

11th October 2022

You can read a summary of this letter in bullet points on page 4.

Dear family member,

There is much to celebrate, reflect upon and share with you from my first six months as Chief Executive Officer (CEO), I can't believe how quickly it has gone. We have welcomed four new members to the Group Executive Team. You can read more about our new Directors [on our website](#): Sinead McHugh-Hicks (Managing Director), Rhoda Iranloye (Regulatory Assurance), Pippa Foster (Lived Experience & Clinical Practice) and Ben Sutton (Chief Digital and Information Officer). We are now a complete executive team enthused and excited to be leading the organisation to deliver our strategy of Better Lives for More People.

I am also pleased to tell you that we have appointed a Family Co-opted Board Member, Veran Patel. As you know, making sure we work well with families is incredibly important to us and we want to get it right while recognising it can be challenging. We're committed to working hard to build understanding, to listen and to work together in partnership. Having someone working with the Dimensions Group Board who can participate from a family perspective is part of that commitment. Their role is to apply knowledge gained by having lived experience to the discussions and decisions made by the Board and to look at the wider picture of our work with families and friends.

Our four family consultants, supported by a further 12 associate family consultants, are all people with lived experience of being a mum, dad, brother or sister to an adult with learning disabilities and/or autism. Most but not all of their relatives are supported by Dimensions. My predecessor Steve used to describe them as a 'stone in Dimensions' shoe' – by which he meant that their role was to challenge our support teams to make sure that we always make the most of families' experience and always consider families' views. This is a critically important role; family consultants can sometimes intervene at an early stage and fix problems before they escalate. They educate, they inspire and very occasionally they mediate. They are here to support you. Their contact details are:

Email: family.helpline@dimensions-uk.org
Family Telephone Helpline: 0300 303 9161
Hours: 10am-12pm Monday – Friday (except bank holidays).

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Staying connected, keeping in touch and listening to feedback continues to be really important to us so we learn and develop as individuals and as an organisation. We are always trying to find ways to improve how we do things. In my last letter I spoke about a number of our approaches to involving you and I encourage you to continue (or start) engaging with tools and processes such as our family portal and [Person Centred Reviews](#). Your locality manager or the family helpline will be able to provide more information on these.

We have had some helpful feedback from our Family Survey and I would like to take a moment to thank all of you who were able to complete it. Overall families were extremely complimentary about our support, but there were some clear areas for us to attend to, particularly around communication and Person-Centred Planning.

Here are some of the activities we are working on:

- Our Families Team have been busy supporting the local teams to increase understanding and awareness and encouraging completion of a [Family Charter](#) with every family.
- We are reviewing and improving the way Concerns, Compliments & Complaints can be made: we welcome feedback and know it helps us maintain quality and improve, so please continue to share with us.
- We recognise it may feel difficult to make a complaint so if you don't feel able to go through a manager, please contact the families team via their helpline, via email family.helpline@dimensions-uk.org or our Quality Officer Sarah on sarah.mcevansoneya@dimensions-uk.org
- We have more dates for Family Zoom sessions: these cover a range of information topics and allow you to connect with others and ask questions. If you'd like to attend, or want to find out about the topics and dates on offer, please contact susan.kirkman1@dimensions-uk.org or family.helpline@dimensions-uk.org

Moving on, you will all be aware of the ongoing challenges facing adult social care; there are many reports in the media describing the lack of funding and issues relating to staffing (recruitment and retention.) The Board has approved a significant investment in pay for our colleagues who support people and we have recently announced pay rises for them backdated to 1st September. Beyond that, I want to reassure you that we are working tirelessly to address issues both locally and nationally by having detailed action plans, through engaging with commissioners, politicians and other organisations to gain a louder voice and a better deal for the people we support and our colleagues. One example of this is publishing our '[Workforce Manifesto](#)' which has been well received across the sector and we even recently presented this at an event in Parliament. Our five point plan includes:

1. Benchmark minimum support worker pay at NHS Band 3 (entry rate £10.40ph.)
2. Establish a Skills Framework
3. Prepare people for work
4. Target integrated health and care
5. Undertake an annual workforce plan for social care

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I will continue to provide evidence to influence positive change for Dimensions and the wider health and social care sector at every possible opportunity; for example I had a [letter published](#) about the pressures in the Guardian a few weeks ago. While I know there are challenging times ahead, there are also great opportunities for creativity, collaboration and connection and I look forward to sharing more examples of how we influence and persuade the Government to make sure we can provide the best support to you and your family and friends.

Finally, I want to mention changes in the testing regime for social care staff and Covid. The government has announced that routine testing will no longer be in place for staff without any Covid symptoms. At present the government still requires colleagues to wear face masks so you will continue to see our staff teams wearing these when you visit your loved ones.

With best wishes



Rachael Dodgson
Chief Executive

PS: For those of you receiving paper letters, I realise the links in this document will not work. If you can, please ask your locality manager to arrange for you to read future letters by email so you can easily access all the information.

If you cannot receive letters via email, you can ask your locality manager to provide the documents referred to here in paper form; of all of them, I would particularly want you to have a copy of our family charter.

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Key points from the letter

- Covid update: Colleagues will only need to do Covid tests if they have Covid symptoms. Colleagues will still need to wear face masks.
- Sinead McHugh-Hicks is the Managing Director.
- Rhoda Iranloye is the Group Director of Regulatory Assurance
- Pippa Foster is the Group Director of Lived Experience and Clinical Practice
- Ben Sutton is Chief Digital and Information Officer
- Veran Patel is our new Family Co-opted Board member who will make sure we work well with families.
- Person-centred reviews and the Family Portal are important in involving family members with the support of their loved one.
- Family Helpline: Contact members of the families team directly via the Family Helpline on 0300 303 9161, Monday to Friday from 10am to 12pm or by email at family.helpline@dimensions-uk.org
- Family survey: our family survey found that most families are happy with our support. We need to improve our communication with families and person-centred planning.
- Our Families team have been letting everyone know about our Family Charter.
- We are looking at how to improve how you can give us feedback, both good and bad.
- Family Zoom sessions: we have more dates for these. Please email family.helpline@dimensions-uk.org to book on or for more information.
- Staffing challenges: We have given pay rises to our support workers. We have presented our Workforce Manifesto to Parliament. The Workforce Manifesto looks at how support workers in social care can be better paid and want to work in social care for longer.