



**Ormiston  
Families**

Brighter futures

THE STREET

38

40

# Ormiston Families

## 2023/24 Impact Report



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#TeamOrmiston - Support us





# About Ormiston Families

Ormiston Families exists today because of one family's tragedy.

Our founder's sister, Fiona Ormiston Murray, was tragically killed on her honeymoon. She loved children and it was no secret that she was excited about starting her own family. Her family, devastated by their loss, honoured her memory by creating a charitable trust, devoted to helping children and families in need. That trust is now known as Ormiston Families.

Ormiston Families focusses its work on the support of vulnerable children and their families across the East of England. The families we work with face a variety of challenges including poor mental health, additional needs, imprisonment, bereavement and child removal.

We offer one-to-one support, small group sessions and prison visit facilitation to help families work through the effects of these challenges. We work directly with children and young people as well as parents, carers and professionals to support change at a personal and systemic level.

In 2023/24, we reached over 5,100 families and welcomed over 60,000 visitors to our prison visit centres. Every one of them has a story to tell. Read about some of their journeys here, and how you can support us to continue to make a difference.

# Welcome from our Chair and CEO

At Ormiston Families, our vision is that all families in the East of England are safe, healthy and resilient. To achieve that, we want to reach those in need as early as possible, capitalising on the early intervention approach we know works and allowing our expert practitioners to provide support without delay.

We are delighted to lay out this report which explains how last year we did that for more families than ever – and the numbers tell the story.

In 2023/24 we worked directly with over 5,100 families, offering nearly 22,000 sessions of support. Remarkably, this was despite seeing a 20% reduction in our income on the previous year. Our 2023/24 report illustrates how we achieved this through collaborating with others to build more effective partnerships, improving our back-office systems and infrastructure, and enhancing the quality and scope of the services we offer.

On asking those that accessed our services last year, 89% reported feeling safer, 84% felt emotionally healthier and 86% told us they felt more resilient. However, we know there is still more to be done. This is why we are advocating for greater support for children's mental health, for improved support for parents of children with additional needs, for targeted and compassionate support for mothers who have had a child removed from their care, and for increased funding for early intervention work with families.

In the challenging economic climate, it is no surprise that crisis services are prioritised for funding. However, at Ormiston Families, we believe that early preventative work costs less overall and reduces the number of families experiencing the heightened trauma of waiting for their needs to escalate to a critical point before support becomes available to them. This is the best way to deliver compassionate services and why we are always keen to explore opportunities to intervene earlier. Hence, our Stars Bereavement service has recently introduced a pre-bereavement support initiative. Similarly, our Breaking Barriers service is collaborating with Police Forces to establish a consolidated record of children with a parent

in prison so that support can be offered earlier to children confronting this recognised adverse childhood experience.

While sometimes we may not secure sustained funding to enable us to continue delivering a service, as a charity we believe in being brave enough to try new initiatives. This year we took the tough decision to end our YouCanBe service for this reason. YouCanBe was a preventative service to support young women, vulnerable to pregnancy and the subsequent removal of their child into care, to make positive choices around their relationships and sexual health. Many young women and their families have benefited from the support YouCanBe provided, which was developed to sit alongside our Mpower service which operates across three counties in the East region and supports women who have already had one or more children removed into care. Our Mpower service grew in 2023 with a newly funded team opening in Peterborough and with the Norfolk team winning and mobilising a trailblazing Public Health and Children's Services tender to deliver a statutorily commissioned service as the first of its kind in the country.

As we enter the third year of our current strategic plan, we are asking the people we work with, staff, funders and others to help us review and critique our progress, as we begin to shape our strategic direction for the next three years. Reflecting on our achievements within this report, it is heartening to see just how many can be traced directly back to the objectives we laid out in our strategic plan in 2022. For this we must thank our trustees and staff for their incredible skills and commitment and our colleagues in the numerous partnerships we are part of, for believing in Ormiston Families, our values, and the individuals and families we are working with.



**Gail Tolley**  
Chair



**Allan Myatt**  
CEO

# A year in numbers

**66,279**  
prison visitors  
welcomed

**5,129**  
families  
worked  
with

**21,774**  
sessions of  
support  
offered

**10%**  
increase  
in prison  
visitors

Families  
supported  
across  
**5**  
counties

**1,554**  
prison visit  
sessions  
offered

**7%**  
increase  
in direct  
work

**20**  
volunteers  
donated  
their time

**89%**  
of people reported  
feeling safer after  
accessing our  
services

**84%**  
of people felt  
emotionally  
healthier after  
working with us

**86%**  
of people were  
more able to  
deal with life's  
challenges  
following our  
support

Children &  
Young People Now  
Awards 2023

Winner

Early  
Intervention  
Award  
winners

# Our work supporting families affected by offending

We ensure families with a loved one in prison aren't left behind and support ex-offenders to reintegrate into their community.

## Why?

**Because an estimated 78% of the prison population have a child aged under 18, and 7% of children will experience their parent's imprisonment during their time at school\*.**

Parental imprisonment is known as an 'adverse childhood experience' that can directly affect long term health and wellbeing, so supporting children experiencing this can help lessen these effects.

Maintaining family ties can reduce re-offending rates, contributing to breaking intergenerational cycles of offending and saving the taxpayer money.

(\*Source: Ministry of Justice. Official Statistics in Development: Estimates of children with a parent in prison (2024))



- In 2023/24, 186 children and young people benefited from support from our Breaking Barriers service to cope with having a close family member in prison.
- Our Prisoner Family Services offered over 1,500 visit sessions, welcoming more than 60,000 visitors to keep families connected.
- 314 people on probation orders worked with our teams to build stronger connections with families and significant others.



# Breaking Barriers

**The children of prisoners often suffer the consequences of their relative's actions through no fault of their own.**

They can be stigmatised, bullied and confronted by their community, making them feel abandonment, loss and shame. Unable to regulate their emotions, some children lash out with disruptive behaviour. Others withdraw and bottle up their emotions. This can lead to antisocial behaviour, mental health problems, poor health and educational outcomes, future poverty and disadvantage.

Breaking Barriers works across the East of England providing one-to-one support for children and young people who are dealing with the imprisonment of a close family member. Children like Paige (not her real name)...

## Paige's story

**Paige was referred to Breaking Barriers by her school after being excluded due to angry outbursts.**

Her behaviour deteriorated following her brother's sentencing, which was publicised on social media. This led to bullying from other students and increased anger at her inability to control her brother's actions. The family dynamics changed as her brother's two children moved in, causing Paige to isolate herself and struggle to regulate her emotions.

After an initial assessment with her mother, Paige began meeting weekly with her Breaking Barriers practitioner at school. She aimed to understand her emotions and learn to control her anger. Paige identified specific emotions related to her brother's arrest and their impact on her mental wellbeing. She addressed her anxiety about constant reminders of her brother's actions and incidents at school that triggered her anger. Paige learned to remove herself from triggering environments to manage her emotions better.

Paige learned what support she needed to prevent emotional outbursts, such as regular contact with school staff and forewarning of potentially triggering activities. She developed strategies for managing her anger, including taking up boxing lessons, using a support hub, and speaking to a school counsellor. Paige became adept at describing her emotions, recognising triggers, and regulating her feelings. She outlined her future goals and showed commitment to achieving them.

Paige's mother said, ***"When Paige's brother offended, she couldn't trust anyone at school. Now she is more open with emotions and expresses her feelings. She was able to be advocated for while maintaining confidentiality."***

Paige said, ***"Thank you for always listening to me without judging me."***

# Prisoner's Family Services

We run eight prison visitor centres across the East of England. We help families understand their visit and try to reassure children as well as providing special activities for families to enjoy together.



In 2023/24, we continued to develop the ways that Dylan, our friendly animated character, can support families affected by the imprisonment of a loved one. A new storybook and workbook was designed with children accessing our Breaking Barriers service, and distributed to schools, libraries, prison visit centres and police forces.



***MY DAD IS HOME!! I'm just taking this time to say thank you. Thank you so much for everything you have done for me and Caleb. We really appreciate it. I remember being so scared and anxious on my first visit. Everyone put me at ease, and I was able to cope and feel safe and like part of a family on every visit. You took Caleb's needs in your stride and always made us feel included and safe. We have so many fond memories with my dad from making cakes to playing connect four and chasing Caleb around the garden. Every visit has been amazing, especially family day. Thank you for taking the time to hold these events and provide activities. What you do really does change and save lives.'***

Visitor, HMP Norwich (names have been changed)

We also worked with young people and former prisoners to produce two videos; a 'walk through' of a typical prison visiting session, and a 'myth-busting' of some of the common misunderstandings young people report to us around prison, which can provoke so much distress.

One young person who had just watched this video said, ***"I have always wanted to visit my Dad but something stopped me. Now I feel more ready to go."***

Our Prison Visit Centre teams have been on hand for over 1,500 visit sessions this year to help families feel a little more at ease.

Special visits give families the chance to maintain the bond with the parent in prison, reducing the impact on the children serving a hidden sentence.





# Probation Family Services

We help ex-offenders reconnect with their families and children and improve their understanding of how their behaviour impacts others.

Those we have worked with this year took the time to tell us about the difference it has made for them...

“

*It has helped with my confidence and has pushed me to get things done and helped me manage my emotions.”*

“

*I feel like it's made me a better person. It has made me look at life in a more positive manner. You don't normally get the chance to think deeply about life but discussing the subjects we have during the 'Who Am I?' course it really has made me think and want to be a better person.'*

“

*I am already managing my tone of voice and if I am going to say no to something I think about it more in future.”*

“

*It has opened my eyes and given me a new perspective on things in life. It has made me think about how other people might see me which I have thought about a lot lately. It has made me realise what my qualities and faults are. It has allowed me to look to the future and think about what I would like my future to look like.”*



# Our work supporting mental health & wellbeing

We support young people and children who need support in looking after their mental health.



## Why?

- Because 1 in 5 children in England experience mental health difficulties\*.
- 50% of mental health problems are established by age 14\*\*.
- Every 20 minutes, a child in the UK suffers the loss of a parent.

Poor mental health can affect children and young people's ability to make friends, enjoy learning, and maintain good physical health, so acting early is important to give them the best chance to grow into happy, healthy adults.

(\*Source: NHS England (2023). Mental Health of Children and Young People in England 2023 – wave 4 follow up to the 2017 survey.

\*\*Source: Kessler RC, Berglund P, Demler O, Jin R, Merikangas KR, Walters EE. (2005). Lifetime Prevalence and Age-of-Onset Distributions of DSM-IV Disorders in the National Comorbidity Survey Replication).

- In 2023/24, we offered nearly 5000 sessions of professional mental health support through our YOUUnited service.
- 136 bereaved children in Cambridgeshire accessed over 750 sessions of specialist counselling.
- Our Supporting Smiles team worked with 1122 children and young people in Norfolk & Waveney experiencing anxiety, low mood and other mental health concerns.

# Stars

**Childhood bereavement is not rare, but for families affected it is an exceptionally traumatic event. Stars supports children and young people in Cambridgeshire who are struggling due to the bereavement of a close family member.**

Stars offers one-to-one, creative and talking therapies for children and young people to navigate their grief journey. Children like 8yr old Bella, and her twin sister, Eva...

## Bella's story

**Bella was really sad after her grandpa's sudden death. Afraid to burden her family with her feelings, she didn't talk about her grief at home. Instead, she focused on caring for her twin sister, Eva, and became anxious about losing other family members, particularly worrying when away from her parents.**

To help Bella, Stars offered seven counselling sessions, with parallel sessions for Eva. Bella was able to express her feelings through creative therapeutic activities, starting with painting and storytelling. In her first session, she created a "Feelings Page," using colours and emoji stickers to depict her emotions about her grandpa's death. She also decorated memory stones and engaged in therapeutic storytelling in subsequent sessions.

As counselling progressed, Bella explored her grief and anxiety, especially concerning holidays and family gatherings. Stars provided age-appropriate coping strategies, such as the "Invisible String" concept, helping Bella visualise her bond with loved ones even after their passing. She also learned grounding exercises and breathing techniques to manage her anxiety.

Bella's progress was notable throughout the sessions. She benefitted from activities like therapeutic sand

play, creating symbolic representations of her emotions. These sessions gave Bella a safe space to explore and express her feelings, helping her cope with her grief and anxiety.

After the sessions, Bella felt much better. She could talk more openly about her grandpa and was less anxious when her parents weren't around. She also learned how to support friends when they were feeling down. Bella's parents were delighted to see her improvement and how she seemed more like her old self.

***Bella said, "If anyone has any worries they should talk to someone. It feels like you're not alone anymore... Thank you Katie for your help, I am feeling much better from talking to you."***

***Her parents told us, "Both of our daughters have benefited enormously from their time in this program... Many thanks to Katie and the whole team for such a creative, well-thought out process which has enabled our daughters to feel more like themselves again."***

# Supporting Smiles

Supporting Smiles offers professional mental health and emotional wellbeing support to children and young people in Norfolk and Waveney.

Our support helps children, young people and their families to build strategies that they can use to address mental health concerns now and in the future.



*The lady who I talked to was one of the kindest people I have ever met.*

Young person accessing Supporting Smiles



*I found that it was good because we did the exposure things and it helped me. It helped me to be exposed to some of the stuff and now I feel very much less scared about being sick.'*

Young person accessing Supporting Smiles



*I really appreciate everything you have done to help me and you've given me motivation to take my life back from OCD."*

Young person accessing Supporting Smiles



*It has been a life changer. Things at home were becoming increasingly difficult and affecting the whole family. The tools my husband and I have been provided with have had a positive effect on all of us. I cannot thank you enough. I tell everyone about the service and the wonderful support we have received."*

Parent

**97%**

of families felt that their views and worries were taken seriously

**96%**

of families felt listened to

**95%**

said the help they received from Ormiston Families was good

YOUUnited uses therapies, counselling and guided self-help to support people in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough aged up to 25.

In 2023/24 the service supported 1,636 children and young people. One of them was 'Amy' (not her real name), whose life was being significantly affected by anxiety. Thankfully, our YOUUnited practitioner was able to offer just the support she needed:

## Amy's story

**Nine-year-old Amy was referred to YOUUnited by her school's Special Educational Needs Coordinator due to significant anxiety and worries about sickness. Her anxiety caused tummy aches and a fear of vomiting, leading to intense panic episodes. Amy avoided situations away from home, fearing illness without her parents' support and missing out on activities with friends.**

YOUUnited provided Amy with eight sessions of support using a parent-led guided self-help manual for anxiety. The sessions focused on worry management, cognitive distortions, and coping strategies, including grounding, breathing, relaxation, and self-talk. Amy and her mother received practical tools to manage her anxiety, helping Amy understand and control it better.

Amy's mother noticed a substantial boost in Amy's confidence, enabling her to manage anxieties more effectively. Amy learned to manage panic attacks using the provided strategies and her progress was remarkable. She stayed in the same room as a family member who was unexpectedly sick and began planning to go on a school residential trip. Her mother felt better equipped to support Amy, thanks to the knowledge and tools gained from the sessions.



Amy's mum said, ***"Kate was easy to talk to, helpful, and communication was good. I felt that Kate had experience which helped and made it easier. Everything was explained in easy terms to understand and forward onto Amy. Amy has been able to relate with the information given and made her own panic plan which has helped her. She has learnt loads, really improved in confidence, and has the thought processes that she knows will help her. It's been like a counselling session for myself too. It's been great to understand and see the benefits of everything we've learnt help her."***

Our practitioner Kate said, ***"A lovely, unexpected impact was when Amy had a friend who was also struggling with their anxiety; she took it upon herself to share what she had learned, helped them make their own panic plan, and delivered it to their house along with a Wagon Wheel."***

# Our work supporting communities

We provide emotional, physical and social wellbeing services within the East of England's local communities.

## Why?

**Because approximately 1 in every 4 mothers who have had a child removed from their care by a court are at risk of return with future children. This risk rises to 1 in 3 for the youngest mothers\*.**

Women are often left unsupported to repeat the circumstances that led to the first child being removed, so our services help to address these issues, and promote healthy relationships to reduce the likelihood of repeat removals.

Over 1.6 million pupils in England have special educational needs, and this number has been rising since 2016.\*\*

Families often face a battle for diagnosis, with no clear path for support and an overwhelming feeling of isolation.

(\*Source: Lancaster University (2017))

\*\*Source: Special educational needs in England' National Statistics release (2024))



- In 2023/24 our Mpower service worked with 120 parents who had at least one child removed into care to help deal with this loss and understand and address the issues behind the removals.
- 28 young women were supported by YouCanBe, with three quarters telling us that they felt more resilient as a result of their work with us, setting them in good stead for a brighter future.
- Our Stronger Together service benefitted 790 children with special educational needs and disabilities.

# Stronger together

Stronger Together helps families in Cambridgeshire who have children with additional needs or disabilities. It offers parent peer support groups as well as specialist sensory resources for families and childcare & education settings to borrow for the children in their care.

Following a comprehensive re-modelling our Stronger Together service has grown in strength this year. A swathe of staff and volunteers with lived experience of children with SEND have enabled new pop-up library locations and parent-groups to take shape, offering greater accessibility to the remote communities that it serves.



*The group has really helped my confidence. When I first went in, I didn't want to talk to anyone. I've met some lovely people through it who I now consider to be really good friends. I have found out information through the group with regards to benefits or different things in the system to help with diagnosis and EHCPs. It's nice to have somewhere to go where other people understand what it is like.'*

Stronger Together  
service user

# Mpower

**We support women who have had one or more children removed from their care across Norfolk, Suffolk and Fenland. We help them understand the reasons for the removal and build a network of support around them. In 2023/24, we offered nearly 2,000 sessions of support.**

One of the women accessing this support was 'Charley' (not her real name). Having developed negative views of support services over the years, our practitioner Michelle sought to rebuild some trust.

## Charley's story

**Charley and her partner, James, had three children removed from their care between 2003 and 2006. When Charley became pregnant again, they fled to Ireland, where they retained custody of their baby and had five more children. After returning to East Anglia, a social worker became involved following an incident between two children, leading to a Child in Need plan. Due to the couple's anxiety and mistrust of professionals getting in the way of progress, Charley's social worker referred her to Mpower.**

Charley received one-on-one sessions with her Mpower practitioner, providing a safe space to express concerns about social care. She discussed her anxieties, gained a better understanding of professionals' roles, and reflected on her past experiences with her eldest children. Despite initial positive progress, Charley and James separated, and Charley faced potential homelessness. Concerns for the children led to an escalation to Child Protection. Mpower remained involved as the risk of care proceedings was imminent, however the children were able to stay with their parents in separate homes. Charley made significant strides,

reflecting on needed changes, exploring her feelings about relationships, and securing letterbox contact with one of her older daughters after years of no communication.

Initially guarded, Charley's perspective shifted as she engaged with Mpower. She developed a deeper understanding of the concerns held by professionals, secured stable housing, and stabilised her finances. Relationships with her younger children improved, and she successfully initiated contact with her older daughter. Charley built a supportive network of friends and focused on personal growth. The children became more settled in school with fewer negative behaviours.

Charley praised her Mpower practitioner, for her support and different perspectives, ***"Michelle has been amazing and has helped me so much. She always listens to me have a moan but helps me to see things in different ways."***







Michelle reflected on Charley's journey, noting her growth in confidence and ability to look to the future. ***"It has been a pleasure to support Charley and witness the changes she's been able to make. When we first met, she was surviving day to day. She has been able to reflect on her own actions, learn from them, and now presents as so much more confident in herself and able to look to the future."***

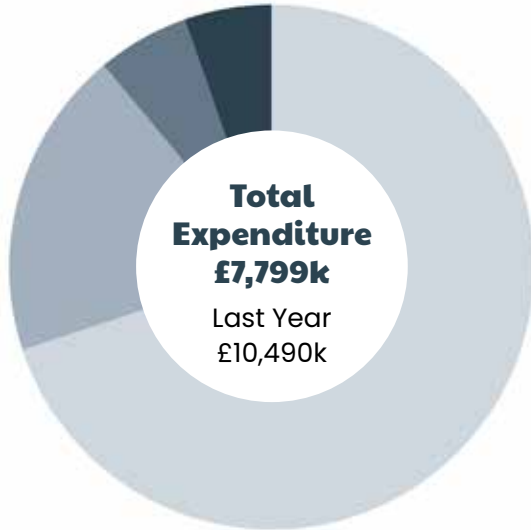
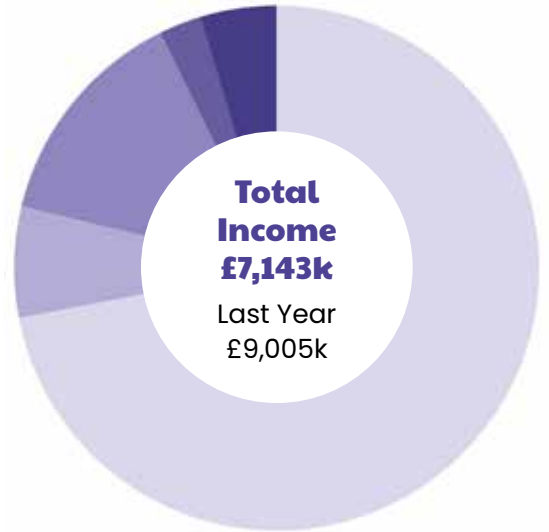
# Financials

## Income

- Government funding
- Trading
- Trust and other grants
- Fees and other income
- Donations and events

£'000

<b>£5,140</b>
<b>£489</b>
<b>£993</b>
<b>£186</b>
<b>£335</b>



## Expenditure

- Services supporting families
- Services for those affected by the justice system
- Trading
- Raising grants and other income

£'000

<b>£5,404</b>
<b>£1,517</b>
<b>£452</b>
<b>£426</b>

In 2023/24, we raised £7,143k to continue our work supporting families in the East of England. We spent £7,799k on our work to make sure our doors stayed open for people who needed support.

In total, this money helped us to work directly with 5,129 families through 21,774 sessions of support. In addition, we welcomed 66,279 prison visitors at over 1500 visit sessions.



*I have learnt how to deal with situations better but also you have given me understanding of what my emotions do to me, how I can see them coming and what to do in a crisis. I have always felt better leaving sessions after a game of Uno."*

Breaking Barriers  
service user

# #TeamOrmiston have been out in force this year.

Nearly 50 brave souls got wet and muddy taking on the Whole Hog obstacle course, while 17 adventurers conquered 30 miles of biking, hiking and kayaking through the heart of Snowdonia to raise vital funds.

When you add 14 people throwing themselves out of planes, and others walking and running marathons and epic challenges, we are delighted to have seen over 100 individuals and 42 community groups and associations raising valuable funds for our work – thank you to you all.



Will you join  
**#TeamOrmiston**  
in 2025 and  
beyond?





*I used to be unkind to others and be mean. Now after seeing you I'm nicer to others. I'd love to tell you all a big thank you for helping me and other children. Just a big thank you for being a good charity."*

Breaking Barriers Service User



**Ormiston  
Families**

Brighter futures

The continued work of Ormiston Families would not be possible without our wonderful supporters. We would like to thank every individual donor, volunteer, corporate partner and Trust or Foundation that has supported the charity. You have helped us keep the doors open, and helped thousands of families across the East of England see a brighter future.

Registered Office: 333 Felixstowe Road, Ipswich, Suffolk IP3 9BU

Registered Charity Number: 1015716 Registered Company Number: 2769307



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