The story of Baked Bean began in 1997 when co-founder Jade was working as a drama teacher at a Social Education Centre in … . Over the Summer, management asked for ideas for summer events and a 6-week theatre group was suggested and, 25 years later, here we are!

The first ever play was called 'A Crossing of Dreams’ and its aim was to give the audience an understanding of what it was like to live with learning disabilities, through the eyes of those who had them. The show was a huge success and performed at various venues, including an outdoor production in Richmond Park.

Most notably of all, though, was the effect on those involved, after the play had finished. The 16 players had a new confidence and demeanor that was striking and noticed by all. From knowing nothing about plays and production, the 6-week immersive project had given them an insight into drama, a new perspective and deep sense of achievement. Drama, as a subject, is an education about life. It helps to shed light on historical events, other people and the world at large.

From then on, the theatre group became a regular fixture, until a few years later when the decision was made to set it up independently, outside the SEC – first, with the support of the council, and then through the private company, Act 2.

In this more mainstream theatre environment, the 16 players flourished and developed. "To raise awareness of people with learning disabilities, from people with learning disabilities" became the strapline, and news of the group spread. Soon, Baked Bean was receiving more referrals than they could deal with. These days, we have around 200 clients and 40-50 staff!

As we built closer relationships with the people we worked with, we began to realise that a lot of them were struggling with their living arrangements. Residential housing, at the time, was limited in terms of location and who you could stay with. On the back of the success of the theatre group, Live 2 was born - a holistic housing and community support service that helped individuals with learning disabilities find housing, apply for benefits and more.

Since then, we’ve expanded even further, into education. Baked Bean Charity offers intensive educational support to children and adults with learning disabilities or the socially excluded. With the arrival of our wonderful CEO Sarah, the services expanded into home-visits, 1:1 lessons ang special educational needs provision, helping to fill the gaps in education, and level the playing field for those with learning disabilities.

From then until now, Baked Bean Charity is committed to fighting the corner for a group who are all too often overlooked and undervalued. We want to be the bridge between learning disabled individuals and the rest of the world, protecting their rights and improving their access to the same systems and services that the rest of us so often take for granted.