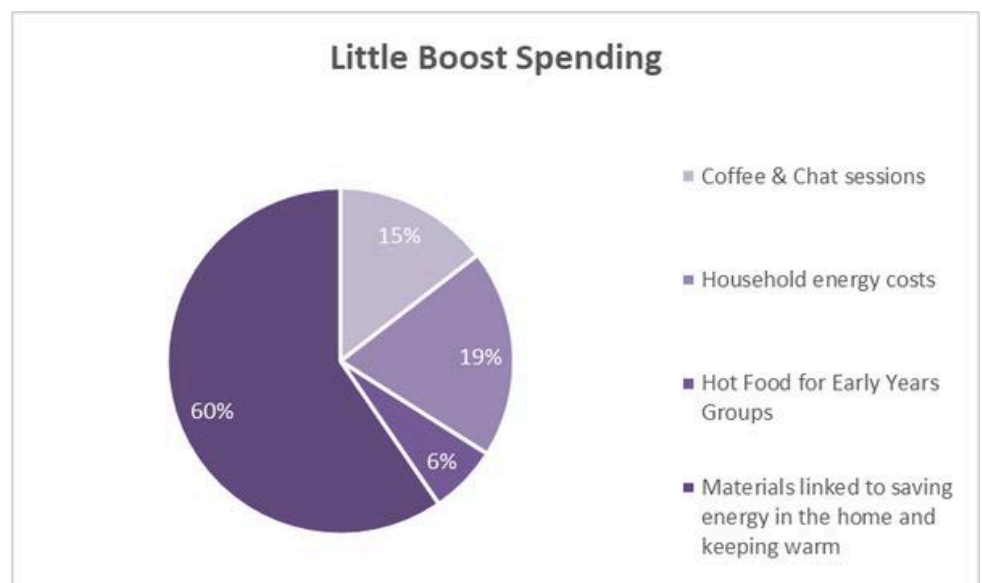
Little Boost

Following the success of our “Little Boost” project in 2022, Aiming Higher applied to Blackpool Council again for funding from their Cost of Living Support Grant project. Our application was successful and Aiming Higher were awarded £12,500. This enabled us to restart our “Little Boost” pot and support families struggling through the Cost of Living Crisis.

We have been able to provide families with gas and electric top-up's, dehumidifiers, air fryers, warm clothing for all the family, cookers and various other materials to support families with being warm, safe and secure in their own home.



The chart below shows how our “Little Boost” has been spent so far. The funding will be completely spent by 31st March 2024. We will continue to support families during the extremely cold winter we are experiencing as well as purchasing items to create a Winter Essentials Hamper for many more families.



Fundraising



Charity Ball 2022

Our annual Charity Ball, with a fire and ice theme, raised £5,933 for Aiming Higher. Everyone enjoyed attending the event held at The Village Hotel in Blackpool.



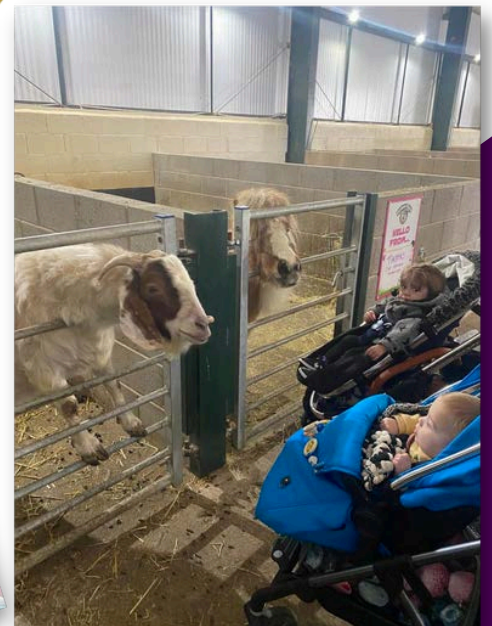
Snowdon Challenge

Our Snowdon climb in July 2023 was a great success and the weather held out for the team as well. A total of £6,174.91 was raised from this event.

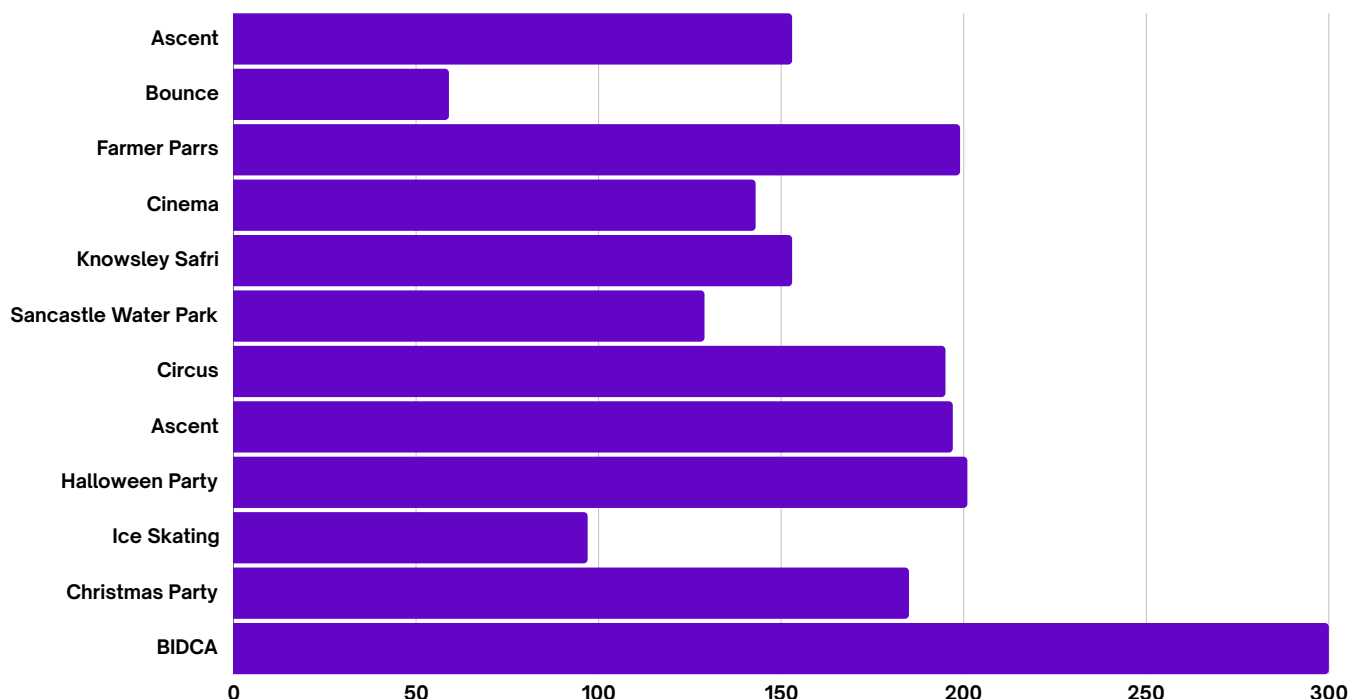


Activities

From Jo Jingles, to ice skating, swimming, safari park day, coffee & chat sessions, indoor climbing and Makaton, Aiming Higher provided 3,633 individual activities.



Monthly Family Activities Attendance 2023



Aiming Higher held another 12 events for children with disabilities and their families this year. In total, 2152 individual activities provided families with an amazing experience which they may not have otherwise been able to facilitate themselves due to the cost and travel difficulties. Our events provide great opportunities for isolated families to meet others, make friends and gain peer support from others who understand and do not judge. All this is alongside having positive and much deserved family time.



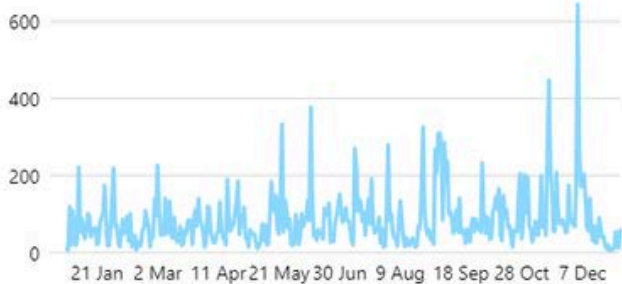
"I'd like to thank Aiming Higher and all the team that supports families with disabled children. Aiming Higher have given my children a social life with all their activities and parties they put on for families with disabled children. This is actually really important for us. They helped us feel included as part of the Blackpool community and we actually feel "normal" at the events they put on for us. At their events I forget we are "different" so a big shout out to them

Social Media Engagements

January - December 2023

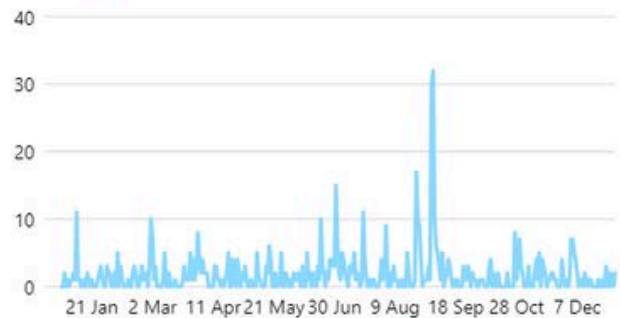
Facebook visits ⓘ

30,951 ↑ 172.3%



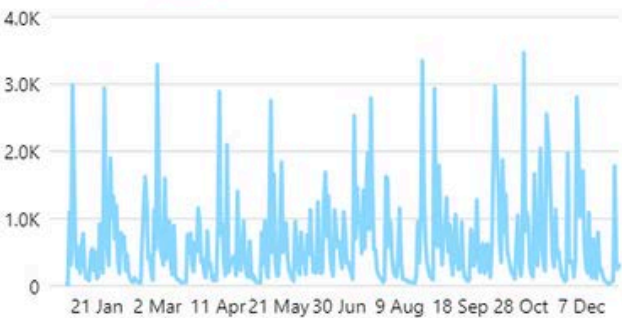
Instagram profile visits ⓘ

668 ↑ 59%



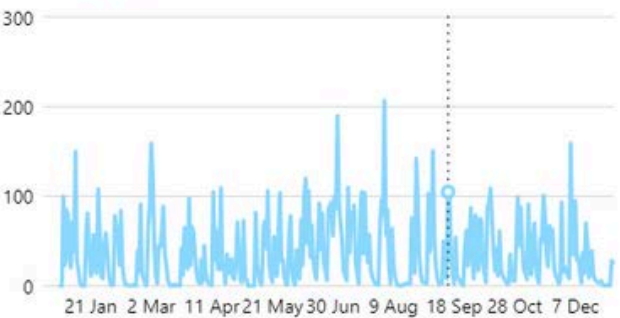
Facebook reach ⓘ

47,536 ↑ 17.1%



Instagram reach ⓘ

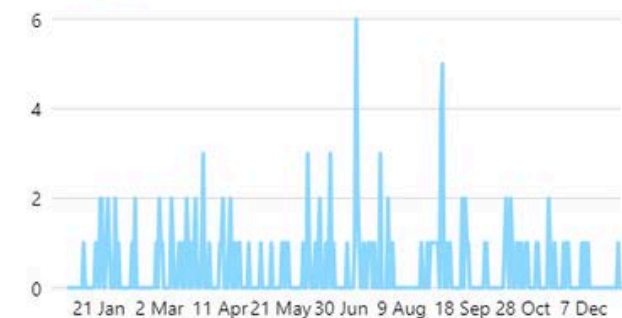
831 ↑ 60.7%



FOLLOWS

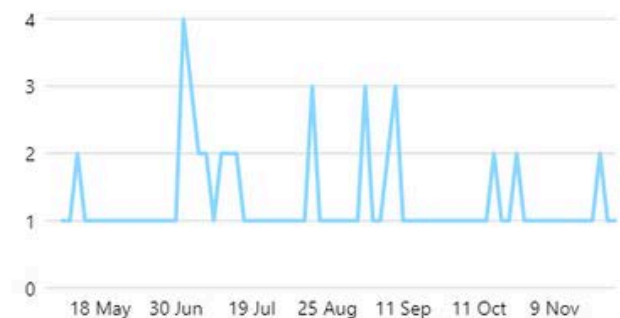
Facebook Page new likes ⓘ

146 ↓ 27.7%



New Instagram followers ⓘ

95 —



Developments



The Reaching Resilience Project has successfully been able to run weekly (term time) Coffee and Chat sessions for our parents/carers. These have been greatly received by all parents and carers attending. We have provided 268 individual activities through our Coffee & Chat sessions.

In addition to Coffee & Chat, we have been able to provide 10 specialist workshops from Building Block Therapy, making wills, First Aid, Hygge and many more with, 15 spaces for each workshop. We held one larger workshop on the topic of sleep. This was held at a larger venue with refreshments supplied by Aiming Higher with a total of 46 bookings from parent/carers.

Wills “Thank you for this workshop. I had no knowledge of wills before today. I feel more informed and happy on how to move forward with making a will. I look forward to all the workshops. Thank you.”

Lego “Thank you for a wonderful morning filled with laughter. The workshop was fantastic! Love how much communication it encourages. It was a fun and engaging activity with endless play options. Really enjoyed the entire session. I’m looking forward to sharing this with my family, including my older children.”

Hygge “Loved it, great ideas and reminders to create a calm, peaceful Christmas. Thank you xx”

We are continuing work on our garden area obtained through Blackpool Council. Aiming Higher is working with UCLAN (University of Central Lancashire) on a project to reduce e-waste and support the environment. We are also in the process of receiving a donation of trees to be planted for the local community to enjoy visually. BAE Systems have requested they run a team building day at our garden completing gardening tasks and rejuvenating the community as well as painting our building.

Aiming Higher continues to develop great relationships with local organisations and charities. Education settings are becoming more aware of our service due to support provided to families by our Family Support Workers and their presence in school settings. We regularly attend Cost of Living events held through Blackpool Council and Community meetings with Arif Rajpura, Director of Public Health. Our Project Manager now also attend VCFSE Asylum Seeker activity meetings each month to discuss support and progress for asylum seekers staying at the Metropole Hotel in Blackpool.



Moving forwards

In 2024, we hope to provide placements for Student Social Workers who are completing their degree. The Reaching Resilience Project manager will be completing On-Site Supervisor Training to enable student social workers to be in place at Aiming Higher. We have been able to obtain a Practice Supervisor from another organisation. Aiming Higher will be working closely with UCLAN throughout 2024 and hopefully provide several placement opportunities within the third sector for their students.



Aiming Higher is also facilitating an Open Day at our centre for local businesses and services to find out more about our service and how they might be able to collaborate with us moving forward.

We are also hosting our annual Ball in June, which this year, has the theme of Around the World in 80 Days. This will be held at The Village Hotel in Blackpool as we have found this a great location for all to attend as well as having a quality service provided by all the staff at the hotel. Due to the success of our Snowdon climb in 2023, we are holding another fundraising event with not one, but three different climbs on offer to those who wish to take part. This event will be taking place in June 2024. All money raised from our Ball and the Snowdon challenge will be for Aiming Higher to continue providing much of the great needed services they provide so well.



Questions? Contact us.

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Registered Charity Number: 1144664



Blackpool Council

