



Business Plan 2017 to 2020



Supporting people since 1994

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Introduction

Welcome to this year's Business Plan. Once again it has been a very busy year with a lot to report and a significant number of new developments in the pipeline.

Perhaps the most significant achievement is the creation of a new Shared Lives service at Botton Village after almost two years of discussions with our partners Camphill Village Trust and North Yorkshire County Council. The new project, which is unique in the Camphill movement and the first Shared Lives service in a community setting, will enable 38 individuals to continue to share their lives with carers in the beautiful setting of Botton Village.

We are also exceedingly proud that all inspections by the regulator CQC have resulted in our locality services being awarded 'Good' across all domains. This is a remarkable achievement in a large organisation such as Avalon with eight locality offices and I need to acknowledge the skills and commitment of both our locality staff and our managers resulting in another successful year.

Governance arrangements within Avalon have been strengthened this year by a thorough review of our arrangements and greatly enriched by the appointment of four new Trustees who bring substantial added value to the skills and experience of our Board. We are all already energised by their contributions and look forward to working with them in future months and years.

Finally, I am delighted with the plan to revisit the fundraising arm of our charity. We hope fresh fundraising initiatives will bring much needed extra resources to the charity to achieve many more successes and enrich the lives of our beneficiaries.



Louise Drake
Chair of Trustees

CEO Message

Avalon's success is entirely dependent on the efforts, commitment and quality of its staff. We have an incredible team of loyal and hard-working people. This year we have parted company amongst others with Sue Creeley, our Finance Director and Denise McConnell who filled the gap as Interim Finance Director. I wish to thank them both for their efforts. I would like to welcome Debbie Gittins, Director of Operations and Emma Williams, Head of Finance to the senior team. They bring enthusiasm, skills and share Avalon's desire to continue to achieve excellence for our beneficiaries.

Our modernisation plans are progressing well. We have upgraded Sage, our accounting software, which will soon offer the ability to offer electronic payments; introduced electronic files which standardised the way we keep customer records; we are in the process of modernising our telephony which will offer faster broadband speeds and establish a single contract; we have reviewed the utilities in all our offices and again consolidated them in a single contract which has generated significant savings; and finally by the time this Business Plan is published we will have started the implementation of a new HR database which will simplify our processes.

In the next financial year we expect to see a significant increase in income received; an important measure of the continuing viability of our services.

Not everything has gone to plan. Despite the efforts of local staff, our initiative to establish services in Rotherham and Barnsley proved not to be successful, largely due to lack of demand and we therefore decided to close the service at the end of February 2018. We also continue to face uncertainties with regards to the national discussions concerning sleepover payments.

Finally, we are developing a partnership arrangement with Inclusion Housing, a Registered Social Landlord based in York. This will reduce the amount of work we are doing drawing up leases, dealing with Housing Benefit etc. and provides the separation between housing and support that commissioners want to see in Supported Housing.



Larry Hollando
Chief Executive Officer

Who We Are

The Avalon Group is a registered charity (Reg. No 1048236), established in 1994, which operates as a social care provider in Northern England. The main services that we provide are: Community Support; Shared Lives; and Learning and Development in the following communities:

- Darlington
- Doncaster
- Kirklees
- Middlesbrough
- North Yorkshire
- Redcar and Cleveland
- Stockton
- Wakefield
- York

Community Support includes services provided in people's own homes as well as the provision of housing with support in dedicated properties made available to Avalon. We continue to develop community support for people living with dementia.

Shared Lives is provided by approved carers who open their homes to accommodate individuals. Support can include short breaks and respite, day opportunities or longer term.

Our Learning and Development team provides learning opportunities to our workforce as well as to individuals and agencies external to The Avalon Group.

Additionally we have in place a wide range of other projects to meet our customers' needs, including an 'Out and About' group in Skipton and a Day Service in Northallerton, which contribute to the wellbeing of those using the local services.

Our services are open to young people and adults who require social care or support in the areas where we operate. Funding for our services comes from a variety of sources including individuals themselves and health or social care agencies.

As a registered charity providing regulated services our governance is based on a robust framework of policies and procedures by which our Board of Trustees ensures accountability, commitment to our mission and values and transparency with our stakeholders. We are regulated by a number of official bodies including the Charities Commission and the Care Quality Commission. We have an established structure to provide oversight on risk and governance issues which are regularly reviewed by the Senior Management Team and Trustees.

Our Mission:

To provide responsive, personalised care and support to enhance and enrich the quality of people's lives.

Our Values:

Quality services

We aim to provide excellent services. By listening to our staff and customers we use feedback to continually improve, ensuring the quality of support exceeds expectations.

Competent and motivated workforce

We believe our customers deserve to receive the best support provided by a skilled team who share our values. In turn, we value our staff and invest in their learning and development to ensure customers receive care by a consistent team.

Personalised

Everyone is different and everything we do is about choice. This means we work with individuals to create personalised support, whether it's for an hour a day or 24 hours a day.

Equality and inclusion

We celebrate and promote diversity at every level within the organisation. Our strategic customer committee ensures that our customers make a real contribution to the organisation and make recommendations for future improvements.

Value for money

As a charity we are not profit driven. We aim to ensure we remain financially sustainable and can continue to invest in new and innovative services for our future.

Current Position

We have continued to expand our services both in Community Support and Shared Lives. We have taken over a house with three customers in Thirsk from another provider, which is being supported by our Northallerton office, and we have established a new Supported Living property with two customers in York.

In terms of Shared Lives services, as already mentioned we have taken over 13 houses at Botton Village, approving 26 new Shared Lives carers who will support 38 customers. We have also been selected to develop a scheme in South Tees, funded by the Department of Health, to develop Shared Lives opportunities for individuals supported by health professionals. The scheme aims to test out this model prior to implementation nationally.

Every year we ask our key stakeholders their opinion on the service Avalon provides. Over 350 staff, customers and our self-employed Shared Lives carers have responded, which sees an increase on 2016. We continue to enjoy a high level of satisfaction and continue to improve areas such as staff terms and conditions and work/life balance.

We have also introduced the 'Wider Wallet' service to staff and carers which offers discounts on shopping, holidays and days out, and our Employee Assistance Scheme which enables people to seek a range of support on areas such as medical, financial, legal and counselling. This has seen over 200 user registrations in 2016/17.

Medication management is a key task our staff undertake and an area closely monitored by CQC. In 2016/17 we have undertaken a full review of our medication policy assisted by a Pharmacist, issuing the new policy and training staff to ensure safe implementation.

Our Future Work

The details of our proposed developments are contained in our Delivery Plans but our overarching priority remains to continue to provide a reliable and safe service to all the customers we support and to continue our efforts to modernise processes reducing reliability on paper trails.

In 2017 we completed the preparatory work to introduce a new Human Resource database which was then introduced in March 2018. The new system will significantly simplify all HR and Learning and Development processes and will in time allow staff to operate remotely and reduce time taken in completing simple tasks such as requests for leave or training attendance. Alongside this we plan to introduce new electronic processes to deal with contracts.

One of the other key tasks is considering the additional requirements from the new General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). A Task Group has identified documents and processes that will need to be amended as well as setting up training for staff on the new regulations.

Health and Safety processes have been reviewed and we are planning to re-launch our approach to health and safety with staff early in the new financial year as well as reviewing our processes in respect of fire risks.

Operationally we are in discussion with a local registered Housing Provider to take over housing responsibilities for some of our supported accommodation as well as delivering a new scheme in Scarborough. We are also keen to expand the support we offer through our Shared Lives services and we are in discussion with a number of local authorities.

Strategic Priorities/Objectives

Over the next three years we have identified four key priorities/objectives. They set out the wider role for the organisation, ensuring we play a strong role in both the regional and national agendas of delivering excellent, personalised services. We will use these aims to guide future developments and to measure our performance to ensure we continue to uphold our values and achieve our mission.

- **Be customer focused in everything we do**

Our customers remain at the centre of everything we do. Avalink, our strategic customer committee continues to be an intrinsic part of our inclusion strategy. Their aim is to better inform customers on key issues such as Hate Crime and staying safe. Working with local groups we seek to engage further with customers and their families, utilising feedback to better inform our work and improve service delivery.

Engagement with both internal and external stakeholders plays a key role in effective communication and loyalty to The Avalon Group brand. The launch of our internal communication strategy will ensure our workforce remains informed and has a two way information flow. Externally, we will focus on greater community presence to develop our private and dementia support services as well as contributing to our aim of being an employer of choice, by using a range of communication tools to reach potential new staff and carers.

In order to continue to support our customers in the best way possible, whilst fulfilling our mission, we need to ensure we continue to review our business, the opportunities available to us and the ways in which we work to ensure we remain a viable business.

- **Develop and grow as a high performing organisation**

Quality Assurance runs through all our services and over the next 3 years we will improve our systems and management information beginning with a streamlined quality assurance procedure. Using national standards and best practice will inform how we review and inspect our services and our refreshed approach to Health and Safety including areas like Positive Behaviour Support will be further developed.

Our technology strategy has a stepped approach to introducing new ICT tools and solutions. These will better equip staff with access to improved management information in order to manage both quality and efficiency both in operations and central services.

We continue to improve systems to provide robust and timely financial information. Over the next 3 years we aim to upgrade systems to enable easier payment options and see operational benefits by upgrading Sage.

- **Undertake organisational developments to support integrated, high quality care**

Over the next 3 years, we have committed to improving the terms and conditions for our staff. The areas we have focused on include the National Living Wage, employee benefits, wellbeing and opportunities for career development. Naturally this incorporates a number of elements such as effective communication and learning and development.

Our commitment to workforce development remains a key priority from preparing to work in social care through to a leadership and management programme. Training priorities are led by operational need and will include a wider programme of specialist care training as well as a range of qualifications and apprenticeships. We aim to develop and strengthen our leadership programme as well as developing a coaching and mentoring culture across the organisation.

Good governance provides the foundation for how Avalon performs and is managed. We are committed to ensuring standards of excellence are intrinsic to our work whether that be the services we provide, the people we support or the development and support of our workforce. We have further strengthened our Board of Trustees by the addition of 4 new members bringing a wealth of skills and experience. We take a robust approach to risk management and our Audit Committee meet regularly to oversee the company finances and overall financial health.

We are committed to providing the best support to enrich the lives of our beneficiaries and are always seeking ways to do this through the development of new projects and services which would benefit our customers and the communities we serve. As a registered charity, we plan to revisit our fundraising arm by focusing on legacy giving, online giving platforms and community fundraising campaigns.

- **Deliver planned business developments to ensure a sustainable future**

We aim to be at the forefront of new and emerging strategies and models of care including Live in Care, Shared Lives Development in line with the Transforming Care agenda and quality supported housing. The success of our Dementia support services will continue to develop by reaching a wider range of people within our communities and developing best practice initiatives. We continue to work with local authorities within our geographical areas to provide complex needs support and specialist care. Over the next 3 years we will further develop our Positive Behaviour Support for individuals with an aim to reducing the need for restrictive practices; mapped with sector standards and best practice guidance including the PBS Academy Competency Framework, Driving up Quality, NHS Autism Strategy and Skills for Care standards.

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