



2020

Impact Report



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Welcome from Emma Pearson, CEO

Hello and welcome. I'm Emma, the CEO of Achieve together.

Welcome to our first Impact Report. This document gives us the opportunity to share some of our great work from 2020 – and tell you all about our plans for the future.

2020 was my first year with Achieve together and I have quickly seen the fantastic work done by our teams in supporting people across England and Wales. I joined as CEO in January 2020 – only a matter of weeks before the outbreak of COVID-19 led to a nationwide lockdown. This has had an immense impact on the most vulnerable people in society; some of whom we are privileged to support.

I have been inspired by the way each and every team has risen to the challenges faced this year, whilst continuing to be positive and focused in all that they do, enabling people we support to live happy, healthy and meaningful lives, even in the toughest of times.

In response to the pandemic, the central teams have also contributed hugely from PPE procurement and management through to a 24 hour help desk and significant investment in IT to support our service delivery during lockdown.

As well as responding to COVID-19, we spent time this year working with people we support, their families and our team members to define our purpose as an organisation and our vision. From this we've also developed our long-term strategy – our plan for the future, which you can read more about on page 10.

As part of this, 2020 saw us launch our family forums, our regional co-production approach (Unity) and our 'journey to outstanding' programme. Getting used to the ever-changing rules and restrictions hasn't been easy for any of us, but it's also been a year of positives, with many examples of innovation, creativity and resilience from across our organisation.

In 2020, we welcomed Progress Pathways and Montana to Achieve together. Progress Pathways is based in Norfolk, supporting people with learning disabilities and autism, while Montana is based across Caerphilly and Cardiff, supporting people with learning disabilities and mental health conditions. We're delighted to be helping these teams successfully integrate into Achieve together.

I also wanted to take this opportunity to thank our dedicated team members across the country who have shown fantastic commitment and also the families of people we support who have been hugely supportive, helping us to deliver a quality of service which really makes a big difference.

2020 was tough and I recognise that 2021 will undoubtedly bring further challenges but I also believe that the pandemic has shone a much needed spotlight on social care, the vital role of our teams and the amazing, extraordinary people we support. I am confident that this puts us in a good place to build on the strong foundations we have put in place and I'm excited for the year ahead and the opportunities it will bring.

As we look ahead to 2021, delivering on the core strands of our strategy remains our unwavering focus.

Thank you again for all your support this year.



Emma Pearson

Emma Pearson,
CEO

“ I have been incredibly proud of the way our teams have risen to the many challenges thrown at us, and continue to be positive and focused in all that they do.”





About Achieve together

Achieve together is one of the UK's leading providers of specialist support for people with learning disabilities, autism and associated complex needs.

Delivered through its dedicated and inspiring teams, Achieve together provides specialist support to over 2,000 people across England and Wales – helping them to live happy, healthy and meaningful lives.

For more than 25 years, we've been proud to put people we support and their families at the heart of everything we do. As an organisation which is driven by its people – both those it supports, and those delivering the care – Achieve together never stands still.

Instead, it leverages its knowledge, expertise and trusted partnerships and networks in order to continually adapt, evolve and innovate so that it can maintain the best standards of specialist support.

Achieve together continues to be a leader in the sector and is at the forefront of efforts to drive up quality and standards for people who need, and deserve it most.

Our purpose, vision and values

Our Purpose

**Ordinary lives.
Extraordinary people.**

We make a commitment to every single person we support, and we tailor that support so that they can live as ordinary a life as possible, which is full of opportunities and fun.

Every person we support is extraordinary. We celebrate their individuality, cherish their uniqueness and work hard to create supportive environments that enable every person we support to thrive.

We're also exceptionally proud of our extraordinary teams, who go above and beyond every day to provide the very best support. We work hard to nurture their talents, helping team members to grow and develop so that they can have rewarding and fulfilling careers.

Our Vision

To provide the best specialist support, inspiring a generation to ensure people live happy, healthy and meaningful lives.

Our Values

In all that we do, we keep our key values in mind:



Being brave

We are creative and confident, empowering people we support and our teams to achieve amazing things

Inspiring a Generation

Nurturing and celebrating the extraordinary people we support and inspirational teams



Having fun

We get the most out of every day and celebrate our achievements and success

Building Meaningful Partnerships

Working with families, local and national communities to create positive change



Making things happen

We have the passion, energy and resilience to overcome challenges and give people the tools to achieve together



Valuing everyone

We value the unique talents of every individual and work together to help everyone achieve their full potential

Shaping the Future

Leading the sector through insight, investment and technology

Our year in numbers



More than
6,000
employees working
in our teams



95%
of relatives surveyed agree
that they are satisfied



358
apprentices
employed



>97%
of people we support said
that we are doing a good job



92%
of our services rated
Good or Outstanding



Nearly
2,200
people supported
by Achieve together



100%
Welsh
Compliance



85
incredible Wheel of
Engagement submissions

Our strategy

Our purpose and our vision show who we are and where we want to go, but we recognise that we won't get there without a plan. So our strategy is our long-term plan for the organisation.

It sets out what we will be focusing on in the months and years ahead and shapes the practical choices we make every day, grouped around four strategic pillars:



Putting people we support at the centre of what we do

It might sound obvious, but we work hard to make this happen. We want to make sure we proactively involve people we support fully in the decisions we make together as an organisation, and make it easy for them to have their say about how things are done.

To do this, everything we do is rooted in a commitment to co-production and the forthcoming launch of our 'is this co-production?' initiative, will provide us with a platform to embed co-production throughout the organisation and create a genuine culture of inclusion.

Valuing everyone's experience and contribution, we will use the ideas and feedback from people we support to shape the specialist support we provide as they strive for independence.

Our independence planning teams will play a crucial role in making this happen, providing person-centred pathways that enable the extraordinary people we support to live an ordinary a life.



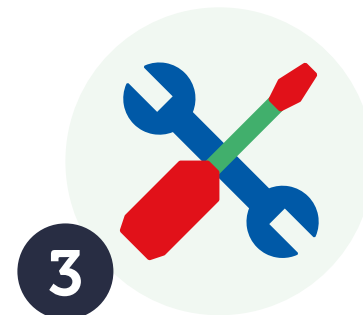
Inspiring teams

We're so proud of the inspirational teams who work at Achieve together – and, in turn, we want to inspire them to do the best work they can. We recognise that to ensure people we support are at the heart of everything we do, the engagement of our team members is a high priority.

That's why it's so important to us that we engage, train and reward our team members so that they feel like they are recognised for the contribution they make and that they have a voice in the decisions we make as an organisation.

We also want our team members to be proud of their work and we want to give them the best chance to develop long and fulfilling careers with us – without forgetting to have fun too, which is one of our values.

To do this we will be enhancing the learning and development opportunities we provide to our teams and our employee value proposition, thereby attracting 'values driven talent' to our sector as well as introducing clear, consistent career pathways, improving the opportunities we are able to offer to team members and in turn, the specialist support we deliver in our services.



Always improving the way we work

The way we work behind the scenes has a direct effect on people we support. So we owe it to them and their families to make sure we work as efficiently and effectively as possible.

This means that we never stand still and are always looking for ways to get better. A fundamental part of this is our digital transformation journey, which will see Achieve together invest in and enhance its digital capabilities, data and systems.

By investing in our future in this way, we will be able to communicate with people we support and their families more meaningfully, give people we support better information and a stronger voice and engage with our team members more regularly and clearly so they feel actively engaged and are able to deliver excellent support.



Growing Achieve together in a sustainable way

Putting people we support at the centre of what we do, means we want them to be truly proud of and live meaningful and fulfilling lives. That's why it so important for us to invest in our services, maintaining them to the highest standard and making sure the accommodation we provide offers a welcoming, homely environment.

We want to work even more closely with local authorities to listen to what their communities need and work in partnership with them to make it happen.

To invest in the future of Achieve together and people we support, we also plan to redefine the accommodation we offer. Through combining the learnings from current research with the latest technology and clever design principles, we will work in collaboration with people we support to offer a range of future-proofed settings that are built to last and deliver on our commitment to provide the best specialist support.

It's important for us to invest in our services, maintaining them to the highest standard and making sure the accommodation we provide offers a welcoming, homely environment

Quality

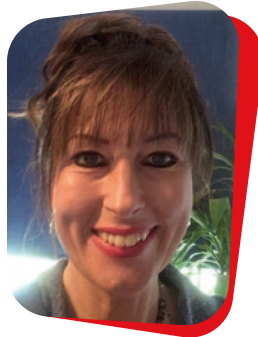
Our pledge

Striving to improve the way we work is a core pillar in our organisational strategy. It drives our teams on every day and underpins everything we do.

With this commitment and resolute mentality, we know we can continue to provide the very best support for people – and this pledge is at the very heart of our organisation.

Our committed team members across the country, work tirelessly to support people with complex needs and we have a duty to make sure our quality standards never drop.

We are passionate and uncompromising in our mission to deliver safe, high-quality services for people we support and their families so we will always keep progressing.



Zoe Armstrong
Director of Quality
and Safeguarding



Michael Fullerton
Director of
Health & Wellbeing

Our 'critical friend'



Dave Sargeant was appointed as our Independent Quality and Safeguarding Chair in September 2019.

In his role, he is a 'critical friend' of Achieve together; looking at our systems, processes and practices – highlighting the positives but also identifying areas for development or improvement.

In an action packed first year and prior to the pandemic, he visited a number of our residential homes and supported living schemes and engaged various elements of the organisation to broaden his understanding of what we do.

He has become a core member of our scrutiny panels, reviewing operational issues and ensuring any incidents are fully investigated with the right follow-up actions put in place. He has also joined the Falls Prevention Strategy Group, COSHH meetings, our quality and safeguarding forums and clinical governance committee meetings

Reflecting on the year and his role, Dave said:

"It has been a tumultuous year for the sector with some enormous challenges. At all levels, I have seen Achieve together rise to this challenge and always keep people they support at the heart of what they do. Achieve together has a strong, quality-focused foundation and a purpose and vision which speaks to the core of this organisation."

"I look forward to continuing to work with Achieve together in the years ahead and hope that my previous experience will enhance their ambition to enable people they support to lead the best lives they can."

Quality overview

To ensure our high standards of delivery are always maintained, we are continuously monitoring the quality of our work and finding ways to make ongoing improvements.

Our internal auditing assurance processes are robust. Our monthly checks are carried out at service level and verified by our senior management team through our governance system. This is then further supported by four comprehensive audits each year, which are completed by quality assurance advisors and regional managers.

Our Quality Inspection (QI) tool – launched in July 2019 – allows the findings from these audits to be identified, recorded centrally and tracked to help every region and home to improve their quality of service delivery.

The standards of these internal audits are reflective of the standards of regulatory inspections within the industry. This ensures we are not only meeting our own high standards, but those set out across the sector.

Accountability is key and measuring the quality of our work every step of the way ensures we stay on track.

In 2020 we created three new roles – a new Compliance Manager and two Heads of Quality to bolster our quality management even further.

Health and safety

One of the key areas of quality management is health and safety. We are constantly reviewing this and working hard to set the highest standards and maintaining them.

What are we doing right now?

- Analysing all incidents, accidents and near misses each month in our quality and safeguarding meetings. This is attended by an independent quality advisor and safeguarding professional to ensure lessons are learned
- Scrutinising information to identify any recurring themes and trends to help us improve
- Hosting a falls steering group to complete root cause analysis on previous falls, liaise with external experts and provide a comprehensive falls prevention framework
- Commissioning a new health and safety consultant to give specialist direction to our in-house health and safety team. This helps us to stay in touch with current legislation and research to modify our safety systems and processes as required
- Completing a programme of secondary independent checks against our current fire risk assessments, providing us with additional intelligence about the safety of services and other health and safety compliance systems
- The procurement team is overseeing a full review of all health and safety contractors to ensure they have the relevant certification and deliver the required quality of work
- Compiling a database of all relevant validation information for our suppliers. This will be used alongside our service level agreements to streamline our suppliers and set out definitive instructions and expectations around the regulatory checks for all our properties.

Compliance

We always set our ambitions high at Achieve together and our ultimate aim is to reach 100% compliance in all our services.

At present, we consistently achieve above 92% – which is 7% above the national benchmarking average – but we want to get even better because we know how important this is.

Following the results from the first quarter of the year, our key areas of focus are:

- The consistency of management in services
- Medication management, Mental Capacity Act (MCA), Best Interest and Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) evidence
- Closure of actions identified through audit processes

This will help us to continually improve and we are also going to focus on engaging with people we support, their families and service development and action planning teams.

: We will engage with
: people we support,
: their families and
: service development
: and action
: planning teams

Our actions:

- We have introduced new support and sustain managers to help services without a manager or who have had recent management change
- Increase our quality governance processes for services to ensure action plans are completed
- Review of Quality Inspection (QI) and Quality Audit (QA) to provide additional specific audit tools for Wales and, separately, Supported Living Services (recognising the differences from residential)
- Provide localised coaching for MCA, Best Interest and DoLS alongside introducing a specific theory into practice tracking process
- Launch a programme for our frontline management and teams to provide a continuum of learning, peer support and communication through monthly Service Manager conferences. Through this forum, we are developing a library of excellence which provides our teams with resources to support them to provide the best specialist support. This will also include a framework of approaches and inclusive strategies for the teams to change the mindset from being nervous of inspection to viewing them as an opportunity to showcase best practice
- Continue to take into account 'registering the right support' and all new guidance and initiatives to assess where our services are not in line with the direction of travel set out by Regulators. Open and transparent communication with our commissioners and the regulator will help us to achieve this

Responding to COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has been a significant challenge for all our teams and our priority has been to protect people we care for and support. Thanks to everyone's hard work, transmission rates across Achieve together have been extremely low and this is something we are very proud of.

Here's how, together, we've achieved this...

- We've created clear and simple guidance on the correct and consistent use of PPE, to ensure a robust process is in place, protecting our people and those we support
- We've developed creative ways to help people we support stay engaged and fulfilled during lockdown
- We've been helping our people (both those we support and those who work with us), to cope psychologically with lockdowns, promoting healthy lifestyles and focusing on positive mental wellbeing during this difficult period
- We're continuing our focus on people keeping well during the winter – with emphasis on flu vaccinations to minimise the risk of seasonal illness

Relative Quality Checkers

In line with pillar three of our core strategy, we always strive to consistently improve all aspects of the quality and delivery of our services. We are fortunate enough to have a dedicated team of relative checkers who are family members of people supported. They provide us with expert advice and guidance which includes audits, consultancy, suggestions for improvements and recently delivered training to our teams at our monthly Service Manager conference.

Traditionally, our Quality Checkers visit Achieve together homes to review what we are doing and ensure our frontline colleagues are being offered the support they need.

Visits became particularly difficult during the COVID-19 pandemic, but with our ethos of continual improvement, we have used this time to create a new, innovative Quality Checker Tool, which will assist the visiting process when we can resume.

Focusing on health and wellbeing

Our vision to ensure people we support lead happy, healthy and meaningful lives, means that the work of our health and wellbeing team is crucial.

The team has worked tirelessly this year to support the mental and physical health of people we support, making sure that, despite the challenging circumstances, they continue to thrive, whilst keeping them safe.

Continual investment in this team and its activities has ensured we can continue to deliver first-class care to those we support.

Embracing a virtual workplace

With our usual roadshows and face-to-face events restricted, we had to get creative and find new ways to engage with our teams, people we support and their families – as we know how important it is to foster great relationships.

Embracing online forums has been at the heart of our plan, allowing us to stay connected and give our team members support all year round, meaning they can continue to deliver the best possible care to those we support.

Virtual Supportive Therapy Week

Instead of our Supportive Therapy Day, we hosted successful online sessions for people with profound and multiple learning disabilities, sharing best practice ideas across the country.

Health & Wellbeing Special Interest Groups and Forums

Utilising Microsoft Teams has enabled these events to continue to grow, with large groups of people across Achieve together able to create new connections remotely.

These sessions are designed to promote evidence and research-based practice, and share better ways of working across Achieve together in a collaborative manner.

These events are going from strength to strength with a number of new groups formed in 2020:

- PMLD Forum
- Epilepsy SIG (Special Interest Group)
- Ageing Well Forum
- Mental Wellbeing SIG
- Autism Strategy Group
- Forensic SIG
- PBS Strategy Group
- Inclusive Communication Strategy Group.



“Continual investment in this team and its activities has ensured we can continue to deliver first-class care to those we support

Adopting the LeDeR framework

Ensuring our support teams are equipped with the skills, knowledge and expertise to deal with complex health needs is fundamental to everything we do as an organisation.

By following and adopting the guidance set out by LeDeR – an NHS-funded body which is applicable to any person with learning disabilities over the age of four – we have access to industry leading tools and insight. This is a key part of our commitment to providing excellent care throughout the lifetime of people we support.

Providing outstanding care and support at all points of the life journey is something we take seriously. It underpins our commitment to enabling people we support to live happy, healthy and meaningful lives whilst importantly reducing premature mortality which can often be the result of inadequate care.

Over the past year, our health and wellbeing team has modelled their training, support and clinical policies on the LeDeR framework. All of Achieve together has access to specialist information for specific or complex needs, including an Ageing Well forum, Epilepsy Special Interest Group and Profound and Multiple Learning Disabilities (PMLD) Forum. Both the Director of Health and Wellbeing, and our Specialist Nurse Practitioner are also trained to complete LeDeR reviews.

Beyond these training packages and the internal knowledge base we have, we continually and retrospectively monitor our performance as well as any trends emerging from internal mortality reviews to drive improvement.

Another key priority has been to ensure people we support are not discharged from hospital prematurely, that reasonable adjustments are made by health professionals, and that the Mental Capacity Act (MCA), and DNACPR is appropriately applied.

Get in touch

Achieve together is continually looking at ways to further develop its support packages based on the feedback we receive from all our key stakeholders.

We thrive on creating a collaborative working environment and welcome feedback from the people and families of those we support and our team members to help us improve our services and how we communicate them.

STOMP

Our support to the STOMP – Stopping the over medication of people with a learning disability, autism or both – programme continued in 2020. To help our team members who are prescribed with psychotropic medicines (in the absence of a mental health condition), we are ensuring their managers are constantly monitoring and reviewing the medicines they are using and helping them to find alternative means of support.

We are also backing a new STOMP research project, which is adopting a psycho-education approach to ensure teams are knowledgeable about psychotropic medicines, effective prescriptions and alternatives to medication.

PASS+PORT

We successfully achieved accreditation with BILD ACT (Association of Certified Training), for our compliance with the new Restraint Reduction Network Training Standards.

Our modular-based PASS+PORT training programme provides a flexible and tailored approach to Positive Behaviour Support. It's a genuine commitment to reducing the use of restrictive interventions, while ensuring safe and respectful support should physical interventions be necessary to maintain safety.

By October 2021, we will use PASS+PORT exclusively as our Positive Behaviour Support/Physical Intervention Training Model to ensure our team members get the best possible support.

World Suicide Prevention Day

The Health & Wellbeing team took part in a bike ride to promote World Suicide Prevention Day and support mental wellbeing generally. This showed how we can all support each other to keep well and how vital it is to promote self-help skills for people when they are struggling to cope.

For further information about our programmes, to discuss our services or to get involved, contact: info@achievetogether.co.uk

Looking to the future

Meeting our high expectations of care and support is an ongoing journey and we already have a number of steps in place to enhance our delivery:

- A new health promotion nurse role has been created and a candidate recruited to enhance effective health planning, prevention and promotion for everyone we support
- Building closer links with acute liaison nurses in hospitals in England and Wales
- Health Planning, Prevention & Promotion Workshops, including use of the Restore2 Mini will be rolled out to managers and deputies from March 2021, with interactive Supporting Good Health Workshops rolled out to support teams from June
- Building a stronger, direct link with NHS England, Public Health Wales and LeDeR
- The Achieve together health charter is being given renewed focus with more measurable outcomes and risk registers being introduced e.g. obesity risk register, epilepsy risk register
- Improved tracking of health screening and DNACPR across the organisation
- A greater focus on health action plans to ensure our standards of work is universally high
- Promoting access to NHS 'Coordinate My Care' ([coordinatemycare.co.uk](https://www.coordinatemycare.co.uk)). This will give our teams access to all the latest and consistent information on a single system to avoid multiple assessments with local health teams and paramedics
- Assurances that people are accessing annual health checks throughout England and Wales
- Creating a stronger emphasis on STOMP. This will ensure we maintain a strong commitment to reducing and eliminating the use of psychotropic medicines, as long-term use may have adverse effects for people

Health and wellbeing for our teams

Mindfulness sessions

The last year has served up a series of unprecedented challenges due to COVID-19. We have worked extremely hard to ensure our team members have been supported throughout this testing time and have encouraged them all to take part in activities proven to boost their health and wellbeing.

Our health and wellbeing director Michael Fullerton has led our efforts to make this happen, hosting mindfulness sessions open for all to attend online. These sessions are hosted weekly and provide a proactive way of making sure our team members have the support they need, whenever they need it.

Supporting our team members

In a year where wellbeing has taken centre stage, we also launched a new employee assistance programme to give everyone access to vital counselling services.

This is in addition to a variety of new initiatives created to help our teams feel supported in the following areas:

- Nutrition and hydration
- Maintaining a healthy weight
- Relationships and sexuality
- Postural management
- Epilepsy
- Diabetes

All these programmes have helped our teams through a challenging year whilst also giving them the tools they need to continue to provide the very best performance and results for the organisation.

Congratulations to Michael Fullerton who was a finalist in the RCN Nurse of the Year Awards in the Learning Disability Nurse category.

Michael's nomination was for the exceptional work he has done to promote the benchmarking of standards in the provision of support to children and adults with profound and multiple learning disabilities in education, health and social care settings. Well done Michael!

Case study: Award winning care

The quality of our end-of-life support care was recognised in 2020 with the Linda McEnhill Award.

This was presented by the Palliative Care for People with Learning Disabilities Network and was awarded for our efforts and care provided to a person under our care (known under the alias of Theresa), who passed away.

... The judges were moved by the love and dedication of our team, and their understanding of Theresa's needs

The judges were moved by Theresa's story and impressed by the love and dedication of our team, how they understood her needs and the careful way in which end-of-life decisions were made, which enabled Theresa to continue to shine even in the last stages of her life.

Theresa's story

Theresa was a happy, settled member of our community. Our experienced, skilled team members helped Theresa cope with multiple health conditions. She enjoyed an extended support network which included close family, who visited often and kept in regular contact with our team.

Sadly, Theresa's health eventually deteriorated and she was admitted to hospital on several occasions in quick succession. In line with the Mental Capacity Act, and with the support of Theresa's GP and the community palliative care team, a collective decision was made to provide palliative care at home.

The Achieve together team were dedicated to supporting Theresa to keep comfortable throughout this very difficult period.

When she died, although the team were devastated, they took comfort in having provided the best possible care for her and the reassurance this provided to her family and other people living in the home.

A new sensory garden area has been developed in memory of Theresa which will include a memorial walk.

Reflections from team members who knew Theresa:

"I'd have given anything not to be there that night [when Theresa died], but now I'm glad I was. If I have to go through that again, I won't feel so anxious and will be more confident in dealing with it."

"Theresa was a beautiful woman with an inner calm. She had a warm presence about her. People were drawn to her and enjoyed her company. She is sadly missed."

Putting the extraordinary people we support first

The People's Survey

Putting people we support at the heart of everything we do is a central pillar of our strategy; it defines what we do as an organisation and how we do it.

It is one of our founding principles and is rooted in our purpose – Ordinary People, Extraordinary Lives. It is also fundamental to our ability to achieve our vision of providing the best specialist support so that people in our care can lead happy, healthy and meaningful lives.

Making sure we achieve this and continue to deliver people-focused care remains crucial. A new survey – launched in 2020 – is helping us to do this, giving us valuable insight and feedback on the quality of our performance.

More than **97%** of respondents said that we are doing a good job

The People's Survey gives people we care for an opportunity to tell us how happy they are with the work we do and how they feel about the care we provide. The results have been overwhelmingly positive; more than 97% of respondents said that we are doing a good job and that they were happy with the support we were providing.

We're really pleased to have received such great feedback, but we're not complacent. In 2021 we are rolling out our Families Forums and extending our Relative Quality Checkers initiative (see page 12).

We're also working closely with local home managers to identify actions we can take or changes we can make that will make a genuine difference.

We launched the survey in partnership with Campaign 4 Change, a self-advocacy group for people with learning disabilities and autism, with a key consideration being how we get people we support to engage and take part.

To facilitate this, the survey was available online in an Easy Read format and was supplemented by a PDF version in both English and Welsh. It was also signed in BSL and available in audio format, both of which were recorded by the people we support.

We'll shortly be asking people we support how we can improve the accessibility of this survey even further so we can gain even more insight, enabling us to continually improve the support we offer and the services our team members provide.

The launch of "Family Forums"

A big success story of 2020 was the launch of our live family forum events.

These provided an open platform for family members of our residents to talk to us about the support we're providing, both in terms of what's working well and anything they felt we could improve on.

The forums also provided us with an opportunity to update families on the work Achieve together has been doing and our focus for the year ahead.

These sessions – hosted virtually – were piloted initially in the London and Surrey area and whilst historically some of them may have been held face to face, the virtual nature of these events actually provided greater flexibility for family members, especially those who currently live abroad.

We received some fantastic feedback about not only the services we provide, but also about some of our inspiring team members. This was extremely uplifting, especially in such challenging times. Family members also came up with some great ideas about what more we could do to support people in our care and all the sessions were recorded with clear follow-up actions set.

The forums were also an opportunity for us to develop our network of existing volunteers – our family checkers – who meet regularly to share ongoing ideas and feedback around the best methods of communication and improving the work we do.

Family members came up with great ideas about what more we could do to support people in our care

Following the success of the pilot, these forums will now become a permanent fixture in our events calendar, with more regional forums set to take place later in 2021.

Extraordinary people, living ordinary, but great lives

Providing a great quality of life for people we support during the COVID-19 pandemic has been challenging – requiring us to work harder and smarter than ever.



Our Wheel of Engagement

At the centre of this has been our Wheel of Engagement competitions – created by the Achieve together quality team to ensure people we support were living fulfilled lives despite uncertain times.

The Wheel of Engagement provides a visual representation of all the elements which contribute to good practice in our homes. It's designed to clearly show the ways in which we can make a positive contribution to enrich the lives of those with learning disabilities.

These elements make up the support we provide every day, but the Wheel of Engagement competition challenged us to find the very best examples from across the organisation – and celebrate them.

To participate in the competition, team members were asked to send in submissions to demonstrate how they were supporting people in each area of the Wheel of Engagement.

We held two Wheel of Engagement competitions last year and the

uptake was amazing, with a total of 85 incredible and unique submissions from across our homes.

A panel of judges consisting of people we support and team members from across the business picked one winner in each area of Achieve together and an overall champion across the organisation. The winners received gift vouchers and the overall champion also got a trophy created by people we support.

Wheel of Engagement Champions

290 Dyke Road

290 Dyke Road supports people with profound and multiple learning disabilities who have very complex health needs. The 290 Dyke Road team excelled at keeping the people they support well and safe during the pandemic, whilst ensuring that everyone continued to live meaningful and fulfilled lives even if they couldn't leave the house. This included recreating activities and places people would ordinarily go to, maintaining excellent and regular contact with families who were unable to see their loved ones, supporting people to learn new skills and, for some, maintaining their paid employment virtually. One of the parents called the team angels for taking such good care of her son.

Vallance Gardens

Vallance Gardens also support people with profound and multiple learning disabilities and complex health needs and the team truly thinks outside of the box to help people they support achieve their goals and important milestones. Everyone living at Vallance Gardens is supported to use symbols to help with their communication. An app has been created for each person for use on their tablet. It uses photos of everything that is meaningful to them so they can either touch or eye point to help communication and choices. They also use big button switches to turn electrical appliances on and off and they are supported to use these for sensory baking and cleaning their rooms with the Hoover. More recently the switches have been used to help individuals learn about health and safety checks on electrical equipment.

Rivendell

Rivendell demonstrated a shining example of co-production and truly living by the values of Achieve together. The Rivendell team and the people they support worked together to create their own Rivendell Charter, which they review every month all together. The people living at Rivendell listed their goals, what makes them happy and what needs to change. The support team set themselves key responsibilities, rules and goals to help people they support live their best lives.

Our Wheel of Engagement shows how we can make a positive contribution to enrich the lives of those with learning disabilities

Upcoming events

Achieve together has a strong history of running successful, engaging events for all the important people across our network – people we support, their families and our teams.

Social distancing has meant we've had to take a lot of these events onto digital platforms, but this hasn't deterred us from keeping connected.

Embracing online platforms has brought great benefits, including being able to bring people together who in the past may not have been able to meet due to where they're based.

This is why we'll continue to run these online events in the future and, when safe to do so, our face-to-face events will be making a return too.



Campaign 4 Change

Campaign 4 Change is a self-advocacy group for people with learning disabilities and/or autism and despite a year full of restrictions, Campaign 4 Change continued to speak up!



Stay up late events

You can't beat a bit of nightlife to boost morale at our homes, proven this year by the successful return of our stay-up late events organised by Fiifi Tetteh from Campaign 4 Change.

Prior to COVID-19, Fiifi held two dedicated events to raise awareness of the stay up late campaign and people's right to have a nightlife; one was a Valentine's Day disco and the other a birthday-themed night, giving the people we support the chance to indulge in a range of fun, social activities. This included late night pool competitions, dancing and tucking into food and drink at a local sports bar whilst campaigning to have no bedtimes.

When the pandemic hit, Fiifi recognised that it was time to cease partying and decided to send a message to all his fellow party-lovers to stay at home and save lives. For this he printed stay up late themed T-shirts with the slogan: *"I'm staying in!"*

Learning Disability England conference

Samir El-Ziftawy, Frankie Dunn and Brad Crittall were invited to run a workshop at the annual Learning Disability England conference. As people with profound and multiple learning disabilities are rarely involved in such events, this was a fantastic opportunity to change perceptions and raise awareness of the barriers these people face in inclusion in everyday life.

They created a heart-warming short film to demonstrate the ordinary things that people with profound and multiple learning disabilities enjoy doing, while giving an insight into the planning and thought that goes into coordinating them.

Raising awareness

Campaign 4 Change also created a range of videos to help raise awareness of a number of important topics.

Mary Woodall created a video to raise awareness of the sunflower lanyard and its use for people with hidden disabilities such as learning disabilities or autism. Esme Barnett helped to create a hand hygiene tutorial to help the people we support stay safe during the pandemic and a number of Campaign 4 Change members and their friends helped create a video about the importance of wearing face masks.

For more information contact: C4C@achievetogether.co.uk

This was a great opportunity to change perceptions and raise awareness of the barriers faced every day by people we support

A year to remember

2020 was undoubtedly a year like no other, but thanks to the inspiring people we support, it turned out to be one to remember in a good way too.

Creativity certainly took centre stage and here we take a look back at some of the achievements and highlights from the last year, including some amazing stories from across the organisation and our communities.

Pimp my chair

The infamous 'Pimp my Chair' competition made a much-anticipated comeback in 2020, challenging people who use wheelchairs to decorate their chairs in fancy dress.

Those who took part had to raise their game to make sure their creative efforts were appreciated on screen.

They didn't disappoint...



Good News Newspaper

In order to lift everyone's spirits during the first lockdown, self-advocacy group Campaign 4 Change decided to create their own newspaper that would only contain positive news and stories.

Campaign 4 Change invited other people supported by Achieve together to contribute to the paper with their own articles – be it personal achievements, exciting news, artwork, poetry or even history. This has been a great way to bring together (virtually), people we support in the production of the newspaper and it's been really rewarding for everyone working on it to receive such positive feedback. We have released two issues so far and look forward to creating many more.

Read Good News issue 1 here: achievetogether.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Good-News-May-2020.pdf. Read Good News issue 2 here: achievetogether.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Good-News-2.pdf



Cooking up a storm

Following a hugely successful Menu Challenge, the winners starred in the Achieve together cookery show, which was broadcasted to homes across the country.

My home's got talent

A series of weekly talent competitions saw an influx of photo and video submissions showcasing talents from the worlds of arts and crafts, dance, comedy, baking, music and much more!

Achieve together Olympics

Gold-medal performances stole the show in our Achieve together Olympics featuring sport races, games and exercises.

Time to celebrate

Here at Achieve together we take delight in finding creative ways to celebrate a diverse calendar of events.

We hosted celebrations for important milestones including Easter, Notting Hill Carnival, Pride, Carers Week, Acquired Brain Injury week, World Heart Day, Suicide Awareness Day, International Day of Friendship, Learning Disability Week, Halloween, Black History Month and many more.

Sensory learning

Homes took part in a range of sensory activities including puzzles and quizzes, as well as a range of different learning activities including world geography, creative arts and crafts and health and wellbeing.

The great outdoors

Even though places to visit have been restricted in 2020, we've still taken the chance to connect with mother nature through gardening projects, farm visits, sponsored walks and supporting in clearing local parks within our communities.

Alderwood 2020 Highlights

Throughout the pandemic we've taken extra steps at Alderwood to maintain a positive outlook. Interaction and communication has played a big role in this and in the absence of visits from family and friends, we have facilitated regular video calls to keep people we support connected with their friends and loved ones.

We've also been encouraging contact between peers from other homes by sending handwritten letters as well as gifts to lift everyone's spirits.

The continuation of our Adult Development Programme was a big win in our quest to keep things feeling normal in 2020.

The case studies of Andy and Jack (not their real names), show the positive impact that being part of the local community can have, helping the people we support to develop their confidence, skills and become independent. Our local communities have needed our support more than ever, and the Adult Development Programme has been a great vehicle for us help our local food bank, making donations to replenish their stock levels while they are under the most strain. This initiative was organised by people in our two homes in Irchester, with donation boxes and posters distributed across all Alderwood locations – helping us to meet our goal of providing a family with at least one meal a week.



Jack's story

Jack [an alias] grew up on farms. He spent most of his time outside enjoying country life, spending time with his family and their animals. At 15, Jack was diagnosed with autism. He started to withdraw, distancing himself from his family and all the activities he loved. Jack began to find it difficult to cope with everyday life, refusing to travel and becoming more unpredictable and physically aggressive. The family sought help and Jack experienced several placements all of which broke down quickly and in early 2019 he was sectioned under the mental health act. Aged 19, Jack was moved to a hospital six hours away where he remained for a number of months, unable to see his family and with no access to the outside. He was then transferred to another hospital before being assessed by Alderwood and starting the transition with us.

When Jack joined us, there were many hurdles to overcome; he'd stopped washing, refused to leave his bedroom and never sat down. We introduced Jack to a visual communication system - designing and making books, puzzles, schedules and work systems. Over the transition period we gradually introduced him to the members of the team who would support him in Alderwood, building up his trust in us and confidence in travelling so he'd be able to undertake the three hour journey from the hospital to Alderwood, which he did successfully.

During the time Jack has been with us, we have been able to re-introduce him to farm activities and animal care. He enjoys cooking, arts and crafts, long walks and more recently has been introduced to the local shop. Being able to support Jack gain independence and regain pleasure and enjoyment in activities that he loves has been a real inspiration, and we feel privileged to have been able to support him on this journey

Andy's story

The local Clinical Commissioning Group contacted Alderwood to support Andy (an alias) as the intensity of his behaviour – causing injury to himself and others and damaging property - meant that his previous placement was not able to meet his needs. At the time of referral, Alderwood's provisions were at full capacity, so to stop Andy being sectioned and going into hospital, Alderwood offered to support him at his current placement.

A small, experienced team from Alderwood began working within the placement, supporting Andy and the team and introducing a 'first and then schedule' so that Andy could understand what was being asked of him and the tasks and activities he would be completing to ensure his day was structured and meaningful. Alderwood's behaviour team also offered on call support, introducing behaviour visuals and tools including a 'no head banging' pillow, sensory balls and a hands down mat.

Andy responded well to this low arousal approach and visual structure, and when a room at Alderwood became available, we supported Andy in his move, also helping Andy get to know the community so that he could enjoy daily local walks and country parks. Andy's day is now filled with many activities, including arts and crafts, sensory play and baking. Andy has also developed his life skills and is following the Adult Development Programme teaching him skills to become independent. We're so proud of Andy and his achievements.

Even though Andy continues to have periods of heightened anxiety, with the use of his behaviour tools, visuals and consistency, he is now able to calm himself effectively.



Achieving together, as one!

We're proud of the hard work and dedication of all our team members at Achieve together and want everyone to feel valued and supported.

The co-production of our purpose and vision and aligning these with our values is an important step on this journey was a key priority for us in 2020.

Our aim is to make sure all our team members know what we stand for as an organisation, what we need from them to achieve our vision and what support we will provide to our team members in return.

We want our people to live and breathe what we do so that we can work together to deliver the best specialist support. In doing this we believe we can make a genuine difference to the lives of people we support, inspiring a generation and ensuring that they lead happy, healthy and meaningful lives.

Recognising our team members

We are continually inspired by, and proud of, the dedication and commitment of our team members, who always go above and beyond to provide the best specialist support.

This year has been no exception with our team members rising to the challenges brought about by the pandemic, working tirelessly to keep people we support, fellow team members and themselves safe while enriching the lives of residents.

They have lived and breathed our values, creating calm and supportive environments within our homes while still bringing fun and excitement into daily activities.

Recognising our inspirational team members for what they do and the support they provide has never felt more important and our employee of the month award is a great way for us to do this.

Taking this further, next year we'll be hosting a dedicated people awards' ceremony for team members who have achieved great things and reflected the values and purpose of our organisation.

As well as our monthly and annual recognition schemes, Achieve together has also been rewarding loyalty with our long service awards, in some cases celebrating team members who have been with us for more than two decades.

Our team work tirelessly to keep people we support safe while enriching their lives

To extend our gratitude to our teams, we have also launched a new reward platform, giving team members access to a range of benefits and money-saving discounts from well-known retailers.





: We want people who
 : work for Achieve together
 : to have enjoyable and
 : fulfilling careers with us

Recruiting and retaining the best talent

To ensure we continue to provide the best specialist support across all our settings, it's vital that we not only retain our existing inspiring team members but also recruit great new talent.

This year, we established a new localised approach to recruitment, enabling us to find the best people within the communities we serve and attracting those with the right ethos to join Achieve together.

We are always on the lookout for new talent and recently relaunched our friends and family recruitment rewards to incentivise team members to recommend great people from their network.

To provide the best support, our new recruits also need the best possible start so this year we've been working hard to improve our induction and on-boarding process, providing new team members with a comprehensive 12-week learning package which includes coaching as well as the development of on-the-job skills.

Our suite of learning extends to our existing team members too. We want people who work for Achieve together to have enjoyable and fulfilling careers with us and we are committed to providing them with the tools and knowledge to grow and develop.

We're working hard to embed our focus on learning across the organisation, so that our people feel recognised, valued and engaged. This focus on our people ensures people we support get the very best care possible and we are always looking for new ways to support our team members to thrive as they develop their careers with us.

Improving Communication

Our commitment to clear, effective communication has never been stronger. We understand what a difference this can make to how effectively we work, how engaged our team members are and the support we provide.

Our CEO Emma Pearson has started a new regular blog to celebrate the achievements of our team members and to talk about key activities and initiatives taking place across the organisation.

We have also launched a series of virtual events including monthly town hall meetings for our functional teams, monthly service manager conferences and regional manager conferences to improve and tailor our communications in a consistent way.

Transparency is really important to us, we value feedback and always look to address any issues or concerns raised. For those team members who would like to speak to us confidentially, a whistleblowing hotline is now available. All feedback from this will be captured and addressed as quickly as possible.

Investing in our future

Technology and our need to make sure we were digitally fit for the future was already front of mind for us and the pandemic made this crystal clear. We recognised that we had to give our teams more advanced tools to connect and stay in touch, so that they could continue to deliver the same level of care to people we support.

While we continue to value the benefits of face-to-face meetings, our teams are now able to work smarter, faster and more collaboratively than before.

Remote teams who may previously have felt out of touch with their colleagues and support services in our central offices, can now connect without having a long journey to a meeting. In turn, the commute to work for those in central office departments may no longer be a daily necessity.

These benefits are here for the long-term and we're working hard to ensure that this new connected way of working is delivering new advantages to our people and those we support.

We've learned a lot from the experience and are now better connected for the future, allowing anyone to work from anywhere across our central function teams, who in turn support those delivering care in our services.

Platform for progress

An 18-month project to standardise the Achieve together network infrastructure reached its conclusion in October 2020.

This huge piece of work involved us surveying every service within the organisation and installing additional IT kit to improve the Wi-Fi connectivity and enhance the security of our internet traffic.

There is still some work to do to improve the broadband speed in some locations, but we now have fantastic foundations to build on, enabling us to equip our sites with the best, most efficient technology and making it easier for us to deliver the best possible support.

Another achievement has been the successful migration to Office 365 and an upgrade of our devices to Windows 10. This transition has been combined with the introduction of Microsoft Teams as our primary means of communications.

While we continue to value the benefits of face-to-face meetings, our teams are now able to work smarter, faster and more collaboratively than before.

We now have fantastic foundations to build on, enabling us to equip our sites with the best, most efficient technology

From not using the Microsoft Teams platform at all, this is now a hive of activity hosting the following in 2020:



10,000 calls



62,000 chat messages



3,500 online meetings

A commitment of specialist support and care

Our vision for providing the best in specialist support to people begins internally, with a genuine commitment to empowering our team members.

We firmly believe that by providing them with the opportunity to build careers which are rewarding and fulfilling, we're laying the foundations for their very best work.

One way we can prove that we are dedicated to fulfilling our vision is in demonstrating our commitment to equality and diversity, an example of which is gender pay. We've made this an area of focus and are pleased that our efforts are reflected in our median pay gap which for 2020 was 0.0%.

This means that the mid-point earnings for men and women were exactly the same and in comparing it to a national average gap of 15.5% in 2020, it shows we're serious about creating an environment where every team member feels valued and supported.

Summary of Gender Pay Gap calculations	%	Finding
Mean gender pay gap	1.9%	Females paid fractionally more across the company
Median gender pay gap	0.0%	Mid point earnings are the same for males and females
Mean Bonus gender pay gap	14.9%	Majority of managers are female
Median Bonus gender pay gap	9.9%	Mid point bonuses are higher in favour of females due to the effect of above

Bonuses	Male	Female
Proportion of male/female receiving bonus	3.4%	4.3%

Proportion of males/females in each quartile pay band	Male	Female	
Lower Quartile	28.5%	71.5%	Lowest rates of pay
Lower Middle Quartile	28.5%	71.5%	
Upper Middle Quartile	28.9%	71.1%	
Upper Quartile	34.0%	66.0%	Highest rates of pay

We're conscious there's no room for complacency, which is why we continue to strive for improvement when it comes to retaining outstanding talent. We continually invest in internal opportunities for our teams, supporting development and career opportunities to maximise the retention of our fantastic team members.

Below is a table which provides an overview of our gender pay analysis.

Our values in action



Valuing everyone

Sheila Kerry
Service Manager,
Sandylee House

"The communication and all of the resources now available to us has been very positive. I've met some lovely people in Achieve together who are so willing to help if I've needed support.

"With support from our amazing teams, people we support are happy, continue to live their lives and strive to be as independent as their individual personal circumstances allow. We are all very happy to be part of a company whose values are at the forefront of everything we do – putting people first and making a difference."



Being brave

Dean Thomas-Bines
Head of Area Operations

"Our teams have worked solidly to protect people we support during these unprecedented times, and our response to the pandemic has made Achieve together a stronger organisation for the future.

"I'm proud of the great things our teams have supported people with whilst staying at home, to provide some normality and hope.

"Achieve together's values are inclusive and were co-produced with people we support, which makes them even more personal and special. Our values are unique and set us apart from other specialist providers of care and support."



Making things happen

Lauren Tough
Head of Resourcing

"We have transitioned into a virtual way of working, enabling us to keep in touch and collaborate remotely, with more open communication across the organisation.

"We have adapted our interviewing process and are reviewing paperwork to be able to be completed online and across a variety of different devices, allowing people to share information quickly and efficiently.

"Virtual webinars have helped increase our understanding of trends, challenges and opportunities across the industry."



Having fun

Tarri Watkins
Deputy Manager,
Bradwell House

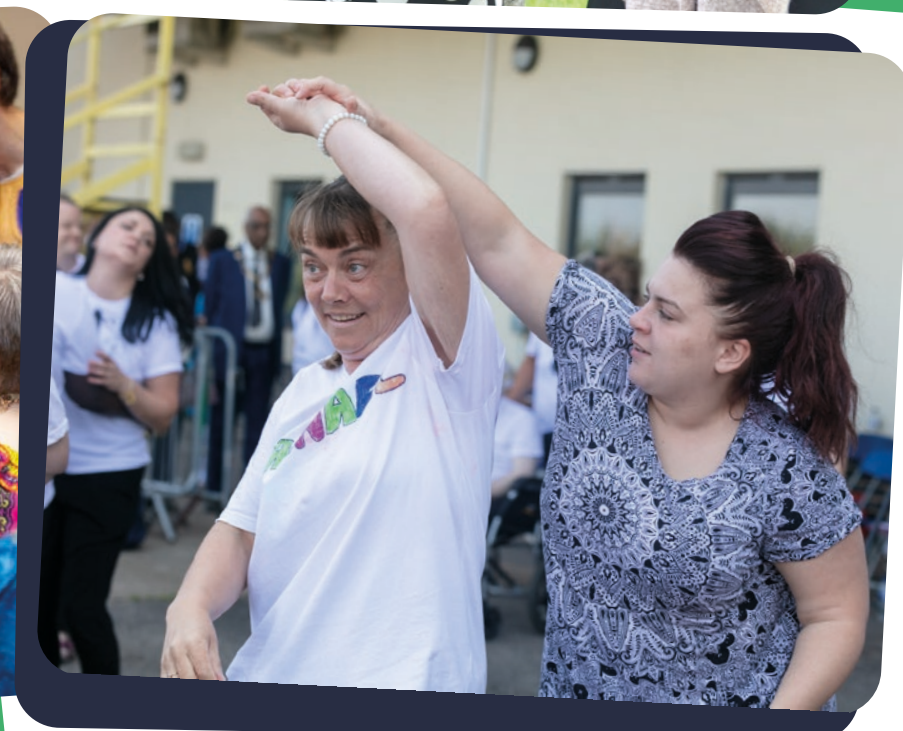
"The team have been amazing during the pandemic, everyone has supported each other.

"We made sure to always follow our value of 'having fun', so each day was as adventurous as possible within our settings"



A HEARTFELT THANK YOU

to our amazing
teams, all the
wonderful people
we support and
their families





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