dimensions

discovery

dimensions Outreach 3Way

dimensions cymru

Impact Report

2020 – 2021

Welcome to our Impact Report for 2020-21

Dimensions' Group Strategy – Better Lives for More People – commits to improve the lives of the people it supports and employs, and to offer those improvements to more people that it will support or employ in the future. It is an ambitious strategy that talks about 'impact' throughout: a relentless drive to not only help people with a learning disability and/or autism lead great lives but also to deliver *beyond our boundaries.*

A pillar of our strategy is 'scale', something we have achieved and founded upon the quality of our support. Scale is not for its own sake but for what it enables us to do; to create *value*.

The pages that follow talk about the impact that we have had in probably our toughest year: the year of the global battle with COVID-19. Alongside providers, local authorities and the NHS, Dimensions inhabits an ecosystem that has experienced incredible disruption to operations and demand for its services. Yet, despite this, there is much to celebrate.

So we have asked colleagues, families and people we support to tell you their stories about our impact, in *their* voices: personal testimony of why they are proud to be associated with Dimensions and – in some cases – what we are learning to do differently or better in the future.

Alongside this wide demonstration of our 'impact' there is the increasingly prevalent theme of 'social value', something our commissioners must now consider as part of procuring support like ours. This is a focus that we welcome – but it is also a challenge: we do not always find it natural or easy to monetise our impact. It is not in our DNA to apply big numbers to great lives. For example:

How could we ascribe a value to the 500,000 autism-friendly cinema visits that would not have taken place without our initiative, training, promotion and relationship with cinemas nationwide?

How can we put a pound sign against improved healthcare driven by our #MyGPandMe campaigning, training and resources?

What about the police forces better equipped to recognise hate crime, or the thousands of Key Stage 3 lesson plans used by children country-wide thanks to our #ImWithSam campaign?

In each of these cases and more, social impact is easy to see but much harder to monetise.

And yet monetise it we must because 2020-21 has seen procurement legislation and guidance that, taken together, reduce commissioners' flexibility to consider non-fiscal statements of social value in tenders.

So, as this Impact Report evolves year-on-year, you can expect to see more information about the monetised social value Dimensions delivers, starting with a few headlines this time.

To report on social value, we will be using 'TOMS' – a model endorsed by the Local Government Association (though some local authorities still use alternative models with different scoring systems). This means that we will be framing our social value across the five TOMS themes:

- Promoting local skills and employment.
- Supporting the growth of responsible regional business.
- Healthier, safer and more resilient communities.
- Decarbonising and safeguarding our world.
- Promoting social innovation.

Dimensions – and our vision and strategy of achieving '*Better lives for more people*' aligns well to these themes. We want to demonstrate value for money for our commissioners' investment and show future colleagues, who may want to support people with a learning disability or autism, that we are serious about impact.

Because, finally, our strategy – *Better Lives for More People* – is founded upon the need to solve our sector's biggest problem: one of attracting great people to come to a great organisation and enjoy a great career delivering great support. To attract great people requires investment and to attract investment we need to demonstrate value in all its forms. It is through demonstrating impact and calculating social value that we will use our scale to justify investment in our sector and evidence that, to deliver better lives for more people, social care deserves more.

I hope you enjoy my colleagues' experiences of Dimensions' impact over the past year.

Steve Scown

Dimensions' Chief Executive, Steve Scown has over 30 years' experience working with people with learning disabilities and autism. He has been a Trustee of Skills For Care and Chair of VODG.

The people we support

We're changing lives

On average, each person we support is currently working towards achieving 5 things they've said are important to them ('outcomes.') That's up from 4 last year.

"Kelsey has learning disabilities and lived in group supported living.

"Kelsey wanted to move into her own home. To enable this, we supported her to learn to cook meals, clean and make telephone calls unsupported.

"In January 2021 she successfully moved into her own flat after searching for the place she wanted to call home.

"Kelsey has gone from having support around her 24/7 to 20 hours of targeted support of her choosing.

"Kelsey was supported in her first week of being in her new home to hold her person-centred review virtually to allow as many people as she wished to attend, to celebrate her success and to plan what comes next.

"One of her new outcomes was to get a paid job. Within the week of her team getting together and hearing her aspirations and outcomes, Kelsey was supported to apply for a Quality Consultant job and is now in paid employment. She is working towards maintaining relationships with her boyfriend (who she can now have in her bubble as she is living alone) and her family, as well as developing in her new role.

"Kelsey's support follows the Activate model of support we developed alongside the Tizard Centre and National Institute for Health Research.

"It's really satisfying to see the results of the model being used correctly. It gives everyone a common goal. The team can review a person's record, record their experiences and achievements and give steps for people to move forward with in order to achieve their goals. The number of live outcomes is rising quickly, which tells me that support teams are really 'getting it.'

"I know from observing practice and speaking with countless people we support, families and colleagues that Activate is enabling Dimensions to deliver better lives for more people and crucially, by supporting people with developing life skills, to reduce their need for paid support over time."

Resources

Find out more about Activate

Jackie Milburn is a Performance Coach at Dimensions. Over 21 years with Dimensions Jackie has held many roles including Locality Manager. She is passionate about Activate and is very happy that her role allows her to support more colleagues and people to achieve more outcomes while using Activate's 8 domains successfully.

Supporting people out of crisis

A quarter of the people we started supporting this year moved from an ATU, residential college or were considered to be in crisis.

One by one we are supporting individuals to transform their lives.

"'Alan' had an extremely fractured start to life, being the victim of physical and psychological abuse by his father, resulting in multiple offences linked to fire setting.

"In his own words, for the first two years he 'didn't listen to a thing we said to him'. However, through understanding the rationale behind his behaviour, and sticking with Alan through difficult times, he was able to see that we were actually there to help.

"That stickability, along with an approach grounded in empathy and his wellbeing, gave Alan the evidence he needed to eventually be able to trust us.

"He is now in the process of leaving our support, having learned the skills required to live safely and manage his emotions in a more effective way.

"In 2020-21 Dimensions supported 26 people out of crisis (together with 6 out of ATU and 5 out of residential school) – all told, that's a quarter of all the people we started supporting in the year.

"10 years since the Winterbourne View revelations led to the national 'Transforming Care' agenda, the pace of change continues to frustrate us all. But one by one we are supporting individuals to transform their lives."

Resources

Download our guide to moving out of ATUs

Download our guide to a good Transition

Read about how we support people to rehabilitate

Jason Bardell (B.Ed.; Dip Couns; HPD (LD); LDAF Level 3) has worked with the Forensic Team since its inception and has been instrumental in the development of the approach we have to working in positive relationship-based ways with people. Jason has 25 years' experience in working with people with a forensic history and now leads a team of experts within Dimensions as the Forensic Team Director. He helps set the tone and culture for everyone.

Achieving high quality, compliant support

89% of our services are registered Good or Outstanding by CQC

Although this performance beats the sector average of 84%, we're not satisfied with our performance here. A year ago, 95% of our services were rated Good or better.

One of Dimensions' experts by experience, Jenny, told us, "As a quality checker who is also supported by Dimensions myself I can't wait to get back into services face to face instead of just online to help managers spot where they can make improvements.

"I check peoples' One Page Profiles and then ask questions like, 'are you having a good life' and talk to them about their hobbies and interests. Not everything is perfect, especially since Covid started, but in general I know from talking to people that Dimensions does a good job.

"I remember one person told me they loved horses and had just completed an online 'Caring for Horses' course, showing me that the person's support team were aware of the person's interests and goals.

"And I was really pleased to even get a ROC star award from my colleagues for my work recently."

We're not just waiting for Covid to go away of course. An internal initiative, "Prevention: Safety through Learning" has sifted through hundreds of reported incidents – our own, as well as from other organisations – with a view to making our safety processes as robust as possible and to ensure we are learning lessons when accidents or incidents happen.

And a second major response has been to set our CQC registrations at local (as opposed to regional) level, giving greater authority and accountability to managers who are on the spot daily.

We have also invested in a range of new technologies – such as RADAR and Pyramid - to support quality, safety and compliance.

CQC has, quite rightly, raised its expectations of learning disability providers. That's a really good thing and we will continue to find new ways to raise our own performance bar.

It is also worth noting that CQC's new strategy looks set to change the landscape around inspections. Inspectors will cross fewer thresholds, and generally only in response to reported concerns. The strategy carries a clear risk that some providers will quietly discourage concerns from being raised; Dimensions will take the reverse approach whatever the impact on new ratings.

Jenny Baker is supported by Dimensions and also works for us as a Quality Checker.

Resources

Read our CQC ratings

Employment: a cornerstone of life

We've supported 123 people into long term employment in the past 3 years

Photo is for illustrative purposes only

"As the pandemic hit Ryan's day service was closed, leaving him without his regular opportunity to get out and about.

"Ryan approached the award-winning Discovery Supported Employment Service with a view to gaining a job, leading to him successfully getting a cleaning job with the local ambulance service. Ryan has worked through the pandemic as a key worker and is immensely proud to have done so.

"Ryan's story shows that, with the right support, people can be active citizens, helping to sustain the local economy and contributing to the local community.

"Ryan is far from alone: studies show that 65 % of people with learning disabilities want to work but just 6 % are employed.

"I'm particularly proud that 100 % of families have rated Discovery's supported employment services as 'excellent' and 100 % of employers have rated us as 'excellent' or 'good'.

"Beyond Somerset, in the normal course of our support, 350 people are now in voluntary or paid employment across the country. Inevitably, Covid has affected this and we look forward to increasing this figure in the current year."

Resources

Employer? Find out more about Supported Employment

Alex Seddon is Head of Supported Employment & Community Enterprise at Discovery, with over 25 years' experience in employment, education and training. She's passionate about achieving genuine equality for all people so that everyone has the opportunity to lead a full life and achieve their ambitions.

Driving up digital inclusion

100% of the people we support in England who want to get online have the kit they need to do so

Social value: £70k*

"I'm into all sorts really, from Paul Simon to Vampire Weekend, 80s to hip hop music. And at my Monday Staying In Touch music group for people supported by Dimensions, I get to share what I like and find out what other group members have been listening to.

"Dimensions gave me a laptop at the start of the pandemic and arranged a load of different groups. I joined the Music one and a Friendship Group too – I've got friends as far away as Newcastle now! There's nothing worse than being isolated and I'm really grateful to those who have helped make the groups happen." Adam.

In fact, Dimensions has been able to provide digital technology to almost all those who want it. Initially this was through using stocks of spare tablets and laptops. More recently we helped the Good Things Foundation shape the government's 'Digital Lifeline' grant fund for England and then successfully applied for 232 tablets (with software, data and training) from the 5000 available sector-wide. We're looking for a similar opportunity in Wales now.

Recipients have been able to connect to families, in some cases for the first time in months and many, like Adam, have chosen to join one or more of our wide range of Staying In Touch clubs.

We are now working to speed up the adoption of other assistive technologies wherever they could improve the lives of the people we support, from kitchen aids to touch lamps and Alexas to Touch Tables.

And we've even supported student projects to get the designers of the future thinking about digital accessibility.

Resources

Find out more about the Digital Lifeline grant

Find out more about our approach to Assistive technology

Adam is one of many people we support who have built new friendships and sustained existing relationships through digital technology during the pandemic.

A louder voice for the people we support

23 people we support advocate for others through the Discovery and Dimensions Councils

"The Councils listen to people supported and housed by Dimensions and Discovery, and stand up for their rights. As groups we support each other and work alongside the involvement and housing teams, Dimensions and Discovery Boards and executive teams to get our voices heard."

In Discovery: "The Council is new, so we are learning about leading every step of the way. Our focus topics for this year are health, equal online opportunities for all, how to complain or make a compliment, speaking up locally and campaigning about hate crime, right to good health care, work opportunities and voting. Our roles involve being sensitive to how people may be feeling if we discuss issues that affect them directly.

"Some of the things we have worked on and shared over the last year include: a guide for colleagues about supporting people in online meetings, getting updates sent to all people receiving day service support, our 10 top tips for looking after your mental health, and a letter to the candidates standing for the Somerset Police and Crime Commissioner elections in May."

In Dimensions: "The Council has been working hard on really big issues for people with learning disabilities and/or autism, especially around visiting, vaccinations, health and coping with lockdown. We were also very pleased to meet with the Discovery Council to work on the Government review of the Human Rights Act. It was great to work together with the Discovery Council and we want to do this regularly.

"Two members of the Dimensions Council also represent our 1000 tenants, elevating key issues (ranging from maintenance to Supported Loving) raised at quarterly Tenants Group meetings."

Resources

Find out more about Dimensions Council

Find out more about Discovery Council

Jamie Newland (chair) and Alice Parsley (deputy chair)
Discovery Council

Jordan Smith (chair) and Emma Fraser (deputy chair)
Dimensions Council

Listening to Experts by Experience

Our Quality Consultants delivered over 500 hours of paid work in 2020-21

"It's been a difficult year.

"As a Dimensions quality consultant (QC) my job is to improve the quality of our support. In all my work, I always focus on the quality of communication that I encounter; it's so important. The year before Covid, the QC team clocked up over 2000 hours of work: quality checking, interviewing, training and supporting business improvement.

"Then Covid hit and the bulk of our work vanished, almost overnight. I'm told that we worked less than 5 hours in April 2020!

"Lockdown meant we could not cross the threshold into peoples' homes to assess the support they were receiving. Some of us were locked down in our own homes too, and those of us living with housemates had even more complicated situations to work through before even thinking about work.

"Although things aren't yet back to normal, I was pleased last week to be able to join interview panels for a new data protection officer (2 of the 6 were appointable) and I've also delivered some digital induction training.

"I've particularly enjoyed helping shape our ROC (Recognising Outstanding Contribution) Star awards and supporting new work to make Dimensions an ever more equal and diverse place.

"Our workload has accelerated through the year and overall the team has delivered more than 500 hours of quality work. But I cannot wait to get back to normality!" David.

Resources

Find out more about our Experts by Experience

Meet our Quality Consultants

Ann McCallum

Jordan Smith

Rachel Wild

David lives in supported living with his best friend. He's been supported by Dimensions for 6 years and says his 'support is out of this world.' David works as a Quality Consultant for Dimensions and is also a member of the Council.

David chooses not to share his picture.

Helping more people to be safe and comfortable at home

82% of our tenants are happy or very happy with Dimensions' housing service

"This past year has been one of the most challenging we've experienced in our lifetime.

"The Coronavirus pandemic has changed the lives of everyone in the country in one way or another. Dimensions housing service is no exception and we have had to change many of our services to make sure tenants and staff stay safe.

"While many of our services have had to be suspended during the 2020/21 lockdowns we have been able to maintain our basic housing and property management services with 95% of emergency jobs being completed on time (and indeed, our repairs, maintenance and decorating expenditure was little changed from the pre-covid period whilst the number of compliance checks we made went up by over 30%.)

"Whilst also a quiet year in terms of social mobility and helping people to secure the home they need to lead a great life, our Housing Brokers still supported sixteen people to move to new accommodation. Some of these moves were from homes where the existing tenancy was coming to an end; others were for new people that Dimensions now supports.

"This is an exciting area of work for us that we expect to see increase in volume as people are able to move safely once the pandemic subsides.

"We've been working together with tenants to find new ways to support tenant engagement and make sure that our service still meet the needs and expectations of all our tenants. We will be introducing new ways for tenants to order repairs and get advice on housing issues during 2021/22, and we plan to re-launch our Quality Consultants, Tenant Meetings and Tenants Newsletter during 2022.

"Last week I found myself 'on hold' to a large private landlord for a sustained period of time. I was trying to exert a bit of influence to get that landlord to prioritise an emergency repair for a person Dimensions supports. Not anything to do with Dimensions' housing team. Why do I recount this tiny anecdote? Because as a new starter at Dimensions myself, I can vouch for the organisation's culture of seeking to influence beyond our boundaries to achieve better lives for more people, one person at a time.

"Finally and most importantly, I'd like to thank the 29 tenants who engaged with our in-depth interview programme in June, your opinions and suggestions on our Dimensions housing service will help shape our service through this year and into 2022."

Grenville Hague is Dimensions' Director of Housing and has 33 years of social housing experience across a wide range of supported living and general needs services. He's committed to delivering secure housing and high quality services that meet the needs of people with learning disabilities and autism, ensuring tenants have choice over their lives.

Resources

Find out more about our Supported housing and specialist housing services

Read our Tenants Annual Report 2019-20

Families

Focusing on families

87 % of families rate our support as good or better

"Planet Serviceland, this is Planet Family calling. Do you copy? Over."

"There is no doubt that my Dimensions colleagues strive to do the very best they can for the people they support, in line with their training and their obligations to the Care Act, Mental Capacity Act and so on, as the headline statistic above shows.
Equally there's no doubt that families strive to do the best they can for their loved ones, in line with their love and their parenting or sibling experience and expectations.

"So what happens when these worlds collide?

"Family consultants make an impact right across Dimensions. There is a family representative at Board level and a team of 15 family consultants and associate consultants doing quality visits and calls. Together, we ensure the voice of families is heard and considered across our organisation. All our family consultants have lived experience of adult social care. Many of us have relatives supported by Dimensions.

"Unsurprisingly, in this year of Covid-19, a lot of our work has been helping families find ways to see their loved ones without causing risk to those around them and in line with guidance. We've been pretty successful at that and helped maintain a lot of relationships.

"My team and I are essentially translators (and sometimes we prod a little too.) We're needed most when things go wrong or when there are disagreements. If a support team, for example, is focused on a person's right to make unwise decisions (smoking too much perhaps) whilst a family is thinking about what's in their best interests (cutting down.)

"Family consultants make the greatest impact when we begin supporting someone for the first time, and when called upon early if there are any concerns; following a change in our processes, family consultants are now always involved whenever Dimensions has identified someone's support as being at risk of breakdown.

"Too often in the past, we were called upon when things were almost irretrievable. In these delicate and rare situations, mediation via a family consultant may prevent service breakdown, keep the wellbeing of the person we support at the centre of everyone's thinking and set the scene for a fresh start. I'm very proud of each individual success story. Our contribution may also help the family and the next provider start on the right foot.
If you're a family member reading this, your first ports of call should be the Dimensions Family Pledge, which sets out our commitment to working with families, our factsheets for families on many important topics and the Family helpline, launched last year, which provides a real person to sense check any concerns with between 9.30 – 1.30 Monday to Friday on 0300 303 9161.

"Over the next year, we will also be rolling out a new 'Family Portal.' This will allow many family members to see photos of their relative's day, check out their diary, read the daily notes and get in touch easily. There is a real opportunity going forward to bring families even closer into the daily life of their loved one. Bringing those planets closer together."

Resources

Find out how Dimensions works with families

Dimensions Family Pledge

Browse our library of plain English factsheets.

Liz joined the team as a Family Consultant in 2012. Mother, sister, cousin and aunt to seven relatives with learning disability and autism her 40 year career has been about creating a welcoming and inclusive world where people with learning disability and autism and their families are respected, know (and get) their rights and are valued citizens. She has worked in advocacy, mediation, family led organisations and as a person centred planner.

Colleagues

Championing diversity in all its forms

Over 90% of colleagues agree they are treated fairly regardless of age, ethnic origin or sexuality

"If 2020 will be remembered for anything other than Covid-19, it will surely be for Black Lives Matter.

"Globally, nationally and within Dimensions it is clear that there is a long way to go before someone's diverse characteristics cease to affect their life chances and experience.

"As a black Gambian manager at Dimensions, and member of the Diversity Matters group, I'm pleased that such a high majority of my colleagues do not feel impeded by their diverse characteristics. I'm proud, particularly, of our 0% gender pay gap.

"And as a father of a child who may one day come to be supported by Dimensions, I often ask myself– could my child fit here? Do we do what we say on the tin? The answer, in my experience to date, is yes.

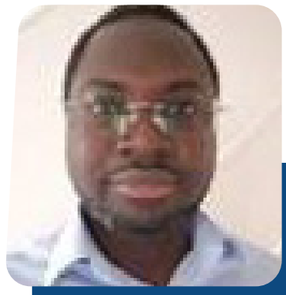
"In saying all that, there is a long way to go. I was thrilled that the Board recently appointed its first non-white member, but there is not yet enough diversity across the rest of our senior leadership.

"One of the many ways we aim to accelerate this change is a 'reverse mentoring programme' (I'm one of the mentors) that aims to accelerate change by influencing approaches and priorities amongst senior managers."

Resources

'Dimensions values me as me'

Black Lives Matter - one year on at Dimensions



Mbye was born in Gambia and brought up in Sweden. He now proudly supports people who have a learning disability and a forensic history, to develop social skills and live independently in the community.

Helping colleagues build a career in care

48 of Dimensions' registered managers - and 2 of our 4 Regional Managing Directors - started their own careers as support workers at Dimensions.

"And here's another statistic. 13 % of our workforce chose to leave last year. That number is too high but is much better than the sector average which stands around 30 % .

"I'm incredibly proud that five of my eight managers are staff that have come through from teams I have managed.

"I love to nurture talent, to identify colleagues' skills and interests, then to give them responsibilities. It gives them a chance to shine and develop within their roles.

"Dimensions invests heavily in career development through award-winning programmes like Aspire; our retention (for the 3rd straight year) of our 'Great Places to Work' accreditation tells me that we're doing a lot of things right when it comes to creating environments where colleagues want to come to work.

"Nationally, the care sector needs more great managers and leaders. The professionalisation of the care workforce is one of the sector's most pressing issues and we are working closely with government both directly and via the APPG, partners such as SkillsforCare and groups such as the Future Social Care Coalition and #BetterPay4SocialCare to influence exactly that."

Resources

8 reasons to consider a career in care

Great Places to Work

Best Workplaces™ Super Large Organisations Great Place To Work. UK 2021

Jane Colenso, Operations Director.

Jane joined Dimensions as a relief worker 19 years ago and was steadily promoted to Assistant Locality Manager, Locality Manager, Super Locality Manager and now Operations Director. She adds, "Over 19 years I have been listened to, supported and nurtured by Dimensions. I have gained qualifications and skills that I could never have imagined. This job isn't about the money, but if you want to feel good about what you do every day then give us a go. If you commit you will be rewarded."

Creating new opportunities for employment

187 people volunteered their time last year

"Both across our paid workforce and our volunteers, we put the individuals we support at the centre of all recruitment.

"What that means in practice is that our priorities are that new colleagues share our values and are well matched to the person he or she will be supporting.

"Drivers, nutritionists, gardeners and even Christmas elves… we're supremely grateful to the many volunteers who offered their time to help the people we support to get more from life.

"Though, inevitably, overall numbers were down due to Covid-19, we hope that their voluntary work with us has also put people in prime position for future career success. And a new partnership with Chichester University will see us soon supporting nursing student placements.

"Looking more broadly, last year 112 new members of our paid workforce declared a disability. We also recruited 49 people through Job Centre Plus and in future years we hope to be able to report more accurately on the number who were unemployed or Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET.)"

Resources

Our volunteering pages

Careers at Dimensions

Sarah Callaghan, a girlguiding volunteer herself, has worked for Dimensions for 3 years and now manages our volunteering team. She believes strongly that a healthy network of volunteers not only gives something to the people we support but also impacts our organisational values and strategies more widely.

Beyond Dimensions

Accelerating social change

Partnering with LDE and VODG, The Learning Disability and Autism Leaders' List has helped over 120 learning disabled and autistic influencers accelerate social change

"At last people respected me for who I am.

"The Leaders' List is so important. It gives a voice and an importance to people like me who society chooses to not hear or notice. We just need patience and understanding and time. We are as important as everyone else - we just have a diagnosis. Do not get frustrated or annoyed that sometimes we are not as fast at speaking as other people. Let your brain adapt and relax and understand that we have things to say that are just as valid and take your time to listen to us and have empathy.

"120 winners can become a million. Please let the Awards go from strength to strength. We need to make a far bigger difference, we are as important as everyone else in this world. Dimensions is making a difference. It is giving us a platform. People please listen to us."

Murray Bruce

Through raising the profile of leaders in politics, community engagement, sport, art, entertainment, education and work, Dimensions is helping accelerate social change. Our Leaders have been featured across the broadcast and print media and by brokering great relationships with journalists, these inspiring people will be empowered to advocate for better over time.

Resources

New Leaders recognised in 2020 included those who had used Covid-19 to make things better, for themselves and others.

View our 2020 winners.
2019 winners
2018 winners

Murray Bruce does not use speech to communicate. He is a vehement campaigner for, as he puts it, 'changing the minds of those who associate non verbal with non intelligent.' A winner in 2019, Murray became one of our many learning disabled Leaders List judges in 2020.

Protecting people from Covid-19

95% of our frontline colleagues completed new isolation training by the end of April 2020, training we also made freely available across the sector.

“Nationally, people with learning disabilities are 5x more likely to contract Covid-19 and then 8x more likely to die of it than other people – appalling statistics that should shame our national public health and healthcare system.

“All told, Dimensions supports and employs nearly 10,000 people. The overwhelming majority have not tested positive for Covid-19. Of those few that have, again the overwhelming majority have pulled through.

“Every single death is a tragedy, and we grieve for each individual and their family.

“At the same time, we must take this opportunity to recognise the sheer hard work and unwavering dedication of our colleagues. Extraordinarily, at one point, sickness levels amongst our colleagues reached an all-time low.

“Throughout this tumultuous year our frontline colleagues have been doing an extraordinary job of keeping themselves, and the people they support, safe through following an ever-changing array of Public Health England and Wales guidance documents.

“Having redeployed our Business Development team to become PPE procurers, I’m proud that even in the early days, not a single colleague ever had to do without the PPE they needed.

“And in the background we have been influencing wherever we possibly can to get the right government and public health policies in place.

“We’ve raised our voice around PPE, vaccination priorities, visiting rights, Do Not Resuscitate orders and the policy blind spot that is Supported Living, working across the media and in parliament, including providing evidence to the UK Parliament Health and Social Care Select Committee.

“We’re advised the DHSC Test and Trace unit on how they can make their testing processes more accessible and we also wrote our own Isolation training and shared it widely across the sector as soon as the severity of covid-19 started to become apparent.

“None of this is going away any time soon. To continue protecting the people we support, we took an early decision no longer to recruit unvaccinated colleagues (unless this would breach their rights) and at time of writing in July 2021 we are doing everything we can to encourage the 8% of colleagues who have told us they do not intend to get vaccinated, to change their minds.”

Resources

Our Covid pages

Dimensions’ Chief Executive, Steve Scown has over 30 years’ experience working with people with learning disabilities and autism. He has been a Trustee of Skills For Care and Chair of VODG.

A brighter future for social care

8 consultation responses in 2020 – 21

“I like mixing with other people in the Louder Voice Group and hearing other people’s views. People in the group have a lot to say and I learn from other people when I hear their views.

“I like talking about what the government’s doing and what’s in the news. I think it’s important that people have the chance to have their say.

“I care a lot about the support and social care people get. We talked about this in the Louder Voice Group. It’s very important getting the right support workers, not the wrong ones or people who don’t know you well.

“It’s really good to be in the group and make new friends. I’ve known some of the people in the group for a long time through things like Speak Up and Make a Difference.” Stephen.

We all want to live in the place we call home with the people and things that we love, in communities where we look out for one another, doing the things that matter to us.

That’s the social care future we seek. But for far too many people, this vision is no more than a pipe dream.

Even as we continue to press for a new national blueprint for social care, we must also make the best of the one we have. That’s why, in the past 12 months we have raised our voice on issues including Liberty Protection Safeguards, reform of the Mental Health Act, the CQC’s new strategy, human rights legislation and much more besides.

Recognising that the sector does not benefit from a cacophony of individual voices, we seek to channel our views through key groups such as the APPG on Adult Social Care, VODG and Learning Disability England, Social Care Future and the Future Social Care Coalition.

We have also responded to a number of public and parliamentary inquiries to share our thinking on reform of social care. These responses are informed by the people we support and their loved ones, through the Dimensions’ Louder Voice Group and Associate Family Consultants.

And whenever government decides the time is right to consult on a new blueprint for social care, we’ll be ready to contribute.

Stephen, a man we support, has been part of the Louder Voice Group since it started and has been involved in responses to the CQC strategy, the Social Care Future inquiry and the Human Rights Act review.

Health and Wellbeing

83% of people we support have had an annual health check

"It is hard to imagine a good life without good health.

"And yet health inequalities for people with learning disabilities are profound and enduring.

"We are proud that following considerable lobbying by Dimensions, a number of other organisations and, crucially, by bereaved parents such as Paula McGowan, the Government has announced an intent to make face-to-face learning disability training mandatory for all primary healthcare professionals. That's a start.

"Covid derailed our own face-to-face training for GPs around reasonable adjustments but in 2021 (in fact by the time this report is released) we will have launched free, certificated, digital training for all healthcare workers informed and led by people with learning disabilities.

"In this, as in all our campaigning work, we strive to add value and provide solutions.

"Recognising that a good primary care experience depends not only on the people but also the environment, in 2020 we also worked with Assura to produce 'Building Better Together,' a research report examining how to create great healthcare buildings.

"For me, one key measure of success is the number of people with a learning disability receiving a good – and that means face-to-face – annual health check. Even amongst the people we support, this number has dipped during Covid. Across the wider learning disabled population, it may well have tumbled. That might be understandable – but nationally, it must now become a priority to get these health checks done – and face to face by default.

"I also ask everyone reading this to share our free #MyGPandMe training as widely as you can."

Resources

MyGPandMe training

Building Better Together

Jordan Smith is supported by Dimensions and also works for Dimensions as an Advocacy Lead, supporting our campaigns.

He is chair of the Dimensions Council and also chair of Learning Disability England's representative body.

Tackling hate crime

Over 3000 KS3 disability hate crime lesson plans downloaded in the past year

"Disability hate crimes recorded by the police rose 8 % in the most recent data and we know from our own research that most of these crimes target people with a learning disability and autistic people.

"This is a growing problem.

"In 2020 we partnered with True Vision, the National Police Chief's Council project that aims to tackle all forms of hate crime. We provided True Vision with our insight and resources drawn from years of campaigning on this topic.

"People can use True Vision to report hate crime; they don't need to go to a police station. I hope that this helps more people to report their experiences.

"I'm also pleased that more and more schools are recognising the problem of hate crime and using our free PSHE resources at Key Stage 3 including a variety of lesson plans and teacher guidance.

"COVID-19 put an end to our face-to-face training of police forces around the country, but I hope to restart this in 2021. I was especially pleased at the high number of Police and Crime Commissioner candidates who responded to our open letter ahead of May's elections. Hate crime is on their agenda.

"Raising awareness is vital. I've just finished a 5-week course teaching members of Dimensions' 'Staying in Touch clubs' (see page 14) about how to recognise and report hate crime.

"And last but not least, it was good to respond strongly to the abuse received by people Dimensions supports and some autistic colleagues who are unable to wear masks. We raised this issue prominently across the media, working with DHSC to ask people to 'Think Twice and be Kind' through our #ICantWearAMask campaign.

"In this, as in all our campaigning work, both I and Dimensions strive to add value and provide solutions."

Resources

Download our free KS3 teaching resources

Visit the True Vision website

Visit #ICan'tWearAMask

Dr Mark Brookes MBE is an advocacy lead for Dimensions. Mark has a learning disability and a keen interest in ensuring people with learning disabilities are safe, while remaining independent.

Mark was awarded an honorary doctorate from the University of Kent for his work on Hate Crime, a huge accolade that has since been followed by an MBE, a place of the Shaw Trust Disability Power 100 list and membership of the Learning Disability Leaders' List run by Dimensions in association with VODG and Learning Disability England.

Enabling accessible communities

Over £340,000 distributed through the Somerset Community Foundation to improve accessibility across Somerset.

Social value: £340k*

"Funding from Discovery's Community Fund will help us make our mental health self-care courses run in AONBs across Somerset more inclusive.

"We're delivering nature-based wellbeing interventions in the Quantocks, Blackdowns and Mendips. Over 6-18 weeks, attendees learn strategies to regulate their mental health whilst participating in conservation, outdoor cooking, or other activities that increase their connection to nature and develop pro-conservation behaviours.

"But we know the courses aren't yet accessible for everyone. The funding from Discovery will help us to increase the number of people with learning disabilities who can access our open courses, and to run bespoke prevention-focused courses too. We aim to train local leaders so that, in time, many more people working in social care have the skills to support people across Somerset to connect with nature in a mindful way.

"People with learning disabilities face barriers to inclusion across many aspects of life. I'm delighted that Discovery's funding will help reduce barriers to accessing our mental health support, and I encourage other charities and businesses across Somerset to consider how similar funding could help them." Kelly.

"The Discovery Community Fund supports improvements to the health and independence of people with learning disabilities and/or autism across Somerset.

"As a social enterprise, Discovery reinvests 50 % of any surplus income we make into community initiatives across Somerset. Our Community Fund awards grants of between £500-£50,000 to projects that support the health and independence of people with learning disabilities in Somerset.

"At time of writing we are in the middle of a public consultation to make sure the money is targeted to where it will make the greatest impact."

Resources

Somerset Community Foundation

Somerset Nature Connections

Kelly Bray co-ordinates the "Somerset Nature Connections" a partnership project with Somerset Wildlife Trust, Quantock Hills, Blackdown Hills and Mendips Hills AONB's.

Kelly chooses not to share her picture.

Helping more venues become autism-friendly

Over 9 in 10 of all UK cinemas have access to our autism friendly training

“In 2021 I really hope that venues restart their autism friendly work. It means everything to me. Put simply, I can’t go out unless I know the venue is autism-friendly. I use the social stories to help me know more about the place I’ll be visiting, and I prepare by finding out about things like sensory adjustments and staff training.” Logan

ODEON, Vue, Cineworld, Picturehouse, Light, Everyman… just some of the cinema chains that have used our autism friendly training and put on regular screenings for autistic guests.

Altogether, Dimensions’ Autism Friendly Screenings have been viewed well over 500,000 times.

Not for most of 2020-21, of course. And Covid closures also affected the libraries and other venues that have used our training to adapt their environments to become more autism friendly.

In 2021 it is critical that we recover the ground lost to Covid, and – to coin a phrase – that we ‘build back better.’ That’s why we’ll be turning our existing autism friendly training into e-learning led by autistic people and made freely accessible to all organisations via our website.

In this, as in all our campaigning work, we strive to add value and provide solutions.

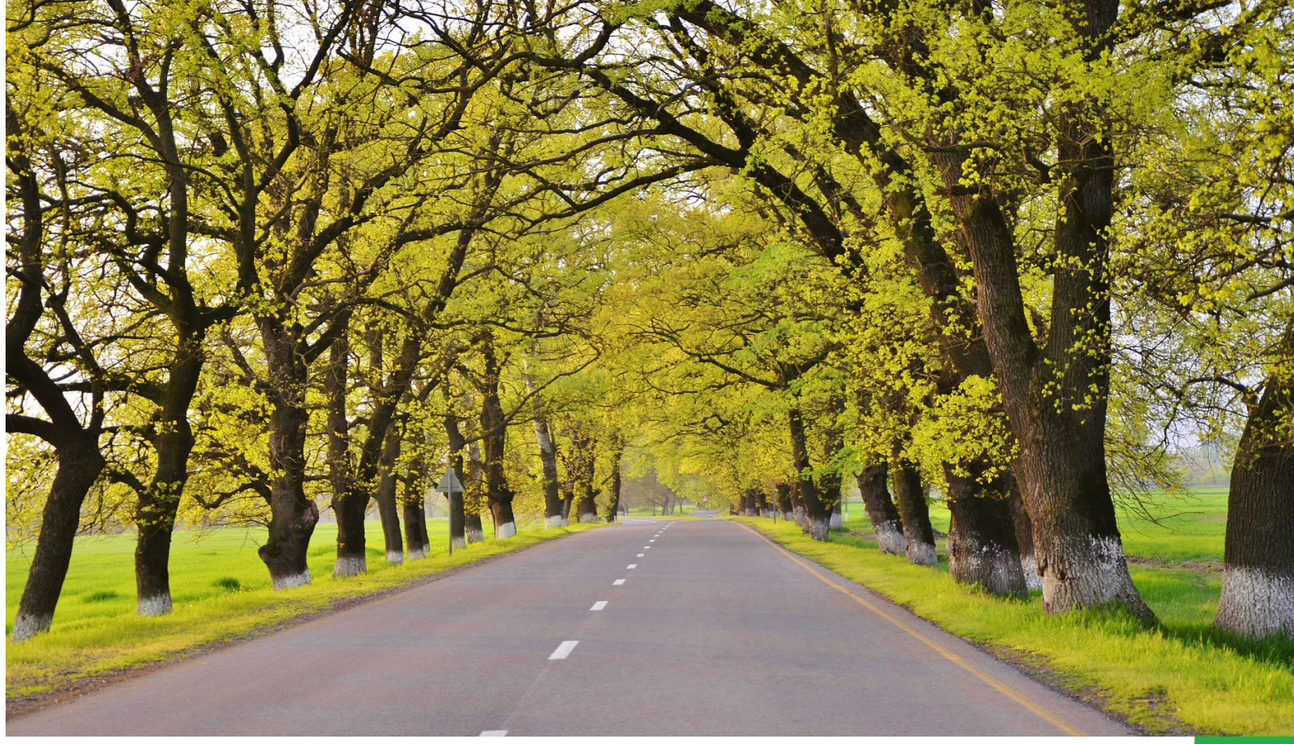
Resources

Navigate from this page for all our autism friendly resources

Logan Rebello is an autistic video producer and editor who works with Dimensions to support the content and design of many of our training and other resources.

The environment

Two million fewer miles driven



"Like every other part of society, we dread to think of the amount of resources used and thrown away in PPE, and we look forward to a time when we can reduce this waste without putting lives at risk.

"But in other ways, Covid has had a positive impact on our environment.

"Take mileage, for example. Dimensions colleagues drove 2 million fewer miles last year than the year before – and that is without considering commutes and other travel types (which we can't calculate.)

"Much of the mileage reduction will be sustained. Dimensions has gone a long way to becoming a home working organisation for our business support colleagues, putting a permanent end to the rush hour pollute (which does not change our ongoing commitment to crossing the threshold of the people we support on a very frequent basis.)

"Working from home has other, less quantifiable environmental benefits. For example colleagues tell us they print a lot less now, and there's less paper waste from water and coffee cups.

"So many more people are now online that we've also decided to discontinue the Group's biannual printed newsletter; we now communicate more often by email (with letters for families that remain offline) – improving the quality and frequency of our communication whilst saving natural resources at the same time.

"Finally, we are working with Somerset Waste Partnership to ensure learning disabled residents of Somerset are familiar with and able to engage with changing recycling arrangements across the county."

Stella Cheetham brings extensive HR experience from the private, public and voluntary sectors to her role of Group Director of People and Organisational Development at Dimensions.

Stella recognises that recruiting, training and engaging people with the right skills and values is essential to ensure that the people we support and their families receive the best possible support and service.

Stella and her team are committed to achieving Dimensions 2020 vision of becoming the exemplar organisation delivering outcomes-focussed care and support.

Appendix: Calculating Social Value					
Applying considerable caution, we have used the TOMS model to estimate the social value added by a few of the topics in this report. See the introduction for further commentary. Further details of the calculations are available on request.					
Topic	**Value attribution possible?**	**TOMS reference**	**Unit value**	**Units**	**Total**
Changing Lives	N				
Supporting people out of crisis	N				
Achieving high quality, compliant support	N				
Employment: a cornerstone of life	N				
Driving up digital inclusion	Y	NT28: Donations or in-kind contributions to local community projects (£ & materials)			£70k
Focusing on families	N				
A louder voice for the people we support	N				
Listening to Experts by Experience	N				
Championing diversity in all its forms	Y	Equality, diversity and inclusion training provided both for staff and supply chain staff	101.86	1223	£124,575
Helping colleagues build a career in care	Y	No. of weeks of training opportunities on the contract (BTEC, City & Guilds, NVQ, HNC) that have either been completed during the year, or that will be supported by the organisation until completion in the following years - Level 2,3, or 4+	286.47	1778	£509,344
Creating new opportunities for employment (1)	Y	NT29: No. of hours volunteering time provided to support local community projects	£16	905	£14,561
Creating new opportunities for employment (2)	Y	NT3: No. of employees (FTE) hired on the contract who are long term unemployed (unemployed for a year or longer) as a result of a recruitment programme	£20,481	49	£1,003,569
Creating new opportunities for employment (3)	Y	NT6: No. of disabled employees (FTE) hired on the contract as a result of a recruitment programme	£16,420	112	£1,839,040
Accelerating social change	N				
Protecting people from Covid-19	N				
Social Care future	N				
Health and Wellbeing	N				
Enabling accessible communities	Y	NT16: Equipment or resources donated to VCSEs (£ equivalent value)			£340,000
Tackling hate crime	N				
Autism Friendly	N				
The environment	N				
Total					**£3,831,089**

Proving life can get better

Dimensions provides evidence-based outcomes-focused support for people with learning disabilities, autism and complex needs. We help people to be actively engaged in their communities.

Find out more about Dimensions

Email: enquiries@dimensions-uk.org

Twitter: @DimensionsUK
Facebook: DimensionsUK

Dimensions
Building 1430, Arlington Business Park, Theale, Reading RG7 4SA

Dimensions (UK) Ltd is a charitable registered society number 31192R
Building 1430, Arlington Business Park, Theale, Reading RG7 4SA.
October 2021