Mermaids

Strategy 2024 - 2027

Welcome

Mermaids has been supporting trans children and young people and their families for nearly 30 years. In a polarised world, where the most marginalised groups are increasingly attacked for their existence, our work has never been more important.

For the strategy taking us into our fourth decade, it was important that we asked our community what they want, and need, from Mermaids today and for the future.

This resulted in hundreds of pieces of feedback, from people of all ages and backgrounds, ranging from drawings from five year olds to emails from grandparents, and everything in between.

This has enabled us to shape our new vision: of a safe, inclusive society where trans children and young people are empowered to live their best lives.

The last two years have been the most challenging in Mermaids' history, both internally and within the context of a hostile external environment.

Despite that, and in many cases because of it, we've been driven to achieve great things. This includes putting young people at the centre of our work internally, and platforming them externally across our policy, advocacy and communications work.



And, we've continued to support thousands of people through our helpline, local groups and growing youth engagement work.

This strategy is a continuation of that work as we seek to continue to strengthen our foundations, deepen our connections to our wider community and deliver the support and services that young people and families need and want for an uncertain future.

We're delighted to launch this strategy, which takes us through to 2027. We look forward to sharing this journey with our supporters, children and young people, families and everyone else who shares our vision.

Belinda Bell (she/her)
Outgoing Chair

Kathryn Downs (she/her)
Incoming Chair

Who we are

We're Mermaids. We've been supporting trans, non-binary and gender questioning children and young people, and the important people in their lives since 1995.

When we talk about "important people" we include parents, grandparents, siblings and any other family member, as well as foster carers, guardians and other trusted adults.

We're one of the UK's leading trans-focused charities. We provide services directly to trans children and young people, to families and work to educate and inform professionals and organisations who want to be part of a society where trans children and young people are safe, included and empowered to be their best selves. Finally, we campaign for the things that matter most to trans children and young people.

This strategy was borne out of wide-ranging conversations with our communities via social media, our supporter mailing list, conversations and feedback from our local groups, online groups and our Youth Advisory Panel. We received well over 700 individual pieces of feedback, and whilst some of those expressed views which are in direct opposition to our values, all were read, considered and enabled us to develop an authentic, community-focused strategy based on the voices of children, young people and families.



age of 25, in line with young people's status in healthcare and education, through what can be a critical time for young trans adults.

This strategy will see us celebrate our 30th birthday. Since a group of parents founded Mermaids to share experiences, find answers and look for ways to keep their children safe and happy, Mermaids has changed, and so has the world. In 2025 we want to celebrate our birthday as a strong, resilient and professional organisation which centres youth voice in everything that we do, and stands up for the rights of trans children and young people.

Thank you to everyone who contributed to our strategy, whether as part of our community, as a staff member, volunteer or funder. We're excited for what the future holds, and can't wait to share it with you all.

Our Vision, Mission and Values

Our vision is a safe, inclusive society where trans children and young people are empowered to live their best lives.

Our mission is to achieve this change by:

- Providing the best quality information, support and empowerment to trans children and young people, families and professionals
- Being a supportive, collaborative partner with others who share our values
- Being a resilient, professional organisation, ready to face any challenge and stand up for the rights of trans youth
- Being a place where people who share our values are proud to work and volunteer and are empowered to thrive

In order to do any of this, we need to embed youth voice in everything we do.



Our values are:

Youth Centred: Youth voice and experience is our guiding star. We inclusively support all trans children and young people to sustainably and ethically contribute to Mermaids. We centre trans children and young people in our decision making, including those whose voices are underrepresented. This particularly includes young children, people of colour, and those young people who experience multiple types of marginalisation.

Collaborative: Open, inclusive communication underpins all aspects of our work. We recognise that our vision is best achieved through collaboration internally between colleagues and externally with our communities. We support, partner with, and uplift others who share our values.

Trustworthy: We behave with integrity as a source of quality-assured, evidence-based information, guidance and support. We foster a safe, inclusive environment where we are accountable to our communities and colleagues and transparent about our responsibilities as a charity.

Compassionate: We have compassion for ourselves, our colleagues and our communities, and we see diversity as a strength. We are supportive, inclusive, intentional and balanced in our work and reflective in our practice.

How we make change happen

Activities (what we do)

- **Direct Services**
  - Helpline
  - Online Services
  - Local Groups
  - Family Events
  - Advocacy & Casework
- **Youth Advocacy**
  - Youth Events
  - Programmes
  - Internal Decision Making
- **Policy and Campaigns**
  - Resources
  - Campaigns
  - Influencing
- **Training and Education**
  - CPD
  - Awareness
  - Internal Training
  - Consultancy

Outcomes (what happens as a result of what we do)

- Trans children and young people report better health and wellbeing
- Families feel more able to advocate for trans children and young people
- Trans children and young people are less isolated
- Trans children and young people have increased confidence
- Increased youth participation in change making
- Policy is more supportive of trans children and young people
- Improved understanding of barriers facing trans children and young people
- Professionals are better equipped to support trans children and young people
- Employers, educators and services have more inclusive policies and practices

Impact (what wider change happens)

- Society is safe and inclusive for trans children and young people
- Trans children and young people access safe, inclusive support, services and employment

Embedding Youth Voice

Our Goal: To enable us to deliver on our vision and mission, we must embed youth voice in everything we do and build structures which mean we are held to account by children and young people.

Everything we do, and every decision that we make, should have children and young people's voices at its core.

Children and young people's voices will become our guiding star. To achieve this we will:

- Increase youth voice and trans representation on our board of trustees
- Adopt new approaches to hearing from children and young people of all ages
- Proactively reach out to those whose voices are hardest to hear and who are underrepresented in our provision
- Improve how we report on what we've done, so that we can clearly evidence how youth voice has shaped our work
- Ensure that our external communications and campaigns platform and amplify the voices of trans children and young people
- Centre young people in our 30th-anniversary brand refresh



Providing the best quality services

Our Goal: To provide the best quality information, support and empowerment to trans children and young people, families and professionals.

The services we provide must be the best quality, and responsive to the needs of young people, families and professionals. To achieve this we will:

- Ensure that our Helpline provides the most comprehensive first point of contact for anyone looking for information and support around issues facing trans young people
- Ensure that our service delivery is accessible and underpinned by modern, fit-for-purpose systems
- Provide supportive, evidence-based and accessible online services and resources
- Improve our offer for trans young people and families based on identified unmet needs
- Continue to strengthen our CPD-accredited training offer and develop new training modules to ensure that everyone working with trans youth has access to relevant, accredited CPD
- Develop links across the voluntary, community and social sectors to provide a great transition from our services as young people age out and to enable effective signposting and joint working



A Supportive, collaborative partner

Our goal: To be a supportive, collaborative partner.
As a community and as a sector we're stronger together, both in delivering great support and ensuring that we have a better society for trans young people to grow up in.

We want to be seen as a great partner for people and organisations across the voluntary, community, social and public sectors.





To achieve this we will:

- Invest in relationship building and community capacity building through resources, networks and partnerships
- Increase partner involvement in our service delivery, including through robust signposting
- Work collaboratively on policy initiatives across the LGBTQIA+, youth and wider voluntary, community and statutory sectors, and with trade unions.
- Provide a supportive space for projects, services and organisations to grow, whether within or outside Mermaids.
- Strengthen research and academic partnerships to drive the development of a stronger evidence base

A resilient, professional organisation

Our goal: to be ready to face any challenge and stand up for the rights of trans youth by being a resilient, professional organisation.

Due to our external environment, we will continue to face challenges, dissenters, and the impact of institutional transphobia.

In order to stand up for the rights of trans young people, we need to build our organisational resilience and professionalism, so that we can focus on speaking up when it matters most.

To achieve this we will:

- Improve our ability to evidence the impact of our work with people, communities and society
- Deliver financial sustainability through longer-term funding and contracts
- Assure the quality of our service delivery through a robust quality assurance programme
- Continue to ensure we have the best possible systems and processes which support our staff, and safeguard children, young people and others we work with



A proud, empowering employer

Our Goal: To become a place where people who share our values are proud to work and volunteer and are empowered to thrive

We want to ensure that everyone, including our colleagues who experience multiple marginalisation, is proud to work and volunteer here and that they have the support they need to thrive and develop their careers.





We'll do this by:

- Having policies and procedures which support and empower staff and volunteers
- Increasing representation within staff and volunteer team through inclusive recruitment, retention and induction processes
- Recruiting, onboarding, supporting and nurturing our people in a way which recognises potential and rewards contribution
- Diversifying volunteering opportunities, including through placements, other roles and structured volunteering
- Improving volunteer reward, recognition and support
- Prioritising the physical and psychological wellbeing of our staff by considering immediate support as well as more long term positive and preventative approaches to help our staff members thrive at work

How you can get involved

As one of the UK's leading charities existing to support and empower trans children and young people to thrive, we have so many great supporters and partners. To achieve the ambitious goals we've set out for ourselves and to drive forward our work so that trans young people in the UK have a better society to grow up in, we need support from our community, our allies and our partners.

Youth Involvement and Advocacy

As you'll see, embedding youth voice in everything we do is critical to us delivering on our strategy. There are opportunities for children and young people to get involved in our work, in our youth advocacy, and in shaping our policy and campaigns activities. You can find out more on our website or contact youth@mermaidsuk.org.uk.





Volunteering

We couldn't have the reach and impact we do without the commitment and support of our team of dedicated volunteers across the UK. Volunteers play a vital role in our work, including:

- Helpline support to young people, their families and professionals through our multichannel support and online forum
- Facilitating local groups supporting families across the UK to build peer support
- Events support at Pride, family and youth events

Get in touch with volunteering@mermaidsuk.org.uk to find out more.

How you can Get Involved

Training and Education
Mermaids offers a tailored, CPD Accredited suite of training modules to professionals seeking a better understanding of gender issues. Our training aims to empower professionals, through increased knowledge and resources, to create a trans inclusive ethos.

We equip professionals with the most up to date and relevant information, enabling them to be confident in supporting gender-diverse communities and embracing all members of the trans population within their organisation.

Check out our website, or email training@mermaidsuk.org.uk for more information.

Donate or Fundraise
There are so many ways to raise vital funds to support trans youth. Take on a challenge, set up a monthly donation or help ensure our services can be provided into the future by leaving a gift in your will.

We would love to hear about your fundraising plans and how we can support you.

Corporate partnerships
We offer a suite of options for corporates to engage with; from exciting office fundraising activities, formal partnership packages and corporate volunteering opportunities. We tailor our partnerships to the needs of our corporate allies ensuring an insightful and educational experience to improve trans inclusivity in the workplace.

Drop us an email at fundraising@mermaidsuk.org.uk and a member of the team will be in touch.





We are here for you.

Call: 0808 801 0400
Email: info@mermaidsuk.org.uk
Webchat: mermaidsuk.org.uk

Mermaids

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