

Brief history of the Family Fund

The Family Fund was set up in 1973 by Sir Keith Joseph, then Minister for Health, to give practical help to families with children who had congenital conditions. It was a response to the particular needs of parents looking after babies affected by the thalidomide drug and recognition that the statutory agencies could not respond as flexibly and quickly as required to help families.

Today, far from diminishing, the need for the Family Fund is even greater. The Family Fund supports all children with severe disabilities living at home where the parents or carers are on a low income. The Fund works to provide things that make the most difference to a family – a washing machine, driving lessons, computer, bedding and clothing or perhaps a few days away.

The Family Fund is the largest charitable sector grant maker to families and is funded by the governments of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Last year, we gave £33 million to 55,000 families, many of whom are living below the poverty line. Each year we strive to help more families. Although our efficiencies enable us to distribute 90p in every £1 in grants, there are still too many severely disabled children whom we cannot afford to help.