



It's been a while since we sent you a newsletter, and so this one is jam-packed full of news about Footsteps. You will hear stories about young people who attend Footsteps, the ways that we have adapted to the covid-19 situation as a centre, some free music therapy for Footsteps children, and also info about a fundraising challenge that we need your help with, coming up in October!

Elliot Baker's Footsteps



Elliot has been coming to Footsteps for nine years and has come back this summer for a three-week block of intensive therapy. While on session, he celebrated his thirteenth birthday. He had a garden gathering with friends, family, cake and pizza! Elliot is a whizz-kid with technology and gadgets, loves painting and his assistance dog Elmo. We can't believe he is a teenager already, as we first met him as a little four year old!

We caught up with Elliot and his mum Caroline to find out about his experiences of lockdown and Footsteps therapy.

Elliot: "Over lockdown, I was a bit bored sometimes, but I kept busy by chatting with friends on Google hangouts and I created some art – I had lessons and made some paintings which I sold online so that I could buy a modified X-Box controller. I use paints and natural materials such as feathers and wood"

Elliot said that he found it really hard work coming back to Footsteps this summer, as he has not been for a whole year. Also, having been stuck at home for months, it's quite a challenge doing a block of this intensive therapy straight away. Despite this, Elliot said it's been nice to see his favourite therapists again.

Elliot's mum Caroline said: "We have survived lockdown, both Elliot and his sister managed to find things to keep them entertained and busy (mostly). One thing that Elliot has struggled with is when people are wearing masks he finds it harder to understand what they are saying – so I got a special see through mask – he can then lip read and it's much easier for him"

What a great idea!

Caroline also said that as they are fairly local and have been coming to Footsteps for so long, its a bit like an extended family: "Families get to meet others in similar situations and parents share and learn from each other. We keep in touch and have become good friends with some families over the years. Also, the therapists care so much about the children and their progress"

We couldn't agree more!

Elliot has written an interesting article about his life and experiences, which you can read [HERE](#)

Footsteps Covid-19 Update



We had to close The Footsteps Centre for 9 weeks due to the coronavirus pandemic. During that time, many children missed out on essential physiotherapy and Footsteps Foundation missed out on thousands of pounds of fundraising through cancelled events and other support. But the good news is that we have now re-opened, on a reduced capacity basis, providing physiotherapy to children that are safe to attend the centre (not shielding).

We have been working in new ways, with new schedules in order to reduce bottlenecks and allow staff time to do extra cleaning. Therapists are wearing PPE, keeping to their own individual gyms, and changing clothes and disinfecting rooms, mats and toys after each child. All staff and families have temperature checks on arrival, use hand sanitiser and adults wear masks. We have advanced cleaning protocols and some fancy new UVC lamps that completely sterilise a room, killing all germs, bacteria and viruses in 10-15 minutes at the end of each day! Families are not allowed to congregate in the centre at present, and have to wait in the car, but that hasn't stopped people having a socially-distanced catch-up in the car park on occasion! If you would like any clarification on our new protocols, please do get in touch.

Because of the current situation, we also understand that the number of families needing extra charitable support might increase due to the economic uncertainty and decreased household budgets. In a recent Disabled Children's Partnership survey of 4,000 families with disabled children, 39% said their household income has dropped significantly in the crisis, and many were on low incomes already. Please do let the Footsteps Foundation team know if you need extra support to attend Footsteps, as we may be able to help with things like fuel and accommodation costs. Also, if your household income had decreased, you may be entitled to more funding towards the costs of physio. Despite the new challenges, many families are keen to return and give their children the therapy they need to progress. One family told us:

"All Phoebe's activities were cancelled overnight. So on top of worrying about home schooling her and her twin sister, we were really concerned about her missing out on physiotherapy. Last year she improved so much with Footsteps therapy – everyone noticed, school, friends, family – we were so worried about it not being available anymore because of Covid. We are impressed with all the safety measures Footsteps has put in place to be able to offer this physio safely and we are so grateful for the centre opening and for the charity that helps us afford it. Aged seven, with an able-bodied twin, Phoebe has begun to understand herself how important this physio is for her progress"

A Million Steps for Footsteps - we need your help!



As you can imagine, our charity has lost a lot of income this year, and we are struggling to reach the fundraising targets that enable us to keep supporting families at current levels. Unlike some other charities, nearly all the money we raise (80p/£1) goes directly to pay for therapy. To continue providing this essential funding for children's physiotherapy **WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT.**

We are launching a challenge **A Million Steps for Footsteps.** Before you run away, may we reassure you that don't have to do the whole million yourself! We need Footsteps friends, families and supporters to take part and sign up to pledge to walk/run/cycle/swim/dance - whatever you like – anytime in October and collect some sponsorship for us at the same time. We will then convert your distance or time into steps to add to the communal target of a Million Steps for Footsteps. If we all join together and do a few steps and raise some money - while having fun - we can surely achieve this!

Footsteps Foundation has never had to call on families help like this before, but with normal funding streams being squeezed at all levels, we really need your help. If all 150 families who attended a Footsteps session last year raise £150 each that would be £22,500....what a difference that would make for those who need to access funding next year.

EXAMPLES - Maggie in the office runs 5k occasionally and she has decided to pledge to run 15k every week in October! A Footsteps child will do 5 miles in his wheelchair. One of our supporters has decided to cycle 50k over 2 days at the end of October. One family will do an online PE class every day in the half term.

We will launch **#AMillionStepsforFootsteps** at the beginning of October, so look out for updates on Facebook and in your inbox before then. You can join at any time in October but the sooner the better! There is no fee to join and no minimum fundraise. We will provide you with a fundraising pack full of ideas of how to spread the word far and wide to raise as much as possible.

If you want to sign up please post your your pledge on our Facebook Group page [HERE](#) or email maggie@footstepsfoundation.com

Thank you so much for your support!

Charlie Grainger's Footsteps



10-year old Charlie has quadriplegic cerebral palsy (affecting all his limbs) and therefore finds most movements that we might take for granted extra hard work. He has been coming to Footsteps since 2013 and he says that it is his favourite place. He enjoys working with all the therapists and always tries really hard with a big smile on his face. He has been in for a session just as we reopened our doors to families this summer.

His mum Laura said that they have been coming to Footsteps three or four times per year all these years because she wants Charlie to achieve his full potential and to avoid future surgeries if possible. Like many of our children, little Charlie has had lots of major surgery already – on his spine and hips – and while these have reduced his pain and spasticity, there is always a lot of recovery time and a need for intensive therapy afterwards. According to Laura: "Charlie has attended Footsteps for the past 7 years, and it's his favourite place to

go. Over the years, Charlie has had to undergo a lot of major surgery - he has had Selective Dorsal Rhizotomy (spinal surgery) as well as double hip surgery, and the Footsteps sessions have undoubtedly made a massive contribution to his recovery process. We notice after sessions improvements in his left hand, which is severely affected by cerebral palsy. We notice strengthening in his legs and also his core. The therapists make the sessions fun, and they understand how Charlie can be motivated. When a Footsteps session is coming up, Charlie is counting down the days!"

He often comes with his grandparents Geoff and Denise, who told us that another huge benefit of Footsteps is chatting with other parents and carers, exchanging news, ideas and tips. Denise said that when a Footsteps session is coming up, Charlie gets quite excited and looks forward to seeing which therapist he will be working with. Charlie is a huge Strictly Come Dancing fan, who loves music and his favourite colour is green. He goes to a school for children with special needs and his headmaster has said that he is not only an asset to his class, but to the whole school and everyone recognises his smiling face! Go Charlie!

To see more updates and fun videos about young Charlie, do check out his facebook page at: <https://www.facebook.com/Charliegraingerfundraiser/>



Free Music Therapy with Lizz Lipscombe

We have teamed up with music therapist Lizz to offer some free music therapy, as she cannot come into the centre at present. We are offering a free one-to-one session via zoom, tailored to your child's needs and abilities. If your child enjoys it, the next two sessions will be subsidised as well! This is on a first come first served basis as we have limited funding so please do get in touch soon if you are interested

What is zoom music therapy? We consider the needs and goals of your child and use music therapy sessions to facilitate them in a bespoke and fun way via zoom.

What are sessions going to include? Instrument playing using

1. Your own bought or home-made instruments.
2. Borrowed instruments from the music therapy instrument store at Footsteps (first come first served basis).
3. Digital instruments. (I-pads are particularly good for apps like garage band and thumbjam).

Listening, Singing / Vocalising, Song writing / composition

How long will a session be?

Session length will depend on the ability, health (on that day) and age of your child, so between 30-45 minutes. Please email lizzlipscombe@gmail.com for more details and to book a session

Please see Lizz's website for more details about her: <https://www.music-therapist.com/about-me>

Thanks to all our wonderful supporters!

Thanks to all those who have carried on with regular donations, donated in lieu of a cancelled event and sent in anonymous support - we really appreciate it now more than ever!

Thanks for your ongoing support,

The Footsteps Team
