

Challengers

2024-2029 STRATEGY



**Transforming
lives through the
power of play**



45 YEARS OF SUPPORT



Challengers was established in 1979 (known then as The Guildford Adventurers Association) to address the lack of play for disabled children. 45 years on, our vision has not faltered, and we continue to strive for **“a world where all children and young people can play together freely.”**

As we enter our 45th year in 2024, the environment remains challenging, and now is the time to really be ambitious to create change with a new charitable mission:

 **To transform the lives of disabled children, young people and their families through the power of play** 

Looking ahead to the next 5 years, we didn't decide this strategy alone. We engaged with a range of people including staff, trustees and families. Informed by data and feedback, we looked at our strengths and where we can add the most value to disabled children, young people and their families.

“Our new strategy should guide all the work we do at Challengers, with our values, The Challengers Approach, and our aims acting as the threads that run through all our plans and across every team.”

Gen Dearman, Challengers CEO

THE NEED

Despite Article 31 of The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child stating that “Every child has the right to rest and leisure”, **disabled children are still routinely excluded** from the same everyday activities as their non-disabled peers.

Research has told us that **70% of disabled young people are chronically lonely** (Sense 2021) which has a detrimental impact on their mental and physical health, further exacerbating challenging circumstances for families. In our most recent parent survey, 49% of parents told us that they are excluded from other settings due to their child’s disability, and they are worried that the lack of service will reduce social interactions and friendships.

Whilst there is a reduced investment by local authorities in SEND, we are seeing an ever-increasing demand for our services to support disabled children and their families, either through respite or when they are in crisis.

87%

FEEL THIS NEGATIVELY
IMPACTS ON THE MENTAL
HEALTH OF THE FAMILY

51%

ARE WORRIED ABOUT
THEIR FAMILIES
BREAKING DOWN

79%

BELIEVE THEY DON'T GET
THE RIGHT LEVEL OF
SUPPORT

OUR THEORY OF CHANGE

Our theory of change demonstrates how Challengers services lead to positive outcomes for the families we support, and support our goal of making society a more inclusive place.



Bright futures

Disabled children and young people have more positive futures and are enabled to live meaningful and fulfilling lives.



Supported families

Through our support, families become stronger and parent carers feel more empowered.



Cultural shift

Attitudes towards disabled people change and the fear of difference is reduced. There is more knowledge and understanding of disabled people and about how they can be included.

OUR STRATEGIC AIMS

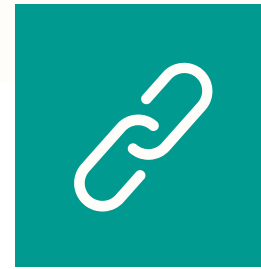
Our aims which will guide the charity's strategic direction until 2029, when we celebrate Challengers' 50th birthday.



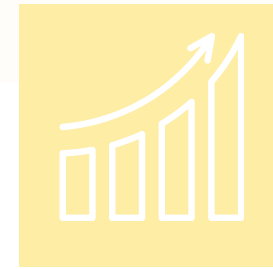
Enrich the wellbeing and confidence of disabled children and young people



Advocate for families and challenge barriers that exclude them



Connect families to reduce isolation and build a community of support



Generate as much net income as we can to **invest** in our vital services

AIM 1 - ENRICH



To enrich the wellbeing and confidence of disabled children and young people through our services. We will always find a way to support and will not exclude based on complexity of needs, the level of support required or their financial situation.

Last year parents who attended our Guildford site had on average less than 48 hours' respite through 6 short breaks sessions, and at the time of writing we have over 250 families that are asking for our help that we currently cannot provide.

We aspire that any family coming to our sites in Guildford and Farnham can access regular respite and an opportunity for disabled young people to make friends and to play, safely.

We will increase capacity at our sites to ensure families who currently attend can access Short Breaks respite more than once a month if they wish to, and will re-open our second site in Guildford to create additional spaces.

Our work at The Hub will continue to offer support to families on our waiting list.

AIM 2 - ADVOCATE



To advocate for families, leading by example and championing inclusion, challenging the social, physical and societal barriers that exclude them.

We will continue to address the fact that young people with an education, health and care plan (EHCP) are more than twice as likely to be excluded and nearly five times as likely to be suspended through Alternative Provision. We will build on our work in Farnham and utilise our Guildford site during term time to increase our 555-provision supporting those disabled young people aged 8-18 who are in crisis due to being out of education

Using the work we do on Impact & Evaluation and through the Child Listening Programme, bring the voice of the disabled child to the forefront. Alongside shaping our services, we will use the experience of our families to inform local policy working in partnership with the local authorities, parent carer forums, and national partners such as The Disabled Children's Partnership and the Charity Coalition "Give Children A Seat at the Table" campaign.

Through our disability awareness training, we plan to reach schools, community groups and companies in the South East each year, helping to increase societal understanding of its responsibilities to remove the barriers that disable and exclude, contributing to a more inclusive society.

AIM 3 - CONNECT



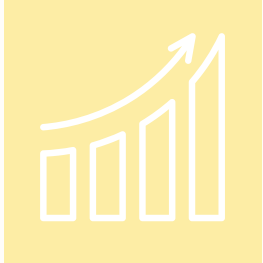
To connect families to reduce isolation and enable a community of support and friendship.

Through our Family Days, provide a safe environment where families of disabled children and young people can use our centres and make friends.

Using The Hub to connect families, deliver informative events with themes that are requested by our families to further support them with different aspects of raising a disabled child.

Launch independent research to understand the transformative effects of short break respite on the quality of life for families with disabled children, highlighting the importance that these services can have on the mental health, wellbeing and resilience of family units.

AIM 4 - INVEST



To generate as much net income as we can to invest in our vital services supporting disabled children and young people.

We will continue to grow and diversify our voluntary income, alongside our commissioned work.

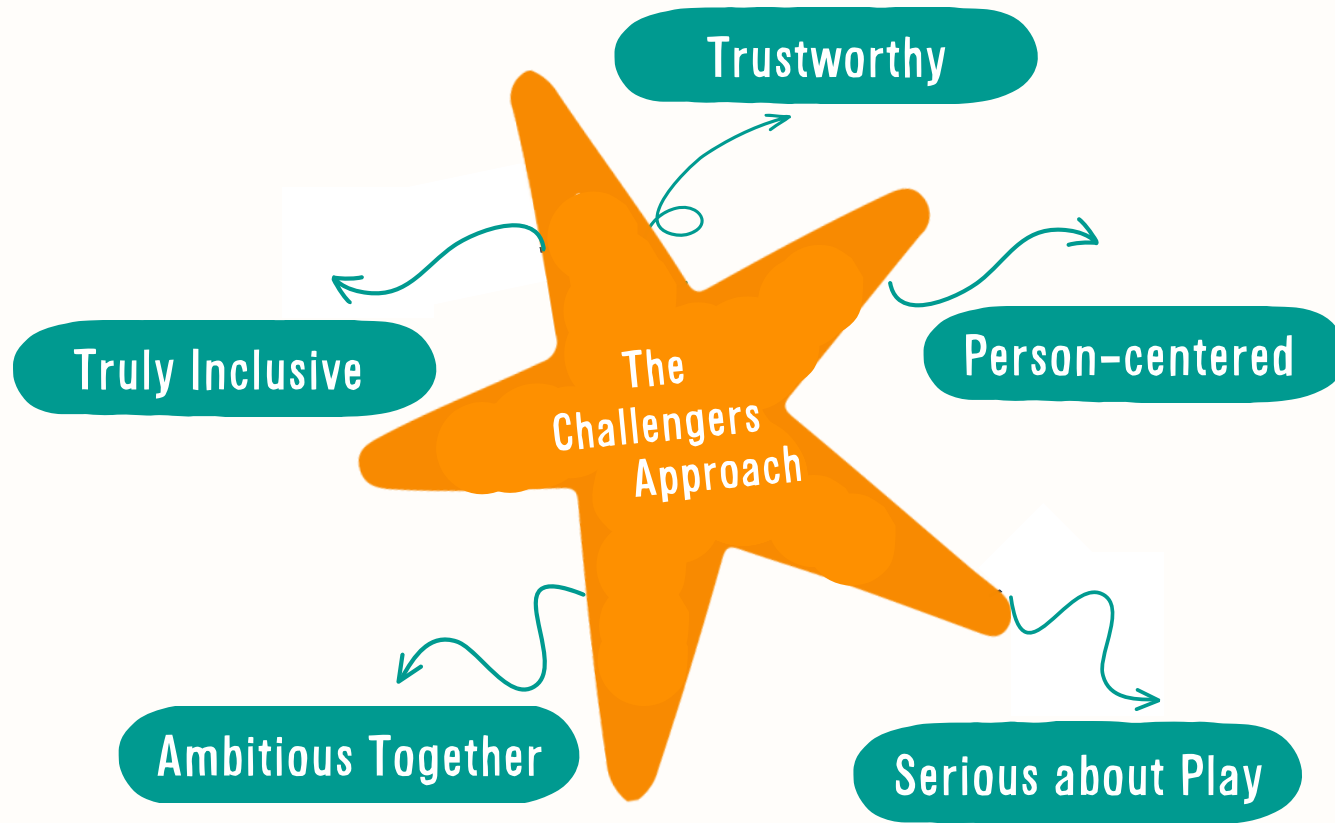
Focus our fundraising on what delivers significant and measurable benefits in generating income and creating new supporters for both today and tomorrow.

Have a consistent business planning approach ensuring we are operating as cost effectively as possible without reducing our impact. Ensure that any loss-making services have a structured and achievable recovery plan, understanding that we have moral obligation to ensure our space and funds are deployed to make the greatest impact for the families of disabled children and young people.

Only seek to take on additional contracts or re-tender for services where demand is there, and it makes financial sense to do so.

OUR PEOPLE

At the heart of our strategy must also lie our approach to our people – how we look after, motivate and develop our employees and volunteers. Through The Challengers Approach, we will foster an inclusive culture and set of values crucial to guiding our decision-making and to setting out the ambitions in this strategy.



Want to help us to bring the power of play to more disabled children and young people?

Contact us to find out more:
CEO@disability-challengers.org

