

The difference we make

Our annual review 2014 / 2015



Our welcome

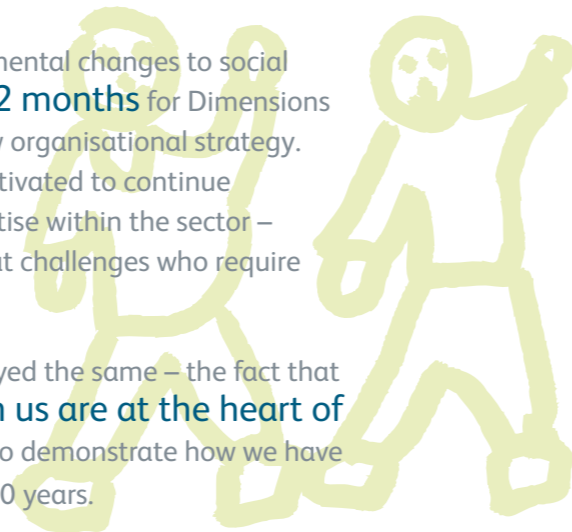
Welcome to our annual review, celebrating our 40th anniversary.

Since the formation of New Era Housing Association in 1975, we have grown through a series of mergers and partnerships to become the **values led organisation** known today as Dimensions.

We are one of the **leading not-for-profit providers** in our sector and today we speak with a confident voice about the beneficial outcomes and positive changes we make to the lives of around 3,500 people with learning disabilities and people with autism throughout England and Wales.

Our annual review provides an opportunity to reflect on the monumental changes to social care over our 40-year story, to report on **another successful 12 months** for Dimensions and to look forward to the next five years as we implement our new organisational strategy. It paints a picture of a **vibrant, ambitious organisation** motivated to continue improving the quality of support we provide and develop our expertise within the sector – particularly when it comes to supporting people with behaviour that challenges who require more specialist support.

Amid all the changes over the past four decades, one thing has stayed the same – the fact that **the people we support and the people who work with us are at the heart of everything we do**. This review highlights some of their stories to demonstrate how we have made a measurable difference to real people's lives over the past 40 years.



Our Chair

2014/15 proved to be an exceptionally demanding year, as it has been for organisations right across our sector. We managed, nevertheless, to make significant progress against the priorities we had set ourselves in our annual delivery plan.

Our approach to personalisation remains at the centre of all we do. We have developed our culture and focus so that the people we support have more choice and control in their lives and are engaged with their communities, with real opportunities to contribute.

Dimensions works in a heavily regulated environment. We have continued to increase the level and consistency of compliance scores in important areas such as CQC ratings whilst also preparing successfully for significant changes in these regulatory regimes.

Over the past year we have secured £18m of new work and competitively retained £13m of existing work. Striving for the best balance between quality and compliance has been central to our work throughout the year. We are also delighted that our 'Love your Vote' campaign resulted in so many people we support voting for the first time in the 2015 general election.

“Striving for the best balance between quality and compliance has been central to our work throughout the year.”

I am enormously grateful to all our staff for the energy, skill and imagination they devote to supporting and delivering services. They have challenged us to stay open to new perspectives, learning and ways of working. We very much value the scrutiny and inspiration which our Council and Family & Friends Forum contribute to keep us focused on what really matters.

Dimensions is greatly strengthened by its wide range of partners, both new and established, and we remain grateful to all our commissioners who believe in what we are trying to achieve and award us the resource to deliver this.

With our strategy for 2020 in place, we are moving into a new phase with our values reaffirmed and a clear and ambitious vision for the lives and voice of all the people we support.

Helen Baker, Chair of the Dimensions Board

Our CEO



The last year has been one of consolidation and some significant steps forward. Yet in the context of an increasingly competitive and challenging external environment, we realise that we need absolute clarity about what we are here for, where we are going and how we can be the best we possibly can be.

This is what lies behind our new five-year strategy which aims to position Dimensions by 2020 as the exemplar in our sector delivering research-based and outcomes-focused care and support.

What does this mean in practice? It means investing in research so that our support is truly innovative and focused on outcomes. It means concentrating more on specialist services for people with challenging behaviour as well as ensuring the safety and quality of services.

It means setting the standard for investing in our staff team, developing a louder voice, devolving decision making as close as possible to the people we support and pushing boundaries to achieve the best possible results and outcomes.

Allied with this, we have a new mission statement which commits us to encouraging the people we support to be actively engaged with, and contribute to, their communities. This new emphasis on community engagement is crucial because *being part of* a community means so much more than simply *living in* a community. We know that when people participate in local communities, they establish friendships and relationships and build a sense of their value and interconnectedness with others. People are not islands but flourish as individuals in meaningful interaction with others.

Implementing the new strategy will take five years, but together we *can* lead our sector and improve the lives of the people we support – who are at the heart of what we do.

Steve Scown, Chief Executive Officer, Dimensions

“Our new five-year strategy... aims to position Dimensions by 2020 as the exemplar in our sector”

Our Strategy for 2020



Personalisation

- ⇒ Supporting choice and control
- ⇒ Meeting needs and encouraging ambition
- ⇒ Protecting and improving the quality and safety of our services
- ⇒ Developing research-based support focused on outcomes

Development

- ⇒ Growing research-based, outcomes-focused support
- ⇒ Increasing services for people with complex needs
- ⇒ Helping people to have a good home
- ⇒ Developing the expertise of our central services
- ⇒ Evaluating new support models and new markets

People

- ⇒ Valuing and supporting the people who work with us
- ⇒ Striving to be inclusive and to respect difference
- ⇒ Building a workforce which is capable, highly motivated, engaged and the best they can be
- ⇒ Developing a flexible, responsible and accountable culture

Engagement

- ⇒ Building partnerships and working collaboratively
- ⇒ Developing a louder voice and promoting best practice
- ⇒ Increasing the influence of the people we support and their families
- ⇒ Adding value to the sector

Organisation

- ⇒ Being an effective learning organisation
- ⇒ Making the best possible use of resources
- ⇒ Devolving decision making to be as close as possible to the people we support

Our year

2014-15 was a successful year of growth and consolidation. Here are some highlights of ways in which we have made a difference to people we support.

Hampshire growth

After winning 14 new four-year supported living contracts in Hampshire, the team pulled out all the stops to complete the transfer of 350 new staff members supporting 142 people before the 30th March deadline. The new services have expanded the South region by 40 percent.

Highest CQC ratings

We have been rebalancing the way in which we review the quality of our services and their compliance with regulation. Our work has helped us achieve the highest CQC compliance rate of all large care providers with 98.8% of services fully compliant with CQC inspection standards.

Research innovators

We carried out a 12 month research project in partnership with the Tizard Centre and the Challenging Behaviour Foundation that looked at structuring support differently. The study saw a reduction in challenging behaviour of 60% and we are working to develop this model.

Love Your Vote

Our Love Your Vote campaign ran throughout the year and involved well attended events in every region as well as a national voter registration event. The campaign culminated on 7th May 2015 when many people we support voted in the general election for the first time.



A positive change

Positive behaviour support and collaborative working show results

Kayley is 29 and experiences very severe autism. She attended a residential school from the age of four to 19 and was then supported by the Dimensions team in the North East of England to move into her own bungalow.

Kayley has limited communication abilities and displays behaviour that challenges. After a series of incidents five years ago, it was considered too high risk for her to go out into her local community.

The Dimensions team were determined to overcome these difficulties. Working in partnership with expert therapists and our in-house Behaviour Support Team, Kayley's life has been transformed. Using innovative

Person-centred thinking tools and a new approach... have made a profoundly positive difference to Kayley

person-centred support tools, the team put strategies in place to understand and manage Kayley's behaviour. They discovered that too much emphasis had been placed on her autism and sensory needs when the behaviours she displayed were actually separate issues. By understanding this and changing Kayley's support plan accordingly, her wellbeing

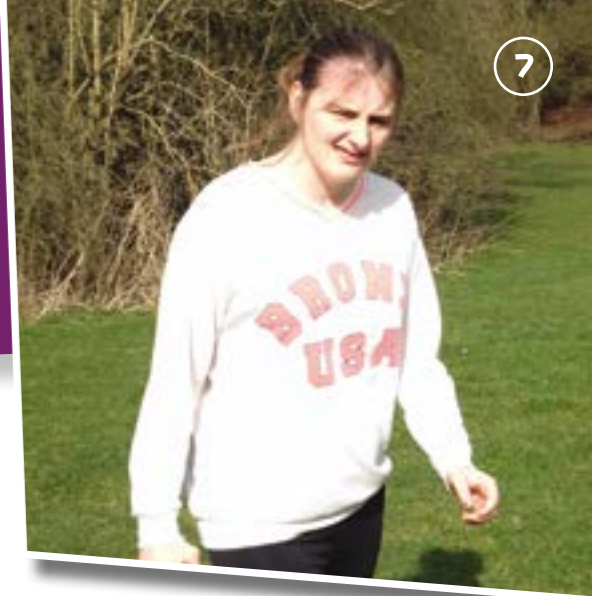
increased and incidents of self-harm decreased significantly.

Kayley's support team also worked with our performance coaches and the Learning and Development team to understand Positive Behaviour Support. This, allied with the changes to Kayley's support plan, have meant that she is once again able to go out and do what she most enjoys.

She has been out to various parks and is communicating well with staff. She has learnt to interact with others in a socially appropriate way and has even enjoyed a daytrip to Whitby. Her support team now even feels comfortable to support her on

trips to McDonald's for a Big Mac.

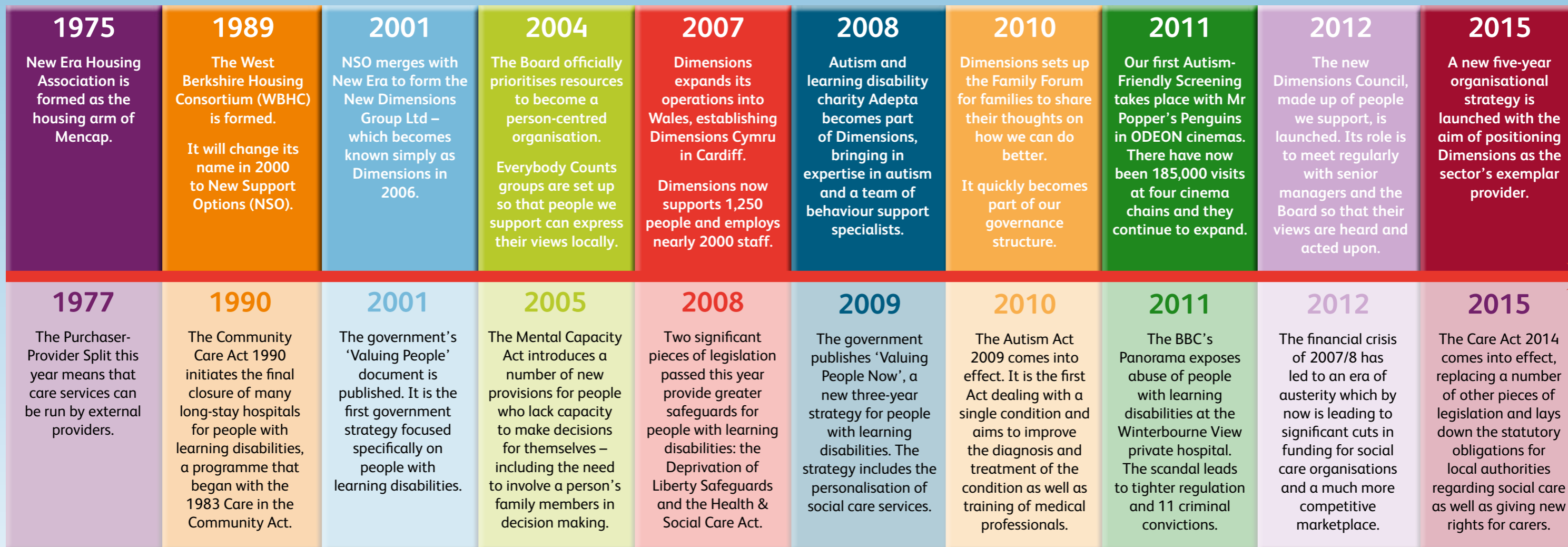
Person-centred thinking tools and a new approach based on our expert Behaviour Support and collaborative working have made a profoundly positive difference to Kayley, to her support team and to her mother who is actively involved in her support.



Our story



Tracing 40 years of Dimensions set against the backdrop of changes in social care.



Equipped for life

Positive Behaviour Support can make the world of difference

Clive is now in his 50s but spent much of his 20s and 30s in long-stay institutionalised settings. When he began living in the community, he was victimised by local teenagers who kicked his door in late at night, stole his possessions and even stood in his bedroom.

In order to help Clive make a success of independent living, his Behaviour Analyst at Dimensions, Susie, worked with him so that he learned to say, 'I don't know you,' and walk away if teenagers asked him for money. He also learnt to call the police using a panic button if someone was harassing him at home or by using a mobile phone when out of the house.

“It’s despicable to think he used to be in a wheelchair in an institutionalised setting. Now he lives the life he wants to”

Together, Susie and Clive’s support team worked with him to practise difficult scenarios using role play to help him know how to respond. Clive has moved to a nicer area and has bought his own house. He is still supported by Dimensions.

Clive is now enjoying his independence. He goes on holiday once a year, has taken on more responsibility for housework, exhibits far less anxiety and feels



in control of his life. “I am a man and I want to be treated like a man,” he says with feeling. “I like being on my own and more independent. It makes me happy.”

Clive’s support requirements have been significantly reduced. Ten years ago he was receiving 105 hours of direct support a week plus sleep-ins every night, but now he only needs a few hours of support a week.

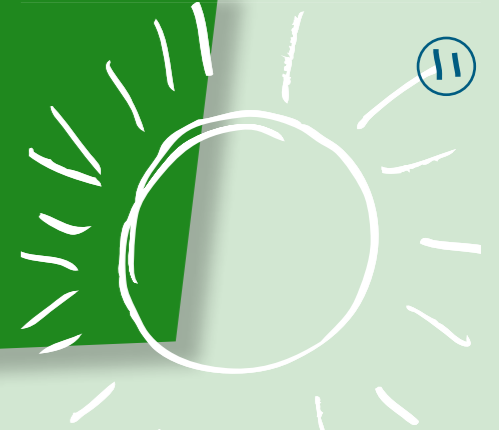
Susie said, “We have made a real difference to his life. I don’t know what would have happened if our Behaviour Support Team hadn’t got involved. To see him own his

own home and living a happy, fulfilled life is a really positive outcome.

“It’s despicable to think he used to be in a wheelchair in institutions. Now he lives the life he wants to and is such a lovely person to spend time with. When he comes across difficult scenarios that would have previously led him to display challenging behaviour, he now knows how to handle them and move on.”

Forty years not out

Celia McDowell has worked with Dimensions from the very beginning.



Celia started working for New Era Housing Association, our predecessor organisation, in June 1975 after she qualified as a psychiatric nurse. “The support provided to people with learning disabilities has changed dramatically since then,” she reflects. “I can still picture my first day when people with learning disabilities were still cared for in long-stay hospitals. It was difficult, but back then we knew no better.”

Over her 40-year career with Dimensions, Celia has seen social care totally transformed. “In the early days we did everything for the people we cared for, but now the support is so much more focused on the needs of the people themselves. They now have far more choice, respect and dignity. I’d say there has been a great leap forwards so that many of them are now supported to manage their own money and health, and even have jobs. They are much less dependent on staff.”

Celia has also seen big developments within Dimensions. “There’s much more support for staff members and great training to help us achieve the highest standards,” she says, “I know recruitment can still be a challenge, but there is such a supportive and friendly environment at Dimensions and everyone is made to feel welcome. There is also a really helpful induction process these days and people can easily climb up the ladder to more responsible positions.”

When asked what the biggest change has been over the last 40 years, Celia replies, “It’s the way we and others look at people with learning disabilities. That’s been an enormous change. Now they are supported to play their part within their communities, go shopping and go on holiday. They are treated just like you and me.”

Yet despite all the changes, the thing Celia likes most about her job has not changed. “The best thing is simply the people we support and although there are challenges on a daily basis, it’s all worthwhile when someone smiles because I’ve helped make their life a little happier and more fulfilling. That’s what it’s all about.”



In 2014 / 2015...

1400

people in supported living or supported by outreach services

88667

hours of support were reduced as a direct result of person-centred approaches

More than
4500

employees across England and Wales

50%

of people we support registered to vote in the 2015 General Election

1138

employees received an attendance bonus

£13m

of work competitively retained

More than
3500

people were being supported

We were commissioned by
72

local authorities and CCGs

Low cost rented accommodation provided to
1138

people

6200

Twitter followers

97%

of people we support said that support staff knew who was important to them

49

people with learning disabilities or autism are employed by Dimensions across the country

£14.8m

estimated value of our social housing stock

5527

fans on Facebook

Around
80000

visits to Autism Friendly Screenings over the last year alone

£18m

of new work secured

45

people were supported into new tenancies

A CQC / CSSIW regulatory compliance rate of

98.8%

225

staff members were nominated by colleagues in the Inspiring People recognition scheme

143

people supported into employment

60%

reduction in challenging behaviour evidenced by our new model of support

79%

of employees surveyed would recommend Dimensions as an employer

13

professional Behaviour Consultants – the largest not-for-profit in-house team

More than
1000

people attended our Love Your Vote workshops

250

people supported through direct payments or personal budgets

670

staff members attended staff focus groups to develop internal policies

£1.2m

in service efficiencies returned to local authorities

40

staff members were enrolled on our Aspire career development programme

0

of our services rated 'inadequate' by the CQC

£111m

annual turnover

Our finances

This is a summary of the Dimensions group financial results over the last financial year 2014-15.

All totals are in £ '000s.

Turnover and expenditure

	2014-15	2013-14
Staff costs	81,433	84,837
Other costs	27,154	27,589
Operating surplus	2,356	3,864
Turnover	110,943	116,290

Balance sheet highlights

Cash and investments	18,178	14,948
Capital and reserves	16,445	14,742



A full version of these accounts is given in the Directors' Annual Report, a copy of which is available on our website.

In a better place

Initial investment leads to better outcomes for all

Fred is 27 and experiences autism. He was first supported by Dimensions in 2010 and lived with three other young men in a supported living service. However, Fred struggled with sharing a house and started to exhibit challenging behaviour towards the people he lived with.

To help Fred overcome these issues we applied for his funding to be re-assessed so that he could move into a place of his own. For months, his support team worked with him to obtain a new assessment, with the support of his mother. The problem was that his funding levels were too low.

Since moving to his new place, there has been a transformation in Fred's anxiety levels and behaviour.

After many meetings, facilitated and led by our highly trained and experienced staff team, a new budget was agreed that would allow Fred to move. However, the council property waiting list was very long and it would have been months before a suitable place was secured. Undeterred, our housing team decided to buy a house for Fred to rent, as Dimensions is also a registered social landlord. This meant that Fred

was able to move last September, and he was really excited to have his own home at last.

Since moving to his new place, there has been a transformation in Fred's anxiety levels and behaviour. Reportable incidents each month involving Fred have dropped dramatically. He now accomplishes 15 tasks at home each day, compared to just two or three in his previous home, and the weekly costs of his placement have been cut by 17%.

Throughout his journey, Fred and the others he lived with have been supported in a thoroughly personalised way focused upon achieving outcomes. Fred is now benefitting from the consistency of a small support team and is trying to use more verbal communication. He has joined his local library, is developing friendships with neighbours and loves having people round to visit. He is also walking much more and using public transport. The future for Fred is now looking bright.



What our families told us this year...



We are pleased with the professional and caring way your staff look after our daughter.

I am very happy with the care and support Darren gets.

I couldn't ask for a better place, the staff are fantastic.

Dimensions staff are always approachable and friendly to us as parents and to our son.

I am extremely satisfied with the care of my brother as his needs and requirements are always met. Thank you.

I have always been incredibly happy with the staff who care for my sister.



How to get in touch



0300 303 9001



enquiries@dimensions-uk.org

How to find out more



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Published September 2015. Our illustrations are created by the people we support.



Diversity Champion
Corporate Award 2014



**INVESTORS
IN PEOPLE** | Bronze