



new prospects

ANNUAL REPORT

2024



Chairperson's Report

Paul Hutchinson

All Change...But What Matters Remains the Same

I think everyone involved in New Prospects will agree we have seen a lot of change within the organisation since the last annual report. This has arisen from two main factors. We have been trying to move on from the pressures of the post covid period to get back to something like a normal life for all and also changes arising from the change of CEO which was mentioned in the previous year's report.

Change At the Top

There has been a very smooth change at the top with Tim Keilty taking over the reins of the organisation as CEO replacing Ellen Vick who had been in office for a very long time. There was never any doubt that the transition would be orderly as Tim and Ellen had worked together for so long but major change can still be unsettling. While it was sad to see Ellen leave, Tim's appointment has proved incredibly popular, and he has worked hard to meet everyone.

Tim has been spending time to understand how every aspect of the organisation works in order to assess whether change was needed, or all was well. A further task was to recruit staff to cover the role that Tim used to fill within NPA which was not easy.

Some decisions had been put on hold pending Tim's appointment but since then, there has been no time spared

before pushing ahead with the necessary changes.

There has been new technology introduced to:

- Record and communicate the work we do.
- Control and manage our HR, and
- Manage and update our policies and procedures.

This is a huge piece of work which will not be complete for some time but we can already see the potential benefits. We will be able to demonstrate the work we have done, be more efficient and be able to provide more focused help to the people we support. Thanks to everyone that is working on making this happen.

There has also been a thorough review of the reporting structure to make sure that staff are more accountable for their actions and things are done in the New Prospects way. New Prospects has its own ethos, and it is important that everyone in New Prospects works to ensure that is maintained.

Collective Planning

As an organisation, we periodically pause to assess what the future of New Prospects will look like.

We have always tried to include as many parties as possible in the future planning and direction of the organisation and taking on board a wide range of views and comments. We have held a planning day attended by staff, the people we support, family and board members. The aim of this was to work out New Prospects should do over the next few years with aims and priorities. This was followed up by a strategic day with the

Board and Senior Management Team to work out how to implement the views from the planning day. This work is still ongoing, but it will feed through into the detailed plans for the future.

Moving On

Although it has been four years since the first covid lockdown, we are all still seeing some of the consequences with the cost-of-living crisis, pressure on recruitment and pressure on local authority commissioners. This all feeds through to the lives of the people we support. Covid has not gone away and the long-term health implications may not be known for years but there is not much we can do about that so we have to get on with life and make the best of what we have.

Recruitment always seems to be a problem for the entire Adult Social Care sector but that does not lessen the needs of the people we support. The people we support want to be able to do more but staff shortages can restrict this. Staff shortages also restrict the new work we can undertake to help more people live good lives. We have therefore taken the decision to over-recruit staff so we always have slightly more staff capacity than we rotas suggest we need. This reduces the pressure on staff to cover periods of sickness and should ensure we have greater capacity to respond to short term needs. During the intervening period until this is achieved, we have been limiting the new work we have been prepared to tender for. This may seem to be bad thing to do but we do not want quantity to negatively impact on quality. We are seeing the benefits with happier staff and better support.

We have also returned to having some large-scale social events during the year. When times are tough, there is nothing better than a good party. These have proved to be very popular. In fact, there have been so many attending that it is proving to be difficult to find fully accessible venues large enough. It is a nice problem to have to solve. Everyone mixing and enjoying themselves is a nice sight to see.

The Negatives

While there is a lot of positive news, there are always some negatives.

The financial pressure everyone is feeling from cost increases is getting a little better but it has not gone away. Both staff and the people we support are still feeling the impact of inflation and reductions in support. We continue to do what we can on both of these issues. We fight for the needs of the people we support and we challenge funding decisions from commissioners when we think they are unfair. We accelerated the annual pay award for staff and have continued to support those who are under financial pressure.

Our staff are the lifeblood of the organisation and we will always try to do what we can withing the constraints we are set. Local authority funding will be under pressure for some time to come so we need to think more constructively and work more efficiently to get more out of less. Its never an easy task but we will do what we can.

Our major social enterprise project at the Whitley Bay Metro Station has also ground to a halt due to the need for extensive emergency repairs to the glass

station canopy. Unfortunately, we cannot proceed until this work is complete as the space we will occupy is needed to facilitate the repair work. This is frustrating but the project is just delayed not cancelled. We will get the project moving again as soon as we are allowed access.

What Is the Same

There has been a huge amount of change but so much remains the same at New Prospects. The ethos of the organisation remains the same. The aim to do better for people with learning disabilities remains constant. The commitment of the staff and the board to improve the lives of the people we support is as strong as it ever has been. Long may that continue and thank you to all those that make this possible.



Paul Hutchinson

Chair

New Prospects Association

CEO's Report

Tim Keilty

Honeymoon

It is a year since I started after Ellen's Retirement – I do stay in touch with her and am happy to report that she is having a restful retirement – but perhaps getting a little bored. A year into my new role and I haven't broken anything yet, but my honeymoon period is well and truly over so if anything does go wrong – it is definitely my fault...

A lot has happened since our last report, all of it adding up to improvements, I hope. All of our changes are designed to make it easier and quicker for us to do the things we have to do so we have more time to do the things we want to do.

So, what do we want to do?

For those of you who came to our Planning Day in July we started to think about that together;



We came up with our values and vision and our five key themes for the organisation in the future;

“We are open, honest, thoughtful, and kind. We respect everyone's uniqueness, whatever their connection to New Prospects. We are rooted in Human Rights and fight people's corners. We understand that friends and family are people's strongest relationships, but believe that through working in partnership with people we support, families, friends, staff and community...”

We can make our key themes a reality;

“Be the best we can be for people we support - so they can live their life as equal citizens.

Be the best we can be for staff - so they are supported, valued and have purpose in their work.

Be an organisation that contributes positively to the communities in which we work.

Be a trusted organisation, known for our integrity, flexibility, creativity, and commitment.

Play our part in Changing the World for the better, so that everyone is included.”

Our five key themes are what we will ‘hang’ our work around, checking back to make sure we are doing what we all agreed.

We want people we support to live their life as a citizen, assisted by staff who are well trained, supported and have a sense of purpose and achievement.

We want to be an organisation that is known and trusted and we want to make a positive difference to our communities and change the world! Not much to ask...

Where we are now

We are building on the strong foundations created by Ellen (and everyone else!) and having a little tweak to make sure we are fit for the next leg of our journey. We are in the middle of some big projects to help us be Effortlessly Compliant and Painstakingly Person Centred. We are investing in digital solutions for all of our paperwork, so staff and managers have more time to spend with people.

Our project team now are in place to push forward our enterprise plans, help people and teams become unstuck, see quality led by the people we support and involve people we support, staff and families more in the life of New Prospects and beyond.

The board are considering all of the ideas people came up with in the session at the Linskill Centre, at the AGM and in our surveys – to decide which of the great ideas you had we are going to focus on first. And using our five themes to decide.

While we make these changes, we carry on doing what we do - supporting people to live their life, assisted by well trained, well supported staff.

Our Next Steps Together

In February 2024 we welcomed Simon Duffy and Wendy Perez for a conference in Newcastle where we helped them launch their new book – ‘Everyday Citizenship – Seven keys to a life well lived’ Our next step as organisation is the challenge to become a lean, mean Citizenship machine! Answering the

question, “How do we make everyday citizenship a reality for all of us?”

The Keys to Citizenship:



Citizenship isn't complicated – here is a brilliant quote from Simon Duffy;

“We give each other the gift of citizenship whenever we see and treat each other as equals”

Testing Times

We are a healthy organisation in lots of ways, reputation, culture, values and finance. It's a good job we are fighting fit because we are seeing the impact of years of austerity really hitting local authority budgets. We stepped aside from some other providers who were challenging the hourly rates provided by local authorities, not because we don't think we need more money, but because we realise that the pot of money is finite and what is given out to us in increased rates will be taken off someone who needs support. We find ourselves battling for the right level of support to keep people safe and live a life of their choosing more and more.

You'll see from the accounts that our increased income almost exactly matches our increased outgoings – that's

reassuring in lots of ways - our aim is to become better not bigger.

Collaboration not Competition

We are continuing the work of Ellen by seeking out organisations with similar values as us, where we can share, collaborate and be stronger together. We've expanded that over the year - particularly building strong relationships with C-Change in Scotland (Sam Smith has been a great source of support, ideas and practical help) and we have built a great relationship with Orbis in North Tyneside, we continue to look beyond social care and this year have been exploring partnerships with Whitley Bay Young People's Centre.

Hard Times

This year we sadly lost Carl Houchin, Elaine Smith, Fiona Ferguson, Brian Johnson and Ashley Davison. Here's to their teams - you supported each other, comforted other people we support, stood by families, battled for people's rights for good health care, fought for people to come home, spoke at funerals, and did them and us proud.

Looking ahead

I'm confident we have the people, the drive, the dedication, the vision and the values to ride whatever comes our way - and I'm sure we have the skills, passion and connections to make everyday citizenship a reality for everyone involved with New Prospects.

Change

I hope the changes we are making are gentle, big, but gently done. I hope the changes don't alter what makes us great,

an organisation completely dedicated to good lives for people we support and staff.

I hope we don't lose the very personal touch we have - I love calling in on people we support, being welcomed in by them and their teams, or being told to go away if I've landed at a bad time! I find myself being welcomed into someone's home, not a service, and part of great conversations filled with respect, love and laughter. I also love the atmosphere in the office, our doors open, people we support or staff plonking themselves down in my office. Sometimes when the pressure of work mounts up, there's a temptation to close the door...but we have always been good at distinguishing 'real work' from 'busy work' at New Prospects. Real work is about people, busy work is about process.

New Prospects are serious and dedicated but we also see the value in fun and laughter, and even when things are tough, laughter is frequent and loud.



Tim Keilty

CEO

New Prospects Association

Treasurer's Report

Keith Williamson FCA

As the summary shows, whilst our income increased by 14%, we only ended up with a modest improvement in the bottom-line surplus.

This demonstrates just how difficult it is to turn all of the hard work done throughout the organisation into surplus funds given that almost 98% of our income is spent on funding our services.

Included in the running costs of the charity, two figures stand out. Firstly, we spent 92% of those costs on remunerating our staff. We wish we could pay more but, until Local Authority funding improves, our hands are tied. It would be nice to think that the new Labour government will be able to translate their words about the importance of the care sector into something tangible but whether that will happen remains to be seen. In the second case, well over £100k was spent during the year on improvements to our IT systems. Once those improvements are embedded, we will be able to provide an even better service for the people we support and, at the same time, our staff will benefit by having to spend less time on record keeping.

Reserves

Our target is to have enough in free reserves to cover 6 months of running costs. Despite being some way short of that target we fully believe that we have sufficient financial strength to continue our work – both existing and new. Whether we will be able to strengthen the position in the current uncertain

climate is unclear, but all efforts will be made to try to at least maintain them at current levels.



Keith Williamson FCA,

Treasurer

New Prospects Association

Income	increased by 14%	to £11.4m
Annual Costs	increased by 14%	to £11.2m
Operating Surplus	increased by £43k	to £255k
Average Staff numbers	increased by 12	to 352
Net Current Assets – these are the funds we have available to meet our monthly costs. (It ignores any fixed assets, such as our head office, that we cannot use to pay our expenses with.)	increased by 10%	to £3m
How long would our net current assets last, until our running costs reduced them to nil?		98 days

Key financial details of the year are;

OUR VALUES AND VISION



We are open, honest, thoughtful, and kind. We respect everyone's uniqueness, whatever their connection to New Prospects. We are rooted in Human Rights and fight people's corners. We understand that friends and family are people's strongest relationships, but believe that through working in partnership with people we support, families, friends, staff and community -

WE CAN:

- Be the best we can be for people we support - so they can live **their** life as equal citizens.
- Be the best we can be for staff - so they are supported, valued and have purpose in their work.
- Be an organisation that contributes positively to the communities in which we work.
- Be a trusted organisation, known for our integrity, flexibility, creativity, and commitment.
- Play our part in Changing the World for the better, so that everyone is included.

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