



# Business Plan 2016 to 2019



Supporting people since 1994

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## Introduction

Over the last twelve months Avalon has continued to evolve and progress. Our dementia service, for example, has grown in both size and reputation with many more local people with dementia and their families now benefitting from our person centred approach; putting people at the heart of everything we do. This is of course true for each of our services, and is something of which we are truly proud.

Significant growth and change has also taken place at a senior level, with the very welcome addition of trustees Wendy Ramshaw, Angela Waddingham, Stephen Fox and Heather Fairfield. They bring a wealth of additional skills in financial matters, housing management and health and social care, helping to drive forward our wonderful organisation.

Due to the departure of Julia Oxtoby from our directorate, we have reconfigured this level of Avalon to best manage our operations. Julie Colley is now Deputy Chief Executive, Sue Creeley remains as Finance Director, and Bev Wilson has joined Martyn Miller as an additional Deputy Director of Operations. This has already proven a wise choice, as we have seen additional strength and a renewed sense of cohesion with the directors supporting our CEO Larry Hollando.

I'd like to thank Julia for her invaluable contribution as HR Director, and look forward to working with her as she takes on her new role as Project Manager.



Louise Drake  
Chair of Trustees

## CEO Message

By all accounts 2015 was another very successful year! In addition to the recruitment and restructuring mentioned in Louise's introduction, we also welcome three new experienced Locality Managers in Scarborough, West Yorkshire and York/Doncaster.

Following the implementation of our bespoke compliance monitoring tool, we are delighted to report that all final CQC reports received so far graded our services 'good', which is a substantial achievement and reflects the excellent efforts of all our managers.

Business development continues steadily and our achievements include acceptance on the Kirklees and Teesside Autism Domiciliary Care frameworks, which will allow our services to grow organically in these areas.

Perhaps our most remarkable good news of the year has been the stabilisation of our financial position at a time of instability in the sector (due to continuing cuts to Local Authorities and a significant increase in the cost of wages).

We have seen growth in commissioned hours and an increase in work commissioned privately thanks to the efforts of Support Workers and local Managers. Despite the difficult financial climate we have seen a significant shift in Local Authority rates reflecting the additional costs as a result of the implementation of the national living wage. Our financial performance is in large part as a result of the outstanding performance by the Finance team under the leadership of Sue Creeley and Susan Edwards. WELL DONE everyone.



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 training and development in the following communities:

- Darlington
- Doncaster
- Kirklees
- Middlesbrough
- North Yorkshire
- Redcar and Cleveland
- Stockton
- Wakefield
- Wirral
- 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 accommodate individuals in their own homes. 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.

## **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 your expectations.

### **Competent and motivated workforce**

We believe you 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 you 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.

## The Challenge / Current Position

From April 2016 all employers were required to implement the new National Living Wage. For Avalon and other social care providers this has proved a greater challenge than employers in other sectors, due to our reliance on Local Authorities, as austerity is severely impacting on their budgets.

It is worth mentioning that Avalon has always been committed to improving the wages of its staff, and over the last five years has increased Support Worker wages by over 7% (whilst only receiving a 3% uplift in Local Authority rates over the same period).

However, the difference in this case is that the increase was imposed by Central Government, and therefore did not allow individual employers the opportunity to assess and evaluate whether the amount was affordable.

At the time of writing we are still waiting for proposed fees for the new financial year from a number of Local Authorities, and thus our evaluations and plans cannot be concluded with complete accuracy.

The imposition of the new wage limits has the potential for significant changes in the social care market: the viability of providers, recruitment and retention of staff, and commissioning by Local Authorities to name a few examples. Increased costs will require employers to review their expenditure and may also result in reduction of other employee benefits.

Despite the sudden shift, Avalon has been able to present a balanced budget to our Trustees. These changes, however, will further erode margins and limit room for manoeuvre when dealing with pressures throughout the year. In last year's Business Plan we signalled the pressure on all staff and limited capacity, inevitably this will increase in 2016/17.

The business year 2015/16 has, however, provided some excellent results. Thanks to the continued effort by our locality teams, income is up by almost 10%. We are now less dependent on Local Authority rates, we are gaining an excellent reputation as a provider who specialises in dementia, and the number of customers purchasing support directly has increased significantly. We have managed to achieve a new supported living service in Kirklees and so far our inspection feedback have resulted in 100% success.

There are always challenges for any organisation such as ours to face. Some are greater than others, but the key is for The Avalon Group to maintain the close-knit, familial ethos that has brought us this far. Together we will weather the storm as always with passion for our work, and for the people we support.

## Our Future Work

Our Business Plan covers the future priorities together with detailed plans for next year. We will continue to focus on delivering safe, high quality services and will explore further opportunities in Shared Lives, respite care and services for young people in transition. We are focused on reaching out to more people in the community who are searching for the best quality private care, and are improving our marketing/promotional literature so that many more people will know the great work we do. Other areas of development include continued efforts to expand our dementia offering and exploring further opportunities to develop housing initiatives.

We have always been committed to engaging customers in the improvement of our charity, and in 2016/17 this will continue and expand. We are proud to announce that already this year Avalink (our strategic customer committee) have been shortlisted at the National Learning Disabilities and Autism Awards, in the category of 'Breaking Down Barriers'. This award recognises innovative work by people who have improved the lives of others with a disability, and Avalink have done this in spades over the last 8 years. Our fingers are firmly crossed for a victory at the awards ceremony in July.

## Strategic Priorities/Objectives

- **Be customer focused in everything we do**  
We will focus on continuous stakeholder satisfaction and how we continue to involve our customers in all aspects of our work. Communicating key messages in the right way is a major element of this strategic priority ensuring that people both within and outside Avalon know and understand our mission.
- **Develop and grow as a high performing organisation**  
Having robust management information and systems is key to the success of this delivery plan. Information about how we operate (financial information, how we use technology, the quality assurance of our services etc.) is vital to ongoing improvement.
- **Deliver planned developments to ensure a sustainable future**  
We will continue to deliver high quality services including the growth of Dementia support. Shared Lives, respite and young people in transition are also areas of development.
- **Undertake organisational developments to support integrated, high quality care**  
Good governance underpins any organisation and so do its people. We aim to recruit people who share our values and continue to invest in the learning and development of our workforce.



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