

Amaze Strategy 2025 – 2030



for families with children and young people with
special educational needs and disabilities in Sussex

<https://amazesussex.org.uk>

Introduction

Children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), their parent carers and wider families sit at the heart of this strategy. We are acutely aware of the challenges they face, and we exist to provide a positive impact on their lives.

The SEND system is under huge pressure, we are expecting more national policy changes, and the context in Sussex is changing with local government devolution. We also anticipate further development of integrated education, health and care services. The environment is tough for charities like us, as we work across 2 local authority areas but do not have the economies of scale of a pan-Sussex delivery model.

We asked parent carers, young people and wider stakeholders for their views on our future plans. The overwhelming feedback was we're doing a good job, and they want us to carry on doing what we do well: providing information and advice on SEND, emotional support and connection.



We also heard that:

- Disabled young people wish to be recognised, respected and included. They want Amaze to provide services that enable them to enjoy themselves, make friends, learn, volunteer, work, increase their independence and develop practical skills.
- Parent carers want Amaze to help them to navigate the SEND system and secure high-quality support to help their family.
- Our commissioners and partners respect and value Amaze for the services we provide, the creative ways in which we work and adapt our offer to support families, and our strong commitment to collaboration.
- Our staff are proud of what they do but are frustrated by the gaps in provision, rising demand and lack of resource to provide the levels of support we wish we could. Staff want Amaze to be more vocal in calling for change.
- We are a strong and well-regarded voluntary sector provider with robust and effective governance and management. Our commitment to good organisational development also helps us to keep pace with, and manage, the growth in demand for our services and support.

“Being a Special Educational Needs (SEN) parent can be lonely and exhausting. I have recently found Amaze, and they have made such a difference. They understand and listen to me. Without Amaze my already stressful parenting journey would be so much harder”
– a parent

We have also found areas to develop and improve, including:

- Ensuring our offer is clear to families and our partners, and that we are easy to navigate.
- Balancing being parent- and young people-led and continuing to work to reach diverse groups and connect the community.
- Recognising that resources are limited and the need to manage expectations and keeping focused on providing sustainable services that add the most value.

It is more important than ever for Amaze to be clear why we do what we do and how we improve outcomes for families in Sussex, and to make the best plans for our future.



We have reflected on and updated our vision, mission and values in discussion with the people and communities we serve. We have also assessed the external factors and set new goals to help us build our future success. All of these are captured in our 2025 – 2030 Strategic Plan.

Who we support

There are more than

23,000¹ 



currently supports
25% of them

Children and young people with SEND in
Brighton + Hove and East Sussex.

Around
8,000



and around
15,000

East Sussex

¹ From local Council
data, April 2025

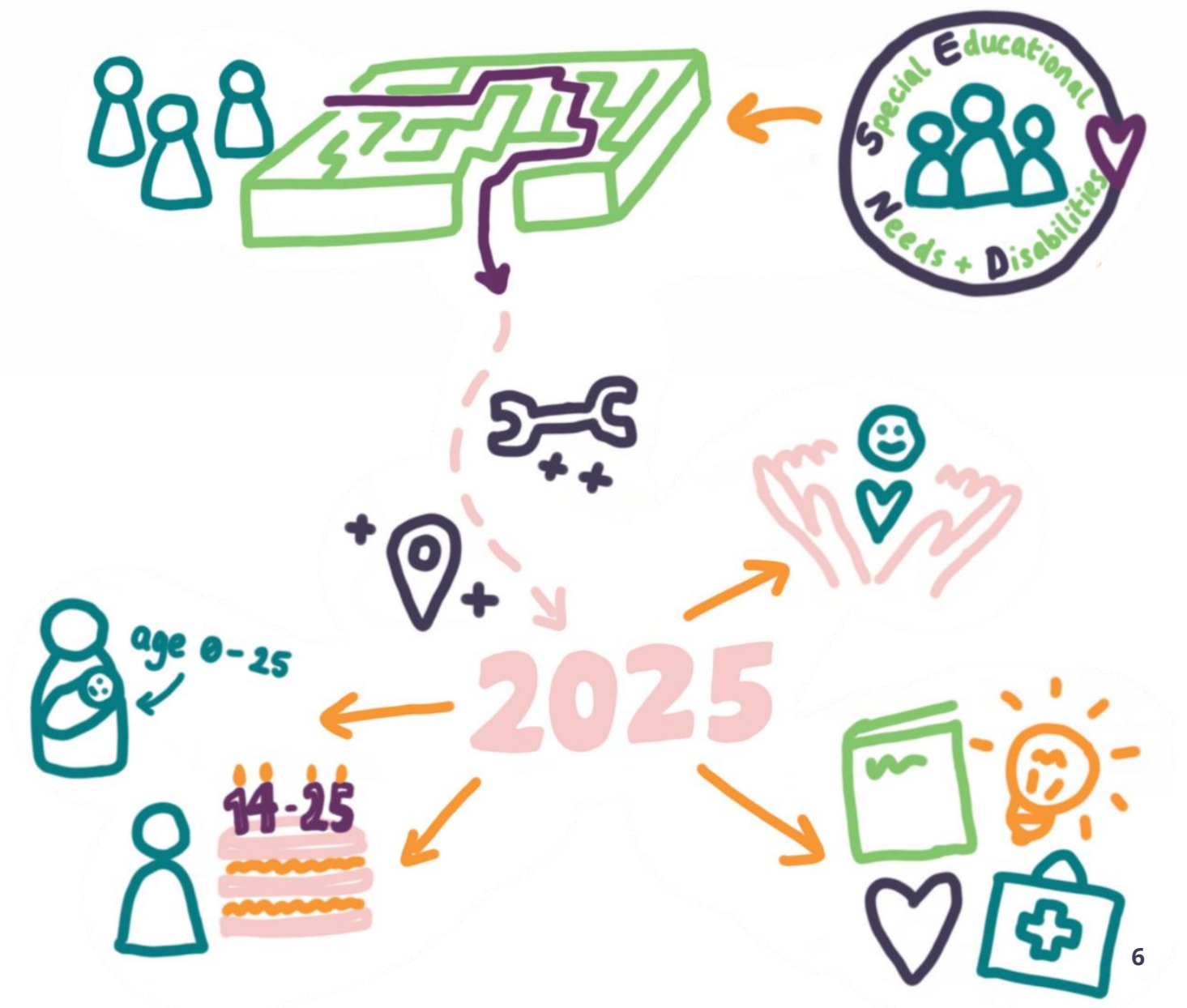
Who we are

Amaze was founded in Brighton and Hove in November 1997 by a group of parents who wanted to guide other parent carers through the maze of bringing up a child with special educational needs or disabilities. Since then, Amaze has grown steadily: expanding both the services we provide and the places where we work.

We now support young people (YP) aged 14-25, as well as parent carers of children and young people aged 0-25. We currently support families and young people in East Sussex, Brighton and Hove. We offer emotional and social support, and information and advice about education, health and care.

We employ more than 60 staff, nearly all of whom have lived experience of SEND. Most staff are part-time, and some are sessional. We are governed by our Board of Trustees, who combine lived experience with a broad range of skills, knowledge and experience.

In 2025/26 we expect to have a turnover of £1.7 million. We receive 80% of our income from statutory grants and contracts, and 20% from fundraising.



Our approach

At Amaze, we are committed to always:

- Being inclusive of all SEND, being non-judgemental, and building a sense of belonging.
- Responding to need. We work in co-production with, and host and support, Parent Carer Forums (PCFs) and youth voice groups to help us with this.
- Working in partnership with local authorities, health and voluntary sector organisations.
- Developing new projects that enable families to come together for mutual support, delivered in the way that best suits their needs.
- Maintaining quality of service and continuous professional development of our team of Trustees, staff and volunteers.

Our vision

An inclusive community where disabled people, and their families, belong and flourish.



Our mission

Amaze guides children, young people and families through the complex world of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). We help them know their rights, feel less alone and get the support they need.



Our values

L

Local with Lived Experience – we understand how to support disabled people and their families in our community.

I

Independent - we are an independent charity. The information and advice we provide is impartial and non-judgemental.

S

Supportive – we are inclusive, honest and welcome everybody.

T

Together – the needs of disabled children, young people, parent carers and their families are at the heart of all that we do. We work together with families and partners to improve services.

E

Excellence and Expertise – we strive for excellence, are experts in SEND and committed to learning and development.

N

Nimble – we are responsive to a changing world.



Our priorities

Everything we do until 2030 will be aligned to our 4 key priorities. We have agreed actions to help us deliver our priorities, and measures to check if we are achieving them.

1. Help parent carers, young people and families navigate the SEND maze and feel less alone

- Develop Amaze as an open access point for SEND information for families
- Provide advice on education, health and care services, with a focus on families facing the greatest barriers to accessing support
- Offer emotional support by building positive connections in the community
- Communicate effectively to increase awareness and understanding, make our offer clear and strengthen accessibility



2. Support young people now and for their future into adulthood

Our diverse support for young people (YP) spans specialist and targeted youth work, health and wellbeing, post-age 16 pathways, employment and short breaks.

- Involve young people in decision-making about Amaze's services. Support young people to be involved in decisions about other services and in driving meaningful change
- Provide information and support to help young people make informed choices
- Collaborate with other organisations to improve support available for young people in transition.
- Run fun and fulfilling activities, which improve young people's health and wellbeing, whilst also building relationships. Apply for funding for projects that young people identify they would like to happen



3. As leaders and trusted partners, influence and drive positive development of the SEND system in Sussex

- Strengthen the understanding of Amaze and its role in the system across services (local authorities, health, schools)
- Amplify parents', carers', and young people's voices in local services
- Develop Amaze's offer that raises awareness of SEND. Create partnerships that build capacity, improve understanding, shape services and grow our reach in Sussex

"Amaze care deeply about the work they do in supporting children, young people, and parent carers. The staff are committed to co-production, knowledgeable, passionate, patient and determined. Amaze is constantly adapting to change and responding to needs."
– a statutory partner



4. Develop Amaze as an organisation to be effective, resilient and sustainable

- Strengthen our infrastructure and organisational design, including workforce development, succession planning and supporting staff wellbeing
- Develop evidence of our impact
- Grow and manage Amaze's resources effectively to sustain our service offer, including diversifying income, aligning with system objectives around commissioning, growing unrestricted fundraising, increasing volunteering, and developing and implementing a digital strategy to improve agility and efficiency (including AI)
- Embed strong co-production at all levels across the organisation, including working in close partnership with the Parent Carer Forums (PCFs) and youth voice groups



Our impact

As a result of being part of the Amaze community, parent carers will feel:

- Informed about support available to them and their family
- Well-supported
- Able to deal with issues or problems
- Resilient, good in themselves, and positive
- Included, understood and/or connected
- Their voice has been heard and views taken into account

As a result of being part of the Amaze community, young people with SEND will:

- Feel connected with other young people
- Have learned new skills
- Have improved health and wellbeing
- Feel included and listened to

As a result of accessing Amaze's careers information and advice, young people will:

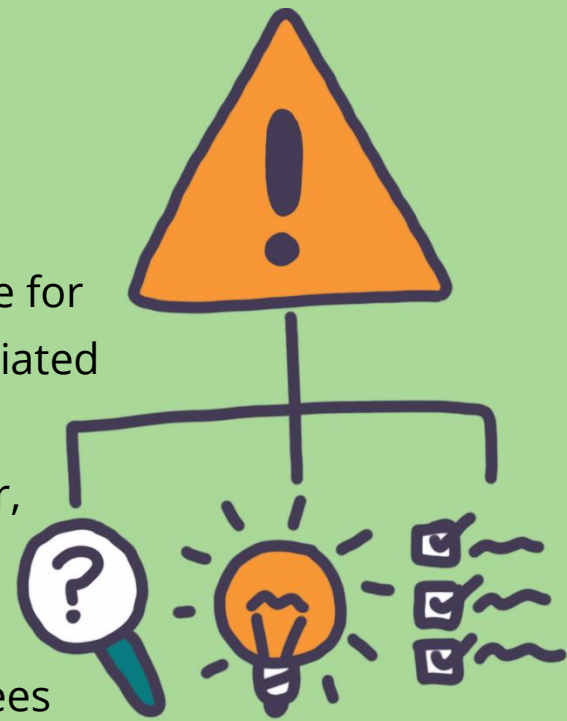
- Have more awareness of education, employment and training options, their rights, and other services and be more ready to engage with them.
- Be more able to articulate their own needs and employability strengths.

"Amazing Futures groups have changed my life. Staff and other young people are so understanding and supportive. It has allowed me to do lots of things that I wouldn't be able to do otherwise"
- a young person



Managing risk

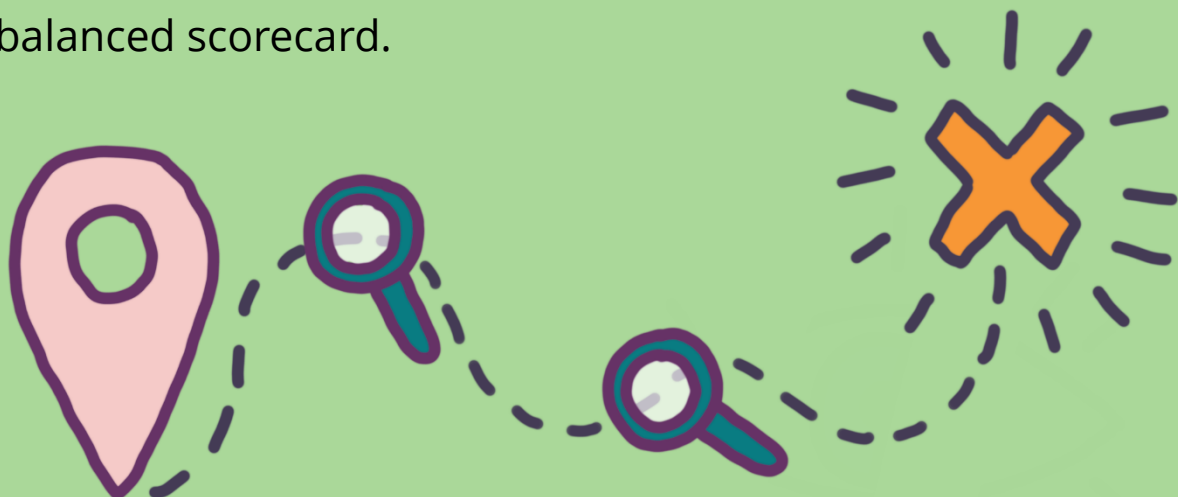
Our Senior Leadership Team is responsible for identifying and monitoring any risks associated with delivering our strategy. These are captured in our organisational risk register, which analyses potential risks, their likelihood, and the possible impact. The register is regularly reviewed by our Trustees at our Board meetings and helps us implement control measures and take action to address any identified gaps.



Delivering our strategy

Our 5-year strategy is being delivered during a time of ambiguity, with many changes anticipated in the SEND system. We will create responsive annual plans to help us deliver our strategy and use our core objectives to help frame decision-making.

Our annual plans will be reviewed and updated (at least) twice a year, helping us adapt quickly to any changing circumstances. Our Trustees are part of each review process, and they also receive progress updates every 3 months using a balanced scorecard.



Our contacts



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AmazeinSussex



"Amaze Sussex"



amazesussex

"I think there is no other organisation like it in the country and families are so lucky to have Amaze in Sussex."



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