

Business Plan



2022-26

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The difference we will make

This strategy lays out Richmond AID's vision, priorities and plans for the next four years. It places disabled people and their interests at the heart of all that we do. To inform our strategy we have gathered opinions, concerns and suggestions from disabled people and their families, as well as our staff, volunteers and trustees.

We have also reviewed a wide range of local and national strategies to gain an understanding of the issues affecting local disabled people and to help develop the evidence base for our strategic objectives.

We are proud of the plans and ideas in this strategy, but we know they are just the beginning of a far longer process. As we emerge from the pandemic many things are uncertain and we know that there will be increased competition for funding as well as increased demand for our services. However, we have chosen to make our plans ambitious rather than cautious as we know disabled people need us.

We will strive to keep the plan relevant and up to date and will review the key elements of the strategy on an annual basis to make sure we are on track, re-visiting the strategic priorities and our performance against them.



About Richmond AID

Mission

Richmond AID will empower disabled people to achieve greater independence and choice by providing a range of services and support. We will work to remove barriers identified by disabled people.

Vision

Empowered disabled people living independently and participating fully and equally in society.

Values

- **The Social Model of Disability** - We believe in a [Social Model of Disability](#) that says that people with impairments are disabled by the way society is run and organised and we believe in a [Cultural Model of Deafness](#) that celebrates Deaf people's linguistic culture and language. For more information on The Social Model of Disability see the Shape Arts [video definition](#) or watch this [animation](#).
- **Independent Living** - We believe in independent living in its fullest sense as defined by the UN Convention on the Rights of Disabled People (UNCRDP), that disabled people should enjoy the same life opportunities, independence and choices as non-disabled people. An [easy read version of the UNCRDP](#) can be found as a link from this page.
- **Inclusion** - We believe in 'Nothing about us without us' - that Deaf and disabled people and our organisations should be fully involved in decisions and issues that affect us. We have systems in place for consultation and feedback and deliver services that our users need. We believe in being responsive to the changing needs of disabled people.
- **Healthy Organisational Culture** - We are a vibrant organisation that provides a safe space for disabled people. We have a culture based on trust, respect, integrity and openness and we embrace diversity and equality of opportunity.
- **Working in Partnership** - we recognise that working in partnership to share expertise, costs and reduce duplication results in better services for disabled people.

OUR OBJECTIVES

To achieve our vision of independence and choice for disabled people we will

- Work with disabled people to identify and remove barriers they are experiencing in accessing services and support
- Include disabled people in the planning of our services and promote wider opportunities for engagement and inclusion
- Ensure disabled people have a strong voice locally
- Raise awareness about disabled people's needs and accessible service provision with service providers and employers
- Increase employment, education, volunteering and leisure opportunities
- Provide high quality information and advice
- Reduce poverty and increase financial security of disabled people
- Understand, track and respond to changing needs.

OUR APPROACH TO DISABILITY

In terms of defining who is disabled we consider it is anyone who has an impairment, illness, injury or long-term health condition and may face barriers to being included in society, whether they self-identify as disabled or not. Our clients include Deaf people, people with learning disabilities, people with sensory impairments, people with physical impairments or differences, people with mental health conditions, people with autistic spectrum conditions, people with long-term health conditions, including cancer, diabetes, epilepsy and people who are HIV positive.



Our History

For more than 30 years Richmond AID has been providing advice and support to disabled people in the area. We have grown from a local telephone helpline set up in 1988 by disabled people in a day centre, to our current position, where we are a medium-sized organisation managing a fully accessible building with a staff team of 20 and a volunteer workforce of around 60. We became a Company Limited by Guarantee in 1999 with a governing document that requires 51% of the Board of Trustees to be disabled or carers.

We remain an organisation of and for disabled people and work with people of all types of disability. Through a process of careful planning, good reputation for delivery and responding to local needs, we are now able to provide the range of services which are described below.

Richmond AID's current profile

Richmond AID is firmly rooted in its local area and works actively across the whole of the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames as well as providing some services in Hounslow and Kingston. Richmond AID feels that our strength and skills lie in our disability expertise, our approach to delivering quality services and our expertise in leading successful partnerships. The majority of our workforce either has a disability or direct experience of disability and we believe that this gives us a genuine understanding of the needs of disabled people. We are passionate about the unique added value and expertise that being a Deaf and Disabled People's Organisation gives us.



Richmond AID's current services fall into 3 broad areas

Advice and Information Services

Richmond AID provides free, one to one advice and support for all disabled people and carers. We have three main advice areas:

- Information Navigation,
- Benefits Advice
- Money Advice.

More recently we have added our Families Advice project and have started to deliver a benefits advice project in Hounslow.

Inclusion and Independence

Richmond AID runs a range of projects which promote social inclusion and well-being and support people to live independently in the community including:

- our BuddyUp which runs in Richmond and Kingston boroughs and matches buddy volunteers to young disabled people so they can access social activities
- Spade gardening service
- telephone befriending
- our Surplus2.U project which provides a weekly stall of food that would otherwise go to landfill
- social activities with our Peer Network programme and a range of volunteering opportunities.

Counselling

We run a low-cost Counselling service that is led by our Counselling Manager and delivered by a team of experienced therapists who are nearly or recently qualified. The service has grown steadily in demand over the years and we have increased our provision in line with this.



Business Plan

2022-26

Introduction

This Business Plan for 2022-26 sets out what we want to achieve over the next four years. We recognise that following the pandemic there will be fierce competition for funding and resources, and that our role in representing the needs of disabled people and delivering relevant services is more important than ever.

We have formed our priorities based on a number of different factors and inputs:

- A Client Survey in 2021 of 114 disabled people looking at needs across a wide range of areas
- Monitoring, evaluation, client feedback and level of demand for our existing services
- Staff and volunteer feedback, annual Service Reviews, operational and service priorities
- Annual Business Plan reviews of progress against priorities
- PESTLE (Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Legal and Environmental) analysis completed by trustees

OUR PRIORITIES & STRATEGIES

Strategic Area 1: Disabled people have increased access to advice and information, well-being, and social and digital inclusion opportunities

Emerging from the pandemic we are already experiencing an increase in demand for our advice and information services and expect this to continue. In our recent survey clients have told us that this is a priority area for them. We have recently begun to deliver services in Hounslow and can see the enormous gap in provision for disabled people in this borough. We will increase our capacity to meet the hugely increased need for free, independent, up to date advice and information.

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the digital divide as people have been more reliant on the internet to access services and health information, to socialise with friends and family, make medical appointments and take advantage of welfare activities. Disabled people are more likely to be digitally excluded. Our strategic analysis by trustees highlighted this as a key area for development. We have recently secured funding for a Digital Inclusion project commissioned by the local authority. This partnership project will recognise and tackle multiple barriers to inclusion digitally including not having access to the required infrastructure and/or devices, lack of skills, or lack of motivation to use technology.

As well as digital inclusion activities we recognise there is demand for people to come together face to face to make social connections. We will focus on activities that bring people together and seek to grow our offer of outdoor activities. Our Counselling service has steadily grown and there continues to be more demand. We plan to further increase our provision this year. All service development is dependent on successful funding applications or raising funds in other ways.



Strategic Area 2: Disabled people have better standards of living

Our priority areas include

- Richmond AID's clients need access to good, affordable social care and support. In partnership with other DDPOs we have recently secured funding to campaign for fairer outcomes for people who need access to social care for working age disabled people. The focus of the project will be to create a robust evidence-base to show the inequalities that disabled people experience as a result of being charged for social care. The Appendix lists some of the wider issues within social care which we would hope to address if resources are available.
- The focus on the virus has caused huge disruption to healthcare services and people with serious conditions have experienced delayed treatment, causing severe pain and suffering, avoidable harm, and risk to people's lives. We know from our advice work that there is a lack of access to affordable, accessible housing, especially in Richmond borough, where land values, house prices and rents are high. We will continue to raise these key issues with the local authority and health services and advocate for our clients.
- Service providers do not make enough reasonable adjustments under the Equality Act. This ranges from the services of the local authority and other providers of public services through to shops and businesses. Transport, and the environment we live in are not nearly as accessible as they should be for a wide range of impairments. We will develop training for local employers on how to be compliant with the Equality Act e.g. on Access to Work and Reasonable Adjustments.
- Digital exclusion may also have an adverse impact on people seeking work. Those who are less digitally skilled or do not have internet access may struggle to search for and apply for jobs online, and may not be able to access online employment support services. We can address some of this via our digital inclusion project but will also seek to provide more support for disabled people who want to get into work.



Strategic Area 3: Be a sustainable and accountable organisation, and work in line with our values

We will continue to develop the organisation and work on sustainability including business planning, income generation and applying for contracts and grants.

Our priority areas include:

- Embedding the principles of the social model across the organisation with training, workshops and development of social model advocates
- Developing intersectional approaches to service delivery
- Ensuring services are not digitally exclusive and are accessible for our clients using BSL interpretation and reasonable adjustments
- Returning to opening the building and face to face provision
- Recruitment and capacity building of disabled trustees
- Developing staff well-being and reflective practice/ gaining insights from peer feedback learning opportunities
- Completing the lease renewal for our building
- Making improvements to our building e.g. new kitchen area, advice room acoustics
- Continuing to build on the infrastructure already in place
 - flexible and home working for staff
 - use of technology and online services to improve client accessibility
 - a new website and move to office 365 for document storage
- Increasing environmental sustainability in projects and delivery
- Promoting existing services and our successes more widely, using case studies, good news stories etc



Financial Strategy

Richmond AID is currently funded by contracts from the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames, by several locally focused charitable organisations, by regional and national grant giving bodies and by funding to work in Kingston and Hounslow.

We coped well during the pandemic and were able to secure additional funds to support our work. As a result, we now have increased demand for our services, in particular our advice and information services. We have recently been successful with some bids, many of which will be delivered in partnership. We are also starting to see some success with getting funding from community events and we charge for some services including our Counselling and Spade gardening services. Attracting funding is likely to be very competitive over the next few years and it is likely we will need to prioritise activities that we are delivering.

RISK MANAGEMENT

Richmond AID has adopted the approach to Risk Management recommended by the Charity Commission. We have a Risk Management Register to identify potential risks under several headings and then score them for likelihood and impact and hence overall risk, and update this annually. These risks are then grouped into Green (awareness and exception reporting sufficient), Amber (requires assessment and confirmation that procedures are in place to manage) and Red (requires assessment and action plan to reduce risk). Progress on these action plans are regularly reviewed at Trustee meetings.

Appendices 1 and 2 follow

Appendix 1 web links

Social Model of Disability - <https://www.inclusionlondon.org.uk/disability-in-london/social-model/the-social-model-of-disability-and-the-cultural-model-of-deafness/>

Cultural Model of Deafness - <https://www.inclusionlondon.org.uk/disability-in-london/cultural-model-of-deafness/the-cultural-model-of-deafness/>

Shape Arts video definition -
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=24KE__OCKMw

Social Model video animation -
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9s3NZaLhcc4>

Independent Living -
<https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-19-living-independently-and-being-included-in-the-community.html>

UNCRDP - <https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities.html>

‘Nothing about us without us’ -
<https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/international-day-of-persons-with-disabilities-3-december/international-day-of-disabled-persons-2004-nothing-about-us-without-us.html>

Welfare Reform & Work Act 2016
<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2016/7/contents/enacted>

Health in All Policies report (Feb 2021) by All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG)
https://debbieabrahams.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/210221_HIAP-A4-Report-Debbie-Abrahams.pdf

Appendix 2 National and local policy drivers

It is clear that following the pandemic national and local government are facing competing priorities coupled with huge financial challenges.

NATIONAL

Impact of the pandemic

The pandemic has deepened inequalities in health, income and employment for disabled people. Disabled people faced 'systematic barriers' before COVID-19 that impacted on access to public services and job opportunities and these have been exacerbated by the pandemic. Health, work, welfare and education policies have all been found to be failing to support disabled people. The Office of National Statistics (ONS) found the negative social impacts of the pandemic have been greater for disabled people. Among people who indicated that their wellbeing had been affected by Covid-19, 46% of disabled people said the pandemic had a negative impact on their mental health, compared with 29% for non-disabled people. Rising fuel and food costs will mean that disabled people are further plunged into poverty.

Welfare reform crisis

A report published in February 2021 by a cross party group of MPs as part of the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Health in All Policies has concluded that, five years on, the effect of the [Welfare Reform & Work Act 2016](#) has been 'devastating' to the health and wellbeing of people on low incomes.

This [report](#) shows there is strong evidence from several sources that the cuts in social security support have contributed to increasing poverty and financial hardship in low income households which has particularly affected the poverty levels of children and disabled people.

The report focuses on the impact of five key measures within the Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016, including cuts to the benefit cap; freezing certain benefits for four years; and cuts of almost £30 a week to disabled people placed in the work-related activity group of employment and support allowance (ESA).

It concludes that the act has pushed many low-income households into poverty, and has caused increased debt, rent arrears, food-bank use, homelessness, and a negative impact on mental health.

Adult Social Care Crisis and Social Care Charging

Adult social care funding has been under pressure for several years. Factors which have contributed to this include: increasing numbers of older people as well as increased demand from working age adults, pressures from local government finances, wage increases, and more recently the impact of the pandemic. Despite some recent increases council leaders and other sector bodies warn these sums fell far short of what's needed to address shortfalls in adult social care.

Thousands of disabled and older people throughout the Covid pandemic have experienced social care cuts and increases in care charging. Families are struggling to make ends meet and pay the week's shopping bill. In some cases, people have to make an unenviable choice of heating the home or putting food on the table. Others are being pushed into debt.

Unlike the NHS, social care support is not free, and even people with a meagre income, including those on means-tested benefits, have to pay towards social care. Good social care support helps disabled and older people to live fulfilling lives with choice, control and dignity. Good social care means people are clean, safe, have food to put on the table, have meaningful relationships, take part in their community, and enjoy life.

Intersectionality

The term intersectionality includes all protected characteristics, such as ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, religion, disability and gender. It's the idea that these layers do not exist separately from each other but intersect and can magnify the discrimination and marginalisation people might experience.

Increase in Disability hate crime

Over 7,300 disability hate crimes were reported to the police across England and Wales in 2019/20, yet only 1 in 62 cases actually received a charge (in a report by Leonard Cheshire and United Response (Oct 2020)).

- Reports of disability hate crime are up 12% across 36 regions in England and Wales in 2019/20, but only 1.6% of cases resulted in the perpetrators being charged.
- Nearly half (3,628) of the reports to police involved an element of violence, rising by 16%.
- 1 in 10 of all reported disability hate crimes took place online, increasing by a staggering 46% in the last year.

Employment gap

The proportion of disabled people who are either unemployed or economically inactive has risen from 45.9% to 47.7% in the year to October-December 2021. This has meant that the disability employment gap has increased over the last year from 28.1% points to 28.8% points. The ONS have reported that a higher proportion of disabled employees have been made redundant than employees who are not disabled. In July-November 2020, 21.1 per thousand disabled employees were made redundant, compared to 13.0 per thousand employees who are not disabled.

National Disability Strategy – July 2021

The UK Government has published its [National Disability Strategy](#). The main things announced by the UK Government as part of the Strategy are:

- The upgrade of job support and opportunities, housing and transport
- Improving accessibility of homes, £300m investment in support for children with special educational needs and disabilities in schools and an online work passport for disabled students moving from education to work
- Plans to consult on disability workforce reporting for businesses with more than 250 staff
- More accessible housing, easier commuting and better job prospects for millions of disabled people

However, critics add that the strategy is mostly made up of existing commitments and policies currently working their way through parliament. A network of more than 20 of the country's leading DPOs has attacked the new strategy saying it was "full of rehashed old policies" and failed to tackle the growing poverty, exclusion and discrimination disabled people face.

Critics also argue that a key issue impacting the human rights of disabled people was excluded from the strategy – food poverty, which disproportionately impacts disabled people. According to the Trussell Trust, 62% of people of working age referred to food banks in early 2020 were disabled.

Even before its publication, the government was facing a high court challenge from four disabled people – supported by DPOs such as Disabled People Against Cuts and Inclusion London – over a controversial consultation that informed the strategy. In January 2022 the High Court declared that the survey of disabled people, used to inform the highly anticipated National Disability Strategy, has been ruled "unlawful" and that the survey failed to consult with people effectively. The government have said they are currently considering next steps.

LOCAL

Health

Richmond, Kingston, Croydon, Sutton and Wandsworth commissioning groups have merged to become South West London Clinical Commissioning Group. Work is currently being undertaken to further develop a Richmond and Kingston locality model which will develop Primary Care Networks (PCNs) to facilitate multi-disciplinary team ways of working between primary and community teams, including social care and the voluntary sector. Social Prescribing locally is being delivered in Richmond by Ruils, where there is a team of 16 Link Workers referring people to our services.

Local Authorities

We work closely with the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames local authority, including social care teams and what is currently called the 'front door team'. We have also started working closely with the local authority in Hounslow. Our Hounslow Benefits Advice worker works closely with their Community Solutions team where we deliver outreach jointly. We have supported families across Richmond and Kingston through our work with Achieving for Children (AfC) and receive many referrals from social workers for the Household Support grant we are administering on behalf the local authorities in Richmond and Hounslow.