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...Giving Hope



The Queen's Award
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Robert Lewis
 The Nineveh Charitable Trust
 Park Farm,
 Frittenden Road,
 Biddenden,
 ASHFORD
 Kent
 TN27 8LG

Dear Mr. Lewis,

30 January 2019

Last year CHICKS was incredibly grateful to receive the generous donation of £5820 from the Nineveh Charitable Trust. Your wonderful grant supported 5 children who attended breaks at our Cornish Coastal Retreat from 21-25 May and 11-15 June. I am pleased to send you the enclosed report which highlights the impact your support made.

As you know, every year CHICKS has an extra special break for children at Christmas. 'Polar Express' break took place at our Coastal Retreat in South Cornwall, from 23rd-27th December, where children came from across the UK for a magical week where they were able to experience a Christmas full of fun and cheer. Throughout the week the children took part in lots of festive activities including going to see the pantomime, visiting santa's grotto and going tobogganing. On Christmas Day the group all awoke to stockings at the end of their beds and individually wrapped presents under the tree; this was an overwhelmingly emotional experience for many of the children, as for some this was their first ever experience of Christmas. After opening their presents the children enjoyed a walk in the fresh air along the beach and then returned to the retreat to tuck into a traditional Christmas dinner with all the trimmings! One of the young people on 'Polar Express' had an extra special week as it was also her birthday, she described her break saying "actually CHICKS was just perfect."

I hope you enjoy reading the enclosed report and can readily see the impact of your support. If you would like any further information, please do let me know. Similarly, if you would ever like to visit CHICKS, or would like to meet with our Trusts team, I would be delighted to organise this for you.

with kind regards,

Susan Talbot

Susan Talbot
 Trust Fundraiser

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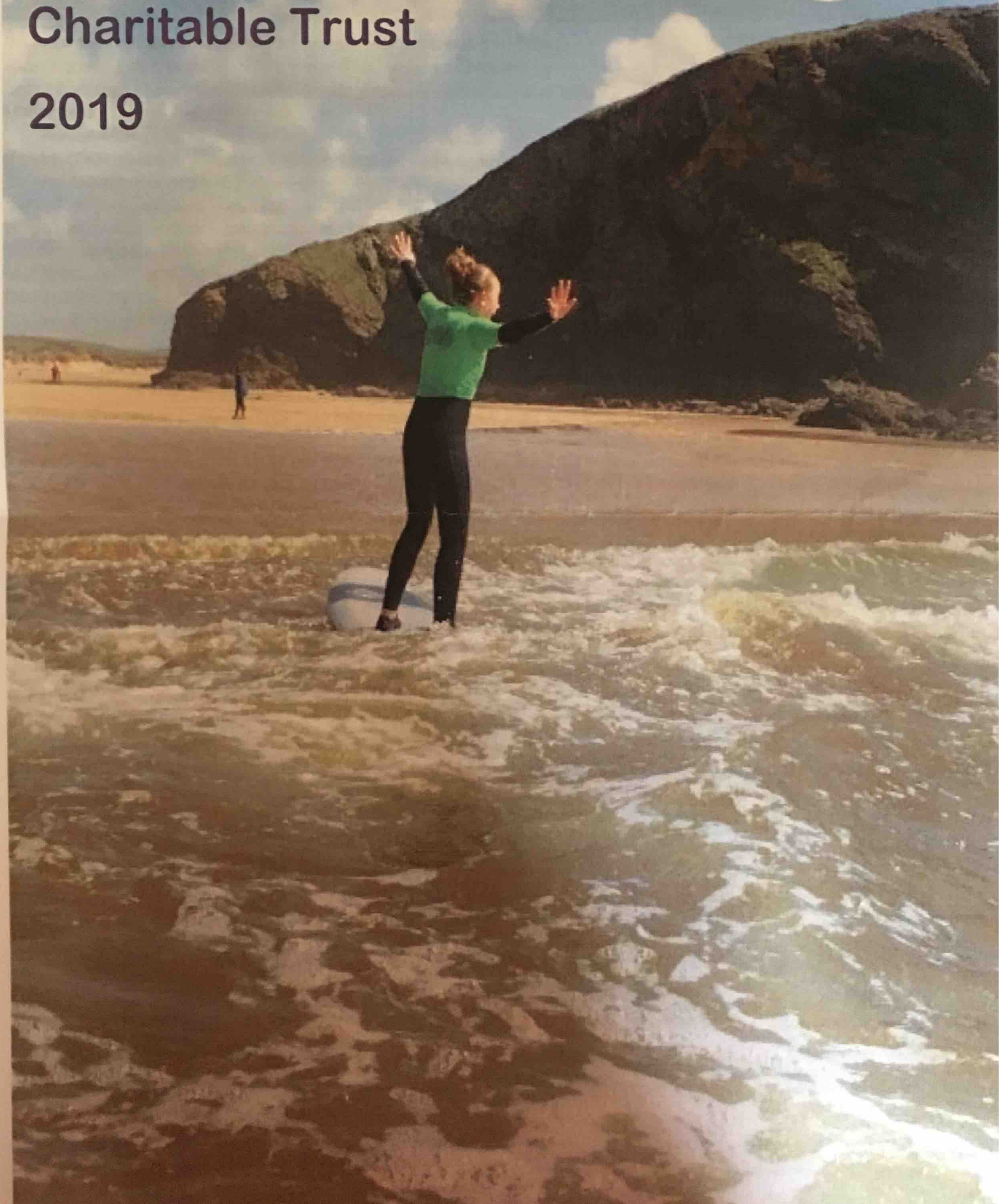
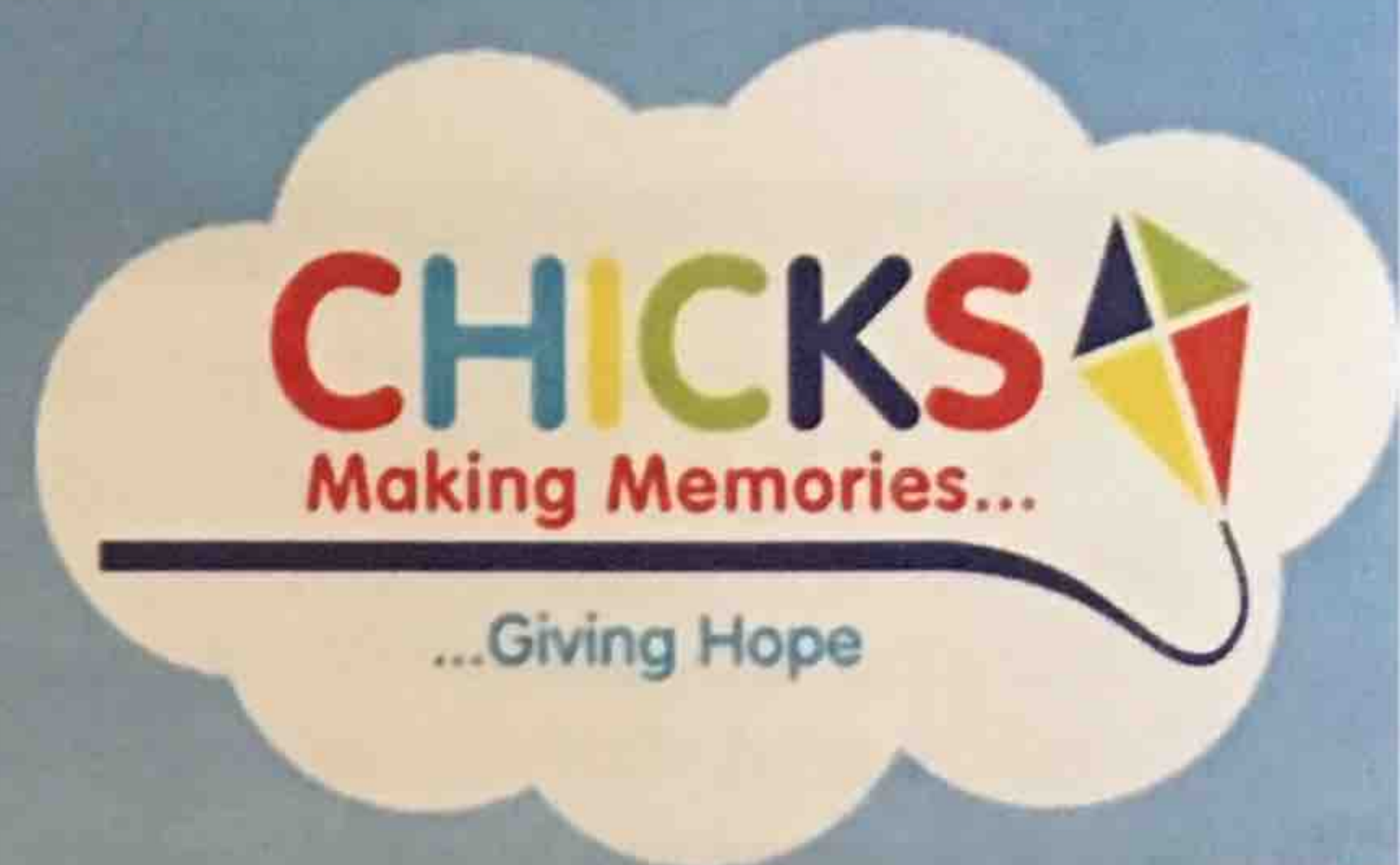
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CHICKS Report to The Nineveh Charitable Trust 2019



Introduction

Last year, CHICKS was incredibly grateful to receive a generous grant of £5820 from The Nineveh Charitable Trust. Your fantastic donation support 5 children who attended two breaks at our Coastal Retreat in South Cornwall in 2018. Whilst at CHICKS, the children you supported were able to experience a week of dedicated care and exciting activities. I hope you enjoy reading this report which highlights the difference your support made. For the purposes of this report, I will write about the break which took place from 11-15th June 2018.

The Children

The children on the Coastal break were aged 8-11 and came from Birmingham and Cornwall. They were all referred to CHICKS by organisations that work with them in a professional capacity and who understand their home circumstances.

These children were all subject to upsetting and stressful home environments and none of them had another opportunity for a break away this year. Children that are referred for a break at CHICKS may have been victims of neglect or abuse. They may have witnessed substance abuse or domestic violence within the home, or may be living with a parent in prison. Sadly, the majority of the children we support have been subject to more than one of these adverse childhood experiences. Over a third of the young people referred to us are also young carers; for many, taking on this responsibility at such a young age can be exhausting and overwhelming, both physically and emotionally.



Robert* age 8 from Birmingham has caring responsibilities and lives in an over-crowded house. He receives little time and space at home and his only opportunities to switch off and relax from his stressful home circumstances are at school. When at home, Robert is expected to live very independently as well as caring for others, and as a result, Robert is self-conscious and quiet. A professional at Robert's school referred him to CHICKS in the knowledge that he would be able to enjoy a break away from his difficult home situation and enjoy a week of carefree fun activities to help him come out of his shell and increase his self-confidence.

On arrival at CHICKS, **Robert*** was very self-conscious and sometimes easily embarrassed by others in the group. This sometimes meant that he found it difficult to listen to the Respite Leaders. However with their support he managed to overcome this during the week and let his natural enthusiasm shine through without affecting his ability to follow instructions. Robert went on to have a fantastic week and particularly enjoyed den-building and horse-riding, an activity which he said was "*the best thing ever*". Robert also enjoyed the delicious home-made food on offer, in particular the roast dinner! The highlight of Robert's week was when he was awarded "star of the day" by the Respite Break Leaders for his dramatic improvement during the week. When asked about CHICKS, Robert said "*it is amazing*". Robert was able to return home with an increased level of self-confidence and some happy carefree memories (including his 'star of the day' certificate!) from his wonderful week at CHICKS.

The Break



The break was led by Respite Break Leaders Olivia, Kate, Tamzin and Steve along with the support of 6 volunteers who dedicated their week to ensure that every child felt valued and received individual adult attention.

Like all CHICKS breaks, the week included a variety of activities including adventurous, imaginative, creative and reflective experiences. The challenging activities that the children took part in this week were horse-riding, rock-climbing and sea-kayaking. We find that these activities often push the children outside their comfort zone but when they are supported to succeed many benefit from an increase in self-esteem. A particular highlight of this week was the horse-riding as this was a first time experience for them all.

There was also lots of time for the children to explore imaginative play and enjoy a sense of freedom some may not experience at home, such as getting messy with the paints in the arts and crafts area, and baking in CHICKS kitchen.

Every evening the group sat down together to enjoy delicious home-cooked meals, and after dinner there were more relaxing activities such as hot-chocolate around the campfire and fun stories before bed; for many of these

children, this was the first time they had experienced such simple pleasures. One of the Leaders described playing at the beach saying *"the children screamed with excitement as they took off their shoes"*.

Sophie* age 10 from Cornwall has never had a holiday. She lives with her Mum and siblings in difficult home circumstances and despite working hard, Sophie's Mum is unable to provide holidays for her children. Sadly, Sophie's Mum had to obtain legal support and help in order to remove Sophie's father from the family home and as a result lives with little financial security meaning that the essentials are barely covered at home. At school Sophie presents as quiet and shy, and often lacking in confidence. A professional in Sophie's school referred her to CHICKS as, with her Mum's agreement, it was felt that CHICKS would be a positive experience for her and provide a happy break from her home life.

When **Sophie*** arrived at CHICKS she was reluctant to mix with lots of other children instead choosing to stick with one girl she knew from school. However as the week progressed, the Respite Break Leaders couldn't help noticing Sophie growing in confidence and expanding her friendship groups, something she found particularly easy whilst playing in the ball pool back at the retreat. By far, Sophie's biggest and most favourite achievement was when she managed to stand up on a surfboard and she was absolutely delighted that the Respite Break Leaders gave her some photographs to take home as a memento of her time at CHICKS. Like most of the children on this break, this was Sophie's first time surfing and horse-riding and she threw herself into all the activities on offer. Sophie's best memory was 'meeting new friends'. Sophie has been able to return home with amazing memories of her time at CHICKS, which will help her through the tough times and give her hope for the future.

Feedback

As part of the more relaxing and reflective evening activities, the group would come together to talk through the events of their day, discussing their 'best bit', what they found challenging, and to each give out a 'star of the day' award to one of their peers. We find that this form of reflection is incredibly beneficial as it gives the young people the chance to give and receive praise, solidifies increases in self-esteem, and encourages them to raise their aspirations for the future. We also ask the children to complete a short questionnaire at the end of the week and below are some of the comments from both exercises:

"It is the perfect place to make friends and have fun."

"Horse-riding because I never get to do that at home"

"It is amazing to go to CHICKS"

"It is the best place ever!"

Post-break Service

After the children return home we run a post-break service to provide them with comfort during times of difficulty. This service includes a memory bag full of certificates, mementos and photo collages to remind them of their week and all that they achieved. They also receive a FREEPOST envelope so that they can keep in touch with CHICKS, and a birthday card and Christmas present in the year following their break. Children are also welcome to return to us year on year, giving them something to look forward to when things at home are tough.

Monitoring and Impact

In order to collate comprehensive feedback, which CHICKS can use to develop and improve as an organisation, we collect information through a variety of methods including reflective discussion, volunteer, referral agent and child questionnaires, child-led focus groups and stakeholder advisory committees. We use the feedback we collect to adapt the running of the breaks, ensuring that we are creating the most beneficial experience for the children. In 2018, nearly 95% of referral agents surveyed agreed or strongly agreed that the child they referred had improved in confidence and self-esteem and 97% believed that the break would have a lasting positive impact on the young person. Other benefits noted included improved interactions with others and increased aspirations for the future.



Thank you

On behalf of Robert*, Sophie* and the other children on the Coastal Break, we would like to extend our sincere thanks to The Nineveh Charitable Trust for your support. As you can see, your donation gave these children the chance to experience a carefree week in the countryside where they could broaden their horizons and realise their potential. Thank you! *child's name changed to protect their identity