



# Support Empower Sustain

**KIDS' Strategy 2022-2027**



Giving  
disabled children  
a brighter future

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## **Together with disabled children, young people and their families, realising rights and opportunities**



Keeping the voice of the child at the heart of what they do

– Carer



# Foreword

**KIDS have always delivered excellent services that support disabled children, young people and families; having experienced a number of these myself. Starting at the KIDS nursery, joining Saturday fun clubs, playschemes, accessing youth club, short breaks and becoming a key member of the participation work KIDS facilitate, the last 23 years KIDS has supported my family and I to achieve more.**

This strategy really demonstrates the new vision KIDS has for children and young people's voice to be at the heart of its work. It will be exciting to see what developments are made in face-to-face services and the digital hub and how more children, young people and families will be impacted by these opportunities. This can make a massive difference, but to make it work everyone needs to support the ambition and get on board with the plan.

I have faced so many barriers, life has not been easy and transitions have been hard. At times I have experienced challenges that nearly made me give up, my mental health at breaking point and I found things difficult to cope with. KIDS offered me a safe space, with trusted staff who helped bring me back to where I wanted to be; without them things could be so different.

We all have hopes but the problem is for so many that these never come true, because people just don't believe. We don't believe in ourselves, we don't believe in the possibilities and heart-breakingly other people don't believe in us either. KIDS is different, they see the potential and have aspirations for everyone to achieve that potential and dreams to become reality.

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.

KIDS were there for me, are here for the current generation of young disabled people and will be there for future generations, believing in them and helping give them brighter futures.

**Georgia Chambers**  
**Young people's service user**



# Our vision and mission

## Our vision

**A society where disabled children, young people and their families enjoy equal rights and opportunities**

## Our mission

- **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**

## Who we support

Throughout this document we refer to 'disabled children, young people and their families'. KIDS works with children and young people with any disability including children and young people with special educational needs, those who do not identify as disabled but require additional support to thrive, and also with young carers. We also recognise that not every family unit is the same; for example, some of the children and young people we support are living in foster care or in a family setting under local authority care.

## Our story

KIDS was launched in 1970, when teacher John Mulcahy, working with a disabled child in his class and the child's mother, discovered what practical support would fill the gaps in provision that the child and family needed.

Fifty years on, we continue to learn from disabled children, young people and their families. Society has changed, and we support families to find solutions that work for them.

Despite major reforms, life remains challenging. Our health and care systems force families to emphasise the negative to gain support. Disabled children and young people are constantly reminded what they cannot do, not what they can and do achieve. Families must fight the system, often falling into crisis because early help is not available.

KIDS works with around 12,000 disabled children, young people and family members each year across England; during 2021 we delivered over 190,000 hours of support. We support children of all ages, from babies through to young adults, whatever their disability. We are continually developing our expertise and sharing it with others. We are proud of our achievements but know how far there is to go before every disabled child and young person leads a fulfilled life and families are supported at every stage.

## Our strategy

We have reflected on our journey and listened closely to disabled children, young people, parents, carers and other stakeholders. We have acted on their insights to shape a new direction for KIDS. Reforms must be rooted in what disabled children, young people and their families are telling us they require. They are the future and KIDS must strengthen their power and agency.

### Our new strategy has four goals:

- Support
- Innovate
- Speak up
- Sustain

Together, they form an ambitious programme which will see KIDS develop, expand and transform its support for families; collaborate to create innovative new models of delivery; work with disabled children and young people to speak up for systemic reform and identify a sustainable way to deliver our services.

By delivering this strategy KIDS will significantly increase the number of disabled children, young people and families we work with from 12,000 in 2022, to reach more than 120,000 in 2027.

### Our consultation showed that:

- Disabled young people, their siblings and young carers wish to be recognised, respected and included. They want a wide range of practical services that enable them to enjoy themselves, make friends, learn, volunteer, work, increase their independence and develop practical skills.
- Parents want to know how to navigate the system and secure high-quality support to help their child progress. They want to enjoy family time together, but also be able to have a break knowing that their child is safe, having fun and is being supported in ways which are tailored for their child's needs.
- Our commissioners and partners respect and value KIDS. They highlight our adaptability and the bonds we build with families, opening doors to other forms of support. Creativity, value for money and innovation are essential to those we support and to those who commission and/or fund our work.
- Our team are proud of what they do, especially in supporting children and young people with the most complex needs or the quietest voices, who, as a result, sometimes go unheard. They are frustrated by the gaps in provision and want KIDS to be more vocal in calling for change.



# Our goals

## Support

### What?

Work with families, communities, commissioners and other organisations to develop and deliver impactful and sustainable services.

### Why?

Everyone we work with says that practical support matters. Wherever they are on their journey, they value the warm, professional and flexible support that KIDS provides. But too many disabled children, young people and their families cannot access the services that will help them to fulfil their potential. The Covid pandemic has profoundly affected the mental and physical health of many young disabled people and their families. It has also changed how services are delivered, to include more on-line provision. This brings opportunities but risks the digital exclusion of some disabled children and young people. In this new environment, KIDS will be collaborative and creative to help ensure no disabled child or young person is left behind.

### How?

- We will work with families, carers and young people to co-produce a distinctive portfolio of services, delivered face-to-face, on-line and by telephone. We will develop new projects that enable families to come together for mutual support delivered in the way that best suits their needs.
- We will create a new, national digital hub, co-designed with disabled children and young people, and accessible to their families, professionals and practitioners. It will be an on-line community where young people connect around shared interests, access services and come together to campaign for change. We will launch our hub alongside a new KIDS website in 2023 and by 2024 we will have significantly increased the number of young disabled people connected with KIDS and with their peers.
- We will collaborate with disabled children and young people, families, young carers and other organisations to highlight the gaps in services to Government and decision-makers and present cost-effective proposals for reform.

“

I feel supported each time I speak to someone from KIDS. I'd be lost without them.

– Family member

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## Innovate

### What?

Develop new models of support that transform disabled children and young people's lives.

### Why?

KIDS has a proud history of innovation. We introduced home learning for young disabled children and their parents, pioneered adventure playgrounds accessible to disabled children and conducted the pilot for the National Independent Educational Advisory Service for parents of disabled children. This was a forerunner of parent partnerships and the special educational needs information, advice and support services (SENDIASS) now provided by every English local authority. Now we will use our expertise, data and connections with families to co-create solutions to the barriers that they face.

### How?

- Families say that knowing where to go for support and navigating the system is all-consuming. Starting in 2022, KIDS will pilot a new SEND navigator model of support to further explore the value for families of one point of contact at every stage from pre-birth onwards. We believe a navigator should be there for every family that needs one. The pilot will test whether access to a navigator results in a reduced demand on statutory services, by preventing crisis and achieving better outcomes for disabled children and young people.
- KIDS will also identify partners and funds to seed or scale new models of support to transform outcomes for under-fives with special educational needs, and outcomes for young disabled people moving into adulthood. Major gaps in provision exist in these two life stages, and fresh thinking is required. This work will be highly collaborative, build on existing good practice and be rooted in disabled children's, young people's and families' expertise in what works for them. By the end of 2025 KIDS will have tested these two new models of support and widely disseminated our learning. We will also work in partnership to identify and develop other innovative products and services.

“

KIDS were a phone call away to the parents and were flexible and agile in the delivery of their service and continued to do what they do best; provide support to some of the most vulnerable children and young people in Waltham Forest.

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– *Short Break Co-ordinator, London Borough of Waltham Forest*

## Speak up

### What?

Empower disabled children and young people to be agents of change. Use our expertise, partnerships and platforms to work with them to achieve systemic improvement.

### Why?

Many people feel the system isn't working, that it under-values families' expertise and does not fund early help that can avert crises and help families thrive. Individual activists and organisations fight strongly for attention on specific issues, but their demands are not matched by ambitious, high-level, society-wide commitments, nor are they backed up by resources to transform lives. As a pan-disability charity, KIDS will speak up about these issues and amplify others' voices to achieve lasting change.

### How?

- We will develop a social change programme with clear policy and influencing objectives, grounded in evidence and research from our own and others' sources. By mid-2024 we will have a series of policy positions, briefings and key messages and will be using our expertise to inform national and regional policy and practice. We will take an active role in disability coalitions and partnerships, and establish a distinctive KIDS voice on the issues that disabled children and young people tell us are the most important to them.
- Disabled children and young people will remain at the heart of our work to change the system. Working with them, their families and partners, we will advocate for reform at every level, including for local authorities and communities to have the resources to sustain safe and high-quality services. We will collaborate widely to improve the availability and quality of both specialist and inclusive provision.
- KIDS has broken new ground in supporting young people to raise disability awareness among decision-makers and to influence their policy and practice. We have already directly connected young disabled people to those who are making decisions about how and when they will receive support. We will expand this work to reach young disabled people across the country. By the end of 2023 we will also have launched a new programme to empower disabled young people to campaign for change.

“

A key KIDS value was Positive – [it] makes you feel heard and reach your potential because you feel like you're being valued. KIDS really increases your self-esteem and self-worth, making you feel more valued as a person.

– *Young person consulted as part of our strategy development*

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## Sustain

### What?

- Identify a sustainable way for KIDS to fulfil its mission.
- Act with others to increase recognition and resources for disabled children, young people and their families.

### Why?

Local government funding for disabled children 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. We currently spend more on providing services than we receive. If we don't act now, our reserves will run out and we will have to close. We know that our services make a positive difference, and we are determined to continue. 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.

### How?

- We will complete a roadmap for sustainability. This will include a five-year financial outlook and a robust plan to rebuild our reserves to be able to invest in new ways of delivery to meet disabled children and young people's changing needs. We will identify the best and most cost-effective systems to support our service delivery and challenge ourselves to find new approaches. Our brand refresh and relaunch in 2023 will substantially increase our ability to connect and collaborate with more disabled children, young people and their families and this in turn will enable us to attract new and sustainable funding.
- Whilst we develop new ways to provide services, we will have to reduce KIDS' presence on the ground in some areas. We will minimise the impact on disabled children, young people, their families and our colleagues, and will demonstrate our determination to forge a path through the chronic under-funding of disabled children's services.
- We will continue to seek new funds and find ways to develop income, from individuals, companies, and trusts and foundations, as well as from earned income. In 2022 we will launch a new supporter programme, which will give individuals the opportunity to donate and be part of the KIDS community. We will also identify products and services which meet a clear need and deliver sustainable income to the charity.
- In 2022 we will commence a governance effectiveness review, to support the implementation of the new strategy. By the end of 2024 we will have a new model in place that will strengthen disabled young people's involvement in KIDS' governance.
- We will make the case to Government for funding safe, sustainable and high-quality services for disabled children, young people, their families and young carers in every local area, supported by digital access for all. We will evidence the human and financial value of timely and consistent support for families. We will work with others to create an unstoppable momentum for reform.







# Our culture and values

At KIDS, optimism, creativity and fun are coupled with the highest standards of safeguarding and professionalism. Families say our positive ethos helps them celebrate every step their child takes. Young people say that at KIDS, they feel valued and develop their confidence.

## **Our ethos is deeply rooted and we stand by our organisational values:**

- To act with passion, care and collaboration.
- To strive for quality
- To be trusted because we are responsive to the needs of both individuals and the whole family

Our new strategy affirms these principles and enshrines our commitment to equal rights and opportunities. This is already evident in KIDS' support for disabled children and young people to have fun, learn and grow. Now we will also acknowledge the obstacles some disabled children and young people face because of their ethnicity, gender, sexuality, religion or belief, class or other aspects of their identity.

- We will develop an equality, diversity and inclusion plan centred on the rights and opportunities of disabled children and young people to be respected, included and recognised.
- We will consult with young people to co-create a campaign that challenges the negative attitudes about disability that can limit their choices and enjoyment of life.
- We will improve the quality and accuracy of our diversity data to strengthen our understanding of the demographics of the people we support, our staff and volunteers and to inform our priorities.
- We will raise awareness and promote dialogue about the systematic inequalities experienced by disabled children, young people and their families.

## **Measuring our impact**

- People are positive about the difference we make. However, we will challenge our assumptions and track how individual interventions shape longer term outcomes. By 2027 we will have in place a robust outcomes measurement framework that will capture and share impact data effectively with providers, funders, commissioners and decision-makers.
- We will work with funders and partners to report on and assess the value we create through timely intervention and support in addition to our social impact. We will demonstrate the systemic changes we have made through quantitative and qualitative data, including case studies and testimonies, bringing these together in a new series of KIDS publications.

# Our accelerators

Resources are stretched, but needs are urgent. We must find ways to reach more people with less money. We have three accelerators to achieve this: People, Partnerships and Digital.

## Our people

Our people are central. We have a committed team who love their work and hold deep expertise in disability and supporting people with complex needs. We will support their digital skills so they can reach more families with on-line and hybrid services. We will nurture their entrepreneurialism and recognise and reward great ideas for future services. We will strive to be an inclusive and diverse workplace and to value the different identities and perspectives each individual brings. We will work together to create meaningful ways to respect, reward and develop our colleagues. We will work together as 'One Team KIDS' in pursuit of our mission.

## Our partnerships

KIDS was founded fifty years ago on a partnership. Since then, we've had multiple partners, local and national. We believe that partnership working gives us the best chance of achieving influence and impact. By supporting children, young people, parents and carers face-to-face and on-line, we will increase the number of people we work with from 12,000 people annually to reach more than 120,000 by 2027.

## Our digital drive

We've embraced digital and used technology to come closer together as a staff team and to adapt services for families during Covid restrictions. We've commissioned new research to learn more about the digital divide; and the dangers of disabled children and families being excluded, as well as the benefits of being on-line. We will create a warm, fun, relatable digital offer, drawing from the best of our in-person services; we will deploy new platforms and capabilities and we will campaign for equal access on-line to be a right for every disabled child and their family.

## Achieving our ambitions

By developing a strong digital presence to complement our successful face-to-face services, a KIDS community of supporters and a new policy and advocacy role for the charity, by 2027 we will be impacting on the lives of more disabled children, young people and families than ever before. We will be operating sustainably and be an established national voice, acting with disabled children, young people and their families to secure the system and resources to which they are entitled.

**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.**

## Stay in touch

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