



## Families in Need. Overcoming hardships together!

### **FiN – Families in Need Annual Review 2025**

Our society is currently being profoundly affected by multiple crises. At the local level, too, in the day-to-day counselling work of the foundation Families in Need, we are witnessing a growing number of emergency situations. The living conditions and opportunities for participation available to families in our region are becoming increasingly unequal. Precarious housing situations, financial worries and psychological strain show the hardship faced by families.

In 2025, 99 families from the city of Hildesheim and the surrounding district turned to us for support. They reached us via our website, the counselling centres of the Diakonisches Werk, or through referrals within our network. Many of those seeking counsel face multiple burdens and have highly individual support needs. Our aim is to ease emergency situations through supportive conversations, the sharing of knowledge and straightforward practical assistance, while showing new paths.

### **Key areas of emergency situations in 2025**

A recurring issue is the financing of **participation**. Many parents are unable to pay for learning materials such as exercise books, school trips or leisure activities such as visits to the zoo or the cinema. Rapidly rising living costs leave no room for additional expenses. Many families, particularly single parents, are under enormous financial pressure in this area.

Serious **illness, disabilities** affecting individual family members, or **bereavement** cause immense psychological strain, accompanied by high costs that families cannot bear alone. Expenses for medication, therapies and travel costs become a major burden for the families affected. Applications to funding organisations are often processed too slowly, responsibilities remain unclear, or no funding organisation can be identified at all. This often leaves those affected facing considerable uncertainty.

In our counselling, we hear about **domestic violence** and relationships breaking down. Periods of separation are, in many cases, a difficult transition both emotionally and financially. Uncertainty regarding alimonies, custody and future financial security often leads to a sharp increase in the risk of poverty for those about to become single parents.

In 2025, a large proportion of our clients reported **psychological strain caused by intolerable housing conditions**. The market for affordable housing in the Hildesheim region is so overstretched that moving house is often impossible, even in cases of mould infestation or serious defects. Moving costs, renovation expenses and rental deposits exceed the budgets of many families, while poor prospects on the housing market – often as a result of discrimination – place considerable burden on the living conditions of many families. This is where individual case support reaches its limits, because real change cannot be achieved in the short or medium term, but must take place at political level.

The consistent shift to **digital application procedures** by funding organisations – for example jobcentres and the Federal Employment Agency – has led to many problems in the application process. Technical hurdles and lengthy set-up procedures resulted in delays to urgently needed benefits. Over the past year, this created a significant barrier both for families and for our counselling service in managing these applications. **Increasing financial hardship** among families became very clear in our counselling through a higher demand for financial assistance compared with previous years.

## **An insight into the Foundation's work**

### **Staff and Board**

In January 2025, **Jana Kuschel** took over the counselling and coordination responsibilities. Thanks to a thorough onboarding, support for families continued without interruption and counselling processes were maintained.

We welcomed **Elisabeth Junge** to the Board as a new member with extensive experience in the field of unequal educational opportunities, and **Dr Janis Berzins** joined as Deputy Superintendent. We are delighted by their commitment.

### **Network and exchange**

As part of our new series FiN Invites, we exchanged views with guests including Lena Düpon (Member of the European Parliament), Daniela Rump (SPD Member of the Bundestag), Simone Flohr (Chair of the Youth Welfare Committee), Matthias Mehler (Chair of Unternehmer Hildesheim e.V.) and Malte Spitzer, Head of Social Services (City of Hildesheim). These intensive discussions focused on how the situation of children and young people in our region can be improved, how disadvantages can be reduced, and how a stable and comprehensive network can be built for disadvantaged families in our region.

### **Active committee work**

FiN is actively involved in the **Round Table on Child Poverty** and in the **Working Group for Single Parents**, and has taken on the lead role in the **Working Group Against Child Poverty**. We actively advocate for the interests of families and children by drawing attention to injustices, identifying needs arising from practical work, and helping to develop and call for effective measures against child poverty in the region. One successful project that emerged from this working group, and was implemented again this year, is the School Start Project. In 2025, 83 families at the counselling centres of the Diakonisches Werk received €100 towards their child's start of school, funded by the district's social fund.

## **Events in 2025**

**Annual gathering at Taktwerk:** On 5 February 2025, FiN invited guests to its annual gathering. The creative and perfectly staged dance performance by children and young people from "Unsere Zukunft e.V.", under the direction of coach Romeo Balié, provided a highly successful and cheerful start to the evening. Host Jens Schulte-Koch guided guests through the event. In his keynote speech, Lower Saxony's Minister of Social Affairs, Dr Andreas Philippi, identified poverty as a clear health risk for children and young people. He emphasised both the importance of ensuring children's basic safety and the need for equal op-



*FiN annual gathering at Taktwerk in Hildesheim*

opportunities for education and participation in our society. The evening came to a close with good conversations and a delicious buffet kindly provided by Restaurant Kupferschmiede.

**Radio Tonkuhle: „Jobcenter Aktuell“:** Invited by Anja Wilson, Equal Opportunities Officer in the Labour Market at JC Hildesheim, Jana Kuschel spoke on 1 July 2025 about the counselling work of Families in Need and drew attention to the emergency situations faced by many families in our region, which are far too often overlooked.

**Women’s Information Day at Taktwerk:** On 4 September 2025, FiN presented its work at an information stand during the Women’s Information Day at Taktwerk, organised by the Women and Business Coordination Office. Visitors were able to find out more about the counselling services offered by Families in Need and, if required, ask questions directly to FiN Coordinator Jana Kuschel.

**Guest of Inner Wheel:** Invited by the Inner Wheel Club of Hildesheim, Jana Kuschel presented the foundation Families in Need at Restaurant Seeglück in Hildesheim on 10 September 2025, and afterwards answered many interested questions from participants about the practical work with those seeking counsel.



*Bianca Nestmann, Vice President  
Inner Wheel Club, Jana Kuschel*

### **A strong network for the children of our region**

The work of the foundation *Families in Need* is supported by a strong network. It is made up of the counselling services of the Diakonisches Werk, extensive social partnerships and the great commitment shown by regional businesses. Together, we work to improve framework conditions and promote disadvantaged children and young people, particularly in the areas of social participation and education.

### **Local commitment in practice**

**Summer enjoyment:** Entrepreneur Matthias Mehler provided season tickets for Jo-Wiese without bureaucracy. This enabled numerous children from low-income families to enjoy carefree visits to the open-air swimming pool during the summer.

**Support at Christmas:** Thanks to the support of Lions Club Hildesheimer Rose e.V., we were able to carry out a voucher campaign that benefited 35 children. Vouchers worth € 30 each enabled families to buy Christmas presents in local shops.

**Christmas Wish Tree campaign:** Targo Bank Hildesheim supported us with a generous donation and a Christmas Wish Tree campaign. As part of this, 25 children received individual gifts, which lit up many faces this Christmas.

### A heartfelt thank you

We extend our heartfelt thanks to all our supporters and donors for the valuable support you have given us this year. Whether through financial donations, personal commitment or practical support, your contribution is indispensable!

### We received this support in many different forms, including:

- occasion-based donations, for example for birthdays or anniversaries
- recurring donations and regular contributions
- one-off donations from companies, service clubs and private individuals



*Handover of the donation check from Atlas Titan*



*Lions Club Hildesheimer Rose e.V. hands over a donation for the Christmas campaign*



*Christmas Wish Tree campaign with Targobank*

Thanks to this solidarity support, we were once again able in 2025 to ease the hardships faced by many families in the Hildesheim region and remain a reliable point of contact for people in difficult and precarious life situations.

Jana Kuschel  
Hildesheim, May 2026

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