

Supporting people with learning disabilities

Corporate Strategy 2023–28

Nothing about you without you





Introduction

This corporate strategy sets out our longer-term view. It incorporates all areas of our charity, including education, residential care, supported housing, shared housing and community support services, employment services, day services, social enterprise and fundraising. We are totally committed to ensuring that people with learning disabilities, autism or both are able, with the appropriate support, to live the life they choose.

Linkage continues to thrive and grow, even though we are operating in challenging external environments. This strategy has been developed in uncertain times. Growing awareness of issues such as climate change and the negative effects of social media alongside the issues caused by the coronavirus pandemic and the increased cost of living, have given Linkage new problems to address.

Our vision that people with learning disabilities, autism or both are provided with opportunities and choice and are supported to achieve their aspirations, is underpinned by four key pillars. These have been developed through conversations with people we work to support, who work with us as colleagues or volunteers, and with families and carers. With their help, we have identified what is most important for us to do over the next 5 years.

Impact | Capacity | Sustainability | Growth

Linkage turns 50 in 2026 and it's essential that we continue to adapt and innovate, to enable us to provide a safe space to enable individuals to achieve their aspirations. With almost 700 amazing staff, working across 60 locations across Lincolnshire, North East Lincolnshire and East Riding, we are already based in local communities. However, there is more that we need to do. We need to ensure that people we support are able to be active members of the community in which they live.

In delivering the strategy, we will take steps to ensure we are in the right shape to go about our task better, faster and more efficiently, with a focus on the needs of the people we support, their parents and carers, and stakeholders.

Valerie Waby

CEO of Linkage Community Trust



Who we are

Linkage Community Trust, commonly referred to as Linkage, is a registered charity that supports people with learning disabilities, autism or both. We deliver high-quality specialist education, care (including residential), adult day services, employability and support services throughout Lincolnshire and the East Riding of Yorkshire.

The Trust was established in 1976 in recognition that there was a distinct shortage of appropriate support to help people with varying degrees of learning difficulties and disabilities to lead creative and purposeful lives in the community. This remains the case today.

Everything we do is about valuing and supporting individuals, their carers' and families to ensure that they can achieve their aspirations. We are committed to creating opportunities to improve the lives of individuals now and in future generations.

Our vision is that:

People with learning disabilities, autism or both have opportunities and choice and are supported to achieve their aspirations.

We work to achieve this vision by making it our mission to:

Provide person-centred services that enable individuals to develop skills and behaviours to live independent lives.



Our values:

Success is important to us, and so too is the way in which we achieve it. Our core values are at the heart of everything we do. We are committed to the following values:

Independence

We will support and encourage individuals to make decisions about their own lives so they have the freedom to live the life they choose, based on their talents and abilities.

Teamwork

We will work together, as one Linkage, to achieve common goals and engage with partners to deliver more services to more people.

Respect

We will respect and value the views, ideas, feelings and opinions of everyone we deal with.

Honesty

We will be honest, open and transparent in our dealings.

Pillar 01

Impact

Increase the **impact** that our services have on the people we support.



CHALLENGE

Linkage's services are traditional in nature and deliver great outcomes for people. Being unable to measure the impact of these outcomes on people's lives and not having evidence of the progress that individuals make prevent Linkage from being able to demonstrate the impact of our services.

AMBITION

We want to help people to reach their own potential and to be able to live their best lives possible. To do this we will:

Develop a culture that embeds a 'nothing about you without you' approach across all services. We will shape our services and models of delivery with input from people with lived experience, the people we support, carers, families and stakeholders. We will utilise person-centred thinking, positive behaviour support and active support tools across all our services and models of delivery to deliver the best outcomes for individuals.

Improve the consistency of our practices to ensure that all teaching is effective, that learning outcomes are the best that they can be, and that active support enables individuals to achieve their aspirations. We will ensure that we develop systems and processes that enhance the robustness of our data, so that we can measure the impact of what we do.



Improve the health and wellbeing of the people we support, and our colleagues. We will focus on developing our approaches to physical, mental and emotional health and wellbeing, including self-care, to increase the independence of individuals. We will continue to invest time and resources in the promotion of healthy lifestyles. We will utilise assistive technology to achieve outcomes, improve independence and tackle loneliness in the people we support.

Become a learning organisation.

We will ensure that our continuous improvement processes and organisational learning are based on reflective practice. We will refresh our offer to ensure that it is ambitious and fit for purpose. We will develop a quality framework and levels of skills and expertise that reflect 'outstanding' in the eyes of the regulators. We will adopt a risk-based approach to focus our activities.

Increase opportunities for accessing purposeful activities and employment.

We will focus on people's skills, talents and aspirations to help them develop greater independence, providing activities and opportunities for measured progressive support towards purposeful activities and employment. We will engage actively in the communities where we work and live so that the people we support have equal access and opportunities within these communities.

Build effective partnerships with businesses, commissioners, funders, registered providers, and other third-sector organisations to enable us to create more opportunities for people we support, and synergies with other organisations. We will refer and signpost, where appropriate, to other organisations.



SUCCESS

We know we are successful when we have:

- Increased the number of services that are assessed as outstanding by our regulators.
- Increased the number of people we support who have reduced support hours as a result of their increased independence.
- Increased 'improved quality of life perception' levels of the people we support.
- Increased the number of people we support who feel proud of their achievements.
- Increased the number of people we support in paid employment.
- Increased the numbers of people we support active, seen in and contributing to their communities.
- Increased the number of people we support to move beyond their current support and living situation where they can and want to.
- Increased the satisfaction levels of parents/families.



Pillar 02

Capacity

Increase **capacity** to deliver high-quality services.

CHALLENGE

Linkage's impact is limited by a lack of diverse representation in our people, our capacity issues and the pressure some roles are under, the mix and structure of our workforce, the impact of learning and development requirements, our existing organisational structure, and our ability to reward staff when faced with fee increases being outstripped by increases in the National Living Wage.



AMBITION

We want to be recognised as a great place to work, with opportunities for colleagues to learn and grow and develop to meet the changing needs of the people who use our services.

Recruit more people, from a diverse range of communities, and give them the best support so they stay with us longer and we all work effectively together as one Linkage team. We will establish a workforce plan that addresses the current challenges and future needs. We will develop our on boarding and induction processes, so that colleagues are able to quickly and effectively provide high-quality support and guidance as one Linkage team.

Develop a highly skilled, agile and flexible workforce, with a focus on lifelong learning. We will invest heavily in learning and development to ensure that our teams have the skills and knowledge to provide high-quality and effective services. We will enable and encourage discussion and knowledge-sharing between our people, no matter

where they are based. We will work to ensure that more people have a qualification above the level required for the role. We will identify and invest in talent through our leadership and management programmes to enable effective succession planning.

Deploy our resources using hub and spoke models to enable more efficient rota planning aligned to efficient delivery models for different types and complexities of services, using leaner and improved systems and processes.

Utilise volunteers' dedication, passion, enthusiasm, experience and desire to make a difference to increase the scale and scope of what we do. We will establish lived experience mentoring programmes. We will support the development of local groups of volunteers to work alongside our colleagues and people we support in local communities. We will fully integrate the insight that our local groups offer us into our work.

SUCCESS

We know we are successful when we have:

- Reduced the staff vacancy rates.
- Increased staff retention rates.
- Increased the diversity of our workforce.
- Reduced the cost of management and overheads as a percentage of income.
- Increased the number of colleagues with a qualification above the minimum needed for their post.
- Increased the number of volunteers who support the charity.
- Increased the number of local groups.
- Increased staff satisfaction levels.
- Increased the percentage of commissioned hours delivered.

Pillar 03

Sustainability

Ensure our long-term **sustainability** by securing the support we need to keep us strong and taking steps to ensure our environments, activities and organisation are fit for the future.

CHALLENGE

Commissioners continue to seek more with less, placing pressure upon Linkage to deliver efficiencies that make its funding go further whilst maintaining high-quality services. This leaves little funding for investment in estates and ensuring that we protect our environment so that it remains appropriate for the people we support as they age. We recognise the difficulties in providing financially viable services to people who may live in rural areas, and the health and social care inequalities they face. We welcome the increases in the National Living Wage but we see local authority funding struggling to keep pace with these increases. The introduction of integrated care systems, will no doubt change commissioning throughout the life of the plan.



AMBITION

We want to be a financially strong charity, able to reinvest in our services and to create environments where people with learning disabilities, autism or both can flourish. To do this we will:

Diversify and strengthen our income streams.

We will continue to ensure that the statutory entitlement for people and all our costs are covered through our fees. We will work with commissioners to deliver safe, specialised, sustainable services that add value. We will develop more longer-term supporters, including trusts, businesses, families and other supporters. We will allocate our charitable funds in ways that support our strategic intent.

Increase the efficiency of systems and processes.

We will invest in digital solutions, systems and processes to enable colleagues to give more active support through investment in technology, systems and workflows to support leaner processes. We will develop and strengthen our decision-making and financial planning based on robust data and trends.

Enhance our environments so that they are energy-efficient and fit for purpose. We will rationalise our property portfolio and invest in our homes to ensure they are fit for the future. We will invest in energy-efficient solutions and new technologies to provide a cost-effective, sustainable future for our portfolio. We will reduce our carbon footprint. We will also target opportunities for capital investment to continue developing our heritage assets.

SUCCESS

We know we are successful when we have:

- Increased restricted/non-restricted fundraising income.
- Increased the sustainability of individual services.
- Increased recycling.
- Reduced our carbon footprint.
- Reduced the number of miles staff travel.



Pillar 04

Growth

Grow the charity to increase the number of people who access our services.



CHALLENGE

Growth is important to us as a charity because it enables us to do more for more people: it builds scale and, when commercially viable, it protects our long-term sustainability. The demand for Linkage's services is high, and the range of diagnoses and complexities that people present with including social, emotional and mental health issues, continues to grow. Although we are the largest learning disability provider in Lincolnshire, we are relatively unknown in large parts of our communities.

AMBITION

We want to grow our services so that we can deliver more things for more people and be the "go-to" provider for young people and adults, families and commissioners in our operating areas across Lincolnshire, East Riding and our neighbouring counties. To do this we will:

Build our reputation supporting people with learning disabilities and autism to lead more independent lives, across all of the communities in which we work. We will reach out to families and schools to take our services where and when people need them. We will become an authoritative voice for learning disabilities and autism in our communities.

Expand opportunities and choice.

We will provide more support, day opportunities, education and employment services in more locations so that more people can access them. These will be a combination of day and residential service programmes to ensure we meet a wide range of needs and aspirations. We will provide more respite to give families and people the break they need, and provide more outreach and therapy services to improve people's quality of life.

Expand long-term living opportunities.

We will provide – either directly or through partners – accommodation to enable people to live their lives as they want. We will create more long-term living accommodation for people with higher levels of acuity so that people have the right support to live as independently as they wish and continue to develop their potential. We will work with local authorities to provide more services in the areas where there is the greatest need.

Develop more services for young people.

We will increase our offer to 16–17 year olds, providing residential education and accommodation for those transitioning to adulthood and enabling those out of area to move back to their community.

SUCCESS

We know we are successful when we have:

- Increased the number of people we support with learning disabilities, autism or both.
- Increased the number of services identified as suitable for people with higher levels of acuity.
- Opened and established complex care services.
- Delivered a residential education service for 16–17 year olds.
- Expanded day service provisions.
- Increased the numbers of people accessing our outreach services.
- Increased the number of people accessing respite opportunities.





Making the strategy happen

We will act as a catalyst for change in the areas around which we work and will seek to create opportunities for the people we support to make the life choices they want for themselves. We aim to bring a real and sustained difference.

- **Working with individuals**, we will ensure that the services we offer meet their needs and aspirations. We will refer to all the relevant organisations where it is appropriate to do so.
- **Working in communities**, we will actively pursue our vision.
- **Working with partners**, we will develop ways of working that will enable us to direct our resources to those areas of greatest need.

The process of monitoring the achievement of our strategy will be divided into three elements:

1. Reviewing whether we are doing what we planned to do, i.e. reviewing the inputs and outputs.
2. Reviewing whether what we do has an impact, i.e. reviewing the impact.
3. Reviewing whether the priorities and plan are the most appropriate to enable us to achieve our vision, i.e. reviewing the outcomes.

Review process

Led by the board, there will be a continuous assessment of assumptions on which this corporate strategy is founded. This will take into account opportunities and threats, the external environment, and the strengths and weaknesses of our charity and individual services. Where this analysis shows that the assumptions are no longer appropriate, changes to the strategy will be made.

The Executive Leadership team will lead on the reviewing of outcomes. This will involve evaluating our progress towards our strategic priorities and mapping key success indicators against our intended outcomes.

The Executive Leadership team will also review the strategic priorities within the corporate plan. This will involve reviewing progress against plans, identifying and positively acting on reasons for non-achievement, and evaluating the capacity and capabilities of resources to deliver against objectives.



Contact Us

For more information on what Linkage does, how you can access our services or how you can support us, please get in touch.

General Enquiries

Toynton Hall, Toynton All Saints,
Spilsby PE23 5AE

Telephone 01790 752499

info@linkage.org.uk

Care

Care and housing options including 24-hour residential care, supported living and community support.

Telephone 01790 755025

residential@linkage.org.uk

College

One of the largest specialist independent colleges in England, offering a range of study programmes to young people aged 16-25 who have a learning difficulty or disability.

Telephone 0800 612 4410

transition@linkage.org.uk

Linkage Choices

Day provision for adults with learning disabilities (aged between 18 and 65), providing a wide range of activities around friendship and community, health and wellbeing, learning and employment and independence.

Telephone 01790 755025

linkagechoices@linkage.org.uk

Employability Service

Employability team supporting adults and young people with learning disabilities to gain internships, work experience and paid employment.

Telephone 01790 755068

supportedemployment@linkage.org.uk

Sensory Outreach

Free advice, guidance and sensory support to remove the barriers to accessing services.

Telephone 01790 752499

Strategic Partnerships

Contact Valerie Waby, CEO

Telephone 01790 755005

valerie.waby@linkage.org.uk

