



**Speech by David Mackintosh, Chair of the Board of Trustees,
at the official opening of KidsAid House on Thursday 5th March 2009**

I'm delighted to welcome you here this evening to the official opening of KidsAid House and to tell you a bit about the charity and what we do.

We gained charitable status in 2007 and have been working since then with an experienced team of therapists to help traumatised children and families across the county. We aim to help children who have been traumatised in some way through bereavement, abuse or some other distress to set their lives back on track and to stop them becoming the problems of the future.

We see early intervention as the way forward for helping get children back on track and this is increasingly recognised by a number of other charities and organisations. Without this support these traumatised children go on to become traumatised adults with all manner of problems.

Many of the Trustees have experienced some kind of personal trauma at a young age such as the death of a parent, as I did by losing my mother at 8 years old. We know that children are not equipped with the same skills to express themselves as an adult or perhaps given the chance and that what KidsAid is all about.

We know the increasing pressures for families these days and, as families break-down and are reformed in so many different ways, we know that organisations like KidsAid are in ever greater need to provide support to families and to help children overcome their trauma in their own way.

Children want security and stability but cannot communicate in the same way as adults but the world of play - or drama, music or art - is a safe world which allows them to re-live traumatic memories in a safe environment.

So we have been working with children across the county since our launch. We work in a number of schools across Northamptonshire and I'm pleased to welcome many of the headteachers, teachers and SENCOs here this evening. We are very proud here of the work we do in schools with KidsAid despite receiving no central or local government funding so far. This work in schools is crucial and, if funding were available, then we would definitely want to extend that work.

But we increasingly receive referrals for families who, for whatever reason, want to see us outside of school or privately and, if the charity is to grow, we needed a base. That is why we set out to find premises for KidsAid and I'm delighted to be officially opening KidsAid House this evening.

I'm sure you will agree that the place looks fantastic and, in the current economic climate, it is especially difficult for charities. We have been very lucky. We have begged, stolen or borrowed most of what you see here today. Even the building was provided at reduced rates thanks to the generosity of the property developers, Hampton Brook, who deserve a special mention.

There are so many thank yous this evening so I'm sure I will miss out many people. Firstly, thank you to everyone who donated furniture, toys or equipment – there are too many to mention by name but I just wanted to put on the record the heartfelt thanks of the Trustees for everything you have done to make the building so impressive.

Secondly, I want to thank everyone from the University of Northampton. We have been warmly welcomed by the Volunteers Team and students who will soon help us with the administration here. The Early Childhood Studies department have also been very helpful and we look forward to working much closer with them in the future. The beautiful artwork on the walls is also on loan to us from the University.

I would also like to thank the many local businesses and organisations who have helped us including Domino's Pizza, the Hilton Hotel and The Northamptonshire Community Foundation to name just a few.

Finally I would like to thank the Board of Trustees – who are all volunteers and are a fantastic support to me and have really moved mountains to make this opening possible. I would also like to thank Maggie Allen who is our Senior Administrator and keeps the admin under control. We should also thank the therapists for the amazing work they do with children and who really make the difference and are what the charity is all about.

We are also supported by the Friends of KidsAid – a group of amazing volunteers who help with the vital fundraising and our big fundraising events – such as our annual Gala Dinner which is on Saturday 19th September at Towcester Racecourse – or through mad fundraising ideas such as climbing Snowdon – congratulations Julie – or by chopping your hair off – Maggie! – or biking up The Highlands – Adrian!

So thank you for coming along tonight and for giving your support to KidsAid. I hope you can see we are a thriving organisation but we always look for more help and more support – especially in these times of economic uncertainty – so any time or help you can give to help would be greatly appreciated.

Thanks again for coming and I hope you enjoying the evening.