



For disabled children
and young people in Sussex

Impact Report 2022-23



“This can feel like a lonely journey. It’s so important to feel there is support out there and people who understand and care.”

Welcome

We have enjoyed celebrating Amaze’s 25th year during 2022-23 but it has been busier than ever, with the families we support facing ever more challenges. The cost-of-living crisis has led to increased pressure on all of Amaze’s services. Families on low incomes are disproportionately affected when they spend a larger percentage of their income on energy and food. Many are experiencing increasing complexity of need, including worsening mental health, and growing gaps in the education, health and care system, so are turning to Amaze for support in ever greater numbers.

“I may not get the outcome I want, but having the right support, information and guidance takes the sting out of the system.”

This in turn is impacting our staff and volunteers for whom we are having to provide additional training and support. We have an Amaze-ing team of over 50 paid staff and double that as volunteers, united by their shared ambition to provide the best support they can to local families and our organisational values. Over half of our staff are parent carers of children and young people with SEND and more than a third have disabilities themselves, plus we were thrilled this year to employ

more young people than ever before in our expanded youth team. This lived experience helps ensure we understand how to support families in the local area.

Parent carers and children and young people with additional needs are at the heart of all that we do, and peer-led support helps us make the best use of resources and work together with families. Increased investment by NHS Sussex has enabled us to achieve one of our key strategic goals this year, to expand our peer support groups for parent carers (**Face 2 Face**) and young people (**Amazing Futures**), with over 20 groups meeting regularly across Brighton & Hove and East Sussex.

We’ve offered more befriending, new one-to-one support around emotional wellbeing and extended our neurodevelopmental pathway (NDP) family navigation, training and support service into East Sussex.

“Before Amaze, I felt so alone like my world was crumbling. Since meeting Kerry and everyone they helped me understand that I wasn’t on my own and the way I was feeling was okay. Having the befriending service is amazing, I now smile for real.”



Demand on our core information and advice service (**SENDIASS**) increased by 21% (with a record 4586 enquiries). We now encourage parent carers to register online and provide us with all the information we need to offer support. We are also trying to reach as many families as we can through workshops and training. In DLA/PIP Benefits Advice alone we ran 17 workshops reaching 269 parent carers. Our Compass Card continues to offer fabulous leisure discounts to 2,236 children and young people on the Brighton & Hove Disability Register. Careers information, advice and guidance also continues to be available helping 100+ young people in working towards their education, volunteering and employment goals.

As this report goes to print, we are reviewing our 2021-25 strategic plan and agreeing priorities for the remainder of its term, with the focus very much on maintaining services and support for families, along with the wellbeing of our staff and volunteers. Diversifying our income streams is critical, given the increasingly precarious nature of local authority finances. It's also the end of an era at Amaze as a new chair of trustees takes the helm, with huge gratitude for Hugh's dedication to the charity over many years. **Sally Polanski** (CEO), **Hugh Clench** (outgoing Chair), **Diana Boyd** (incoming Chair)



Our values

Listening is at the heart of what we all do – on our advice line, in our benefits advice and peer support work, and also in the way we plan and develop our services according to what families tell us they need. The word itself captures our values perfectly.

L

LOCAL AND LIVING IT We are local people who know our area and understand how to support families in our area. Many of our staff, volunteers and trustees are carers or are disabled.

I

INDEPENDENT & IMPARTIAL We are an independent charity and any information or advice we provide about services is impartial.

S

SUPPORTIVE We support everybody we can; making the best of our resources, developing peer support and being more hands-on for those that need it most.

T

TOGETHER The needs of disabled children and young people and their families are at the heart of all that we do. We work together with families and SEND professionals to plan, develop and improve services.

E

EMPOWERING We empower disabled children and young people and their parent carers by building their confidence, knowledge, skills and resilience.

N

NON-JUDGEMENTAL We listen and offer advice without criticism, prejudice or judgement.



Special Educational Needs Information, Advice & Support Service

The **Special Educational Needs information, Advice and Support Service** (SENDIASS) provides information and advice to children and young people with SEND, and their parent carers, in East Sussex and Brighton & Hove.

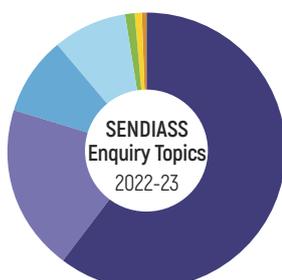
Demand for SENDIASS has grown dramatically in the last year and calls are often more complex. SENDIASS received a record 4586 calls and emails from local families, a rise of 21% from the previous year. We are pleased to be able to support more callers, but it does reflect the increased difficulties faced by many families.

Our delivery model has changed to accommodate the increased demand on our service. We pride ourselves on the quality of the phone calls we make but they are time-consuming, so where possible we respond by email,

making sure that attached resources equip parent carers to deal with their issues. Many parent carers prefer to receive their information in this way, but we make it clear that we are happy to respond to any specific questions generated by the emails we send.

The increased demand on our phone and email service means that our capacity for casework is now limited to only short-term interventions for a small number of families but we continue to casework young people, recognising that often they wish to access information, advice and support in ways that are different from their parent carers.

“I have more avenues to explore and more hope than I had. That’s worth its weight in gold.”



Education	7071
Health	2286
Money & Benefits	1061
Social Care & Housing	993
Compass Card & Leisure	151
Workshops & Training	96
Employment	40

4,586
REFERRALS
RECEIVED

48,807
WEBSITE
USERS

3,944
FACTSHEETS
DOWNLOADED

Nick and Alex's story

"I spoke to SENDIASS about appealing the local authority's decision to not conduct an Education, Health and Care needs assessment (EHC). I find it difficult to ask for help and there were times that I felt like giving up, but SENDIASS gave me hope. I have ADHD and when I feel emotional, it can be difficult to take in information. It was incredibly helpful to have someone to talk to who knows the system and who could calmly talk me through my options.

"The local authority eventually agreed to conduct an assessment, so I contacted SENDIASS to get some support. Sally gave me useful information about EHC plans and was able to explain the options for Alex's education. Sally also met with Alex to capture his views. He really opened up to her in a way that teenagers often don't do with their parents.

"When we received our draft EHC plan, Sally had an online meeting with both of us to talk through what we wanted to change.

"Sally made Alex feel involved in the process in a way which put him in control. Being able to identify his aspirations was really motivating for him. Speaking to an independent person reduced both our stress levels!

"The support from SENDIASS was lifechanging as I don't think I would have coped without it."



Our digital impact

Amaze uses digital platforms to inform parents and young people about SEND and signpost them to services and support.

This year, our comms team rapidly grew our Instagram and LinkedIn community, as well as building our audiences on Facebook and Twitter. We updated our 28 fact sheets and produced new advice on home education and school avoidance. This content was co-produced with parent carers and/or people with lived experience of specific conditions or issues.

We secured funding to develop our website for parent carers and to create a brand new 'sister' site just for young people. Engagement and scoping work was completed this year and the sites will both be live in 2024.

553

NEW FOLLOWERS
ON INSTAGRAM
(UP 480%)

22,000

ENGAGED PEOPLE
ON FACEBOOK
(UP 193%)

80,000

SESSIONS ON
OUR WEBSITE
(UP 21%)





Amazing Futures

“A safe space to be unapologetically me and join a community of other young people like me.”

Amazing Futures is a young person-led project which supports young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) aged 14-25 in Brighton & Hove and East Sussex. In 2022-23 we helped 359 young people get involved in their community and develop their life skills as they transition to adulthood.

Amazing Futures has five elements:

- social groups where young people can take part in a range of activities, make friends and gain social skills
- peer support provided by trained volunteers which builds confidence and leadership skills
- emotional wellbeing support, helping young people to take positive steps to improve their health and access local services

- careers advice and guidance to help young people achieve specific goals around employment, education and training
- a safe place where young people can have their voices heard, valued, and self-advocacy improved.

This year 22 young people accessed our pilot counselling project, which is shaping the development of a wider emotional wellbeing service in 2023-24. Our wellbeing walks, fitness activities and popular running group have encouraged social skills and physical wellbeing. Young people also gained skills co-producing content for the Amaze website and **Amazine** – our e-zine created for and by our young people.

“[Amazing Futures] not only helped with my confidence and social skills, but it’s also given me a second family.”

359

YOUNG PEOPLE SUPPORTED

34

PEER SUPPORTERS

309

ACTIVITY SESSIONS

126

YOUNG PEOPLE ATTEND WORKSHOPS

80

IAG CAREERS SESSIONS

Brandon's story

"I've been part of the Amazing Futures Peer Support Project in Brighton from the start in 2016. Before I found Amazing Futures I felt sick, anxious and lonely. I've made a lot of friends at Amazing Futures – I hadn't been able to make them before. But getting together with people in the activity sessions helped me to make a lot of friends. A lot of friends!"

"I went on to train as a Volunteer Peer Supporter helping at the young people's groups. We did board game sessions, painting, drama that sort of thing. In the beginning, it was a bit nerve-racking doing the groups and training. Really scary to be honest but I got through. Going through it made me feel confident."

"Amazing Futures has helped me develop my leadership skills in other ways, too. I recently trained to become one of the volunteer Walk Leaders, welcoming young people on walks along the seafront and in local parks. This was fantastic."

"I've been involved with lot of physical activities and help others join in - Brazilian dance and music sessions, yoga, sports sessions in the park and the running group. Doing the Santa Dash dressed up as Father Christmas along the seafront in December 2022 was brilliant, I really enjoyed that. The best thing about Amazing Futures has been taking part in all these activities."



"I've liked having a say in how to help improve Amaze services as well as services in the city. Through Amazing Futures, I also took part in the National Citizenship Award that was offered to young people at Amaze."

"Amazing Futures has helped me with interview skills and doing a CV. I did everything with Dara at the Amazing Futures Career Service which was great. I've been working in Screwfix for about five years now and have been helped to get work experience with the Co-Op – hopefully at the end of the ten weeks they will offer me a job! I still volunteer for the Amazing Futures Peer Support Project. I feel good, very good about my future."



Face 2 Face

“I’ve found a safety net and friends who have been with me in tough times.”

Without support, caring for a child with additional needs can be stressful, lonely and overwhelming. Our **Face 2 Face** service provides parent carers with one-to-one befriending, year-round, in-person groups and 12 WhatsApp groups across Brighton & Hove and East Sussex. These services build crucial connections and support networks between parents and carers with similar experiences.

Since the pandemic, we have seen more families struggle with their mental health and referrals to Face 2 Face increase dramatically. Group membership has more than doubled. 130 members are now joined to our **'Mental Health WhatsApp Room'**. And over 30 families have been matched to our trained volunteer befrienders over the past year.

Alongside groups and one-to-one befriending, we now offer a range of wellbeing activities and sessions run in our core groups or as standalone sessions hosted by external facilitators. Activities covered include wellbeing walks, 'looking after you' sessions, mindfulness, relaxation and art and craft workshops. Any parent carer in Brighton & Hove and East Sussex can join these activities.

24

DIFFERENT
GROUPS

1,253

GROUP
MEMBERSHIPS

179

NEW PARENTS
SUPPORTED



NDP Family Training & Navigation

The **Family Training & Navigation Service (NDP)** supports parent carers of a child or young person on the pathway or post-assessment for neurodevelopmental conditions such as autism or ADHD. We provide valuable signposting and training to help parent carers connect with support, services and resources while they are waiting for assessment and beyond. Our lived experience of neurodevelopmental differences and knowledge of local services and support groups is brought to all aspects of our work.

In 2022, we extended this service from Brighton & Hove into East Sussex. We received 454 referrals for a navigation call from both areas.

“This is not just a service, it's a lifeline.”

During the year we ran 18 workshops including a **'Tics and Tourette's'** workshop, **'Insider's Guide to ADHD'** courses, and **'Introduction to Neurodiversity'** workshops.

We have worked closely with parent carer forums, health, education, and social care services in Sussex to understand the potential gaps in services for families with children on the ND pathway and how our services can help meet some of those needs.

454

PARENT CARER
REFERRALS

18

WORKSHOPS



1,076

PARENT CARERS SUPPORTED

507

HAD CASEWORK SUPPORT

43

YOUNG PEOPLE HAD PIP CASEWORK SUPPORT

Help with disability benefits

Our disability benefits work offers young people and parent carers the expert advice and support needed to make a successful claim for DLA or PIP. The support includes phone and email advice, written resources and regular online workshops. We also offer one-to-one support for families or young people who are really struggling. 26% of parent carers we worked with in 2022-23 consider themselves neurodivergent, disabled, or have a long-term health condition.

“I lost my PIP when I told DWP about an extra diagnosis and thanks to Amaze I got it back. I can now afford to keep my assistance dog, Axl. He calms me down and helps me get out of the house.”

A successful claim for DLA or PIP can generate between £7k and £13k in benefits for families on low incomes. The money helps pay for the extra costs of caring and strengthens families' resilience. It improves families' mental health and well-being, and enables young people make choices that can change their lives. In the past year, our service has generated in excess of £2 million in additional income for families.



The Compass

The **Brighton & Hove Compass Card** provides access to affordable leisure opportunities, in return for a child or young person being registered on the city's Disability Register. In the past year there has been a 76% increase in people registering for the first time.

This year, we have provided special offers, competitions and over 100 free ticket giveaways alongside 11 brand new offers for local days out and activities. We also got involved with **Carers' Week**, as always, by offering freebies and discounts to carers. Thanks to additional resources from Public Health in Brighton & Hove, we organised two family **Fun Days** in partnership with Freedom Leisure with a focus on healthy activities and physical wellbeing.

We stay connected with Compass families through our e-newsletter and social media pages.

“The Compass card [has] been so valuable. We plan most of our summer holidays activities around it. I have two sons so it helps so much financially to know we can do things together.”

2,326

BRIGHTON & HOVE COMPASS CARD HOLDERS

153

OFFERS AT SUSSEX VENUES





Strategic and partnership work

Amaze is active in many different local, regional and national partnerships. We commit time and energy to collaborating with others to increase our collective impact. For example, in Brighton & Hove and in East Sussex, we represent local voluntary and community sector alliances in governance boards overseeing SEND strategies, health policy and early intervention programmes. We work closely with our fellow carers organisations, local disability charities, youth work providers, and others, to improve local education, health, care, youth, adult social care and other services.

We host the **East Sussex Parent Carer Forum (ESPCF)** and the **Brighton & Hove Parent Carers Council (PaCC)** and together we work closely with the **West Sussex Parent Carer Forum (WSPCF)**, particularly around co-production of health services across Sussex. We share insights, identify priorities, and seek to influence partner agencies through being active in many workstreams. ESPCF now has 800+ members and PaCC 600+ and we are hugely grateful for their reach into the diverse SEND

community and the expertise they provide to Amaze, in helping shape our services. The PCFs are well respected for working collaboratively to identify improvements and provide constructive challenge to service providers and strategic leaders in the SEND system.

Nationally, we are members of the **Disabled Children's Partnership** and contribute to their research and policy work.

There isn't space to list all our other partnerships here, but we're especially appreciative of our collaborative work with: the **Making it Happen** project in East Sussex; the **Inclusive Communities Partnership** in Brighton & Hove (hosted by TDC); the **Additional Measures** organisations in East Sussex (hosted by SCDA); **Incredibles SEND Club** partners **Hangleton and Knoll Project** and **Extratime**; **Care for the Carers** East Sussex; **B&H SpeakOut**; all our **Compass Card** Partners; organisations we work in partnership with to deliver parent carer coffee mornings and SEND youth clubs across Brighton & Hove and East Sussex.



Our funders

We would like to thank all the organisations and individuals who helped to fund us in 2022/23.

Statutory funders

Brighton & Hove City Council, East Sussex County Council, NHS England, NHS Sussex ICB, Sussex Partnership Foundation NHS Trust, East and Central Brighton Primary Care Network.

Grants and other funders

Active Sussex, BBC Children in Need, Blagrove Trust, C M Keyser Charitable Trust, Care for the Carers East Sussex, Contact a Family, David Solomons Charitable Trust, Fitton Trust, Friarsgate Charitable Trust, Garfield Weston Foundation, Henry Smith Charity, Hove & Portslade Aid in Sickness Association, J C Robinson Trust No. 4, Mencap, Pannett Charitable Trust, Sir Joseph Hotung Charitable Settlement, Sir Jules Thorn Charitable Trust, SLN Uni Connect, Sussex Community Foundation.

Supporters

Thank you to all the wonderful donors, fundraisers, community groups and companies who have supported us. Special mentions to Dillon Fiolet, Kevin Crowley, Brighton College, Longman Pub, Dead Sweet, Patrick Moorhead Antiques Ltd and Toyota.



Accounts

Amaze Brighton & Hove (A company limited by guarantee)
Statement of financial activities incorporating an income and expenditure account] for year ended 31 March 2023

	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	2023 Total funds	2022 Total funds
	£	£	£	£
INCOME & ENDOWMENTS FROM				
Donations and legacies	99,340	116,558	215,898	184,600
Charitable activities				
Grants	1,061,252	43,400	1,104,652	754,197
Services	75,518	-	75,518	261,925
Investment income	1,772	-	1,772	495
Other income	11,197	-	11,197	19,442
Total	1,249,079	159,958	1,409,037	1,220,659
EXPENDITURE ON				
Raising funds	100,807	-	100,807	60,393
Charitable activities				
Staff costs	928,041	99,623	1,027,664	883,231
Property costs	49,904	4,878	54,782	33,765
Administrative costs	88,426	19,573	107,999	90,685
Other costs	51,614	3,359	54,973	42,408
Overhead allocation	(13,712)	13,712	-	-
Total	1,205,080	141,145	1,346,225	1,110,482
NET INCOME	43,999	18,813	62,812	110,177
RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS				
Total funds brought forward	682,738	-	682,738	572,561
TOTAL FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD	726,737	18,813	745,550	682,738



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 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, Eliph Hadert, Moe Hamdhaidari, Fungai Murau, Alison Plant.

Our contacts

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