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Summer/Autumn 2008
Newsletter of the Dimensions Group



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Working together - our journey towards personalisation

For those of you who may be unaware, Adepta joined Dimensions in August 2008. Dimensions and Adepta are an excellent match – we both have a clear commitment to providing truly person-centred services to the people we support. We both have a lot to offer each other. Despite the cliché, I really think we will be stronger together.

So why have we chosen to start on this journey together? In reality, it is because we know that we have to reinvent ourselves to thrive in the emerging world of individual budgets. What do I mean by this? I mean that we will have to go about our work in a very different way, using a person's budget creatively and flexibly. Our purpose will still be the same – to help people with learning difficulties to live the life they want. However, the journey towards achieving real outcomes for the people we support will be very different – unique, in fact, to each individual person.

We believe that, as a larger organisation, we can share strengths and resources. This will help us along our journey towards personalisation. It will equip us with the ability to offer truly

personalised support to the people we support throughout their life journey, helping them to live the life they want.

Adepta
part of Dimensions

David Wolverson, Chief Executive

For more information about Adepta go to our Intranet, or see overleaf for some frequently asked questions. You can post any questions you have about the merger to David in his blog on the Intranet.



Adepta - Frequently Asked Questions

- **Who are Adepta?**

Adepta are a charity supporting people with learning disabilities, autism and/or mental health problems to make the most of opportunities within their communities. They provide individually-focused services to 700 people and employ over 1000 staff. They are particularly experienced in supporting people with complex needs, such as those who have additional physical and sensory disabilities or behaviour that may challenge.

- **Why have Adepta joined Dimensions?**

Our sector is changing, and people with learning difficulties are rightly asking for more personalised types of support. We need to create an organisation that can meet the needs of people with learning difficulties across the UK by offering them real choice and personalised, quality support packages. Adepta joining the group means that we can combine expertise to offer more choice to more people.

- **Doesn't this mean we will get too big?**

No. Each of our regions is expected to be what we call a 'personal touch' region. This means that the region should support about 100 – 150 people, and the Regional Director will know every person supported personally. So even if we're large as a whole organisation, each region works very locally responding to what the region, and the people they are supporting, needs.

- **Why Dimensions?**

Adepta have been talking to different providers since 2005 to find an organisation to work with, and Dimensions and Adepta are a great 'fit'. Both Dimensions and Adepta share the same purpose of helping people with learning difficulties to live the life they want. Adepta also generally work in regions where Dimensions do not currently have services, so working together means that we will be able to provide choice and quality support for people with learning difficulties in most regions of England and Wales.

Speak up and Make a difference



We are launching a new practical development programme for people we support, which will help them to develop skills to participate in meetings and speak up for themselves.

Times are changing for people with learning disabilities as the balance of power shifts back to the person, putting them in control of their lives. Our aim is that this course will give the attendees the confidence to 'speak up and make a difference' for themselves, but also for others. Over forty people we support applied for the course, and all were invited to selection days where they sat an informal interview. The twenty attendees, chosen by a panel including a person with a learning difficulty then completed a 360 degree questionnaire, so that they could each be paired up with a mentor. The scheme is set to be launched on 3rd September with monthly core workshops to follow.

Lost in Transition? A Home of my Own

Later this year we'll be holding our second national conference on transition, where we'll be highlighting best practice for moving young people with a learning difficulty into a home of their own.

The key findings from our new research report, 'A Home of My Own', will also be shared, as well as feedback from the regional free parents seminars we held throughout the country this spring. To find out more about the conference, see the transition section on our website: www.dimensions-uk.org/transitions, or email Hayley or Sophie in the Marketing team: marketing@dimensions-uk.org

Lost in
Transition?
A Home of My Own

Have you received your Diversity Information card yet?

Over the last few months reps from each part of the organisation have been putting together some information to raise awareness of Diversity within Dimensions.

Have you got a question, or do you just want to talk to someone who is involved with this diversity initiative? Have a look at the Diversity info in your workplace, the Diversity pages on the Intranet, or email: diversity@dimensions-uk.org

What do you think about Dimensions?

Our third Staff Attitude Survey is a chance for you to voice your ideas about our organisation - what's working, what's not, and how we can improve. Please take the time to complete it - your opinions really do make a difference.

This year we've made changes to the format to make it easier to complete as well as asking your manager to make sure that you have the time at work to do it. As usual, the survey is completely anonymous - all of the data is held by PDP Dains, an independent company who run the survey on our behalf. Here are some of the changes we have made within the organisation since the last survey...

What you said...



- **52%** of you felt you were **not properly paid** for working bank holidays
- **Only 48%** of you believed your **pay and benefits** were equivalent to what you could get in a similar job

What we did...

- Dimensions (UK) staff now also receive **bank holiday pay**
- We introduced the **staff benefits** scheme (including staff discounts, life insurance, accident insurance and rehabilitation support)

You can find out more about the changes we have made on the Intranet.

This summer in pictures

West Berks thank their staff and celebrate the successes of the people they support at their 'Tiaras and Bow Ties' ball.



Racing for life - Mary from Ludlow, West Mids ran the race in May and Jean and Karen from North Central raised £238 for their race.



Carly from the North East has just completed her Focus on Work Programme at Newcastle College.



We have been working in Cardiff for one year – they celebrated this July with punch and croquet at their Garden party.



This is Erica from Berkshire realising her dream to meet Robin Cousins at the Dancing on Ice Live tour.

Good to Great – Derby leading the way in person centred planning

Staff in Derby have been given a unique opportunity to learn the latest person centred planning tools from national, leading PCP consultant, Helen Sanderson.

Dimensions in Derby are one of three support providers who have been personally invited to take part in the Good to Great Programme – a ‘person centred tool kit’ funded by Derby Social Services. A set of coaches have been selected to attend the training, and then go back to their teams and share what they have learnt. The training is having a real effect for the lives of the people we support in the region and Neil Woodhead, head of Good to Great in Derby has commended the work that is happening at Dimensions. Lisa Orme, Area Manager says,

“The key to this training is person centred thinking - re-educating people to think in new ways, and we can see it working. From day one, new staff are learning to think in a person centred way. I know it works - people we support are making real decisions about how they want to live, using these new tools”.

You can read more about this exciting project at [http://www.helensandersonassociates.co.uk/PDFs/Good % 202 % 20Great % 20Derby % 20City.pdf](http://www.helensandersonassociates.co.uk/PDFs/Good%20%20Great%20Derby%20City.pdf)

For more info, contact Lisa Orme - 01332 347 281 or email: lisa.orme@dimensions-uk.org

The Person centred tools that are being used can be found on www.elpnet.net.



Adam Chilcott, one of the people we support in Derby, is on the leadership team for the Good to Great project. He loves mobiles - he is pictured here with his hot air balloon mobile PATH.

Here is Ashley on his backpacking trips in Europe, and Aaron ready for his catering course at college.



“A Canterbury Tale” - Ashley and Aaron present at Learning Disability Today ‘08

Trying to fit two and a half years into fifteen minutes is no easy task, but this is what Ashley and Aaron, two of the young people we support in East Anglia, set about doing at a recent conference.

The result is “A Canterbury Tale” - a fantastic film about their lives, explaining their experience of transition into adulthood, both the good and the not so good. Ashley and Aaron presented their film with Kate Jackson, our Transition Development Manager during a seminar at Learning Disability Today in Manchester this July, to an audience of 70 transition workers and other learning disability professionals.

They had a lot of fun and laughs making the film, which gives an insight into what daily life is like for the two brothers. It’s been designed to have a pop video feel. As well as presenting their film, the guys took part in a question and answer session with proved really useful for the attendees - nothing beats first hand experience. Ash and Aaron answered the questions with honesty and a good sense of humour, as you can see from this question and response:

Q. “What do you feel would have made your transition even more successful?”

A. “Money!”

The people who attended the seminar were really impressed and many thanked the team. Congratulations Ashley and Aaron!

Calling all artists!

The Crafters Group, an art club in Berkshire, have gone from strength to strength in the past year, now providing art workshops for over fifteen regular members.



Some of their activities have included scrap booking, beading and glass painting, and they are now so in demand that they have had to find a bigger venue and hire an assistant!

Can you help? If anyone has any art and craft materials, scrap fabric, card, ribbon etc that they no longer have a use for please pass them to Wendy Haines, Dimensions, 9/10 Commerce Park, Brunel Road, Theale, Reading, RG7 4AB.



Team days bring staff together

“it was great because I saw my team members as friends rather than colleagues”

This summer the staff team from France Road in Sheffield descended upon Hathersage, a quiet, little village in the Peak District for a work day with a difference.

Mandy, their Team Manager and Rebecca, Senior Support worker had planned a treasure hunt team day – a day designed by them to encourage staff

to draw on the different skills and abilities of their colleagues and to work together to think outside the box. Staff were sent off in teams to complete tasks around the village, before relaxing at the café by the outdoor pool! Rebecca Fletcher, Senior Support worker at France Road says,

“We ran the days to encourage and increase team spirit, giving our staff the opportunity to work with people they don’t normally work with and to give them a fun day out, off-site. Since the days out, the staff have felt more comfortable asking for help from each other and they do more things together like joint BBQ’s in the garden. They recognise that different people have different strengths and so seem to help each other or offer to help more.”

David has Sunday lunch his Gran and Auntie after twenty five years

Staff at Maplewood in the North East have been working away quietly over the last few years, arranging to reunite David, one of the people we support there, with his family.



David hadn’t seen his Gran for over twenty five years and the last time he saw his Auntie Ethel was when she visited him in Prudhoe hospital in 1964. They came to visit with David’s mum for Sunday lunch and everyone had a lovely day, full of reminiscing – the staff learnt more about David’s past and other members of his family. David’s mum was delighted that they were all together again, and both David’s Gran and Auntie were very complimentary about his home and the sensory garden - Auntie Ethel even said she wanted to move in!



Housing Update

• **Housing continues to slowly dispose of properties.** Only two homes have transferred this financial year to date. Housing Associations are actively pursuing transfers and have agreed offers for homes in many areas, but the Housing Associations concerned have made no progress over the past six months.

• **In the last couple of years more and more operational staff have been using Housing Staff's expertise** in housing management, maintenance, development, contract and tenancy law, Housing Benefit legislation and claims, and in the provision of office accommodation. We are now offering these services to Adepta staff and services and are expecting a busy time over the next six months.

• **We'd like to say goodbye and thanks to Sarinder Bengal**, who has worked for Dimensions for 8 years, is leaving us for a post as a Diversity Officer with Gateshead Council. We wish her every success in her new role. Her work is being undertaken by Bob Greenhalgh, who carries out similar duties in the North East.

Learning and Development The launch of the E-Learning programme

Dimensions and ThirdForce are working together to provide staff with training through E-learning throughout our organisation.

E-Learning is the delivery of training and management of learning using computers. You can access E-learning from ThirdForce using the computers in your local office, your own computer, or by using E-Boxes with courseware loaded locally.

Managers have been invited to attend 'Roll Out Days' to explain the benefits of E-learning and they have been trained on the process of accessing E-learning through ThirdForce. The manager can view their team's progress by accessing AiMs - a reporting tool that tracks the staff member's progress through each training

module attempted through to completion. It is essential that once the managers have attended the 'Roll Out Days' that they encourage their staff teams who require refresher training to access E-Learning.

It is still early days and feedback from managers who have attended the 'Roll Out Days' has been very positive.

Why is E-learning important?

It is more cost effective than instructor lead training - it reduces cost for cover in the services as well as reducing wastage of training resource through non-attendance. It will also provide our workforce with up-to-date training programmes available twenty four hours a day, seven days a week.

What do I do if I need help?

Support is available from several sources to help make E-learning enjoyable for our staff;

Lauren and Tina from the Learning & Development department can help with Username and Password problems and with Managers who need to view more than one Service through AiMs.

Lauren Swales - 01189 297974
lauren.swales@dimensions-uk.org
Tina Wilson - 01189 297998
tina.wilson@dimensions-uk.org

ThirdForce offer support on 'It doesn't work - How do I?' 01458 254443 or 0845 378 0040
e-mail: tsupport@thirdforce.com

Learning & Development are also working together with I.T. to address technical problems. Please contact the I.T. Helpdesk on 01189 297999 if you are experiencing connection, speed and sound problems.



Health and Safety

What can the Employee Assistance programme (EAP) do for you?

Did you know that all Dimensions staff have access to our Employee Assistance Programme providing access to information, advice and support for you and your immediate family?

It's a free and confidential service designed to make your work and home life easier.

General Information – The EAP can help and advise you on general issues such as knowing your consumer rights, money management and tackling social services issues

Legal Information - Qualified solicitors are on hand to answer any legal questions you may have on a range of subjects including house purchase, divorce, probate, court cases or even noisy neighbours.

Debt Advice – Their debt advisors specialise in looking at individual situations and then recommending the appropriate course of action to help put you back in control.

Work Matters - Sometimes it can be difficult to raise issues internally - the EAP can support you with a range of work-related matters such as adjusting to change or re-structuring, relationships with colleagues, conflict and stress.

Counselling Support – There are no set criteria to meet before you're entitled to counselling, so you can discuss whatever's on your mind whenever you want! Most people find that one call is normally all that's needed to put their minds at rest but our expert co-ordinators are also trained to identify the situations where face-to-face counselling would be more beneficial.

You can contact the EAP 24 hours a day, 7 days a week on 0800 854 572, or by e-mail: support4u@focuseap.co.uk

Driver Authorisation

If a member of staff wishes to drive a company vehicle or their own vehicle for company business then they must first complete a Driver Authorisation Form. This form needs to be returned to Justin Hunt in the Sheffield office together with a copy of the paper part of the driving licence showing the endorsement section.

If they wish to drive their own vehicle for company business they must also send a copy of their current motor insurance which must include business use cover and their current MOT certificate if the vehicle requires one. Business use means any usage on behalf of Dimensions. This includes attending training courses, taking people we support on outings, holiday, shopping etc)

Once Justin has approved this he will send out a letter confirming that you are an authorised driver. Please remember - unless you have received this letter you are not authorised to drive on behalf of Dimensions.

Personnel

Here are the three winners from our benefits competition

- This is Matthew Clementson who won 3rd prize of £150 of Love 2 shop vouchers.
- Lorna Heffer won 2nd prize of a digital photo frame.
- Tanya Emmons (below) won the 1st prize - an Ipod shuffle.



in terview



Sam Halmarack has just finished a six month secondment as Accessible Communications Officer in our South West region. We met up with him to find out how it went and what he has learnt...

What is the aim of your role?

The aim has been to make information accessible to the people we support in the South West. We've focused on ways of allowing people to access a section of their support plan with more independence.

Why is accessible communication so important?

I think it's essential in fulfilling every point of our organisation's statement of purpose. If you think about it, it's just as disabling to have a document solely in text for someone who cannot read, as it is to have a steep flight of stairs for a wheelchair user.

What have been the biggest surprises/challenges for you in this role?

Probably the discovery of low cost, low tech accessible communication tools, such as Talking Mats (a doormat with a set of pictures with velcro on the back) which can be put into place easily and make a real difference to somebody's life. Communication isn't necessarily about listening and speaking - it can involve any of the senses.

What are you most proud of?

At every stage the creation of an accessible support section has depended on many different people, but the greatest achievements have been made by creating ways for the people we support to take control. I also feel proud to work for an organisation that is progressive enough to put communication at the forefront of what it does.

If you have any questions or want to share anything you've found out about accessible information, I'd love to hear from you. My email is: samuel.halmarack@dimensions-uk.org



Here is Sam's top ten list for making a support plan more accessible



1. **Make it clear.** Whatever format you choose, the planning stage is vital - divide each point to a single sentence, better still if that sentence is limited to a single line on a page.

2. **Find out what's out there** - get to know the different accessible options available.



3. **Get some help** - find out if there's been home video maker or artist you can involve.

4. **Work out what works for the individual** - what are their interests?

5. **Before starting** - make sure you have picked the right format and level of complexity.



6. **Keep the person in the driving seat** - have them do the talking, let them choose who else is involved, or support them to do the filming.



7. **Test regularly** - at various stages of production try and show the person for feedback.

8. **Be prepared** - are your batteries charged for filming?



9. **Be as clear as possible** - don't be afraid to use simple and clear language.

10. **Evaluate** - work out what has worked and what didn't work and share your findings.