STRATEGIC PLAN

Early Intervention
Lifelong Difference

2024 - 2027

transforming autism

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Early Intervention Lifelong Difference

We provide crucial support for young Autistic children and their families at an age when we can make a lifelong difference that everyone can benefit from; the early years are the optimal time to ensure children experience a safe environment, so that the lifelong trauma that often comes from a feeling of not being properly understood, and even judged and criticised for who they are, can be most effectively averted.

Based on a deep understanding of the profound sensitivity and other positive aspects inherent in autism, our unique early intervention approach transforms Autistic children's potential and provides parents and carers with the foundational support to confidently build positive, nourishing, trust-based relationships so everyone in the family can enjoy a happy and fulfilling life.

This approach is founded on our empowering conception of autism as having unlimited positive possibilities rather than one with constraints or impairments.

Our support and services benefit:

- Autistic children: transforming the impact of aspects of autism to unlock potential so children are no longer limited by them.
- Parents & carers: transforming their capabilities to build a positive relationship and future with their Autistic child.
- Society as a whole: transforming perceptions and understanding of autism.

“I have also been immensely impressed by the depth of your listening to all of us, your speedy alighting on our anxieties, and particularly by the very powerful combination of analytic understanding with suggested strategies, all of which have helped me with my enchanting grand-daughter.”

Grandparent

Welcome

Transforming Autism is an ambitious and growing charity that’s changing the way autism services are delivered for children aged 0-12 years of age. We believe our specialist work is unique as it sets early intervention at the heart.

Transforming Autism was established to address the needs of families because:

- The early signs of autism are rarely acknowledged
- There are few effective interventions available in early years
- There is little comprehensive guidance and support for parents after an autism diagnosis
- Wait lists across the UK for assessment and diagnosis continue to rise

Established in 2017 by parents of Autistic children, the charity initially focused on developing, piloting and evaluating programmes for children aged 0-4 years. Since then, we have added further programmes for parents of Autistic children aged 5- 12 years.

We have been largely volunteer run with the support of qualified child Psychologists and Paediatric Occupational Health Practitioners. This is changing thanks to the support from our charitable partners as we brought on board our first employed CEO in February 2024.

The numbers of families we are working with are growing and we are excited and ready to move our expansion to another level.

This plan aims to set out our priorities for the next 3 years, supporting as many young Autistic children as possible so they can fulfill their potential and go on to live happy and fulfilling lives.

About Us

Our Values

Mission - Our Path

To provide crucial support for young Autistic children and their families at an age when we can make a lifelong difference.

The charity is based on a strong culture and values that are lived out in the way we work with families on a day-to-day basis.

Our Programmes

First Steps Programme 0-4 years old

Our flagship “First Steps“ is an innovative, research-led programme developed by Dr Theodora Papatheodoru and Amy Prescot and funded by the Norland Foundation that, unusually, provides direct face-to-face support within the family’s home. The programme responds to the realities of everyday life of Autistic children up to 4 years old.

Assessing and supporting an Autistic child and their family in the place they feel most comfortable, enables the family dynamic, and the child’s needs within it, to become the focus. With a 12-week duration, the programme is implemented by licensed child psychotherapists and paediatric occupational therapists, who have experience and deep understanding of working with Autistic children.

Confident Autism Parenting (CAP) Programme – 5-12 years old

Parents or carers of up to 10 children from across the UK come together by video conference for 75 minutes each week for a 10-week course with Transforming Autism’s Senior Therapist and one of our Occupational Therapists. Each programme is based on the components of the First Steps programme tailored to the needs of the group.

Casa - Parents or carers participating in CAP have an opportunity to continue working with us in a group on a unique bespoke more depth programme tailored to the groups needs. Co-created and facilitated by Transforming Autism’s Senior Therapist and one of our Occupational Therapists, this programme is open for participants to join or leave to suit their needs.

Consultation

For a small number of families each year we provide private 1:1 support.

Resources

Parents or Carers can access webinars, online assessment tools, and a wide range of video and documented resources.

We want every young Autistic child and their families to receive the support they need as early as possible, to ensure their potential is realised and they can go on to live happy and fulfilling lives.

Our strategy's overarching aim is simple:

We want to reach as many Autistic children under 12 years old and their families in the UK as possible, so they can benefit from the support and development our programmes can provide, in the home.

In the long term our aim is to be able to provide personalised support on demand

Strategy principles

We regard ourselves as a specialist provider of services tailoring a small number of original well researched, distinctive programmes to families of young Autistic children nationally. We are aiming to make a profound lifelong difference.

Who are our services for?

Whilst our primary focus is Autistic children aged 0-4 years, we provide services to Autistic children aged 0-12 years and their families regardless of whether there has been a formal diagnosis.

We work with the family believing that without this, progress will be impaired.

Where

We will be working in the home both face to face and leveraging technology online to increase the locations and numbers of families we can reach.

Strategic aims Overview

1. To grow the number of children and families we work with nationally - to 1000 families by 2027.

2. To increase the diversity of the families we work with ensuring we reach the families who are least able to access or afford the support they need.

3. To carry out rigorous research and evaluation of our programmes in partnership with those most qualified to do so.

4. To leverage technology advancements that the pandemic has provided by developing and piloting more on demand in the home programmes.

5. To work in partnership enabling and supporting organisations to deliver our programmes thereby reaching more children and families.

6. Build on firm foundations creating a long term sustainable organisation.

How we will do it

- We will diversify our income streams to ensure we are not reliant on single sources of funding.
- We will continue to ensure that affordability is not a barrier to accessing our programmes whilst developing a charging mechanism for our core programmes, that will simply cover costs.
- We will work with local partners who serve hard-to-reach communities.
- We will ensure we are culturally competent ensuring our programmes reflect and provide a safe and comfortable environment for all children and families.
- We will seek out new and relevant developments in the areas of early intervention autism.
- We will build alliances with like-minded charities.
- We will develop our volunteer platform to ensure our volunteers continue to be motivated and valued.
- We will transition key roles into paid employment of practitioners.

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Year 1

- We will develop and offer an online school support programme for Autistic children starting school for the first time.
- We will secure early years school partnerships working with children and parents of Autistic children.
- We will improve our child and parent referral pathways.
- We will secure an academic partner to support us in our research and delivery of our work. We will publish our findings.
- We will secure an expert advisory board to support us in areas of the programme, ethics and child development.
- We will further develop our network of therapeutic practitioners to support our growth.
- We will build on our board skills with further Trustees in Legal and Compliance and Child Development.

Year 2

- We will connect to local health practices to share our work and secure referrals.
- We will develop a pilot and launch an online in-the-home intensive support programme for Autistic children and their families.
- We will train a dedicated team of practitioners to deliver online in-the-home support.
- We will develop and provide school partners with a primary/ secondary transition programme for Autistic children.
- We will research and develop a programme to support pregnancy where autism in the family is prevalent.

Year 3

- We will work with local delivery partners interested in delivering our programmes.
- We will pilot an online – on-demand service to parents and schools.
- We will secure a long-term technology partner to support our online growth.
- We develop a database of practitioners nationally trained to deliver our programmes for nationwide parental access.

Progressing the Plan

We are very excited about the potential and possibilities open to the charity and will be reporting annually on progress formally through our annual report and accounts.

During the year we will update progress through social media, but if you want to know more about the charity in the meantime, please do get involved or get in touch.

“I speak for both of us when I say, it’s so reassuring, not to feel so alone. We don’t feel that we can truly express in words, how comforting it is, not to have your feelings invalidated at every concern that we shared, almost feels empowering”

Parent

About Autism and Early Intervention

Autism

One of the things that makes our charity different is our distinctive and empowering conception of autism. We reject the implication that it is an impairment to be treated or cured or that Autistic children are in some way limited in what they can aspire to in life.

The most noticeable signs of autism include social disinterest and lack of or limited affective responsiveness, repetitive or restrictive behaviours, and impaired communication. Severe signs may be perceived by, and cause concern for caregivers early in children’s life, while less severe signs might be noticed when children enter the school education system, and their behaviour and interactions affect the teaching and learning process.

Why is Early Intervention Important

Increasingly, research has shown that signs of autism are evident early on in a child’s life. Some of the early signs include a child’s response to sensory input (such as noise, light, texture, taste, smell, and physical contact) and sensori- motor coordination challenges (*Trevarthen and Delafield-Butt 2013, 2020; Walbam 2019*). It is argued that the most common and noticeable signs of autism, such as social isolation, social emotional and cognitive delays, and language disorders, are secondary consequences of poor early sensori-motor and affective integration (*Trevarthen and Delafield-Butt 2013*).

These differences, along with a lack of understanding of what they’re experiencing, even from their own parents, can be the source of ongoing distress for young Autistic children, who can easily become completely overwhelmed. Continued triggers can and very commonly develop into traumas that in turn affect their development at the most formative stage of life.

If the distress caused to an Autistic child from their everyday experiences is not understood by a parent or caregiver, it may affect their interactions and relationships with their child . Parents may find it difficult to be in tune with their child, which may affect the connectedness, attachment, and bond they have with them.

Thus, parental awareness of these early signs is crucial in building connectedness with their child and developing the skills to support and strengthen the child’s potential.

That’s why our focus is on supporting Autistic children and their families in the earliest years of life. We find that if we can address their and their families’ anxieties and show them true understanding and care, dramatic and profound changes are possible that can completely transform their life trajectory.

Left undiagnosed and unsupported, research shows young Autistic children can go on in life to struggle with school, exclusion and find it difficult to transition in later life to employment.

Get Involved

Donate online

Even a small donation will make a difference to an Autistic child and their family. So if you would like to donate, please visit www.transformingautism.org.

Leave us a gift in your will

By leaving a legacy, you can help us continue to support Autistic children and their families. please contact us at fundraising@transformingautism.org for more information on how to do this.

Volunteering

Our charity is built on a team of dedicated and skilled volunteers. As little as a few hours a week could make all the difference. If you would be interested in joining our volunteering team contact us at volunteering@transformingautism.org.

Partner with us

Whether you are a school, or a local autism service, we would love to hear from you to share our programmes and reach more Autistic children and families.

If you would like to fund one of our projects, contact us at fundraising@transformingautism.org

If you would like to fundraise for us – there are many ways, please contact us at fundraising@transformingautism.org.

“We came to you seeking guidance and support, and we found so much more than we could have hoped for. Through their personalised approach and expert guidance, we were able to better understand our child’s needs and implement strategies to help them thrive.”

Parent

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