



# Corporate Strategy 2016-2021



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# Foreword

Since 1976 Linkage has been supporting those with learning difficulties and disabilities to lead independent lives. We owe our origins to the recognition that for many people with varying degrees of learning difficulty and disability there was a shortage of support for them to lead creative and purposeful lives in the community.

During the past 40 years the shape of our charity has changed significantly. Our services have developed and expanded from a specialist independent further education college, with an initial entry of four students, to a charity that has:

- a specialist further education college delivering across two campuses,
- 23 residential care homes across Greater Lincolnshire,
- 2 Shared Housing schemes,
- 70 Supported Housing places,
- an active community support team that supports around 60 people in their own homes,
- a dynamic day service provision for over 200 people per week,
- an employment advice and work placement support service,
- a range of social enterprises and,
- a children and families advice service.

We also have a small local presence in Staffordshire.

Linkage remains a hidden gem. Many organisations and people in our communities are unaware of the superb services that Linkage offers.

We now support c450 people each year and remain in touch with many ex users of our various services. We have a 'social heart' with clients and students at the centre of all our decisions.

Over the last eight years the economic climate has provided significant challenges for us. The impact of a prolonged period of recession and austerity measures has resulted in reduced levels of funding and has made it increasingly difficult for people who wish to use our service to access the appropriate funding package. In addition the impact of the introduction of the living wage and increasing competitiveness in the market place has placed us under great cost pressures.

Underpinning all our activities is the need to maintain a secure financial base. We must establish consistent and reliable sources of income sufficient for a sustainable, efficient and effective organisation. We are committed to manage our financial resources prudently and while seeking to develop our services, will do so in line with our capacity to ensure they are sustainable.

We will operate Linkage with a 'business head' and 'social heart'.

# Where are we going?

In a constantly changing world we know we have to change too. Over the past six months we have been consulting and developing our ambitious new strategy which takes us forward over the next five years from September 2016.

This corporate strategy sets out our longer term view. It incorporates all areas of our Charity, including education, residential care, supported housing, shared housing and community support services, employment services, day services, social enterprise, and fundraising.

We are totally committed to ensuring people with learning difficulties and disabilities are able with the appropriate support to live the life they choose.

We will take steps to ensure we are in the right shape to go about our task, better, faster and more efficiently, with a focus on the needs of our students, clients, parents, carers and stakeholders.

## Keeping on course - striving for excellence

Our primary aim is to support people with learning difficulties and disabilities, to achieve their aspirations for independence, social engagement and employability.



# Vision, Mission and Values

## Our vision is that:

People with learning difficulties and disabilities have opportunities and choice and are supported to achieve aspirations.

## The Mission

We work to achieve this Vision by making it our Mission to:

Provide person centred services that enable individuals to develop skills and behaviours to live independent lives.

## Values

Success is important to us and so too is the way in which we achieve it. Our core values are at the heart of everything we do. We are committed to the following values:

### Independence

We will support and encourage individuals to make decisions about their own lives and the freedom to live the life they choose, based on their talents and abilities.

### Respect

We will respect and value the views, ideas, feelings and opinions of everyone we deal with.

### Honesty

We will be honest open and transparent in our dealings.

### Teamwork

We will work together collaboratively as one Linkage to achieve common goals and engage with partners to deliver more services to more people.



# Our Approach

## Priorities

Our approach and service for the past 40 years has been designed specifically for those with learning difficulties and disabilities who wish to develop skills to live independent lives. We believe that through our support, people develop independence and skills that enable them to achieve their aspirations.

We do this by focussing on three key priorities:

### Putting People First

We will focus on helping the people we support live the life they choose

We will:

- Improve the quality and consistency of our services
- Promote inclusion and independence
- Promote Health and Wellbeing
- Invest in technology to support independence
- Make every pound count

### Working Together

We will focus on working collaboratively with other organisations, agencies and experts to offer a range of solutions for people their families and carers.

We will:

- Improve the collection and application of evidence
- Develop common purpose leadership
- Support and engage our people more effectively into paid employment and social engagement activities
- Develop new services to meet needs
- Create a volunteer base to support our services

### Growing Our Business

We will focus on delivering more services for more people, whether they need a lot of support, or just occasionally.

We will:

- Expand geographically throughout the East Midlands and to neighbouring counties
- Develop unrestricted income streams
- Diversify our services to children and older people with learning difficulties and learning disability



## Putting People First

We will put people first by focussing on and helping the people we support live a better life they choose.

We want to meet and exceed our customer's expectations, thereby maximising the satisfaction levels of our students, clients, families, carers, commissioners and wider stakeholders. We will actively engage our stakeholders. We will listen to their views and will learn and continuously improve services.

We will improve the quality and consistency of our services and will shape our services around our students and clients' needs and aspirations.

We will also work with and influence those whose actions and policies have an impact on our students and clients.

The results we produce are key to our success.

We will benchmark ourselves against top performing organisations and will learn and model their success.

We have finite resources to spend and we will manage and direct those resources to gain maximum benefit for our students and clients.

Value for money and making the most of our resources is integral to our business performance. We will make every pound count and we will also maximise our opportunities to gain additional funding from alternative sources.

We have positive, dedicated and well trained employees who are empowered to take decisions and use their initiative in dealing with our students and clients.

## Intended outcome

Improve the quality and consistency of our services.

## Indicator

- Increased customer satisfaction
- Good rating for Education Services
- CQC Good/Outstanding ratings
- Accreditations maintained

Promote inclusion and independence

- Complementary activities and services developed to enable people maintain their independence
- Increased number of service users engaged in community activities

Promoting Health and Wellbeing

- Reduction in health inequalities
- Increased number of educational and training opportunities

Invest in technology and tele-health

- Increased independence for service users
- Increased staff productivity and efficiency

Make every pound count

- Improved Group Operating Surplus
- Increased Operating Margin by Activity
- Increased Return on Investment
- Improved fundraising ratio



## Working Together

Our objectives and aspirations are deliberately challenging and ambitious. Our focus is on the people who use our service and the difference we want to make for them.

In order to achieve our strategy we recognise the value in working collaboratively. We will work to achieve common goals and objectives by developing and maintaining inclusive, co-operative and positive working to offer a range of solutions for people their families and carers.

We have established strong and effective partnerships with government and the community and voluntary sectors.

This corporate strategy sets out our ambition for the next four years as we take forward the priorities we have agreed with our students and clients, the board and consultation with our key stakeholders.

### Intended outcome

### Indicator

Develop a common purpose leadership approach with key stakeholders

- Increased numbers of referrals to partner organisations
- Increased signposting activities

Improve the collection and application of evidence.

- Base level information included for all services
- Services benchmarked against national averages

Support and engage our people more effectively into paid employment

- Number of people in work experience
- Number of people in voluntary work
- Number of people in paid employment
- Number of people in paid employment for 16 hours or more per week

Develop new services to meet needs

- New services developed
- Existing services expanded

Create a volunteer base to support our services

- Increased number of volunteers supporting our services

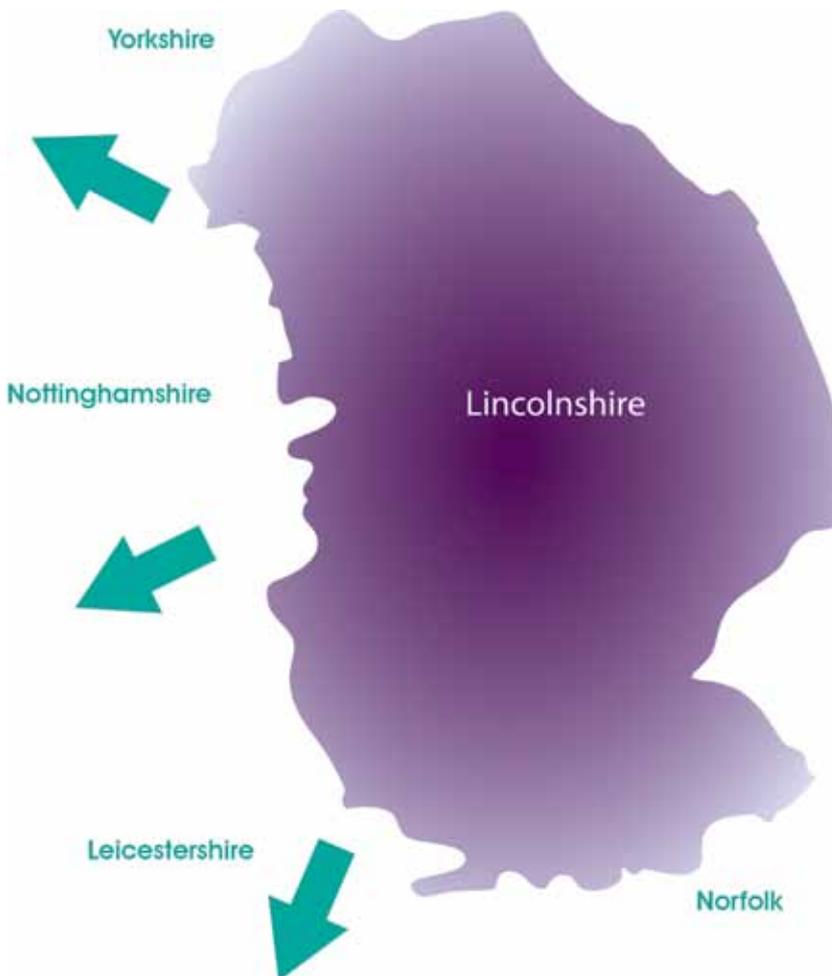


## Growth

We want to grow and deliver more services for more people, whether they need a lot of support or just occasionally.

We will actively seek opportunities to develop services that add value for people.

We will seek to improve our financial strength and will ensure that we develop new streams of unrestricted income to allow us to invest in the development of new services.



Our business and financial plans reflect the challenges associated with the availability of government income. We will actively fundraise and generate profit through our enterprise activities, to provide additional services which complement our existing activities.

We will continue to develop our plans based on delivering efficient high quality services and will take measured risks to achieve our objectives.

We want to provide more services for more people and ensure that those in need are provided with a choice of services that meet their aspirations.

We acknowledge that bigger does not mean better... only better means better. We also acknowledge that smaller isn't better either. Our desire to grow is based around having increased capacity to deliver more services for more people.

We recognise our services only currently start at the age of 16 and with an aging population need to be reshaped and redeveloped to meet the needs going forward. We will therefore look at our services and expand into new markets where appropriate.

We currently operate across Greater Lincolnshire and in Staffordshire. In future we intend to focus our activity in the East Midlands and South Yorkshire regions and will actively seek organic growth in these areas.





We want a range of services that can offer real choice that reflects the needs of individuals. In developing our portfolio we will take into consideration the changing markets in which we operate and the needs of our students and clients.

We will also look for opportunities to develop existing services where opportunities arise outside those regions we will assess these on their own merits.

We recognise that there are opportunities to provide a range of services for new markets and will be proactive in developing new services but complement our existing activities and provide a positive contribution to the business.

We acknowledge the need to be commercially minded in the development and promotion of services. Where appropriate we will actively seek out and form partnerships in order to deliver these initiatives. Our current partnerships with Waterloo Housing Group will continue to be developed to enable us to provide more services for more people.

We will strengthen our current financial position through careful strategic and financial management and diversification. Any new activities will need to be based on sound financial criteria, provide a positive contribution to the business and be at a level of risk that is acceptable both to the company and its shareholders. New activities will complement our existing activities and will not adversely impact on the company's core business

### Intended Outcome

### Indicator

Expand services geographically to neighbouring counties, and other local authority areas in Lincolnshire

- New education provision in Lincoln
- 3 new provisions developed in Lincolnshire
- 3 new provisions developed outside of Greater Lincolnshire

Develop unrestricted income streams

- Increase in % of unrestricted income
- Improved fundraising ratio

Diversify our services to children and older people with learning difficulties and disabilities

- New services developed

# Resourcing the strategy

To achieve the outcomes we have set we will ensure the following resources are in place:

## The right people

### Our Staff

We recognise the value and talent of our many skilled and experienced staff and will create and sustain an environment where people are recognised, rewarded and supported in realising their full potential.

We will develop our people who are motivated and consistently perform at the highest level.

We will create a culture with shared values where employees are able to deliver our strategic objectives.

### Trustee Board

We value the expertise of our voluntary board members and will actively recruit and train members to add value to our business.

Our board members provide us with a range of skills and expertise that enable us to develop our strategy, monitor performance and monitor risk. We will look to continue to develop a diverse board with the skills necessary to drive forward our agenda.

### Student and Client Influence

We are committed to engaging our students and clients in developing, implementing and evaluating our services. Through the student union and client parliament we demonstrate our ongoing commitment to put service-users views at the heart of what we do.

We will recruit, train and develop sufficient service users to provide the necessary quality of input to inform our services and to evaluate the quality and effectiveness of them and we will offer a range of methods for clients to get involved to shape our services.





# The right organisational structure

The board is committed to reviewing the organisational structure in light of continually evaluating effectiveness and its appropriateness to meet the strategic objectives. This may at times mean making tough business decisions, decisions that are best for the Charity and for the people that matter the most our students and clients.

# The right partnerships

Our plans are ambitious, we recognise to be truly effective and to make the most significant impact in the shortest period of time we need to map and align our aims and resources with those of partner organisations. This will ensure that our joint resources deliver real benefits to our people and create real opportunities for them to improve their lives. We recognise that for some services for our students and clients these may best be delivered through partner organisations and will actively engage with others to ensure that those best placed to deliver real outcomes for them do so.

# The right technology

We need to take advantage of developments in information communication technology without losing the human touch which is integral to the delivery of our service. Technology can improve the effectiveness and the efficiency of our deployment of our employee resources. It can help us gather more and better information upon which to act and extend our reach into specific communities which find some methods of communication more accessible than others.

# A secure financial base

We will manage our financial resources prudently. We will seek to develop our services in a sustainable manner in line with our financial capacity. Financial strength and viability of our business underpins everything we do. Our board will continue to be fully accountable for the performance of our organisation.

In the current economic climate will increase our focus on the financial risks associated with our activities. We will ensure that we invest in schemes that provide a positive contribution to the Charity both in the short and medium term where schemes and services do not provide a positive contribution these will be evaluated and we will make a strategic decision as to whether or not to continue with those services. Only with a secure financial base can we begin to deliver better services for our people and look towards the expansion of our Charity.

# Making the strategy happen

We will act as a catalyst for change in the areas around which we will work and will seek to create opportunities for our students and clients to make the life choices they want for themselves. We aim to bring a real and sustained difference.

Working with individuals we will ensure that the services we offer meet their needs and aspirations. We will refer to all the relevant organisations where it is appropriate to do so.

Working in communities we will actively pursue our vision among high risk groups.  
Working with partners we will develop ways of working that will enable us to direct our resources to those areas of greatest need.

## Review process

The process of monitoring achievement of our strategy can be divided into three elements.

- Reviewing whether we are doing what we planned to do ie reviewing the inputs and outputs
- Reviewing whether what we do have an impact ie reviewing the outcomes and
- Reviewing whether the priorities and plan are the most appropriate to enable us to achieve our vision to reviewing the inputs and outputs.



Led by the senior management team this will involve reviewing progress against plans, identifying and positively acting on reasons for non-achievement and evaluating the capacity and capabilities of resources to deliver against objectives.

## Reviewing outcomes

Led by the senior management team this will involve evaluating our progress towards our strategic priorities, key success indicators will be mapped against our intended outcomes.

## Reviewing the strategic priorities within the Corporate Plan

Led by the board there will be a continuous assessment of assumptions of which this corporate strategy is founded. This will take into account the opportunities and threats and the external environment and the strength and weaknesses of our business and our services. Where this analysis shows that the assumptions are no longer appropriate changes to the strategy will be made.







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