

Better Lives Better Jobs Better Business

Avenues Strategic Plan 2018-2021



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Executive Summary

This Strategic Plan outlines the aspirations of the Avenues Group for the period 2018-2021 and the plans to achieve them. It reaffirms the Mission, Vision and Values of the organisation and the actions it will take to ensure that at the end of 2021, the people we support will lead better lives, the people we employ will have better jobs, and the organisation will do better business.

This will be based on stable finances, driven by sustainable development and a commitment to quality.

In setting the strategic direction for the Group, it seemed appropriate to review the progress that we have made in the lifetime of the old plan and to describe the current situation, outlining the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats associated with the Group.

The plan then goes on to describe the conversations that we have had, which have informed and shaped the focus of our future work, which will be the delivery of community based specialist services. These services will focus support on working with people:

- with learning disabilities, and/or Autism, who's behaviour challenges services,
- or who have additional health needs,
- or have a forensic history or,
- with people who have acquired brain injuries.

This sharpened focus meets fundamental needs in social care and plays to Avenues experience and expertise.

The plan then goes on to describe what makes Avenues services distinctive and how we will measure our progress against planned targets. Detailed plans relating to the subsidiaries and central functions are attached to the Group plan, describing how they will contribute to its delivery. Finally, there are financial projections demonstrating the sustainability of the Group.

A robust, challenging, but deliverable plan is important for the health of the organisation, but is vital for the people we support. We owe it to them to constantly improve the quality of what we do to meet their evolving needs. It is against this last objective that our real success should be judged.

Introduction

The first year of this Strategic Plan coincides with Avenues 25th birthday. So it is natural when planning for the next three years to look back at the last 25. We will build on our experiences and strengths to be better in the future and deal with our weaknesses and challenges that we face.

Avenues was created at the back end of the hospital closures programme in the South East for people with learning disabilities. We always supported people with complex needs, particularly behaviour that challenges and/or life limiting health conditions. This is the core of what we do and is the main focus of the new Strategic Plan.

In order to provide quality support we need dedicated, enthusiastic, well trained and supported staff who share the organisation's values. Recruitment is the single biggest challenge facing Avenues and social care in general. Our response in this plan is to provide a sector leading experience involving raising salary levels within the resources provided through contracts, but concentrating on a training and development programme which will equip staff with skills and support to enable them to provide bespoke services to people.

Our approach will be based on sharpening our delivery of Active Support and Positive Behaviour Support. Experience has taught us that great and outstanding services rely on exceptional first line managers so our management and leadership programmes will concentrate on this level within Avenues.

Our aim to do better business is not based upon the need to provide returns for shareholders or owners, but an absolute commitment to be here for the long term. Many of the services we provide may be delivered over decades and we owe it to the people we support to plan sustainably.

Our financial sustainability plan will involve the closure of loss making services, the reduction of agency use, an increased efficiency through the better use of IT and a reduction of central costs in general. We will also aim to grow in a sustainable fashion

Looking back

Progress achieved against targets in 2012-17 Plan

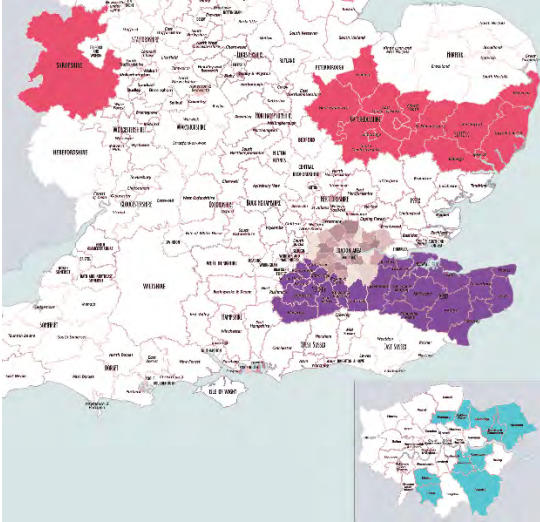
The previous Strategic Plan set out the following strategic aims:

- Extend the reach of Avenues
- For it to remain a Quality Organisation
- To attain Financial Resilience
- To have Future Proof Business Systems
- To attain Workforce Resilience
- Create Housing Strategies and Partners

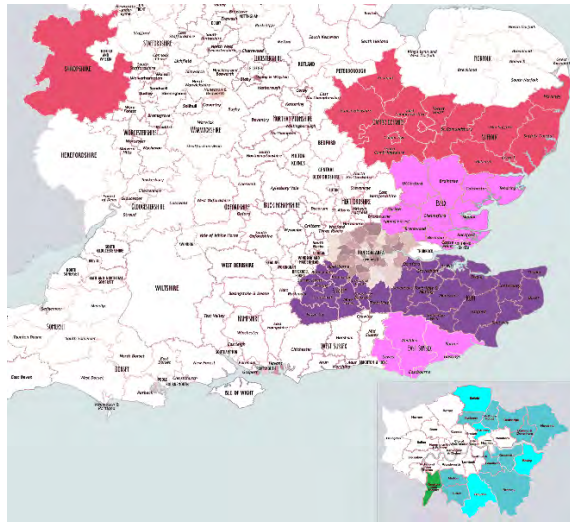
Our progress against these strategic aims is described below:

Extending Reach – the 2 maps below show the geographical expansion of Avenues, which has been significant.

Services Dec 2013



Services Dec 2017



The integration of Welmede into the Group has extended the services that we offer in Surrey. We did not achieve the hope for spread of services for people with acquired brain injuries across the Group.

Quality Organisation – The quality of Avenues services as measured by CQC remains broadly similar with the vast majority of services being considered either ‘Good’ or ‘Outstanding’.

CQC Rating Dec 2017	Rating Totals	%	No of People We Support	%
OUTSTANDING Services	3	7%	641	58%
GOOD Services	38	86%	451	41%
Services REQUIRING IMPROVEMENT	3	7%	20	2%
INADEQUATE Services	0	0%	0	0%
Total	44	100%		

The results of our Internal Quality Audits reveal inconsistency with some great services counterbalanced by those in need of improvement. This inconsistency will be addressed in the next plan through the development of internal quality review systems and processes that will support statutory compliance, recognise and share great practice but also expose service delivery that falls short of the standards that we set

Financial Resilience - The financial resilience of the Group has improved following the merger with Welmede, with the creation of free reserves and a property portfolio. However, our position is fragile, given the funding of social care, but we consider that financial resilience is tantalisingly close, and is within our control if we manage costs and price services with appropriate margins.

Future Proof Business Systems - Significant progress has been made in the installation of People Planner and Mobizio, which will improve the management of our services, creating much more reliable data. The Group continues to have significant IT issues, particularly relating to security infrastructure, resources being appropriate and extending accessibility to mobile workers.

Workforce Resilience- Workforce is the biggest issue facing the Avenues Group, and social care in general. Developing our position as an employer of choice is central to our success and our ability or otherwise, to recruit and retain staff will be a significant brake on our development plans. Building workforce resilience is a major theme of the new plan.

Housing Strategies and Partners – The provision of appropriate housing has been a struggle in the lifetime of the previous plan, but the introduction of Welmede into the Group is now a key to unlocking not only our property strategy in Surrey, but across the areas in which we operate.

How we have changed since the last plan - comparative data

	Income	Deficit	Staff	People we Support
2013/14	£27,245,115	-£60,738	993	723
2017/18	£44,800,000	-£1,221,000	1811	954

*please note the 2017/18 financial figures are forecast only and includes the exceptional items related to the merger with Welmede.

The Present

Board discussions and feedback

In order to set the broad strategic direction for this plan a number of discussions were held at board level to ascertain trustee views.

Mission, Vision and Values

Following consultations and discussions with Trustees the Avenues Group Mission, Vision and Values will remain unchanged, as they continue to capture the essence of what Avenues does and why it does it.

- Mission To challenge and overcome the disadvantages people face through illness, injury and disability.
- Vision Everyone has the opportunity to be an active citizen in their local community.
- Values
 - Respect:** we treat people how we would wish to be treated ourselves.
 - Excellence:** we don't settle for okay; we are determined to achieve more.
 - Integrity:** we do the right thing, not the easy thing – even if it takes more time and effort.
 - Pride:** the work that we do is something we want to tell others we are part of.

All boards agreed that the Group structure should remain with subsidiaries providing operating services, supported by a central group function. There will be minor changes to management arrangements to allow single responsibility in Surrey. There were no changes recommended to the governance of the organisation. Again, there was agreement that the strategy of developing specialist community based services best matched the expertise and experience of the Group.

It was agreed that the housing function within the Group should be separated from the delivery of care and support, and therefore housing and property management would become a centrally managed service to the rest of the Group, leaving each of the subsidiaries to provide care and support services.

There was a view that the Group needed to grow significantly in the period of this plan, whilst ensuring quality remained high. As part of the growth and development programme, a targeted programme of property redevelopment and service redesign, particularly in Avenues South East will be undertaken to ensure the sustainability of some of our more long standing services.

The financial position of the Group, following these decisions, needs to be more robust in the future.

Finally, given the quality of the services provided by Avenues we should raise our profile becoming a trusted voice representing both the learning disability and broader charity sector.

Consultation

View of the families and people we support

It's difficult to obtain detailed views of many of the people we support, but Welmede has well developed communications and the response was positive. Most people liked the quality of the support they received and got on well with their support workers.

We got varied response rates from families across the Group. They were overwhelmingly positive with comments such as "Avenues changed my son's life in a positive way" and that we had "a culture of transparency". Lastly parents were pleased that we celebrated people's achievements. A number of families were particularly complementary about our services for people whose behaviour challenges. A small number of critical comments were made, but were of a more general nature. With a particular geography of service pattern. They suggested that we could deliver better on our values and have more consistency in staffing.

View of Staff

Staff comments were generally positive about training and development and that Avenues was a good place to work, but universally critical of levels of pay.

Views of our commissioners

A number of commissioners were consulted to ascertain their views on the services provided by Avenues. We have a good reputation for the quality of our services, the openness and honesty of our approach and the fact that we don't give up. There is a very clear hope amongst all commissioners who replied that we ought to grow further, especially to meet the demands of the Transforming Care population.

NHS England consider us as a key partner of the Transforming Care Programme, which enables people with learning disabilities to be discharged from secure psychiatric settings.

View of Care Managers

We received no comments from care managers specifically about the plan, but do get positive comments regularly about particular supports we provide to people.

View of CQC

CQC are reluctant to comment on individual providers, but following an 'outstanding' inspection Andrea Sutcliffe – Chief Inspector tweeted that "we need more providers like Avenues". A regular comment from CQC is that they are impressed with Avenues openness and honesty. Our relationship manager considers us to be a good provider.

SWOT Analysis

EMT undertook a SWOT analysis, which was discussed at a number of Avenues Boards. The results of which are listed below.

Strengths:

- We are honest
- We have a great reputation
- We know what an outstanding service looks like
- We set high expectations of quality
- We are tenacious and don't easily give up
- Externally we are seen to provide a good service
- We are well governed and have exceptional trustees
- We employ and work with extraordinarily talented people

Weaknesses:

- IT/Systems/Data Management/Performance Management
- Limited access to housing
- Don't have a good early warning system in place
- Quality isn't always consistent, and risk is significant if something goes wrong
- Inconsistent response to poor staff performance
- Lack of free reserves financially

Opportunities:

- Transforming Care cohort
- Housing
- Growing our geographical footprint
- Forensics
- Polarisation of social care market
- In a good position to negotiate terms with local authorities

Threats

- Social care funding inconsistency
- Labour market competition
- Remuneration
- Focus
- Stretching ourselves too far

This analysis leads us to be confident that Avenues has significant opportunities to grow and that it is within our gift to manage systems, resources and people to enable this to happen. Throughout the new strategic plan we outline how we are going to seize these opportunities, utilising our strengths to be better. However we also need to address our weaknesses and mitigate threats. Specific measures to address the latter issues are outlined below.

Weaknesses

IT/systems/data management

We are currently contracting a consultant to undertake a review of our IT infrastructure which will form the basis of the IT strategic plan. Similarly we are reviewing systems, crucially how they interface.

Performance management

This is a key strand of the HR plan

Limited access to housing

This is improving through the merger with Welmede and the appointment of the housing director, and key aims are contained in the housing plan.

Don't have an early warning system in place (Better systems – templates- gates)

Lack of free financial reserves

The finance plan includes disposal of assets to create free reserves together with consistent delivery of financial surpluses.

Quality isn't always consistent and risk is huge if something goes wrong

We aim to raise the profile of quality through the appointment of an EMT member to revisit the quality assurance system, reporting through People Planner to aid speed of response and record keeping.

Threats

Social care funding inconsistency

The move to specialisms reduces inconsistency of services which will always be needed and the necessity of skilled support acknowledged. Avenues provides quality services at a saving to the public purse.

Labour market competition

We will raise our profile in the labour market and attempt to further differentiate ourselves through the quality of our learning & development and support services.

Remuneration

Increased specialisms lead to increased prices which allows increased salaries. This will be marginal but will attempt to distance us from our competition.

Focus

The plan is clear that we will target three groups of people within the current and adjacent geographical footprint.

Stretching ourselves too far

There will be a rigorous assessment process using 'Better Lives, Better Jobs, Better Business' to create new opportunities. A similar process will be used to assess redevelopment plans. EMT development post and rigorous development process monitored by reinvigorated SMT.

Avenues Environment

The environment in which the Avenues Group operates is shaped by a decreasing real terms spend by central Government on social care. Although the Government has increased its focus on the social care agenda, it has not acted to invest funding, rather pushing back solutions to local government. For example although it has increased local Governments ability to raise revenue for social care through initiatives such as increasing council tax, we expect that this will have no significant impact in many of the poorest areas of the country where there is significant dependence upon social welfare.

The area in which the Group operates is relatively protected in terms of funding allocations, as we support people with long term needs that are likely to endure. However as funding is not rising with the cost of its provision (specifically requirements to pay National Living Wage (NLW) and Sleep-in Duties at NLW) operating margins are being eroded. The Group's plan to specialise, and move away from providing support to people with low or moderate needs will help us to mitigate against this and ensure full cost recovery for our work, though increasingly we will need to enter in to assertive conversations with commissioners about the reality of providing services where we would be exposed to financial risk.

Specialised services commissioned through the Transforming Care Programme are relatively well funded, and we can demonstrate that we can provide this and still deliver public savings against alternative forms of care. A significant issue for the programme is in being able releasing resources that the NHS has tied up in those alternative forms of care into social care. The Transforming Care Programme is moving forward slowly, but is still uncoordinated. There is a lack of national strategy, and preference to local leadership which in many areas is not strong. Given the potential gains the programme can offer in terms of real cost savings and improvements to care and well-being there is significant pressure to deliver the programme in the lifetime of this strategic plan, and it remains a core NHS strategic commitment.

The biggest obstacle to delivering the national programme is the difficulty in recruiting, retaining and paying care staff properly. This is acknowledged in many of the Transforming Care plans, but in most localities there are no concrete plans to address the issue. Avenues employment situation will not be particularly affected by Brexit as most of our non-UK workers come from outside the EU. Workforce planning remains uncoordinated at a national and regional level.

The commissioning environment in which we operate is devoid of national strategy, preferring local initiatives through Strategic Transformation Plans (STP) and Transforming Care Plans (TCP). The former is an initiative to create larger geographical areas combining CCG's and NHS Trusts to meet the health and well-being needs of local populations. Transforming Care Plans are 44 local initiatives to deliver the national programme. There is little evidence of co-ordination between the two initiatives, but Avenues will monitor the progress of both throughout the lifetime of the strategic plan as they may provide development opportunities. They will certainly lead to tighter collaboration between local authorities, CCG's and NHS providers sometimes leading to single commissioners with the expectation that Accountable Care organisations may be created. These are not legal entities or organisations but partnerships between commissioners and providers. As a strategic aim Avenues should attempt to become one of the partners in STPs although the role of the third sector is extremely limited in their creation at present.

Competition exists between providers, but in the specialist area in which we operate demand outstrips supply and consequently this is not a particular issue. We will however

need to be aware of NHS providers "repainting" existing services in an attempt to make them fulfil the criteria contained within Transforming Care, and the potential of new market entrants particularly from the private for profit sector.

The business intelligence service, Plimsoll, monitors the performance of social care organisations. They have useful data about providers in our sector, but their information is incomplete. For instance they do not include our key competitors. However, the general pattern is that charitable providers are all in stretched financial circumstances with many making a loss. This finding is confirmed by a report published by our auditors RSM confirming that many of their charitable clients are now using their reserves to subsidise losses. In contrast, most commercial providers are profitable. This is in part explained by their ability to raise finance, and achieve greater financial efficiencies, but also by providing relatively static and large congregate services where economies of scale are easier to achieve. The Avenues information contained within the Plimsoll analysis is distorted by the Welmede merger, but we are probably in the middle of the pack financially with a higher than average growth rate (sector average 2.5% Avenues 6-7%).

We have seen an increase in merger activity between providers, including the consolidation of two of our closest competitors/partners (MCCH and Choice Support). This is no doubt a reflection of the pressure on income and the need to generate better efficiencies through economies of scale. Avenues approach to mergers will be to keep a watching brief and monitor actions of competitors, but also to actively seek partners to join the Group in the Shropshire area in order to consolidate our services or where the Group can benefit from a specialist provider's expertise

Access to housing and providing housing is increasingly important to the care we provide, and though we have had success in bringing new services on line this is not a cost neutral activity. The recent announcements from the government on the future of supported housing funding have to some extent dampened down anxiety within the provider sector, though more detail is needed to support planning and development. For Avenues with its focus on long term housing, we are in a relatively good position as we can continue to develop our approach of using our exemption from housing benefit regulations to achieve full cost recovery for our housing services. Development is more complex and challenging as we will need access to capital, and our ability to raise capital will be influenced by our profitability. That said the potential of improving partnerships with private developers/landlords and RSL's will provide alternatives, whilst there is also significant capital available within the Transforming Care Capital Programme which we have had success accessing already.

Our regulator CQC has been more active recently, particularly concentrating on a more robust inspection of supported living services. Their regime is now risk based which will drive the frequency of inspections. The Group's expectation is that all services will be good or outstanding in the lifetime of the strategic plan. We need to monitor CQC's priorities within their regulatory regime in order to respond to any changed emphasis in their inspections. The expectations of relatives and families rightly continues to rise and we can expect and welcome significantly increased involvement in the lifetime of the strategic plan.

Finally, there may be a change of Government in the lifetime of the plan, although the effect of any result is unclear. The addition of social care to the title of the Secretary of State for Health may indicate a raised acknowledgement of the issues facing the sector and we await development. There are plans to publish a green paper in relation to older

people's services in the spring 2018 and there is an initiative as yet unclear about social care for younger adults. The Labour party's position in relation to social care is to create a National Care Service, although the details of this have yet to be finalised. We will therefore need to monitor any evolving policies in relation to social care delivered by the two main political parties.

The public perception of charities, particularly service providers is confused and we are not as trusted as we used to be. There is a nervousness around whether or not charities are best placed to provide public services and we are still tainted by fundraising and poor governance scandals linked to major national charities. As part of our attempt to become a respected voice within the sector we need to contribute to the discussion promoting the role of charities as excellent providers of public services representing good value for the spend of public money.

This is Avenues

Services provided by Avenues

The majority of Avenues supports and services are for people with Learning Disabilities and/or Autism and those with an acquired brain injury. The level of their disability is varied with biased towards those with profound and multiple disabilities. We manage 44 small registered residential homes, supporting approximately 178 people and have 80 supported living schemes, intensively supporting approximately 450 people, with a further 600 people being supported on a less intense basis through community based schemes. In addition, we have a small mental health scheme and one residential home with nursing for people with mental health issues. We also manage a Community Support Service, offering a variety of leisure support and employment opportunities and the pioneering It Takes Two project in South East London that connects people to community resources.

Avenues Distinctive Offer

We believe that the offer Avenues makes to the people we support and employ is unique. . Whilst what we say and write is similar to other organisations, the reality of what we do sets us apart. We deal with the reality of people's lives, the innate uncertainty and risk involved, and the celebrations often unexpected.

This is difficult to describe, but you recognise it when you see it.

But we still need a statement, so here goes....

Avenues Distinctive Offer

What makes Avenues distinct.....

- We believe that everyone can live a good life, somewhere they have chosen, supported by people they have picked – everyone.
- Of course it's safe and well thought of by CQC
- Of course it's about keeping healthy
- Of course it's for the long term – we'll stick with you through it all
- Of course it's based on positive behavioural support
- Of course it provides great staff training
- Of course it's a partnership with families, communities and friends
- But, it's much more than that.....

- **it's real**
- It's about people's lives – as they change over time
- It's cooking
- It's going fishing
- It's honest and open
- It's giving it a go
- It's about moving in with my mate
- It's doing your own washing
- It's about keeping in touch with my brother
- It's going round the corner for a pint of milk
- It's going back round the corner for a pint of beer

- It's cleaning the cooker
 - It's going camping
 - It's helping me develop my relationships
 - It's helping me with my choices around sex, sexual wellbeing and sexuality.
 - It's getting involved in my own care and support
 - It's being an aunty
 - It's about moving to live in my own flat
 - Its backed up by research
 - It's a great place to work
 - Its having a bit of a laugh, but taking it seriously when we need to
 - It's having a takeaway on a Tuesday because you fancy one
 - It's not getting it right all the time
 - And we can prove it works.
- Finally, we are bothered about doing it right.....even when it's difficult
 - And it will be better next year.

So what does this look like in practice?

Suttle House (name changed) is a supported living scheme in Ipswich where five people live. They all have a learning disability and significant long term health needs, some of which are considered to be life limiting. If you go there most of the time most of the people are out, shopping, sailing, shopping, horse riding, shopping, going to the doctors or visiting relatives. There is a lot of shopping done here! Personal plans are a great mixture of structure, people know what to expect and flexibility- if there is a better thing to do, then let's do it. There are great links with local GPs, Community Health Teams, the hospital and hospice. Families are in and out all the time. The service is well lead by an experienced and committed service manager.

The service is well commissioned – with enough money (just) to do it properly. There is a large staff team and they are clearly dedicated to ensuring everyone gets the best deal they can. They are always seeing if new things can be done or improved. For instance when someone is in hospital they go with them reducing anxiety and ensuring that no one gets stuck there. Staff get extra training to undertake medical procedures that mean people can come home quickly.

CQC and commissioners think it's great. Relatives think it's great, but the service manager knows it's not good enough yet.

Future service focus

The SWOT analysis of the Group and a review of commissioning intentions in the areas in which we operate lead to a Group Board decision, that whilst we would not stop supporting our current range of people, future development would concentrate on supporting people

People with learning disabilities and/or autism who have complex needs, with a particular focus on behaviour that challenges, and/or complex health conditions.

People with acquired brain injury

People with a learning disability and/or autism who also have a forensic history

This focuses on our organisational expertise and experience, is an area of social care with many opportunities and is in line with what commissioners prefer.

Here are a couple of examples of what we mean.....

Simon's Story

"Simon is a different person now. Every morning he seems excited about the day ahead."

Simon has profound learning disabilities and complex needs relating to his physical disabilities. Before coming to Avenues, Simon had spent most of his life in an institutional setting. His support workers noticed early on that during the day Simon rarely engaged in any activities. At night, he slept very badly, often waking up screaming and crying. The support team were concerned that Simon was unhappy and knew that something needed to change.

The team decided to support Simon using active support. They started with daily tasks, such as doing the laundry, encouraging Simon to pull the washing off the line and put the clothes in the basket. One member of the support team noticed that Simon enjoyed feeling the different kinds of material. The team then decided to support Simon to do other types of sensory activities, and as time went on, Simon became more and more engaged with his surroundings.

As a next step, the support team held opportunity sessions with Simon to discover new activities he might be interested in trying. Opportunity sessions are a way of finding out someone's interests by presenting different activities to them, either through images or through doing an activity for the first time, to see how they respond.

Over time, Simon has picked up many new interests, and he now enjoys gardening, watching football, sensory sessions, hydrotherapy, candle making and participating in local community events.

Simon now sleeps very well and rarely needs assistance during the night. His quality of life has improved and his support workers are pleased with his progress.

Clare's Story

"For the first time in a long time, I've seen Clare smile, laugh and just be herself. It's a huge weight off my shoulders knowing that she is okay again. My daughter is now close by, she is living life the way she wants and she is happy. I can't tell you what this means to me."

Clare has autism and complex needs. After being sectioned under the Mental Health Act she had been admitted as an inpatient to an assessment and treatment centre. She didn't have many opportunities to go out and her family lived too far away to visit on a regular basis.

The transition from the assessment and treatment centre to her own flat involved many steps over a period of months to make sure that Clare was ready to move. Her new support team spent time building a relationship with her and getting to know more about her

interests and hopes for the future so that they could plan how best to support Clare when she moved.

“I’m extremely happy with Clare’s response to the team. Her personality has really shone out now that she has freedom to express herself and control her life the way she wants.”

Mel, Service Manager

The team works with Clare using a mixture of person-centred active support and positive behaviour support. As a result, Clare now feels more in control. She is able to plan her day with her support team using a visual timetable. Small changes like this, which the team have introduced gradually, have made a difference to Clare’s quality of life.

The positive changes in Clare’s behaviour have allowed her to become more active and even adventurous. Her team has supported her to discover new hobbies, as well as encouraging her to take part in day-to-day tasks like shopping. Clare is supported to go out at least once a day and her new passion is horse riding, which she does once a week.

Clare’s family are happy to see how much her life has improved. They now live much closer to Clare and enjoy their regular visits at her new home.

Tom's Story

“Before Avenues started supporting us, we had some very tough times.”

Tom is 10 and has a learning disability. His speech is limited and his behaviour is sometimes challenging. Looking after Tom had started to affect his mum’s health.

Tom needed two support workers to successfully manage his behaviour. He would sit on the floor for hours and refuse to move; he would spit, swear and be physically aggressive. In shops, he would pull things off the shelves and try to break them. Lorraine, one of Tom’s support workers says, “It was hard with Tom at first, however with consistency and patience we soon started to build a relationship.”

Tom’s support workers saw he was inquisitive and that he enjoyed being in the town centre. He also had a great sense of humour and enjoyed having fun with others. That gave his support workers something to build on. As they built a rapport with Tom he started to engage more. He grew visibly more content and observed boundaries with his behaviour. After eight months, Tom’s support needs had reduced and he needed only one support worker. At this stage, Tom’s support started to focus on promoting independence, including dressing, eating and expanding his vocabulary.

To promote physical health and wellbeing, Tom is encouraged by his support workers to do as much exercise as possible. He is supported to take a weekly swimming class as well as going to a play centre where he can safely climb, roll, and jump. During his weekly supported trips to the town centre, Tom is learning how to greet staff in shops and what to say when buying something. On supported visits to the cinema, Tom now concentrates on the film and enjoys it. Lorraine says, “The first time we took him his behaviour was challenging. He rolled down the aisles, pulled the hair of the lady sitting in front and ran outside and started kicking the lift doors. He’s a different person now. He enjoys himself and it is a pleasure to be out with him.”

Looking forward

Strategic Objectives

Better Lives, Better Jobs, Better Business

Avenues will grow sustainably in the period of the plan. We will achieve this by supporting people to live better lives, being a better employer and doing better business.

Avenues exists to support people with complex needs to lead the life they want, where they want supported by whom they choose. Therefore, the first priority of this plan is to ensure that the lives of people we support improve over the years of the plan – ***Better Lives***.

This can only be achieved by committed, skilled, experienced staff. Therefore our second priority is to continually improve the experience of working for us – ***Better Jobs***.

Finally we can only achieve these priorities if we are a sustainable organisation. If they want us to, we can support people for decades so we owe it to them to manage our business well, systems, policies, and finances – ***Better Business***.

We will judge our current work and any future work against these three criteria, and develop evidence against which progress can be measured.

Better Lives

Better Lives is really doing ordinary things, going out, having friends, having intimate personal relationships, having a laugh, staying healthy.

We will be undertaking a major program of research on service improvement with the Tizard Centre at the University of Kent, which will be a significant driver of our quality improvement program – leading to better lives – central target for subsidiaries.

There is evidence that giving a person control of the resources spent on their support leads to better support and improved value for money. It is also a key plank of NHS England's Transforming Care programme so we aim to introduce personal health and care budgets, and/or independent support funds in the first year of the plan and to increase their use in subsequent years.

The involvement of families and carers is crucial to the delivery of good support and we will explore the possibility of funding a family worker across the Group to ensure that families are fully involved in the creation and delivery of personal plans.

Evidence

- Percentage of objectives achieved in support plan, including how many mates, how often did I go out to non-segregated settings.
- Engagement levels as measured by the Tizard Centre.
- Percentage of individual budgets increased over the lifetime of the plan.

Better Jobs

Supporting people to lead better lives is a complex task that changes over time, and therefore requires skilled staff. We aim to continue to be an employer of choice, offering exceptional opportunities to develop and to have a level of remuneration to reflect the skills and experience we require. We will work hard to improve the reputation of social care roles and to promote the public value of this work – we will not be a ‘minimum wage’ employer with the negative connotations that this brings.

We aim to raise the salary of specialist support workers complex support practitioner in real terms, in each of the years of the Plan. New rates are outlined in the table below.

A key plank of the strategy and one that will differentiate Avenues from other providers will be the further development of a management and leadership program for first-line managers - particularly service managers. Identifying alternative career pathways for support workers, developing practice leadership, retaining skilled and experienced support workers to work with people that we support and demonstrating best practice and improving quality will be a priority to ensure that we can offer employees diverse and exciting careers, not just jobs.

We will deliver a targeted recruitment campaign offering attractive salaries and employment benefits, leadership and development programmes, together with sector leading, skills based training centred on Active Support and Positive Behaviour Support.

Evidence

- Improved remuneration rates
- Reduced staff turnover
- Reduced agency use
- Improved staff satisfaction levels
- Introduce role of Practice Leader in first year of plan
- Introduce PBS and Active Support training
- Reintroduce Avenues management and leadership academy in 2019/20
- Increase use of advanced apprenticeships

Better Business

The third strand of sustainable development is to “do better business”. We need to review the financial health of all our services, to ensure their viability, taking difficult decisions when they are not sustainable. We will review our central costs, separate out those relating to service quality and plan a reduction as a % of turnover in each year of the plan. All costings for new services will ensure sustainability, and include appropriate staff costings that will support us to pay above the Industry average, and never to become a minimum wage employer. This programme of work will deliver consistent surpluses to the Group, which will create ‘free reserves’ enabling us to weather the inevitable difficulties faced by social care, and will also allow us to make strategic choices. Better business will also include improving our business systems, IT infrastructure, project management capacity and data management. We will continue to improve our governance processes.

As part of our drive to deliver better business we need to promote the fact that in addition to improved quality and choice our services save public money, which is sometimes forgotten given the high unit costs. This message is particularly important for commissioners, both national and local.

A key plank of better business will be the delivery of sustainable development.

The twin aims of sustainable development will improve our current services, through redevelopment, making them fit for the future and develop new services to support people. The area in which we work is complex, and does not lend itself to simplistic growth targets, but given our capacity, the ability to invest and the obvious need, we project our growth will be in the range outlined in the tables below.

We owe it to everyone connected to Avenues, the people we support, their relatives, people we employ, commissioners and communities, to provide ever improving services and support. Our first responsibility is to people we currently support and we need to ensure that services change to meet their evolving needs and wishes.

We believe that we have a responsibility to ensure that people with learning disabilities should not live in secure mental health settings in anything like the current numbers. A small number of people have mental health issues requiring this service, but the vast majority of people should just not be there. There are better quality, community based alternatives and the increased delivery of these are at the heart of Avenues growth strategy. It is not one based on percentage growth, but meeting the needs of a group of people who currently get an appallingly bad deal.

All future developments should be judged against Better Lives, Better Jobs, and Better Business criteria.

Redevelopment

The redevelopment programme will ensure that many of our services will have a future but some that are not viable will be the subject of honest conversations with commissioners. As long as services make an appropriate contribution we will be able to provide them but where they do not we are not in a position to subsidise commissioners. We have experience of this process having renegotiated a number of contracts in Avenues East and sadly having to return some to commissioners who were not prepared to pay a sustainable rate.

Development

In the year 2018/19 we aim and to support between 15 and 30 new people spread across the Group. In addition redevelopment of 6-8 services will commence. In aim to support a further 30-50 people. Again, a programme of redevelopment outlined in the subsidiary plans will continue. Towards the end of year 2 we will review progress and may recalibrate our gross plans but at present we aim to support a further 40-50 people and complete the first phase of the redevelopment plans.

Year	Year 1 at £18,000		Year 2 at £18,500		Year 3 at £19,000		Total	
							Min	Max
New people supported	15	30	30	50	40	60	85	140
No. of support workers 1:7	105	210	210	350	280	420	595	980
No. of support workers 1:10	150	300	300	500	400	600	850	1400
No. of support workers 1:12	180	360	360	600	480	720	1020	1680
Cost at 1:7	2,268,000	4,536,000	4,662,000	7,770,000	6,384,000	9,576,000	13,314,000	21,882,000
Cost at 1:10	3,240,000	6,480,000	6,660,000	11,100,000	9,120,000	13,680,000	19,020,000	31,260,000
Cost at 1:12	3,888,000	7,776,000	7,992,000	13,320,000	10,944,000	16,416,000	22,824,000	37,512,000

Other costs at 18% 1:7	510,300	1,020,600	1,048,950	1,748,250	1,436,400	2,154,600	2,995,650	4,923,450
Other costs at 18% 1:10	729,000	1,458,000	1,498,500	2,497,500	2,052,000	3,078,000	4,279,500	7,033,500
Other costs at 18% 1:12	874,800	1,749,600	1,798,200	2,997,000	2,462,400	3,693,600	5,135,400	8,440,200

Costs per new person	Year 1		Year 2		Year 3	
	Full Cost	Weekly	Full Cost	Weekly	Full Cost	Weekly
Annual cost for 1:7	185,220	3,561.92	190,365	3,660.87	195,510	3,759.81
Annual costs for 1:10	264,600	5,088.46	271,950	5,229.81	279,300	5,371.15
Annual costs for 1:12	317,520	6,106.15	326,340	6,275.77	335,160	6,445.38

This plan anticipates a relatively modest rise in the number of people we support but given their complexity it involves a significant increase in staff, between 980 and 2,760.

Even at the lower end these are significant targets particularly given the state of the social care workforce market. We will target particular geographical areas to develop and expand our area of operation and be robust in our negotiations with commissioners. The projected growth over the three years is between £15.5M and £45M depending on how many new people we support, the intensity of the support and salaries paid to staff. It is very unlikely that the upper figure is achievable nor indeed desirable. Growth plans will be reviewed annually.

In addition to organisational growth we will guarantee to save public money, provide a better service and to price our services to ensure that we can recruit staff and hence be sustainable.

A new feature of this strategic plan is the housing function. Following the merger with Welmede the group now owns and manages properties, and has the opportunity to develop where appropriate across the group and as importantly to foster new long term partnerships with a variety of housing providers to offer choice to existing and potential people we support.

Housing

Within the lifetime of the plan our ambitions for housing are:

- To establish a new function to support subsidiaries with housing management and development. The team will work across the group to provide consistent housing management services and enable subsidiaries to focus upon delivering even better services.
- Review our costing for housing services, ensuring that we achieve full cost recovery and investment for the future.
- Develop a range of partnerships to support the development and acquisition of properties.
- Develop the growth of new services through the acquisition and development of property, identifying and securing funding for capital development.

The final plank of the better business strategy will be to be open to approaches from other organisations to join the Group and to monitor others in particular areas where they might add to our services, or enhance our infrastructure. To be clear the merger and acquisitions strategy is an adjunct to the main development process which is organic.

Evidence of Better Business

- All Services make a sustainable financial contribution 10-20%? Depending on size
- Decreasing central costs as a percentage of overall costs
- Restructure senior management to be more efficient and promote quality
- Investment in growth
- Sustainable growth
- Free reserves/working capital created
- Between 85-140 new people in 3 years
- New geographical areas
- Monitor other organisations with a view to partnerships/mergers particularly where it deepens our presence in an area.

Finally, in order to deliver all 3 strategic objectives we will reorganise the senior management structure to introduce a new EMT level post of Director of Quality. This reflects the strategic importance of maintaining and improving quality across the Group. We will also rationalise some head office management structures and will finally we will simplify the operational management structure, ensuring only 1 subsidiary operates in each geographical area and they are each led by a Regional Director.

Strategic plan ambitions

So the plan will deliver better lives, jobs and business. It outlines broad objectives to be supplemented by yearly operational plans outlining detailed objectives and plans to achieve them and indices to allow progress to be measured.

The Group Strategic Plan is supplemented by a number of functional plans, Finance, HR, I.T/Systems, Quality, Housing, Growth, Governance and Welmede Integration. All of the functional plans need to relate to Better Lives, Better Jobs and Better Business. The relationship between the plans is outlined in the diagram below, describing the 'plan on a page'. The subsidiary plans operationalise the strategic plan adapting for local factors. These later plans will follow the same format and are attached as appendices.

*[To be completed after subsidiary Board meetings].

Financial projections 2018/21

Having established our strategic objectives, and described our plans to achieve them, we need to deliver a sustainable financial performance. Finances in social care will be very tight in Avenues the current position is a reflection of this. The loss in 2017/18 will be eliminated and the Group will make surpluses in 2019/20 and 2020/21. This will be achieved through stopping providing loss making services, greater efficiencies and targeted growth.

The Group financial projections are outlined in the table below:

AVENUES GROUP CONSOLIDATED BUDGET 2018-2021 WITH 2017/18 FORECAST

Strategic Plan	Avenues South East				Welmede				Avenues London				Avenues East				Directorate				Group Total			
	10 + 2 Forecast	Budget 2018/19	Budget 2019/20	Budget 2020/21	10 + 2 Foreca st	Budget 2018/19	Budget 2019/20	Budget 2020/21	10 + 2 Forecast	Budget 2018/19	Budget 2019/20	Budget 2020/21	10 + 2 Forecast	Budget 2018/19	Budget 2019/20	Budget 2020/21	10 + 2 Forecast	Budget 2018/19	Budget 2019/20	Budget 2020/21	10 + 2 Forecast	Budget 2018/19	Budget 2019/20	Budget 2020/21
2018-2021 Budget With Forecast	£K	£ K	£ K	£ K	£K	£ K	£ K	£ K	£K	£ K	£ K	£ K	£K	£ K	£ K	£ K	£K	£ K	£ K	£ K	£K	£ K	£ K	£ K
Income																								
Support Fees	16,272	17,250	17,644	17,049	12,761	13,092	13,411	13,799	8,540	9,387	9,692	9,332	4,682	5,118	5,198	5,506					42,255	44,847	45,945	45,685
Growth			786	1,311																	0	0	786	1,311
Voids (un-funded)	(651)	(512)	(512)	(512)	(84)	(100)	(100)	(100)	(59)	(43)	(43)	(43)	(168)	0	0	0					(962)	(655)	(655)	(655)
Residential Contribution	103	138	139	141	2,133	2,362	2,297	2,344	175	95	82	82	74	57	57	57					2,485	2,652	2,576	2,624
Fundraising																	0	10	0	0	0	10	0	0
Other Income	104	78	79	80	303	160	152	152	256	228	228	228	361	109	109	109	136	80	0	0	1,160	656	569	569
Rebates	0	0	0	0	(1)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0					(1)	0	0	0
	15,829	16,954	18,136	18,068	15,112	15,514	15,760	16,195	8,913	9,667	9,960	9,599	4,948	5,285	5,364	5,672	136	90	0	0	44,938	47,511	49,221	49,535
Staff Costs																								
Basic Salaries	9,967	10,498	11,161	11,053	7,943	7,962	8,623	9,018	5,861	6,269	6,519	6,188	3,286	3,372	3,457	3,690	2,657	2,813	2,815	2,856	29,715	30,915	32,574	32,804
Enhancement	995	1,146	1,146	1,146	1,326	1,394	1,379	1,395	772	755	703	617	244	340	342	346	6	0	0	0	3,343	3,635	3,570	3,503
National Insurance	763	838	838	838	609	744	755	776	501	529	520	475	235	245	253	275	255	277	278	282	2,363	2,633	2,643	2,645
Pension	147	257	260	260	441	339	344	351	99	156	153	139	43	76	113	120	109	141	142	144	839	968	1,012	1,014
Agency premium	799	522	441	387	509	556	427	375	44	18	17	17	210	187	173	167	55	0	25	25	1,618	1,283	1,084	971
Wel - Salary adj						(290)	(800)	(800)													0	(290)	(800)	(800)
	12,672	13,260	13,845	13,683	10,829	10,704	10,728	11,115	7,277	7,727	7,912	7,436	4,018	4,221	4,338	4,597	3,082	3,231	3,260	3,307	37,878	39,144	40,082	40,138
Other Staff Costs																								
Training	56	83	83	83	112	142	151	160	32	45	45	45	28	35	35	35	45	83	83	83	273	389	397	406
Training Levy	45	47	47	47	38	44	47	49	27	32	32	32	0	3	3	4	11	13	15	15	121	138	143	146
Recruitment	139	135	135	135	47	79	84	89	37	34	34	39	29	30	30	30	71	57	60	63	323	335	342	356
Occupational Health	19	22	22	22	13	10	11	11	11	14	14	14	9	10	10	10	7	9	11	13	59	64	67	69
	258	286	286	286	209	275	292	309	108	125	125	131	66	78	78	78	135	162	169	174	776	925	949	978
Total Staff Costs	12,930	13,547	14,132	13,969	11,038	10,979	11,019	11,424	7,385	7,852	8,037	7,566	4,084	4,299	4,416	4,676	3,217	3,393	3,429	3,481	38,654	40,069	41,032	41,116
Operating Costs																								
Staff Mileage	0	139	139	139					0	20	19	18					0	34	35	35	0	194	193	192
Operational costs (Housekeeping)	952	738	786	740	1,144	1,073	1,052	1,066	421	290	260	259	212	253	253	253	236	174	177	179	2,964	2,529	2,529	2,498
Equipment, vehicles and servicing	268	244	244	244	242	330	329	337	88	99	95	96	0	5	5	5	131	261	265	269	729	940	938	951
Other costs	87	164	164	164	493	219	218	219	60	121	118	114	60	53	53	53	747	828	841	853	1,446	1,385	1,394	1,404
Total Other Costs	1,307	1,285	1,333	1,287	1,879	1,622	1,599	1,622	568	532	492	488	271	312	312	312	1,114	1,298	1,318	1,337	5,139	5,048	5,054	5,045
Property Costs	660	673	647	629	932	953	971	1,047	263	224	217	218	90	74	74	74	364	416	428	441	2,309	2,340	2,337	2,408
Total Direct Operating Costs	1,967	1,958	1,980	1,916	2,811	2,575	2,570	2,669	831	756	709	705	361	386	386	386	1,477	1,713	1,746	1,778	7,447	7,388	7,391	7,453
TOTAL COSTS	14,897	15,504	16,112	15,885	13,849	13,555	13,589	14,093	8,216	8,608	8,746	8,271	4,446	4,685	4,802	5,061	4,694	5,106	5,174	5,258	46,101	47,457	48,423	48,569
SURPLUS/(DEFICIT) Before Ce	932	1,450	2,024	2,183	1,264	1,959	2,171	2,103	696	1,060	1,213	1,328	502	600	563	610	(4,558)	(5,016)	(5,174)	(5,258)	(1,164)	53	798	966

Surplus (Deficit) %	5.9%	8.6%	11.2%	12.1%	8.4%	12.6%	13.8%	13.0%	7.8%	11.0%	12.2%	13.8%	10.1%	11.4%	10.5%	10.8%	(2.6%)	0.1%	1.6%	1.9%
Staff %	81.7%	79.9%	77.9%	77.3%	73.0%	70.8%	69.9%	70.5%	82.9%	81.2%	80.7%	78.8%	82.5%	81.3%	82.3%	82.4%	86.0%	84.3%	83.4%	83.0%

Conclusion

Where will we be in three years' time?

We will be able to prove that the quality of lives of people we support is better than it is now through evidence provided by the Tizard Centre, our own internal quality assurance systems and simply by talking to people and their families. We will be an employer of choice, with high staff satisfaction levels, minimal use of agency staff and salary levels in the top 25% in the sector.

We will have sufficient free reserve to enable choice and development, and to weather inevitable financial storms. Our central costs will have reduced to below 10% of turnover, and we will have a widespread use of mobile technology underpinning flexible quality services, and greatly enhancing communication with staff. Finally Avenues will be an authoritative voice in the Sector, whose views are regularly sought.

Basically, it will just be better!

Everyone should have the opportunity to be an active citizen and engaged in the community where they live.

avenuesgroup.org.uk