

Family First Charity Commission Report Year Ending March 2025

Submitted to Charity Commission Sept 2025

Who we are

Family First are a Christian charity who support families in the Ipswich area to make small changes which make big impacts on family life. Our primary offer is to mentor parents and carers to reach agreed goals to improve family life. We help improve mental wellbeing, build confidence and increase social and support networks.

Family First was set up by a group of Christians in Ipswich in 2013, originally known as Ipswich4family a franchisee of Yeovil4family. In 2016 we became a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) and in May 2017 we became an independent charity with a new name and renewed focus on the needs in our local area.

The Charity is led by a board of Trustees and a Management Team who possess a wealth of knowledge, skills and experience working in the public, private and voluntary sector. All have a passion to see vulnerable children and families supported to reach their full potential.

Our Mission Statement:

Family First is a Christian charity who support families in Ipswich. Our staff and volunteers visit parents and carers to listen, support and encourage them to reach their agreed goals. We work with all families regardless of age, race, religion or cultural background.

Our aim is for parents and carers to increase their confidence, build social and support networks to reduce isolation, and improve mental wellbeing.

Our vision is to see families that are resilient, thriving, and happy.

What we do

Our core offer is to increase the confidence, social support networks and mental wellbeing of parents and carers to see families thriving and happy. We do this by providing mentoring programmes. We talk with families and build a picture of what their life looks like now and how they would like to see it change. We then agree around 3 goals they would like to achieve through working with us. The allocated worker provides regular visits to listen, support and encourage the families, agreeing small steps or actions that can be taken each week which, over time, result in goals being met.

We work on an empowerment model which enables families to grow in confidence and equips them so, when our work comes to end, they are able to keep going and overcome future challenges.

Social Impact

The support Family First offers, is primarily designed to have an early intervention impact. This means that by working with families, we can reduce the likelihood that they will go on to require input from statutory services such as Social Care thus reducing the financial cost to society.

We know that these services are seeing an ever-increasing demand on their time and resources and that they are looking to the charity and voluntary sector more and more to meet this need. We work closely with statutory and voluntary services to ensure the whole family receive holistic care. This could include, for example, referrals for support with finance and debt, domestic abuse or educational support services.

Case Study F268

Self-referral for support with daughter's anxiety, mum's confidence and self-esteem. We helped Mum to look deeper into what was going on for her daughter and used a range of tailored tools such as visual resources and social stories. We worked on how to prepare their daughter for upcoming transitions to a new home and school. This was something she found difficult. Mum said her daughter is now positive about moving.

Our Family Worker supported Mum by giving written information about local SEN support services and working through our self-esteem pack. They concentrated on Mum looking after herself, having her own boundaries and being able to say no.

We have seen positive progress in the family, including Mum feeling confident about her parenting and her daughter being able to cope better with changes due to the support given. The family are aware of how to gain support from the school and what they can put in place to help. Her daughter attended her first residential at school which went well, and she enjoys attending Suffolk Family Carers sessions once a month.

At the beginning of Family First's involvement Mum's Self-esteem score was 16 and her statement score was 17. By the end of the support Mums self-esteem score had gone up to 27 and her statement score up to 35, which shows a huge improvement overall.

Mum's comments during conversation:

'I feel in a much better place than before, I feel a lot more confident in dealing with H's difficulties and not feeling so overwhelmed'.

'I have developed a better understanding of my child and that they may be neurodivergent too'.

Review of the year Mar 24 – Feb 25

- The number of referrals into our service increased by 11%, slightly over our target of 10% per year.
- Of the families who completed their work within this year, we saw 100% report an improvement in overall mental wellbeing and self-esteem.
- Overall mental wellbeing score increased by an average of 8 points on a scale of 0-35
- Self-esteem increased by an average score of 5.6 on a scale of 0-30.

As a result of the continued rise in the complexity of work received and the difficulty in recruiting volunteers, we saw a rise in work managed by paid staff rather than volunteers. In response to this we reviewed the paid roles across the team allowing for clearer definition between roles and an increase in hands on time spent with families. We also undertook additional training to support staff in areas such as mental health and formed new or closer relationships with other services. This enabled us to offer a wider and more in-depth range of intervention within our own roles and working alongside/signposting to others.

Staff have reported feeling more confident within their roles.

Update on actions identified last year:

1. To improve recruitment and retention of volunteers and staff including improving the training offer to ensure workers have up to date skills and knowledge.

UPDATE – induction training was revised and, in line with feedback, now includes a wide range of case studies and input from existing workers sharing their experience. More training was offered to staff and volunteers. We have yet to see an increase in volunteers but staff report feeling more confident.

2. Clarify core service offer to ensure we get appropriate referrals

UPDATE referral form revised to include more clarity on what input is required from Family First and what referrer has done/will do. Conversations undertaken with referrers to clarify what work can/cannot be offered both by Family First and the referring agency.

3. Continue to increase our reach across Ipswich and see referrals received from a wider range of sources.

UPDATE we have seen some new referrers come onboard and the Service Lead has continued her networking to raise profile of Family First.

Finance

We continue to be funded solely by fundraising, grant applications and donations. We have had a good year with some generous individual donations as well as securing a large grant of £50,000. This provides us with financial security for the next 18m-2yrs. It also led to us opening a separate 95 day access interest earning account giving us a small additional income. This will be valuable in supporting us should we need to continue to increase the paid hours as volunteer hours fall.

Structure and Governance

Family First is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation. Charity No: 1166175

Registered Address: The Hope Centre, 10 St. Margaret's Street, Ipswich IP4 2AT

We are governed by a constitution adopted in March 2016.

There has been no change in our trustees who remain:

Dorothy Cordle, Chair, Jan Baker, Secretary, David Sansom, Safeguarding Lead,

Mark Crawley, Daniel Somers, Sajani George

We also have a Patron – Cllr Elizabeth Harsant

We have the following policies in place:

Disclosure and Barring Service, Children and Vulnerable Adult Protection and Safeguarding, Data Protection, Recruitment, Use of Mobile Phones, Health and Safety, Equal Opportunities, Managing Performance, Money Handling, Privacy, Expenses, Supervision and Appraisal, Special Leave, Grievance, Complaints, Lone Worker, Risk Management, Anti-Fraud and Bribery.

All policies are reviewed annually or bi-annually.

Priorities for next year:

1. Review the organisational structure including balance of paid staff vs volunteers
2. Further review on range and appropriateness of referrals – this may lead to focusing on referrals from specific agencies as priority
3. Improving efficiency of service, reducing overall cost per family

FAMILY FIRST
RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 21ST MARCH 2025

Registered Charity Number – 1166175

Address:

Family First
The Hope Centre
10 St. Margaret's Street
IPSWICH
IP4 2AT

FAMILY FIRST

Charity number 1166175

Receipts and Payments Account**for the year 22nd March 2024 to 21st March 2025**

	Note	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	Total £	Last year £
Receipts					
Donations, Legacies, Fundraising income	1	9,646	0	9,646	5,441
Grants	2		65,000	65,000	40,710
Bank Interest Received		1,552		1,552	849
Total Receipts		11,198	65,000	76,198	47,000
Payments					
Gifts to families/ self-esteem packs			367	367	1,185
Staff costs	3	87	41,795	41,882	39,687
Administration and Other costs	4	2,573	6,198	8,771	3,147
Fundraising costs		0		0	50
Total Payments		2,660	48,360	51,020	44,069
Net incoming resources for the year		8,538	16,640	25,178	2,931
Transfer between funds					
Cash funds b/fwd		27,961	54,926	82,887	79,956
Cash funds c/fwd	5	36,499	71,566	108,065	82,887

Statement of Assets and Liabilities at 21st March 2025

	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	Total £	Last year £
Cash funds				
Bank current account	31,827		31,827	27,887
Lloyds Deposit accounts	4,672	71,566	76,238	55,000
	36,499	71,566	108,065	82,887

Signed on behalf of the trustees:

D Cordle

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9/11/2025

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Notes to the Accounts**for the year 22nd March 2024 to 21st March 2025****1) Donations, Legacies Fundraising Income**

	Unrestricted	Restricted	2025	2024
	£	£	£	£
Donations	9314		9,314	4,122
Gift aid	0		0	242
Fundraising income	332		332	1,077
	9,646	0	9,646	5,441

2) Grants received

	Unrestricted	Restricted	2025	2024
	£	£	£	£
The Grant Foundation			0	4,500
Ropes Trust 2			0	10,000
Ropes Trust (specific expenses)			0	1,210
Ropes Trust 3		15,000	15,000	0
Irving Memorial Trust			0	25,000
Irving Memorial Trust 2		50,000	50,000	0
	0	65,000	65,000	40,710

3) Staff Costs

	Unrestricted	Restricted	2025	2024
	£	£	£	£
Salaries and Staff Costs		34,134	34,134	33,790
Non-salaried family workers' fees		5,257	5,257	4,190
Employer pension costs		327	327	354
Travel costs		1,680	1,680	915
Phone costs	87	397	484	438
	87	41,795	41,882	39,687

Notes to the Accounts (continued)**for the year 22nd March 2024 to 21st March 2025****4) Administration and Other Costs**

	Unrestricted	Restricted	2025	2024
	£	£	£	£
Flyers/leaflets/banners/publicity	150	148	298	270
Equipment - phones	152	90	242	138
Equipment - laptops	1,088	1,143	2,231	0
Office/venue hire		86	86	541
Training	105	114	219	243
Legal / Licences	47		47	35
DBS checks	75		75	101
Postage, stationery, printing	20	249	269	175
Insurance		592	592	440
Software and IT support	600	2,677	3,277	404
Website expenses	305	162	467	0
Meeting / hospitality expenses / refreshments		16	16	22
Gifts to Volunteers/ Staff		527	527	291
Subscriptions	0		0	267
Bookkeeping / admin expenses	31	144	175	0
Accountancy / Independent examination fees		250	250	220
	2,573	6,198	8,771	3,147

5) Restricted Funds cf 21st March 2025

	Cash funds at 21st March 2024	Fund income in the year	Fund expenditure in the year	Tfr to unrestricted funds	Cash funds at 21st March 2025
	£	£	£	£	£
Ludlow Trust 2022	2,429		(2,429)		0
Ludlow Trust 2022 (2)	11,287		(11,287)		0
Smith and Mount Trust (2)	1,710		(1,710)		0
The Grant Foundation	4,500		(1,291)		3,209
Ropes Trust 2	10,000		(10,000)		0
Ropes Trust 3	0	15,000	(1,142)		13,858
Irving Memorial Trust	25,000		(20,501)		4,499
Irving Memorial Trust 2		50,000			50,000
Total cash and bank funds	54,926	65,000	(48,360)	0	71,566

Independent Examiner's Report to the Trustees of Family First
For the year ended 21st March 2025
Charity number 1166175

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity for the year ended 21st March 2025.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the charity trustees, you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 (the Charities Act).

I report in respect of my examination of the charity's accounts carried out under section 145 of the Charities Act, and in carrying out my examination, I have followed the applicable directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Charities Act.

Independent examiner's statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination which give me cause to believe that, in any material respect, accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Charities Act, or that the accounts do not accord with the accounting records.

I have no concerns, and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed:

Carole Cowgill

Date:

28/5/25

Mrs. Carole Cowgill ACA

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Capel St. Mary
Ipswich
IP9 2UU

