



“I suppose, most of all, they just gave me the confidence to navigate this on my own.”

A parent carer



25 years supporting families with disabled children and young people in Sussex

Impact Report 2021-22



“Thank you so much. Just being heard and listened to, properly validated and knowing we can call and get real, tangible help is incredible.”

Welcome to a special 25th anniversary edition of our impact report

In this report we share our key achievements across 25 years' supporting families with disabled children in Sussex, as well as the more usual financial year reporting.

We asked young people we have helped, who are also turning 25 this year, what impact Amaze has had on their lives; we dug deep into 25 years' worth of outcomes reporting to present our lifetime's impact in numbers; we trawled our archives to create a timeline of achievements and dug out pictures from when we were all younger. We hope this labour of love conveys just how much Amaze has to be proud of so far, and how much we might achieve in the future.

Financial year 2021-22

The Covid-19 pandemic continues to present challenges to our work and the people we support. In May 2022, we carried out a rapid evaluation of the pandemic's impact on parent carers for NHS England, which showed that the emotional health and wellbeing of all members of the family - disabled children, their parent carers and siblings - has worsened. Added to this, national research by the Disabled Children's Partnership reported families 'feeling abandoned' - with many vital services reducing or stopping

altogether in 2020, then being slow to return in 2021.

Our focus throughout has been to let families know we are there for them and continue to offer services, albeit sometimes in different ways.

High quality, impartial, information, advice and support remains the bedrock of our service. This year our SENDIASS (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Information, Advice and Support) advice line dealt with 3,792 enquiries (up 15% on the previous year), supporting 2,546 individuals (up 31%). We ran 29 free workshops and gave one to one advice and support to 284 parent carers or young people who face additional challenges (up 25%). These positive-looking numbers hide a less positive truth: there are many more families needing in-depth casework than we have the funding or capacity to support.

Knowing how isolated many parent carers were at the start of the year, we prioritised expanding our Face 2 Face support groups, welcoming 191 new parent carers into this befriending service. We also ran 21 community outreach partnership coffee mornings. Our WhatsApp groups, e-newsletters and social media channels also help parent carers to feel part of an inclusive community.

Requests for help with disability benefits rose again. We helped 488 families apply for (or appeal) claims for Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence



November 1997

- Amaze is founded by a group of parent carers in Brighton and Hove to support other parent carers through the challenges of bringing up a child with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)

November 1997

- Amaze invited to become the **Parent Partnership Service** for Brighton & Hove
- Amaze Helpline opens **Mon to Thurs** mornings, and we recruit **Independent Parental Supporter** volunteers (named persons)

January 1998

- Amaze produce first printed **Out of Amaze** newsletter
- First edition of **Through The Maze** handbook for parent carers published



Payment (up 23%). With more families falling into financial hardship as the cost-of-living crisis deepens, and parent carers of seriously ill children especially impacted by rising energy costs, this service is more important than ever.

Our Amazing Futures peer support and activity groups empower young people with SEND to improve their knowledge, wellbeing and resilience. This year we ran 261 activity sessions and 127 young people were supported by 34 other young people who we trained as peer supporters. Meanwhile, our careers service advised young people on employment and training, independent living and life skills.

We are developing opportunities for young people with SEND to build their confidence and skills to participate in decisions about Amaze services and strategies. In 2022/23, this voice work will focus on responding to rising mental health needs in young people.

We increased the number of children and young people on the Compass Disability Register Brighton & Hove, giving 2,200 families free or discounted entry at many local, inclusive leisure opportunities. Disappointingly, West Sussex County Council decided to take their register back

'in-house' in March 2022, ending our running the Compass West Sussex Register.

From our strategic review at the start of 2021, we developed a new set of Strategic Principles, incorporating our values, to guide our work and support our decision making to 2025. Within this new plan we made a commitment to develop our equalities, diversity and inclusion work - beginning with an anti-racism project. We published a set of commitments to becoming an anti-racist organisation and strove to better understand the barriers some Black, Asian and minoritised ethnic families might face accessing our services, and those of others. We conducted whole-staff training and improved the triage process when someone first tries to access our help.

In August 2022, we bid farewell to our CEO of 13 years, Rachel Travers. We are grateful to Rachel for her committed leadership and we will continue to build on the strong foundations she established. We were fortunate to enter 2022-23 in a secure financial position, thanks to Covid-related grant funding and the sustained support of our statutory partners. But as costs and demand for our services skyrocket, it remains a priority to diversify our income streams and develop our partnership working. This will help us continue to provide the best support we can to SEND families in Sussex.

Sally Polanski (CEO) & Hugh Clench (Chair of Trustees)



February 1998

- First Amaze course for parent carers (**Everyday Problems in Childhood**)

June 1998

- First **Brighton & Hove SEN parent forum** met with parent reps from Amaze, the council and schools

April 1999

- '**What Next?**' conference on transition to adulthood

November 1999

- Amaze registered as a **charity**

November 1999

- First **DLA workshop** delivered by **Lizzie Batten**
- First **DLA volunteers** recruited to help with DLA claims



Andre

“When I first got involved with Amaze I was very isolated. I wanted to make friends but I didn’t really know how, and I found it very hard to engage in those sorts of situations, like activities, or even general communication really.”

“The thing that was most difficult for me at that time was the fact that I found it hard to engage with social situations, meaning that it was hard to make friends. Having trouble communicating meant that I never really got the chance to really get to know anyone, or anything like that. So I really

didn’t have anyone who knew me very well. So even though people would say ‘Hi’, I’d never really be able to make friends at the time.

“Amaze helped me - or is helping me - by making sure that I was getting better at getting into those social situations and now I can communicate very well with people. Even though I still get anxious, I can at least regulate it a little bit better, and I can talk to people now and make friends a lot easier than I used to.

“Amaze also helped me when I was back in school with PIP, DLA, and also the EHCP meetings, which continued into when I was at college. Now I’m in my gap year it’s more about the activity sessions and the general social activities with the friends, playing football, and stuff like that.

“Without Amaze I’d never have got to that level of ability to communicate with the people, and I’d never have been brave enough to go up and make friends. I’d just be very different to what I am now, in a very big way I’d say.”



November 2000

- Amaze launches **workshops** about communicating with disabled children
- Amaze supports parents to comment on draft **SEN** code of practice

April 2001

- Through the NEXT Maze** handbook for the transition years first published
- First **AGM** as a charity

November 2001

- Amaze** takes over managing Brighton & Hove City Council’s children’s **Disability Register**

February 2003

- Compass Card** developed, a free leisure card discount scheme to incentivise registrations

November 2003

- Amaze** publishes first set of **11 fact sheets**

Debbie and Zoe

“Zoe has a very rare genetic syndrome called Glass syndrome, that affects her globally. She’s got severe learning disabilities, she doesn’t have any speech, and she has some behavioural difficulties too, so she’s quite complex but a delight!”

“We first realised that Zoe had something different about her when she was very small, about a year old. Life was really hard for us at the time. Our older daughter wasn’t yet two, they were both in nappies and Zoe was sick all the time - she didn’t walk, didn’t talk, and she was quite challenging in her behaviour.”

“When Zoe was about 18 months old, our health visitor gave me Amaze’s handbook and told me to contact them, so I did. The first person that worked with me was Lizzie and she got me DLA for Zoe.”

“Quite soon, Gemma was just starting school, and I had multiple appointments at the children’s hospital, and Amaze were great with just helping me navigate through that. They also helped me think about how to manage the statementing process, and again when that changed to an EHC plan.”

“Later on, when Zoe was a little bit older, around 16, Sally from Amaze worked with Zoe to make sure that her voice was heard in the EHC process, and she was brilliant with her. Because Zoe can’t speak that’s quite challenging, so Sally made sure that her voice was heard through pictures, and she attended the EHC meeting with us and helped Zoe to say what she wanted.”

“Amaze has helped us over the years as Zoe has changed, moved on from being a child to an adult. They helped us think about where she might live, and which college she might go to, and just how to navigate the adult world. And Sue was brilliant with the courses that she led, so I learned a lot from her.”

“Without Amaze, I don’t know where I’d be. I wouldn’t have got DLA, I wouldn’t have got PIP. I wouldn’t have been able to challenge a DLA decision without Lizzie’s help, and they were really brilliant, really supportive all the way through.”

“I suppose, most of all, they just gave me the confidence to navigate this on my own.”



March 2004

- ▶ Autism friendly cinema club added to Compass Card

June 2004

- ▶ Pilot project to reduce bullying around SEND in schools

November 2004

- ▶ Amaze gets involved in Transition Forum and Learning Disability Partnerships

January 2005

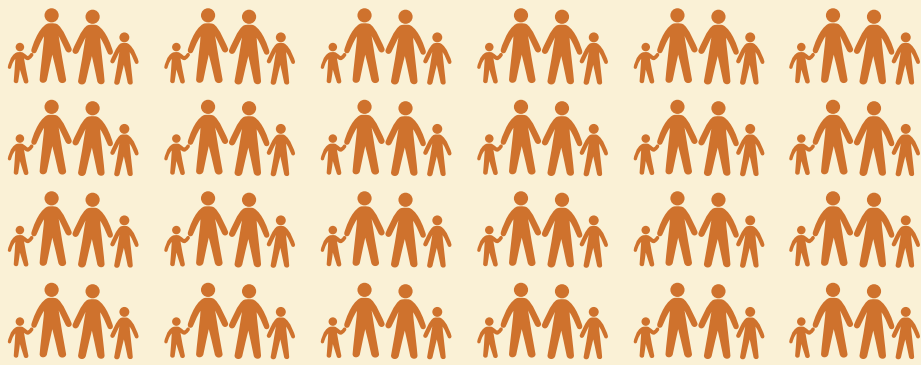
- ▶ Evening helpline piloted

June 2005

- ▶ Parents with Teens group launched
- ▶ New programme of 'Insiders' Guide' training courses, co-delivered by parent carers, covering different stages of the parent carer journey

Our Amazing impact - 25 years in numbers

OVER **25,000** FAMILIES SUPPORTED IN **25 YEARS**



223

PARENT CARERS MATCHED WITH BEFRIENDERS (SINCE 2017)

391 PARENT CARERS ATTENDED OUR FACE 2 FACE SUPPORT GROUPS



53,000

PRINTED NEWSLETTERS POSTED OUT (SINCE 2008)



85,000

NEWSLETTERS SENT VIA EMAIL (SINCE 2008)



“Lyra explained the system to me and explained what each step would be and what I needed to do. Without her I would’ve given up and that’s not fair. I’d just like to add that her professionalism and her persistence is amazing. Her phone manner and emails are always professional and written in plain English so that I could understand it. I honestly don’t know what I would’ve done without Amaze and you’ve actually saved me a few times, because each of my children all have a illness and disability.”

802

YOUNG PEOPLE SUPPORTED VIA AMAZING FUTURES (SINCE MARCH 2017)



66,000

CALLS HANDLED BY THE **ADVICE LINE**



154,000

WEBSITE USERS (SINCE APRIL 2017)



20,500

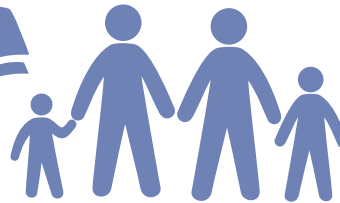
SUCCESSFUL **COMPASS CARD** APPLICATIONS (SINCE 2002)

5,300

BENEFITS CLAIMS

£55 MILLION

IN **DISABILITY BENEFITS** OBTAINED BY FAMILIES SUPPORTED BY OUR **BENEFITS ADVICE SERVICE** OVER 25 YEARS



458

YOUNG PEOPLE BENEFITED FROM **CAREERS ADVICE** (SINCE MARCH 2019)



DISCLAIMER Over 25 years, the way we have recorded our impact has naturally changed. This made gathering these statistics a complex patchwork of reporting, research and some estimation based on previous or average data, for example. They are not as definitive as the data we provide annually, from our database recording since 2015, but they are the most accurate means by which we can tell the story of Amaze's impact since 1997. Figures for any specific year can be requested via info@amazesussex.org.uk



“Just wanted to say a big thank you for all your help, especially through the pandemic. It’s really helped me get through these tough times knowing you’re there and receiving regular updates from you.”

“Being dyslexic means that these [DLA] forms take hours longer than they should and I know that your service will mean getting access to funding and support faster for my family. That’s worth its weight in gold.”



Billie

“My mum works in a special school and a couple of the students at the school use Amaze, so she got in contact. At the time, I didn’t really have friends who had autism, or any SEND needs. I was very lonely. My mental health was really bad and I just wasn’t enjoying the day to day.”

“Thanks to Amazing Futures in East Sussex, I’ve made some long-lasting friends, I would say. I finally feel like I’m accepted in a group, because I always felt like I was the outsider before. And it really helped with my mental health. I’m a lot happier now.”

“If I hadn’t heard about Amaze I reckon I’d still be in quite a bad place.”

Maia

“I first heard about Amaze via Facebook. At the time I was quite depressed and suffering from anxiety.”

“Amaze has helped me to socialise and be more independent. My life is good now. I’m more independent, and less depressed and less anxious.”

“Without Amaze I probably wouldn’t be here if I’m honest.”



November 2006

- Amaze website launched

February 2007

- Amaze launches Triple P courses for parents of children with SEND, on behalf of Brighton & Hove City Council

November 2007

- Amaze celebrates 10th birthday

2008

- Amaze helps set up Brighton & Hove’s parent carer forum the Parent Carers’ Council

November 2009

- Parent Carers’ Council official launch with first PaCC awards

February 2010

- Amaze has first patrons Angela Pell and Henry Normal



Fahmina

“Amaze first got involved in my life in 2008. I had really difficult times in my mainstream primary school, because I was always behind in every subject. I couldn’t read or write at all. I didn’t have any friends and I was really lonely.

“My headteacher and a few other teachers back then noticed my difficulties and tried to help me out at times, like getting

one to one support, but it wasn’t enough. I was recommended to move into a special needs school, and my primary school then introduced me to Lizzie at Amaze.

“Lizzie supported me and my parents in claiming DLA and helped with the move to special school. In my teens, Sue, who runs the peer groups helped me with my confidence and encouraged me in volunteering and Sally helped me with my EHCP. She also helped me with filling forms such as my Railcard and Disabled Bus Pass.

“From Amaze I’ve also learned about other communities to join such as Speak Out and Grace Eyre. I’ve got involved with more groups that are for people with learning disabilities or who are autistic.

“At my secondary special needs school and at my college, I made a few good friends. I also made friends with other young people by attending peer groups at Amaze.

“I’m now living independently. I get some support from Adult Social Services and I will be joining Mencap. I’m in a relationship with my boyfriend, and we’ve been together for four years. We met through a mutual friend.

“I honestly think that if I didn’t have Amaze then my life would be very different, in a negative way, and I really would struggle with things. I’m really grateful that I know Amaze, and that I’m really lucky that I’ve had them as my supporters.”

“I honestly think that if I didn’t have Amaze then my life would be very different, in a negative way, and I really would struggle with things.”



June 2010

- ▶ First **BIG CHEER for Amaze** stand up comedy night organised with help from our patrons

July 2010

- ▶ **Compass Card** activities launched



2011

- ▶ **Carers Card** launched

February 2013

- ▶ Amaze win the **Biggest Impact** award at the inaugural **CVSF Sector Stars Awards**



April 2013

- ▶ Amaze develops advice about **Personal Independence Payment (PIP)**

June 2013

- ▶ **Sport England** funds six new **Compass Card Activities** in partnership with local leisure organisations

Our influence

Amaze works closely with and supports the work of the three parent carer forums in Sussex, particularly around engaging families in the planning and design of health services. Our hosting arrangements with East Sussex Parent Carer Forum (ESPCF) and the Brighton & Hove Parent Carers' Council (PaCC) mean the independent voices of parents can be heard effectively in co-production with the people who plan services.

Both forums continue to grow in strength and size, with memberships increasing by the end of March 2022 to 525 (ESPCF) and 513 (PaCC) respectively. The forums have reps who attend and feed into many partnerships and projects - working collaboratively to identify improvements to services and provide constructive challenge to partners. It has been especially helpful to call upon this expertise in the set-up of our new NDP Family Training and Navigation Service.

Thanks to the generous participation of parent carers and young people, we have fed into a steady stream of national consultations this year, such as the Green Paper SEND Review. In February and March 2022, we carried out a rapid evaluation of the pandemic on parent carers for NHS England, which showed that carers continue to feel exhausted, and more anxious and stressed than pre-pandemic. Disabled children have seen their conditions worsen, some needs have become more complex; and delays in assessments mean some needs have not been identified.



We are an active member of the Disabled Children's Partnership, feeding into their #LeftinLockdown campaign, for example, that exposed the disproportionate impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on disabled children and their families, and called for targeted recovery policies. More recently, we have joined with other disability charities in calling on the government to help families with disabled children with their extra energy costs and soaring household bills as a result of the cost-of-living crisis.

There's no space here to list all the organisations we partner with to help deliver our services across Brighton & Hove and East Sussex, but we're especially grateful to those who help us reach diverse communities and share their specialist knowledge to enhance support available to SEND families. We are enriched and strengthened by their collaboration and commitment.



July 2013

- Amaze launch outreach coffee mornings in Moulsecoomb then Hangleton & Knoll in partnership with TDC and H&K Project

October 2013

- Amaze partners with Grace Eyre to provide travel training for young people with learning disabilities

December 2013

- Robert Smith auctions guitar and raises 22k for Amaze

April 2014

- Amaze trains GPs on the experience of parent carers

May 2014

- Amaze wins GSK Health Impact award for our services for parent carers

25 years of volunteers

Over the last 25 years, hundreds of local people have volunteered with Amaze, in many different roles, some long term, some for just a day.

Back in 1997 our first volunteers came on board to help parents with meetings at school and paperwork around **Statements of SEN**, as they were called then. We still have a small but special group of people doing that role. The second key volunteer team we established was to help with **Disability Living Allowance** claims. We've been blessed with some brilliant **office volunteers** over the years too, but we've needed these less as everything became more digital. We do miss those biscuit-fuelled mornings stuffing newsletters into envelopes! Thankfully, some volunteering



staples never change, cheering at fundraising events like the Marathon for one.

Amaze can only run as a charity because we have had generations of **volunteer trustees** who have taken responsibility for the charity and made up our management committee. And we have relied on so many parents (and more recently young people) to represent the voice of their community by volunteering to share their experiences, taking part in consultations and speaking up at meetings.

Over the years, most of our volunteers have been parents or others with **lived experience**, and this has immeasurably enriched our work. Our volunteers tell us how rewarding it has been for them too and we're delighted that volunteering with Amaze has often been a pathway to employment or career change.

Around 150 people volunteered with us in 2021/22. Our biggest group of active volunteers are our peer supporters and befrienders; the 60 parent carers and young people who connect with others, one to one or in groups, to reduce isolation and help each other flourish.

An enormous thank you to everyone who has given their time and energy to contribute to Amaze's work over the last 25 years.



June 2014

- Amaze wins **Independent Support** contract for **West Sussex** and **Brighton & Hove** to help families transition from statements to new **Education, Health & Care (EHC)** plans.

September 2014

- Charitable objectives** changed to work across **Sussex** and directly with **young people** aged up to **25**, **employing** our first **young person with SEND** to help us develop new services
- Annabel Giles** wins **25k** for Amaze on **The Chase**

February 2015

- Compass Card** extended to **young people** up to **25**
- Amaze begins to offer **Independent Support** for **parent carers** and **young people** up to **25**



Our funders and supporters

Amaze is fortunate to have been sustained by a huge range of supporters and funders since we started out as a small charity for parent carers in Brighton & Hove 25 years ago.

We still receive the majority of our income from statutory partners, with a combination of contracts and grants from Brighton & Hove City Council, East Sussex County Council, NHS Brighton & Hove and NHS East Sussex Clinical Commissioning Groups, Sussex NHS and Department for Education funding a bedrock of core services that adapt and grow to meet the priorities of our families and partners.

Alongside our core funders, we have also enjoyed the longstanding support of a number of trusts and foundations. For example, Sussex Community Foundation was one of the first funders of **Amazing Futures**, our peer support project for young people. With the evidence we collated for them about the project's impact, we were able to secure long-term investment and embed it into our core services. Another key trust supporter, the Henry Smith Charity, has been the main funder of our benefits advice

project over many years. Their funding has enabled us to expand the service into East Sussex and reach many more families through our tailored approach, providing workshops and self-service resources for more resilient families, and intensive support for disadvantaged families.

But it's not just organisations who have kept us going. Ordinary people (and a few famous ones too) have run marathons, jumped out of planes, swum great distances, put on concerts, come to our comedy nights, sold stuff, made cakes or just dug into their pockets to donate. Some of our most memorable fundraisers and events are pictured here but every single one of our supporters has helped us make a difference to local families with disabled children.

In the last two years, like many charities, Amaze's income has been hit hard by Covid-19, with fundraising from events and corporates virtually ceasing overnight during the first lockdown. Whilst we are delighted to have resumed our unrestricted fundraising programme, including our flagship **Big Cheer** comedy night, we are now also focusing on increasing Amaze's profile with the wider general public and building regular giving from individuals. This will help us plan for the future and maximise our impact.



June 2015

- Amaze extends advice services to young people with SEND up to 25

October 2015

- Helpline now open on Fridays (five days)

October 2015

- Julia Donaldson becomes patron
- Parent Partnership replaced by SEND Information Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS) as part of Children & Families Act

February 2016

- Compass Card Activities end or continue via other providers

April 2016

- Compass Card West Sussex launches

Accounts

Amaze Brighton & Hove (a company limited by guarantee)

Statement of Financial Activities (incorporating an income and expenditure account) for year ended 31 March 2022

	Unrestricted funds (£)	Restricted funds (£)	2022 Total funds (£)	2021 Total funds (£)
INCOME & ENDOWMENTS FROM				
Donations and legacies	95,523	89,077	184,600	311,756
Charitable activities				
Grants	624,114	112,083	754,197	578,246
Services	261,925	-	261,925	283,054
Investment income	495	-	495	926
Other income	19,442	-	19,442	36,829
Total	1,019,499	201,160	1,220,659	1,210,811
EXPENDITURE ON				
Raising funds	60,393	-	60,393	69,943
Charitable activities				
Staff costs	740,611	142,620	883,231	998,247
Property costs	21,099	12,666	33,765	11,773
Administrative costs	72,353	18,332	90,685	28,129
Other costs	14,404	28,004	42,408	45,375
Total	908,860	201,622	1,110,177	1,153,467
NET INCOME	110,639	(462)	110,177	57,344
RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS				
Total funds brought forward	572,099	462	572,561	515,217
TOTAL FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD	682,738	-	682,738	572,561

We ended the year in a robust financial position which has enabled us to designate some of our reserves to fulfil projects within our strategic plan, such as upgrading some of our systems and developing our services for young people.

For a full version of our annual audited accounts or to discuss our finances, please contact Zoe our Resources Manager.

Thank you

We would like to thank all the agencies, organisations and individuals who helped to fund us in 2021/22.

Statutory funders

Brighton & Hove City Council, East Sussex County Council, West Sussex County Council, NHS Brighton & Hove Clinical Commissioning Group, NHS East Sussex Clinical Commissioning Group, Council for Disabled Children, Department for Education.

Grant funders

BBC Children in Need, The Blagrove Trust, The Chalk Cliff Trust, Ernest Kleinwort Charitable Trust, Garfield Weston Foundation, Mrs A Lacy-Tate Trust, Noel Bennett Fund, Pears Foundation, Sussex Learning Network, Tallulah Lewis Foundation.

Supporters

Thank you, too, to all our wonderful individual, company and community supporters, including our runners, cyclists and swimmers. Special mentions to the Grand Hotel, Waitrose, Patrick Moorhead Antiques Ltd and the Longman of Wilmington Pub.



June 2016

- ▶ PQASSO Mark awarded by NCVO
- ▶ We develop 40 new fact sheets in partnership with Reaching Families, West Sussex
- ▶ Independent Support extends into East Sussex

March 2017

- ▶ 'Amazing Futures' service launched to support young people with SEND aged 14-25, with all activities co-planned and co-delivered with young people

July 2017

- ▶ Amaze launches Face 2 Face peer support befriending and groups for parent carers

Eliph

"I have autism, multiple health problems and mild learning difficulties.

"I was first involved with Amaze when I was about 11, when I was diagnosed with Chronic Fatigue Syndrome. I was really unwell. I think my doctor said to apply for PIP, so I first got involved with the benefits side when I had help to do a PIP claim.

"As a teenager it was quite tricky, because I'd been at school and college and hadn't done that well because of my health problems, and I was really isolated after finishing college. I was trying to do adult education stuff and it wasn't really a good fit for me. And I just couldn't find any volunteering that would call me back. I would go into charity shops after making appointments with the managers, and it was really disheartening. I feel like a lot of places don't want to let people with disabilities volunteer.

"I was really low and didn't have that many employability skills, then I got involved with Amazing Futures. When I was about 21,



I applied for the Amazing Futures internship role and I didn't get it, but I started volunteering, which was really good and helped my confidence. And eventually I did get the internship which really helped me a lot.

"I got a lot from volunteering, which I still do. I've really improved my speaking skills and writing. And doing the internship massively improved my confidence. Eventually I got onto a foundation degree while I was working at Amaze, and I was able to go to university, which I'm doing now.

"Without Amaze, I think I'd probably still be living at home with my parents. I probably wouldn't be doing that much. I'd definitely be a lot more down."

"I loved being a Peer Supporter for the Amazing Futures project. Not only was it rewarding to volunteer in the community, but it was also very beneficial for me too. I gained a lot of confidence, made some lovely friends and it gave me lots of valuable experience and transferable skills. Lots of young people in their 20s have a hard time finding jobs because employers tend to favour previous work experience over educational qualifications. Because of my volunteer work, my CV was solid and it allowed me to gain many employment opportunities!"



September 2017

- Amaze SENDIASS service expands into East Sussex

November 2017

- Amaze celebrates its 20th Birthday

March 2018

- DLA and PIP advice extended to East Sussex

November 2018

- Amazing Futures East Sussex is launched

March 2019

- Looking Forward (later Amazing Futures careers) careers support for young people up to 25 launched

June 2019

- Face 2 Face peer support pilots in East Sussex

Looking ahead

This year, we plan to expand and improve our **SEND information and advice** resources (including our website) to enable more families to help themselves to the information they need.

Having secured a new three-year **SENDIASS** contract from Brighton & Hove and East Sussex councils, we will continue to provide our advice line, workshops and some limited one to one casework to parent carers or young people who face additional challenges. Sadly, there are many more families needing this kind of in-depth casework than our resources and funding can support. We have, however, developed an additional navigation and training service for families with children on the neurodevelopmental pathway for conditions like autism and ADHD. The **NDP Family Training and Navigation Service** is now available across Brighton & Hove and East Sussex and in 2022/23 we will be developing more NDP resources, training and support groups.

SEND families falling into financial hardship as the cost-of-living crisis deepens is a stark reality. Our disability benefits service is more important than ever. We are updating our written **DLA** and **PIP** resources whilst continuing to provide workshops for everyone, targeted resources for others and one-to-one support for those families with additional challenges.

We'll continue to address the isolation parent carers of disabled children can often feel by growing our **Face 2 Face** befriending and groups across Sussex. We are currently

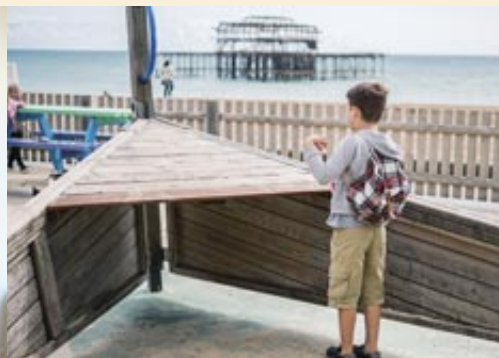
“I just wanted to express my thanks for the input you made at the recent annual review for Joe. Your calm, reasonable and supportive approach truly helped this situation enormously, so thank you very much.”

recruiting and training more befrienders and we are setting up new groups in **Hailsham, Uckfield, Lewes** and beyond.

The case studies in this report reveal just how significant an impact our **Amazing Futures** groups have on the lives and wellbeing of local young people with SEND. This coming year, **Amazing Futures** will have a greater focus on mental health and wellbeing, in response to the rise in mental health issues since the pandemic. We are developing counselling services and making sure we better capture the feelings and opinions of our young people through new **Youth Voice** groups.

The **Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion** work we began in 2021 will expand to focus on neurodiversity and gender this year. We are also building the needs of carers into our working practices more robustly. Staff will all complete a **Carers' Passport** so we can make sure work is working for our team, many of whom are parent carers of disabled children.

With recent funding successes including Covid-related grants and renewed statutory funding, we are fortunate to be entering 2022/23 in a secure financial position. But as costs and demand for our services skyrocket, it's vital we diversify our income streams and further develop our partnership working, to ensure we can continue to provide vital support to SEND families in Sussex.



2020

- In response to the pandemic, we rapidly created **SEND-specific coronavirus online advice** pages, which have over 20,000 page views during the year

2021

- **NDP Family Training and Navigation Service** launches in **Brighton & Hove** to support families with children and young people on the neurodevelopmental pathway

July 2022

- **NDP service** extends to **East Sussex**

September 2022

- **Amaze** secures contract to continue to provide **SENDIASS** in **Brighton & Hove** and **East Sussex** for another three years



Thank you

Our staff and volunteers

The work described in this report is made possible by our incredible staff team who continue to go above and beyond, many of whom are also caring for a disabled child at home.

Amaze is also supported by a large family of volunteers who give us their experience, expertise and commitment for free. Though we cannot thank all our volunteers individually here, we're truly grateful.

Our patrons

Angela Barnes, Julia Donaldson, Annabel Giles, Henry Normal, Angela Pell, Joe Wilkinson.

Our trustees

Hugh Clench (Chair), Debby Norris (Treasurer), Dan Barfoot, Shelley Bennett, Siobhan Cox, Moe Hamdheidari, Sally Howell, Fungai Murau, Debbie Tuesley, Alison Plant.

Our contacts

📞 Advice line: 01273 772289
✉️ sendiass@amazesussex.org.uk

📞 Office: 01273 234020
✉️ info@amazesussex.org.uk
🌐 amazesussex.org.uk

📘 AmazeinSussex
🐦 @AmazeSussex
📺 "Amaze Sussex"
📷 amazesussex



Amaze, Community Base,
113 Queens Road, Brighton, BN1 3XG

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