



Dimensions Council Annual Report 2021/2022



Working differently

The Dimensions Council have been working hard this year and have flourished in our online meetings. We are joined every month by Board members, guests and representatives from across Dimensions group. We have continued to invite speakers from internal and external organisations, driven campaigns and commented on issues facing people with learning disabilities and/or autism in England and Wales.

“The Council want to connect with more people and work with colleagues across the organisation.”

David, Chair





A word from the Chair – David

“We have spaces on the Dimensions Council and really want more people we support to join us.”



When I was elected Chairperson of Dimensions Council October 2021, I wanted to try and do 3 things. In my election manifesto I said that I want to make being online safer for people with disabilities, improve diversity and to grow the Council and make us stronger. We also decided to create a new Vice Chair role to support me to lead and help them lead too. We have brought a lot of positive energy in the Council group.

Being a Chair is amazing but I also work hard. I meet with Chelsea and the Involvement and Engagement team to set the agenda every month and decide which guests to invite. We choose what we want to talk about. We also do lots of planning and represent the Council at other meetings.

Support colleagues have been working very hard during the coronavirus pandemic that has lasted 2 years and the whole Council thank them. It was my support worker Thelma who found out for me about the Staying In Touch clubs and I'm a big fan. I love drawing in art club, playing bingo and chatting to new friends about films and football.

We have spaces on the Dimensions Council and really want more people we support to join us.

Getting stronger with new members



The Council was pleased to welcome 1 new member during this year, Catherine Matthews from Kent.

So...how do we get things done?

The Dimensions Council is a forum for people who have learning disabilities and/or autism and are supported or housed by Dimensions. We strive to:

- talk about things that are important to people with learning disabilities and/or autism,
- influence the policy and practice of Dimensions (UK) on behalf of people supported by Dimensions through meetings with the Board of Dimensions (UK), the Executive Team and the Leadership Group members and by working in partnership with Discovery Council,
- campaign about issues that affect people with learning disabilities and/or autism, who are supported by Dimensions and sometimes wider.

Saying goodbye



The Council said a fond goodbye to former Chair, Ann McCallum, who retired from the Council. As a respected leader she demonstrated how the Council could set their own agenda. She has a keen sense of humour and enjoyed heckling the new Chairs from the backbenches! The Council thanked her as a friend and mentor.

Robin Hendry also retired after many years proudly representing Wales. He doesn't use many words to communicate but had a lot to 'say', and a wonderful singing voice. The Council are proud of him and remember him launching our anti-hate crime campaign 'I'm With Sam' in Parliament.

The Council were also very sad to say goodbye to Phil Smith who stepped down due to circumstances out of his control. Phil was a very active member of Council and also represented the Council at Discovery Council, Health and Safety meetings and much more. Phil is very much missed by the Council but he is still very busy with his volunteer projects, particularly the local walking group he founded.

**“I would not be the person I am today without the Council and the work I do as a Quality Consultant”
Phil Smith**





Highlights of our achievements in 2021/2022



- More people were going back to jobs and college so we decided to have a longer meeting every month with easy read agendas and minutes instead of every 2 weeks (from August 2021).
- The Council have continued to invite guests from inside and outside Dimensions to learn from them and work together on Council priorities.
- Monthly representation at Executive team meetings, regular Board members and working with the Dimensions Board face to face to improve diversity.
- Electing David as Chair and Chelsea Lovell as Vice Chair.
- Linking with Discovery Council with representatives on both Councils and working with Discovery Council to review the Human Rights Act.
- Working with Clare Bates from Supported Loving talking about supporting people with relationships (e.g support to go out in the evening and recruiting the right staff)
- We have new pages in the Involvement Team Hub to show people what we do and link to information about us for people wishing to join.

Guests

The Council set our own agenda and invite guests to speak about things we are working on. There are regular spaces for board members and representatives from families, public affairs, tenants and Discovery Council. Guests also ask to come to the Council to seek their guidance:

- Steve Scown, Dimensions Chief Executive Officer
- Clare Bates MBE, Supported Loving
- Alan Critchley, Independent Chair of Safeguarding
- Kate Chate, Family Consultant
- Sara McEvansoneya, Quality Officer
- Ultimate ROC Star Andy Smyth
- The Tizard centre at Kent University
- Jo Greenbank, Company Secretary
- Luke Joy-Smith, Project Director
- Duncan Bell, Head of Marketing



Our agendas are set by the Council Chairs to respond to current issues and invite guests to present. We have discussed and acted on really important issues facing people with learning disabilities and/or autism in Dimensions and beyond, such as:

- Emma Fraser leading as Vice Chair and sometimes as Chair.
- Saying goodbye to Jackie Fletcher and Steve Scown.
- New Safeguarding focus group with Alan Critchley.
- Getting outside after lockdown – we made an animation and worked on ambition project for support colleagues.
- Project Prevent – keeping people safe before they get hurt.
- Learning Makaton with Kate Chate.
- Thanked support colleagues for everything they've done to support people through the pandemic.
- Complaints and compliments and how to report them.
- Encouraging people to get vaccinations.
- David wrote about protecting diversity online to social media companies like Facebook.
- Spoke to Kent University about being safe on social media.
- Chelsea's ideas box – looking at representation in the media.
- War in Ukraine – what we can do.
- Changes to Dimensions Board and Executive team.
- Helping people to answer the Dimensions Customer Survey independently.
- We chose to plant 29 trees to remember people from Dimensions who died because of Covid-19.

Working on Human Rights with Discovery Council



We were very pleased to meet together online with the Discovery Council to work on the Government review of the Human Rights Act. We said that the current rights must stay but we would also like to see a right to protection from online bullying. There should be better support to report hate crime and in the courts. We want to see more people like us on TV and in the media and more training in schools so that people understand who we really are and include us. We also want to be involved in decisions about our medical care.

Executive team

Our respectful partnership with the Executive team has continued to grow. We have discussed ensuring that people we support can give their views independently in the customer satisfaction survey, telling people about ROC Stars, supporting relationships and clarity about working from home.

“We are going to miss Steve Scown, he’s had an amazing career. But we’re pleased that Rachel Dodgson has become the new CEO and is ready to tackle the important issues.” David, Chair



Working together



The Council meet the Board every year. Luckily this year we were able to do this in person at Theale. It was fantastic to be in a room, meeting people that we had only spoken to online. Over 2 days we enjoyed being together and held elections, presented certificates, held workshops and watched our animation.

David said “I was nervous to meet the Board because I thought it was going to be Like Britain’s Got Talent! But they are nice people and it was brilliant to meet them. Being a Board member must be such a tough job because you have to respond every day to big issues. They are great to work with.”

Alan Critchley asks the Council to focus on Safeguarding



I’m the Independent Chair of the Safeguarding Panel. That means that it’s my job to see how well the Dimensions Group do at keeping all the people they support safe. The Panel meets every three months and we look at lots of data and we hear from managers.

I wanted to hear from the people we support how safe they feel and what their safeguarding concerns are. To do this we set up a Safeguarding Focus Group as a part of the Council and I meet with the group every three months or so. The Group has been brilliant! I’ve heard some good stories about how Dimensions has kept people safe. We have also talked about how to make it easier to make a complaint; we’ve talked about dating and staying safe and we’ve talked about staying safe online. I then feed all the ideas and concern to the Panel. I also tell the Group what the Panel have been talking about.

The Group is going from strength to strength and is defiantly permanent. I’m really grateful for all the honesty and great ideas that come from the Group!
Alan Critchley, Safeguarding Panel Chair



Council supporters and regular guests



Chelsea Lovell

The Council is joined regularly by Jamie Newland (Discovery Council Chair), Martine Otton (Support Housing and Quality Advisor), Paula Gledhill (Head of Public Affairs), Jackie Fletcher (Executive Director of Quality and Compliance) and are supported by the Involvement team; Paul Pargeter, Tracey Garcia, Michelle Rebello Tindall and Beccy Simmonds.

“Meetings of the Council are always inspiring and it’s interesting to hear what’s on members’ minds and how they would like to influence change. It’s been inspiring to work closely with Chelsea Lovell on a recent visit to Parliament to speak to ministers and MPs about what good support looks like and to highlight the pressure on the social care workforce.” Paula Gledhill, Public Affairs

To find out more about the Dimensions Council have a look at our intranet page by going to Key Colleague Information then Involvement & Engagement.

Did you know you can observe the Council? Just ask us!
dimensionscouncil@dimensions-uk.org



Contact us

If you have any questions, would like to get involved or become a member, then please do get in touch with the Dimensions Council.

Email: dimensionscouncil@dimensions-uk.org

You can hear from the Council themselves by listening to their monthly Podcast called Check Your Connection on Dimensions YouTube channel.