

Family Action

Family can shape the future - An organisational strategy 2024-2029

About Family Action:

Our mission Family Action supports people through change, challenge or crisis. It's what we've done for over 150 years. We protect children, support young people and adults and offer direct, practical help to families and communities. We see first-hand the power of family to shape lives, for better or worse, so we speak up for the importance of family in national and local policymaking, amplify family voices and represent the changing needs of families in the UK today.

Our vision and ethos At Family Action, our vision is of a society that understands the importance and power of family as a foundation for individual futures and connected, resilient communities. Because family is the key to positive futures, for individuals and society: whether it's recognising the value of family networks and support in the present or understanding the impact of trauma from the past, understanding the power of family to shape futures at every age is vital. We know, first-hand, that our early experiences of family stay with us, for better or worse. That's why we work across the lifespan, with people of all ages, so that we protect children today, safeguard futures tomorrow and support people going through hard times in the here and now. We believe that the path in front of us connects back to our past, so it's never too early, but also never too late to change things. Intervening as early as possible is key to safeguarding children and promoting their development. Love and experiences, good and bad, shape our brains dramatically in early childhood, but the process doesn't stop aged five. We are all capable of change throughout life and the power of family extends throughout our lives.

We believe there are many ways to be a family – it's relationships that matter. Family should be safe and supportive, loving and protective - beyond that there is no blueprint for what a family 'should' be. Too many people have been badly hurt in the past by damaging ideas about the 'right' way to be a family. Everyone deserves dignity, respect and an equal chance at life.

At Family Action we believe no-one should feel forgotten or be left behind. It's why we work with people through all sorts of change, challenge and crisis and with some of the most vulnerable in our society: those who are in or have experienced state 'care' systems, those whose experience of family is traumatic and painful, and families who are living in or close to poverty.

Our values:

We support people at the most vulnerable moments of their lives and invest in a values-driven culture that seeks to ensure we do so with sensitivity and respect and with a practical focus on reducing inequalities, tackling poverty and increasing resilience.

Our values are central to us. We are a can-do organisation, we strive for excellence, we maintain a clear people focus and we have mutual respect for everyone we work for and with. We recruit against these values, appraise our staff against them, ensure that our practice is continually informed by them and measure our impact against them.

Our context and approach:

As it was at the time of our founding over 150 years ago, a key context for much of Family Action's work is hardship and poverty. This has been intensified in recent years by the cumulative effects of austerity, global pandemic, war and the continuing cost-of-living crisis.

We find ourselves living and working in an increasingly divided society. We recognise systemic problems of poverty, inequality, inequity and loneliness; that some family stories start out much tougher than others and that effecting change is always harder for those facing multiple sources of pressure and disadvantage.

We base the development of our services on a realistic assessment of the strengths of our organisation, our ability to maximise our benefit to society, both in our own capacity and through partnership, and on what we learn from what families tell us about their daily lived experience. We have built on our long legacy of family support to establish a dynamic, holistic and strengths-based approach to work with people in need, whatever their background or circumstances, whatever has happened in the past and whatever is happening now in the present.

As we continue to expand nationally and develop communities of reflective practice, we can increasingly transform our frontline experience into an evidence base of what works when placing family, and their voices, at the heart of support work in our communities.

Family Action is here to support people through change, challenge and crisis. We care deeply about the children of today, the adults of tomorrow and all of us here now; the children we were and the people we could be in future, with the right support. And that's what we strive to offer: the right support at the right time - for every family in need and anyone who is, or ever has been, without the support of a family or familial networks.

Through every age and stage of life, we have specialist and practical support for those in need. Community FOOD Clubs help with food and essentials; perinatal, parenting and post-adoption support gives families the best start in life, while our family support, wellbeing, helpline and counselling services help people shape - or reshape - their futures for themselves.

Across all our services, we focus on:

- Creating opportunity and life chances
- Promoting health, wellbeing and connectedness
- Supporting families through all life stages and major changes
- Helping to build and sustain safe, supportive relationships
- Amplifying family stories and the voices of families today

About this strategy:

This strategy provides us with a clear framework and direction of travel for the next five years through five key objectives. However, that framework also remains broad enough to allow us to respond to both internal and external circumstances as they unfold. The strategy is underpinned by detailed rolling action plans and monitored regularly by our Board of Trustees and our Senior Leadership Group.

Objectives 2024 - 2029

Objective 1

Ensuring we maximise our positive impact on society Family Action both wants, and has a responsibility to support and promote a society that enables children, young people, adults

and families to thrive. We recognise that we operate within a broader system and we must ensure we do all we can to leverage our unique position to facilitate change for the benefit of families in the UK. We will do this by:

- Advocating across the political spectrum for policy and investment that is relevant to and supportive of families today and also for systems and frameworks that place families at the heart of our society.
- Seeking to influence local and national priorities, policy, procurement and practice, providing insight and evidence based on our work directly with families and the voices of those we are here to support.
- Reaching and supporting a diverse community of children, young people, families and adults wherever we work so that lesser heard voices are amplified.
- Maximising our Social Value and embedding Social Value consideration into every area of Family Action. This includes our drive towards net zero as part of our commitment to the environment. As an organisation, we will leave the world in a better state than we found it.
- Being a supportive but challenging partner to the third sector and to all organisations we work with to ensure that together we can continue to deliver value and impact for families.

Objective 2

Ensuring the quality of our work Family Action aims to provide sector leading, high quality, impactful services at the right time, in the right way and by the right people. We are committed to improving and sustaining outcomes for children, young people, families and adults through delivering high quality services. We aspire to always operate a high performance, high support and high challenge culture with safeguarding and continuous improvement central to our work.

We will do this by:

Models and service development:

- Directing and influencing our service design and delivery through service user voices and understanding of their lived experience.
- Continuing to use evidence-based service models, and developing clear practice frameworks and standards governing different service types. We know what good looks like and we will make sure our outcomes make a difference.
- Working on service design and structure well before we are dealing with service delivery and ensuring all our services have a clear logic model.
- Using innovative approaches to addressing system wide gaps and unmet needs, including co-designing services with those we support, wherever possible.

Creating services that work and deliver for everyone.

- Providing services that are accessible to and beneficial for those on the margins of society. Services meet the needs of families here and now, and their design and delivery are influenced by them.
- Making sure families feel respected by the service provided by Family Action, even where it has been challenging. We are successful at building and sustaining relationships with a wide range of diverse communities, often breaking down barriers and taking positive action.

- Finding out how children and families, and the communities they live in, feel about the work we do to support them and use this to develop our services and interventions

Measurement, accountability and continuous improvement.

- Clearly defining standards and KPIs, and criteria for evidencing whether or not they have been met. These include the use of data and processes for measuring and evidencing outcomes, impact and effectiveness, including a robust Quality Assurance Framework.
- Having clear lines of accountability throughout the whole organisation, with governance structures in place that give support and challenge to hold our focus on improving outcomes.
- Developing Communities of Practice which support Family Action to be a learning organisation and to ensure practitioners are aware of latest research and best practice as well as to ensure systemic continuous improvement across the organisation.
- Upskilling and enabling our practitioners, managers and volunteers to access learning and apply this to maximising outcomes and safeguarding children, young people and adults.

Objective 3

Ensuring a strong culture that enables our people to thrive

Our people are the lifeblood of our organisation; passionate staff and volunteers working together to achieve the best outcomes possible for everyone we work with. We want and need an organisational culture that supports this and enables our people to thrive – to be supported, equipped and engaged to achieve our strategic objectives. We will continue to develop a culture where the families we work with have a strong voice and influence.

We will do this by:

- Rolling out our People Strategy and associated functional strategies and plans. Our values continue to be the cornerstone of everything we do and have shaped our People Strategy which will ensure that staff and volunteers feel:
 - Supported
 - Equipped to do their job
 - They know when they are doing a good job
 - They belong
 - Their work is rewarding
- They have opportunities to develop
- Continuing our efforts to build a more diverse organisation to foster a more inclusive culture and continue to support the wellbeing of our people. We want our people to feel supported and connected, with pride in Family Action as a national charity.
- Focusing our efforts on ensuring our people are equipped to deliver the best outcomes possible and are rewarded for doing so, with opportunities to develop.

Objective 4

Ensuring our organisation remains relevant and resilient.

We will ensure that Family Action is a strong, resilient and sustainable organisation that is able to manage uncertainty in a very challenging economic context, so that we are able to continue to be there for the people who need us.

We will do this by:

Financial

- Ensuring financial viability through a combination of actions: retention of existing contracts, winning new ones, and increased corporate and individual giving. We maintain an income level of at least £40m in order to support the robust central infrastructure needed to effectively manage a significant national organisation.
- Making sure we give and obtain value for money. All contracts are carefully reviewed and we remain alert at all times to financial viability so that we do not expose the charity to unforeseen financial risk.
- Including a fair and reasonable contribution towards the costs of our central departments in new bids.
- Continuing to seek opportunities for diversification of income including legacy income and major donors, as well as continued investment in Individual Giving and particularly corporate new business.

Technology

- Being bold in investing in technologies where this supports our charitable mission and vision.
- Continuing to advance our technology capabilities - investing in digital communications technology, greater use of automation, leveraging artificial intelligence etc

Service delivery

- Having clear priority growth areas, based on evidence (research and insight, financial landscape, existing and emerging need) and aligned to our Theory of Change.
- Making sure we prize, encourage, explore and celebrate innovation and understand that there is always scope to do things better.
- Regularly reviewing whether services still hold a purpose, including through listening to the views and ideas of the people we work with, and consolidating when needed.
- Building strategic alliances, which advantage growth.
- Ensuring service delivery models are understood, ready to market, delivered through evidence
 - based practice, and outcome tools are agreed

Objective 5

Ensuring families in the UK are seen and heard

We want families to trust us an organisation that shares and amplifies their voice but, importantly, we will also create spaces and platforms for families to share their stories themselves, as the experts in their own lives and experience.

Family Action recognises how important participation is within its many forms and the impact the voice of the people we serve has on the individual, community and the organisation. By valuing and respecting their perspectives, Family Action aims to empower children, young people, and families to have greater control and more power in their lives, using their voice to tell their stories and make services more relevant and impactful. We want the experience of family life in the UK to be accurately represented and shared – both positive and negative.

We will do this by:

- Integrating co-production and storytelling through all our external engagement, brand and influencing work so that we are sure we are representing families and their experiences accurately.
- Working to ensure politicians, the media, and society in general seek out, listen to and act on what children, young people and families are saying about their lives in the UK today.
- Maximising our experience of working with families to ensure we are the go-to organisation for comment on family matters today.
- Continuing to build our brand so that we are recognised, trusted and supported by the public, meaning we are able to raise funds and other support so we can reach more people through our work.
- Representing the diversity of UK family life in our external engagement and actively promoting inclusivity in the concept and articulation of family today.