

Impact Report

2024-2025

**Protecting Children &
Reuniting Families
Across Borders**

Reflections on the Year

Message from our CEO

As we come to the end of our 2022-25 strategy, I am deeply proud of the impact CFAB has achieved over the last three years. In a world where more children and families are crossing borders than ever before, CFAB provides vital services – protecting children, reuniting families and championing their right to grow up with love, stability and safety.

Over the last three years, we have helped to protect nearly 9,000 children through our Advice Line and specialist casework services. We have launched new services – from legal advice, to therapeutic life story work – to provide deeper and more holistic support. Our expanded global network means we can take on more cases, reach more countries and help reunite children with family members who can care for them.

We have equipped professionals across the UK with the skills to support families from diverse cultural and national backgrounds. Through tireless advocacy, we have kept a child's right to family on the UK and international agendas.

Last year alone, we supported 187 children's service teams with international cases spanning over 130 countries.

As the UK member of the International Social Service network, CFAB remains the only UK charity with a dedicated inter-country social work team – and the only one offering a free, national Advice Line for international child protection.

As we celebrate our 70th anniversary in 2025, this impact report is an opportunity to reflect on our achievements but also to renew our commitment to expand our reach, deepen our impact and ensure every child can be safely reunited with their family, wherever they may be.

Thank you for taking the time to read our Impact Report. I hope you enjoy it.

Best wishes,

Carolyn Housman

CEO, Children and Families
Across Borders (CFAB)

Our Vision

Our vision is of a world where the complexity of migration and international separation does not deny already vulnerable children the right to care, protection and a safe family environment.

Our Mission

Our mission is to use our expertise and experience to ensure vulnerable children and families who are separated across international borders are given care and protection, no matter where they come from. Where possible, we work to reunite families.

Our Values



Professionalism

As the UK arm of the International Social Services Network, CFAB is part of a worldwide network of professionals working in 130 countries, allowing us to access expert support from around the world to protect children at risk. CFAB's team includes professionally qualified Social Workers and Case Workers specially trained to manage inter-country social work cases.



Impartiality

CFAB's work is grounded in the best interests of vulnerable children and adults and we defend and uphold their rights to protection, care and family life. CFAB does not have any political affiliation nor agenda. We work with local authorities, the courts, the police and other agencies to ensure that the protection and care of vulnerable children and adults is at the heart of decision-making.



Respect

CFAB ensures that children and vulnerable adults play a role in decisions that affect their lives. We value the role, expertise and experience of our overseas partners, without whom we could not effectively safeguard children and vulnerable adults. We recognise that the complexity of international social work demands we all work together to secure the best outcome possible for every beneficiary.



70 Years of Protecting Children and Reuniting Families Across Borders

The year 2025 marks a monumental milestone for CFAB as we recognise 70 years of commitment to reuniting children with their families across international borders.

Our work began in 1955 in the aftermath of the Second World War, helping British children search for their foreign servicemen parents. In 70 years, our mission has remained the same: to prevent international borders from standing in the way of a child's right to family.

As the needs of families evolved, we evolved with them. Countless conflicts, disasters, and crises have displaced and separated children and families: the Hungarian Revolution, the Bihar famine and the Biafran Civil War. The expulsion of Uganda's Asian population, the Vietnam War, famine and human rights abuses in Ethiopia and Eritrea, and the Rwandan genocide. CFAB has been a constant source of hope through it all.

For 70 years, CFAB has been at the forefront of our nation's cross-border child protection, ensuring that every family, no matter where they are in the world, has the chance to reunite. Through decades of tireless work, we have earned our reputation as a trusted service — tackling complex problems that no other agency can solve.

But the work is far from over. The challenge we face is great. Cuts to essential services, a fracturing global order and increasingly complex cases make our mission more urgent than ever.

As we look to the next 70 years, we invite you to join us and support our essential work. Together, we can expand our reach, deepen our impact, and build a world where every child is given the chance to reunite with family.



CFAB Strategy 2022 - 2025

This year, 2024-2025 is the last year of our three year strategy in which we have focused on achieving the following goals:

Impact Goal 1

Through the delivery of our quality services, children have improved chances to remain safely with family, no matter where they are.

Impact Goal 2

Through sharing our skills and expertise, children are better protected in vulnerable situations and arrive safely to their home, wherever that may be.

Impact Goal 3

Our advocacy results in a child's right to family being upheld in a meaningful way so they know all options were explored and that decisions were taken solely on a child's best interest.

Impact Goal 4

We protect the health of our staff and our mission through good governance and financial stability.



Our Key Achievements in Numbers

2022 - 2025



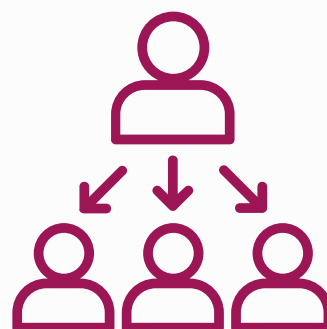
**Almost 9,000
children supported**



**5,389 calls to our
Advice Line**



**899 cases linked
to 133 different
countries**



**Worked with 191
local authorities
across the UK**



**Trained over 1,000
child protection
professionals**



**Supported 171
refugee families
through our Family
Reunification Project**

Goal One

Children have improved chances to remain safely with family, no matter where they are.

Our Advice Line

Through our national Advice Line, we provide guidance on international child protection issues and cross-border children and family cases.

- **In 2024-25, we answered 1,742 calls, and helped over 2,400 children.**
- **We advised 187 different local authorities throughout the UK.**
- **We received calls about children linked to 130 different countries.**

Our Casework

We offer a range of specialist casework services that involve the UK and another country. Cases are referred to us by local authorities, statutory agencies, charities and our global partners in the International Social Service network.

- **We helped 483 children through our casework in 2024-25, working with our international partners in 68 countries.**
- **Over 40% of our cases involved domestic violence or physical abuse.**
- **1 in 4 cases involved child neglect.**

Abena's story

Abena was eight years old when she entered the care system. Her biological mother had died when she was a baby and Children Services were concerned that her adoptive mother had trafficked her into the UK from Nigeria. Her father was located but he had since re-married and had no interest in looking after Abena. Abena's social worker discovered that she had two maternal aunts who remained in Nigeria and called CFAB's Advice Line. Working with our partners in Nigeria, we conducted a thorough assessment of both aunts and their ability to care for Abena. We were assured that one the aunts would be able to provide Abena with a safe and loving home and made our recommendations to the Family Courts in the UK. Abena has now reunited with her aunt in Nigeria and is growing up, safe and surrounded by her family.



"Thank you for your quick response and the high level of knowledge that you have shared with me".

Quote from a local authority social worker, 2024

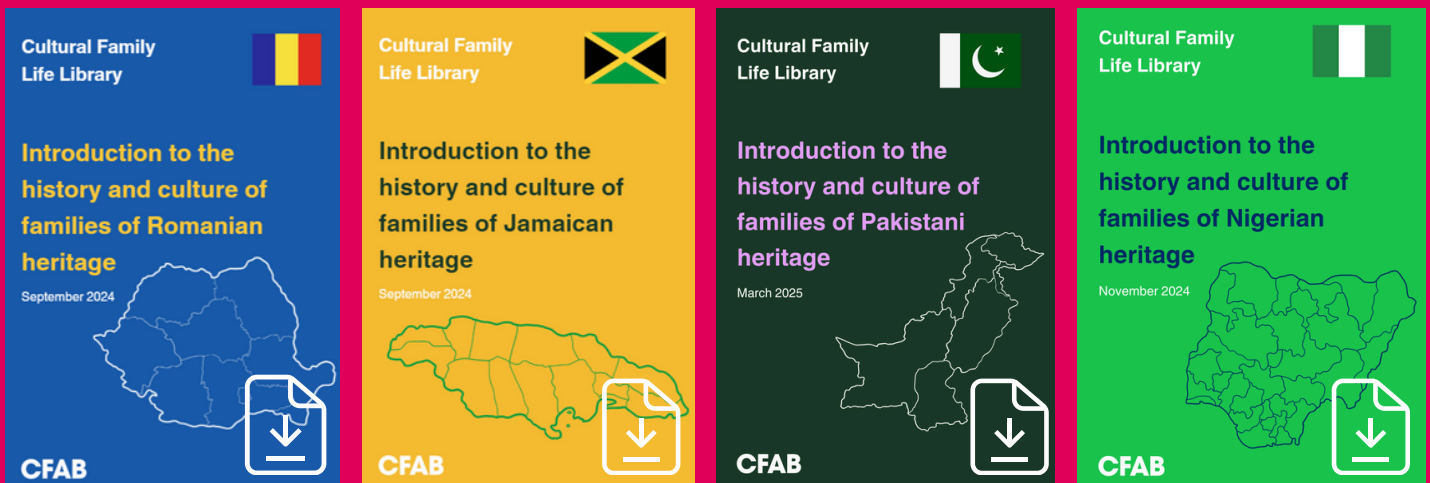
Sharing our expertise with social workers across the UK and beyond

We have developed our training programme and learning resources over the last year, training 327 child protection professionals from local authorities, the NHS and other organisations.

This included regular Lunch & Learn sessions on good practice when supporting refugee families, understanding overseas assessments and navigating cross border social work.

A significant achievement was the launch of our cultural inclusivity training. This training helps social workers consider the diverse culture within the UK, common misconceptions and bias and underlines why it is so vital that practitioners work in a culturally inclusive manner.

Our expertise in culturally inclusive practice is reflected in our growing Cultural Family Life Library. This is a series of guides for social workers introducing them to the history and culture of families in diaspora communities in the UK. We are proud to have published guides on Pakistan and Nigeria this year, with more guides coming in 2025-26.



“The Cultural Family Life Library is an excellent resource for helping social workers to engage positively with different cultures and religions. I am proud to support CFAB’s work to enhance the social work profession through cross-cultural understanding. Every social worker would benefit from having the Cultural Family Life Library on hand to support their practice.”

Isabelle Trowler CBE, Chief Social Worker for Children and Families in England

Expanding our global network

We work with partners in over 130 countries but in today's global society, there is a need to increase our reach. We were delighted to develop new partnerships in countries including Malaysia, Uganda, Somalia, Romania, the USA, Germany and Portugal to help boost our capabilities.

Celebrating the 100th anniversary of the International Social Service network

In October 2025, we celebrated the 100th anniversary of the International Social Service network. Celebrations took place in Geneva including an International Council Meeting to plan for the future of the network and how we can protect more children and families on the move.



CFAB's CEO Carolyn Housman and Service Manager, Fiona Robinson, in Geneva

Family for Every Child

Over the last year, we have been an enthusiastic member of Family for Every Child, a global alliance of organisations working in 36 countries to improve the lives of children and families in need. Over the last twelve months, we participated in a Practice Exchange in Greece and Rome in which our practitioners shared with other organisations good practice around supporting refugee and asylum-seeking children and families. We are looking forward to collaborating further in 2025/26.



Goal Two

Children are better protected in vulnerable situations and arrive safely to their home, wherever that may be.

Strengthening our Family Reunification Service

As global conflict, climate change and humanitarian disasters continue to impact the welfare of children around the world, we are very proud of the support we provide through our Family Reunification Support Services for asylum-seeking and refugee children in the UK.

Now in its sixth year, this valuable project provides support to unaccompanied children and young people who arrive in the UK to be reunited with family members here.

The children have come from countries such as Afghanistan, Syria, Eritrea and Iran but we have also seen a rising number from Palestine and Sudan as a direct impact of continuing conflict. These children have arrived in the UK to live with siblings, aunts and uncles. The number of referral partners has also grown in the last twelve months as awareness of our unique project has risen. We have received referrals from organisations including Safe Passage, RAMFEL, the Helen Bamber Foundation, Together Now, Red Cross, Asylum Aid and the South London Refugee Association.

166

children supported in 2024-25

82%

have been supported to continue their education

95%

were supported to access more appropriate housing



Extending our therapeutic support services

We continued to operate our Life Story Work project this year, which was introduced during 2023/24 following a generous grant from the Educational Opportunity Foundation and, more recently, the Porticus Foundation. This is an evidence-based therapeutic service that uses a range of tools and activities to help beneficiaries explore their life. This may include making a Life Story Book or a memory box to explore past events. It helps children to make sense of their experiences and to develop a clear sense of identity. It can be very helpful for children who have experienced significant changes or traumatic events in their lives. Over the last year, we have supported 9 children, helping them to work through their trauma and come to terms with their new lives.

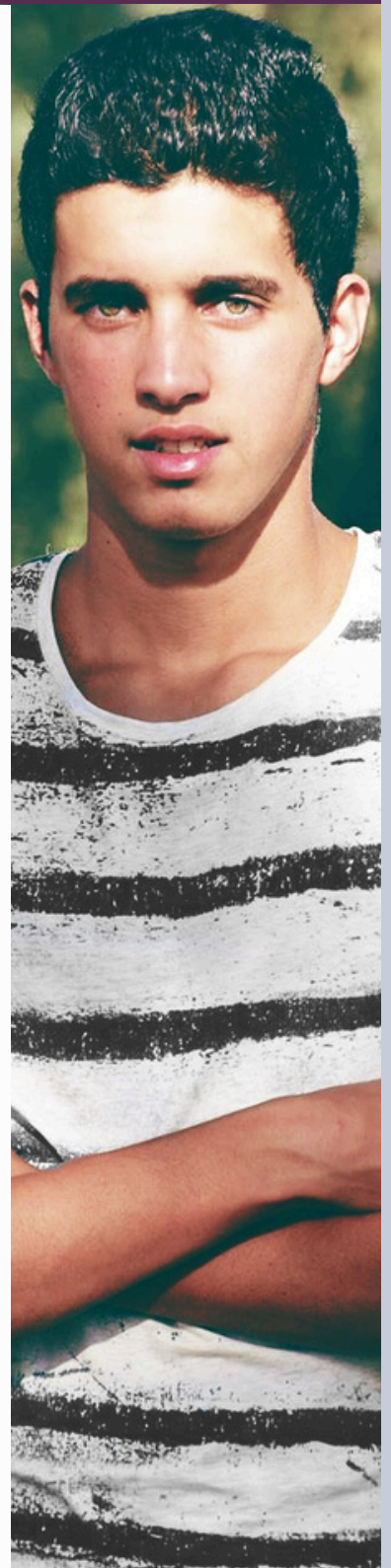
Rafi's Story

Three years ago, our team supported a young person called Rafi from Afghanistan. Rafi was 16 when he arrived in the UK, unaccompanied. His journey here had been long, and he often spoke about his time in various detention centres.

Rafi arrived to live with his uncle, his wife and their children. Despite helping him to enrol in school and to access therapeutic support, Rafi collapsed at school a few months after his arrival. The journey had taken too much of a toll on his mental health, and from there, he underwent several hospital admissions to strengthen his mental health. Eventually, we found him a place in supported accommodation.

Last year, Rafi got in touch with our team again. His father had smuggled his younger brother, Ali, out of Afghanistan after fearing for his life under Taliban rule. We managed to speak to Ali, who had made his way to Turkey. He was living in a basement with lots of older people, and we were concerned for his safety. We found an NGO in Turkey that could offer support to Ali and worked with Safe Passage in the UK to find a solicitor who could assist him in obtaining the relevant information and reports necessary to make an application for entry clearance into the UK.

During this worrying time, we also continued to support Rafi, whose mental health was still fragile. Despite a lengthy process, we were delighted once Ali's visa was approved and the two brothers were reunited. We have since been supporting Ali to settle into his new life and to ensure he continues with his education.



Goal Three

Our advocacy results in a child's right to family being upheld in a meaningful way.

In England



- We have continued to engage with the Department for Education and were delighted to see overseas placements acknowledged for the first time in the statutory guidance published in October 2024.
- In the autumn, we also soft-launched a new campaign, Strengthening Safeguards for Foreign-born Vulnerable Children, to express our concerns that current efforts to safeguard foreign-born children do not meet existing legal obligations. Our aim is to contribute to revised guidance and provide cultural competency training for social workers and immigration officials.
- We participated in the sector working group for the Global Care Reform campaign, launched by the Foreign Secretary, David Lammy MP in January 2025. This aims to strengthen family-based care worldwide.
- CFAB's CEO, Carolyn Housman, acted as Chair of the Kinship Care Alliance which has helped to raise awareness of international kinship care. Through this role, she has been in touch with the Secretary of State for Education, Bridgette Philipson MP and Minister for Children and Families, Janet Daby MP and has raised key issues around international kinship care and support for kinship carers overseas.

In Wales



- We were delighted to have continued our partnership with the Welsh Government under the 1996 Hague Convention. Through this contract, CFAB provides guidance and advice to Welsh unitary authorities on complex cases involving foreign judicial and social service systems.
- At the end of 2024, we delivered presentations to AFKA (Association for Fostering, Kinship and Adoption) Cymru's legal and fostering Special Interest Groups to raise our profile with more practitioners.

In Scotland



- CFAB's CEO was invited by the Scottish Association of Social Workers (SASW) to join their Anti-Racist Project team and assist with creation a suite of anti-racism resources for social workers.
- We fed into the Scottish Government's Children's Hearing Redesign Consultation and were pleased to see our submission directly quoted in the published analysis.
- We have been collaborating with East Lothian local authority to develop a factsheet on international kinship care and look forward to publishing it in 2025/26.

Goal Four

We protect the health of our staff and our mission through good governance and financial stability.

The many achievements listed in this report have only been possible due to the hard work and dedication of CFAB staff. Following our staff survey in early 2025, we were pleased that staff ratings for governance, satisfaction with our CEO and line management remained high. Additionally, there was a recognition that internal communication across the organisation had improved.

Career development and training at CFAB

As a small organisation, we are aware that it can be difficult to offer promotional opportunities to our staff. However, in order to ensure that staff have the opportunity to develop professionally during their time with us, over the last year, we have introduced professional development plans for each role in CFAB. Each staff member also has a personalised training plan to support their progression.

Flexible working

We have continued to offer flexible working to staff throughout the last year. In order to understand how to plan for our future, the team have participated in different working trials throughout the year to test different working patterns from being fully remote to varying days in the office. We've really appreciated staff feedback throughout this process. While we are still considering our future working space, we will certainly be prioritising space for collaboration and cross-team working.



Increasing diversity and the voice of those with Lived Experience

We have remained committed to our Equality, Inclusion and Diversity strategy over the last twelve months, ensuring inclusivity in our practice from recruitment right through to service delivery. Following presentations from members of the Cafcass Family Justice Young People's Board, we are developing a strategy to better involve Experts by Experience in our work and look forward to setting up an Advisory Group in 2025.

Our fundraising efforts

We were delighted to take part in the 2024 Big Give Christmas Challenge once again and were very grateful to receive grants from a number of funders including the Esmee Fairbairn Foundation, the Henry Smith Charity, the Schroder Foundation, the Educational Opportunity Fund and the Bleu Blanc Rouge Foundation. We were delighted to once again benefit from the Ali Sattaripour Golf Event in September 2024 and are very grateful the committee for their continued support.

For further information, please see our annual reports on our website.





www.cfab.org.uk

Charity number: 1085541 | Company Number: 4025539

CFAB | **70**
protecting **CHILDREN** and
uniting **FAMILIES ACROSS BORDERS** | **YEARS**

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CFAB is the UK member of the International
Social Service (ISS) network