



# Group Director of External Affairs Candidate information pack January – February 2026



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# Welcome from Cheryl Ward CBE, Group Chief Executive Officer

Thank you for your interest in the role of **Group Director of External Affairs at Family Fund**.

This is a unique opportunity to shape how one of the UK's largest charities supporting families raising disabled or seriously ill children and young people engages with the outside world — from families and funders to policymakers, journalists, supporters and sector partners.

Family Fund supports thousands of families every year with essential grants, services and practical help. But we know that our role goes beyond that direct support alone. We want to grow the scale and reach of the help we provide, whilst also changing the conversation on disability, childhood illness and disadvantage. Central to this is ensuring that the lived experiences of families we support influence public policy, the funding landscape and public understanding.

As Group Director of External Affairs, you will lead a talented, multidisciplinary team spanning marketing and communications, press and media, public affairs, stakeholder partnerships and research. You will be responsible for setting and delivering a clear external affairs strategy that strengthens Family Fund's voice telling our story, strengthening our influence, and building the relationships we need to deliver our mission at scale.

We are looking for an experienced and values driven leader who is passionate about social justice, understands the power of marketing, communications and policy to drive change, and is ready to take Family Fund's external voice, reach and impact to the next level.

If that sounds like you, we would love to hear from you.

**Cheryl Ward CBE**  
Group Chief Executive Officer



## Who we are

Family Fund is the UK's largest charity providing essential support to families raising disabled or seriously ill children and young people. We believe that all families should have the same opportunities as others, regardless of income or circumstance. Our mission is to break down the barriers that make life harder for these families to make a real difference to the lives of children, young people, and their families across the UK.

We provide grants for everyday essentials and life-changing items -from washing machines and bedding, sensory toys, technology, family breaks, and outdoor play equipment. Alongside our grants, our information and support services help families access practical advice and guidance that improves wellbeing, eases daily pressures and helps families thrive.

Raising a disabled or seriously ill child can be financially, emotionally, and physically challenging. Family Fund is here to ensure families are not alone in facing these challenges. By supporting their needs, amplifying their voices, and helping shape the conversation around disability and disadvantage, we aim to create a fairer, more inclusive society for all. To learn more about our impact, and to read our annual report go to our website [www.familyfund.org.uk](http://www.familyfund.org.uk)

## Our history

Family Fund was established in 1973 following a public campaign on behalf of children affected by Thalidomide.

It was initially established as part of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation to support the UK government in providing financial help to those who needed it. We became an independent charity in 1996.

Our very first grant was for £26 to support a family with the cost of visiting their child in hospital. Years later we are still providing practical support to tens of thousands of families every year.

Today, based in York, Family Fund is one of the largest charities in the UK. We receive funding from the four UK governments, Trusts and foundations, donations and income we generate through the work of our trading arm and social enterprise, Family Fund Business Services (FFBS), which was set up in 2013 to help support our sustainability to provide unrestricted income to the charity, but to also support other organisations with their procurement needs.

Over the last 50 plus years, we have grown in size and profile, and we are providing more grants and services than ever before, but we know there is more to do.

# Our vision, mission and values

## Our vision...

is that families raising disabled or seriously ill children have the same choices, quality of life, opportunities and aspirations as other families.

## Our mission...

is to improve the day-to-day lives of families on a low income, raising a disabled or seriously ill child, or young person. We do this by providing grants and services that ease daily pressures and improve quality of life. And by helping families to influence the wider support landscape.

## Our strategic Group aims



To read our strategy:

[www.familyfund.org.uk/about/what-we-do/](https://www.familyfund.org.uk/about/what-we-do/)

You can also meet the Board and leadership team here:

<https://www.familyfund.org.uk/about/what-we-do/>

# Working at Family Fund

We believe that Family Fund is a great place to work for great people.

We provide a challenging and rewarding working environment where every staff member can make a real difference.

We are proud to be a Voluntary Living Wage and Disability Confident Leader.

We have a great package of benefits including:

- flexible working arrangements
- a focus on your wellbeing including access to an employee assistance programme
- a generous holiday allowance
- a salary sacrifice pension scheme with generous employer contributions
- payment of relevant professional membership fees
- reasonable adjustments if you need them to perform at your best
- excellent maternity and paternity provision
- shopping discount platform
- and above all, a friendly and capable team who want to make a real difference every day.

Meet some of our staff and read their stories: [www.familyfund.org.uk/news-](http://www.familyfund.org.uk/news-)



## Our Values



### SUPPORTIVE

We are here.  
We listen.  
We care.

### CONNECTED

Together  
we find  
a way

### PASSIONATE

Proud to  
make a  
difference  
everyday

### DETERMINED

Driven to  
go above  
and  
beyond.

# Inclusion: A place to be you

Inclusion is not a new concept at Family Fund. It is fundamental to who we are and why we do what we do.

With the input of our staff, we have created our inclusion statement. This sets out our commitment to improve inclusion in all aspects of our work.

Our vision is to have a culture where we acknowledge and celebrate all differences so our staff, volunteers, and the families we support feel safe and free to be themselves, always.

We fundamentally believe in equity and inclusion. These beliefs and our values will influence all that we do.

We are committed to creating a culture that holds diversity and inclusion at the heart of everything we do and to establishing an environment that champions equity for us all, making sure we are all treated fairly and reach our personal potential.

We recognise that this requires continuous and concerted action and will learn together to build and then maintain this inclusive environment. Everyone at Family Fund takes responsibility for doing this together.

**Find out more about inclusion at Family Fund:**

<https://www.familyfund.org.uk/inclusion-at-family-fund>

**Meet our Inclusion Champions:**

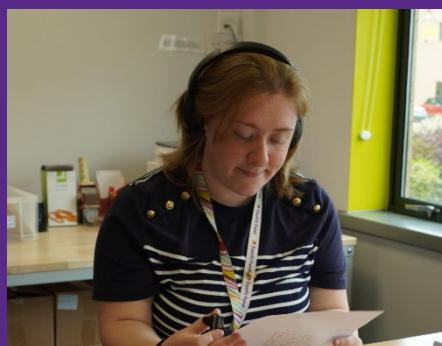
[www.familyfund.org.uk/meet-our-inclusion-champions](https://www.familyfund.org.uk/meet-our-inclusion-champions)

**Hear from our colleagues:**

<https://www.familyfund.org.uk/news-stories/?cat=staff-stories>

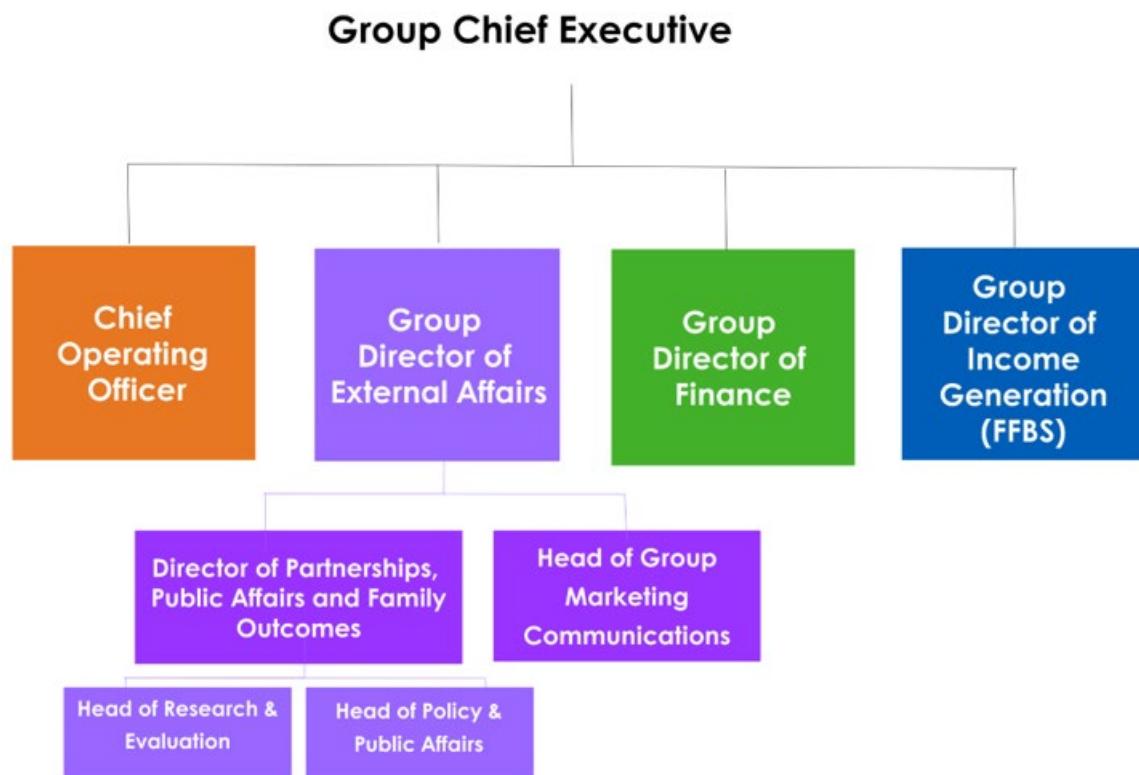
**We are proud of our supported internship scheme and the difference it is making to the lives of young people. You can find out more at:**

[www.familyfund.org.uk/our-supported-internships](https://www.familyfund.org.uk/our-supported-internships)



# Role description

## Organisation Chart



## Purpose of the job:

As a key member of the Senior Leadership Team, the Group Director of External Affairs will work closely with the Group Chief Executive, Executive Directors, and Trustees to shape and deliver Family Fund's vision and strategy. This role leads the development and execution of a bold, integrated external affairs strategy encompassing marketing, communications, policy and public affairs, stakeholder relationships, partnerships, and research. The Director will ensure that all external activity is strategic, coordinated, and directly aligned to Family Fund's mission and priorities.

The Director will raise Family Fund's national profile and influence, positioning the organisation as a trusted, evidence led voice on childhood disability, serious illness and the broader challenges facing low-income families. They will build and sustain strong relationships with policymakers, funders, and the public ensuring the organisation secures the visibility, support, and resources needed to drive lasting change for the families we serve.

## Duties and responsibilities

### External affairs and public policy

- Lead a bold and forward-looking external affairs strategy that positions Family Fund as a trusted, evidence based-led voice in national conversations on childhood disability, serious illness and challenges facing low-income families
- Build and sustain strong, strategic relationships with policy makers, public sector, and industry stakeholders, across all nations of the UK.
- Amplify the voices and lived experiences of families to shape and inform public policy, influence decision-making, and unlock funding and service opportunities.
- Lead impactful policy and campaign work to establish Family Fund as a credible and solutions-focused sector leader.

### Marketing Communications

- Oversee all communications and marketing activities, developing integrated strategies to grow Family Fund's brand, voice and reach to achieve strategic priorities. Raise awareness of Family Fund and strengthen public understanding of our work, presenting and promoting the charity as best in class.
- Enhance engagement across families, funders, and the wider public, building and managing engagement mechanisms that add value to our work.
- Act as a senior spokesperson and support other leaders in media engagement to ensure confident and informed public representation.
- Lead on reputation management, including crisis communications, to safeguard and enhance Family Fund's public image.
- Ensure all communications are informed by insight and reflect the lived experiences of the families we support.

### Partnerships and stakeholder engagement

- Develop and deliver a strategy for strategic partnerships that supports mission delivery and organisational growth.

- Build high-impact collaborations with charities, corporates, public bodies and community groups that share our values and priorities.
- Champion shared goals to improve support and services for families raising disabled or seriously ill children.

### **Research, insight and impact**

- Lead the organisation's research function to inform policy, drive innovation, and evidence our value and impact.
- Embed insight-led thinking across the charity to improve outcomes, strengthen our influencing, and inform decision-making.
- Ensure Family Fund's lived experience insight and data are used to shape the external narrative and support advocacy.

### **Organisational leadership**

- Lead and develop a high-performing team, fostering a culture of collaboration, accountability, efficiency and innovation.
- Contribute to cross-organisational planning and decision-making as a member of the senior leadership team.
- Act as an ambassador for Family Fund Group at external events and forums.
- Promote and support good governance, efficiency and strong leadership across the organisation.

### **Other duties**

- Provide effective line management and coaching for direct reports, promoting effective performance management and positive team working.
- Represent Family Fund, including deputising for the CEO as and when required, attending and presenting to a range of audiences as needed.
- Work with the senior management team to ensure effectiveness and efficiency.

- Work with colleagues to provide effective leadership of Family Fund Group, advising the CEO and Board of Trustees on strategies for external affairs, communications, marketing and research.
- Work alongside the Group CEO, COO, Group Finance Director and Directors to promote and maintain good governance.
- Carry out other activities that are within the scope of the role and/or leadership position within the charity.



# Person specification

## Experience

### Essential

- Proven experience in a senior external affairs, communications, or public affairs role
- Strong track record in influencing government policy and engaging with high-level stakeholders.
- Leading and managing teams and driving strategic initiatives.
- Presentation of reports at Board level
- Managing large budgets
- Experience in media relations, digital communications, and brand management.
- Impact monitoring and evaluation.
- Relationship building outside the organisation.

### Desirable

- Work in the voluntary or statutory sector at a senior level.

## Skills, knowledge, and abilities

### Essential

- Ability to contribute at a senior level to strategic organisation management
- Exceptional communication skills, with the ability to craft compelling messages for different audiences.
- Strong interpersonal and networking skills to build, maintain and strengthen relationships and partnerships
- Credible at the most senior levels within organisations and government
- Excellent written and oral communication skills with the ability to present complex information in a persuasive manner at a suitable level to the audience

- Ability to command respect and gain confidence across a variety of audiences
- Ability to work under pressure and to deadlines, managing a number of projects simultaneously
- Ability to assess complex information from a range of sources
- Ability to work as part of a team and to motivate others
- Ability to set and achieve performance targets
- Excellent leadership, staff management and development skills.

## **Education/training**

### **Essential**

- Educated to degree level or demonstrable equivalent experience.

## **Personal attributes**

### **Essential**

- A passion for Family Fund's mission and a deep understanding of the issues affecting families raising disabled children
- Results driven
- Creative, innovative, inspiring and encouraging
- Open and participative management/leadership style
- Flexible and resilient to changing work patterns and conditions
- Able to travel across the UK
- Commitment to Family Fund's values
- Commitment to equity, diversity, inclusion and fairness for all
- Commitment to safeguarding.

## Role specifics and how to apply

This role is a hybrid role, with some attendance at our office in York required and also the need to be the face of Family Fund at meetings or events around the UK. There is scope to work at home too, to create balance. This can be discussed further at interview.

The salary is £94-100k, and the role is full time.

If you would like to apply for this fantastic opportunity, please provide the following with your application:

- An up-to-date CV
- A supporting statement of no more than 2 sides of A4, outlining your experience, motivations and suitability for the role.

All applications are being handled by our recruitment partner, Russam. All applications should be uploaded via the Russam website: [Application link](#)

If you have any difficulty uploading your application or if you would like to have an informal and confidential discussion about the role, please contact Melissa Baxter - Managing Partner, Charities on: [melissa.baxter@russam.co.uk](mailto:melissa.baxter@russam.co.uk) | 07789 985 229

**The closing date for applications:** Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2026

**Initial interviews with Russam:** 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> February 2026

**Interviews with Family Fund:** 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> March

**We can offer flexibility if required; please let us know if you're unable to attend on these dates.**

We commit to inclusion, equality and diversity and we welcome applications from all parts of the community. Family Fund is a Disability Confident Leader. We will invite to interview all disabled applicants who meet the requirements for the role. If you have a disability, and are happy to let us know, please highlight this in your covering letter. We have also signed the Armed Forces Covenant, and we welcome applications from the Armed Forces Community.



#### Find us:

Family Fund  
3 Alpha Court  
Monks Cross Drive  
Huntington  
York YO32 9WN

#### Talk to us:

Telephone: 01904 550055  
Email: [info@familyfund.org.uk](mailto:info@familyfund.org.uk)

#### Community:

[@familyfund  
 \[@familyfund  
 \\[@family\\\\_fund\\]\\(https://www.instagram.com/family\\_fund\\)\]\(https://twitter.com/familyfund\)](https://www.facebook.com/familyfund)



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[www.familyfund.org.uk](http://www.familyfund.org.uk)