








Better Lives for More People

Our Group Strategy for 2020-2025

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“Quite simply, we envisage ‘Better Lives for More People’ – the people we do and will support, their families and other significant relationships, the wider sector through our sharing of our learning and, critically, our dedicated colleagues who are so committed to proving that life can get better. ”

Strategy, page 4

Introduction from our Chair



Welcome to *Better Lives for More People*, our Group strategy for 2025, created to deliver better lives for people we support, their families and our colleagues across Dimensions in all its forms, including Discovery, Waymarks and O3W. Where you read ‘Dimensions’, we mean everyone.

Our outgoing strategy, *Dimensions 2020*, was a landmark for our organisation. It announced our intent to become a research-based, exemplar provider; to continue Dimensions’ forty-year legacy of supporting people to leave hospital and lead great lives in their local communities. It led to Activate, our unique support model, and prompted our investment in ensuring that we can make independent living outside of institutions a reality for people with even the most complex needs. *Dimensions 2020* was the framework upon which we built the organisation I see today - a values- driven employer, structured to deliver in a devolved, localised way that brings important decisions close to the people that they affect. In fact, one of the largest not-for-profit providers of support for people with learning disabilities in the country - scale which is not important for what it is but for what it enables us to do: to invest in learning and development; to draw on the expertise of people we support and their families so their influence permeates throughout Dimensions; to amplify their voices as we expand our contribution beyond our boundaries.

Five years on and, whilst Dimensions has changed significantly, sadly many sector issues endure. People with a learning disability still die too young. There are still two and a half thousand people living in hospital and too many that leave will find themselves in locked facilities. The age of those being admitted is getting younger, with increasing prevalence of autism. Unsurprisingly most now also experience mental ill-health that increases the support that they need and decreases their chance of moving on. The television is still showing me people being abused in publicly-funded care homes and hospitals. Thirteen hundred young people leave residential schools and colleges each year to live in ‘out-of-area’ placements, away from their families and significant relationships. Commissioners are still seeking more with less. The lack of investment in the sector means that salaries are still too low and so attracting people to come to work in our sector – and stay - remains hard, even though I know there are people out there with the right values. I could go on...

But I also see things that inspire me, every single day. I look at our organisation and I see all the passion, engagement and values that we need to give people great lives. I see people we support voting, getting jobs, learning new skills, finding new friends and being heard. People with a learning disability and/or autism achieving what, for most of us, are the critical cornerstones of life. Just as satisfying are the everyday things: seeing people make their own dinner, contribute to making a cup of tea, shop online, go to the doctor. Seeing the people we support need us less! And it makes me proud. Proud of them and proud of my colleagues who help to make it happen.

Where I perceive a gap is between our ambition – a core value - and our capacity. I know that we can – and do - get it right for people; that we have acquired the knowledge and the experience to deliver better lives. However we need more good people in support roles, more good leaders, leaner processes, stronger systems and some new skills to do more. More Dimensions people delivering more Dimensions support to help more people need us less.

So the document you are about to read tells you what we are going to do about it. Our strategy for 2025 describes a series of high-level aims that we will apply to five strategic pillars. It tells you how we will build upon *Dimensions 2020* to make our evidence-based support available to people when they need it most. In short, it tells you how we will make real our vision of *Better Lives for More People*.

Nick Baldwin, Chair

Our purpose

Affirmation of our Core Mission... but a new Vision

This strategic review has reaffirmed the importance of Dimensions to the people we support, their families and significant relationships, as well as to the sector and the wider community. In a harsh environment, our value is more pronounced than at any time in our history.

Our Mission – unquestionably – endures. We cannot yet conceive of a time when we will not be needed *‘to provide high quality personalised support for people with learning disabilities and autism, helping them to be actively engaged with, and contribute to, their communities’*. This Mission is tangible and meaningful to our workforce: it describes what the majority of our colleagues strive to do every day.

Further our Values are embedded. Wide consultation has shown deep pride in our Values and a real commitment to making them the hallmark of everything we do and every decision we take.

However our Vision, whilst inarguable in its merit, has been less easy for colleagues to see and, if we are realistic, is not a state that we can ever bring about. Through consultation we have reaffirmed that we would like to see *‘an inclusive society where people have equal chances to live the life they choose’* but, however laudable that vision is, we can do no more than offer a small contribution to making it real.

What we *can* see, clearly, because of our Values, Mission and increasing expertise, is continuous improvement in the support we provide and a future where more people benefit from what we know and can achieve. We can see this and make it *happen*.

So our Vision has changed. Quite simply, we envisage *‘Better Lives for More People’* – the people we do and will support, their families and other significant relationships, the wider sector through the sharing of our learning and, critically, our dedicated colleagues who are so committed to *proving that life can get better*.

Vision

Better Lives for More People.

Mission

To provide high quality personalised support for people with learning disabilities and autism, helping them to be actively engaged with, and contribute to, their communities.

Values

Ambition: We seek to help people reach their potential.

Respect: We show people respect and recognise that their unique contribution adds value to all.

Courage: We are guided by the courage of our convictions to make a difference.

Integrity: We ensure that what we do is grounded in what we believe.

Partnership: We work with others to achieve more for people.

2025 Strategic Pillars

Our Pillars are the framework that supports our Vision. All must be strong if our Vision is to be achieved. Our Pillars are *facets* of our organisation, not activities, and are interdependent – they cannot be isolated and be effective. In the life of this document, business strategies will protect or improve each Pillar. They are themes by which success will be measured. The aims listed beneath each one are not exhaustive – they are points of focus for this strategy.

Quality: Better lives; impact for our sector.

- Supporting more people to enjoy cornerstones of life: homes they choose, employment, relationships and active contribution to their communities.
- Creating clearer, stronger pathways for people that support their life choices.
- Improving the health and wellbeing of people we support and colleagues.
- Improving support for people with complex needs, using and sharing organisational learning.
- Keeping people we support safe while enabling choice and control.

Reputation: Valued by stakeholders; a Group people want to work for and with.

- Being recognised as a great place to work inside and outside our organisation.
- Being recognised by people we support, commissioners, families and significant others as an organisation that they would recommend.
- Building our reputation for supporting people with autism.
- Measuring and evidencing our social impact for people, communities and society.

Scale: Supporting more people; ability to invest and deliver economies.

- Developing new offers to reduce sector reliance upon institutional services.
- Developing and investing in our housing offer, helping more people access high quality, affordable homes that meet their needs.
- Building effective partnerships.

Capacity: Capacity and capability to deliver where and when it matters.

- Developing and broadening the skills of our workforce.
- Building our capacity to grow in leadership, management and delivery.
- Exploiting technology to improve quality and capacity.

Sustainability: Sustainable for stakeholders; resilient in our environment.

- Improving productivity.
- Diversifying and strengthening income streams to reduce risk.
- Making systems and processes more efficient.

Quality

✓Creating 'Better Lives for More People' by...

Supporting more people to enjoy the cornerstones of life: homes they choose, employment, relationships and active contribution to their communities.

A focus of our work in the last five years has been consistent delivery for people we support, founded upon a strong organisational approach to risk and compliance. Safety and consistency, allied to improved quality, have led to strong ratings from our regulator, the CQC.

However, through our conversation, colleagues, families and people we support gave a very loud message: there is more to do to ensure that people can lead a full life. The things that matter to them are clear: jobs, a home of their choice, holidays and significant relationships.

In 2025, Dimensions will be:

- Supporting more people to find jobs, holidays to enjoy, passions to pursue, a home they choose and significant relationships outside of their support.
- Supporting more people to be active, seen in and contributing to their communities.

✓Creating 'Better Lives for More People' by...

Creating clearer, stronger pathways for people that support their life choices – with particular emphasis upon young people making the transition to adulthood.

Through *Dimensions 2020* we have improved living environments and better used our assets, aiming to make them suitable for the changing needs of people we support throughout life.

Despite our efforts, we have more to do. Some people still reside with others that they would not choose to live alongside. Externally, too many people are forced to live in 'out-of-area' placements, miles from their significant relationships and communities and we know that 1,300 young people each year are leaving residential schools and colleges to live out-of-area.

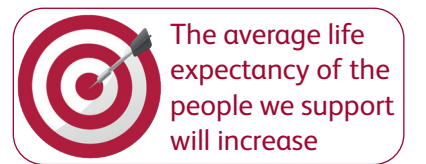
In 2025, Dimensions will be:

- Helping more people – especially young people with autism - to see and move beyond their current support and living situation where they can and want to.
- Supporting more adults and young people making the transition to adulthood to move back to their community from out-of-area.

✓Creating 'Better Lives for More People' by...

Improving the health and wellbeing of the people we support and our colleagues.

In *Dimensions 2020* we worked to improve the health and wellbeing of people we support and beyond where appropriate. *MyGPandMe* trained GPs to enable people with a learning disability or autism to better access health services. *STOMP* (Stopping the Over-Medication of People) sought to reduce the administration of un-necessary medication. *I'mWithSam* was aimed at raising awareness of – and



determination to tackle – hate crime against people with a disability.

In 2020, we know that the benefits of this work will be longer-term. There is more that we must do to tackle health inequality for people that we support and, where we can, more widely.

In 2025, Dimensions will be:

- Developing and using new practices to improve the physical and mental health and wellbeing of colleagues and people that we support.
- Campaigning to promote access to essential health services for all and reduce physical and mental health inequality for people with a learning disability or autism.
- Using innovation to support compatibility and wellbeing in places where more than one person lives; creating pathways for those who want to live alone or with someone else.

✓Creating 'Better Lives for More People' by...

Improving support for people with complex needs, using and sharing our organisational learning.

Our work through *Dimensions 2020* has given us the expertise to make independent living the destiny for many people with behaviours that challenge. We know that the majority of those people have experienced instability, insecurity and disruption throughout their lives and our determination is to ensure that our support creates a new platform upon which they can thrive.

In 2020 we perceive a need to make our application of what we have learned more consistent so that we can deliver quality support when it is needed most.

In 2025, Dimensions will be:

- Using learning to ensure consistency in support for people with behaviours that challenge, so that failure of support is never a reason for service failure.
- Recognised for research and best practice in supporting people with behaviours that challenge.

✓Creating 'Better Lives for More People' by...

Keeping people we support safe while enabling choice and control.

Dimensions has a long history of supporting people to live safely in their community.

The Group is focusing on ensuring that the balance between 'hygiene' (the things it has to do) and 'impact' (the things that make a difference to peoples' lives) is right: that people are supported to lead great lives whilst safe from harm. Activate, our model of support, gives Dimensions the facility to measure safety and the extent to which people feel in control.

In 2025, Dimensions will be:

- Evidencing that people with complex needs can exercise choice in how they lead their lives, learn new skills and try new things safely.
- Evidencing that people with a learning disability or autism can feel in control of their lives.

Reputation

✓ *Creating 'Better Lives for More People' by...*

Being recognised as a great place to work inside and outside our organisation.

Dimensions' growth has enabled investment in attracting people with our values to join and stay with us. We are especially proud of Aspire, our award-winning management training programme, which has helped people develop a career in social care as part of our workforce.

Our recognition as a Great Place to Work in the Super Large category in 2019 is a validation of our ability to engage people and equip them with skills they need. However, recruitment and retention of the people needed to meet demand is the greatest problem the sector faces. We want to enhance our reputation as a great employer and for valuing and promoting diversity.

In 2025, Dimensions will be:

- Leading the sector in colleague engagement.
- Seen externally and internally as a great place to work, committed to professionalising our workforce and offering opportunities to commence and progress a career.
- Perceived as an organisation that values and promotes diversity at all levels in the organisation, reflecting communities with which we work.

✓ *Creating 'Better Lives for More People' by...*

Being recognised by people we support, commissioners, families and significant others as an organisation that they would recommend.

In *Dimensions 2020*, we worked to give families and people we support more say in how we work and amplify their voices in the sector.

In 2020 we are proud of the influence that people and their significant relationships have upon our organisation. From representation on our Board and Council, through a body of Family and Quality Consultants working in Dimensions, to consultative mechanisms in delivery of support, there is a wide range of ways in which people who have lived experience shape the way we work. Having established this level of involvement, we want more stakeholders, from people we support to commissioners, to feel able to recommend Dimensions to others.

In 2025, Dimensions will be:

- Promoted by people we support, families and significant others as an organisation that they trust and recommend.
- Promoted by partners and commissioners as a provider that delivers value for money.
- Recognised by our regulators and our commissioners as a well governed, high quality provider of housing, care and support.



✓ *Creating 'Better Lives for More People' by...*

Building our reputation for supporting people with autism.

Dimensions has supported people with autism throughout its history and has developed a strong skill set. The number of people that we support with autism has increased steadily over time and we have delivered some great initiatives – Autism Friendly cinema screenings and our partnership with GAME stores being two examples – but it is not what we are best known for.

However there is a growing need: the people entering hospitals and treatment units at this time are most likely to be young and have autism. To ensure that more of those people have a great life in their community, we need to build our reputation for supporting people with autism so that people and their families know that they can come to us for great support.

In 2025, Dimensions will be:

- A go-to source for information and guidance on supporting people with autism.
- More widely recognised by commissioners and partners for our work in supporting people with autism.

✓ *Creating 'Better Lives for More People' by...*

Measuring and evidencing our social impact for people, communities and society.

In *Dimensions 2020* we implemented Activate, our support methodology, and iPlanit, the system that supports it. Supporting people to achieve and capturing the resultant data has been a focus.

At present we can demonstrate *momentum* – an increasing number of outcomes being achieved and recorded – but the data, whilst positive, does not yet offer the articulate evidence of impact that we want. Meanwhile the sector interest in – and emphasis upon – social value increases, with commissioners increasingly evaluating providers' success as part of creating new support.

In 2025, Dimensions will be:

- Using data to prove that life can get better for people with a range of needs across a wide demographic, with strong emphasis upon young people with autism.
- Using data to calculate and demonstrate the social value that we give to communities, the sector and society.
- A leader in measuring and evidencing social impact in our sector, selected by commissioners because of a track record in delivering social value.



Scale

✓ *Creating ‘Better Lives for More People’ by...*

Developing new offers to reduce sector reliance upon institutional services.

Dimensions 2020 enabled a solid track record in delivering personalised homes and services for people who would otherwise live in institutional settings – our definition of ‘complex needs’.

However, we continue to be approached local authorities and health partners to support people who, for often avoidable reasons, need urgent help. Many are in crisis, face imminent discharge or are making the transition to adulthood. The biggest increase in admissions to assessment and treatment units has been young people with autism.

In 2025, Dimensions will be:

- Preventing placement breakdown where people are in crisis or in transition.
- Providing alternatives to the use of locked facilities and institutional services.
- Supporting people to leave institutional environments where mental or physical ill-health is a factor, as well as disability or autism.

✓ *Creating ‘Better Lives for More People’ by...*

Investing in our housing offer, helping more people access high quality, affordable homes that meet their needs.

Our Housing Strategy has seen us manage our assets more proactively, bringing stock back into management, disposing of outmoded homes and commencing our journey to developing new homes in core, cluster and practice-led hub models with Homes England partner status.

As we launch this strategy, these techniques, plus the work of our Housing Brokerage Team, are helping people access the homes they need to lead better lives. But we need to do more: people we support, families and colleagues have told us that quality of homes is a priority for them.

In 2025, Dimensions will be:

- Partnering with other housing providers to help people access affordable housing that meets their needs.
- Creating and identifying homes that are right for people at different stages of their lives, especially when they are younger.
- A housing provider that invests more new money in building and acquiring homes.



✓ *Creating ‘Better Lives for More People’ by...*

Building effective partnerships.

Dimensions has rapidly increased in scale through *Dimensions 2020* and this has enabled it to do a variety of things to add value to our sector – such as giving a louder voice to people we support and their significant others. As we have grown, we have given more.

In 2020, ‘scale’ is a key facet of our organisation that we must continuously develop, protect and leverage to contribute more widely: so as to create *Better Lives for More People*. Delivering high quality support to more people enables our use of thought and systems leadership to add value beyond the work we are commissioned to do. We will continue to grow and enhance the investment we can make in new ways - for example: we recognise a growing concern for our environment amongst people we support and colleagues at all levels in the organisation. We want to use our scale to work in partnership to respond to this.

In 2025, Dimensions will be:

- Supporting more people and a go-to provider for consistent, high quality support.
- Using partnerships, campaigns and a louder voice for people and their families to promote the social care model for people with learning disabilities and/or autism.
- Working with people we support and colleagues to protect our environment: delivering sustainable housing and support, using green energy and a reducing use of plastics.



Capacity

✓ *Creating 'Better Lives for More People' by...*

Developing and broadening the skills of our workforce.

Our last strategy saw continuing development of our Positive Behaviour Support and Practice Development Teams, alongside the roll-out of Activate, to enhance our skillset.

Our ambition for people with very complex needs requires us to continuously develop and broaden the range of skills that we have available. Our experience through Transforming Care has taught us that, whilst the majority of people who remain in institutional environments are disabled, other conditions influence their support requirements, most commonly mental ill-health, physical ill-health or a personality disorder. We need broader skills to support more people to live their lives in the community.

In 2025, Dimensions will be:

- Professionalising our workforce, investing in qualifications, accredited programmes and training above the minimum in a way that's visible to health and other professionals.
- Supporting more young people, people with autism and people with a learning disability to recover from – or manage if recovery is not possible - mental and/or physical ill-health.
- Delivering Positive Behaviour Support and delegated healthcare tasks more widely.

✓ *Creating 'Better Lives for More People' by...*

Building our capacity to grow in leadership, management and delivery of support.

Dimensions 2020 has seen our organisation increase in scale and work hard to improve the quality of support – the two primary strands of our vision of Better Lives for More People.

We have learned much about delivering services for complex needs (for example people with profound and multiple learning disabilities or behaviour that challenges) in the last five years, critically the importance of ensuring that colleagues who will deliver the support are experienced, well-trained and immersed in our Values. We have also gained significant experience in taking on significant transfers of business. Both require Dimensions to constantly build its capacity in leadership, management and delivery: to be able to attract and develop people at all levels who subscribe to our commitment to ensuring that community living becomes the destiny of more people with a learning disability or autism.

In 2025, Dimensions will be:

- Delivering where and when it matters: capable, engaged colleagues and volunteers ready to deliver in locations where there is potential to give high quality, sustainable support.
- Actively managing talent and planning for operational, executive and non-executive succession to attract and retain the people we need.
- Equipped with the leadership capacity it needs to grow and give better lives to more people, including strategic partnerships and other organisations joining the Group.



✓ *Creating 'Better Lives for More People' by...*

Exploiting technology to improve quality and capacity.

Through *Dimensions 2020* we have expected technology to have a significant impact in three ways: an assistive sense, supporting people to have a great life; a capacitive sense, making operations more efficient to release capacity to deliver great support; and in enhancing capability, helping people perform well in their roles.

The strides sector-wide have not been as significant as we might have expected, although consultation with colleagues in the development of this strategy has highlighted some good examples of technology being used – especially to support communication with people who do not use spoken language – and our roll-out of iPlanit software to support Activate has progressed well.

In 2025, Dimensions will be:

- Working with people and their families to experiment with assistive technology and artificial intelligence to achieve outcomes, improve independence and tackle loneliness.
- Enabling colleagues to give more active support and practice leadership through investment in technology, systems and workflow to support leaner processes.
- Innovating and then aligning what works across the Group.



Sustainability

✓ *Creating 'Better Lives for More People' by...*

Improving productivity.

Dimensions 2020 encompassed a period of financial challenge where commissioners needed to seek more with less, placing pressure upon providers to deliver efficiencies that would make its funding go further without denigrating quality of support.

In 2020 we see no change: cost (most particularly the National Living Wage) is rising, need increasing and there is no immediate sign of significant sector investment to alleviate the situation. The productivity of social care providers continues to be under intense pressure.

In 2025, Dimensions will be:

- Aligned to efficient delivery models for different types and complexities of services.
- Using improved systems and processes to reduce the cost of management and overheads as a percentage of total spend.
- Reducing direct costs through improving use of Dimensions' staff, enhanced rota management and a reduction in agency usage.

✓ *Creating 'Better Lives for More People' by...*

Diversifying and strengthening income streams to reduce risk.

Local authority funding – Dimensions' principal source of income - has been under intense pressure since 2008. Whilst the learning disability sector has not seen some of the cuts that other supported groups have experienced, providers are, at least, doing more with the same.

We welcome the increases in the National Living Wage but we see local authority funding struggling to keep pace with these increases. Many local authorities are eating into their reserves and some have been pushed to the brink of insolvency and intervention. We need to diversify our income.

In 2025, Dimensions will be:

- A more meaningful partner for commissioners in locations where we can work together to deliver high quality, sustainable services.
- A valued partner for the NHS.
- Increasing housing revenue through partnership, proactive asset management and investment in development.



✓ *Creating 'Better Lives for More People' by...*

Making systems and processes more efficient.

Through *Dimensions 2020* we have grown in scale and one of the benefits is that it can release capacity to do more – but only if we are disciplined in our approach to things that we have to do.

At the time of creating this strategy, we are working to support efficiency: our IT strategy is re-platforming critical systems, iPlanit is embedding as the system that supports day to day delivery and our Leadership Group is focused upon removing non value-adding activity.

In 2025, Dimensions will be:

- Using leaner critical processes and systems that release capacity for impact.
- Basing business decisions upon increasingly accessible, controlled, consistent, accurate data.
- Delivering through a devolved, dispersed structure, with aligned systems and ways of working supporting a culture of accountability.
- Customer focused, with interfaces designed to make contact with our organisation easy, effective and consistent, feeding learning into service improvement.



We are committed to recruiting people who share our values and helping them become care and support professionals; giving them the skills, qualifications and tools to support people to a consistently high standard at a competitive cost.



Find out more

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