

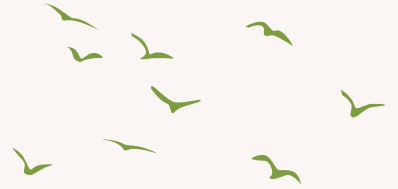


Here for the
journey...



**Reaching
Families**

2024/25 Impact Report



About Us

Reaching Families is a grassroots, parent-carer led charity which aims to empower, inform and support parent-carers and families of children and young people with SEND in West Sussex. We achieve our mission through delivery of the following project and services:-

Making Sense of It All parent guide

Factsheets & Animations

Training Workshops

Benefits Advice

Volunteer Befriending

ND Navigation Service

Umbrellas Support Groups

Facebook Support Group

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Registered Charity No: 1150906
Company Limited by Guarantee: 8261096

Executive Summary



Spend a little time with parent-carers and you won't wait long to hear them talk about "the journey" – parent-carer speak for learning how to do the best for our SEND children and access them the support they need.

For too many parents the journey is gruelling – an endless battle to negotiate a system that is complex and bewildering.

We aim to help parents make the journey as smooth as possible. From diagnosis to adulthood we help them acquire the knowledge, skills, resources and support networks they need to navigate the road ahead.

In 2024/25 we helped more families than ever – over 3,000 in person, countless more who joined our Facebook group or used our website and information resources.

Around 60% of parents engage with us in multiple ways. In that engagement you can trace their own individual journeys – from working with a befriender to get their bearings then attending our support groups and finding their tribe. Some go on to train as befrienders and support the next parent-carer needing directions.

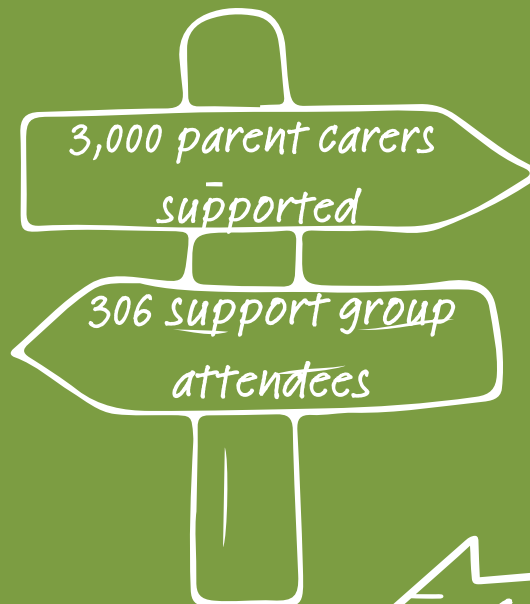
"Reaching Families have been there for us throughout our journey. We as a family wouldn't have come this far without them."

Having more than doubled in size in the last five years Reaching Families has been on a journey of its own, adapting from being a small grassroots organisation to the largest VCS provider of services to SEND families in West Sussex.

This transformation has not been without its challenges but with firm foundations in place, we are confident of staying the distance.



Our year in numbers



Our Impact: 2024/25



Project	Engagement	Outcome
Information Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 2,000+ copies of our parent-carer guide distributed• 10,000+ factsheets downloaded from our website	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 90% of parents said they are better informed on SEND
Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 1,209 parents attended one of 65 workshops	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 85% of parents said they felt more skilled and self confident in supporting their child with SEND
Benefits Advice Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 279 families supported with 339 claims for Carers Allowance, DLA and PIP	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• £3.2 million raised in claims• 70% of families supported were new applicants
Outreach & Peer Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 72 parent-carers worked with one of our specially trained volunteer befrienders• 306 parents attended one of our 7 parent-carer support groups• 600 parents received short term case work support	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 88% of parents said they felt more resilient• 70% said they had better networks of support• 75% said they had improved wellbeing
ND Navigation Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 549 parent-carers supported with information, advice, training & signposting	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 88% of parents said they better understand their child's condition• 44% accessed a new service



Finding out...

"After months of my head spinning I finally feel like I have direction and every piece of information I need, rather than scrabbling around looking for it all."

2024/25 marked the first full year of our new ND Navigation Service, designed to support families navigating the assessment process for ADHD, Autism and other neurodivergent conditions.

With an average wait time of 2.5 years for children to be assessed the service is much needed. Through information, advice, training, peer support and signposting we are helping parents better understand their child's condition, access new services, learn new skills and start to build networks of support that will help them on their journey..

88% of parents said the ND Navigation Service helped them better understand their child's condition





Learning the Landscape

It is no surprise the SEND landscape is sometimes referred to as a jungle or a maze. The complexity of information, jargon, assessment pathways and labyrinth of services makes it daunting, particularly for new parent-carers.

Our information resources, which are all written and edited by parent-carers, help parents make sense of the world we live in and navigate their way to better support for their child and family.

Over 38,000 parents used our website last year whilst over 10,000 downloaded factsheets and over 2,000 used our popular handbook, *Making Sense of It All*.

"Every time I pick up Making Sense of It All, I learn something new."

90% of parents said they better understood the SEND landscape as a result of using our information resources



Reaching Families

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Tools for Parents

At a time when it's harder than ever to get expert support from statutory services, more and more parent-carers are looking for alternative solutions to supporting their child's needs.

Our training workshops are filling some of that space by helping parents become more self reliant and gain tools and strategies that enable them to support their child's development, access vital resources like DLA or an EHC Plan and enhance their own wellbeing and resilience.

More than 1,200 parents attended one of our workshops last year. Such is the demand they are fully booked within minutes of our schedule being released.

"Reaching Families has been at the heart of my learning journey for the last 3 years. I am eternally grateful for all their support."

85% of parents said they felt more skilled and self confident in supporting their child with SEND



Making Connections

"I can't describe how lovely it was to talk to people who understood our journey. I've literally never had that before so I felt quite emotional."

Connecting parent-carers with peers who empathise, share experiences and offer mutual support is one of the most important elements of our service.

In 2024/25 we helped over 1,500 parent carers across West Sussex make connections via our befriending service, Umbrellas support groups and Facebook group.



***75% of parents said
our peer support
helped improve
their mental health
& wellbeing***



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Money Matters

Thanks to a three year grant from the National Lottery Community Fund we were able to invest in the development of our Benefits Advice Service last year.

Recruitment of new staff enabled us to support a record number of families with a record number of claims – 339 in total, and in doing so helped families raise over £3 million, also a record for our service.

With worrying changes to PIP and Universal Credit expected in 2026, we anticipate more pressure on our service to support families in making claims and in particular, mandatory reconsiderations and appeals.

"I cried when I got the letter from the DWP saying the DLA had been awarded. You have all been so helpful, thank you."

***£3.2 million raised
in applications for
Carers Allowance,
DLA and PIP***



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Giving Back

We learnt many years ago that very often the best person to ask for directions as a new parent-carer is another parent who has been on a similar journey.

Our team of 25 volunteer befrienders are sharing their knowledge, experience and insight with new parent-carers and in the process helping them come through their journey and out the other side.

We are enormously grateful to our volunteer befrienders for their invaluable support. We simply could not do it without them!

"Supporting other parents makes me feel like I'm giving back and helping at what can be a very lonely and scary time."

90% of parent carers described the support they received from their volunteer befriender as excellent



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The road ahead...

With demand for our service growing every year but with resources that are not keeping pace, the next challenge for Reaching Families is finding new ways to increase accessibility and maximise the number of families we can support.

With that aim in mind our priorities over the next year are as follows: –

- Finding new methods of delivering training content to parents who have been unable to access our live workshops
- Recruiting more support staff to join our ND Navigation Service and in doing so bring down waiting times
- Working with other SEND providers to increase in person access to our Benefits Advice Service and ND Navigation Service at community settings across West Sussex
- Developing new income streams to maximise our long term financial sustainability

"We are really lucky to have Reaching Families in West Sussex. The quality of their work is amazing."



*Thank you to all our funders
and supporters. You make
the journey possible!*



With thanks to...

Awards for All
Bascule Charitable Trust
Broyst Foundation
Co-op Community Fund
Down's Crematorium
Ernest Kleinwort Charitable Trust
February Foundation
Garfield Weston Foundation
Grocers Charity
Hopper Trust
Legal & General
Michael Cornish Charitable Trust
National Lottery Community Fund
NHS Sussex
Shanly Foundation
Sussex Community Foundation
Tesco Stronger Starts
West Sussex County Council

