

Closing the Gap

Our strategy
2022 - 2026



Anna Freud
building the mental
wellbeing of the
next generation

Who we are

Anna Freud is a mental health charity and we've been supporting children and young people for over 70 years.

We listen to and learn from their diverse voices, and integrate this with learnings from our science and practice to develop and deliver mental health care. This holistic approach has world-changing potential – our training, schools support, networks, partnerships and resources equip those who impact children and young people's lives with the knowledge and skills to support their mental health.

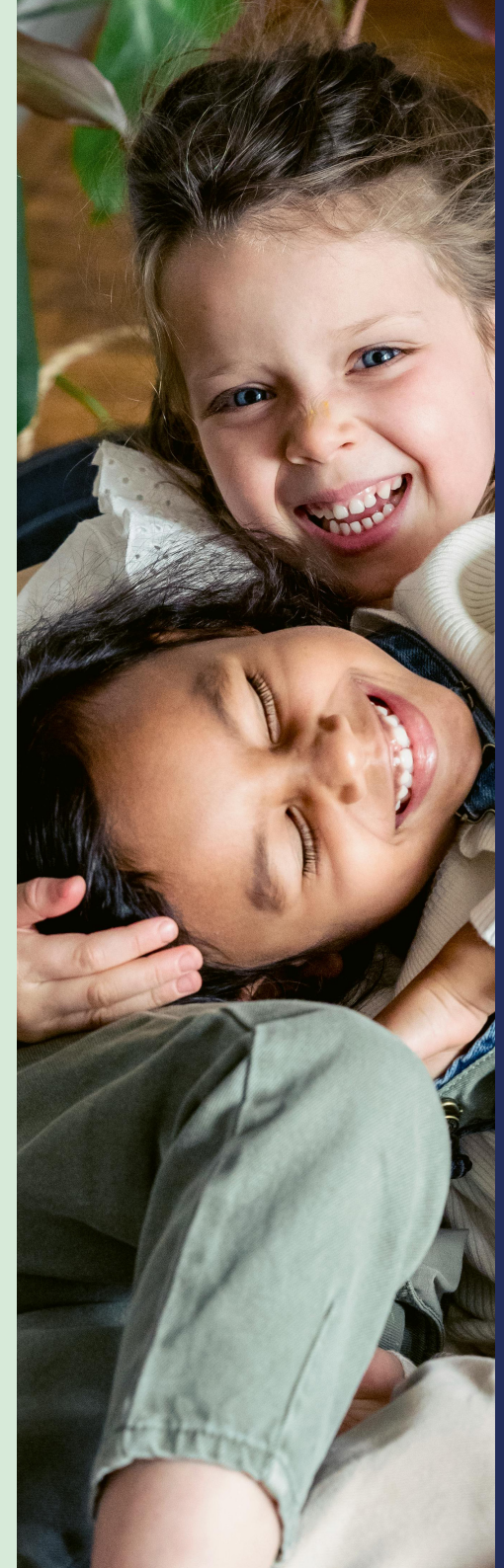
We believe mental wellbeing is the foundation from which children and young people achieve their potential. By continually expanding our understanding and translating it into practice – grounded in science and guided by children and young people – we can ensure they get the right support at the right time.



My name is Thea, I'm 21, a young champion at Anna Freud and I have gone through my own battles with mental health.

Change driven by those it will affect is the most important thing. We need to not assume we know why or how young people feel and bring them into the conversation. They have a lot to offer and hearing their demands will help build tailored help for those that need it. It is so important to widen accessibility of support as currently there are too many young people missing out.

**Thea,
Anna Freud
Young Champion**



Why we need to close the gap in children and young people's mental health

The *Closing the Gap* strategy is transformative and reflects the Anna Freud holistic approach to supporting children and young people with mental ill health and their families. The plan outlines the immediate needs children and young people face and how essential it is for the 'right support' and interventions to be accessible to everyone at the 'right time'.

It's really important to include the voices of young people, parents and carers, as it brings to life the needs they have and the experiences they've gone through. It provides them with an opportunity to feel listened to and empowered – using their lived experience to contribute to helping others.

As the parent of a young person who has experienced mental ill health, the goals in this strategy will really make a difference to families like ours.

Claire
Anna Freud Parent* Champion

**When we say parents, we refer to
parents, carers and guardians*

So often in my experience the help comes when you reach crisis point in the family, and I'd love to live in a world where we're on the front foot with understanding and building our children's mental health in a positive way. This feels like it will do some of the work to take the taboo out of needing help for mental health difficulties – if mental wellness is something everyone understands we're aiming for, and we know how we're doing it, then it's easier to start a conversation when things aren't going so well.

Anna,
Anna Freud
Parent Champion



What we stand for

Our vision

Our vision is a world where all children and young people are able to achieve their full potential. A world in which they and their families get support that is designed with their input, available at the right time, and meets their needs, so that they can develop their emotional and mental health.

Our mission

Our mission is to close the gap in wellbeing and mental health by advancing, translating, delivering and sharing the best science and practice with everyone who impacts the lives of children and families.

Our values

Our values underpin everything we do, our external and internal relationships, our programmes and organisational structure.

Collaboration

We maximise our impact by working in partnership with others, learning from them and sharing our knowledge, expertise and experience.

Integrity

We act with honesty and integrity, guided by evidence, while keeping in mind what science cannot tell us.

Inclusivity

Children, young people, and their families are at the heart of everything we do. We listen and learn from them, and from those who support them in education, social care and health, and across statutory, voluntary and community services.

Equity

We strive for fairness and adjust our approach to help towards addressing the inequalities that exist in society today, recognising that not everyone starts in the same place.

Compassion

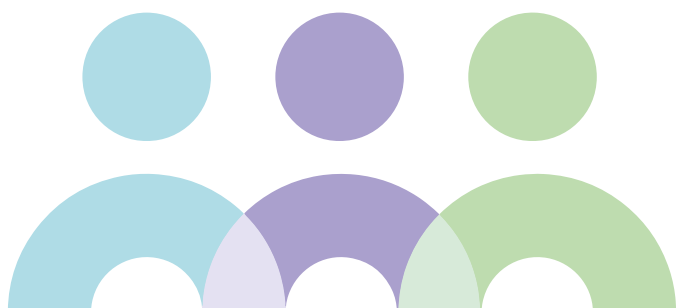
We strive to empathise with the experiences and feelings of others, reflecting constantly and with humility to honour the trust we are given.

Creativity

We are imaginative in how we build new understanding, strengthen relationships and develop our skills as the foundation of excellent practice.

Courage

We experiment and pioneer, accepting that we will sometimes get things wrong, and that is part of how we learn.



We're closing the gap

One in five young people has a probable mental health disorder,¹ but less than a third of those who seek support receive it.² And the situation is particularly severe for marginalised groups: discrimination can contribute to mental ill health and create barriers to accessing help.³

To deliver on our vision, we need to close these gaps. And we do that in three ways:

Closing gaps in science

Only by understanding the causes of mental ill health can we know how to help. We'll listen to lived experience and widen public participation in research to achieve scientific breakthroughs and develop better solutions.

Closing gaps in implementation

We will design and test new approaches to improve the support available. We'll connect professionals and communities to transform the system around children and young people and ensure no child or young person is left out of its reach.

Closing gaps in knowledge

We will distil and share knowledge about what works. We will build tools, provide training, and host peer support networks to grow the confidence, skills and understanding of everyone who impacts children and young people's lives.

Delivering in these three areas will enable us to intervene sooner, prevent mental health problems before they develop and build the mental wellbeing of the next generation.

¹Newlove-Delgado T, Marcheselli F, Williams T, Mandalia D, Dennes M, McManus S, Savic M, Treloar W, Croft K, Ford T. (2023). Mental Health of Children and Young People in England, 2023. NHS England, Leeds. <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/mental-health-of-children-and-young-people-in-england/2023-wave-4-follow-up>

²Children's Commissioner for England, [Children's mental health services 2021-22](#)

³Cave, L., Cooper, M. N., Zubrick, S. R., & Shepherd, C. C. J. (2020). Racial discrimination and child and adolescent health in longitudinal studies: A systematic review. *Social Science & Medicine* (1982), 250, 112864. Advance online publication

Our strategic goals



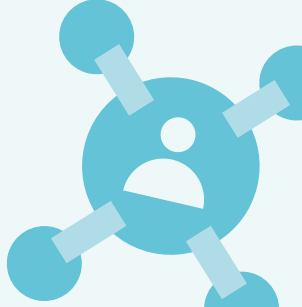
Changing ourselves

We're changing ourselves by:

▶ Publishing our first equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) strategy and prioritising making our organisation representative of the diverse communities we serve.



▶ Placing participation and co-production at the heart of all we do.



▶ Creating a clear and recognisable brand identity that expresses our values, principles and ambitions.



▶ Reviewing and modernising our business model and developing new income-generating activities.



▶ Adopting new technologies to improve efficiency, functionality and accessibility.



▶ Reviewing pay and reward structures, development, family leave and wellbeing policies to better look after our people.



Get involved

Collaboration is central to everything we do. This strategy is ambitious yet achievable – but we will only close the gap with the support of partners, professionals, policy makers and donors, and the input of children, young people, parents and carers.



Support our work by donating at annafreud.org or by joining the Anna Freud Pioneers – a community of like-minded supporters.
Email annafreudpioneers@annafreud.org

Shape our policies and services by signing up to become a Young Champion. You'll need to be aged 14 to 25 years old with lived experience of mental ill health and an understanding and awareness of mental health services.

We also have a Parent and Carer Champion programme for parents and carers with lived experience of mental ill health and an understanding and awareness of mental health services.
Email participation@annafreud.org

Being the parent of a young person who has gone through emotional regulation and mental health challenges has highlighted to me the importance of supporting parents and carers when they need it most. Anna Freud's approach of supporting the child, parents, families and professionals will really make a difference.

**Anna Freud
Parent Champion**



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Anna Freud is a charity registered in England and Wales (1077106).
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