



for disabled children
and young people in Sussex

Strategic Plan 2018-21

1. Foreword

As Chair of Amaze, I am delighted to present our new three year Strategic Plan, setting out what we wish to do during 2018-21 to support children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and their families, across Sussex.

Over the last three years we have sought to expand our services both geographically (across Sussex) and from solely supporting parent carers¹, to also providing services and engagement activities to young people with additional needs directly.

Last year Amaze celebrated its 20th birthday highlighting the impact we have managed to deliver for a whole generation of families living in Brighton and Hove. We want to build on this legacy and for this next period make sure that all families contacting us understand what we do in each area and that they are receiving an excellent service. We also want to raise more funds to increase the number of core/added value Amaze services that are available to families across Sussex.

For a more detailed picture of the impact we have on families' lives, please see our most recent Impact Report and the 'Generation Amaze' video at <https://amazesussex.org.uk/about-us/our-impact/>.

I want to take this opportunity to thank all our funders, supporters and our dedicated team, and I look forward to continuing to work with you over the next three years.

Hugh Clench, Chair of Amaze

2. The needs of children and young people with SEND and their families

Amaze currently holds detailed information about the profile and needs of over 4,500 local children and young people with SEND on the children's disability registers - The Compass Brighton and Hove and The Compass West Sussex. That's around 4,000 families and represents about 68% of the population (aged 0-16) in receipt of Disability Living Allowance (DLA) in Brighton and Hove and about 28% in West Sussex.

Our direct service delivery means we are gathering evidence all the time about what families and young people with SEND are struggling with and what they might need at different times in their (child's) life.

¹ Parent carers – we acknowledge that it is not only 'parents' that are carers, and that there are often siblings, unrelated carers, foster parents etc who support children with additional needs. We use 'parent carers' throughout but use this term to encompass a range of family situations.

Amaze also hosts the Brighton and Hove Parent Carers' Council (the PaCC) who are the local 'voice' of families with children and young people with SEND, inputting to all the key strategic decision making boards. As families really appreciate the support they get from Amaze, often telling us we are their 'lifeline', we generally get very good response rates to surveys and consultations that we run together with PaCC.

Amaze works with the three parent carer forums across Sussex, alongside Parent Carer Representatives, to feed in 'intelligence' about these needs, trying to improve local strategic, policy and practice decisions and we champion and promote the need for co-production with parent carers and children and young people with SEND in all areas of service development and delivery.

More recently, Amaze has also been working directly with young people with additional needs, who have been telling us directly what they want and need, via the Amazing Futures project and our advisory group that we support with Speak Out.

All in all we feel we have a pretty good sense of what the key needs are and we have laid these out in detail in Appendix A. In brief, families with disabled children tell us that life is 'complex' and they feel they are in a 'maze' with new jargon and many different services to navigate at different stages of their (child's) life. For parents, one of the most stressful times is when their child is newly diagnosed, or awaiting a diagnosis, with many parents facing a huge learning curve as they seek information about their child's additional need(s) and what support is available for them:

"When my son was born he was in special care for three weeks and we knew when we left that he had cerebral palsy and it was going to be quite severe... We were sent home on our own and we didn't know anything. Didn't know who to phone. Didn't know anyone." (Parent Carer living in West Sussex)

At the other end of childhood, thinking about the future, having safe relationships, living independently and gaining employment is what most young people with additional needs want, but find it is very hard to achieve. Transition to adulthood is stressful for them but also their parent carers who continue to be a young person's main trusted source of help and information.

So young people and parent carers want to access good quality and impartial information, advice and support (IAS). Amaze has successfully provided this service to parent carers in Brighton and Hove for the last 20 years via our Helpline, our publications, website, events and workshops and more recently, through active use of social media. We began providing this service in East Sussex in 2017. Amaze has also been supporting young people with SEND directly since 2014, and we want to develop this work further over the next three years.

We also know that families with disabled children can feel financially and socially isolated so Amaze has developed additional, complementary services, including the DLA project and The Compass, which help give families the funding and confidence to feel part of, and access, their community.

"We now feel part of the community... we feel like we belong somewhere and are accepted" (parent quote, JB Eventus evaluation of the Compass).

Mental health is a growing area of concern both for children and young people with SEND as well as their parent carers and we have shown that having someone provide early, informal, peer support is incredibly impactful. Our Face to Face befriending, for parent carers, and Amazing Futures project, for young people, provide this in Brighton and Hove but we want to secure these and extend the services further. The Amaze community outreach partnership coffee mornings, other small groups and training courses are also proven to improve the resilience, mental health and wellbeing of those attending and we will seek further partnerships to increase these.

3. Our Vision, Mission and Outcomes

Amaze Vision: the ultimate outcome

“A world where families with children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities are valued, included in their community and supported to thrive.



Amaze Mission: outcomes

“Parent carers, children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities are informed and supported to build their resilience, achieve positive outcomes and their voices are heard.”

As a result of implementing our new three year strategy we aim that parent carers of, and children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities themselves, will be:

More informed about their (child's) additional needs and the support and services

Well supported to achieve positive outcomes in relation to their (child's) additional needs

More able to deal with any issues or problems that arise from their (child's) additional needs

Included, understood or connected to others in similar situation

Listened to and their views are taken into account regarding their (child's) needs

4. Our Values

We recently asked families who use our services what makes Amaze unique. Many said that our staff “walk the talk” and have their own lived experience of having a disability or a child with a disability. They said we offer both professionalism and compassion and are respected by families and professionals alike.

The following organisational values underpin all our work:

- We **listen and are responsive** to the needs of families
- We provide families and young people with a **voice**, both in their individual casework and at a strategic level, **influencing** decision makers by sharing our learning about what families need
- We are **independent** from statutory agencies and provide **impartial** information, advice and support
- Parent carers and young people with SEND themselves are the experts and our services are **‘person-centred’** and **‘co-produced’** by them
- We **empower** parent carers and young people by building their confidence, knowledge, skills and **resilience**
- Our services are of a **high quality**, provided by experienced and knowledgeable staff, who are approachable and trustworthy
- As demand for our services remains incredibly high, we prioritise our services to support the **most vulnerable**, and support others to be more **‘self-servicing’**

5. At Amaze's Heart – our core services

We provide a range of different information, advice and support services to parent carers and to children and young people with SEND. Whilst the range of services that Amaze offers across Sussex currently varies, according to the funding we receive, we will aim to develop Core Amaze services in each area as a minimum, including:

- **Information** – in a variety of formats including online, face-to-face, and paper-based. In Brighton & Hove and West Sussex this is supported by managing each local authority's disability register (The Compass)
- **Voice and influence** – at a local, regional and national level, using intelligence gathered from providing services and Compass data, supporting the local parent carer forums and young person's advisory groups to affect change and co-produce service developments

We also provide other essential, 'added value' services including:

- **Helpline** advice and support and signposting on subjects that cover education, health, care and other important aspects of a family's life
- More in-depth **casework** for families facing particular challenges
- **DLA and PIP** benefits casework
- Increasing opportunities for leisure, sport, activities via the **Compass Card**
- **Training** workshops and courses
- **Peer support** and more informal opportunities for parent carers and young people to network and support each other e.g. befriending, coffee mornings, parent support groups, young people's peer support groups

6. Our Goals

Over the next three years Amaze will focus on delivering four key goals. We have developed a detailed programme of work that sits under each goal and will be used internally to focus our capacity and measure our progress. But in summary:



GOAL 1:

Increase knowledge to empower families and young people by providing a range of high quality, information, advice and support services.

Key aims

- a) *Continue to deliver a high quality, impartial, SENDIASS in B&H and ESx and gather evidence to illustrate what additional investment is required to meet needs*
- b) *Increase our range of information resources for young people with SEND and develop our IAS work with children*
- c) *Develop our work to support families going through mediation or tribunals, signposting to legal advocacy where appropriate*
- d) *Continue to deliver some support around the assessment and planning process including some EHCP support, following the closure of our Independent Support service*
- e) *Increase the first time caller response rate to our Helpline and investigate new technologies to increase reach of information and advice e.g. SKYPE, text, messaging apps, live chat*
- f) *Seek to reach families not currently in touch with Amaze, in particular those who are very isolated, BAME and traveller families*

GOAL 2:

Improve family and young person well-being and inclusion in their community by increasing access to disability benefits and group/social/leisure and work opportunities.

Key aims

- a) *Support families to make successful DLA and PIP claims reducing their financial isolation and child poverty linked to disability*
- b) *Increase registrations on Compass Registers and wellbeing of CYP via increasing opportunities on Compass Cards in B&H and WSx and seek to extend the Compass scheme into ESx*
- c) *Extend the range of half and one day workshops and training courses for both parent carers and young people and work with ESPaCC to make these available to (particularly isolated) families in ESx too*
- d) *Continue offering Face to Face (parent befriending) in B&H and seek opportunities to extend this service across Sussex*
- e) *Continue the Amazing Futures project in B&H and pilot extending this into ESx*
- f) *Develop and pilot activities which support and increase the skills and confidence of young people to take up volunteering, internships or paid work experience*

GOAL 3:

Improve policy, practice and services across Sussex by providing intelligence from Compass Registers, service delivery and engagement work.

Key aims

- a) *Collate and analyse data on the Compass Registers and intelligence gained from service delivery to evidence the needs of families, and share with wide range of partners to inform effective strategic and services planning*
- b) *Work closely with all three local parent carer forums in Sussex, as well as national bodies, to support their influencing work, to improve policy and practice for all families*
- c) *Support the B&H PaCC with back office functions, training and capacity building to enhance parent participation and co-production in Brighton and Hove*

- d) *Support the B&H YP Advisory Group to ensure the views of disabled young people are at the heart of our decision making and their views are fed into other strategic groups*
- e) *Champion co-production and increase opportunities for parent carers and young people with SEND to inform all service developments at Amaze*
- f) *Commission independent research into the (unmet) needs of families across Sussex, to complement existing data, and to demonstrate the impact of our preventative services*

GOAL 4:

Build Amaze's organisational and financial resilience by developing and supporting our staff and volunteers and diversifying our income.

Key aims

- a) *Enhance staff development opportunities and introduce a management/leadership development programme for middle managers*
- b) *Invest in additional fundraising capacity to increase funding available for these projects*
- c) *Continue to diversify our income – increasing focus on corporates and fundraising campaigns across Sussex*
- d) *Ensure all bids for new work achieve full cost recovery*
- e) *Develop responsive communications strategies and plans across the organisation ensuring our audiences understand our 'offer' and engage with us*
- f) *Build our regional profile and develop Amaze as a brand that 'speaks to' families and young people across Sussex, as well increasing general public awareness of what we do*
- g) *Review data on our outputs and outcomes to ensure we are achieving best value for money with our funding*
- h) *Demonstrate the value of Amaze services including where these reduce the pressure on other statutory services*

Amaze delivers a number of core services to individual young people and parent carers, but we also use our knowledge and expertise that we gather from this, to help influence and improve local policies and practice to benefit the wider population of families. This is partly through working in partnership with the parent carer forums and partly through our staff attending key strategic meetings and forums across Sussex and by feeding into national consultations and strategies. This work is not funded within our core contracts so we are limited in how much we can do but we believe 'strategic influencing' is a core part of our work as a charity working to support families with disabled children.



7. Extending Our Reach – geographically

The following table sets out what services are currently provided/well developed in each of the 3 local authority areas of Sussex we operate in and shows where we have projects in development or where we have an aspiration to extend into this area.

	B&H	Esx	WSx
GOAL 1: Increase knowledge to empower families and young people by providing a range of high quality, information, advice and support services.	Full range of Information	Website and factsheets in development	Factsheets development with Reaching Families
	Full advice service	Full advice service	Work with SEND IAS service
	Ongoing support/casework	Want to offer more face to face advice	Work with SEND IAS service
	Independent Support (ends 2018)	Independent Support (ends 2018)	Independent Support (ends 2018)
GOAL 2: Improve family and young person well-being and inclusion in their community by increasing access to disability benefits and group/social/leisure and work opportunities.	Disability Living Allowance/Personal Independence Payments benefits advice	Hastings pilot late 2018	Some provided by WSCC but could be opportunity to do more
	Face to Face - parent carer peer support	Face to Face - parent carer peer support	Face to Face - parent carer peer support - with Reaching Families
	Amazing Futures - young people peer support	Amazing Futures - young people peer support	Amazing Futures - young people peer support
	Compass Card (leisure discounts)	Compass Card (leisure discounts)	Compass Card (leisure discounts)
	Training courses and workshops	Training courses and workshops	Trialling providing one IG workshops
	Outreach information coffee mornings (with PaCC)	Outreach information coffee mornings (with ESPaCC)	Provided by WSPCF and Reaching Families
	Siblings groups	Siblings groups	
GOAL 3: Improve policy, practice and services by providing intelligence from Compass Registers, service delivery and engagement work.	Compass Disability Register	Compass Disability Register	Compass Disability Register
	Strategic and back office support to B&H PaCC	Keen to establish ongoing partnership arrangement with ESPaCC	Keen to establish ongoing partnership arrangement with WSPCF
	KEY:		
	Well established - being delivered		
	In development - some funding identified		
	Aspirational/blue sky - product available but no funding yet identified		
No current intention			

8. Our Finances

Amaze is currently funded via a variety of statutory partners (including local authorities, CCGs and Department for Education) but we are getting an increasing proportion of our income from trusts, foundations, companies, individuals and by putting on fundraising events.

Some of our income is confirmed in advance as we hold contracts or grant agreements, some is paid in arrears based on actual activity levels and some is based on our projections/forecasts. We will have a known, planned reduction of income in the middle of 2018/19 which is the result of central government contracts to deliver Independent Support coming to an end but we anticipate securing other funding to maintain our turnover at about £1m per annum for the period set out in this strategy.