



**Family Fund**

Helping disabled children



# Being there for families

Strategy 2023-2028

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1

## Deliver

essential help to families, making day-to-day life easier.



2

## Grow

our support – to do more, for more families.



3

## Partner

with families and others to create positive change



4

## Enable

our team to work at their best.



# Vision, mission and values

## Our vision...

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



# Vision, mission and values

## 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'll do this by providing grants and services that ease daily pressures and improve quality of life. We'll also amplify families' voices on the issues that matter most to them.



## Our values...



drive the way we work. By being **supportive, passionate, connected** and **determined**, we will give the best support to families and one another.



# Foreword

## **We start our new strategy in 2023 – a year which marks the fiftieth anniversary of Family Fund.**

Since its inception, Family Fund has grown to become one of the UK's largest grant-making charities for families raising a disabled or seriously ill child or young person. We are trusted both by families and those who provide us with funding for our ability to get essential support to those who need it most.

As we move into our sixth decade of operation, it is a time to reflect on what the charity has achieved, but also a time to look forward to what we must do for the future.

Over the period of our last strategy, we are proud to have awarded more than half a million grants to families and provided thousands more with vital information and support – yet there is much more to do as the landscape for families and charities becomes increasingly challenging.

The impact of the COVID pandemic resulted in a dramatic increase in the number of families turning to Family Fund for support. This was a challenge that Family Fund rose to meet, with the support of those who provided funding, and our staff who worked tirelessly throughout.



Life has not returned to normal for the families that we support, and the level of need continues to grow. As a result, Family Fund continues to receive significant numbers of applications from families across all parts of the UK.

In fact, as we look ahead to the next five years, the need for the support that Family Fund provides has never been greater. More so as, at the time of writing this strategy, the UK is faced with increased costs and inflation that has reached a rate not seen since 1981.

We already know that households with a disabled child face a higher cost of living and are disproportionately affected. It now seems inevitable that the financial pressures on families will increase even further, as the impact of high food and energy costs, housing costs, and changes to the benefits system continue to make themselves felt across the UK.



**We are committed to raising more funds to be able to meet the needs of children, young people, parents and carers, to whom our support can be a lifeline.**

## Foreword continued...

Now more than ever, it is vital that Family Fund can “be here” for families. In practice, this means continuing to deliver the essential items that families tell us they need to survive and thrive, and offering information and support to help families face the challenges ahead.

But it does not end there. The landscape for charities is changing, and Family Fund will need to change with it.

Over the next five years, Family Fund has ambitions to grow its support to families, and this will be a significant challenge against a backdrop of higher costs and tighter budgets. We know this will be challenging, but we are committed to raising more funds to be able to meet the needs of children, young people, parents and carers, to whom our support can be a lifeline.

Achieving our ambitions will require working closely with our current funders and donors, as well as forging partnerships with new ones, who share the vision that all families raising disabled or seriously ill children should have the same choices, quality of life, opportunities and aspirations as other families. We will also need to ensure our organisation can respond quickly to new challenges and opportunities, whilst meeting the highest environmental, social and governance standards.

In doing this, we will - as ever - keep families right at the heart of everything we do, as we work to ease the present, and shape a bright future.

This strategy is rooted in the hopes and ambitions of all who contributed, and our thanks go to our staff, trustees, funders and sector colleagues - but most of all to our families, for the insight and contribution they provide. The theme of this strategy - the importance of being here with disabled children - echoes throughout, and it is these words that we hold close as we move into the next five years.

For five decades Family Fund has proved it can make a difference to the lives of children and families. Drawing upon our values of “passionate”, “supportive”, “connected” and “determined”, the trustees, senior leadership team and Family Fund’s dedicated staff are absolutely committed to building on that achievement for the next five years and beyond.

**Cheryl Ward, CEO**





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# Context to this strategy



**There are circa 1.1m million families in the UK raising a disabled or seriously ill child or young person. Every family is different, but the common thread uniting them all is the financial impact that disability has on day-to-day life.**

In 2022, our Cost of Caring report presented some stark findings about the financial pressures facing the families raising a disabled or seriously ill child.

Many people are already experiencing poverty and hardship. Others are just getting by, but risk falling into poverty, or even crisis, unless they receive help, or the economic picture significantly changes.

As our report showed, on average, the families who come to us for support live on £17,000 a year, and they have seen their income decrease. More than half of the parents and carers in our research reported cutting back on the size of meals or skipping them completely to provide enough food for their children. A higher proportion than ever said they could not afford to keep their accommodation warm, whilst a staggering nine out of ten told us they were struggling on household bills. The research also showed a picture of rising household debt, and an inability to cope with unexpected expenses, with little or no savings to fall back on.

A tough economic climate affects all families, but it is particularly acute for families raising a disabled child. Not only do they have to pay out for specialist items such as adaptations, sensory items and therapies, but they have to pay more for clothing, food and household goods due to extra wear and tear or special dietary requirements. The amount of time that carers can work is often limited due to their caring responsibilities, so there is little opportunity to improve family income.

In the face of these circumstances, it is no surprise that many families say that the physical and general well-being of their child has declined alongside their own health and well-being.

We have seen the impact of the economic situation at first hand. At the time of publishing this strategy, Family Fund has seen continued demand from families in need of additional support, and a surge in the number of new applicants who are applying for help for the very first time.

The context is challenging and often difficult to comprehend, but over the next five years Family Fund will deliver its mission to improve the day-to-day

lives of low-income families raising a disabled or seriously ill child by focusing on four key themes:

**1**

## **Deliver**

essential help to families, making day-to-day life easier.



**2**

## **Grow**

our support – to do more, for more families.



**3**

## **Partner**

with families and others to create positive change



**4**

## **Enable**

our team to work at their best.



# 1 **Deliver** essential help to families, making day-to-day life easier.



## We will do this by...

- Providing families with grant items and services that make day-to-day life easier
- Making sure that our grant and service offer meets the needs of families, and is inclusive and equitable
- Reaching out to families who are new to our support, raising awareness of the help we offer
- Making it easier and quicker for families to access our support

## Providing families with essential grant items and services to make day-to-day life easier

Families with a disabled child are more likely to experience poverty. We are determined to be here for families, as we have always been, providing the essential items and experiences that no family should have to do without, and the information and practical support that families value.

Quite simply, making grants of essential items such as washing machines, clothing, bedding, furniture, toys, games, and digital devices is what we do - and we know that they make a huge difference to the quality of life for the whole family. We will continue to work with our funders and suppliers to ensure we offer a broad

range of high-quality essential items to low-income families who would not otherwise be able to afford them.

We believe that the opportunity to play, or make memories by taking a break together, is something every family should be able to enjoy – but a break from the day-to-day can be especially important for families raising a disabled or seriously ill child. We will do everything we can to ensure that days out and family breaks remain part of our “essential” offer, so that children and families can enjoy new experiences and have an opportunity to spend quality time together.

Supplementing our grant-making activity, we will continue to offer information and support to families, directing them to help that is relevant

to their needs, and providing practical tools that help families to manage day-to-day practicalities.

**Making sure that our grant and services offer meets the needs of families and is inclusive and equitable**

Family Fund offers a wide range of grant items, and this range has been shaped by families themselves, who tell us what they need.

Over the years, we have seen different requirements emerge in response to changing economic circumstances, as well as changes to the care and support environment. Over the next five years we will continue to work with families to make sure that we have the right offer in place, and that we respond to new requirements when they arise.

We will also do everything we can to ensure that we are inclusive and equitable in the offer we provide, the way we communicate, and the way we operate. In particular, we will enhance our support for people who often experience barriers to accessing services, including applicants with learning difficulties, those who are not online, and where English is not the first language.



## **1 Deliver** Continued...

### **Reaching out to families new to our support, and raising awareness of the help we offer**

Whilst we will continue to provide support for families who need to turn to us more than once, we know that the tough economic climate will mean families who have not previously needed to reach out to us for help may now need to do so, and we want to be here for them.

Over the next five years we will develop our network further, boosting our connections with grass-roots and condition-specific support organisations.

We will use these, together with digital and traditional media, to reach out to new families, ensuring that the breadth of our funding programme and support is fully known, and that new applicants are able to apply.

### **Making it easier and quicker for families to access our support**

In the last few years, Family Fund has developed its digital capability, so that those families who want to apply and communicate online can do so.

We will continue this digital journey by improving the accessibility of our services, allowing families to request services on their choice of channel, and increasing the opportunities for families to do more online, at their own pace and at a time that is convenient for them.

At the same time, we will continue to reduce the time it takes between a family making an application and receiving a grant. To do this, we will work with funders, suppliers and other external partners, to explore where we can use technology to streamline the grant-making journey and make the application experience quicker and easier for families.

## 2 Grow our support – to do more, for more families.



### We will do this by...

- Working in partnership with existing funders to retain and grow financial support for families
- Supporting our trading subsidiary to deliver social value and increase income
- Increasing our funding base through fundraising activities, backed by brand profile and compelling communications
- Improving our ability to respond rapidly to new opportunities, whilst continuing to develop and grow our existing schemes
- Expanding our information and support resources and offering families a gateway to wider assistance
- Developing the breadth of our programme offer
- Developing our approach to volunteering, so we can increase our capacity to help more families

### Working in partnership with our existing funders to retain and grow funding programmes

The funding landscape is changing, resulting in intensified competition for grant funding, a move towards more formalized tendering and contracting arrangements, and even stronger emphasis on providing evidence of positive outcomes and value for money.

Family Fund has well-established relationships with a range of funders including governments, charitable trusts, private donors and corporate funders. We value these relationships, and over the next five years we will deepen them – consolidating our position as the delivery partner of choice for those who align with our purpose and vision.

## 2 **Grow** Continued...

We will do this by delivering high-impact programmes that meet the needs of families to time and target, and by demonstrating the impact that our work has on the day-to-day lives of those who receive support.

### **Supporting our trading subsidiary to deliver social value and increase income**

A key aspect of our delivery is the financial support we receive from Family Fund Business Services (FFBS), our wholly-owned trading subsidiary.

FFBS provides a procurement and fulfilment service to local authorities, charities and others, and gifts the profit from these activities to Family Fund charity. FFBS has an ambitious strategy to grow its business significantly over the next five years.

We will continue to create social value from these funds by using them to make strategic investments and improve our organisational capability and capacity, alongside supporting more families.

### **Increasing our income through fundraising activities, backed by compelling communications**

If we are to achieve our ambition of offering more support to more families in need, we must also continue to build our funding base in other ways.

Over the next five years we will increase the level of fundraising activity – with a particular focus on fostering longer-term, strategic-level and donor relationships.

In support of our fundraising, we will strengthen our brand profile, and create a series of compelling campaigns and funding opportunities for potential donors at all levels to engage with Family Fund and contribute to its activity.

This will include seeking programme funding, but also sponsorship of other core operational activity delivered by Family Fund.

In delivering this work we will aim to ensure that we address imbalances across communities and nations, by actively developing our funding base for use in communities and nations where support is partial or limited.

## Improving our ability to take new funders on board, and respond rapidly to new opportunities

The events of recent years (such as the pandemic, the energy crisis and changes to benefits) have shown that the context for families can change dramatically, and if we are to serve their needs, we must be able to adapt quickly to challenges and opportunities as they arise.

Over the next five years we will build on the investment we have already made in technology to improve our organisational flexibility, creating the adaptable systems and structures we need to be flexible and respond to the changing landscape and needs of families.

## Expanding our information and support resources, and offering families a gateway to wider assistance

Family Fund is in contact with tens of thousands of families every year, so we are well-placed to go beyond the grant, and offer a range of information and support (IaS) resources to help families to access the help they need to deal with day- to-day challenges.



Over the next five years we will:

- Develop our information and support offer because we know that the combination of a grant and IaS offers the best support for families
- Embed IaS across all parts of our organisation, so we can offer help to families at the point of contact - wherever this may be
- Develop strategic partnerships with relevant information and support providers so we join up the support that already exists, and build on our ability to link families to the right help
- Develop our resources in the areas of managing household finances and accessing financial assistance, mental health and well-being and digital inclusion - and in areas that support our grant-making

## 2 **Grow** Continued...

- Structure and develop our team to allow us to embed a higher level of tailored helpline support to families who would benefit from a more personalized approach.

### **Developing the breadth of our programme offer**

Many people with a disability or serious illness continue to need help throughout their lives, yet we know that many forms of support fall away when a young person reaches the age of 18.

Your Opportunity is Family Fund's flagship programme to support young people with a disability or serious illness, who are aged 18-24. Over the next five years we are committed to raising the profile of this programme and developing it further, so that we can reduce the support gap for more young people and help them to achieve their own aims and ambitions.

Over the course of this strategy we will also look at gaps in support, and – with the support of relevant funders and donors - develop our programme offer further to meet those needs.

### **Developing our approach to volunteering so we can increase our capacity to help more families**

Over the next five years, we will develop a volunteering framework that sets out how Family Fund will engage, support and utilize volunteers across all relevant areas of our work.

We will continue to seek family volunteers to share their experiences as part of research, public affairs and promotional work.

We will build on opportunities for families to participate in continuous improvement activities, so that we design and develop our services with the participation of those who use them.

In addition, we recognise that volunteers within the workforce can bring additional skills and knowledge, and can be a source of new thinking and ideas.

With this in mind, we will shape a volunteer offer for those who would like to play an active role in our operations, working alongside our established teams.



We will build on opportunities for families to participate in continuous improvement activities, so that we design and develop our services with the participation of those who use them.

### **3** Partner with families and others to create positive change



#### **We will do this by...**

- Engaging with families to understand their experiences, challenges and needs - keeping them at the heart of what we do
- Helping families to have a voice on the matters that are important to them
- Developing partnerships and affiliations with other organisations, so we can join-up support, and influence the future support landscape

#### **Engaging with families to understand their experiences, challenges and needs**

Families have always been, and will continue to be, at the heart of everything we do at Family Fund. To provide the best support we can, it is vital to engage with families to understand their experience of our service, but also their wider experiences of raising a disabled or seriously ill child or young person.

Using a range of practical mechanisms, we will continue to seek feedback from families and involve them in shaping what we deliver, and the way we deliver it.

We will continue to evaluate our work, the impact it makes, and the outcomes it generates, so we can understand



“what works” for families and keep improving and evolving our service. We will also continue to conduct, publish and promote research, to highlight the experiences of families, the challenges they face, and the support they need.

## Helping families to have a voice on the issues that matter to them

The direct contact we have with thousands of families, together with the evaluation and research we produce, means we are well placed to act as an “insightful friend” to policy-makers, funders and partners who operate in the disability space.

We will continue to act as advocates for families and their needs, but we also know that the people who speak most powerfully about raising a disabled or seriously ill child are parents, carers, and children and young people themselves.

We will seek out opportunities for families, children and young people to engage directly with policy and decision-makers, through face-to-face meetings, consultation responses and events, so that we can broker a better understanding of families’ support needs amongst those in a position to help.

Through our wider communications we will also help to raise the general level of awareness of the lived experience of families raising a disabled or seriously ill child or young person.

## Developing partnerships and affiliations with other organisations

Family Fund already engages with a broad range of organisations which provide support across issues such as disability, health and well-being, housing and protected characteristics.

We will continue to participate in these networks so we can reach out to families across diverse communities, understand where families’ needs intersect, and work collaboratively to create new and effective solutions.

Over the next five years we will develop our strategic partnerships with a number of key organisations to explore where and how we can join-up our services to provide a more cohesive offer to families.

Where policy action is needed, we will join with others to provide the evidence- base for change, and campaign for the support that families raising a disabled child need to reduce the gap in income and opportunities.

## 4 Enable our team to work at their best.



### We will do this by...

- Being a great place to work for great people
- Using technology to drive efficiency and free up time and resources to do more for families
- Horizon scanning and preparing for future challenges
- Setting the right example in how we work – in governance, the environment, social value, and equity, diversity and inclusion

### Being a great place to work for great people

We believe that our people really are our greatest asset, so we will build on our People Strategy to make sure we are a great place to work for great people. This will involve:

- Ensuring we provide reward that recognizes the contribution of our people, is appropriate to our sector, and which allows us to recruit and retain the skills we need
- Refining our working model, so we strike the best balance between office and home working, and people have the tools they need to work productively regardless of location
- Continuing to mature as a learning organisation, with a particular focus on developing the skills of our team so that we can work effectively across functions and embrace technology.
- Building a diverse and inclusive culture across our organisation, where people feel safe to be themselves.
- Continuing to provide supported internships for young people with a disability, and expanding our activity as a Disability Confident Employer



## Using technology to drive efficiency

In our last strategy, the focus was on adopting technologies to improve the grant-making process in collaboration with our families, and we have already achieved a great deal in this area of work. Over the next five years we will take this further.

We will also focus on our support teams, and how we can use technology to drive efficiency throughout our organisation, freeing up time and resources to do more for families.



## Horizon-scanning and preparing for future challenges

We recognise that we work in a complex and ever-changing environment, and that we need to adapt to these changes, and make the most of the opportunities they present.

Over the next five years we will continue to look at emerging trends and best practice, so we can evolve and improve our service by bringing new ideas, techniques and technologies to Family Fund.

## 4 Enable Continued...

### Setting the right example

As a charity, we want to operate in a way that respects others, and that provides assurance to our team, our families and our funders, as well as the wider community.

In our organisation and in our work, we commit to seeing people how they see themselves, so that we engage, communicate and support people in a way that respects diversity.

We already have strong governance and assurance structures in place, but we will continue to strengthen these aspects of our work over the next five years, ensuring that we meet high standards of practice across all aspects of our operations.

Taking the United Nations' sustainable development goals as our guide, we will develop our Environmental Social Governance (ESG) strategy and strengthen our commitment to sustainability by working to achieve PAS 2060 certification.

We will also work to achieve other relevant accreditations as evidence of our ambition to provide the best possible service to those we support.





# Family Fund

Helping disabled children

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