

Avenues
Strategic Plan
2021 - 2025

Building Better Lives Together

Contents

Page	
1	Strategy on a Page - Avenues Strategic Ambitions 2021-2025 <i>Overview of the strategy to take us to 2025</i>
2 – 4	Introduction and Foreword
5	Our Ethos and Values
6 - 8	Avenues Strategic Ambitions for 2025 – Executive Summary <i>Why we think it's important</i>
9 – 11	The Details <i>What we think is important</i>
12	Ambition One Quality and Specialism
13 – 16	Ambition Two Capacity and Resources
17 – 18	Ambition Three Reputation and Reach
19 – 21	Ambition Four Sustainability and Growth
22	Ambition Five Engagement and Co-production
23	Conclusion

Strategy on a Page - Avenues Strategic Ambitions 2021-2025

Our Purpose: To fulfil our vision for more people who need us, in more places with even better services, through the transformation of our organisation and services.				
Our Vision: Everyone has the opportunity to be an active citizen in their local community				
Our Mission: To support people to overcome the disadvantages that they face through illness, injury and disability				
Quality and Specialism	Capacity and Resources	Reputation and Reach	Sustainability and Growth	Engagement and Coproduction
Avenues will be known and recognised as a high-quality specialist provider of social care services to people with a learning disability, those people with an acquired brain injury, and also those with a life limiting condition. By 2025 Avenues will have an exemplar offering for people living with Autism.	Avenues will have sufficient capacity and resources so as to ensure organisational resilience, support for the long term and offer high levels of efficiency and leanness in the way we work. We will maximise the use of improved business systems to provide targeted business intelligence and analysis, leading to better, more timely decisions	Avenues will be known to, and valued by, a broader group of potential purchasers and other key stakeholders including families, jobseekers, sector professionals, leading sector academics - and people with a learning disability.	Avenues will offer a variety of models of support that will suit people’s needs and who will need support at different stages of their life journey. We will have attracted new customers, funders, and commissioners, thereby diversifying our income.	Avenues will be known for the strength and quality of our engagement and co-production. People who receive our services, their families and significant others in their lives will influence what we do, how we do it and will tell us what they want.

Introduction

Thank you for taking the time to find out more about Avenues, and our ambitions for the next four years and beyond. For more than 25 years Avenues has striven to provide the very best to the people we support. We have succeeded in transforming the lives of so many people for the better, and the ripples of which have touched their families, friends, and communities where they now live. Over that time, we have gradually grown in terms of the numbers of people supported and the areas in which we operate. But we believe that we can do more.

This strategy comes at a truly exciting time for Avenues, as we survey the landscape of social care and envision how this extraordinary organisation can make use of its huge potential.

We aim to extend the Avenues offer to many more people who need and deserve the very best social care and continue to give the hundreds of people we already support the same; today, and long into the future. Avenues will become a provider of choice across a wider geographical area, making links to people needing support, their families, and commissioners in areas adjacent to areas in which we currently work.

We are a learning organisation, and this has been evident throughout the term of our last strategy. We adapted and tackled the challenges of the Transforming Care programme, modernised services which were not meeting current day best practice, and more recently tackled the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic as it swept across the country – with significant risks to vulnerable people with care and support needs. We have proactively managed the risks associated with access and availability of testing, reliability of PPE supplies and as I write this, we are gearing up to ensure that all the people we support have access to vaccinations

I am hugely proud of the way Avenues reorganised and adapted to these situations. Whilst all very different in nature, each underlined the precarious environment that third sector providers, like Avenues, operate in.

In the midst of all of this, Avenues showed its true colours; an organisation that was prepared for the adverse events, and still able to exceed expectations. Through the pandemic we successfully opened new complex services and safely transitioned people into communities where they could thrive.

Much of this strategy is shaped by our learning from these events, a new recognition of the organisation's outstanding abilities, and our consequent duty – whatever the barriers - to offer our support to more people. We will broaden our service offer, with an aim, for example, of becoming an exemplar service provider for people with autism.

We will widen our reputation as a truly agile, high-quality provider, able to respond swiftly and effectively to the complex world we operate in, and consistently deliver our vision for people and commissioners.

We will ensure that Avenues increases its organisational strength – ensuring that we make a reasonable return on the services we operate – and so ensuring that we remain financially stable, and able to weather the turmoil that so often arises within the social care world.

March 2021

Of course, to do all this well, the fundamentals must be right – robustly putting the voices of the people we support at the centre of what we do, while building stronger connections with their families and those who matter to them.

Doing all this properly, and to our own high standards, is dependent on funding and resources. We

know from experience that we cannot rely on significant additional funding through central or local government, or NHS commissioning. We must therefore become the masters of our own destiny and foster an entrepreneurial spirit. We will find new, ethically-sound revenue streams, seizing the right opportunities and using the innate creativity and determination that runs through the organisation to make the best use of our funds, wherever they come from.

Finally, I would like to recognise the enduring dedication and skill of support workers, both at Avenues and across the sector, who do so much for so many with so little in return. The organisation will continue to do everything it can to get a better deal and better pay for front line staff. We know that without dedicated, well trained and well supported staff, our strategy and ambitions cannot be fulfilled.

Terry Rich, Chair of Trustees

Foreword from Jo Land, Group Chief Executive Officer

Avenues has always gone the extra mile to provide the best support to people with profound and multiple learning disabilities, autism and acquired brain injury.

The fulfilment of this strategy will mean we are able to continue to provide our unique support in the long term, to more people, in more places, to the consistently high standards they deserve - and our vision demands.

But Avenues will continue to go the extra mile. The pandemic in 2020 demonstrated what an exceptional workforce we have, and our culture means we will not allow external challenges to inhibit the lives of the people we support.

Our aspiration is not to manage people's lives, but to understand what really matters to them and unlock the opportunities they want to take. But no provider can do this effectively in isolation. Avenues is a community of people; those supported, their families, the people who work for us and others. All their voices must be heard. We will find new ways for everyone to appropriately influence how we make best use of the funding we have, and make sure people continue to smile, laugh and grow.

Over the lifetime of this strategy, our digital journey and use of technology will afford us the opportunity to promote greater independence for the people we support whilst also improving our operations. We will continue to build a justified reputation for supporting even more people to flourish, regardless of the challenges.

Our Ethos and Values

Avenues support is about confidence-building care, which meets the needs of individuals, and their families.

It's a place where people smile, laugh and grow - and can achieve extraordinary things.

Everyone is different, but our aspirations for those we support is steadfast – we want everyone to have the opportunity to have a fulfilling life, regardless of the challenges they are faced with each day.

We love seeing the progress people make, encouraging individuality, confidence and independence, and seeking out opportunities in life for them to flourish, and have fun.

As a charity, we love to go the extra mile, investing in our team so that their skills are focused on expanding people's lives.

This is because we know that well-supported people support people well.

That's why all our support packages are unique, recognising the distinct needs, ambitions, likes and dislikes of each person. Getting this right is dependent on a real understanding of what matters to them, so we work closely with their families and others in their lives to build support plans that really work for them. For us this is all about the ordinary and everyday things like getting outdoors, going shopping, phoning your sister, getting a haircut or just making a cup of tea when you want it.

It's also about making more complicated choices, like deciding where to live or who you want to be friends with. Making choices also means taking risks, so we support people to do this safely. Of course not everybody is able to take part in the same levels of activity, but we help people to do as much as they want to do. We believe that everyone that we support has the right to be the very best that can be - overcoming barriers that limit them and achieving their full potential.

Our 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.

Avenues Strategic Ambitions for 2025 – Executive Summary

Our Ambitions are the bedrock of our vision for 2025. Each Ambition sets out clearly the areas that we consider to be essential to Avenues achieving our vision for 2025. No one area of Ambition is more important than another; we need to achieve them all by balancing our priorities and managing competing demands and the delivery of each will be reflected in separate annual operating plans to ensure that we deliver them all by 2025.

1. **Quality and Specialism** by 2025 Avenues will be known and recognised as a high-quality specialist provider of social care services to people with a learning disability, often combined with a profound physical and/or mental health condition, those people with an acquired brain injury, and also those with a life limiting condition. By 2025 Avenues will have an exemplar offering for people living with Autism.

Why? As a support provider we must always aim to deliver the best quality for the people we support and for the funders who purchase our services. We are good at what we do and therefore we should expand what we do to other areas, keeping to our reputation as a specialist provider.

Including;

- An organisational development strategy to articulate our provision of services to those people who have Autism and their families, who are looking for a new approach.
- Delivery of a system wide approach to Active and Positive Behaviour Support.
- A continually improving and evolving quality framework that evidences the positive impact we have on people's lives.
- 100% Good or Outstanding rating with CQC.
- A positive approval rating from the families of the people that we support.

2. **Capacity and Resources** - Avenues in 2025 will have sufficient flexibility, capacity and resources so as to ensure organisational resilience, support for the long term and offer high levels of efficiency and effectiveness in the way we work. We will maximise the use of improved business systems to provide high impact business intelligence and analysis, helping us to continually improve our decision making. We aim to generate a modest surplus on our operations enabling us to withstand unexpected events and to be able to invest in our infrastructure and into service innovation.

Why? In order to ensure that we are here for the future and we operate as effectively as we can to invest our surpluses back into services, offering continual improvement for the people that we support and those that we employ

Including

- Our use of mobile digital technology and business systems will be further developed, building upon what we currently have in place, supporting our ability to understand our business and respond to emerging opportunities
- We will also explore how technology can be harnessed to promote the independence of the people we support.
- Our workforce will be supported and developed to work efficiently and effectively, using technology to further improve our performance.
- Utilising our estate of property, whether that be owned or through partnerships with others, we will make sure that we are able to respond to the housing needs of the people we support and that our offices are fit for a modern, post Covid, working environment.

3. **Reputation and Reach** – By 2025 Avenues will be known to, and valued by, a broader group of potential purchasers and other key stakeholders.

Why? We believe that we can expand our reach and can do more of what we do and benefit more people who need our support, demonstrating the improvement we can achieve in someone's life

Including

- Families will know of us and our work to support people to have the best life and will share their stories with us.
- We will have developed an understanding of the impact of our work through Social Impact measurement and be able to articulate our social value.
- A great place to work and develop a career in health and social care.
- A great partner organisation to work with, recommended by purchasers and our regulators.

4. **Sustainability and Growth** – in 2025 Avenues will offer a variety of models of support that will suit people's needs and which are capable of providing great support at different stages of their life journey. We will have attracted new customers, funders, and commissioners, diversifying our income streams and reducing our reliance upon specific commissioners and geographies.

Why? To de-risk our income profile we will offer new and exciting service models based upon what people want and what works, meeting the needs of the people that we currently exist to serve and those of the future.

Including

- An agile and responsive approach to business development.
- Rebalancing our portfolio of contracts to achieve greater balance and reduce risk.
- Developing new income streams beyond statutory funding, adding value and innovation.

- Developing our service model offers to appeal to new or emerging markets
- Growing beyond our current geographic reach based upon thorough assessment of opportunities.
- Being open to new partnerships, collaborations, mergers and acquisitions.

5. **Engagement and Co-production** – Avenues in 2025 will be known for the strength and quality of our engagement and co-production. People who receive our services, their families and significant others in their lives will influence what we do, how we do it and will tell us what they want.

Why? The support that we will offer will be informed and shaped by the people who need that support and their families. All of these people should be a part of helping us to continually improve.

Including

- Quality Checkers to hold us to account for the quality of the support that we provide.
- A Social Enterprise offering employment and development for the people that we and others support.
- Family Consultants who we can work with to develop services that meet the needs of their family member. These family consultants can help us to understand and meet the aspirations of families for their loved ones.
- Expert User Reference Group of people we support, to be involved in our decision making and to provide us with a valuable perspective on what we do and how we do it.

The Details

External Context and Opportunity

At the time of writing this strategy there are many factors influencing the external environment. While some of these are new and related to the pandemic others are well known and precede 2020. Perhaps the most overwhelming aspect influencing future planning is the sheer level of uncertainty about what the future holds for individuals and organisations in the UK. This necessitates an ongoing careful tracking of the external environment to identify and respond to threats in a timely manner, as well as to capitalise on the opportunities for development and innovation that a post-pandemic period is likely to offer. A flexible and adaptable strategy that is allowed to evolve as the external world changes is therefore critical to Avenues and the way that we work will reflect this.

UK Economic Position – The Backdrop to our Plans

Undoubtedly the UK economic position coming out of the pandemic will be troubled. Directly impacting Avenues is the financial position of its primary purchasers, Local Authorities, nearly nine out of ten of which are facing budget deficits this year with some considering section 114 notices unless further central government funding is forthcoming (In Your Area, 2020). For some time, Local Authority finance has been of concern. The National Audit Office commented in 2018 that *“the current trajectory for local government is towards a narrow core offer increasingly centred on social care”*. The consequences of the pandemic mean it is inevitable that providers like Avenues will see a further squeeze on contract funding. There will be further economic implications that will play out in the coming years from the anticipated ruling on sleep-ins and government plans to potentially freeze the upward trajectory of the national living wage in the shorter term though higher minimum ‘care worker’ pay rates may be set in the longer term.

A worsening economic position is not all bad news for social care providers, however. The predicted 7.5% - 10% working age unemployment by mid-2021 (BBC, 2020) means opportunities for recruitment into the sector, and potentially improved staff retention rates. This will require sustained focus on induction, training and managerial support for new entrants to the sector.

The Positioning of Social Care

For some time, it has been widely acknowledged that social care is in crisis. While the pandemic means an ongoing delay to the green paper, it has shone a spotlight for central government on the importance of social care and there is a growing awareness of the importance of and reliance upon social care with the general public. The sector is seeking to capitalise on this increased awareness, e.g., the introduction of new CARE brand. There are likely to be some fundamental changes to the positioning of social care during the strategy lifetime with the most radical muted idea being the wholesale lift of social care from Local Authorities to put it under the management of the NHS. Even if plans do not go this far, closer

integration with the NHS is likely and the drive towards Integrated Care Systems and Provider Led Collaboratives remain on track.

Questions remain about the implications for future social care contracts as a result of squeezed financial pressures and greater NHS involvement. On the one hand it could lead to larger, more complex contracts such as those used for transforming rehabilitation or the Work Programme, seeking economies of scale and involvement of subcontracting arrangements. Alternatively lessons may have been learnt from the failings of these programmes and the looser, more networked place-based contracting could win out, such as the vision set out by Danny Kruger (2020) (in a report commissioned by the government) of a 'social covenant' in which the social value delivered by charities and social businesses is more highly prized and commissioners are freed of restrictive EU Procurement rules to work more in partnership with local organisations on the design and delivery of services.

The Learning Disability and Autism markets

Considering the sectors most relevant to Avenues specifically, demand for learning disability services is likely to continue to grow due to factors including improved life expectancy, better medical interventions at birth leading people being more likely to survive to adulthood and increasing unwillingness or inability for families to provide informal care at home. According to Laing Buisson there is no evidence of increasing prevalence of Autism in the UK population, but a rising profile of Autism is leading to a growing demand for specialist services for people who previously were left vulnerable and at risk of deteriorating mental health and/or brushes with the criminal justice system.

Avenues operates within a complex and under-resourced system, for example there is a significant shortfall in numbers of learning disability nurses available, commissioning teams in local authorities have been seriously depleted over recent years with fewer commissioners with a specialist understanding of the services they commission, social housing availability can be challenging and lack of clarity in accountability and decision making are amongst the reasons cited for the poor performance around the Transforming Care Programme. While Avenues can and should seek to influence system change there are systemic issues in the external environment which mean only large scale, government led bold changes are likely to lead to lasting impact. Therefore, an acknowledgment of this imperfect system is necessary and having an understanding of the local conditions and context, including perhaps a selective approach to where Avenues chooses to operate is likely to be important for future sustainable development.

The Transforming Care market was a key focus for the previous Avenues strategy. While the Transforming Care programme has seen some successes, including changing the lives of some people now supported by Avenues, it has failed to meet its targets and numbers of people as inpatients in ATUs and secure units are growing again (NHS Digital, 2020). In particular numbers are growing amongst younger people and those with a diagnosis of autism. Meanwhile others in the sector are campaigning against the development of new private hospitals and seeking to draw attention to the ongoing poor performance (and abuse in some cases) in this type of provision (Mencap, 2020). Under the NHS Long Term Plan the

Transforming Care Programme has found a new home and the targets are included in the Top 20 objectives of the Long-Term Plan for the NHS going forward (NHS, 2020), though it remains to be seen how much of a focus these will have in the immediate future.

As the Chinese proverb says *'When the wind of change blows, some build walls, while others build windmills.* The pandemic has heightened awareness of underlying weaknesses for some providers in the sector. While some, including Avenues, have expertly steered their organisation through the crisis others are understood to be struggling. The anticipated sleep-in ruling is likely to cause some further turbulence in the Learning Disability provider market in particular, with the potential for a ruling against Mencap to tip some providers into serious financial trouble. This potentially presents an opportunity for Avenues to be ready to step in and consider absorbing whole organisations or individual services thereby securing continuity of care for people who might otherwise be at risk of service closures.

Ambition One

Quality and Specialism

Complex Services

Avenues will continue to build upon its great reputation for working with individuals with profound and multiple learning disabilities and those whose behaviour challenges the services in which they live. We will be acknowledged as a sector leader in this work.

We will have an organisational development strategy that articulates our provision of services to those people who have Autism and their families, who are looking for a new approach.

Through a combination of potential acquisitions or in-house developments, we will have a compelling offer to support people with Autism that will be researched based and we are able to evidence its impact and outcomes.

We believe that continual learning is essential if we are to consistently improve the services which we provide and therefore the quality of life experiences for the people that we support. As part of our approach to learning and improving, we will work with other organisations in our sector to share best practice, develop ideas and learning, collaborating on projects to drive up the quality of our services and to improve the sector in general.

We will develop training programmes in partnership with academic experts, as well as families and people with lived experience of autism to support this development.

Quality Assurance

Avenues will be an organisation where delivery of a system wide approach to Active Support and Positive Behaviour Support is evident and embedded in everything that we do.

We will build upon our evidence based, research proven, meaningful and measurable outcomes for every person that we support. Over time we will be able to evidence the difference that our support makes to someone's life.

The Avenues Quality Framework will be continually improved and will evolve to ensure that Avenues can evidence the quality of the support that we provide and that it exceeds the standards set by our regulators and can be effectively benchmarked externally.

We will not settle for anything less than 100% Good or Outstanding rating with CQC

Avenues will seek appropriate external accreditations for what we do.

We will also seek to develop a quality rating, based upon the views of the people we support, their families, and other people important in their lives.

Ambition Two

Capacity and Resources

Digital and System Transformation

Avenues will continue with the programme of IT mobilisation that is underway in 2020. We have made significant progress with the use of technology across the organisation, prompted by the need to respond quickly to Covid 19 and we will keep up this progress.

Mobile technology solutions for all employees will be delivered in the course of this plan, moving Avenues to a paperless organisation, improving data security and delivering quicker, timelier reporting, online support planning and recording and supporting a fully flexible work force.

We will continue with our research into the uses for assistive technologies for the people that we support. We are clear that technology is rarely a replacement for the benefits of person-to-person interaction, but we also recognise that it can provide opportunities for the people we support to have greater control over their lives and more involvement and engagement in their everyday activities and can reduce loneliness and isolation.

The use of multiple aligned business systems to store, manipulate and interrogate our data will be the core to the support our central functions provide. We will use these systems to give us greater visibility of our operational and business performance and help us to drive efficient and effective performance by delivering critical business intelligence and analysis in real time, thereby facilitating faster decision making

The increased use of technology will promote opportunities for working remotely where appropriate to do so. The flexibility that this affords our workforce means that we can look at new and different ways of working and learning.

Governance and Structure

We will continually review the effectiveness of our governance arrangements making sure that they are operating in line with best practice and guidance.

Avenues has a complex corporate structure, which works well having recently been reviewed. However, it is important that this be further reviewed periodically in the course of this strategy to assess the continued suitability and explore other options of not-for-profit structure to meet the organisation's aims and objectives.

Whilst we remain committed to our charitable aims, we will explore the benefits of other not for profit organisational structures with the intention of being as cost effective and efficient as we can be.

Leadership and resilience

Avenues has a highly skilled Executive team that has been strengthened over the last year ready to meet the emerging and challenging political, financial and technological environment in which we work. Looking forward to 2025, we will have added further strength to the March 2021

Executive skill set, especially in the area of Information Technology so that we are ready and able to embrace the efficiencies and opportunities that exist and have a clear road map for technology and digital transformation underpinning our strategy.

We are supported in our mission by a highly skilled and committed board of trustees. We recognise that being a trustee is a significant responsibility, especially where the wellbeing and safety of vulnerable people is at the core of what we do. Working with our Chair of Trustees and the board members, we will develop a compelling offer to trustees so that the experience of being a trustee for Avenues is valued and contributes to professional development. We will seek to diversify our board membership so that it is more representative of the communities in which we work and the people that we employ and serve.

The Avenues Academy will support the professional development of Avenues Leaders and Managers, ensuring that they have the skill set required for their role. Everyone will have a continuous development plan in place, be regularly given feedback on their performance and we will ensure that there are succession plans in place to meet any changes in the workforce.

Property and Housing

Having access to accommodation is fundamental to our service offer, whether this is to support a long- or short-term need. For Avenues increasing our own level of property assets will provide a return on that investment over time which will enhance our long-term sustainability and profitability.

We have been successful in developing property partnerships with registered providers, NHS Trusts, Local Authorities and private investors, but will need to do more of this to meet the demands of the people we support and increase the services that we provide.

Though the quality of the accommodation we have is high, many of the people we support are growing older and we will need to adapt and change some of the services we provide to meet these needs.

In some areas it is increasingly difficult to provide sustainable services because of rising operational costs and other challenges and we need to divest away from these areas and focus upon other places in order to balance our business model.

To meet these demands, we will continue to develop our partnerships with other organisations to enable us to increase the amount of accommodation we provide.

In addition, we will seek to reduce our reliance upon this partnership model, to give us the flexibility to increase our own stock, through divesting of assets that no longer meet our needs, and investing in the acquisition and development of new property. This may also involve using our reserves to leverage and borrow to increase capacity and exploring opportunities through Social Finance models.

In partnership with our business development and operational colleagues we will establish a group wide property plan which will guide our needs and approach to property that will align with the new strategy.

We will review our housing model to ensure that it is best placed to support the funding of capital development, as well as our processes to ensure that these are efficient and continue to meet the needs of the people we support as well as demonstrating good value and return on investment.

We will establish standards for property, based upon the needs of the people we support that will govern and drive forward the quality of the Avenues offer. During the life of this strategy, we will also divest Avenues of properties which are no longer fit for purpose and are unsuitable for being transformed into accommodation that meets current and future requirements and standards for the people we support.

We will improve working conditions for colleagues working from our offices, reviewing the office portfolio to provide better value for money and efficiencies for the organisation, whilst also offering more flexible working practices and improve the quality of our environment and aim to promote greater collegiate working.

Workforce Development

By 2025, Avenues will be recognised by the labour market as a great place to work. We will ensure that our workplace is welcoming, friendly, and trusting. Employees will feel that in every interaction that they have with Avenues. To substantiate and validate this we will seek appropriate independent accreditations such as 100 Best Charities or Great Places to Work.

Avenues will be a workplace where feeling safe, secure and being able to work without the fear of negative consequences, even when you make a mistake, is recognised and encouraged. We will be a place of work where people are comfortable being themselves, diversity is respected and personal risk-taking in a safe environment is encouraged. Above all, within the Avenues community people respect each other and feel accepted.

Avenues supports and is committed to the social justice case for diversity and inclusion in the workplace. Going forward to 2025 we will build upon this commitment and as an employer will value, support and promote Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. Everyone stands to benefit when we embrace and value diversity of thoughts, ideas, and ways of working that people from different backgrounds, experiences and identities bring to work. To support this commitment, we will seek appropriate accreditation that evidences our delivery of a more diverse workforce including within our leadership and governance structures. Our internal assurance framework will be able to evidence that our support plans and opportunities for community engagement reflect our cultural diversity.

Creativity and innovation led by our employees is essential if we are to be at the forefront of developing new, unique and personalised services for people. Avenues HR team will develop at ways to promote and support creativity and innovation in the workplace.

We believe that our managers are the key to delivering the best services that we can. They are integral to recruiting and retaining the best teams, and the first point of contact for families. We will empower our managers and ensure that they have the skills, knowledge and confidence to manage their teams whilst also ensuring that they have the technical skills to use systems effectively and the professional development that is necessary for a highly skilled social care management role.

Complementing our ambition for high levels of engagement with the people that we support and their families and other stakeholders, we will work tirelessly to promote and encourage high level of employee engagement. Avenues employees will feel that they belong to an entire community and that they can contribute to shaping that community in a variety of ways, giving employees' choice about how they can contribute.

Ambition Three

Reputation and Reach

Evidencing Social Impact and Social Value

Measuring social impact is something that Avenues has done in the past, but not as well as we would like. We will invest in a project to explore and measure our social impact and we will carry out a multi-year longitudinal survey to be able to show the positive impact of what we do on the quality of the lives of the people we support, the people we employ, and our local community.

There will be resources available to evidence our social impact including a library of suitable case studies which will show case what Avenues does. These will be in a variety of different mediums such as video, online brochures, storyboards and they will be suitable for different audiences.

We will develop our capability to demonstrate the social value of what we do. This will not only meet the procurement rules within which we operate but will also give Avenues the opportunity to showcase our social value for the purpose of growth and development.

Known for being the best place to work and develop a career

We will work towards the highest standard of accreditation with Investors in Diversity over the life of the plan; demonstrating our commitment to progressing a diverse and inclusive experience for our workforce over time, and showcasing that Avenues is a great workplace. To complement this, we will retain and promote existing accreditation of our first-class training whilst seeking recognition for our leadership and management programme.

Our approach to wider accreditation will be to identify appropriate awards that add value to our employment offer and align with our workforce strategy and to work towards achieving them.

We will actively and routinely pursue career management discussions with every employee and produce plans to meet development needs. Our non-hierarchical approach to providing opportunities to engage with and be involved with the organisations development and growth will provide a greater range of meaningful development opportunities that compliment more traditional hierarchical approaches. All our efforts will be underpinned by a robust succession planning process that identifies and develops talent and seeks to retain it within the organisation.

We will develop an Academy approach to learning and development, through which we will retain and promote all of our high-quality training comprising statutory and regulatory compliance training and Leadership and Management Programmes.

We will work with other sector leaders to influence meaningful recognition for social care roles from central government through improved funding and greater parity with health. In line with our pay strategy, we will use every endeavour to maintain rates of pay over and above the National Living Wage that better reflect the skilled and complicated work that people do and provide a meaningful suite of benefits that meet a broad range of workforce needs.

Increased reach of the Avenues brand, raising our profile as an organisation people aspire to work for, and with.

Over the life of the plan we will develop a comprehensive communications and marketing plan which demonstrates our brand and ethos to a wider relevant audience, building awareness of our services and careers.

Our case studies and storytelling will demonstrate our workforce's qualitative impact on people's lives, their families, and communities, ensuring that Avenues is recognised as a trusted provider, employer and advisor, which works with stakeholders to achieve better outcomes for the people we exist to serve; influencing regulators, purchasers and other sector professionals.

Alongside our communications and marketing we will also develop a policy and public affairs plan that will monitor and comment on relevant policy. The plan will support our networking and contact management by organising, managing and attending events providing opportunities to meet with stakeholders.

Avenues will convey relevant information to stakeholders in a concise, efficient and honest manner. This can be done through submissions to government consultations, writing internal and external briefing papers, and producing leaflets and newsletters, one-to-one meetings or speaking at sector events.

Through the delivery of our communications, marketing, policy and public affairs plans we will ensure that Avenues becomes recognised as one of the sector's most authoritative voices on matters that affect the lives of people who have a learning disability or who are living with autism.

Ambition Four

Sustainability and Growth

In 2025 Avenues will be operating with a strong balance sheet and with sufficient free reserves as to be able to invest back into the delivery of services. We will return a modest surplus that is increasing year on year between 2021 and 2025, ensuring organisational sustainability so that we are here for the long term and the people that we support are secure in the knowledge that we are here for as long as they want our support.

Our surplus will also permit us to invest in the organisational infrastructure, driving a modernisation agenda for all our business systems and processes.

Our pricing will be competitive and will ensure that all our services cover the cost of delivery and our central costs will be managed tightly to deliver the best value to our purchasers.

Increase the number of statutory funders we work with through development in new geographies (CCG's, LA's and Health Trusts)

Our Local Authority and NHS partners are increasingly challenged by the financial pressures that they face, and we do not see any time in the near future when this will change significantly.

More than half Avenues income comes from two main purchasers. While recognising the strength in these relationships, there is risk in operating a narrow portfolio of contracts as it creates a financial dependency on these purchasers. By 2025 Avenues will have diversified into new geographic areas and also new purchasers thereby reducing our dependence on our historic geographic areas of work. In partnership with our commissioners Avenues will be offering different models of support.

Avenues will grow the number of services that we deliver based upon a thorough assessment of the opportunities that each geographical area offers.

Diversifying our different income streams beyond statutory funding

Avenues has ambitions for people it supports beyond that which statutory funding can provide. By 2025 Avenues will be raising non-statutory and voluntary income to add value and enhance its offer to people we support and the wider sector. This may include raising restricted funds via grants targeted at strategically relevant projects and unrestricted income via fundraising and social enterprise. We expect to develop partnerships to support this activity. Further we will explore the appropriateness of direct fundraising and work with relevant advisors in the field of legacy fundraising too.

Developing our service model offers to appeal to new or emerging areas of work

Avenues has a reputation within the areas where we work for providing skilled and specialised support, often working one at a time with people with profound, multiple and complex learning disabilities. Our commitment to Active Support and Positive Behaviour Support are core and will remain core to the way we in which we work and support people.

However, our organisation was built upon working with people who presented us with a wide range of disabilities, including some with more moderate needs. Whilst most of our new work is of the more complex nature, we still have a commitment to those people whose needs are less, and we will continue to work in these areas where it is appropriate for us to do so.

Accommodation based support, using a supported living model is and will continue to be our preference. This reflects our long-held commitment to independence, choice and control for the people we support. Where it is appropriate to do so we will work with young people in their family homes and continue to provide outreach support.

One of Avenues key strengths is our ability to respond enthusiastically and positively when we are asked to consider new and different support. This has led us to develop specialist skills supporting specific sub-groups of people. Through the life of this strategy, we will identify and target specialist niches which are viable to be scaled up and developed further. Subject to an agreed process of market appraisal, the following opportunities and new service offerings will be considered:

- We will seek to work with young people and their families to help plan, prepare and transition to adult life.
- We will provide more services for young people who have complex needs and behaviour which can be challenging to live at home with their family for as long as that is what is considered to be in everyone's best interests.
- Using specialist professional skills, we will offer support to live well and enjoy life to people with a learning disability who are also living with early on set Dementia or other additional memory and cognition diagnoses
- We will have a bespoke and specialist support package to enable people with a learning disability, who are also living with life limiting condition, to have the best possible life.
- Our services for people who are living with an acquired brain injury will develop further and by 2025, ABI services will be part of our core offer in all the locations where we work.
- Increasingly Avenues works with people with a learning disability combined with complex, often undiagnosed, mental health issues. We will support more of these needs and in line with our work with people with complex and challenging behaviour, we will continue to offer support that is community based and does not require restrictive hospital settings

Autism Support

Notwithstanding the above, Avenues in 2025 will be supporting more people who are living with Autism and will be known as a specialist and expert provider for this support. We know that we can provide skilled individual support to individuals who need us, and our experience has shown that the people Avenues support with Autism, have full, active and exciting lives. But we want to do better. Working with other professionals, academics, families, and most importantly the people themselves we will drive our offer of support further so that we become known as the provider of choice for individualised support for people with Autism.

We will update and publish a new Autism Strategy and plan for the whole Group, with measurable objectives.

Being open to new partnerships, collaborations, mergers and acquisitions

Avenues will have a developed network of respected sector partners to work jointly with and improve our offer – Tizard, Challenging Behaviour Foundation, Autism Alliance, Think Local Act Personal, LDE, and Social Care Futures.

We will have a developed an impact-measured track record of successful collaborations with other similar organisations which have improved our offer to funders, either statutory or discretionary.

Avenues will be actively involved in research, case studies, innovations and advisory roles that will advance the sector and the lives of the people that we support. We see this as an investment in our sector for the good of the populations that the entire sector supports.

By 2025 Avenues will have achieved tangible net growth by either successfully acquiring or merging with other organisations that can add value to the portfolio of services the Avenues deliver, whilst retaining Avenues philosophy and ethos throughout. Our preference in any such merger or acquisition would be to be the lead provider.

Ambition Five

Engagement and Co-production

Quality Checkers

A team of trained quality checkers drawn from the community of people we serve, will be engaged in reviewing and assessing the quality of services we offer. We will explore the opportunity for this to be paid employment and seek eventually to scale this model to provide quality checking and accessibility services to our wider communities in which we work.

We will have researched and if appropriate become members of the Association of Quality Checkers.

A Social Enterprise offering employment and development for the people that we and others support

Avenues will seek to expand our offer to the people we support beyond housing, care and support including working to find employment and volunteering opportunities as a real life needs purpose and to feel valued.

We will explore training, skills development and qualifications for the people that we and others support as part of our work to enrich people's lives beyond receiving a support service. We will launch this as an extension to the Avenues Academy and seek alternative funding sources to support it.

Family Consultants

We will develop a reference panel of family members to provide input to our plans, consult with regarding organisation developments and offer peer support to other families. Working with families, we will refine and enhance our offer and our service models, reflecting not only what good support looks like to the people we directly support but also how we can support families to feel engaged and part of the Avenues community.

Expert User Reference Group

Avenues will have in place a council of members, experts with lived experience, drawn from the Avenues community who will provide opinion, challenge and support for the organisation. This Reference Group will have a properly constituted place within the Group's governance structure and agreed terms of reference to be defined.

Conclusion

This plan has been developed with the contribution, thoughts and input of the entire Avenues Community.

Through conversations we have sought to understand our commissioners' emerging requirements and how Avenues can be best placed to help them achieve their strategic aims.

Talking to the people that we support; we have learned what they want and expect from Avenues as a support provider and this plan reflects their expectations of us over the next four years and beyond.

Families have told us how important great quality support and safe environments are for their family members whose care and support are entrusted to Avenues.

Our workforce have told us what they need from an exceptional employer and we will work hard to meet and exceed these expectations over the lifetime of this plan.

Working with our Chair and Trustees we have developed a shared vision of what it will take for Avenues to thrive and be even more successful.

It has been a collective and collaborative effort that signals the way we will work in the future and which was a thoroughly enjoyable experience to be a part of. We would like to thank those people who kindly gave up their time to talk to us, we could not have done this without your input, and we hope that readers will be as excited and enthusiastic about our ambitions for 2025 as we are.

Jo Land

CEO