



## Families in Need. Overcoming hardships together!

### FiN – Families in Need annual report 2024

The year 2024 was a year full of challenges but also full of commitment for Families in Need – FiN. Amidst a changing socio-political landscape marked by economic uncertainty, rising living costs, and the ongoing consequences of global crises, we face the important task of supporting children and families in acute emergency situations. Social inequalities have continued to worsen in 2024, and many families are confronted with existential fears.

In 2024, a total of 110 families turned to FiN, 57 of them referred by third parties – including other counselling centres, authorities, daycare centres, youth welfare organizations, or women's shelters. The majority of those seeking help are mothers, most of them single parents.

### Recurring crises

#### – the occasions or life circumstances that lead to contact being made are

- **School, apprenticeship, studies:** numerous inquiries concern the topics of starting school, re-equipping with school materials after moving from another region, starting or changing apprenticeship or studies, fees, travel costs, basic equipment, bridging benefits
- **Separation and loss:** death of a parent, death of a child, divorce of the parents – accompanied by family and financial burdens, problems in exercising parental care, visitation rights, alimony disputes
- **Illness or disability of children or parents:** costs for medication, aids, special purchases, therapies, advice on benefit entitlements, and arranging further assistance
- **Pregnancy and childbirth:** premature or multiple births with special needs, initial baby equipment, counselling and support, especially for young mothers or parents
- **Increased electricity and heating costs:** in 2024, the high energy and living costs had a noticeable impact, for example on utility bills and purchases. Energy cut-offs were often threatened or already implemented
- **Participation:** Financing of course fees, sports equipment, children's camps, or family vacations
- **And repeatedly:** unregulated transitional situations, refusal of responsibility by funding organisations, long processing times for benefit applications, disappearance of documents, unavailability of official authorities.

### Structural deficiencies

Statutory benefits, e.g., for education and participation, too often do not cover needs, the administrative burden is high, and financial aid does not reach all families. Participation benefits are not sufficient to promote talent in the arts or sports, and many children are excluded from social interaction (e.g., at children's birthday parties). Social welfare organizations have long been calling for a basic child allowance that covers needs and free learning materials.

High costs are also not covered in many families when it comes to starting school, for example. This year's back-to-school campaign by the Hildesheim Social Fund was in high demand: The Diakonisches Werk Hildesheim was able to support low-income families with up

to €100.00 for 99 first graders with a total of €9,750.00 at its offices in Alfeld, Bockenem, Elze, Hildesheim, and Sarstedt, which was €1,300 above the estimated budget. In addition, 18 families had to be turned away. The actual need is therefore clearly much higher than the voluntary funds available to the county of Hildesheim for the Social Fund.

### **Round Table on Child Poverty**

That is why we co-initiated a Round Table on Child Poverty in the county of Hildesheim and, together with representatives from administration, politics, and associations, have been working since 2018 to combat child poverty and the consequences of deprivation at the municipal level. Following the successful implementation of a social space conference in Alfeld in 2024, the Round Table is planning an adapted version of this conference in Bockenem in 2025. The aim here is to highlight the specific needs of these locations in terms of precarious living situations and gaps in provision. Since fall 2024, the Round Table has been featured on the Hildesheim district website



[www.landkreishildesheim.de/  
Familie-Kinder/Runder-Tisch-Kinderarmut/](http://www.landkreishildesheim.de/Familie-Kinder/Runder-Tisch-Kinderarmut/)

The working group “Gemeinsam Gegen Kinderarmut” (Together Against Child Poverty) met on June 3 at the Maluki Family Centre and on November 4 at the district office in Nordstadt to discuss further measures. The aim of the working group is to bring topics and perspectives from the participating professional groups to the Round Table on Child Poverty and to highlight the needs of the various areas and districts of Hildesheim.

### **Current events and news**

Gisela Sowa, long-standing coordinator of FiN, handed over the leadership of the foundation Families in Need to Jana Kuschel at the end of the year. In addition to her consulting work, Jana Kuschel will represent FiN as the new coordinator at both the Round Table on Child Poverty and the Working Group Against Child Poverty.



*Gisela Sowa steps down*

After many years of good cooperation, Petra Schlote has stepped down from the foundation’s board in order to devote herself to her other extensive voluntary activities. We would like to thank her very much for her commitment to Families in Need.



*Jana Kuschel is the new coordinator of FiN*

### **Donations**

In addition to numerous individual, regular, and special donations, we were delighted to receive support from community groups: donations from the Söhlder Fastnachtsfrauen and the international choir “Hildesheim spendet Wärme” (Hildesheim donates warmth) enabled us to quickly and unbureaucratically alleviate various emergency situations and meet special needs. The special funds from the Diakonisches Werk in Lower Saxony from the NDR fundraising campaign “Hand in Hand für Norddeutschland” (Hand in Hand for Northern Germany) for our project “Glücksmomente für Familien in Not” (Moments of Happiness

for Families in Need) were also a blessing. We were able to make various family activities possible, such as trips to the cinema or zoo, annual passes for Rastiland, the Sottrum amusement park, swimming pool visits, and visits to the Christmas market.



*Söhlder Fastnachtsfrauen*

## Events and networking

- The annual FiN meeting took place on February 29, 2024, under the motto “Engine of education and growth – equal opportunities for children and young people in the region” at the KSM Castings Group, a long-standing supporter of the FiN network.

A keynote speech by Bern Westphal, economic policy spokesman for the SPD parliamentary group in the Bundestag, was followed by an exciting panel discussion with Matthias Mehler, CEO of Unternehmer Hildesheim, Ellen Osterode-Meyer, head of the Himmelsthür secondary school, Gisela Sowa, coordinator of the FiN Foundation, Malte Spitzer, Head of Social Affairs for the City of Hildesheim, and Bernd Westphal. The discussion was moderated by Matthias Ullrich, Managing Director of the Hildesheim Region Economic Development Corporation mbH.



*annual FiN meeting at the KSM Castings Group in Hildesheim*

- On May 13, 2024, Matthias Mehler hosted a meeting with Lena Düpont, CDU member of the European Parliament, at the Bischofsmühle.
- May 27, 2024: Attendance at an event with Lower Saxony’s Minister of Culture Julia Willie Hamburg at the Kufa. She responded evasively to critical questions about the second Digital Pact, specifically regarding the financing of tablets and free learning materials. Due to the budgetary situation, funding from the state of Lower Saxony is not in sight in the foreseeable future.
- August 27, 2024: Presentation of the foundation Families in Need – FiN at the general meeting of the Lions Club Hildesheim-Rose. The Lions Club had organized a record market with donated records for the benefit of FiN the previous year. Thanks to this fundraising campaign, the emergency situations of numerous families and their children were alleviated.
- On October 29, 2024, FiN presented itself at FLURfunk, the networking meeting of Hildesheim foundations.

We would like to thank all our supporters and the members of our network who accompany us on this journey and work with us to ensure a better future for children and families in our region.

Gisela Sowa & Jana Kuschel

*Hildesheim, March 2025*

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Donation Account Families In Need Hildesheim – FiN:

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