

**A
Different
Story.**



2025

ANNUAL REPORT



Published January 29, 2026

Dear friends and community,

As I look back on this past year, I feel deeply grateful for the families, volunteers, partners, and supporters who make A Different Story what it is. Every conversation shared, every moment of connection created, and every family supported reminds me why this work matters so much. Together, we have built spaces where parents feel less alone, children feel included, and difference is met with understanding and care.

I am continually inspired by the strength, honesty, and generosity within this community. Together, we are shaping a more inclusive future—one where difference is acknowledged, celebrated, and met with meaningful support. Thank you for being part of this journey and for helping ensure that no family has to walk this path alone.

Warm regards,

Sarah LaPham
Director
A Different Story



2025 Impact at a Glance

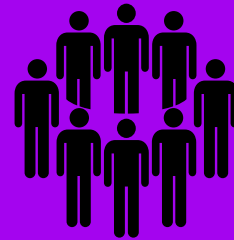
Direct Family Support

60+ parents and caregivers received 275+ hours of direct support



Community Engagement

80+ families participated in our monthly support meetings



Children and Teen Programmes

65+ children and teens participated in 100+ hours of community-based services



Volunteer Contributions

1000+ volunteer hours were contributed from our growing community



Mission and Impact

Since 2022, A Different Story has supported families in Amsterdam caring for children and teens with rare genetic and developmental conditions, complex care needs, and disabilities. These families face significant barriers - social isolation and high levels of stress, language and cultural challenges, reduced workforce participation, and limited access to inclusive support. We envision a future where children with complex care needs and their families in the Netherlands have a better quality of life, as well as broad awareness in society of the problems and vulnerabilities these children experience. To realise this vision A Different Story has a clear mission to become a trusted source of information, advice and support to these families. Therefore, our programmes directly address these inequities by providing community-based services that foster inclusion, equal opportunities, and participation in social and civic life.

Through our programmes and activities in the past year, we have worked with more than 50 unique families to create safe, inclusive spaces for connection, respite, and empowerment. Our core activities in 2025 have demonstrated strong outcomes, including: **60+ unique parents and caregivers received 275 hours of direct service across multiple services**, helping them navigate challenges; **65+ children and teens received 100+ hours of community-based services**, fostering growth, inclusion and social engagement; and, **80+ families participated in our monthly support group meetings**, strengthening connection and peer support networks. Furthermore, **1000+ volunteer hours** were contributed over the year, reflecting the growing strength and commitment of our community.



Our Programmes and Activities

Parent Support Group

80+ families participated in our monthly support group meetings

Our Parent Support Group and the corresponding activities are the cornerstone of our direct services, and a starting point for families seeking guidance and a community. We provide a consistent, safe and trusted place for parents and carers to connect, process lived experiences and share the ever-growing web of complexities in raising and supporting a child with developmental disabilities and complex care needs.

Held monthly and in-person one Saturday each month at our neighborhood and partner community center, where a maximum of 10 parent participants gather for 1.5 hour per meeting. This space allows families to candidly share concerns, hopes, fears and struggles with other parents on similar journeys. Topics emerge through discussion, which drives future programming, including topics for workshops. Parallel to this meeting free childcare is offered in a room next door and led by skilled childminders, allowing both respite for tired families, and more opportunities for meaningful social engagement in the community for kids and teens with disabilities. Topics of conversation may include: parental advocacy and empowerment tools and strategies; guidance around navigating social services, education and healthcare; support for siblings and extended family members; and, encouragement to accept and celebrate their own different story in raising in an extraordinary child.

To ensure barriers such as geographical reach, weekend employment obligations and transportation barriers do not restrict participation, monthly online meetings are also offered. These online meetings follow the same format and structure as our in-person gatherings but are flexible and ensure accessibility for all. Families from throughout the Netherlands, and even beyond in the local EU region and globally can participate in monthly online meetings.

Belen, Gonzalo & Aurora

"Finding this support group made us realise we were not alone against the world. Sharing winings and losings is always better with people who really understand what you're feeling."



Family Support Workshops

**60+ parents and carers
received 275+ hours of
direct support**

We organize specialty workshops and in-depth trainings, allowing for tailored opportunities to deepen parent's skills, knowledge and expertise in topics related to social inclusion, advocacy, social services navigation. These workshops foster a sense of empowerment and confidence for parents and carers. Topics are shaped by family interests, and facilitated by social workers and therapeutic providers, with topics ranging from: navigating the care system; education advocacy; knowing their rights; building family communication skills; self-care and mindfulness; and, more.

Piloted in Q3 of 2025, we saw a demand for a deeper dive into specialty topics unique to families with complex care needs and severe developmental disabilities. The outcome has shown a dramatic impact on families' sense of confidence, agency, advocacy and self-worth. Childcare is also provided, ensuring all sets of parents and carers can be fully present for these in-depth workshops. In 2025, Q3 and Q4 we had 12 parents participate.



Nina, mom to Isabel

"This community offers a sanctuary for parents navigating the road less traveled - a steadfast home for those journeys being in difference...Today I am deeply grateful it does - ensuring that no parent must face this path alone."



Stronger Together, Social Meet Up for Kids and Teens with Disabilities

65+ youth participated in 100+ hours of community based services

We run monthly community based social meet ups offered for kids age 8 – 16 to promote connection, socialization, community inclusion and fun. Facilitated by a social worker who is embedded in the school systems, and shaped in partnership with the children and teens, these 3 hour meet ups fosters critical opportunities for organic community connection. Furthermore, the small group size (with a maximum of 7 children/teens) per session, allows for a personalized approach, as well as intimate and lasting connections.

The structure of these meet ups encourages playfulness, exploration, socialization, confidence building and most importantly, connection and fun. From dance and movement to games and improv, to arts, crafts, cooking and sensory exploration, each meet up is driven by the unique needs and goals of each family. Families submit applications to express goals and opportunities, and thus programming is shaped to meet the individual needs and goals of each group. While the children and teens are engaged in activities with the facilitator, support staff and volunteers, parents can also connect and observe strategies to encourage independence, confidence building and social skills with other participants.

Piloted in spring 2025, we saw impressive growth in the children and teens engagement from beginning to end of each gathering. During our first year we engaged with 15 children and teens, and their families. For 2026 we plan to increase participation by 200%, reaching over 30 children and teens.



Maaike, mom to Arthur

"I just want him to be seen and accepted for who and what he is. It's a very basic need."



Community Events for Parents, Carers, Kids, Teens + Community Members

1000+ volunteer hours contributed from our community

Seasonal events are offered to the whole family system and extended to the community free of charge. These events focus on community integration and inclusion, awareness, advocacy and celebration of difference. With a family centered approach, seasonal events offer a fun, community-based opportunity for the full family to actively engage in the community together. Through summer picnics, or winter festivities, we offer a playful space for parents, carers, providers, volunteers and community members to come together and celebrate the growing sense of community building. Creative crafts, music, snacks and activities focused on the entire family and encourage connection outside of the home, and engagement in the community together.

In 2025 we offered 3 events and had **participation of over 45 parents and kids, with over 15+ community members and 10 volunteers engaged.**



Case Support and Advocacy

Designed as a specialized service for families with extra complicated care needs, we offer 1-1 counseling and support to bring an extra layer of holding for families navigating extremely complicated care systems. Intended for families with unordinary circumstances (single parent, cultural backgrounds, ultra-rare disease diagnoses etc.), we offer support with any of the following, in collaboration with a skilled consultant who serves as an advocacy specialist and subject matter expert. Even though each municipality does offer some form of free and independent client support for its residence, many of the families we work with have extra complicated cases and have found that the level of support offered via the municipality is inadequate in securing workable care arrangements.

Support often focuses on finding suitable solutions to better manage their caregiving role, providing real solutions to their demanding responsibilities, including a better balance between caring, work, and personal life.

In 2025, **we helped 15 families** with access to: educational rights, transportation accommodations, genetic counseling support and government funding for respite and resources.



Jordan, Papa to Iggy

Parenting a child with multiple disabilities is simultaneously the hardest and best part of my life. I'm so grateful to get the support, which makes all the difference for me to be a better parent.

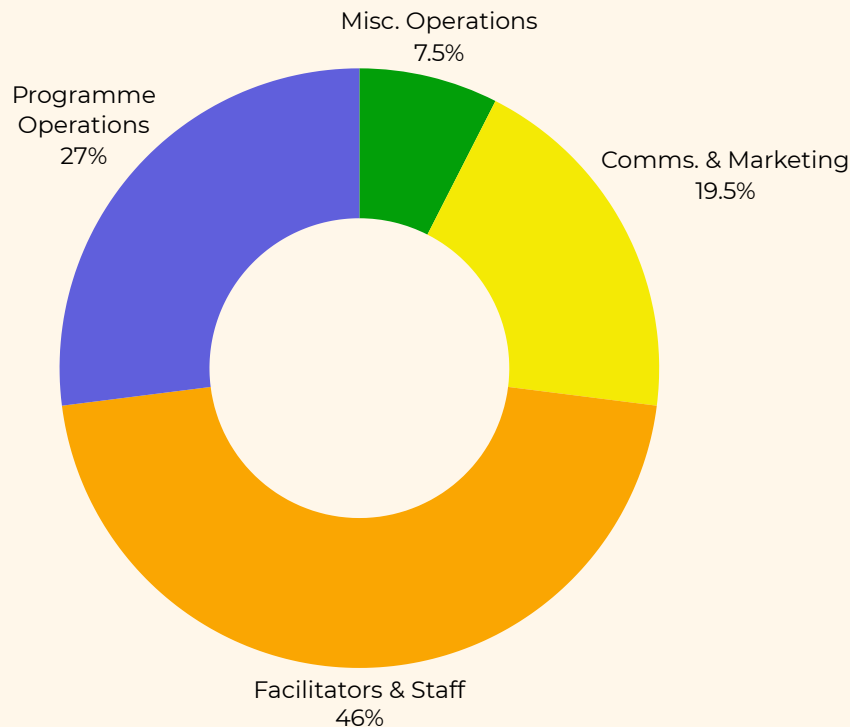
Financial Transparency

Revenue

€30,000 Grant

Operational Expenses

€28,432



*We are grateful to receive the Google for Non-profit Grant to help promote our services, and the in-kind support from Combiwel Buurtwerk, providing us with a lovely new facility and location for our services.

*The incredible impact in 2025 was made thanks to a generous grant from Illumina. We are working to submit additional grant and subsidy requests to grow our revenue stream as we look ahead.



Governance and People

The charity is governed by an independent Board that provides strategic direction, oversees operations, and ensures compliance with Dutch charity law. The Board acts on a voluntary basis and is committed to safeguarding the organisation's mission, integrity, and accountability, with particular attention to the rights, dignity, and wellbeing of disabled people. We operate with a small, dedicated staff team, supported by a strong network of community volunteers who play a vital role in delivering our activities and supporting participants. Many of our volunteers bring valuable lived experience, helping to ensure our work is inclusive, respectful, and responsive to the needs of the people we serve. We are committed to good governance, transparency, and creating a safe, accessible, and supportive environment for disabled people, staff, and volunteers alike.

Board



Sarah LaPham

Director and Board Chair

Sarah brings over 20 years of experience in advocacy, lobbying and communication to the role of Director. She is also the mother to a young son with a rare disease. Her experience is rooted in advancing the rights of vulnerable and marginalised people in society, including in the field of sexual reproductive rights and health, as well as within the healthcare industry at large.



Jordan Hatcher

Treasurer and Board Member

Jordan is an experienced lawyer and General Counsel, with a focus on intellectual Property (IP) and Information Technology (IT), with multi-jurisdictional training and experience in both the US and Europe. Outside of law, he is also the father to a son with a rare genetic disease.



Ella Dollman

Secretary and Board Member

Ella is a certified doula, shamanic energy worker and professional nanny. After 10+ years working in global media roles, she left the marketing world in 2017 to work with children and families. She ran two Montessori bi-lingual preschools, became a professional nanny and later freelanced for several successful small business focused on supporting parents and children in Europe.

Our Partners

Combiwel Buurtwerk - Horizons

Given the growing importance of our work in the local community we serve, we've teamed up with Combiwel Buurtwerk and their Horizons neighborhood centre in the Westerpark area. Through this new partnership we hold a certain number of our events and activities at this location free of charge and are also working with the neighborhood team to ensure our activities and services are known to this local population.

Ludica

A Professional Mediator and Family Counsellor focused on the use of positive communication and with an expertise in supporting neurodivergent children and their parents. This provider helps lead our Parent Support Group programme of events and activities.

Caesar Solutions

A licensed social worker specialising in school and community-based care for children and teens who are at risk, vulnerable and with developmental disabilities. This provider brings a person-centred approach to programme design, ensuring youth meet ups foster inclusion, empowerment, and social integration.

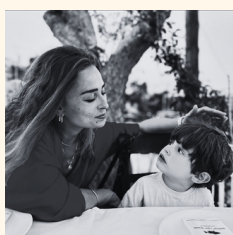
Zorgsaam

An Informal Care Broker and Independent Client Support Worker. They assist parents/caregivers with extra complicated circumstances with professional support in navigating complex social-service and care systems. This provider works alongside our Programme Director to deliver case management for families facing language, financial, or bureaucratic barriers, including support in finding suitable solutions to better manage their caregiving.

Financial Support

We are deeply grateful to our donor, Illumina, whose generous financial support during the year has been instrumental in enabling our work. Their commitment has allowed our Board, staff, and volunteers to deliver meaningful, high-quality support for families caring for a child with complex care needs and disabilities, and to achieve the impact outlined in this report.

Family Testimonials



Janneke & Odin

"Parenting a special needs child can feel isolating. It has been so comforting meeting parents with similar stories and feeling like you are part of a community of people who understand."



Kobi & Arthur

"My relationship with my son is improving over this last year and this group has greatly contributed to that."



Marcos

"There is a special comfort in meeting people who are experiencing similar struggles. It feels good to listen and share and even make jokes about things that are painful. I truly appreciate the space that A Different Story has created."



Whitney & Olive

"Being a special needs parent comes with a lot of fear and anxiety about the future and I can't imagine this journey without the incredible support of this group. From day one, the shared experiences, advice and encouragement have given me strength and helped me feel less alone."



David & Isabel

"A Different Story is a space where you immediately feel at ease and understood when sharing your journey as a parent of a special needs child with a rare neurological condition. Very useful!"

Future Outlook

**Aim to expand reach by 200%
to our target audience in 2026**

Looking ahead across our programme of activities for 2026 we aim to expand reach by 200% to our target audience, including parents, carers, extended family members, and children and teens living with complex care needs and disabilities. That includes reaching 150 parents/carers and 75 children and teens with either direct support and advice and/or in-person social connections in a community-based setting.

Direct support and advice will continue to be offered via our Parent Support Group meetings, 1-1 counseling meetings and family support workshops. Whole family engagement will be offered via our Stronger Together programme and seasonal community events. To reach our goal we aim to double the number of in-person Parent Support Group meetings to x 2 per month, as well as the number of Stronger Together meetings to x 2 per month. Our family support workshops are held on demand and in response to the needs of the parents/carers, where we aim to hold at least 3 in 2026.

Promisingly, our new partnership with the Horizons Neighborhood Centre already facilitates this anticipated growth by facilitating further reach and engagement with our local community. This partnership enables promotion and advertisement of our services and activities via the local neighborhood team.

Furthermore, we will expand from our base in the Haarlemmerbuurt to additional neighborhoods, ensuring that families from all backgrounds can participate. Partnerships with cluster and special education schools, Ouder-en-Kind Teams, and community organisations will broaden outreach and engagement. Importantly, our efforts in 2026 will undoubtable advance social inclusion and equal opportunities for this vulnerable and often under reached group, and thus improve the quality of life of children living with disabilities and complex care needs and their families in the Amsterdam metropolitan area.

Closing Remarks

We step into this next year with a sense of pride of where our past efforts of have brought us today, with new motivation and understanding of the continued work necessary to reach the families that truly need us, and a deep knowing that through acceptance and the celebration of each family's child and different story is where the journey always begins.

