



THE SUSSEX CHARITY FOR CHILDREN  
SINCE 1890

# IMPACT REPORT

2023/24





# WELCOME...

As I come to the end of my tenure as chair of trustees, I have been reflecting on all the changes over the past nine years. I believe one of the many strengths FSW has, has been its ability to move with the times.

We have constantly looked at effective working practices but always keeping our families at the centre of all we do. The need for our services has sadly grown exponentially over the last few years, but the team has risen to the challenges and we have employed more practitioners to meet this growing need. This has only been made possible by the generosity of all our supporters, volunteers and our amazing fundraising team, who have been so successful in achieving many significant grants and individual donations.

Martin, with the support of his team, has steered the ship through some challenging times and I wish to put on record my thanks to him and the whole team who give so generously of their time to ensure we can support our families to the best of our ability. My thanks must also go to the Deanery Committees who work tirelessly, facing many challenges of their own but ensuring the fundraising continues as well as supporting families in their own towns and villages. Thank you also to the many trustees whom I have had the pleasure of working alongside during my nine years. You hold a wealth of expertise and have always been there to support the FSW team whether it be in meetings, visiting the office, or attending events - thank you.

I came across this quote the other day that was given to me by a colleague, and I think it sums up FSW's approach:

"Our lives are not determined by what happens to us but by how we react to what happens, not by what life brings to us, but by the attitude we bring to life. A positive attitude causes a chain reaction of positive thoughts, events and outcomes. It is a catalyst, a spark that creates extraordinary results"

I wish Richard all the best as he takes up the position of Chairman of Trustees. He will bring a wealth of valuable experience to the board.

**Alyson Heath**  
Chairman



Looking over the last year it is remarkable to see the impact that the whole team have made to the lives of families in Sussex. We have seen the demand for our work increase and we have, I think, stepped up to the mark and accepted the challenges that brings.

Our practitioners and their volunteers have been there for the families that have needed us. Supporting each one in a bespoke fashion, each family is unique. This increases pressure on the staff because there is no handing down of standard responses but ultimately that is one of the reasons we see real and lasting change with the families we help. I know if we went online or did more work over the phone our reach would be greater, but I am sure the impact would diminish because what our families need more than anything is the contact with a fellow human who will walk along the road with them, at the speed at which they need to go.

As you will see reading through this, our drop-ins and group services as well as the Family Contact Centre at Eastbourne enable us to have more time with the families in informal settings to help them grow together. This is where you can become part of the journey too as a volunteer working with the families.

I want to go on record on behalf of the staff and trustees, past and present, as well as the families, to say a very big thank you to Alyson as she stands down. Her quiet, firm support in the background has been a great asset to FSW, especially as we went through the process of making difficult decisions and lock downs. FSW owes Alyson a great deal of thanks for ensuring that we have reached the place we are at now and her contribution has made us the organisation we are today.

**Martin Auton-Lloyd**  
CEO

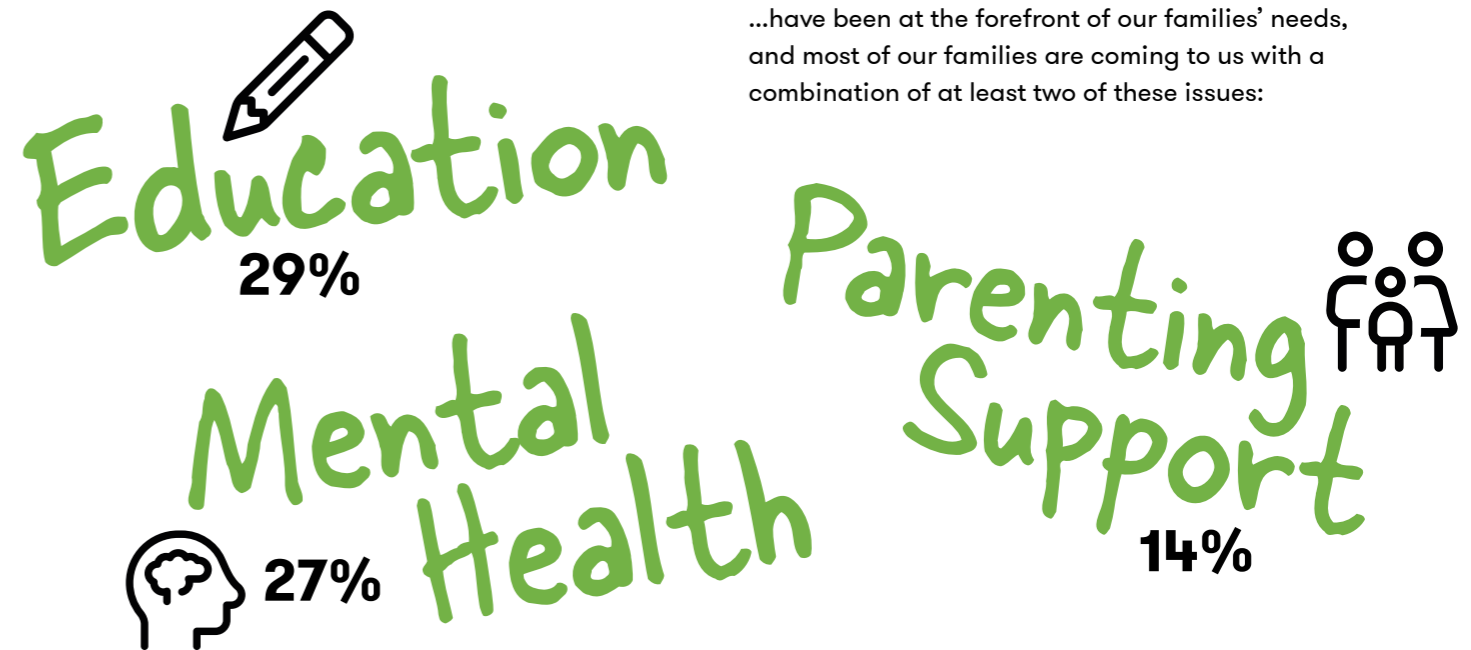


# TACKLING CRITICAL CHALLENGES

Over the past year, we have continued to tackle many of the same challenges we have historically faced.

## Educational matters, mental health and parenting challenges...

...have been at the forefront of our families' needs, and most of our families are coming to us with a combination of at least two of these issues:



However, the demand for our services has significantly increased due to a lack of provision elsewhere, underscoring the critical role we play in the community.

## This surge in demand...

...has led to waiting lists for the first time, highlighting both the urgency of our support and the strain on our resources.

"Our family were in horrific circumstances and unable to see a future and a bright side"

"I was crumbling under the stress of everything when I first met you"

# OUR RESPONSE

To manage these challenges effectively, we have to balance the growing expectations with what we can realistically achieve. While we remain committed to providing comprehensive support, it is essential to recognise that solving every problem immediately is not feasible.

Our focus is on **sustainable, long-term improvements**, which often means addressing each issue separately and taking as much time as needed to find resolutions.

Our core work lies in the one-to-one support we provide to each family on our caseload, primarily carried out through **home visits** or remote **support calls**.

Our team of 20 family support practitioners are highly experienced professionals from social care, education and healthcare settings. This wealth of experience means that we can support families seeking help for a range of issues from finances to housing, parenting to schooling, and work with them to find solutions. Whether this is practical support such as assisting with bureaucracy, or emotional support to give a single parent a chance to offload to another adult, our flexibility means we can adapt our work to each family's individual and most pressing needs.

## Our 3-step approach



Although one-to-one home visits are the core of our work, our activities stretch far beyond this as we aim to find the best ways to support families. With social isolation a real challenge for many of our clients, the group activities we organise help to ease this burden and also give families access to specialist support. In the last year, in addition to general drop-in settings for social benefit we have run groups focussing on these specific areas:

- ✓ Mother Nurture course for first-time mums
- ✓ SEN specific groups
- ✓ NVR parenting course for parents managing challenging behaviour in their children
- ✓ Healthy eating and budgeting cookery sessions
- ✓ Pop up parenting classes

## CASE STUDY

# Mandy's Story

Mandy was referred to us for emotional and practical support following violent domestic abuse from her ex-partner, father of her youngest child. She was due to move house for her safety but at the time of referral had not moved, even though the request had been made to the housing association six months earlier.

Mandy's older child had visited her father for the weekend and he would not return her, making malicious accusations against Mandy. We supported Mandy with applications to the family court for access to her daughter, which took six months and included numerous court visits which we attended as well. This was a time where Mandy needed a lot of emotional support as well, as she was distraught not to see her daughter.

Mandy finally moved house and a stalking and harassment order was set up against the father of her son. In the previous property he had broken into her house using a crowbar and had violently attacked her, as well as trying to climb in through windows on several other occasions. Mandy had no cooker in her new house so we were able to help her purchase one, and we also obtained a new mattress for her as the one she had brought from her old property was bloodstained from her attack.

Mandy's ex-partner has continued to try and find her, and had broken into other properties in her old neighbourhood. With our support, Mandy has now got a dedicated police officer to liaise with, as well as extra security features to prevent her ex from getting into her new house. We have supported Mandy with family court applications and paperwork; attendance at court; foodbank deliveries; a caravan holiday, funding for electricity and counselling. We have liaised with domestic abuse agencies, the police and the housing association. But most importantly we have provided emotional support as this had been an incredibly stressful and scary time for her and continues to be so. She calls us her angels as we have been there in some of the most difficult times of her life, and thankfully we are able to continue that support for as long as it is needed.

Separate from our regular caseload of families is our project running the Eastbourne Family Contact Centre. Here, we provide a neutral space for non-resident parents to spend time with their children when a visit to their home is not possible. Over the year this project has grown, with 34 families using the service during the year, which allows children to maintain vital relationships with both parents.

"When I got told I was going to get a support practitioner I'm not going to lie, I was dreading it! I don't like asking for help and people interfering. But since the first meeting you put me at ease. You are easy-going and down to earth with no judgement whatsoever."



# OUR ACHIEVEMENTS



782

**families supported  
(2065 adults and  
2805 children)**

1,444

**food deliveries made  
from our foodbank**



2,982

**in-person  
home visits**

13,753

**Support  
calls**



599

**group and community-  
based activity sessions  
delivered for 15,000 people**

# OUR IMPACT

The issues our families struggle with may be very similar, but the way in which these are resolved varies enormously. The action plans we create with each family in the early stages of our work are unique, and take into account the approach which is most likely to succeed in each case. Some techniques will work for one family and not for another. Consequently, our approach to measuring the impact of our work is multi-dimensional. Our Family Star assessment tool, completed collaboratively by families and their practitioners, evaluates progress across ten areas of family life.

In the last year we have seen a significant improvement in several areas. A sharp increase in parental wellbeing impacts on the entire family as parents feel more able to cope, and an improvement in economic stability means that families can focus on other matters which may previously have been less of a priority.

75

**%  
increase in  
parental  
wellbeing**

71

**%  
increase  
in economic  
stability**

59

**%  
improvement in  
parents' abilities to  
set boundaries and  
manage children's  
behaviour**

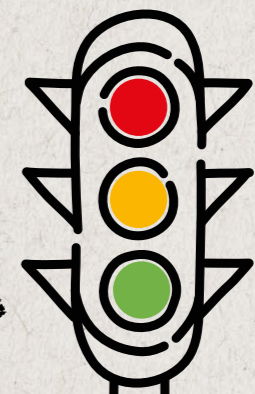
56

**%  
increase  
in families  
improving  
their social  
networks**

*"When I first met you I didn't think I would ever be able to manage with everything that's going on. But you have shown me how to change things in myself and in the house with the kids. I never in a million years thought that I would be able to do this, but now I know I can. Thank you so much for being there for me all this time."*

In addition to the outcome star, our impact can be measured in smaller but just as important ways. It is easy to see change when the family approaches us for help with a single issue, but for others dealing with complex, multi-layered issues, progress can be harder to capture. In these cases, the strong relationships our practitioners build with their clients over weeks or months enable us to recognise change. This could be something as small as a parent making the step to attend a group session after many weeks of refusal - something which may seem easy for most, but represents a huge change towards improving social networks.

Our traffic light system provides a simple way of assessing the urgency of a family's needs when they are first referred to us. This year we have seen a marked increase in families assessed at being red level, a reflection of the increasingly complex situations we are dealing with. Families on red require multiple engagements each week, whereas a family on green will receive a more light-touch approach as they are better able to cope.



**202 red**

**504 amber**

**76 green**

*Traffic light status at  
the end of the year*



# OUR FUNDRAISING

FSW receives no statutory funding for its work. Our income is sourced from a varied fundraising programme in addition to the profits from our charity shop in Eastbourne and income received from letting 4 flats located at our office in Brighton.

In a climate where we have seen other charities fall into administration after an over-reliance on a single source of income, it is vital that our fundraising activities harness varied avenues. Because of this, our central fundraising team works hard to secure income from grants, individuals and corporate supporters. They also support our deanery committees in the planning and execution of local activities as well as running central fundraising events.

This year saw FSW's income reach for the first time in its history. This was in part due to a significant donation from a private individual as well as a grant from a trust which was closing down. However, all our other income streams performed exceptionally well given the current economic climate.

Particular highlights of the year included our **Winter Fuel campaign,** which raised **£39,626** and the fundraising activities carried out by our deanery committees,

which brought in **£115,329**. Our NGS Open Garden season was another busy one, with 20 dates raising a total of **£8,390**.

Our corporate support from Brewin Dolphin continued through the year, with employees participating in fundraising events, donating food for our foodbank and items for our charity shop, and once again assisting with the preparation of Christmas hampers and volunteering at family events. We were also

delighted to welcome **Grant Thornton LLP** as a new corporate partner this year.

The support from our regular donors continued to grow, with an increase of 10% in value over the year. In addition, we were successful with a number of multi-year grant applications, which provide important stability for future years.

We are very grateful to everybody who supported our fundraising activities during the year, whether through participation, sponsorship or raising awareness. Our fundraising team would be delighted to speak to anybody who would like to get involved in any of these activities – please get in touch by emailing [fundraising@familysupportwork.org.uk](mailto:fundraising@familysupportwork.org.uk).

## over £1 million



# OUR TEAM

The impressive growth in our frontline services over the last few years has meant an accompanying need for more support behind the scenes, in order to ensure continuity and stability for the organisation. During the year we welcomed 4 new staff members:

Jane Lyons and Alison Dewdney joined us as community engagement and volunteer co-ordinators for West and East Sussex. Their roles will enable us to be more visible in local communities and attract new volunteers to support the practitioners' work. Our fundraising team was strengthened with the addition of Danni Stillwell as a digital marketing apprentice until December 2024, and Jason Palmer as team administrator. We also said a fond goodbye to Jude, our Hastings Family Support Practitioner. Jude retired after twenty years working with us and was our longest-serving member of staff.

# OUR COMMUNITY

One of the most important parts of our work is the connection we have with our local communities. With our practitioners dedicated to supporting a specific geographical area, and in many cases living in the area themselves, we have a strong and vital link with these communities.

Our community work takes many forms – referrals come from community organisations; we deliver many community outreach activities with other local partners; and we have been able this year to raise more awareness about our work by attending and speaking at various community events.

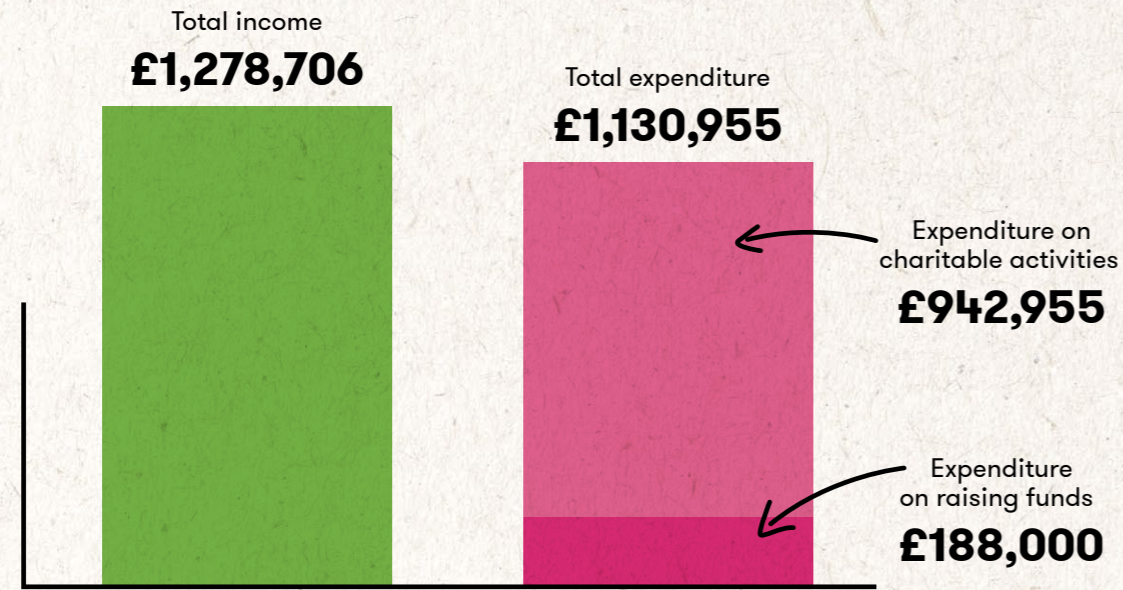
*"They are so flexible, make referrals easy, offer so much and tailor their care and support to the needs of the client. They have been able to reach and support members of the community who would otherwise have fallen through the cracks and helped to meet a wide range of often complex needs."*

Key to this work is our team of wonderful volunteers who support group activities and one-to-one work, as well as being advocates for FSW and fundraising for us. In the year we were supported by **270** volunteers in this way. We also valued the contributions of the volunteers at our foodbank, charity shop and at the Eastbourne Contact Centre – without their support these projects would not be possible.

The recruitment of our two new volunteer co-ordinators during this year means that we can now focus our efforts on increasing these numbers to support all aspects of our work and continue to be fully engaged with our communities across Sussex.



# OUR FINANCES



For every pound we raise, we spend...

83p

...on our work with families

It costs

£23

a week or

£1,205

per year to support a family

We hope that this impact report gives a brief insight into FSW's achievements this year. Whilst we are very proud of what we have been able to achieve, we acknowledge that none of this would be possible without the incredible support we receive from our funders, committees, individual donors, corporate partners and other local organisations.

If you would like to discuss ways of supporting our work financially please contact the fundraising team by email [fundraising@familysupportwork.org.uk](mailto:fundraising@familysupportwork.org.uk)

or phone  
**01273 041401.**





**F** Family  
**S** Support  
**W** Work

The Sussex Charity for Children  
Since 1890

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