

STRENGTHEN  
BROADEN  
ENABLE

ohiverse  
sexual health matters

Strategy document October 2021-October 2023

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Dhiverse's strategy document. In this document you will find details of how we delivered our previous strategy document (2018-2020) and what we aim to do over the next 2 years.

We have chosen a 2 year plan, because we remain mindful of the fact that the environment in which we operate is fragile and ever changing, and even more so since the COVID-19 pandemic.

We anticipate that our financial situation will be, at the very least, stable for the next 2+ years. This financial stability will enable us to have an increased focus on reviewing, strengthening and developing our current provision and on sourcing longer term funding for our key services that will be coming towards the end of their current grant in 2023-24. It will also allow us time to carry out needs assessments for proposed new projects and, depending on the outcomes, to decide on the next steps. Our 2 year plan will enable us to achieve our short term aims and objectives with the least pressure on our reduced staff team, whilst continuing to provide excellent services to any one in need of education, support or information in line with our provision.

These changing times come with both challenges and opportunities and this means that we need to be agile, embrace the changes ahead, and as a Board maintain our focus on robust financial management and strong governance. In view of the diversification of our provision over the last four years and the changing needs of people living with HIV, over the next two years we will also take time to review our charitable objectives, key strategic aims and mission.

We will aim to continue our work with other organisations to ensure that we maximise the potential of any new opportunities and to support each other if we are faced with a challenge.

Our team is our most valuable asset. Without our experienced, skilled and dedicated team we would not be able to bring this plan to life and we would not have been able to manage the challenges that we have faced over the last 2 years. We will continue to support and develop our team and hopefully to grow it to enable us to meet our aims.

This document shows how we achieved our last plan and sets out how we will achieve our next set of objectives through our strengthen, broaden and enable model.



Susan Walker  
Chair of Trustees



Sharron Spindler  
Chief Executive

## 2. OUR CHARITY DETAILS

Registered name: The Dales Trust

Working name: Dhiverse

Charity registration number: 1058307

Company registration number: 3249464

Registered office: Office B1, Dales Brewery, Gwydir Street, Cambridge, CB1 2LJ

## 3. OUR MISSION

To provide high quality sexual health and HIV support, education and information for all. We are inclusive, caring, non-judgmental and committed to upholding our organization's values.

Through service user involvement, campaigns and collaboration we challenge stigma, prejudice and inequalities.

## 4. OUR STRATEGIC AIMS

We aim to fulfil our mission through:

**Support:** To provide education, training, support and information relation to anything linked to sexual health, to anyone in need. To provide support, information and signposting to people living with and affected by HIV

**Prevention:** To prevent increases in HIV Infection, the spread of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and unintended teenage pregnancies, through training, education and consciousness-raising.

**Action:** To campaign and lobby to affect change for people living with and affected by HIV; To promote equality in sexual health by challenging sexism, homophobia and transphobia.

## 5. OUR VALUES

**Empowerment:** We do not tell people what to do but support them in the choices they make. It is important that we give people the range of choices and options available to them so they can make their own informed decisions. This ensures that they receive the best possible treatment, support and care in order to maximize their health and wellbeing.

**Confidentiality:** Maintaining service user confidentiality is a core value of Dhiverse. It is our responsibility to ensure service user information is held securely and not disclosed without written permission, unless the service user is at risk or is a risk to someone else. We understand unequivocally the need for confidentiality and in some exceptional cases anonymity.

**Respect:** We respect that not everyone wants to be supported or given information in the same way. We treat every person as the individual they are. We support, respect and value each other, work without prejudice, inequality or judgement and we promote diversity. We are professional and united in our vision and aims.

**Quality:** We aim to provide the highest quality of service possible. Our service users are the focus of what we do and we want to provide a good and positive experience for all. Our staff are fully trained in all aspects of their work and receive regular supervision and support to ensure they have the most up to date skills, knowledge and experience to deliver the services we provide.

We seek and welcome all feedback from anyone involved with us. This feedback helps inform and shape improvements and developments within our provision.

**Fun:** We embrace individuality, encourage creativity and create opportunities for voluntary sector work to be exciting and meaningful. Engaging our team, our service users and the people we work with in activities that strengthen positive relationships is important to us. We maintain a healthy perspective on work/life balance and inject fun, spontaneity and humour into our working day.

**Flexibility:** Being progressive, innovative, using new technology and always learning and adapting, is what we aim for.

## 6. WHY OUR WORK IS IMPORTANT

- Sexual health, like physical, mental and emotional health, is one important dimension of overall health and social wellbeing. Being sexually healthy is more than being free of sexually transmitted infections. Being sexually healthy is also about sexual rights, sexual relationships and communication around sex, the ability to enjoy sexual pleasure alone or with a partner, respecting all sexual genders, sexual orientations and sexual identities. In 2021 many people are still unaware of how important it is to keep sexually healthy.
- Poor sexual health is much more common amongst people who already experience inequalities associated with their age, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, mental health, disability, education or economic status. Poor sexual health also affects a significant number of people who have other public health needs, in particular those relating to alcohol and drug misuse, homelessness and violence.
- Not having the opportunities to find out about or have support with sexual health, sex and relationships, gender identity, sexual orientation and how to keep safe, can often lead to poor mental and physical health, misunderstandings, risky behaviour, and, as we often see through our SLIP and ABC Programmes, challenging behaviours and attitudes towards sex and relationships, which can often lead to police intervention.
- Today, more than ever before, we have easier access to almost everything through the use of the Internet and Social Media. This can, and does, open up a world of opportunities and can be a great way to learn, keep in touch create and have fun. Throughout COVID, being able to keep in touch online has literally been a lifeline for many people. However, if we're not able to make informed choices and decisions when we're online, we risk accessing misinformation; accessing and sending inappropriate content and we risk communicating with people who might not be who they say they are or who might have negative reasons for being online.
- While the continued decline (in 2019 there were 4,139 new diagnoses, which is a 10% fall on 2018 figures and more than a 25% fall on 2015 figures) in new HIV diagnoses is, of course, excellent news, around 42% of new diagnoses are still being categorised as 'late'. People diagnosed late i.e. after the best possible time to start treatment, have a 1 in 10 chance of dying within the first year and could unknowingly transmit to sexual partners. People diagnosed promptly who are on effective medication, have an undetectable viral load, cannot pass on their HIV and are able to physically manage their HIV like any other manageable long term health condition.
- Although HIV is categorised as a manageable long term health condition, other manageable long term health conditions do not have the level of stigma and prejudice still associated with HIV. Some people may experience stigma and prejudice, whilst others may live with the fear of experiencing it. For these reasons, many people living with HIV need psychological or emotional support to help them manage these issues and the social isolation which can happen as a result.

## 7. HOW DID WE DO THROUGHOUT 2018-20?

### **A challenging time**

Although the COVID-19 pandemic was an unprecedented challenge for most of us, with the implementation of our Business Continuity Plan and a dedicated staff team we were able to adapt to home working and virtual provision very effectively. We are now well placed to manage any future lockdowns and restrictions and also to continue to offer our provision virtually to reach people who are unable to get to face to face sessions.

However in 2019-20 we faced our most challenging period for over 10 years for other reasons. In 2019, Public Health Cambridgeshire and Peterborough (PHC&P), who at the time had been our main funder for almost 9 years, undertook a review of the service we had been commissioned to provide. This review led to a re-design of prevention of sexual ill health services for the county. In January 2020 the newly designed service went out to tender and the service had changed considerably from the one we had delivered for nine years. The focus had shifted from HIV and education to a large scale chlamydia screening service. Unfortunately, because of the shift and scale of the new provision, and the financial requirements of the bid process, we found ourselves in the unexpected and unfortunate position of not being able to bid for the new service.

To enable the new provider to prepare the new service under COVID-19, PHC&P extended our contract by six months, to September 2020. This gave us some time to review our position and to assess and plan how to manage the loss of the Public Health contract.

The loss of this contract meant:

- A 40% loss of our total income at the time
- A loss of half our staff team, along with their skills, knowledge and experience
- We no longer had funding to provide a social care HIV Support Service (our original provision since 1986), free Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) in schools, free training to professionals, our MSM group or to run key campaigns and events.

### **How did we respond to this challenge?**

- We reduced our accommodation and associated costs by 50%.
- We reduced other core costs through negotiations with suppliers, who were very supportive, and through cutting back as much as possible.
- The loss of 7 members of staff halved our salary budget and associated staff costs.
- We were very fortunate in that the majority of staff who lost their jobs with us, chose to remain connected to Dhiverse in some way i.e. through volunteering, sessional and advisory work. For example, the staff member who managed our MSM group/work, stayed with us as a volunteer, so this work could continue.

## How did we respond to this challenge? (cont)

- We had always been aware of the challenges we could face in finding alternative funding to enable us to continue these services. We realised that if we wanted to continue to provide these in demand services, that, like many charities, we would have to charge for them. In late 2019 we began to put plans in place to develop our RSE work in line with the Department for Education (DfE) Framework to introduce a compulsory RSE Curriculum from September 2020.

Following feedback from schools we knew that many had concerns about developing an RSE curriculum, both in terms of content and time, and about ensuring they had staff trained and willing to deliver it.

After discussions with schools we made the decision to develop and design our own RSE Curriculum to sell to schools. We also further developed our training provision to sell to professionals, universities and colleges and the general public.

Unfortunately, finding funding to reinstate support for people living with HIV remains a challenge, but we will continue to work on this.

The above services are, of course, only part of our provision, and during this period our ABC Project, SLIP Programme and Counselling Service went from strength to strength. The success of these services enabled us to apply for continuation funding and each service was awarded a continuation grant through to 2023/24.

In April 2021, despite the challenges we faced in the previous 18 months, we were able to start the new financial year with a balanced budget and a stable financial position.

We also successfully achieved over 80% of our 2018-20 objectives, with the ones we didn't achieve being mainly as a result of the Public Health decision to review the service.

The breakdown of our achievements is on the next page.



## How we met our 2018-20 Objectives?

Objective	Outcomes for Objectives Achieved
Strengthen our sexual health workshops for young people	These workshops became the basis for developing our RSE curriculum
Improve the way we raise awareness of the importance of prompt testing for HIV	Through our HIV insti testing programme and through linking in to national campaigns
Review and evaluate our training programme	This enabled us to streamline and to strengthen our training provision, apply for CPD accreditation, and charge for our trainings
Secure further funding for our ABC Project	In December 2018 we were awarded a further 5 years funding by the National Lottery Community Fund
Be prepared to respond to the implementation of the government's requirement for RSE to be compulsory in all secondary schools	We designed and developed our own RSE Curriculum.
Ensure that our HIV support service reflects the changing needs of people living with HIV.	We identified the need for more and better psychological support for people living with HIV. This strengthened our funding application for a counselling service.
To provide a counselling service that is open to anyone who is experiencing trauma related to sexual health, relationships, sexual abuse, sexual orientation and gender identity	In 2018 we were awarded a 3 year grant from the Henry Smith Charity. Due to its success, in May 2021 we were awarded a further 3 year grant
To provide an alternative RSE programme for young people with challenging behaviours and attitudes towards relationship and sex.	In 2018 we developed our SLIP Programme and we were awarded a 3 year grant from BBC Children in Need. In July 2021, due to the programme's success we were awarded a further 2 year grant.
Assess the sexual health support needs of people with a physical or sensory impairment.	Although the need for a specific programme was not identified the need for support to be tailored was, and we are able to offer this
Assess the sexual health support needs of sex workers	Our needs assessment didn't evidence any specific need for sex workers
To support parents/guardians to understand the RSE taught to their children and to feel equipped to talk to their children about relationships and sex	We were awarded a small grant by the National Lottery Community Fund to help us pilot workshops. These were very successful.
To provide support, education and awareness raising around PrEP.	The events and workshops we held were well received and successful
To obtain accreditation for our key training courses	Key trainings awarded CPD accreditation in 2019
Develop and strengthen our relationships with other relevant organisations	We have excellent relationships with many organisations across the county.
Ensure our IT equipment is fit for purpose	Achieved with the support of our IT supplier. However we still need to find grants for new equipment.
Improve our marketing and communication (internal and external)	We improved our website and our social media presence and streamlined our materials - ongoing
Improve staff incentives as agreed with the board and staff team	Improved flexible working options, incentives for delivering our mainstream RSE sessions and more options for unpaid leave.
To develop sexual health information for people 45+ in line with our 2017 survey	Further exploration of this identified that people 45+ did not actually need/want tailored information or to be involved in the development of information.
<b>Objectives not achieved due to the Public Health service review and COVID-19</b>	
To support older people living with HIV	Our planned work around this didn't happen due to the situation with Public Health funding.
Investigate the need for 'consent' workshops in the work place	As above, but this will be carried forward into our new plan
Strive to achieve full cost recovery on all projects	This continues to be a challenge as more funders are not covering core costs within their grants – ongoing
Find new and innovative ways to engage our service users in the review and development of our work	This has been difficult throughout the pandemic so this is an ongoing piece of work for us.

## 8. OUR APPROACH

We aim for inclusivity and equality in everything we do. Our services are open and accessible to anyone. Everyone has a right to have a consensual sexual relationship. We want everyone to have the opportunity to be equipped to make informed decisions around sexual health, consensual and pleasurable sexual activity, healthy relationships, and personal safety.

Our approach is holistic and person centred; we support the person, not just the issue. For many people, the presenting issue is often the tip of the iceberg and they find that while talking to us they are able to open up about other things.

What people thought about our services:

**ABC Programme:** *This is really helping me to understand what to look out for and what the signs of abuse are before I start another relationship. 1-1 Participant*

*ABC Programme: Thank you that's been really helpful for us and has helped me to understand. I've taken notes and we will try some of these out to help us understand each other better. Couples session*

*Understanding ABC Workshop: "Thank you for this training, I listened so intently as it is a new topic for me with regards to young people with learning difficulties. This was very interesting and I learnt a lot around this subject. I liked how you delivered the sensitive topic with such dignity and it is clear you have the service user at the centre of all work. Very inspiring, Thank you of all work. Very inspiring, Thank you.*

**The SLIP Programme:** *"Many of our students are some of the most vulnerable in our society, living in residential care homes, foster placements or with disadvantaged families. The SLIP Facilitator's professionalism and ability to talk to students about extremely important topics that affect them, such as sexuality, consent and pornography was essential. SLIP provided them with a safe space to ask questions, provide reassurance and correct misconceptions – in a fun and age-appropriate way. As a school, we feel our students were able to engage as well as they did as the program was not part of our core curriculum and not delivered by teaching staff they see every day. This reduced the embarrassment factor for them - and school staff! In addition, SLIP was able to support school staff with support and queries about individual pupils, enabling staff to continue to support students when the program ended. Teacher*

**Counselling and Emotional Support:** *Diverse helped me put the pieces of my childhood back together and allowed me to move forward. It's helped me see that being gay isn't wrong and it's who I am. I don't need to pretend to be someone else anymore, I only need to be me. The sessions have made me look at how I see myself and learn to like me for who I am. Counselling Client*

*Having someone to talk to about how I'm managing my HIV day to day has been so good for me. It's good to talk to someone who knows what I'm going through. Emotional Support Client*

**Sexual Health Trainings:** *The 'Consent' training was absolutely brilliant. Beautifully set up and well delivered. Really very useful. 100% love! Great trainer, please pass on our thanks. Participant*

**The 'Chat?' Group:** *Living alone during the pandemic, 'Chat?' meant that I could keep in touch and get support from other people in my situation. Participant*

## 9. THE CHALLENGES

- Our main challenge, over the next couple of years will be to position ourselves so that we remain financially stable post 2023/24.
- To continue to strive for full cost recovery on both new and continued grants
- There is still stigma, embarrassment and, for some, confusion, surrounding sex, sexual health, sexual orientation and gender identity.
- April 2019 saw the end of ring-fenced local authority public health budgets in England and this, along with the COVID-19 pandemic, is putting significant pressures on services.
- The fact that HIV is now seen as a manageable long term health condition means that it's no longer the major public health concern it once was. However, whilst it's excellent that people can now live a physically healthy life with HIV, there are few long term conditions that have the same level of stigma and prejudice associated with them as HIV, and this often affects a person's emotional and psychological health and affects their ability to interact socially.
- With the ongoing development and increased use of both the Internet and Social Media, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, we have seen first hand through our SLIP Programme, ABC Project and Counselling Service how this can affect people's personal safety, sexual health and wellbeing, relationships and mental health and wellbeing. We have seen a 50% increase in people being referred for support because they have committed a minor offence, or they are at risk of offending.
- There will undoubtedly be competition in terms of our RSE Curriculum Package. We will need to work hard to ensure our content remains unique and 21st century relevant.
- The ever changing landscape of sexual health needs and priorities.

## 10. OUR 2021-2023 'TO DO LIST'

Our overall aim is to strengthen and broaden our charitable objectives to support:

- Access for all to education, training support and guidance around sexual health, relationships, sex, sexual rights, sexual orientation and gender identity, fit for the 21st century
- The normalisation of sex and sexual health so that they are no longer seen as an embarrassment or a taboo
- The end of both HIV transmissions and the stigma and prejudice towards HIV

Our **Strengthen, Broaden and Enable objectives for 2021 to 2023** are set out on the next page:

<b>Our Strengthen Objectives: How we plan to strengthen our current provision</b>	<b>By when?</b>
Further develop our 'Understanding SLIP' workshop and increase promotion	January 2022
Review and evaluate the content of our SLIP Programme to ensure it remains relevant, accurate and up to date.	March 2022 & March 2023
Grow our SLIP Programme to enable us to see more young people, in and out of county, and to have a greater reach both face to face and virtually	Ongoing
Ensure that the programme remains funded beyond our current grant	February 2023
Review and evaluate content of our ABC Project to ensure it remains relevant, accurate and up to date.	March 2022 & March 2023
Grow our ABC Project to enable us to see more young people, in and out of county, both face to face and virtually.	Ongoing
Ensure that the project remains funded beyond our current grant.	June 2023
Ensure both ongoing and planned review and evaluation of our RSE Curriculum to ensure content remains relevant, accurate and up to date	Oct 2021; May 2022; May 2023
Further develop our General Sexual Health Trainings to ensure trainings are content remains relevant, accurate and up to date	November 2021
Continue to regularly promote both the RSE Curriculum and General Sexual Health Trainings in and out of county	Ongoing
Increase our bank of sessional trainers and volunteers	Ongoing
<b>Our Broaden Objectives: How we aim to broaden our provision and our reach</b>	<b>By when?</b>
Develop a 'Train the Trainer' course for our ABC Project	Dec 2021
Recruit sessional workers as necessary and promote it nationally	March 2022
Consider the need for a hybrid SLIP/ABC Programme and how this might look	April 2022
Revisit and further develop our 'Parent's Project' and find funding	April 2022
Assess the need and viability for a charged counselling service in addition to our current funded service	May 2022
Develop a 'Consent Training Programme' to include modules: Consent in the workplace; Consent for professionals; Consent in Universities/Colleges	June 2022
If the need for a hybrid ABC/SLIP Programme is identified - implement next steps	Jul & Aug 2022
Carry out a needs assessment to establish if there is a need for a Specialist Counselling Service for people who have a severe learning difficulty or autism and are suffering trauma from sexual abuse	Oct 2021
If we identify a need for a charged counselling service we will recruit a volunteer counsellor with the skills to manage and deliver the provision	November 2022
If we identify a need for a Specialist Counselling Service (above) we will design a service and work towards finding funding to get the service in place	Dec 2022
Continue to seek funding to enable us to expand our psychological/social support for people living with HIV and for MSM	Ongoing
<b>What we need to do to enable us to achieve our Aims &amp; Objectives ?</b>	<b>By when?</b>
Recruit a general admin person either through a grant or a volunteer	March 2022
Review our charitable objectives, key strategic aims and mission	July 2023
Increase our unrestricted income through our charged services and fundraising	Ongoing
Strive to achieve full cost recovery on new grants	Ongoing
Continue to seek grants and donations to help purchase new IT equipment	Ongoing
Ensure that we keep up to date with the RSE Curriculum DfE guidance and all sexual health developments	Ongoing
Explore opportunities for new patrons and 'friends of Diverse'	Ongoing

## 11. TRUSTEES

Our trustees are responsible for the governance of Dhiverse, helping to set our strategy and helping to achieve our objectives.

In May 2021 the Board voted to implement a rotating Chair model of governance. The elected Chair served a period of six months and the new Chair is elected at the Board meeting towards the end of the six months. Jeffrey Grierson was the elected Chair for the period March to September 2021. Susan Walker was elected in September for the period to March 2022.

### **Our Board as at September 2021:**

Susan Walker (Chair of Trustees)

Andrew Carmichael

Gaby Clements

Jeffrey Grierson

Hannah Schober

### **Message from the Board:**

As the Board of Trustees for Dhiverse, in collaboration with the Chief Executive, we are responsible for setting the overall strategy and direction of the charity and for ensuring that Dhiverse uses its resources effectively in order to realise its mission, aims, objectives and approach.

As outlined in Section 7 of this document, as an organisation we faced some significant challenges during the period covering our previous strategic document. However we are both pleased and proud at how well we have responded to these challenges and in what the charity has gone on to achieve in spite of them.

The charity has accomplished a lot in the last 4 years and as a Board, we are delighted to be part of an organisation which provides some unique services around relationships, sex and sexual health.

We are confident that we are well positioned to manage the challenges that we will undoubtedly face in the coming years, and we are excited about our plans for the future.

Of course, none of what has been achieved over the last 4 years would have been possible without the dedication of numerous people. As a board we would like to express particular gratitude to Sharron Spindler, Chief Executive and to the wider staff team and our volunteers, including those who left during the last year due to the funding cuts.

We would also like to express our ongoing appreciation to our funders and donors; you help to make our work possible, and to our service users who continue to inspire and challenge us to offer them the best possible services we can.

Last but by no means least we would like to extend a huge thank you to Andy Bell, who after six years as our patron has decided to stand down due to his workload as a performer. Andy has helped to raise awareness of the importance of prompt HIV testing and the need for more funding to support the psychological needs of people living with HIV.

# dhiverse

sexual health matters

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The  
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Charity  
founded in 1628



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no. SC039557

The Mrs Smith & Mount Trust