

Dimensions Group Safeguarding Strategy 2016-20

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Foreword

It is my pleasure to introduce the new safeguarding strategy for the Dimensions Group.

I was appointed the first independent chair of the safeguarding panel last June. Since then it has been a privilege to meet and work with many talented members of staff throughout the organisation, a very committed group of friends and family, and most importantly, an engaged and empowered forum directly representing the interests of the people that Dimensions supports. Building upon that talent, commitment and partnership is at the heart of this strategy.

My experience has convinced me that the very positive organisational culture set by the Board has had a real impact upon the organisation and is helping to create an environment where good safeguarding practice should flourish.

As always, however, there are areas where that practice can be improved, and we have had robust and challenging discussion at panel which have helped to clarify the way forward. This strategy has a clear emphasis upon building even greater openness and engagement, a sharper focus upon current and emerging areas of risk, and the need to ensure that when things do go wrong there is genuine learning as a result. Our intent is to continue to develop it, and to oversee its implementation through the safeguarding panel, to ensure that safeguarding practice becomes exemplar, and makes a real difference to the quality of life of the people we support.

Richard Crompton
Independent Safeguarding Chair

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Introduction

Dimensions Group 2020 Strategy: Becoming Exemplar

This document presents the Dimensions Group's strategic plan for safeguarding people we support from abuse. It is the overarching plan covering all of the entities that make up the group; Dimensions (UK), Waymarks, Outreach3Way and Real Focus. The Group has a shared commitment to aspire to being exemplar organisations in all we do, and this includes how we respond to safeguarding issues. The strategy describes the operating and regulatory environment, our organisational context and how we will recognise success. Clear connections are made with our strategic pillars of Personalisation; People; engagement; development and Organisation. However, put in it's simplest terms this strategy is all about listening and learning. Listening to the people we support, their family and friends about how to keep people safe from abuse and acting of what we've heard. Learning from when things go wrong, and from others who have found effective ways to prevent abuse happening in the first place.

There is no doubt that the Dimensions Group considers safeguarding to be of high priority and there is much time and consideration given as to how we can best keep people safe and free from abuse.

For an organisation the size of Dimensions Group and with a good reputation for service provision it is a given from our regulators and commissioners that we will have in place structures, systems and processes that will seek to address safeguarding matters. We have a plethora of data available that tells us of events and actions taken but no way of knowing what impact is being made. If we are unable to improve people's lives then our safeguarding framework with its structures and systems is purposeless.

We seek though to be better than this and strive to make safeguarding matters personal to each person being safeguarded with the outcome that they each wish for. This is a shift in culture and practice not just for Dimensions Group but for the wider environment as well.

To set the scene for this Safeguarding Strategy we first consider the operating context.

Safeguarding Operating Context

Operating and Regulatory Environment – England and Wales

Safeguarding adults at risk from abuse or neglect is a clear directive across the operating and regulatory environment. There is an expectation that all agencies put in place systems that protect vulnerable adults from abuse or neglect. In particular we draw attention to:-

The Care Act 2014 sets out a clear legal framework for how local authorities and other parts of the system in England should protect adults at risk of abuse or neglect.

The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 sets out the same in Wales.

The Health and Social Care Act 2008 (Regulated Activities) Regulations 2014: Regulation 13

The intention of this regulation is to safeguard people who use services in England from suffering any form of abuse or improper treatment whilst receiving support. Improper treatment includes discrimination or unlawful restraint, which includes inappropriate deprivation of liberties, under the Mental Capacity Act 2005. Providers are required to have a zero tolerance approach to abuse, unlawful discrimination and restraint. This includes:-

- Neglect
- Subjecting people to degrading treatment
- Unnecessary or disproportionate restraint
- Deprivation of liberty.

The Mental Capacity Act (MCA) 2005 applies to everyone involved in the care, treatment and support of people aged 16 and over living in England and Wales who are unable to make all or some decisions for themselves. The MCA is designed to protect and restore power to those vulnerable people who lack capacity.

The Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS), which apply only in England and Wales, are an amendment to the Mental Capacity Act 2005. The DoLS under the MCA allows restraint and restrictions that amount to a deprivation of liberty to be used in hospitals and care homes – but only if they are in a person’s best interests.

Other key legislation that also influences safeguarding policy and guidance includes:-

- **Sexual Offences Act 2003**
- **Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Groups (2006)**
- **Willful neglect**
- **The Domiciliary Care Agencies (Wales) Regulations 2004**

A robust legal framework that promotes safe systems goes some way to protecting people from abuse and neglect but we recognise a balance has to be struck between safeguarding against harm and not overruling the wishes of people with the capacity to decide they do not want to go through a safeguarding process.

Making Safeguarding Personal

Dimensions Group strives to balance two elements: Personalisation and maximising people's personal freedom to make choices and decisions and safeguarding adults who are at risk of harm and abuse.

Personalisation and safeguarding are two sides of the same coin: supporting people to speak out, enabling them to make informed choices and encouraging communities to look out for one another.

"What good is it making someone safer if it merely makes them miserable?"

Lord Justice Munby

SWOT Analysis

In April 2016, Dimensions Group's Safeguarding Panel undertook a SWOT analysis of its policy and procedures. Its findings helped to inform this strategy and can be found at Appendix 1.

Purpose

Business Philosophy

We have a strong business philosophy that promotes choice and control, openness and honesty. A philosophy that lays the foundations for good safeguarding practices. Subsidiaries may express this philosophy in slightly different terms, but we all share the same fundamental approach. The philosophy is characterised by the following principles:

- Ambition, Aspiration and Opportunity - we seek to help the people we support and the people we employ reach their potential
- Respect, Individuality and a rights-based approach- we show the people we support and the people we employ respect and recognise that their unique contribution adds value to all
- Courage and Tenacity. We are guided by the courage of our convictions to make a difference
- Integrity, Transparency and Trustworthiness - we ensure that what we do is grounded in what we believe. People we work alongside, their families, and people we employ and people we work with can trust us. We spend the money we receive in the best way we can
- Partnership - we work with others in order to achieve more for people

Safeguarding Objectives 2020

All safeguarding objectives are aligned with our broad organisational intent of becoming exemplar in every way; setting the standards for others to follow.

Strategic Pillar	Key Objectives
Personalisation	Safeguarding experiences of people we support are dealt with in a manner that is personal to them and their wishes and points of view are considered and acted upon.
People	<p>Developing a framework that will provide employees with the knowledge and skills to support making safeguarding personal and instil confidence in them to ask questions and challenge.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A range of knowledge and skills (including legal frameworks) will give employees the confidence to address safeguarding issues and to ask questions at the beginning and throughout any safeguarding process.• Safeguarding awareness exists in all Dimensions Group departments and there are identified key people who maintain an on-going conversation amongst teams and external contractors.• Organisational recruitment and training development is informed, where appropriate, by learning from safeguarding incidents

Engagement	<p>Developing exemplar safeguarding structures and approaches that consider people with learning disabilities and autism and their families and friends views first and foremost. Encouraging people to speak out loudly about things that matter to them.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • local user-led groups influence Dimensions Group safeguarding approach and discussion at all levels and forums across the organisation. Different parts of the Group have different ways of involving people but they all have involvement and influence as central principles. • Consultative processes inform the organisation what is important to the people we support. • We have more effective ways of listening to people with more complex needs and advocacy is available where required.
Development	<p>Evaluating and reviewing safeguarding approaches and learning via internal and external partnerships. Developing ways to better support people with more complex needs or complex histories through safeguarding experiences with the implementation of Activate or other quality initiatives.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key partnerships enhance our learning and influence cultural change across the organisation in relation to safeguarding. • Contributing to research opportunities that influence practice and prevention.
Organisation	<p>Working with teams and departments to reduce risk to people we support and to achieve key objectives, for example revised induction and learning opportunities and revised quality checking. Sophisticated triangulation of data to provide information that will enable action.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organisation and regional reflective learning opportunities for every safeguarding circumstance and the person affected or their representative is always involved. • Organisation and regional structures contribute to robust personalised safeguarding practices. • The Safeguarding Panel provide a challenging voice within operational and governance structures and there is evidence of organisational impact. • We have a clear policies and procedures that are easy to follow and make sense to all stakeholders.

Organisational Context

Operating Infrastructure

The safeguarding infrastructure is implicit throughout the Dimensions Group structures though recognisably being more prominent at Executive and Governance levels, with the Safeguarding Panel responsible for the scrutiny and oversight of safeguarding monitoring and performance for Dimensions ,Outreach 3, Way, Waymarks, Real Focus and future subsidiaries.

The organisational lead for Safeguarding sits at Group Executive level within the Quality and Compliance Directorate and the regions and subsidiaries are supported by a national Safeguarding Manager.

Regional/subsidiary structures will vary in accordance with operating environments but it should be expected that safeguarding has a high regional profile.

Dimensions Group, Regions and Subsidiaries

The success of making safeguarding personal by its very nature means that decision making must be as close to the person being safeguarded as possible. This is conducive with Dimensions Group direction of travel and devolvement of the regions and the 'stand-alone' arrangements for each of its subsidiaries. This strategy seeks to ensure a balance between the centre, the regions and the subsidiaries whilst maintaining a clear sense of oversight at Governance levels. Underneath this strategy subsidiaries will need to develop their own safeguarding business plans which will put the principles into practice, each recognising and reflecting their unique operating context.

How we will recognise success

Personalisation

Improved experience for each person involved in issues of safeguarding by fully understanding the person's point of view, their wishes and how best to address these, including involving their relatives to the extent they wish us to involve them

- Each person involved in safeguarding events will be consulted with and offered support throughout (and ongoing if necessary) all reported incidents.

People

A range of knowledge and skills (including legal frameworks) will give staff the confidence to address safeguarding issues and to ask questions at the beginning and throughout any safeguarding process.

- A suite of learning resources will be available and employee will be equipped with a personalised safeguarding development plan.

Safeguarding awareness exists in all Dimensions Group departments and there are identified key people who maintain an on-going conversation amongst teams and external contractors.

- Each department will have a named lead person who will ensure that teams and external parties have safeguarding awareness.

Engagement

Dimensions Council and entity-wide, regional or local user-led groups (such as Everybody Counts and the Family and Friends Forum) will influence our safeguarding approach and discussion at all levels and forums across the organisation.

- Members from respective forums and other involvement structures are heard and their views are acted upon. The Safeguarding Panel will evidence inclusion.

Consultative processes inform the organisation what is important to the people we support.

- Evidence that matters of importance are heard and acted upon at the highest levels within Dimensions Group.

We have more effective ways of listening to people we support and advocacy is available where required.

- *Activate* 'communication and Social Interaction' domain evidences continuous improvement and tangible outcomes for people.

Development

Key partnerships enhance our learning and influence cultural change across the organisation in relation to safeguarding.

- Membership of two external networks with evidence of learning.
- Contributing to research opportunities that influence practice and prevention.
- Evidence of contributions documented and learning acted upon.

Organisation

Organisation and regional/subsidiary reflective learning opportunities for every safeguarding circumstance and the person affected or their representative is always involved.

- Evidence of lesson learnt and actions taken in all circumstances. We are alert to certain themes and take actions to address these. For example, new business with ongoing safeguarding matters, issues of compatibility and working with commissioners to find more suitable arrangements.

Organisation and regional structures contribute to robust personalised safeguarding practices.

- Business plans reflect personalised safeguarding practices and appropriate responsibilities.

The Safeguarding Panel will provide a challenging voice within operational and governance structures and there is evidence of organisational impact.

- Positive assessment of impact and outcomes.
- Clear policies and procedures that are easy to follow and make sense to all stakeholders.

This will be evidenced in CQC reports and internal quality and compliance checks.

We recognise when the organisation or its employees have been or pose a potential source of harm to people we support, that we take appropriate remedial or preventative action and always apologise.

- Build apologising into our processes and keep an apologies register.

Appendix 1 – SWOT Analysis

The following elements of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats were identified by members of Dimensions Group ' Safeguarding Panel in April 2016

Strengths

- Policy and procedures
- The Safeguarding Panel exists and has an independent chair
- Many strengths, starting from good base
- Being big
- Working in partnership
- Approach to work with those who challenge.

Weaknesses

- Variability across organisation/ different organisations need to level up
- Danger that can be seen as additional layer of bureaucracy
- The overwhelming amount of data – using it properly
- Whilst MSE explain this approach is embraced, it is yet to be fully embedded.
- This is about learning and evidence, changing things as a result rather than completing a form
- Perceived as internal only but relates to external world in which we operate – what we don't do is see it as being part of external world/effective working partnerships
- Approach to work with those who challenge people and society
- Being part of a big group

Opportunities

- Partnerships both internal (e.g. FFF, council) and external
- Opportunity to do more and better
- Approach to work with those who challenge
- Transforming Care
- Push for outcomes based commissioning
- Can become a key thought leader in this area

Threats

- No consistent safeguarding approach across the country – differences between LAs
- All the stuff on social media etc, everyone sees providers, real learning and transparency could be driven underground.
- Financial climate, lower paid staff, less control
- Strategic intent of the organisations – we work with people with complex histories and people who challenge services.
- Employment market issues. Recruiting/retaining right quality people. The recruiting strategy should reflect this
- Transforming Care – timescales tight
- LAs trying to fill voids
- Taking on more work, working with people for fewer hours – more vulnerable to social environment – opportunity to help educate those people
- National Housing shortage which contributes to incompatibility – not developing housing association – opportunity and threat
- TUPE transfers/inherited workforce
- Inheriting poor safeguarding practices when taking on new work