



Giving
disabled children
a **brighter future**

Annual Report 2021-2022:

A year of transition



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Company information

Company number

01346252

Charity number

275936

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Trustees

Stephen Unwin, Chair (*resigned 6 July 2022*)

Diana Sutton, Chair (*elected 6 July 2022*)

Sanjay Nair, Treasurer

Sam Bowerman

Steven Clarke

Kerry Crichlow (*resigned 6 December 2021*)

Austin Erwin (*resigned 18 March 2022*)

Anna Hamilton

Mary-Rachel McCabe

Zoe Peden (*resigned 19 January 2022*)

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Chair's Welcome

2021-2022 was a year of joy and challenge, hard work and renewed optimism for the future at KIDS.

It came as a great relief to see more normal service resume after the constraints of the pandemic. But the truth is that KIDS kept most of its activities going through the darkest months, true to its commitment to disabled children, young people and their families. This has been a uniquely challenging time for everyone, and it has been inspiring to see how brilliantly our staff rose to the occasion.

In common with so many caring organisations, recruitment and retention of skilled and committed staff is hard, and KIDS is doing everything we can to make working for KIDS special.

It was also a year of reflection. After a period of wide-ranging consultation and some careful deliberation, KIDS has launched its new strategy, which combines a sober analysis of the difficulties we inevitably face, with a creative, empowering and positive vision for the future.

It is with huge pride that I step down as Chair of KIDS after six fascinating and rewarding years. It was the honour of a lifetime to lead the Board and I'm very grateful to so many for the trust they placed in me: trustees, staff, families, supporters and our many partners. And I'm delighted that Diana Sutton is taking up the reins: she brings real commitment to the cause with so many relevant skills and I know KIDS is in the best hands imaginable.

KIDS is an amazing charity. When my disabled son was young, KIDS stepped in and made all the difference. And so long as there are disabled children, young people and their families, KIDS will be needed, as a shining beacon of optimism, creativity, and decency, continuing to make a real difference.

Stephen Unwin
Chair until 6 July 2022

A Message from our new Chair

I would like to thank Stephen for his immense contribution to KIDS over the past six years.

In shaping our new strategy, Stephen championed the voices and views of disabled children and their families whom KIDS is here to support. It's an honour and a privilege to pick up the baton and help lead KIDS to deliver its ambitious new strategy. We want to increase the number of people we reach tenfold and to continue to provide vital and new support. I want to use my experience to amplify young people's voices to become agents of change, and to ensure that the voices of disabled children, young people and their families are and remain at the forefront of the organisation's work. At the same time, we need to ensure that we are sustainable so that we can continue to provide services in these financially challenging times. And I would like to thank every single donor and partner. Your generosity makes it possible to continue our practical, creative and life-changing support.

My thanks also to all our staff and volunteers for their dedication and commitment to KIDS work, keeping vital services going during the on-going interruptions caused by the pandemic. Finally I would like to thank our current and outgoing trustees for their service to KIDS.

Diana Sutton
Chair from 6 July 2022



KIDS have continued to support me in different areas of my life; encouraging me, motivating me and believing I can do more and be more. Now I live independently, help teach other young disabled people to ride horses and am more confident in having the future I want and deserve."

- Georgia Chambers, a young service user



Chief Executive's Welcome

Welcome to our review of the year. During 2021, we took stock, regrouped and reshaped our charity to develop an ambitious new strategy to meet future challenges. Our incredible team delivered almost 225,000 hours of support, over 40,000 hours of online support across all our services, working with almost 15,000 disabled children, young people and their families.

This period saw many adaptations and learning - for KIDS as a charity and for the families we work with. We didn't shy away from the challenges the covid pandemic continued to throw up, or the challenge of ensuring financial stability. The adaptability of our teams during this period has been impressive and everyone at KIDS should feel incredibly proud of our achievements in a tough climate.

I love visiting KIDS services, and our early years settings are especially fun (sandpits and water play are personal favourites!). A special memory this year comes from our specialist SEND nursery in the Midlands. Parents of under-5s are often anxious about a mainstream primary school's abilities to meet their child's needs and our staff take the time to listen and support them on their journey to identify and secure an appropriate placement. One of the children I met now spends part of the week with KIDS and part of the week in a mainstream nursery. The arrangement is working well and as a result the family is openly considering a mainstream school as an option. Every child is different and it's fantastic to see how by collaborating with families and other providers, we can open up opportunities to find the right place for them to thrive.

Our new strategy

After reflecting on the insights and experiences of children, young people and their families, and listening to colleagues inside and outside KIDS, in March 2022 I was delighted to launch 'Support, Empower, Sustain', our new strategy for 2022-2027.

In five years' time we plan to:

- Have a strong digital presence to complement our vital face-to-face services,
- Have developed a KIDS community of supporters and a new policy and advocacy role for the charity,
- Be operating sustainably,
- Be driven forward by disabled children and young people to achieve equal rights and opportunities and a more inclusive society for all,
- Have achieved a tenfold increase in the people we reach from 12,000 to 120,000,
- Be impacting the lives of more disabled children, young people and families than ever before.

As part of our strategy review, we renewed our vision and mission, to crystallise our commitment to disabled children and young people's rights and opportunities. Our mission has two elements: 1. To provide disabled children, young people and their families with practical, life-changing and creative support and 2. To empower disabled children and young people, to amplify their voices and to champion their rights.

KIDS has practical 'on the ground experience' from 50 years of working alongside children, young people and their families which we know could make a difference to policies, practices and systems if shared more widely. Already, this year I have been increasing our presence in national policy debates and in Parliament, making the case for the system to work for children and families (and not against them as they often experience when trying to navigate the system). Our new strategy commits us to developing a 'Speak Up' programme which will see us collaborate with others to secure stronger systems and resources so that no disabled child is left behind. We will amplify the voices of disabled children and young people, young carers and their families, support them to become agents for change and help to drive KIDS forward to achieve equal rights and opportunities. We'll be increasingly pro-active at influencing national and regional policy and practice, advocating for reform at every level.

A new era

As we start to deliver our new strategy it is time for us to bid farewell to our Chair since 2016, Stephen Unwin, and welcome Diana Sutton as our new Chair. On behalf of everyone at KIDS we thank Stephen for all of his time, wise words, care and exemplary leadership. We're delighted to welcome Diana as our new Chair. Diana, a KIDS trustee since 2020, brings extensive experience of charitable leadership and a real passion for involving children and young people in our next chapter.

I am so appreciative of the exceptional work of everyone at KIDS over the past year. Across England, colleagues displayed an empathetic and can-do attitude, working together as 'One Team KIDS'. Staff, trustees, volunteers, donors, funders, corporate partners, supporters and allies were enormously generous with their time, money and dedication. We ended the year in March 2022 with a wonderful Gala event, where we celebrated the last 50 years and shared exciting ideas for new initiatives. These include a new national digital hub to connect more disabled young people with their peers and with KIDS; new models of support to transform outcomes for under-5s with special educational needs, and for teenagers moving into adulthood and a pilot 'Navigator' - a named, single point of contact working with families to support them to access their entitlements.

Demand is rising, budgets are stretched and the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) system requires urgent reform. It's a tough environment for any disabled child, young person or their family to secure the support they need to flourish, but I know that we have the expertise, creativity and determination to rise to these challenges in the year ahead.

Katie Ghose
Chief Executive

Achievements

Our services

For more than 50 years, KIDS has provided a wide range of services nationally for disabled children, young people and their families. Our services cover three main areas: information, advice & family support; play and social; and learning and development.

Information, advice & family support includes:

- SENDIASS: The Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Information Advice and Support Services
- Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Mediation and Disagreement Resolution Service
- Domiciliary care
- Keyworking
- Training for parents
- Children's rights and advocacy
- Young carers
- Early years health and wellbeing groups
- Autism services

Play and social includes:

- Adventure playgrounds
- Play schemes
- Holiday accommodation
- Short breaks
- Overnight short breaks
- Youth clubs

Learning and development includes:

- Early years provision
- Portage home based learning
- Transitions to adulthood
- Young people's engagement groups
- Young people's participation



15,000 people
benefitted from our help

We provided:



225,000 hours
of support



40,000 hours
of online support

Beneficiaries who responded to our National Annual Family Survey this year strongly agree or agree that:

our service is caring and friendly

94%

our staff are knowledgeable and professional

93%

they trust us to act in child's/family's best interests

92%

they are happy with our service

91%

They also said:



Life saver. Thank you. Above and beyond. Staff are amazing. Someone to speak to when needed. Nothing but gratitude.



If it wasn't for your help my children would still be out of education.



Without KIDS, my children would be isolated and would not have the opportunity to do enjoyable activities.



My daughter's worker goes above and beyond and I honestly don't know what we would have done the last few years without her help.



Without my worker I'm not sure I'd be here as I was suffering from bad mental health around all the pressure of being a single parent with a disabled child.



Wakefield Awareness Support Project is the best service for children and families with additional needs. This service should be showered with funding and resources.

Our five-year strategic plan

This year of reflection, regrouping, and renewal, saw KIDS come together to develop and launch our five-year strategic plan. It marks the start of an exciting new era and sets out our new vision of a society where disabled children, young people and their families enjoy equal rights and opportunities.

Our new mission has two key elements:

To provide disabled children, young people and their families with practical, life-changing and creative support.

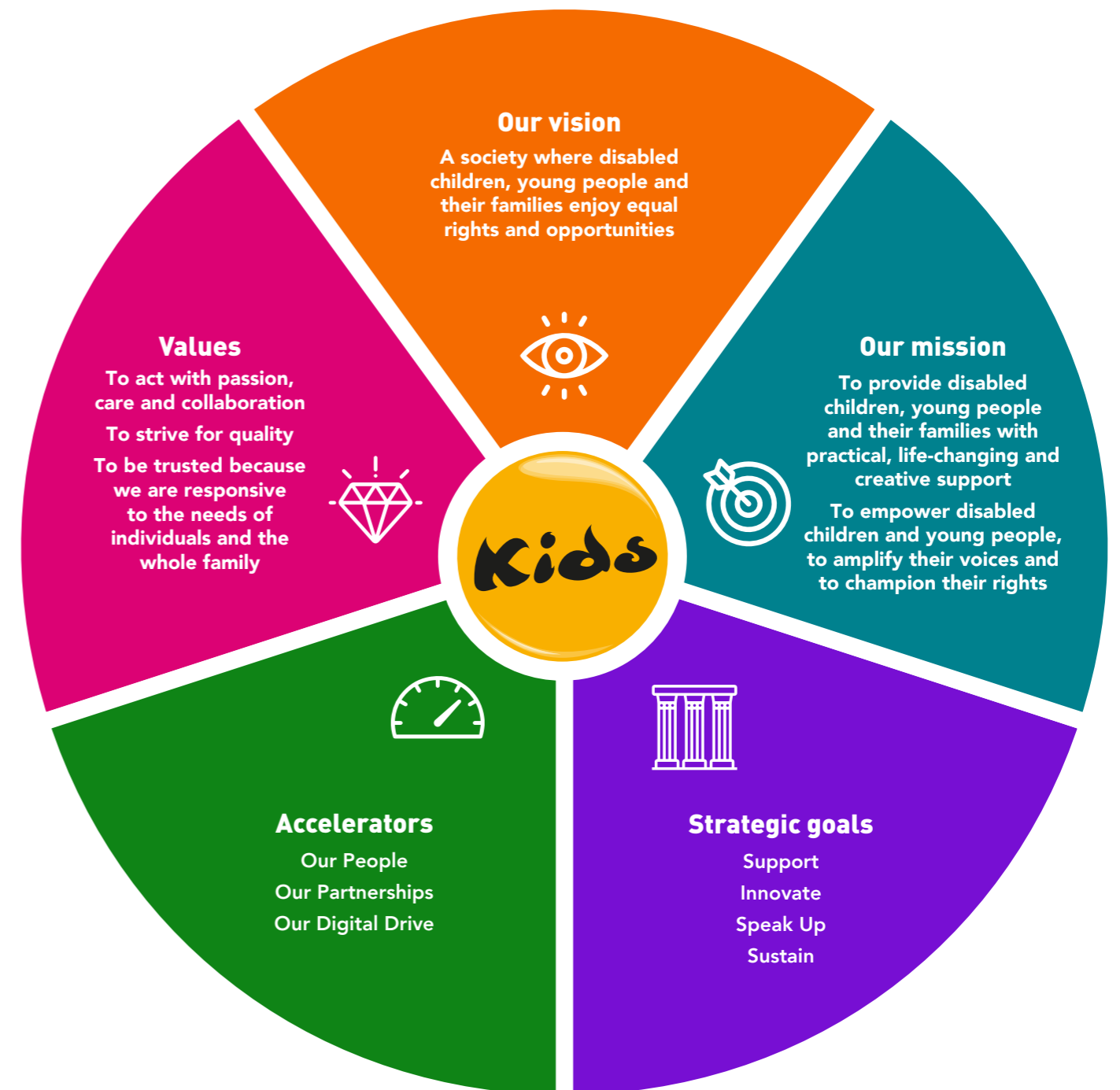
To empower disabled children and young people, to amplify their voices and to champion their rights.

Our new direction is firmly rooted in what disabled children, young people and their families are telling us they require, together with some important context and reflection on our 50 year journey. The strategy builds on KIDS' experience of providing practical and emotional support for children of all ages, from babies, through to young adults, in partnership with their families. It responds to the realities: that families still have to emphasise the negative to gain support, not what disabled children and young people can and do achieve; the chronic under-funding of disabled children's services which means that KIDS spends more on providing services than it receives and new pressures caused by the pandemic.

In our new strategy we outline how we will develop a strong digital presence to complement our successful face to face services, grow our KIDS community of supporters, initiate a new policy and advocacy role for the charity, and increase the number of disabled children, young people and families we work with from 12,000, to reach more than 120,000 people in 2027. Above all, disabled children and young people will be driving us forward to achieve equal rights and opportunities and a more inclusive society for all.



KIDS' strategy



The theme for our annual review this year is renewal. Renewal of our vision and mission, moving on from covid, and increasing the visibility of what we do and what we offer disabled children, young people and their families.

This year we launched our new strategy and in this report we highlight some of our key achievements over the year which align with our strategic goals of **Support, Innovate, Speak Up** and **Sustain**.



Support

This year we continued to work with families, communities, commissioners and other organisations to develop and deliver impactful and sustainable services. Practical support matters, but many families cannot access the services that will help their children to fulfil their potential. This year we have continued to strengthen our early years, play, mediation and the support we give to young carers.

Early Years

Our early years provision offers a range of services, which include early years education to ensure children develop, learn and are ready for school. We have expertise in developmental play in the home and in specialist creches. As part of our provision we also support parents to develop the necessary skills to help care for their children and promote their development.

Our staff team are very highly skilled and qualified and are experienced in working with children who have medical conditions such as epilepsy, asthma and children who require tube feeding and/or medication.

As part of this early years offering, we deliver nursery provision to over 100 children across two nurseries, one in Birmingham and one in Basingstoke.



Colby's Story



Colby was not meeting numerous milestones when he first started KIDS Nursery in September 2021. Aged two, he had only just started crawling and was unable to stand without full support.

I chose KIDS Nursery as it was recommended to me by his health visitor and numerous people from the team involved in and around Colby's care. I also sought advice from other parents as Colby was unable to communicate and sometimes exhibited some challenging behaviours.

Colby had been diagnosed with Cerebral Palsy, Global Development Delay and Periventricular Leukomalacia among a couple of other smaller diagnoses just before his second birthday. Thanks to the amazing team at KIDS working in partnership with us as a family and with the support from physio and Occupational Therapists, as well as reports from paediatricians and neurologists, we were able to tailor a plan to steer Colby in the right direction through various meetings – Colby is now three, and is able to cruise around a room, he's able to say many words and not get as frustrated with stuff he may not be able to do yet.

The KIDS team have been so fantastic; I couldn't sing their praises higher. Talking me through each stage, helping me move Colby on to a SEN placement as he was originally just funded for mainstream support, now also we are working towards an EHCP [education health care plan] for when he starts school in September 2023. The KIDS team have also talked through the process of school placements and what they believe would be best for Colby.

Jane and the team made Colby feel so welcomed, made him feel like he wasn't any different to any of the others more able in his class and have offered us so much support. Having a child with disabilities sometimes can be so difficult when you're having to take on all the different appointments and meetings that go hand in hand with that. Jane and the team made me feel like I wasn't alone and no question that I had was too silly."



Play

KIDS gave 317 disabled children 38,609 hours of play opportunity through our four specialist adventure playgrounds in London this year, as well as opening our doors to families, the local community and other professionals.

Our playgrounds offer adventurous child-led play in a safe, creative and stimulating environment. Supported by qualified and trained staff, we aim to provide all children using our playgrounds with equal access to all activities.

KIDS playgrounds vary in size however, they all have a wide range of equipment including soft play, zip wires, sensory rooms, nest swings, climbing frames, tree houses and bikes and trailers. They are all secure in a safe environment where children can explore freely.

Funding our playgrounds is a mix of statutory local authority funding, fundraised income and parent/family contributions. Our playgrounds can be found in the London Boroughs of Hackney, Wandsworth, Islington and Kensington and Chelsea.



All children need a place to play. They need space, informality, and freedom to move around and make a noise, to express themselves, to experiment and to investigate. Disabled young people need this freedom even more than others. In surroundings which stimulate their imagination and challenge them to face and overcome risks, they will be given opportunities to build their self-confidence and independence”.

- Lady Allen of Hurtwood



I love Hayward Adventure Playground. It has been a lifesaver for me as a single mum of three children, with one who has autism.” - Parent

While the equal opportunity to play is fundamental to our mission, our playgrounds offer so much more; often being the only service that is consistent in a child's life and stepping in to offer critical support when it is needed most, as experienced by Leo-Blake*.

Leo-Blake is 16-years-old, and has been attending our Islington playground since 2010. He has grown up at the playground, and many of our staff members have grown up with him.

Since the outbreak of covid, Leo-Blake's needs have become more complex. Due to increased levels of anxiety, Leo-Blake hasn't been attending school, and the only time that he will leave his house is to attend the weekly Sunday sessions at the playground.

At first, he was too anxious to even attend these sessions, however, we regularly sent staff members that he knew well round to his block of flats to wave at him from the balcony the day before he was due to attend. After a few weeks of this encouragement, Leo-Blake began to attend sessions again. His increased anxiety and isolation over the covid period have led to a complete regression in his functional skills.

Having previously been a chatty and engaged child, Leo-Blake no longer uses much verbal language unless talking to himself. Reports from home state that he spends most of his days sitting alone in his room rocking back and forth on his bed.

At the playground we are supporting Leo-Blake in his mental health by making sure that he has access to things that bring him joy. Leo-Blake's ability to access the playground has been essential in allowing him space and time to be outside and to engage with other activities, like scooting and dancing, that we know he loves.

Key staff members have been working closely with Leo-Blake's support network outside the playground to try to understand how to get him back to a place where he is accessing more services. As part of this transition, KIDS now provide a weekly individual tailored daytime session for him: first with KIDS staff members, then with staff and support workers from his school. We hope that it will encourage him to return to school and a more stable routine, and allow some respite for his dad who is Leo-Blake's sole carer.

*Name changed to protect anonymity.



Award-winning SEND Mediation

This year, KIDS' award-winning Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Mediation and Disagreement Resolution Service, continued to go from strength to strength. We adapted to virtual mediation sessions during the pandemic by arranging video links or telephone conferences, and we continue to offer this service to those who need it. The number of families we have worked with to provide this valuable service continued to increase this year. We had almost 3,600 mediation referrals.

KIDS SEND mediation is free of charge for families, and is for children and young people with SEND (or who may have SEND), aged 0 to 25. We are, and have been, a leading and highly-regarded provider of this service to over 50 local authorities across England for almost 20 years. SEND Mediation and Disagreement Resolution is a statutory requirement for local authorities. It is a quicker and less formal way to resolve disagreements than going to Tribunal, saving time and pressure for all involved, and it can help rebuild relationships that may have broken down. We believe that high-quality mediation is a valuable part of the SEND system because it encourages collaborative problem-solving.



We both just wanted to say, thank you very much for being welcoming, kind and patient with us but most importantly with our child. He really did enjoy talking to you! There's not many people out there like you, so thank you for the service and care you provided when dealing with our situation it was much appreciated."



Many thanks. As you can appreciate this has been and remains an incredibly stressful time for my family and I but you and your organisation have acted with great compassion and humanity throughout, things which are sadly lacking elsewhere in this process. You have been extremely efficient and reliable throughout and on behalf of my family I wish you and your colleagues our heartfelt thanks and best wishes for the future."

What is SEND Mediation?

It is the process of an independent trained SEND Mediator supporting a discussion designed to help parties reach agreement over disputes surrounding SEND.



Young Carers

Through our young carers project, we support young carers between the ages of eight to 18, whose lives are restricted in some way because they are supporting a person who is ill, has a disability, mental illness or is misusing a substance. This could include a parent, sibling or close family member. Our support allows the young carer to take time out for themselves, socialise and cope with the demands placed on them as carers.

KIDS run regular clubs where young carers can safely talk about how they feel, meet other young carers, get support, advice and information as well as have some fun away from their caring responsibilities. We also provide holiday activities and occasional weekends away.

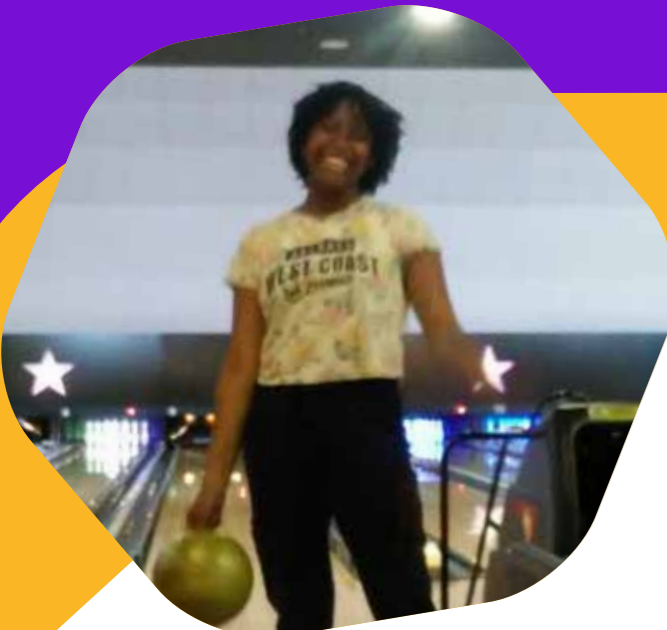
The project looks to match support with the needs of the young carer. The young carers' team visits every young carer and their family at home to design and plan support that meets individual needs and then, on an ongoing basis, we review the support plans to ensure that they reflect individual young carers' changing needs. We also work alongside schools to make sure they understand individual caring circumstances.

The services also provide accessible links to youth counselling and other agencies who can give expert advice and information on all issues that affect young carers.

The Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity (RNRMC) have supported Naval families for many years. We currently hold a three year grant for £141,000 that allows the young carers group to provide bespoke support to Royal Navy and Royal Marines families.



Indie-Iris' Story



Mum, Camille said:



Indie-Iris started back at school after her dad went on deployment and she struggled quite a bit and started having anxiety attacks. Obviously, this was a very anxious time for us all with my added health concerns. KIDS has been instrumental in providing a stable and confidential avenue for Indie-Iris to be able to talk about her feelings. She has mentioned that one of the biggest things is having someone to talk to and the fact that when she is not at home it helps her to not think of her dad being away from home. She has returned from meetings in a much better place than she was and being able to meet with other children who are in the same position as she is, has allowed her to process things much better than previously. This has also allowed me to be at ease knowing that she has this space that is 'hers'. Thank you so very much."

Indie-Iris said:



Young carers help me by taking my mind off my dad, like when we go out or just having someone to talk to. It actually really helps me quite a lot even when he is here. When we went to the young carers festival it helped so much because I wasn't in the house, I was just out, it helps because I made new friends who feel and know what I am going through."

Indie-Iris cares for her mum who has a physical disability. Her dad is serving in the Royal Navy and is currently deployed.

In March, the family found out that Indie did not get her choice of secondary school. This was a stressful time as getting her to the school she was allocated would have been challenging due to her mum's health, and even more so when her dad is deployed. Also, all her friends and support network were going to a different school. The family were upset and stressed; they simply did not know what to do.

The carers project was able to support the appeal of the secondary school decision, by providing supporting letters explaining the impact that not getting into her chosen school would mean not only from being a serving forces family but also the risks associated with young carers falling behind in education due to their caring responsibilities, and the impact of being removed from her support network. All the evidence provided for the appeal helped to secure Indie's place at her chosen secondary school.

Indie fully engages with KIDS support sessions and leisure activities, voicing her opinions on preferred trips. We are able to provide opportunities that would be difficult for the family to provide. For example, at Easter Indie went to the theme park at Chessington for the first time. Day trips like this are difficult for the family, due to the exhaustion the day would cause for mum. Indie has a good relationship with staff, this ensures we are aware of her emotional state to support her fully. We provide one-to-one support when Indie is struggling when dad is deployed; especially when this falls in the holidays and this impacts her access to leisure activities.

SEND Navigator model of support

This year we built on our successful track record of innovation to test and scale new models of support, including our flagship SEND Navigator model. A named SEND Navigator is one point of contact for families who will assist them to access the support and entitlements they need, reduce families' isolation and lift the burden of stress. We know from this pilot we are delivering in Birmingham that it's a vital lifeline and support service for families.

Early help makes all the difference. From the moment a child with a disability receives a diagnosis, they and their family are plunged into a complex and often frustrating system where getting the right support can feel like an almost impossible task.

The SEND Navigator will support them through the health, social care and education maze ensuring access to early years entitlement and highlighting best practice, impact, and policy and service gaps.

SEND Navigators work at KIDS Family Groups (KIDS services that help parents to support their children). A parent taking part in our pilot project in Birmingham told us:



I was very stressed and tearful as I did not know how to get support with my living situation and having an older child with autism and a younger child that was also showing some behaviours. SEND Navigator supported us in accessing services that I did not know how to. I am less stressed now as I can see change happening and extra support for my children."

Support for parents is urgently needed in early years in particular, as it is an underrepresented area, with limited financial commitment from Government. For example, early years has been allocated just 3% of the Education Recovery Programme Funding to help support children's learning and development in the aftermath of covid. Early years provision is often caught up in a conflict between providing early years education and offering quality childcare, straddling education, health and social care. The early years sector is already under strain and the impact is magnified for children with SEND.

We want to continue the SEND Navigator pilot and extend it nationally, as we want every family with a disabled child to have a Navigator.

What is a SEND Navigator?

A named, single point of contact for families with a disabled child, providing one-to-one support at every stage, from pre-birth onwards.



Navigating help

A Senior Practitioner at Lakeside Family Group in Birmingham referred siblings Alex* and Ben* to KIDS due to concerns about Alex's behaviour and Ben not attending school.

Alex displayed aggressive behaviour towards family members and had a poor sleep pattern. They also displayed a lot of sensory seeking behaviours, including eating non-food items. Alex attended KIDS nursery.

Ben had very high anxiety, had previously struggled to settle at nursery, and was struggling to settle in reception, despite being on an extremely reduced timetable. During the period of support for the family, the transition plan broke down and Ben was removed from his school.

To support Alex's behaviour, the SEND Navigator:

- Signposted the parents to the occupational therapy helpline and gave advice about implementing the strategies offered.
- Created a sleep routine with parents and gave support and advice to implement it.
- Liaised with KIDS nursery to arrange a multi-agency meeting which included input from the occupational therapy and speech and language therapy team.

To support Ben, the SEND Navigator:

- Referred Ben to early years inclusion service (EYIS) and provided evidence for the EYIS worker to complete a SEND support provision plan.
- Successfully processed both Ben and Alex's autism assessments through liaison with the child development centre.
- Supported parents to apply for an alternative school placement and supported parents at an education health and care plan mediation meeting.
- Gave 1-1 learning sessions at KIDS Family Group.
- Supported parents to complete Ben's disability living allowance form.

*Names changed to protect anonymity



I feel less isolated now, before a lot of people I spoke to regarding my child's behaviour said it was him being naughty, however you educated me in understanding his behaviour better and why my child is displaying certain behaviours. I feel there is more support available for families and that I can ask for help."

Creating a new digital service

A stark feature of covid lockdown measures was the extent to which for many of us living, working and socialising online became 'the new normal'. At KIDS, however, we were acutely aware this was only half the story.

Our frontline staff continued to support families face to face - in nurseries, playgrounds and community settings, by adapting groups to one-to-one sessions or meeting outside when venues were available.

Other services, including mediation, were provided by telephone or online. An unexpected benefit was that some young people felt more able to participate in formal meetings about education plans than they had when in person as this felt less daunting than meeting face to face.

Quickly we could see the distinction between families who could easily access an online environment and the barriers which prevented others from doing so. Every family was under pressure, but disabled children and their families faced multiple additional challenges.

Digital access was a lifeline but also brought its own challenges – not enough devices or bandwidth; on-screen fatigue; dexterity needs or sensory impairments. We adapted 'in the moment', making videos for under 5s with Makaton; dropping off sensory packs to support the online experience; and providing tailored one to one support ahead of a group session online.

We commissioned a report for the Pears Learning Hub (a partnership between Pears Foundation and the Disabled Children's Partnership) to uncover the reality of digital experiences for disabled children, young people and their families during covid, and launched the 'Locked Out' report in August 2021. The report offered a snapshot of young people's digital lives and the adaptations of organisations around them. Uniquely, the report explains what digital disadvantage is, through the lens of disabled children and their families and shows us how it can be tackled to make services and other parts of society accessible for all.

Young People's Hub

Following this report, we looked at how we could better support and help bridge the digital divide with our young people. A brilliant example of this, and one that came directly from the young people we already work with, is our new digital hub, designed by young people for young people. They told us that they want a place that can give them information they can trust; ways to connect with other young people to share experiences or just have fun; opportunities to make their voices heard; and receive personalised support and advice when they need it most.

The design phase of our digital hub was completed this year. We will complete the build of the hub next year. It will provide young disabled people with a safe, accessible and welcoming space to get advice, learn skills, share their experiences, ask questions, and connect with others. It will reach new young people and enhance existing services.

We will launch our hub alongside a new KIDS website in 2023 and by 2024 these and other initiatives will be helping us to significantly increase the number of young disabled people connected with KIDS and with their peers.





Speak Up

This year we made a commitment to speak up about the issues affecting disabled children, young people and families and to empower disabled children and young people to be agents of change. This significant new element of our strategy will see the charity become increasingly proactive in influencing national and local policy and practice, by drawing on its frontline expertise and collaborating widely with other partners to amplify the voices of children and young people with SEND.

This year we worked with young people to help them achieve systemic improvement, through groups like Loud Mouths and Staying Positive. Taking our lead from our 'Locked Out' report, we involved young people from the start in co-designing our new digital hub, which will provide learnings for the co-design and delivery of other services in partnership with children and young people.

Once again, we took an active role in several disability and SEND coalitions and partnerships. We continued to co-chair the Digital Services Consortium with Sense and contributed to a collection of case-studies on digital services provision by charities serving disabled or seriously ill children and their families. We articulated how digital access is a right, not a luxury and the interventions we believe could be most impactful in making this a reality.

We started to establish a distinctive KIDS voice on the importance of community provision, such as short breaks and after-school clubs, to enable disabled children and young people to thrive.

We want disabled children and young people to be at the heart of our work to change the system, advocating for reform at every level, including for local authorities and communities to have the resources to sustain safe and high-quality services. Over the next year we will expand our work to support disabled young people to influence decision-makers. By the end of 2023 we will also have launched a new programme to empower disabled young people to campaign for change.

Building evidence to speak up

KIDS commissioned research into disabled digital exclusion and digital disadvantage during the pandemic. This is the foundation for us to help amplify young people's voices and to help influence equal rights for disabled children, young people and their families.



Loud Mouths

KIDS Loud Mouths is a Young People's Participation Group, funded by The National Lottery Community Fund. It enables disabled young people to have a voice, shape and influence service delivery in Hull, and supports young people to be champions of participation and co-production.

Loud Mouths is led by young people with SEND aged 14-25. They meet up twice a month to make new friends, have fun, learn about what affects them, tell others what they want and get their voices heard.

The young people are able to develop happier and stronger relationships with each other, to understand difference and the power of the collective and to develop good links and a sense of trust with local decision makers.



The Loud Mouths are pioneering participation and young people's engagement in the city of Hull and nationally. This group are giving young people with SEND the opportunity to actively be involved in the decisions that affect their lives and the lives of all young people with SEND. The group is a diverse range of young people of all abilities working together to achieve a common goal; to have a voice and to be heard. This diversity makes them wonderful and unique. You will not meet a more deserving group for recognition or awards for celebrating unity."

- KIDS Fundraiser

KIDS Staying Positive Group

This year, another success story of using digital to navigate out of lockdown has been our groups led by young people. The Staying Positive Group in Stockport, funded by the Zochonis Charitable Trust, achieved so much by adapting to meet the challenges exacerbated by the pandemic, and by reducing the inequalities faced by the disabled young people who attend.

When face to face meetings of the group restarted, after being suspended for a number of months, it was crucial to offer a flexible approach to delivery in order to ensure that the group could continue. The group carried on meeting weekly, and when in-person sessions were not possible, co-ordinators and practitioners held online group sessions, maintaining the crucial peer support of the group and making use of interactive digital resources including games, videos and museum tours. These virtual meetings proved popular with our young people as a fun and convenient way for them to meet up when in-person meetings were not available or anxiety about being back out in the world proved too much.

It became clear that the impact of disrupted routines and reduced contact with the world and support services was having a particularly detrimental effect on the young people's confidence and sense of independence. To address this and help support the young people through this, our practitioners introduced additional, intensive 1-1 sessions with each member of the group so that individual concerns and needs could be identified and steps planned to address them.

This year the group has:

- Teamed up with Transport for Greater Manchester to create an accessible, sensory walking route through their local Vernon Park. The route is now featured on the new map.
- Worked with Pure Vision contributing a piece of artwork to their Vision for Stockport project, the canvases will be displayed in public buildings around Stockport.
- Taken part in the Ripples of Hope Festival, sharing recipes, food and stories of Human Rights with other marginalised community groups.



- KIDS support worker



Will has been attending the group for several years. Prior to this year, his personal challenges had prevented him from engaging in our social trips and activities, but this year he developed a strong rapport with the team and gained the confidence to communicate and participate more in group discussions, especially during online sessions."



Kyle has benefited hugely from attending the group. This year has seen him continue to make huge steps and he has really defined himself as a fantastic ambassador for the group. Kyle now takes a lead role in some sessions, he has gained a lot of confidence, communicated his aspirations, and he has expressed an interest in becoming a volunteer for our wellbeing group."

Making Participation Work

Now in its sixth year, we have been commissioned by the Department of Education (DfE) as part of a consortium with Contact and the Council for Disabled Children, to deliver a national participation programme with children and young people with SEND.

The Making Participation Work programme quickly responded during the pandemic and, the KIDS participation team opened their groups virtually to a wider cohort. This allowed those who live in areas that don't have groups, where groups had stopped, and those who find it challenging to attend face to face meetings, to be part of the participation sessions.

This year, young people continued to tell us they 'want to be involved', 'want to make a difference' and 'want to be heard'. Through these participation sessions, KIDS really saw the benefit of bringing young people with SEND together from across the country regularly, to share experiences, learning, have a say, and influence matters important to them.

Many young people made it clear they wanted to come together face to face, after spending so long meeting virtually. However other young people who were worried about travelling, as well as some areas seeing a rise in covid cases, still wanted to participate in a Collective Get Together (CGT).

We worked with young people to develop an agenda that allowed for a virtual element to the day using a hybrid approach to allow for wider participation. The way we worked over lockdown meant we were already well prepared to include this. The young people were delighted that our sponsors Kurt Geiger supplied the venue and lunch, and TY provided goodie bags with cute face coverings and cuddly toys.

The CGT day was attended by a representative from Department for Education (DfE) along with representatives from Contact who attended as part of the virtual sessions.



I wanted to drop you a line to say thanks for letting me be a part of the CGT on Tuesday. What a fantastic day it was, as always, I was so impressed seeing how fabulously it was delivered and I'm looking forward to seeing the write up in due course as the sessions were so valuable. I would say I was surprised by the quality of input from the young people – but at this point I know to expect it, please pass on my thanks to them for allowing me to be in their safe space and for all their considered thoughts and ideas."

I would be very interested in attending future events where possible, please do let me know; it's really brought colour into the work that I do, you can never underestimate first-hand contact with the young people who are directly impacted by our areas work"

- DfE representative

What is Making Participation Work?

Making Participation Work is a national participation programme funded by the Department of Education that looks to increase effective participation for children and young people with SEN. The programme is co-delivered by KIDS and Council for Disabled Children to: influence national and local policy and practice development on SEN; establish and embed young voices within strategic participation locally; and to ensure that young people understand changes to the law and how it affects them.



SEND reform

In March 2022 the Government finally published its long-awaited Green Paper on the support provided for children with SEND.

There is huge variation in the extent to which education, health and care providers in different local areas meet the needs of children and young people with SEND. The pandemic disproportionately affected disabled children, and brought new pressures to disabled children's services, already chronically underfunded. The pandemic highlighted and intensified long-standing issues in the SEND system.

The Children and Families Act 2014 was the biggest SEND reform in a generation. Unfortunately, disabled children, young people and their families were let down by its implementation and will be looking to Government to ensure this set of reforms is resourced, implemented and enforced. KIDS shares Government's

vision of a system that delivers 'the right support in the right place at the right time'. We want Government to prioritise wrap around support at home and in the community; to strengthen support for under 5s and their families and to address the postcode lottery to ensure good quality support is available in the different places where disabled children and young people live their lives: at home, at school, in their local community and online.

A core part of our new strategy is to speak up, and this is what will do. Our response to this Green Paper is to ensure that reforms are rooted in what disabled children, young people and their families are telling us they require, such as keeping mediation robust but not mandatory. We will work with disabled children, young people and their families, alongside carers and practitioners to respond to the consultation and make recommendations informed by our 50 years of frontline experience.

Local government funding for disabled children, young people and their families has fallen over the last decade. This has affected many charities, including KIDS, which receives 85% of its income from local authority contracts.

This year, a fundamental aim of our strategic review was to recognise and assess the financial difficulties we face, and identify a sustainable way for KIDS to fulfil its mission. We currently spend more on providing services than we receive and we know that if we do not act now, our reserves will run out and we will have to close. Our plan is to move first to achieve a balanced budget and then to a position where we have the funds to invest in new models to support significantly more people and increase our impact.

We started work on a comprehensive roadmap for sustainability, which we will complete in 2022-2023.

Whilst formulating its new strategy, KIDS identified the growth of profitable new earned income streams as key to becoming financially sustainable. This year, we scoped and shortlisted a number of new income-generating initiatives which we hope to develop, refine and test in 2023, to find viable commercial propositions that will deliver both financial income and positive impact in line with KIDS' mission.

Fundraising is a key element in our roadmap for sustainability and we will continue to seek new funds and find ways to develop income from individuals, companies, and trusts and foundations.



Thank you

In 2021-2022, our generous supporters helped us to raise £1.3M through donations, grants, legacies events and other activities, which meant we were able to deliver services for disabled young people, children and their families across the country. We are very grateful to everyone who kindly supported our work. Support from trusts and foundations has remained outstanding.

Our supporters bring diversity, passion and creativity and all have one thing in common: they believe in giving disabled children and young people the best possible start in life, the opportunity to be included within society and the chance of a better future.



From volunteering days...

We celebrated Volunteers Week in June with 150 volunteers from Kurt Geiger rolling up their sleeves to upgrade the specialist KIDS adventure playground in Hackney.

To fundraising or challenge events including fun runs, marathons, sky dives or abseils ...

The team at corporate partner Greystar challenged themselves to run, walk, cycle, swim, mow and push prams in an attempt to visit all 61 global corporate offices virtually in their '80 days around the Greystar Globe Challenge'.





And dinners and auctions...

Cranswick Country Foods held their 7th Golf Day and Charity Auction for KIDS. To date, Cranswick has raised over £250k supporting projects in Hull.

We extend a very warm thank you to our Special Events Committee for their invaluable support, generosity and expertise. The year ended with a fantastic gala dinner, a fitting end to our 50th anniversary celebrations. 24 year old Charlie confidently addressed the room, earning a standing ovation, telling supporters and guests of his journey with KIDS since 2009.



Charlie (pictured above) said:

Through the different groups I have done with KIDS the different skills I have developed mean I can do more with my life. I live in my own place now with some support and travel independently. I got a job, and volunteer at a charity shop. I could never have done this before because I didn't have the confidence. If KIDS was not around and I didn't get these opportunities I might not be the young man I am today!"



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