



Even Better Lives for Even More People

Our refreshed strategy for 2025 – 2027

Introduction from our Chair



Better Lives for More People

Welcome to our refreshed strategy of Better Lives for More People, the Group strategy that will take us from 2025 – 2027. A strategy that is intended to deliver better lives for the people we support, their families and our colleagues across Dimensions in all our forms, including Discovery, Dimensions Cymru and Outreach 3 Way. Where you read Dimensions, we mean everyone.

In 2020 we published our Group Strategy, “Better Lives for More People,” designed to steer Dimensions’ strategic direction and purpose from 2020 – 2025. We’ve delivered many of the ambitions we set out in that strategy, all within the context of a global pandemic, funding, recruitment and retention challenges and a cost-of-living crisis. All these events had an impact upon Dimensions, and in some areas on the delivery of our strategy.

We have reviewed our Better Lives for More People strategy and determined that our purpose, vision and mission remain relevant. Our values drive the way we work and are at the heart of our decision making. And our five strategic pillars of Quality, Reputation, Scale, Capacity and Sustainability continue to be the right ones. Based upon that review the Board agreed that we should refresh our existing strategy to take us through to 2027. This is our refreshed strategy.

“We must do some things differently if we are to return a surplus that allows us to invest in the many other areas that combine to deliver even better lives for even more people.”

We are one of the largest not-for-profit providers of support for people with learning disabilities and autistic people in the country – scale which is not important for what it is, but for what it enables us to do: to invest in colleague pay, learning and development; to draw upon the expertise of people we support and their families so their influence permeates throughout Dimensions and to amplify their voices as we seek to shape and contribute to a healthy and sustainable social care sector.

No successful strategy exists in a vacuum. Our ambition in the life of this strategy is framed against historically unseen funding challenges; we must do some things differently if we are to return a surplus that allows us to invest in the many other areas that combine to deliver even better lives for even more people.

The conditions we operate within continue to be challenging. This is a sector that is both undervalued and under invested in. Recruitment is tough. Too many people with learning disabilities and autistic people are living a life that they wouldn’t choose for themselves. There are not enough disabled people in paid employment. Numerous health inequalities impact the length of people’s lives.





But as I reflect on the last five years, I am inspired by many things we have achieved. Covid-19 was without a doubt one of the most significant and testing world events for every organisation. From isolating alongside the people we support to protecting rights by challenging Do Not Resuscitate (DNACPR) orders, our colleagues stood firm in the toughest of times alongside the people we support. In this way we emerged with an organisation that remains fit for purpose. Those we lost, will never be forgotten.

The Dimensions Council (made up of people we support) continues to shape our priorities and influence how we work. Their priorities are woven into the fabric of this refreshed strategy.

We have continued to support new people in Dimensions and enabled them to lead better lives. Our supported employment programme in Discovery has brought great joy, meaning and value to people's lives and I'd like us to do more of that. We have been independently certified by the Great Place To Work institute for the past seven years, including recognition as a Great Place to Work for women and health and wellbeing. We continue to have a Collective Bargaining

Agreement with UNISON and have invested as much as we can in colleague pay. Our colleague turnover rates remain lower than in much of the sector. We have invested in our IT systems, and whilst there is a way to go for them to truly make lives easier for our colleagues, I am confident we will get there.

All these things make me proud of Dimensions, but we must strive for better, both for the people we support and our colleagues. I'd like us to support even more people to lead even better lives. More Dimensions people delivering more Dimensions support to help more people need us less.

So the document you're about to read tells you what we are going to do about it. It sets out both the progress we've made over the last five years against our five strategic pillars, and our high level aims for the next two years. As well as working on the things set out here, we will in 2026 begin thinking about our next strategy. As you can see we will have a great deal to do!

Nick Baldwin CBE, Group Chair



Our purpose

We know from feedback from those we support, their loved ones and others that Dimensions plays an important role in supporting people with learning disabilities and autistic people.

Our vision – Better Lives for More People – describes the overall impact we aim for. Our Mission is tangible and meaningful to our workforce: it describes what our colleagues strive to do every day: ‘to provide high quality personalised support for people with learning disabilities and autistic people, helping them to be actively engaged with, and contribute to, their communities’.

Further, our values are embedded. We know from feedback from colleagues and others that the way we live and breathe our values sets us apart. There is pride in our values and a real commitment to making them the hallmark of everything we do and every decision we take.

Our vision, mission and values are the enduring foundation on which our strategy is built. In calling this strategy “Even Better lives for Even More People” we recognise the potential to make progress on both halves of our vision through the remainder of its duration.



Vision, Mission, and Values

Our vision: Better Lives for More People

Mission

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

Dimensions’ values are:

Ambition We 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 What we do is grounded in what we believe	Partnership We work with others to achieve more for people	

Dimensions’ 2025 strategy is underpinned by the following strategic pillars:

Quality Better lives; impact for our sector	Reputation Valued by stakeholders; a group of people we want to work for and with	Scale Supporting more people; ability to invest and deliver economies of scale	Capacity Capacity and capability to deliver where and when it matters	Sustainability Sustainable for stakeholders; resilient in our environment
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Our 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 plans will continue to 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

1. Supporting more people to enjoy the cornerstones of life: homes they choose, employment, relationships and active contribution to their communities.
2. Creating clearer, stronger pathways for people that support their life choices – with particular emphasis upon young people making the transition to adulthood.
3. Improving the health and wellbeing of people we support
4. Improving support for people with 'complex support needs,' using and sharing our organisational learning
5. Enabling choice and control while keeping the people we support safe and well
6. Expanding our supported employment offer.

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

1. Being recognised as a great place to work inside and outside our organisation
2. Being recognised by people we support, commissioners, families and tenants as an organisation that they value and trust
3. Defining our People and Planet priorities in Environmental, Social and Governance terms.

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

1. Supporting more people
2. Providing alternative models of support
3. Improving our housing offer, helping more people access high quality, affordable homes that meet their needs
4. Building effective partnerships.

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

1. Developing and broadening the skills of our workforce
2. Building our capacity to grow in leadership, management and delivery of support
3. Exploiting technology to improve quality, capacity and resilience.

Sustainability: Sustainable for stakeholders; resilient in our environment

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

Pillar: Quality

1

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

People we support, families and colleagues continue to tell us that leading a full life matters, and a full life includes jobs, friendships, hobbies, a home of their choice, holidays and significant relationships.

We have made progress across our Quality pillar, with our regulatory ratings improving as we have experienced more inspections following a dip in the wake of Covid-19.

“ I want to spend more time with the people I love. Dimensions Council member ”

But many aspects of a full life became harder to fulfil during Covid-19 and although we've improved in many areas, we are not yet meeting our Council's ambition to support people to have a fuller life across all these cornerstones. We can do even better:

“ At work I'm cheerful and friendly. But in the evenings and weekends I'm alone, and loneliness is really tough. Expert by experience, Dr Mark Brookes MBE ”

2

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

Too many young people leaving residential schools and colleges have to move outside of their local area, and we want to continue to play our part in supporting people to stay close to home with just enough support to really thrive.

So we're proud of the way High Greave, our new transitions service in Sheffield, sets young adults up for success in life, and we're

looking forward to the opening of our next housing development in Hertfordshire, that will also provide single person accommodation for people with 'complex support needs'.¹ Developments like these are contributing to our success in supporting more young and/or autistic people year on year.

¹ "Complex support needs" isn't a term we particularly like but is widespread. We use it for ease of reference only.

First independent cooking. First independent travel. First holiday. First date. And significant reductions in support needs. Just some of the early success stories from High Greave, where we've implemented a new approach to supporting 'complex' transitions



In 2027, Dimensions will be:

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

In 2027, Dimensions will be:

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

Pillar: Quality

3

Improving the health and wellbeing of the people we support

Since the end of the pandemic we have worked hard to ensure the people we support get renewed access to the treatment and Annual Health Checks they need.

From bowel management to menopause, cancer to choking, we have introduced training, resources and processes aimed at helping the people we support lead a full life, and to manage any health conditions well with health issues under the best possible control.

We've also successfully advocated for many by directly training and respectfully challenging medical professionals across all of healthcare. For example, this has led to fewer people we support taking unnecessary psychotropic (and other) medication.

Health inequalities for people with a learning disability continue, so we will continue to address this everywhere we can.



In 2027, Dimensions will be:

1. Providing the right training and resources to enable our colleagues to provide good quality support and advocacy to meet the changing individual health needs of the person they support.
2. Supporting mental health through targeting our Council's priority of loneliness. Focal points may include paid work and community connectivity.
3. Continuing to campaign for equal access to essential healthcare services to reduce physical and mental health inequality for people with a learning disability and autistic people.

4

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

We want to build on our existing strengths in supporting people with profound and multiple learning disabilities, together with autism or 'complex health needs.'

We recognise that most people whose behaviour is described as challenging, are actually distressed and frustrated.

And we know that too many people, including those who have experienced the Criminal Justice System, remain in hospitals simply because it is difficult to find the right support and/or housing.

Our protocol around how to support people with a history of distressed behaviour drives our proven track record in this area. It enables us to have a transformational impact in the life of virtually every person we support out of such settings. And it is continuously being refined as we continue to learn.

“I lived in a hospital from 2010 to 2023. Last year I transitioned to living independently with 3:1 support. I've become much happier. I used to have patches of hair missing, skin problems and a poor diet. These issues no longer affect me as I can cook for myself and eat more healthily. Supported living has helped me to manage my anxiety and trauma – I have a flat which I am proud of and now feel safe at home. I'm building up the confidence to go out more and do the things I love like cycling. Best of all, my mother and I were reunited for the first time in six years.

By 'Arnold' ”

In 2027, Dimensions will be:

1. Contributing to high quality academic and practice-led research wherever we have something to offer or to learn, particularly across the spectrum of Transforming Care topics.
2. Following our values of courage and ambition when determining if we are well placed to support any particular individual with 'complex support needs and history.'
3. Demonstrating how we can support commissioners to save money through demonstrating how both 'Just Enough Support' and our unique support model for people who have experienced the criminal justice system enable individuals to gain control over their own life.

Pillar: Quality

5 Enabling choice and control while keeping the people we support safe and well

Our Person-Centred Active Support, whistleblowing, safeguarding, Risk-Trigger-Response and Never Event processes are rigorous and robust, enabling colleagues to support people to be ambitious in their lives and bold with their independent living skills. Because living a full life does not mean living a life free of risk.

iplanit was simply a tool for recording daily notes. It has now become our system for assessing people's needs, support planning and risk oversight.



Further, Activate enables us to shape each individual's support plan and measure progress across multiple areas, including consideration of safety, choice and control.

We have numerous examples and evidence of how people with 'complex support needs' have developed new skills, tried new experiences and grown in confidence - taking control of their lives. Whilst we have lots of success stories we will never be complacent and our focus on this will be retained into 2027 and beyond.

“I am the King of my World. Martin, Council member and tenant representative”

6 Expanding our supported employment offer

Having a purposeful life is important for us all. And for many people we support one of the things that brings purpose and meaning to life is having a paid job.

Nationally, the proportion of people with a learning disability in employment is declining (from 5.6% to 4.8% in 5 years²) – despite record workforce pressures on employers. During Covid-19 the number of people we support in paid employment also fell, and we have yet to make up the ground that we lost.

“It's why I get out of bed in the morning,” Jordan, Council Chair, talking about his job”

Our Supported Employment scheme in Discovery has brought huge benefits to 250 people in the life of the previous strategy by supporting them into paid employment, and we want to help replicate that success for others.

² [NHS ASCOF data 2024](#)



In 2027, Dimensions will be:

1. Embedding iplanit in its entirety and ensuring we can make good use of the data it yields, particularly around active lives, health and employment - KPIs that will enable us to demonstrate the social impact of our support on people's lives, proving that life can get better, both individually and collectively.

In 2027, Dimensions will be:

1. Utilising the skills and knowledge of our Employment Support Team to deliver an accessible toolkit and training programme across Dimensions to enable more of the people we support to gain paid employment.
2. Evidencing an increase in the number of people we have supported to find paid employment, ensuring that everyone who wants to work is given the right opportunity and support, where employers are valued as equal partners. This will be achieved through a variety of arrangements, including supported internships and inclusive apprenticeships.

Pillar: Reputation

1

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

We are proud of our investment in our workforce, which includes commitments to people's development and to paying colleagues as much as we can. Our status as a not-for-profit provider, and our collective bargaining agreement with Unison, mean we prioritise investing as much as we can into pay each year.

Aspire, our multi-award-winning training programme, has helped many rising stars in our organisation to further develop their career in social care with 70% experiencing career growth – promotions or increases to responsibility - here in Dimensions. Our colleague turnover is below the sector average with colleagues choosing to join Dimensions, and more importantly then choosing to stay with us.

Our colleague benefits and wellbeing offer is strong, but not enough people know about it or use it; we aim to increase utilisation in the life of this strategy extension.

We have been independently accredited by the Great Place to Work Institute for the past seven years and have also been recognised as a Great Place to Work for women, for health and wellbeing, for personal development and for charities. We've also retained "Disability Confident Leader" status.

These accreditations are important to us, not for their own sake but because they show that we are a good employer, engaging colleagues and equipping them with the skills they need. However, recruitment and retention continue to be among the greatest challenges the sector faces. We want to continue to enhance our reputation as a great employer that values and promotes diversity:

89%

of respondents agree that "My work has a special meaning, this is not just a job." (Great Places To Work 2024)



2

Being recognised by people we support, tenants, commissioners, and families as an organisation that they value and trust

Over the past five years we have continued to give families, tenants and people we support more say in how we work and to amplify their voices.

We are proud of the influence that people and their significant relationships have upon our organisation. Members of our Board and colleagues have lived experience, our Dimensions Council is made up of people we support, and we have Family and Quality Consultants working in Dimensions. We have reshaped our approach to gathering

insight and subsequently doing things differently by Working Together for Change, and we've introduced account management to strengthen relationships with our commissioners. People with lived experience shape the way we think, work and make decisions in many ways.

“Choices are hard for her. To have the support of the team to help her make those choices is great. We couldn't be happier.”
Ellen's mum, Karen”



In 2027, Dimensions will be:

1. A sector leader in colleague engagement and externally recognised as a Great Place to Work.
2. Perceived by people we support, tenants, colleagues, families and commissioners as an organisation that values and promotes diversity at all levels in the organisation, reflecting the communities in which we work.
3. Adding value for our colleagues by increasing awareness and uptake of our health and wellbeing offer.

In 2027, Dimensions will be:

1. Trusted and valued by people we support, tenants, families and significant others.
2. Viewed by commissioners as an organisation that delivers value for money.
3. Recognised by our regulators and our commissioners as a well governed, high-quality provider of housing, care and support.

Pillar: Reputation



84%
of respondents told us they feel good about the ways Dimensions contributes to the community (Great Places To Work 2024)

3 People and Planet

Our previous strategy spoke about the importance of delivering wider social value and in this refreshed strategy we have extended our thinking and framed it around our Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) objectives. During the past year, we have been shaping our ESG plan and our supporting People and Planet plan that will drive our environmental goals:

Environment

Covid-19 prompted a move to home working that has significantly cut travel miles for many of our colleagues. Emissions will have been further reduced through giving up many of our offices, through the digitisation of care and finance records, through our bike to work and electric vehicle leasing schemes. The previous strategy made a commitment to working with people we support and colleagues to protect our

environment, delivering sustainable housing and support, using green energy and reducing the use of plastics. This aspect of the strategy is one we need to redouble our efforts on. Following a materiality assessment, we plan to frame our environmental work around the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): Affordable and clean energy (SDG7,) Responsible consumption and production (SDG12,) Climate Action (SDG13.)



Social

Our social impact can be framed at individual, local and national level. iplanit will help us describe our social impact on the people we support, individually and as a whole. Our commissioners tell us they are most interested in our social impact at a local level so we must devise new ways to demonstrate the impact we make locally, especially on local labour markets and local communities.

At a national level we start from a position of strength in many areas of social impact and will frame this work around the following UN SDGs: Good Health and wellbeing (SDG3,) Quality Education (SDG4,) Gender Equality (SDG5,) Decent work and economic growth (SDG8,) Reduced inequalities (SDG10.)

Governance

As a large not for profit support provider and a small registered social landlord we already have a robust approach to governance with strong internal controls and values-led decision making. We have a strong, skilled and diverse Board and will retain that diversity, in all its forms, as a diverse Board makes for a better Board.

We have strengthened the ways in which the Board hears and uses insight from the people we support and their loved ones. During the next two years we will continue to ensure that the Board uses the insights from people we support and their loved ones to inform their discussions and decision making.

In 2027, Dimensions will be:

1. Delivering an agreed Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) Plan.
2. Measuring our ESG impact via Business as Usual and other performance measures (including Value for Money.)
3. Delivering our People and Planet climate action/carbon reduction plan.
4. Ensuring that the lived experience of people we support and our colleagues is at the forefront of our decision making.
5. Better able to describe the local social value we bring.

1

Supporting more people

We support people with a very wide range of gifts and abilities to live full lives. People who also have histories of distressed behaviour. Who have encountered the criminal justice system. Who are autistic, have profound and multiple learning disabilities, and/or 'complex health needs.' Many people who need daily person-centred support to lead gloriously ordinary lives.

Whilst we don't always get things right, in the main we do, helping people to lead fuller lives – often with embedded positive behaviour support and frequently resulting in people needing us less as they build increasingly independent lives.

We have the individual skills, the organisational capability and the collective desire to support more people with these needs.

Over the past five years we have delivered more support in some areas of the country, and less in others. We have welcomed new people that need support into Dimensions and have experience of bringing in new business at scale. Sadly, we have stopped supporting some people, often because the price offered by commissioners does not enable us to support a person in the way we want to, meeting their reasonable expectations of (and right to) an ordinary life, or to pay our colleagues what they deserve.

Our scale gives us opportunities for efficiencies, and our widespread geographical coverage means we have a strong operational foothold in many areas. We want to continue to grow, not for growth's sake, but because we believe we can deliver even better lives for even more people, both those who need support and those who work in social care.

We are open to supporting more people both through directly commissioned work, and through merging with organisations that can bring their own strengths and assets to a partnership that delivers quality and efficiencies to the sector. But only where we are confident that we have the capacity and conditions to do that well. And only where the other partner is aligned to our purpose, mission, culture and values.

“The environment we've created for Luke has empowered him to live his own life... he doesn't need to display behaviours of distress any more – so he doesn't.”
Jonathan, behaviour support practitioner





1:00

Campaigning for Better Lives for More People



Part 1: What makes a full, safe and happy life?



Having a safe home



Being with people I love



Being healthy



Being listened to



Being in control of my money



A reason to get up (Purpose)



Having people I trust supporting me



Being 'King of my world' (independent, making my own decisions)

In 2027, Dimensions will be:

1. Supporting more people in parts of the country where the conditions enable us to deliver both high quality support and pay our colleagues well.
2. Supporting more people with 'complex support needs.'
3. Demonstrating how 'Just Enough Support' enables people to live fuller, more independent lives whilst supporting local authorities to save money

Pillar: Scale

2

Providing alternative models of support

Dimensions has long supported people through 'day service' provision. However, building-based day services closed during Covid-19 and many of the people we support told us they didn't want to return to those day services once they reopened. We understand how important it is to people to have meaningful things to fill their day with, and we also recognise how important day support provision is to many loved ones. We have been on a journey during the past five years of modernising much of our in-house day support, with most of our traditional building-based day support moving to hubs based in local communities, or outreach support so that people are able to make the most of what their local community has to offer. Our approach reflects what individual Local Authorities will commission.

For some people, particularly some people with profound and multiple learning disabilities, this can be a difficult model to get right. We want to offer a range of options so that our refreshed day support offer enables people to be part of their local community whilst meeting our commissioners' needs. We'll continue to listen carefully to different viewpoints and new ideas here.

During the past five years Individual Budgets and Individual Service Funds have also become more commonplace, offering people greater choice over how to spend money allocated them for their care and support. We already support a number of people in this way and are keen to work with commissioners to make this a reality for more people. This will require us to consider how our finance systems can be adapted to support this at scale.

“We're working towards one sleep-in instead of two waking nights for Ian, and we believe we can work together, maybe through an ISF (Individual Support Fund), to help him direct his own support and go further still...he's already got a new rabbit and newly chosen home décor...

Tracey Parrock, LM, Cornwall”

In 2027, Dimensions will be:

1. Offering more choices within our preferred day support model that meet people's needs.
2. Supporting more people to exercise greater choice and control by enabling Individual Budgets and Individual Service Funds to be used at scale.

3

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

Having a good home is a cornerstone of life for everyone. Yet half of all planned discharges from long stay hospital are blocked due to a lack of suitable housing³. Housing scarcity also has a significant impact on our ability to support more people so we strongly welcome the Government's commitment to build more social housing.

We are a small registered social housing landlord and our previous strategy set out our ambition to better manage our housing assets, bring stock back into our management, dispose of outmoded homes and begin our journey of developing new homes in core and cluster, practice-led hub models. And whilst we know there is more to do, we have made good progress.

As we move towards 2027 we want to consider what more we can do to deliver our ambition. We want to be able to improve our housing offer and over the next two years we will take time to strategically review our existing housing offer and determine our future approach.

³ [Learning Disability Services Monthly Statistics, AT: December 2024, MHSDS: November 2024 - NHS England Digital](#)

“My home is where I feel safe and can be myself. Everyone deserves that. Martin, Council member and tenant rep”



In 2027, Dimensions will be:

1. Implementing a housing plan for the future that helps us to achieve our ambition of more and better-quality homes for people who we support.
2. Improving the energy efficiency ratings of our existing homes.
3. Building on our existing, and developing new partnerships with third party landlords to help more people access a good quality, safe home

4

Building Effective Partnerships

We aim to be a strong and valued partner for local authority and NHS commissioners, housing associations and other support providers; a go-to provider for consistent high-quality support. We want to earn our partners' trust by consistently acting in line with our values, so that we can support even more people to lead even better lives.

We are particularly proud of our constructive relationship with National Unison and our collective bargaining agreement. There's no doubt that this makes us a better employer.

With 20,000 organisations working in social care, the sector has a fragmented, weak and sometimes dissonant voice. We are stronger together and will build effective partnerships with a range of representative bodies to advocate for the future of social care and to shape and influence the thinking of policy makers and government.

Our scale enables us to support people with lived experience to speak truth to power – with real impact. Our experts by experience are spokespeople, thought leaders, campaigners and advocates of best practice. Partners in our shared future. Together, we bring specific expertise in supporting people out of long stay hospital, transitions to adulthood and across social inclusion topics ranging from hate crime to autism-friendly opportunities.

The government has set out its plans for a National Care Service, and a Fair Pay Agreement for social care. Now more than ever it is important for us to work with others to help this be a success.

“We have a good working relationship with Dimensions where we routinely have open and honest conversations about how people should be supported and how best to meet their outcomes [...] We use [High Greave] as an example to other providers to evidence what good support looks like.” Sheffield City Council Learning Disabilities commissioning team.”

In 2027, Dimensions will be:

1. A support and housing provider of choice for partners who share our vision and ambition.
2. Working towards a bright social care future for the people we support and colleagues alike, influencing collectively and campaigning alongside those who share our values.



1

Developing and broadening the skills of our workforce

Our previous strategy set out our ambition to continue to develop the skills of our workforce, particularly in relation to our support of people with 'complex support needs.' The people we support do not fit neatly into any single box; we support people with a wide variety of needs to live their best lives.

We have invested heavily in our workforce during the past five years, including where possible enabling people to achieve qualifications beyond minimum requirements so our colleagues are well equipped to deliver great support.

We have embedded our approach to positive behaviour support and know that this has made a significant difference to many of the people we support.

Support work is a skilled and professional role, and we have done much to highlight this externally. We will continue to make every effort to ensure this is recognised and that the social care workforce is valued by others.

The government has set out at a high level its vision for a National Care Service (NCS), which includes a skilled workforce who could be asked to deliver tasks beyond those which are currently expected of social care workers.

It is early days, and we will contribute wherever we can to shaping the government's vision for the NCS and ensuring that Dimensions itself is fit for that future.

We'll develop and professionalise our workforce to the maximum extent possible within our funding parameters.

“I have found the Aspire programme really helpful because of the way it treats everyone as an individual enabling the programme to be tailored to each person's needs. I am looking forward to the challenges and responsibilities of my new role. Newly-promoted Aspire participant.”

In 2027, Dimensions will be:

1. Delivering personal and career development training, such as Aspire, that enables our colleagues to have great careers in care and support in line with our role as a sector leader.
2. Delivering skills training that enables our colleagues to excel in their roles and to support people to live a full and safe life.

2

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

Strong and values led leadership is critical; we need outstanding leaders who can bring practice-led leadership and develop individuals and teams.

During the past five years we have placed accountability and decision making for people's lives closer to the leaders who work alongside them, for example by changing the level of managers who are registered with the Care Quality Commission (CQC).

Many of our senior leaders began their careers as support workers here in Dimensions. We know we need to continue to invest in our managers and future leaders and we have invested much time into succession planning for senior roles, alongside career conversations with senior leaders to identify opportunities to help them grow. We know that in order to support more people, we must continue to develop and invest in our leaders.

We have invested in both our existing and aspiring leaders through programmes such as the Skills for Care Moving Up Programme aimed at aspiring managers from ethnic minoritised backgrounds.



“Richard [North Regional Managing Director] is an amazing colleague who has looked after me when I'm feeling down. When I go to the managers' meetings, he always cheers me up by dancing with me. He's an amazing father figure and takes care of me around the loss of my dad. Kelsey, Council member”

In 2027, Dimensions will be:

1. Actively managing talent and planning for operational, executive and non-executive succession to attract and retain the people we need.
2. Ensuring a pipeline of capable, engaged colleagues who are ready to deliver in targeted locations where there is the potential to provide high quality, sustainable support.

Pillar: Capacity

3

Exploiting technology to improve quality, capacity and efficiency

Assistive technology can make a vast difference to a person's independence and safety. These technologies are in widespread use across Dimensions but we can do more, making best use of the 'My Technology' section of our support plans.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is also developing at a rapid pace, and we know it will radically change during the lifetime of this strategy. AI brings both risks and opportunities. We want to make best use of what is out there to support people well, to embrace the opportunities, and to create capacity for managers to focus on what matters. We will also be alive to the risks that AI presents, and seek to manage those, with clear parameters about what will enhance the lives of the people we support, recognising that technology can never replace human interaction.

“Mary uses the touchscreen to change photos and looks at the different pictures from her past. It helps with her sensory needs, too.” Locality Manager

In 2027, Dimensions will be:

1. Realising the benefits of our systems to free up colleagues' time so they can focus on what matters.
2. Making greater use of assistive technology to support more people become more independent and lead fuller lives.
3. Exploring applications of artificial intelligence in a way that is innovative and impacts people's lives but does not place them at undue risk.
4. Leveraging our technology investments to become more efficient and self-sufficient.



1

Improving Productivity

The past five years have seen a social care sector that has continued to be underfunded, and we have sought to create efficiencies wherever possible. We do not yet see a future where these conditions will change. The National Living Wage continues to increase year on year, (which we welcome but funding does not always keep pace,) and additional costs such as the increases to National Insurance Contributions (NICs) place a further financial burden on the sector. Dimensions is not immune to this.

“Our floating (peripatetic) team gets so much love here in Discovery. Quality is high because they know the people they support and benefit from internal training and support. And the cost is below the agency equivalent. It’s a model that really works for us...” Trina Bright, Head of Improvement and Support Practice, Discovery ”

During this time, we have implemented a new Operating Model which aimed to deliver consistency, clarity, capacity and cost-efficiency across the organisation. We brought our business support colleagues back into the centre of the organisation to develop centres of excellence where people can better collaborate and share best practice. We are already seeing some of the benefits of this, for example in Human Resources case management and reduced sickness levels, and Business Development flexibility and efficiency.

In some regions we have also begun to introduce a peripatetic team where colleagues are contracted to work across an area to reduce our reliance on agency colleagues. This brings numerous benefits, particularly in relation to consistency of support for people,

In 2027, Dimensions will be:

1. Delivering greater consistency, clarity, capacity and cost-efficiency as the Operating Model becomes fully embedded.
2. Delivering an expanded peripatetic team across the organisation to improve the quality and consistency of our support and reduce our reliance on agency.

2

Diversifying and strengthening income streams to reduce risk

In our previous strategy we recognised that most of our funding came through Local Authorities, and we made a commitment to diversify our income sources. Over the past five years we have become a valued partner for the NHS in many areas, with many people’s support being funded by Integrated Care Boards. We have also introduced ‘account management’ in our Business Development team to build better relationships.

We have already set out in this strategy our intent to diversify our income by supporting more people to have better choice and control through Individual Budgets and Individual Service Funds. And of course there is much to be understood about the National Care Service and the mechanics of how funding might flow in this new system.

“When “Jack” came to Dimensions he received 112 hours, plus 7 sleep-ins of support each week. We’ve supported Jack to understand and accept his history, develop empathy for those around him and to gain control over his emotions and decisions. As a result, not only has his support reduced to 13 hours per week with no sleep-ins, he now has a job he loves. Jack’s life is unrecognisably better, and his commissioners can focus more of their precious funds on others. Locality Manager ”

We know that we must seek to operate in areas where we can deliver the quality of support we want to, with a workforce that we can fairly reward. As part of this strategy refresh, we also reviewed our approach to fundraising. We already have small amounts of funding donated to specific homes or areas, generally ringfenced for a particular purpose. These donations enable us to deliver things that impact on people’s lives beyond that which is statutorily funded. But it takes expertise, time and money to yield wider benefits from fundraising.

Our conclusion is that we will not significantly increase our fundraising activity. But we will be publicly clearer that we are open to donations and legacies, and put the core enabling mechanisms in place, so that we can have a greater impact on people’s lives by providing things that are not statutorily funded.

In 2027, Dimensions will be:

1. A strategic partner for likeminded commissioners in areas where we can work together to deliver high quality, sustainable support.
2. A provider of choice for people with an Individual Budget or Individual Service Fund.
3. Clear that we welcome donations to enable us to have a greater impact on people’s lives.

Pillar: Sustainability

3

Making systems and processes more efficient

Our previous strategy set out our ambition for our systems to free up time for our operational colleagues to enable them to focus on what matters. This is a journey that we are still on, and whilst some of our systems have not yet yielded those efficiencies, we are confident they will do in time.

Some of our new systems, for example our in-house people management system Dimensions Online, are still in the infancy stage. Others such as RADAR (incident management) are well embedded, and others such as iplanit (support management) and Oracle (finance management) are settling down.

It will take time to fully embed these systems and realise the benefits, as well as setting the foundations for a ten-year Enterprise Architecture Plan that will see us having leading systems and processes to free people up to focus on value added activity.

The pace of change – technological, political, social and economic - is increasing across all organisations, and we must be ready for this. In particular, we will lean into the challenge of not just getting the right systems but also supporting colleagues to adapt effectively to them, recognising and exploiting the positive benefits.

“ I may not support people directly but I contribute to better lives for more people. So do you. We're all in this together. Head of Comms ”

In 2027, Dimensions will be:

1. Making better use of reliable and accessible data to improve our analytical capabilities and capacity.
2. Delivering consistency in how we work, whilst enabling innovation to be identified and shared.
3. Clear on our Enterprise Architecture Plan.
4. Supporting colleagues to adopt new or updated technology and to adapt effectively to change.



Better Lives for More People

For over 40 years, we have been supporting people with learning disabilities and autistic people to have a louder voice, choice, and control in their lives.

We design personalised support for each individual, working towards specific outcomes in the cornerstones of a good life: health, relationships, work, hobbies, and having fun.

Contact us to find out more:



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Phone: 0300 303 9001

Email: enquiries@dimensions-uk.org

Find us on social media @DimensionsUK



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Dimensions (UK) is a charitable registered society number 31129R.

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