

The next chapter in our story

Strategic Plan 2015–2020 summary



contact a family

a national charity for families
with disabled children



We provide information, advice and support.



We bring families together so they can
support each other.



We campaign with families to improve
their circumstances and for their right to
be included and equal in society.



Introduction

We were founded in the 1970s by families of disabled children, who recognised that even if their child's conditions were different, they shared a common experience – of being a family with a disabled child. They understood how important it is to support each other.

A lot has changed since then but some things haven't changed nearly enough. The challenges families face today – battling attitudes and inadequate services, trying to stay in work and stay together, or just trying to get a decent night's sleep, would be all too familiar to our founders.

Today, everything we do is about improving the lives of families with disabled children. We achieve this by working directly with parents and carers, and we are driven by what they tell us is important. We are proud of the way we work – in partnership, with knowledge and with great warmth.

This strategy sets out the next chapter in our story as a charity. It is designed to equip us to embrace the challenges and opportunities of a changing world. Yet whatever the next five years bring, ultimately we are a charity united in our desire to stand shoulder to shoulder with families of disabled children – all 800,000 across the UK. Families who are brilliant, flawed, funny, tired, managing against the odds – or not at all. It is families stories that drive us as a charity and inspire us. So some things haven't changed at all.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Amanda". The script is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'A'.

Amanda Batten
Chief Executive

A changing world

Since we were founded in the 1970s, the population of families with disabled children has grown enormously. This is due to a number of factors including improved diagnosis, better survival rates for pre-term babies and a reduced stigma in reporting disability.

The population of disabled children is not just growing, it is changing.

This is due to a broader definition of disability and a rise in the number of children diagnosed with mental health and behavioural difficulties. Improved medical care has also meant a rising number of disabled children with both complex and palliative care needs.

Whilst the aspirations families hold for their children are rising, the challenges they face remain very real.



Today there are around
800,000
disabled children in the UK



More than
50%

of families with a disabled child at home are at risk of poverty



6%

of the country's
child population
is living with
a disability



1 in 5

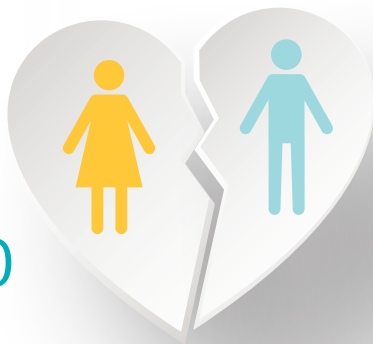
children are now
identified as having
an additional need

We currently reach around 20 per cent of the UK's total population of families with disabled children.

We want to be there
for more families, both
now and in the future.

32%

families with
a disabled child
split up under
the pressure



To achieve this, growth must be sustainable, and support us to diversify our current funding model. We recognise we can't meet every family's needs, so we commit to adding value to the work of others rather than duplicating effort. We will develop partnerships for the greater benefit of families.



“ It is so refreshing to know that I am not alone in my struggle to access certain services and support for my son and it was wonderful to pick up the phone and speak to someone so knowledgeable so quickly. ”

Our vision

Our vision is that families with disabled children feel valued and are strong, confident and able to make the decisions that are right for them.

Specifically, we aim to ensure:

- 1 Families with disabled children know how to get the right support, for them and their families.
- 2 Families with disabled children are confident to deal with the challenges they face.
- 3 The financial disadvantage that families with disabled children face has been alleviated.
- 4 Families with disabled children are understood, valued and included as equal participants in their communities, and in society.

Our role



We are there for the family around the disabled child – whatever their child's condition or disability, wherever they are in the UK.




We will be the first line of support and information for families: the go-to charity in the early days when families don't know where to turn.



We will direct families to appropriate support and services provided by others, and campaign to ensure those services are there.



We will maintain a connection with families through our networks and by being there for them when they need us.

A photograph of a woman with blonde hair and a young girl with brown hair and bangs, both smiling and hugging each other outdoors. The woman is wearing a purple cardigan and a purple necklace. The girl is wearing a pink cardigan over a pink dress. They are standing in front of green foliage and white flowers.

“ As a full-time carer of three family members, the exhaustion levels I face and the worry on a daily basis, particularly with benefit matters are greatly alleviated by your help. I'm more grateful than I can say for the advice, patience and the support that you give me. ”

“ We met on a Contact a Family day out. We just hit it off straight away. We have a bond with each other which is priceless. ”

“ She is such a strong person and I am stronger for our friendship. It's easier to talk to people who can understand your struggles. ”



How we work

This model sets out what we do, how we do it
and how it all fits together



1

Develop a sustainable business model to expand our service offer so we can support more families to be confident, informed and able to access the support they need.

How we will achieve this:

- Develop our family support offer to ensure it delivers information and support to families that is what they need, at a time they need it and in the way they want it.
- Scale up our work with professionals, commissioners and partners to create new revenue streams and extend the reach or depth of our family support offer.



2

Enable more families to receive and provide peer support to each other by increasing access to groups or networks.

How we will achieve this:

- Expand the peer support opportunities we provide for families across the UK.
- Develop our support for and engagement with the National Network of Parent Carer Forums and support groups across the UK.



3

Enable families to give back to other families by developing a sense of commitment to, and a relationship with, Contact a Family.

How we will achieve this:

- › Ensure families have a sense of belonging to, or connection with, Contact a Family that results in them giving back to us.
- › Provide families with the opportunities and mechanisms by which they may give back to extend support for other families.



4

Secure changes in awareness, policy and service provision that support families with disabled children to be as stable, happy and secure as other families.

How we will achieve this:

- Provide a platform for the views and experiences of families to be heard, to secure changes to policy and services that reflect their needs.
- Maximise our capacity to secure change by building our profile, partnership working, relationships and knowledge base.



5

Ensure all our resources (people, policies, processes, systems and premises) support the efficient delivery of the charity's strategy.

How we will achieve this:

- Expand our fundraising activity to allow us to draw funds from a broader range of income streams and increase income from both restricted and unrestricted sources.
- Be accountable for the work we deliver to families, funders and each other.
- Have an infrastructure that supports efficient and effective delivery of our goals.
- Be aligned in our efforts through establishing a clear planning framework and by communicating well with each other.



“Contact a Family gave us the feeling that we were not alone. It was the first time that we felt there was a network of support and help out there.”



How we will measure success

To ensure we are making best use of our resources, we will monitor this strategy against a set of key success measures, which include:

- number of families supported
- outcomes of families using our services
- reach and depth of supporter engagement
- impact on public policy
- total income with a focus on the level of unrestricted income
- diversification of revenue streams



To be part of our story or learn more about our work visit www.cafamily.org.uk

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🌐 www.cafamily.org.uk

📘 www.facebook.com/contactafamily

🐦 www.twitter.com/contactafamily

📺 www.youtube.com/cafamily

Free helpline for parents and families:

☎ **0808 808 3555** (Mon–Fri, 9.30am–5pm)

✉ helpline@cafamily.org.uk (Access to over 200 languages)

Our free family linking service

🌐 www.makingcontact.org