

Press Release

29th January 2015

Family Fund launches new video showing how iPads make a difference for disabled children

Family Fund is today launching a new video to raise awareness of the impact that technology can have on outcomes for disabled and seriously ill children and to encourage parents to consider the benefits that they can make to the whole family.

Produced in conjunction with MCC who are a longstanding Apple Solution Expert in education, the film looks at two children who have received grants from Family Fund for iPad and examines the different ways in which the children, Oscar and Marnie, have used these devices as a tool for learning and development.

Oscar was diagnosed with Autistic Spectrum Disorder in 2009. "Oscar was completely non-verbal so we had been using a combination of Makaton sign language and PECS communication system," says Oscar's mum, Caroline. "The iPad allowed us to introduce more fun ways to interact with Oscar to get him to communicate. We began to upload photos of everyday things that would provide visual clues to the day, resulting in less frustration and meltdowns. A picture of granddad let him know it was time for a visit and a picture of the car showed that it was time to go out."

Oscar quickly mastered the use of apps and was soon forming sentences on the iPad such as "I want juice". The value of this has been immeasurable and Oscar can be found reinforcing his school work through a carefully selected app.

Marnie was very ill when she was born and was subsequently diagnosed with Kleeftstra Syndrome. Mum Karen said "It was really obvious that she wasn't developing at the same rate as her peers. She didn't really want to engage with anything. If you left her in a room with a load of toys, she would just sit there."

"It's been fantastic because it's enabled her to do things she couldn't do in real life, effectively. She's been playing with lots of apps which have helped her learn the alphabet. Even when she couldn't speak she could play with an app which would say "touch the letter A" and she would touch the letter A and you could see that her understanding was there."

"Now she's beginning to speak and realising there's a point to communication, she is quite bossy!"

The Family Fund is one of the largest enablers of digital inclusion provision to disabled children in the UK, with more than 12,000 digital devices granted every year. With the number of families receiving grants growing year-on-year, reaching a record 68,551 in 2013/14, this is set to increase further.

Cheryl Ward, Chief Executive for the Family Fund, said "When we respond to families' requests for tablets or computers, we are also not simply providing a tablet or computer. Children are getting a new tool. It can be a tool for communication, for inclusion, or to help the children grow and develop by providing new ways to learn, or opportunities that may be denied them by conventional social means."

"Our hope is not just that this film will be a great opportunity for showing the impact of the Fund's grant making, but also that it might be the first step for some families in realising that there could be support for them out there that they weren't aware of, and we can look forward to being able to help even more families with a wide range of support that can make an immediate and lasting difference to families raising a child with a disability or serious illness."

The video can be viewed at <http://youtu.be/3dVFLpx6e50>

Families interested in applying for a Family Fund grant can find out more at www.familyfund.org.uk/grants.

Notes

1. The Family Fund is the country's largest grant-giving charity and has over forty years of helping families with disabled children. It helps ease the additional pressures faced by low-income families raising a disabled child by giving them grants for a wide range of goods and services, including washing machines, dryers, fridges, clothing, bedding, sensory toys, computers, much-needed family breaks and more. Across the UK last year, the Fund supported 68,551 families with £33 million in grants.
2. The film was produced by Motus and entirely funded by MCC, who provide families with iPads when they have received a grant from Family Fund.
3. Family Fund works hard to ensure that all funding received reaches as many families as possible across the UK. Last year, more than 94 pence in every £1 received went to a family in grants and services.
4. Family Fund grant applications can be downloaded from the Family Fund website (<http://www.familyfund.org.uk>). Families can contact Family Fund using the online contact form or by telephoning: 01904 621115.

All press enquiries, contact Jim Paterson on 01904 571 094/07825 699192 or email comms@familyfund.org.uk.