



# Forward with Families



Family newsletter  
Winter 2015/16

## Greetings from Gail and Liz



It looks like another busy year ahead for us as we take our Forward with Families and Friends Strategy into a new year with some clear directions set by your responses to our survey. Your feedback lets us track our progress against the promise of the Family Charter and target our efforts where they are most needed. Be prepared to have a role in recruiting new staff for your relative if you wish to be involved when vacancies arise, and to have more information about new staff in your relative's support team!

Many of you have asked for a landline number to get in touch with us. As we are out and about a lot of the time we haven't got a personal landline number but if you ring our switchboard on 0300 303 9001 they will get a message to us and we will call you back as soon as we can.

We also have a new service on the website called 'Ask Liz'. This is where you can email us a question. Just visit: [www.dimensions-uk.org/families/](http://www.dimensions-uk.org/families/) where you can email a question.

We are very excited about the recordings we are making of families discussing important issues and interesting snippets of history. We will be bringing our recording equipment to a place near you soon, so please come along and record a conversation with us that will help our staff learn. Liz did a recording last week about the mystery of the shrunken jumper! We really look forward to meeting you for this.

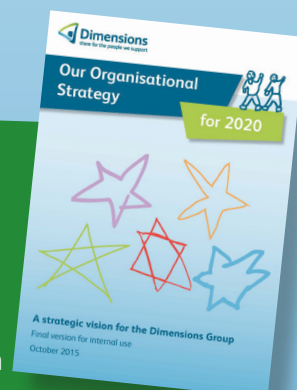
We would like to wish you a happy and peaceful 2016.

Gail and Liz

## New strategy

We have launched our new organisational strategy which includes our plans for the next five years.

The new Dimensions Strategy for 2020 seeks to position our organisation over the next five years as the exemplar provider of research-based, outcomes-focused support within the sector. It commits us more than ever before to providing the very best personalised support for your relative or friend. It is built around five distinct pillars and is all about allowing the people we support to flourish as active members of their community.



## News round up



### New website

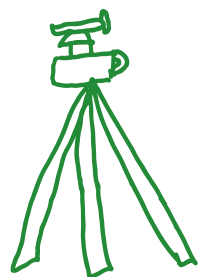
Our new public website is now up and running at [www.dimensions-uk.org](http://www.dimensions-uk.org). The new site spotlights the great work we do and celebrates outstanding examples of support from across the country. It also features a Families section, which includes information and advice, a families blog and a range of resources. Please visit [www.dimensions-uk.org/families/](http://www.dimensions-uk.org/families/) to find out more.

### Improving our Quality Checks

We have reviewed the way Dimensions check for good quality in our services. For many years Quality Checks have been carried out by the people we support but we now want to add family members to these teams. If you would like to be a Dimensions Quality Checker please contact Paul Pargeter for more information. Email [paul.pargeter@dimensions-uk.org](mailto:paul.pargeter@dimensions-uk.org) or call: 0792 004 0550 or 0300 303 9002.

### Activate

Activate is our new model of support and forms a key plank of our new Strategy for 2020. It will be rolled out over the next two years and is all about improving and monitoring the quality of support we provide under eight headings covering health, relationships and skills development as well as processes and governance within Dimensions as a whole. It is directly based on ground-breaking academic research and will ensure that we are the very best we can be in supporting people to live their lives to the full.



### Speaking volumes

Has anyone ever told you that you should write a book about your experiences with your relative? We all have so many stories to tell: funny, interesting, challenging... Times have changed so much that it is useful for new staff to understand the difference between how our relatives have been supported in the past and now. To help new staff, we have started a series of recordings which are available to new and existing staff so they can learn from our experience.

## Dimensions 40th Anniversary Games

2015 was a big year for Dimensions, marking our 40th anniversary. To celebrate, a sporting event was arranged for 18th September for everyone we support plus staff members.

The event was held at Allianz Park, London, home of the Saracens Rugby Club. Teams from all six Dimensions regions took part in track events, javelin and club throwing, long jump and boccia. The events were for all levels of ability and 260 athletes took part.

The special guest was Jade Lally, Commonwealth Games bronze medallist for women's discus, and entertainment was provided by The Coasters, a band made up of people with learning disabilities who met at Outreach 3Way's day service.



## The Family Survey results

Thank you to everyone who took the time to fill in and return our Family Survey. We had a slightly lower response rate to the survey this year, but we also know that more families than ever before do not wait for a survey to let us know how things are going. You pick up a phone and speak to someone or send an email. This means that any issues can be ironed out quickly and those all-important compliments that mean such a lot to staff morale can be passed on immediately. Here are some of the main messages coming from the survey:

**I can die happy knowing my relative is well cared for.**

**Knowing that your relative is well supported brings great peace of mind.** We want everyone to agree with the parent who said this. A respectable **82% of you think we are providing a good, very good or excellent service to your relative** and your feedback will enable us to improve both the way we deliver support and our relationships with families and friends.

We were already aware that many people didn't have the right contact details for our staff and offices and the survey confirmed this. By now you should have received an updated information pack. We will make sure that all families receive this.

**Almost 80% of you are as involved as you wish to be in decision making.** Where possible we will be working to get better at involving you but sometimes a decision is made by your relative and we have to respect their wishes in this. The Mental Capacity Act sets very clear guidance on how people with learning disabilities and autism should be supported with decision making. You can download information about the Act from our website or ask your manager to print it for you. (insert link)

If you are one of the **18% who feels they do not have enough contact with us** please speak to your manager and let them know what works for you. We will remind our managers to check on this too.

**There has been a 15% increase in the numbers of families actively involved in support planning.** Everyone we support has a support

plan which you can see (if your relative gives permission) and contribute to. Whether we have been supporting a person for a few months or a few decades, family input and expertise is valuable and makes a positive contribution to the person's health and wellbeing. Please speak to your manager if you would like to be more involved in this, there are many different ways you can contribute.

Although we understand that many of you prefer to leave recruitment in our hands we feel that your involvement (not necessarily at the interview stage) helps us to match the right member of staff to your relative's team. Of course skills and professional experience are very important, but getting the personality match adds something very special to everyone's life. We are speaking with our Operations Directors about this issue and expect to see many more relatives than the current **8% involved in recruitment** over the coming two years.

**78% of said you know how to make a complaint,** and the new families information pack should mean that everyone will now know how to do this. **Only 19% know how to nominate a staff member or team for an Inspiring People award.** We see some heart-warming good practice as we travel around the country and staff always appreciate being nominated even if they don't win a prize. Nomination is quick and easy either by email to [inspiringpeople@dimensions-uk.org](mailto:inspiringpeople@dimensions-uk.org) or by phoning your locality manager or local office.

We will use this newsletter to keep you updated about progress made as a result of actions taken from your feedback in the families survey. The next one will be in 2017 but meanwhile, please stay in touch.

## Chair's report

I have had a really exciting time recently, being involved in various activities with Dimensions.



I was asked to present the Inspiring People awards for the North region and it was really humbling to realise just how dedicated Dimensions staff are. The nominees had all gone far more than the extra mile to ensure the people they support had fulfilled lives. Families, those supported and support staff were all at the meetings and the atmosphere was so warm. Two great experiences! Remember that the Inspiring People awards are now regionally based and your nomination, when you feel that staff deserve extra recognition, would be welcomed.

I have also been involved in talking with staff about how important personalisation is for

families. We want to know that any service is built around our family member. I was really proud to be involved with the organisation when I did the talk as the staff were so enthusiastic and committed to ensuring that the people we support had as good a life as possible.

I have been reminded so often of why I am delighted that my son is supported by Dimensions over the past few months. We all know that nothing is perfect but I think Dimensions are striving towards that. If you feel differently or have a story to tell, don't forget Liz and Gail are there for you and I would also love to hear from anyone who thinks they could offer something to the Family and Friends Forum. Note the change of name, as we would love to have friends involved as some people we know do not have families!

Best Wishes  
Susan Kirkman

## Meet the Family and Friends Forum

The Forum was set up by Dimensions to ensure that the views of families and friends are heard on a regular basis by senior management. Four times a year some relatives from across the country come together to advise us on our work with families. They bring the views and issues of families from their area to our attention and are a thoughtful, reflective and challenging group to work with. We know time, distance and other commitments keep many of you from attending our local meetings so representatives would be pleased to take your views forward. You can meet the rest of the Forum in the next issue.



**Susan Kirkman, Chair of the Family and Friends Forum**

My son is supported 24/7 in his own house in Sheffield.  
Email: [susan@susankirkman.wanadoo.co.uk](mailto:susan@susankirkman.wanadoo.co.uk)



**Elizabeth Bruce (known as Liz)**

My son is supported by Dimensions in a Residential Care Home in West London.  
Email: [elizabeth.bruce37@btinternet.com](mailto:elizabeth.bruce37@btinternet.com)



**Martin Boniface**

My son is supported by Dimensions in a Supported Living arrangement in the West Midlands.  
Email: [martinboniface@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:martinboniface@blueyonder.co.uk)



**Fran Kime**

My son is supported by Dimensions in Cambridgeshire. It is a pleasure and a privilege to serve as a member, but it would be even better if we were able to access more of your views.  
email: [fran@speakingeye.co.uk](mailto:fran@speakingeye.co.uk)

For more information, please contact one of us:

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Liz Wilson (North and Midlands) ☎ 07908 669 040 @[liz.wilson@dimensions-uk.org](mailto:liz.wilson@dimensions-uk.org)

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we support