

The Big Plan

- Learning Disability Strategy

Be all you can be 2020 - 2025

February 2020





Aberdeenshire is home to lots of people with learning disabilities

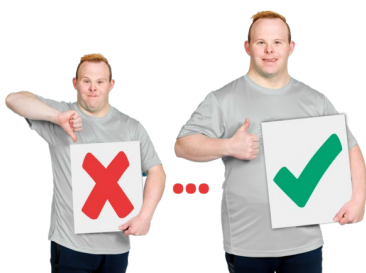


A learning disability is a lifelong condition that affects people's development.

People with learning disabilities may need help to:



- Understand information
- Learn skills
- Cope independently



We want to make life better for people with learning disabilities in Aberdeenshire.

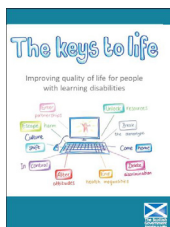


We want Aberdeenshire to be a happier and healthier place for people with learning disabilities.



In Scotland, there is a **national strategy** for people with learning disabilities.

A **strategy** is a plan of work.



The **National Strategy** is called 'The Keys to Life'.



We have developed a local strategy for people with learning disabilities.

Our strategy is called **The big plan**.



We have asked lots of people what they think should be in our big plan.



These are the 4 important things in our big plan:



- Feeling Well
- Felling Involved
- Feeling Valued
- Feeling Supported

Feeling Well



We want people with learning disabilities to feel well and be healthy.



We want people with learning disabilities to have good mental health.



We want to help people with learning disabilities to get the treatment they need in health services.

Feeling Involved



We want people with learning disabilities to be involved in local groups and activities.



We want people with learning disabilities to be involved with the local workforce.



We want people with learning disabilities to have friendships and relationships.

Feeling Valued



We want people with learning disabilities to be treated with dignity and respect.



We want people with learning disabilities to have a say about things that affect their life.



We will make sure we have a range of ways for people with learning disabilities to make their voice heard.



Feeling Supported



We want people with learning disabilities to live where they want and feel safe.



We want people with learning disabilities to have the right support.



We want the carers of people with learning disabilities to feel supported.

More information on our big plan

Across our learning disability services, we want to encourage, motivate and support people with learning disabilities to 'be all they can be'. This is a philosophy that is embedded into the heart of this plan, to ensure that the personal outcomes of all people with learning disabilities living in Aberdeenshire are realised.

In 2013 the Scottish Government published a national strategy aimed at improving the quality of life of people with learning disabilities. Progress has certainly been made in the past five years and we believe that Aberdeenshire is a great place for people with learning disabilities to live. However, we recognise there is still a need to seek further improvements to the lives of people with a learning disability and the development and implementation of a local strategy (the big plan) will help to achieve this.

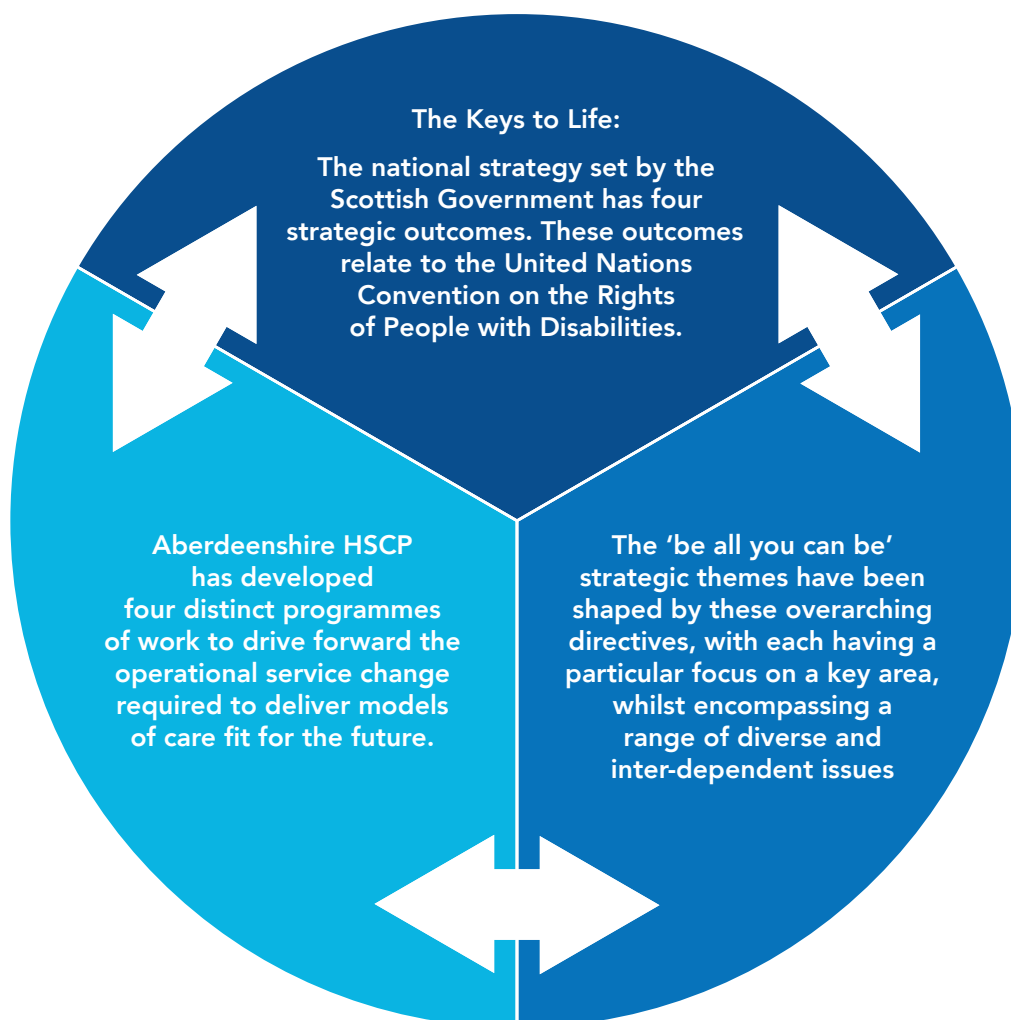
We must explore what barriers still exist for people and then work together to break these down wherever possible. To do this, we have adopted a grassroots approach using a simple formula:

Directly asking people with a learning disability to tell us what does and doesn't work for them in their daily lives. This information has been used as the basis for the commitments made within this plan and shapes what we endeavor to do. Ultimately, we want Aberdeenshire to be a happier, healthier and more inclusive place for people with learning disabilities.

It is estimated that around 40% of people with learning disabilities also suffer from poor mental health, a much higher rate than the general population. We are therefore committed to ensuring that this strategy maintains close links with the Partnership's 'Adult Mental Health & Wellbeing Strategy 2019-2024' and works together to achieve positive outcomes through the respective action plans.

We acknowledge that we live in a time where demand is increasing and that the challenge is to meet this demand with the resources available to us. Therefore, progress that we make must be informed by this reality. However, in Aberdeenshire we are truly passionate about effecting positive change and believe that this can be achieved by fully utilising existing resources, creative thinking and working closer with our established multidisciplinary networks. This strategy is an aspirational document aimed at improving the lives of everyone with a learning disability in Aberdeenshire regardless of the complexity of their disability.

Setting the scene



The Keys to Life Strategic Outcomes	The Aberdeenshire HSCP Work Programmes	The 'Be all you can be' Strategic Themes
A Healthy Life	Enabling Health and Wellbeing	Feeling Well
Active Citizenship	Facilitating Shared Ownership and Engagement	Feeling Involved
Choice and Control	Safe, Effective and Sustainable	Feeling Valued
Independence	Reshaping Care	Feeling Supported

Engagement

Successful delivery of the big plan requires engagement with, and positive input from, a wide range of partners. This includes people with learning disabilities, family carers, advocacy groups, health and social care professionals and service providers.

Face-to-face engagement sessions were held with people with learning disabilities across all six localities in Aberdeenshire at the end of 2018. The aim of each session was to hear and learn of people's experiences first hand and ascertain views on various topics. These sessions were hosted through a variety of established groups, including day services, supported work placements, social clubs and service user forums. Over 120 adults with learning disabilities participated in these sessions.

Additionally, more feedback was received through an online survey which was available for anyone with a vested interest to complete, and by the closing date it had collected 129 responses.



Feeling Well - A wee bit more

Feeling Well



In Aberdeenshire, we want people with learning disabilities to feel well – both in terms of having the highest attainable standard of physical health and maintaining good mental health.

What people with learning disabilities told us:

Accessing health services can be a frightening experience for some people. In general, there is a fear of having to go to appointments at the GP surgery or the dentist. Helpful attributes of health staff were having flexibility around appointments, calm demeanours and being knowledgeable around learning disabilities.

Some people spoke about feeling undervalued because some medical staff would speak to their carer or family member, rather than them. One person had been prescribed antibiotics for a chest infection without a physical examination. Some people said that they do not always understand what the doctor has said to them. Others explained that they have little knowledge surrounding the medication they take or some of the treatment they are prescribed. One person explained that she did not know what phototherapy was until she arrived at her first hospital appointment for this treatment.

There were many people who spoke about having a negative hospital experience. One person said that he found the hospitals very scary, especially in comparison to the friendly environment of the children's hospital. The role of the learning disability liaison nurse based

“Waiting rooms are really scary and we have to wait a long time for appointments.”

“I hate when the doctors are running late – it can get really stressful when I have to wait. I would rather get a phone consultation.”

“The GP never speaks to me, he speaks to my carer.”

“The learning disability nurse is a great service.”

“I have to take medication daily but nobody tells me what it is for.”

“When I was in hospital a care manager came to speak to me, but then I never saw them again.”

“Sometimes I have to wait three weeks for a doctor's appointment, which makes me really anxious.”

at Aberdeen Royal Infirmary was referenced by several people as a valuable and helpful resource. It was however highlighted that this specialist support is not available in the evenings or at the weekend. It was also suggested that there should be more education on learning disabilities needs for mainstream hospital staff.

“I find my visits from the physiotherapist quite confusing – they never give me much information.”

“Some doctors just don’t understand me.”

What we are going to do:

In Aberdeenshire, we want to ensure that accessing health services is a helpful and supportive experience. We want to improve the support given to people with learning disabilities in primary care settings to promote a positive experience. Furthermore, we wish to focus on supporting people to prepare for health appointments or hospital visits so they can better understand what to expect and help alleviate some anxieties. We want to make sure people are treated respectfully and fairly, where information around health conditions and required treatments are explained in a manageable and accessible way and look to increase the number of home visits offered to people in the community. We also recognise that Aberdeenshire is home to a number of people with profound and complex learning disabilities and are committed and determined to address these specific health needs and ensure that there is an equity of healthcare access and treatment with a key emphasis on good communication between the family, carers and all involved health professionals.

Feeling Well – Service Spotlight

Focusing on key areas such as: communication, care facilitation/co-ordination, clinical care and championing the needs of people with a learning disability, the Acute Learning Disability Nurse Advisor is pivotal to ensuring positive outcomes and a person-centred approach to care when people require to access services for outpatient and hospital admissions. The ability to coordinate admissions and provide advice increases and supports equal opportunities in accessing healthcare and addresses many of the health inequality agendas that people with a learning disability often face.

Recognition of the importance and value of the role not only by colleagues but by families, carers and people with a learning disability are highlighted with the following feedback:

‘I’ve spent quite a bit of time with the Acute Learning Disability Nurse Advisor the past few days which I feel has been beneficial in supporting the current admission and ensuring a person-centred approach to care: communication has been key’

Strategic Outcomes:

People with learning disabilities in Aberdeenshire:

- are well and healthy.
- have good mental health.
- have equal access to and treatment in health services regardless of the complexity of their disability.

Feeling Involved - A wee bit more

Feeling Involved



In Aberdeenshire, we want people with learning disabilities to feel involved – in terms of being fully participating members in all aspects of their community through accessing local resources, contributing to the workforce and engaging in social activities.

What people with learning disabilities told us:

The people of Aberdeenshire are very fond of the local community that they are a part of. There are many local facilities that are well used, such as community centres, libraries and shops. At nearly every engagement session, the consensus of the group was that there should be more options for things to do in their area. A lot of towns host a social night aimed at people with learning disabilities, which runs one night a week. For many, this was the only night they socialised in a week and this wasn't enough. Most people rely on the support of someone else to get out and about. It was mentioned many times that some resources are still not accessible to those with physical disabilities. This can either be because of access to a property or because toilet facilities are not fully accessible. It was also expressed that it was difficult to make new friends or relationships out with work placements or day services.

Employment was a huge topic of conversation across most groups and it was universally agreed that obtaining employment was very difficult for people with learning disabilities. This was based on several factors across the employment spectrum; from application forms being complicated and confusing, to a stressful interview process

“I don't go to church every Sunday because there isn't always staff to support me.”

“I like nights out and I like cocktails.”

“I wish I could go to a party every weekend – like my sister does.”

“I have to plan to see my friends in advance with my support staff – I could never just say I will be round in half an hour.”

“I go to a social group in Aboyne and I love it there.”

“People like us get to volunteer, but if it's a paid job it's goodbye.”

with little allowances being made and where employment has been achieved, a lack of 'on the job support' leading to work placement breakdowns. It was highlighted that job centres are not valued by people with learning disabilities as many find the thought of going to one too daunting.

A lot of the issues highlighted under this theme, and indeed across the three others, link to issues surrounding transport. With Aberdeenshire being geographically widespread with many remote and rural settlements, transport links are in some places non-existent. It was said that it can often be easier to get into Aberdeen City than it is to get to a neighbouring town. The general experience of people with learning disabilities using buses is not positive as buses regularly run late, break down often and operate at limited times. These all pose problems for people with disabilities, particularly those who are anxious. The best option for most people were taxis, however these can be extremely costly.

“I feel like employers could do more during interviews to make you feel better.”

“I spent nine years in a day centre but I have finally broken the barriers – I wanted to embrace the change.”

“I live in the middle of nowhere and there is no public transport.”

“The bus drivers can be really rude and unhelpful which can be off-putting.”

What we are going to do:

In Aberdeenshire we want to enable people with learning disabilities to enjoy the facilities and activities that are available locally, in partnership with local groups and service providers. We will continue to develop our existing assets and focus on the availability of community resources, not only in terms of physical access but that public toilet facilities are fully accessible for all. We want to review how leisure activities are commissioned and look at more flexible ways of promoting social connections.

We recognise that an ambition for many people with learning disabilities in Aberdeenshire is to gain employment. We will work closer with our local job centres and create better links with local employers. We recognise that Aberdeenshire Council and NHS Grampian have many employment opportunities and we will look at how we can streamline our own employment process to make applying for vacancies more appealing for everyone. This would hopefully in turn inspire other local employers to follow suit. We will also look at how Aberdeenshire's employability service works with people with learning disabilities, as it was highlighted that there is a long wait for work compounded by a lack of work placements.

We will continue with the principles of the IDEA project, whilst also responding on a locality basis with services that meet the needs of our population. We will review attendance at our day service buildings to ensure that, where possible, people are integrated into their local communities. Building based services will only be used by those who would benefit most from this style of service.

Inspire...By Charity Shop & Workshop is Inspire's flagship social enterprise model, based in Huntly & Stonehaven, combining an employability-focussed daily support service for people with learning disabilities and additional support needs, including autism, in Aberdeenshire, with the fundraising potential of a charity shop.

The enterprise provides a unique opportunity for attendees – who are largely referred by the local authority - to develop their skillset in the operation of a retail outlet, as well as gaining further competencies. This skills development involves work-based activities such as the collection of goods to sell, preparation of the goods for resale, pricing, cleaning, stock taking, customer service and handling monetary transactions.

Providing person-centred support to those who attend, Inspire...By empowers life choices by fostering employability skills, with the ultimate aim of further community integration.

Strategic Outcomes:

People with learning disabilities in Aberdeenshire:

- participate fully in meaningful activities in their local community.
- make valued contribution to the local workforce.
- have friendships and relationships

Feeling Valued - A wee bit more

Feeling Valued



In Aberdeenshire, we want people with learning disabilities to feel valued – by ensuring that each person is treated fairly and respectfully in every aspect of their life. We want to ensure that we listen to individuals and make every effort to ensure everyone has a voice that is heard.

What people with learning disabilities told us:

The people of Aberdeenshire wish to be treated as equals by everyone they encounter. However, many people shared experiences of not having the necessary support to fulfil their wishes. One person said that they would like to marry their girlfriend but felt that nobody would help him to make this happen. Another person explained that they had to go to Edinburgh to be assessed on their ability to take driving lessons and were told they can have their lessons, but only in an automatic car. Unfortunately, there are no learning schools in the area with automatic cars.

When discussing feeling important and being listened to, many people felt that this was not always happening. One gentleman explained that his key worker where he lived was changed without consulting him; and even more upsetting for him was that he found this out from his housemate.

In terms of professional support, some people said that their social worker has changed several times in a short period of time which is unhelpful. Difficulties communicating with professionals was mentioned on several occasions. Others said they didn't know who their social worker was. Some

“I would like to live on my own, but my family say I am not allowed.”

“I hate review meetings and would rather not have one, especially when everything is okay.”

“Everything is decided at meetings when you are not there and I just hate that.”

“At one review there was a support worker I don't like there speaking on my behalf.”

“I am not good at making decisions and rely on the help of my family.”

“I just don't ever feel listened to.”

people didn't get regular review meetings to discuss their care and support, whilst others said they didn't like going to review meetings. When unhappy, people tended to say they felt confident speaking to a family member or support worker – who often can help them.

“My care manager made decisions about my life and didn't listen to me.”

“I have not had a seizure for five years and would like to spend time on my own.”

What we are going to do:

In Aberdeenshire, we will endeavour to ensure that people with learning disabilities feel they are treated as equal citizens. We will ensure that every person knows the professionals that are working with them and how they can be contacted. Any review meeting held should be a positive and helpful experience for all involved and therefore we must look at how these are planned and implemented with people. There are many tools that can be utilised to ensure those with communication problems are empowered to give their views. We will therefore ensure core staff are adequately trained and have access to a suite of resources. We will also explore how we better document the efforts staff make to ensure people with learning disabilities' views are sought and how these views have been considered when making decisions about their life. The engagement sessions to develop this plan have been well received and we will ensure that similar sessions are completed each year of the big plan's timeframe.

Feeling Valued – Service Spotlight

ARC Scotland facilitates two self-advocates groups for people with learning disabilities in Aberdeenshire. The self-advocates group which covers North Aberdeenshire is called 'Aberdeenshire Involvement Network' and the newer group which covers Central and South Aberdeenshire is known as 'A'body Matters'.

People with learning disabilities come together to meet every 2-3 months from across Aberdeenshire. They represent their own views and the views of other groups and forums they belong to. Aberdeenshire Involvement Network has played a key part in training staff on the Keep Safe Scheme.

The groups have links with people within Aberdeenshire's Health and Social Care Partnership as well as with the Learning Disability Providers Forum.

Strategic Outcomes:

People with learning disabilities in Aberdeenshire:

- are equal citizens and are treated with dignity and respect.
- make decisions about their own life.
- will have a range of ways to make their voice heard.

Feeling Supported – A wee bit more

Feeling Supported



In Aberdeenshire, we want people with learning disabilities to feel supported – in terms of having accommodation that suits their needs, giving people choice and control over their own lives and ensuring that the care they receive is of the highest quality.

What people with learning disabilities told us:

Accommodation was a hot discussion point and yielded many different response and opinions. The one clear observation is that Aberdeenshire requires more accommodation options for people with learning disabilities to truly be able to pick where they lived. Some people expressed an interest in moving out of their family home but that there was nowhere available for them. Similarly, others explained that they currently lived with their peers in a group setting and would prefer to live alone. However, a proportionate amount of people held the opinion that staying with another person would be their preferred option and that they wouldn't like to ever live alone. One person expressed that they couldn't truly choose where they lived, as they had to wait for options to become available. Being told they will have to wait a long time to be able to move out of their parent's house made one person feel like a second-class citizen.

In terms of care and support, people with learning disabilities want to be supported by people who are fun, friendly and dedicated to their role. It is extremely important that support staff understand what a learning disability is and how it can affect people. Support provided should be flexible and not always so regimented – some

- “I want my own flat and have been waiting for a long time.”
- “I want to move out, but my mum and dad don't want me to.”
- “I don't want to live on my own - I have never thought about living on my own.”
- “I want a proper home and not a disabled house.”
- “I don't want placed with older people.”
- “My support workers are often late which is annoying – it takes two minutes to call me.”
- “Care staff are nae to be nippit and nae be too strict!”
- “Sometimes I just want someone to sit and speak with me.”
- “I want to make sure my mum and dad are okay.”

people would like more often if their carer could sit down with them and have a relaxed conversation over a cup of coffee. Some people detailed having a conflicting opinion between what they want for themselves and what their family carers think is best. People gave examples of not being able to explore certain options because their mum or dad didn't agree it was right for them. However, more commonly, it was very clear that people with learning disabilities value their family very much and want to ensure that those around them are healthy and happy.

What we are going to do:

Aberdeenshire is committed to giving people with learning disabilities choice and control about where they live, who they live with and the support they receive. People with learning disabilities want to lead lives that are fully integrated into their communities. We will publish a Market Position Statement that will identify the type, location and service style of accommodation that we require to meet the needs of our population of adults with learning disabilities. This will enable us to plan with service providers, housing agencies and other Aberdeenshire Council Services to meet these requirements.

People with learning disabilities, unsurprisingly, state that they want to be supported by kind, experienced and passionate care staff. To help achieve this, we will work with commissioned services to ensure that staff have relevant training and feel confident in their knowledge and abilities. We also recognise that those supporting people with learning disabilities must regulate their own values, belief systems and experiences so as to not impact negatively on their judgement when supporting people, especially in relation to individuals making decisions or taking risks. We must also try and ensure this same philosophy is promoted by health and social care practitioners to informal carers.

We want to build on our existing use of digital technology that contribute to people with learning disabilities feeling more reassured and independent within their homes, such as community alarms. Improved access to services, supporting self-management, maximising independence and reducing inequalities will be some of the principles underpinning our consideration of the digital and technology enabled solutions we adopt.

We recognise the high level of support and commitment given by many informal carers in Aberdeenshire to people with learning disabilities, which greatly helps not only to sustain care packages but in fact, enhance them. With the recent implementation of the Carers (Scotland) Act 2016, we are aware that we need to support carers in a more effective way than before. Within the learning disability community of Aberdeenshire, we are committed to improving the health and wellbeing of unpaid carers by fulfilling the duties as laid out in the Act

Feeling Supported – Service Spotlight

In 2015, St. James's Court was opened in Inverurie. This 24-unit extra-care housing offers adults with learning disabilities their own self-contained flat with access to communal facilities, and a flexible staffing model that promotes independent living. Most tenants moved from five small group home settings. This is proving an effective model of support that gives the opportunity for people to have greater choice and become more independent.

A resident's view from St James's Court: "I was a wee bit scared at first about moving into my own flat but now I like my flat because it is warm and comfortable, and I have my own space. I am happier now as I can mix with my friends and join in activities when I want to or just sit and do things like drawing or watching DVDs in my flat. I see my family every week and have a meal together which is good."

Strategic Outcomes:

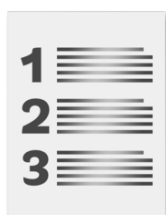
People with learning disabilities in Aberdeenshire:

- live where they want and feel safe.
- receive support when needed from skilled support staff.
- have carers who feel supported and have fulfilled lives.

The Big Plan – What is next?



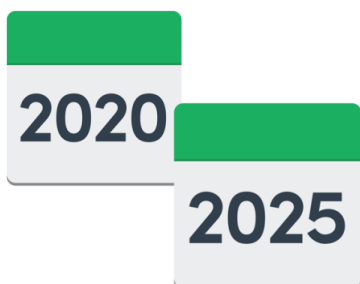
We have made a big plan of the things we need to do.



We will call this plan the **big list**.



We need everyone to help us with the **big list**.



We will work together to make things better over the next 5 years.

If you require this document in another format, or if you
require further information or would like to make comment
on any aspect of this plan please contact:
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