



**acorns**



# **Strategic Plan 2021-2024**

*Together, we stand tall*

[www.acornsproject.org.uk](http://www.acornsproject.org.uk)



# Mission Statement

We support children, young people and families affected by domestic violence and abuse. We aim to help survivors to recognise their own strengths and skills, putting the power of their recovery in their hands. Together, we stand tall.



“

Just like when people talk about being in a protective bubble, this is how I feel about Acorns. It's a hard shell that finally gives children the *safe haven* they have wanted. Instead of feeling like just one person lost in this big old world, Acorns helps put the world in your hands. Helping regain *confidence and happiness* to help give each child the start in life they all deserved. It's okay not to be okay and together we are strong.

## Introduction from the Chief Executive

I am so excited to be in a position to publish Acorns' plan of action for the next three years. Domestic abuse is on the rise worldwide, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic which has offered abusers increased opportunities to assert control and intensified the isolation that so many survivors (adults and children) experience. We have never been more needed.

We have worked so hard over the last three years to listen to the needs of the families who access our services and our partners in the field of domestic abuse. We have improved existing services, implemented new services and adapted our ways of working. This plan is a culmination of all of that work.

Undoubtedly the last year presented us with huge challenges, but has also given us opportunities to innovate, and we come out of it better and stronger and in a position to support even more families over the coming period. Our strategy will be the blueprint for this work, and three years from now, we expect to see an Acorns Project that has gone from strength to strength with the ongoing commitment and passion of our Board of Trustees, Management Team, staff team, the families who access our services, our supporters in the local community, key stakeholders, and the investment of our funders, without whom none of this could happen.

### Getting In Touch

**Contact us** on 0191 349 8366 or  
email [admin@acornsproject.org.uk](mailto:admin@acornsproject.org.uk)

**Find us online:**  
[www.acornsproject.org.uk](http://www.acornsproject.org.uk)

**Find us on Facebook:**  
[facebook.com/acornsproject](https://facebook.com/acornsproject)

**Find us on Instagram:**  
[acornsproject](https://www.instagram.com/acornsproject)

**Find us on Twitter:**  
[@acorns\\_project](https://twitter.com/acorns_project)



**Abby Traynor**  
Chief Executive Officer



# Three Year Round-Up



We have made a great deal of improvements in the last few years. Most importantly, we have identified gaps in our services for children, young people and families and worked hard to bring in further resources to fund new services, and improve existing ones, including:

- Undertaking **whole team training** in the domestic abuse specific TIME (Trauma Informed Model of Empowerment) Model, developed here in the North East by My Sister's Place, action planning to ensure everyone is involved in improvements and building these principles into our everyday practice.
- Expanding our work under our 'Prevent & Cope' priorities including increasing our outreach staff team, increasing the provision of our bespoke programmes, and implementing a new '**First Response**' service supporting young people aged 11+ who are experiencing domestic abuse or abuse within their own relationships.
- Delivering a successful pilot programme of outreach counselling in Northumberland which is now fully funded, and has recently been awarded the **Scottish Power Foundation 'Innovation Award'** for our approach, which takes counselling to the children who need it.
- Improving our **Recovery Services**, adding flexibility to our offer to ensure a family's needs can be accommodated, and adding a counselling service for the parents and carers of the children who come to Acorns.

*"You are all angels and do such an amazing job. I now have my daughter back and we both know how to love each other and how to show this to each other again."*





1

*Improve the physical and mental health and well-being of families who have been impacted by domestic abuse*



2

*Increase personal resources by building self-esteem, confidence and assertiveness*



3

*Empower families to increase their self-efficacy and live safely and independently*



## Organisational Development

Behind the scenes we have strengthened the way that we operate. We have implemented new computer systems taking all of our case work online, and modernised the way we manage our finances. We have looked at our service provision, and streamlined our teams and introduced team leaders, to improve support for staff and to ensure we can be flexible and responsive to the needs of our families. We have reviewed our HR practices, and, after a staff consultation, implemented a new pay grade structure and new contractual terms and conditions. We've never been in a better position, and we are excited to continue our valuable work!



# What People Say About Us

“

A massive thank you to my worker for helping me. She did not see the broken person in front of her, but the old me and the passion I have to help others. She has helped me build back up my resilience to my situation and point me in the right direction of turning my negatives into positives.

I had many questions and worries and my worker has always taken the time to listen and provide advice and reassure me that I'm doing my best. She has been an incredible support to my son and myself. Thank you so much.

”

“

I just wanted to say a massive thank you for everything you have done for me, you have really influenced me to change. Go back two years and I don't think I would have been able to deal with the half the stuff I have this year without completely breaking down and relying on everyone around me.

Communicate with different agencies well. Do everything they say they will. All staff are brilliant. Make it so welcoming for adults and children. An amazing extra support I never knew about.

”





## Our Three-Year Strategic Plan



### Part A: Service Delivery

We will be known and respected for delivering excellent services to children, young people and families who have experienced domestic abuse.

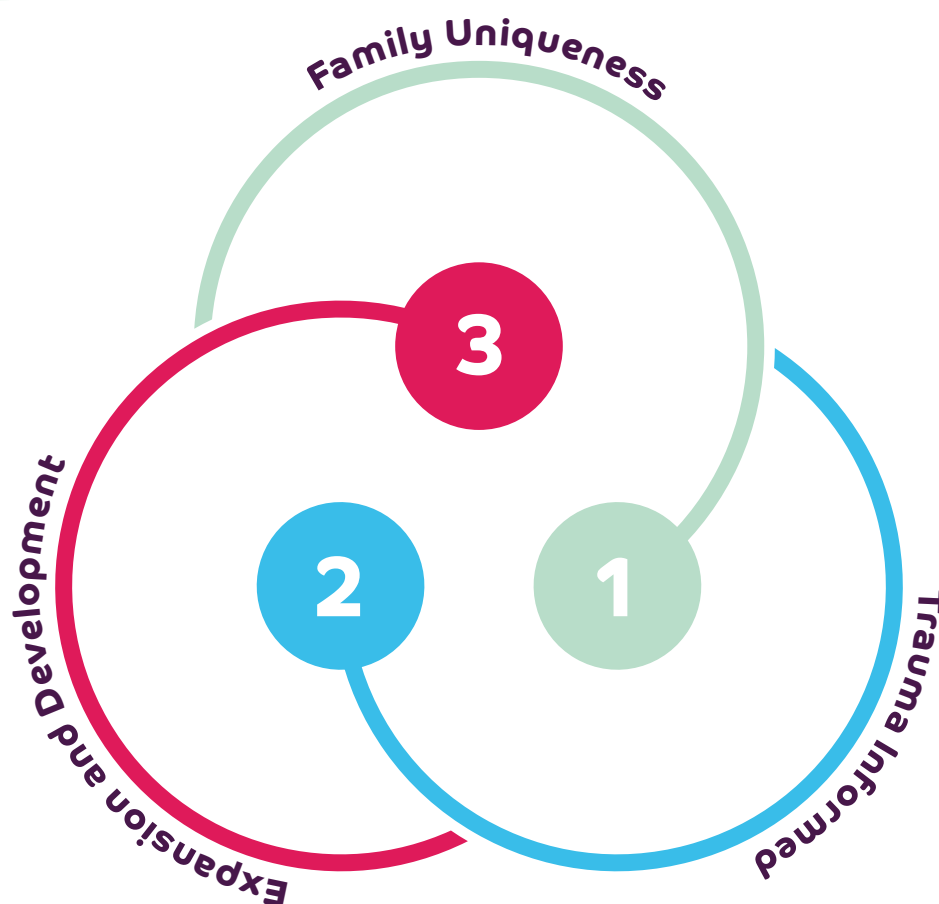
- Family Uniqueness
- Trauma Informed
- Expansion and Development

### Part B: Charity Development

We will build a well-led, sustainably funded charity that invests in its people and is held in high regard by its community, its peers and its funders.

- Inspiring Leadership
- Secure Funding
- Skilled Team
- Communicating Effectively

# Part A: Service Delivery



## 1. Family Uniqueness

### Objective

To take an inclusive approach to engaging families, always seeking to understand and respond to their unique needs and situations.

#### A. Single Door, Many Rooms

Following initial referral, ensure access to a range of therapeutic services to meet the needs of parents and carers, children and young people, and extended family members where appropriate.

#### B. Keep-in-Touch Opportunities

Expand and improve awareness of the 'keep in touch' support we offer to those who may require further help; such as weekly youth groups, peer support, flexible drop-in services, and ongoing advice.

#### C. Improve Ongoing Evaluation

Improve review and evaluation to include a three month and one year catch up to monitor families' well-being, with a view to developing a preventative approach that highlights emerging issues.



## 2. Trauma Informed

### Objective

To practice trauma informed, resilience-based support, within a psychologically informed environment.

#### A. Trauma-Informed Approach

Ensure that trauma-informed practice is present in all aspects of our work with targeted training for staff and volunteers (including trustees) to ensure consistency of culture and quality of delivery.

#### B. Appropriate Service Range

Provide a range of services to meet the varied needs of service users across our tiered services, from advice and signposting, to therapeutic recovery services.

#### C. Promote Choice

Work flexibly to ensure that service users are empowered to work with us to design their own journey, making services available at times and places that meet their needs.

## 3. Expansion and Development

### Objective

To extend all our services throughout all our areas of operation ensuring fair access to support, and to implement new services where gaps in provision are identified.

#### A. Consistency of our Offer

Increase access to our services in Northumberland bringing them more in line with those already available in North Tyneside.

#### B. Increase Capacity

Increase the capacity of our services, in response to increasing demand so that we can offer support in a timely manner, reducing waiting lists.

#### C. Adding and Adapting Services

As we grow we will tailor existing services as the context requires, and also develop new provision in the fields of family work and youth engagement (both in and out of the school context).

#### D. Collaborations and Partnerships

Seek opportunities to work with other organisations in ways that will add value to our services and be of benefit to those we support.



## Part B: Charity Development



### 4. Inspiring Leadership

#### Objective

To strengthen the charity with inspiring leadership at every level.

#### A. Board of Experienced and Skilled Trustees

Attract and retain committed board members with the breadth of skills needed to support delivery of the strategic plan.

#### C. Greater Inclusion of Service Users

Increase inclusion of our service users, including young people and adults with lived experience, making the most of their valuable insights in planning and decision-making.

#### B. Greater Depth of Knowledge

Opportunities for the leadership team to increase their understanding of our work at all levels, developing depth of knowledge in key areas.

#### D. Improve Two-Way Communication

Ensure effective communication between the board and the staff team including opportunities for working together.

## 5. Secure Funding

### Objective

To invest in our relationships with funders, securing reliable income through commissioned services, grant funding and community fundraising.

#### A. Stability Through Planning Ahead

Consolidate our existing funding arrangements and ensure that commissioners and grant managers are aware of our impact. Constantly horizon-scan for new multi-year funding opportunities.

#### B. Enable a Greater Degree of Flexibility

Develop funder relationships to allow for adaptation of services i.e. evolving needs of service users, changing social environment.

#### C. Community & Corporate Fundraising Plan

Plan for the growth of income through community and corporate fundraising, with associated profile-raising and gift-in-kind benefits.

#### D. Scope Relocation of Premises

Investigate the cost and practical considerations in moving Acorns out of Alma Place into a more suitable home.

## 6. Skilled Team

### Objective

To attract, grow and retain an increasingly effective workforce by stepping up the investment and support given to our whole team: paid staff and volunteers.

#### A. Tailored Personal Development

Be at the forefront of good practice by ensuring that our people are offered tailored personal development opportunities, including having a voice in the direction of the charity.

#### B. Enhance Workforce Skills

Review and implement effective means for the support and development of role-related skills, including extra capacity and versatility in back-office i.e. finance, communications and fundraising.

#### C. Embrace Greater Diversity

Harness the opportunities of a more diverse workforce, reflective of our service users and their lived experience.

#### D. Develop Others

Explore the potential to offer vocational development opportunities in our field, in terms of volunteer and trainee counselling, social work placements and apprenticeships.

## 7. Communicating Effectively

### Objective

To know our most important stakeholders and audiences, and to reach them effectively through our communications.

#### A. Produce a Comms Strategy

Set out with clarity how Acorns will communicate with key audiences, identifying objectives to be achieved and methods to be utilised.

#### B. Launch Fresh Identity

Achieve widespread brand recognition by finalising and launching our new identity across our website, social media and printed resources.

#### C. Share Our Knowledge

Become a trusted source of expert information and knowledge for all those with an interest in the effects of domestic abuse within families.





7 Alma Place  
North Shields  
Tyne and Wear  
NE29 0LZ

[www.acornsproject.org.uk](http://www.acornsproject.org.uk)

*Together, we stand tall*

Charity Number: 1157078 | Company Number: 8838624