



Gheel
Autism Services

2023 - 2027 Strategic Plan



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Foreword



On behalf of the Board, I am delighted to be in position where we are ready to introduce Gheel's Strategy 2023- 2027. In this strategy we have set an ambitious agenda for Gheel, the implementation of which will present a substantial, but achievable challenge over the next 5 years.

On behalf of the Board Members, I would like to thank everyone who was involved and contributed to the hugely important task of producing the Strategy, which will provide the guidance for our Service in the next part of its journey. To all of our staff, I want to thank you for your flexible responses to the COVID 19 pandemic across the service, which has been inspiring. As a Board it has been reassuring, that through your commitment, creativity, and expertise - the Service has not only continued the provision of quality and safe supports, but expanded them further in the midst of a pandemic.

We have learned from watching the world events of the past few years that our best path forward is to follow a compass - not a map. This better equips us to deal with the unknown, to learn and adjust, and to move forward effectively. The world is evolving, and so the focus of this strategy has been about the pursuit of outcomes, and not about commitment to a rigid process.

Foreword



This Strategic Plan is a result of many months of hard work and commitment by Gheel’s strategy development team. It has involved many sessions with stakeholders, listening to their concerns, opinions, and suggestions. The 5 goals and 23 objectives within the strategy create a challenging, but achievable vision for Gheel services. It builds the strong enduring values of Gheel, which have and will, continue to guide the organisation, and all who work within it. Working to these values we will continue to provide and develop leading edge supports that allow individuals to imagine and live their best life.

As I noted previously, we do this with immense pride in our association with the achievements of the service to date, and with every confidence that the teams in place across the service will grow and develop into the future.

On behalf of the Board Members, I would like to thank everyone who was involved and contributed to the hugely important task of producing the Strategic Plan 2023 – 2027, I can reaffirm our Board’s support for the work that lies ahead, and I look forward to reviewing progress on implementation with the management team.

Tony McMahon

Chairperson - Gheel Autism Services

Overview of Gheel



Gheel was founded in 1971 by parents of autistic adults in response to the lack of available and appropriate support services. Since its creation, Gheel has been providing tailored and autism informed services across Dublin and North Kildare. Gheel is a grant-aided Section 39 Agency, meaning that it provides services on behalf of the Health Service Executive (HSE). We currently support c260 people, impacting hundreds of families.

In Gheel, we focus on supporting autistic individuals to have fulfilling life experiences, while having autonomy and control over their choices and decisions. Gheel provides a wide range of services for autistic adults including day opportunities, transition support and a variety of supported living options.

Across our services we consider how each person thinks, learns and processes information to develop a personalised plan of support. Considering individual strengths and motivations, we enable people to obtain outcomes that are meaningful to them. Committed practitioners receive regular training and they are equipped with the knowledge and skills to enable each individual to have positive and meaningful life experiences. All staff are involved in enhancing the culture to supporting people into a more inclusive, independence focused style of support - where people are encouraged to be partners in, not recipients of, their life planning and support.

Mission

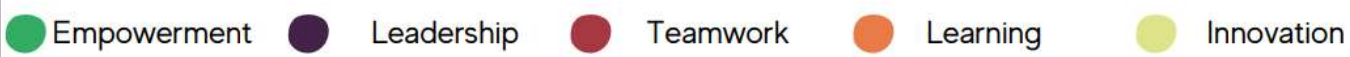
We are solely focused on providing support to live happy, meaningful lives

Values



Vision

Inclusive communities where people are valued and have meaningful opportunities to design their own future in Ireland

Happy Teams	Quality Support	Sustainability
		
We ask 'why' often to find a better way	We put people's rights at the centre of our practice	We make best use of our resources
We help each other to make quality support possible	We work hard to build warm, trusting relationships	We plan with intention for the future
We are open and honest	We think creatively to communicate in partnership	We recruit great people
We listen and learn from one another	We see ambitious, limitless potential for every person	We build connections of support in communities

Support Options

Day Support

Within the day service support opportunities, each person is supported to work with an allocated key worker to build and create a tailored programme of support around the person.

Living Options Support

Our Teams provide supported living opportunities, offering up to 24 hours of support if required. Support is provided in line with individual need and choice and based on social, personal and healthcare needs

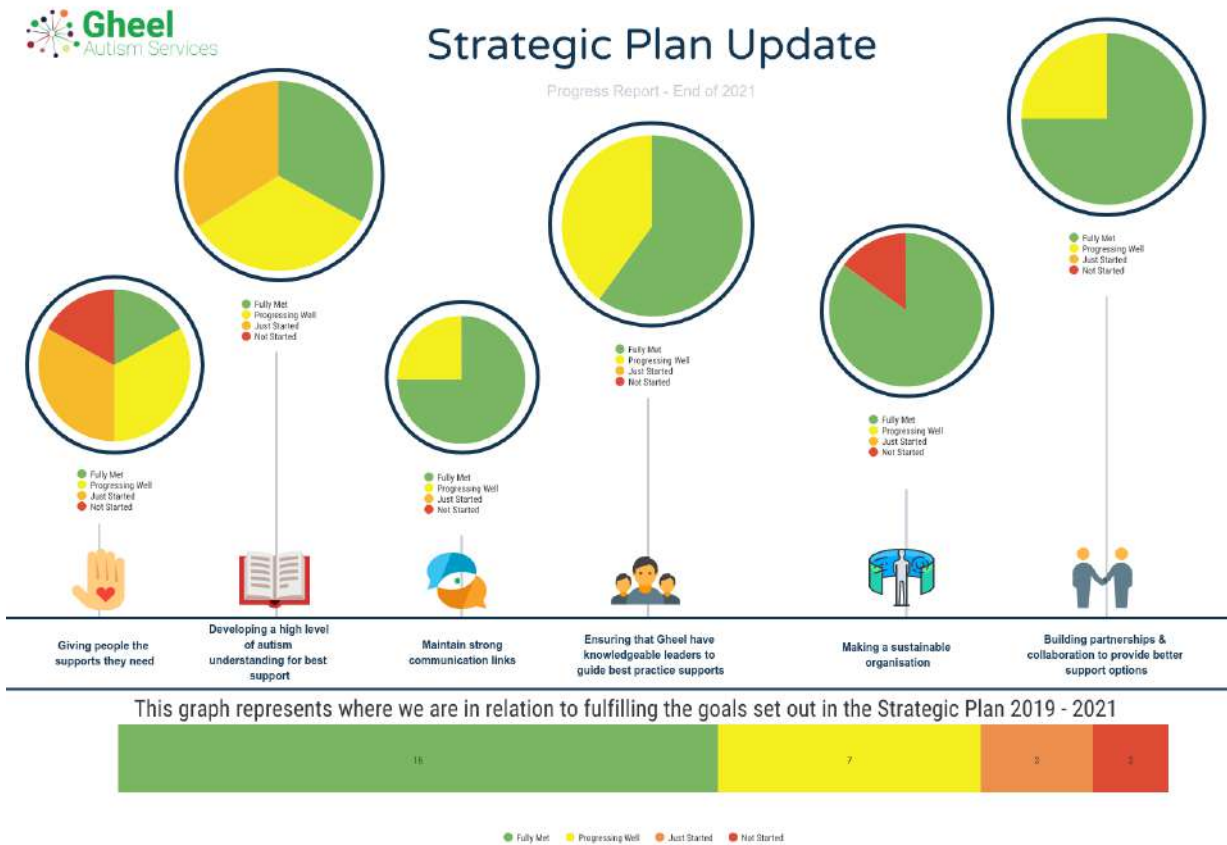
Transition Support

Transition support is an innovative model of service which offers individualised support to people in areas of education, employment and housing.

Community Support

Transition support is an innovative model of service which offers individualised support to people in areas of education, employment and housing.

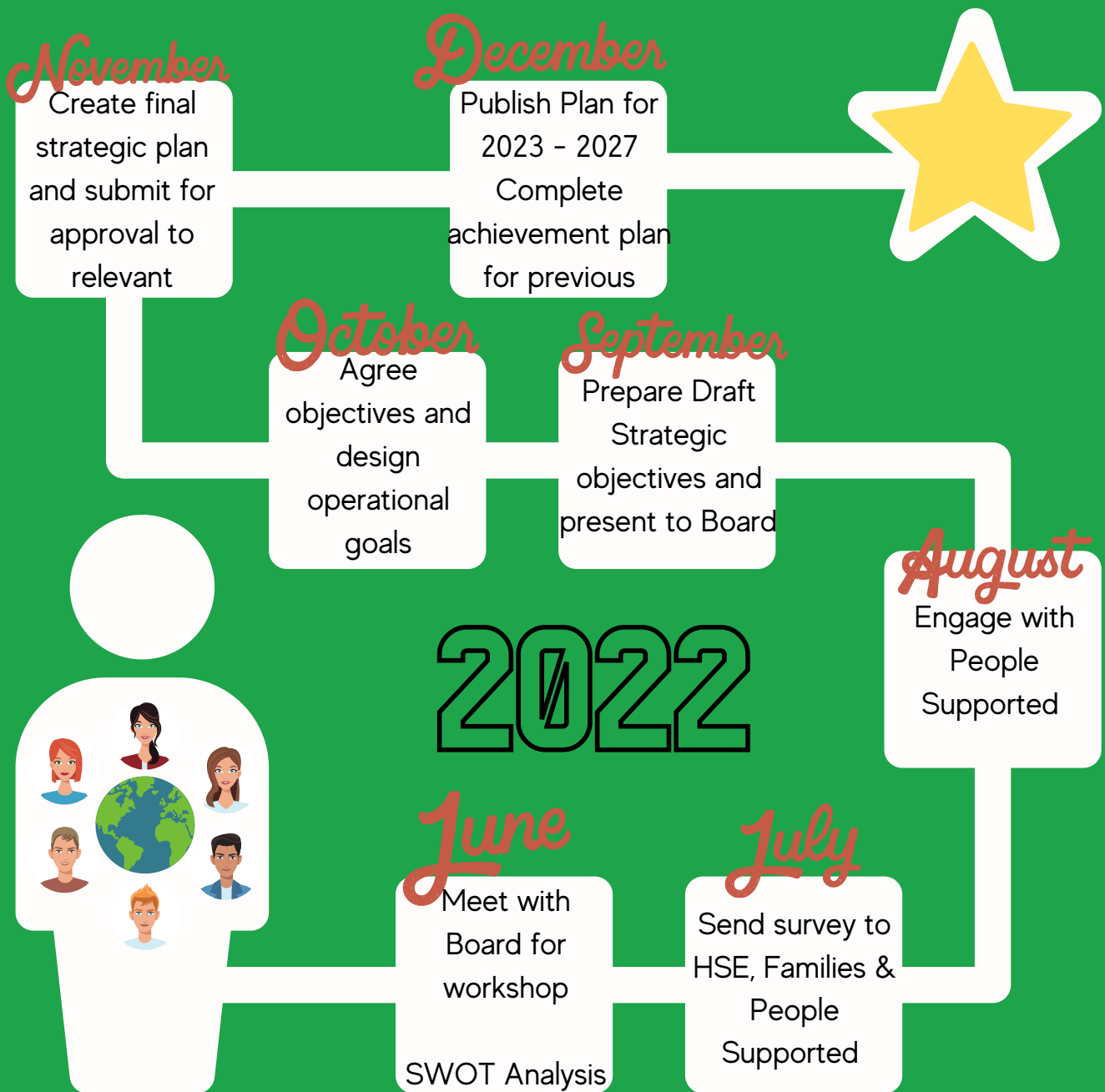
Review of 2019



The review of the 2019-2021 plan established that despite the onset of a worldwide pandemic in early 2020, significant progress was made in achieving the plan. Of the 28 objectives, 16 were fully met. A further 7 have reached advanced stages of completion. 2 of the objectives were deemed to be no longer relevant.

The previous strategic plan was broadly aligned to changes required in structures and operational realignment. This has paved the way for the current strategic plan to be much more focused on the process improvements for more direct impact on peoples lives.

Journey to Here



Creating a Plan Together



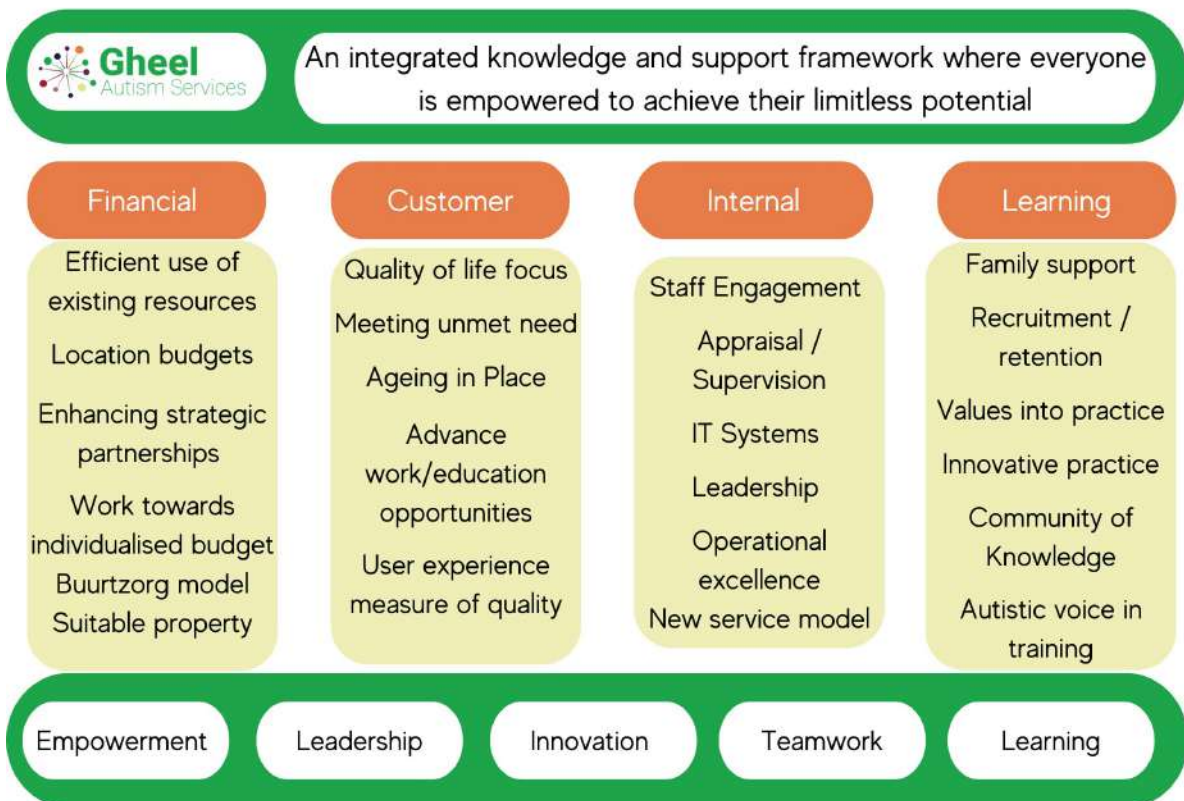
Inputs to the Development of this Plan included:

- Communicating with the people supported within Gheel to find out what is working well and what we could do better in the future.
- Conducting an online and postal questionnaire with key stakeholders - staff members, family members and our HSE funders.
- A comprehensive review of the things that worked well and not so well in the delivery of the Strategic Objectives from the 2019 - 2021 plan.
- Examining our values and determining what our 'Sense of Mission' was as an organisation.
- Reviewing National policies and international literature on the future of best practice for autism supports.
- Engage with other agencies and healthcare providers to find out what they are focusing on and engaging to develop synergetic partnerships.
- Consultation events with the thought leaders within the organisation and targeted events with different teams.
- Discussing with our funders what their expectations of support need will look like into the future.

Development



The balanced scorecard approach provides a framework and language to communicate the mission and strategy and use the measurements to provide information to employees about the factors that drive the success of current and future so that leaders can direct the organisation's existing human resources to work specifically moving towards achieving long-term goals. We used this methodology in the consultation process with all stakeholders and collated main feedback under the four headings of the Balanced Scorecard below. This feedback, combined with our vision, mission & values and the core underpinning frameworks led to the ultimate guidance on the strategic pathways for this Strategic Plan.



Underpinning Frameworks



**United
Nations**

The UN's Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) underpins all that we do here at Gheel Autism Services and, as such, is integral to our 2023-27 Strategic Plan. The purpose of the Convention is to promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities, and to promote respect for their inherent dignity.

There are a number of specific articles contained within the UNCRPD which are of particular relevance to Gheel's 2023-27 Strategic Plan. For instance, Article 19, Living independently and being included in the community, states that people supported must 'have the opportunity to choose where and with whom they live and are not obliged to live in a particular living arrangement'. Articles 24 and 27 are concerned with inclusive education and employment and enshrine the rights of the people that we support to have responsive and individualised supports tailored so as to ensure full and meaningful participation. Article 25 of the UNCRPD states that people supported have the right to the 'enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health'.

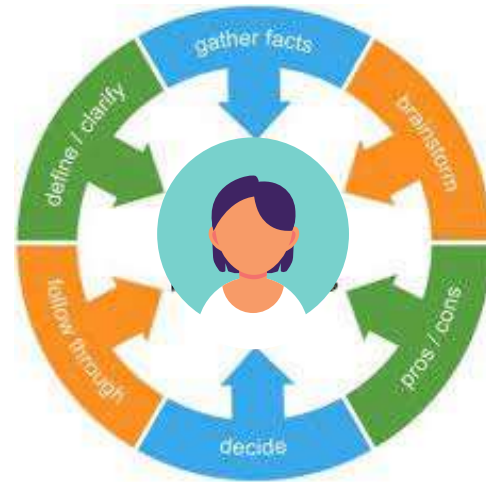
There are many other areas of the UNCRPD that underpin practice, operations and strategic development here at Gheel Autism Services but it is worth noting that Article 12, Supporting capacity and decision making, will ensure that all that we strive to do now and into the future will have the will and preference of a person being supported as the guiding light.

Quality of Life



It is remarkable that emotional wellbeing and the pursuit of it, although being highly valued for every human being, have received so little attention in autism research. In many studies and scenarios, criteria for success in life exclusively focuses on levels of independence and adaptive functioning, not on quality of life and certainly not on the personal experience of emotional wellbeing. Where the focus is on wellbeing, it is typically aimed at measures of lack of positive wellbeing. We are looking towards refocusing the definition in a neuro-affirmative direction towards happiness.

Assisted Decision Making



At different points in our lives we all need to make decisions. We take important decisions about our finances, property, employment, accommodation, social supports and health care.

The Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Act (2015) is all about supporting decision-making and maximising a person's capacity to make decisions. This newly enacted piece of legislation really preserves article 12 of the UNCRPD and will ensure that legal personality and legal agency are the basis for the self-determination of the people we support at Gheel Autism Services. Depending on a person's supported needs they may require assistance to make decisions that are beneficial for their health, wellbeing and dignity under this new law. This may be achieved through one person or through a network of trusted people.

This new and welcomed Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Act will have considerable impact on the roll out of our 2023-27 strategic objectives so that we can ensure that the rights and interests of people supported remain centre stage.



Vision for Future

Inclusion is not just a word, but a belief. Advancing the way we think, support and engage with autistic people can only occur when we truly believe that inclusion, acceptance and equality is our responsibility.

We must engage in a meaningful way to be guided towards each individual person's own vision for their future - and recognise that the role we play is one of support to overcome barriers in pursuit of these ambitious outcomes.

In the future, we will look at what is common between each person, not different. We will be tied by the aspiration and hope of all people - to live a quality life, a life filled with happiness and joy.

Our vision for the future is simple - one of acceptance over awareness.



Strategy as Compass



We are committed to real change and want to ‘move the dial’ in each of our Strategic Pathway areas.

However, we have learned from watching the world events of the past few years that our best path forward is to follow a compass - not a map. In recent years, those who accepted the unknown and non-linear path forward were the ones who learned, adjusted, and moved forward effectively. Those who were guided by their vision and mission navigated the changing landscape with success. The world is evolving, and strategic planning is moving to be considered more about the pursuit of outcomes and not process.

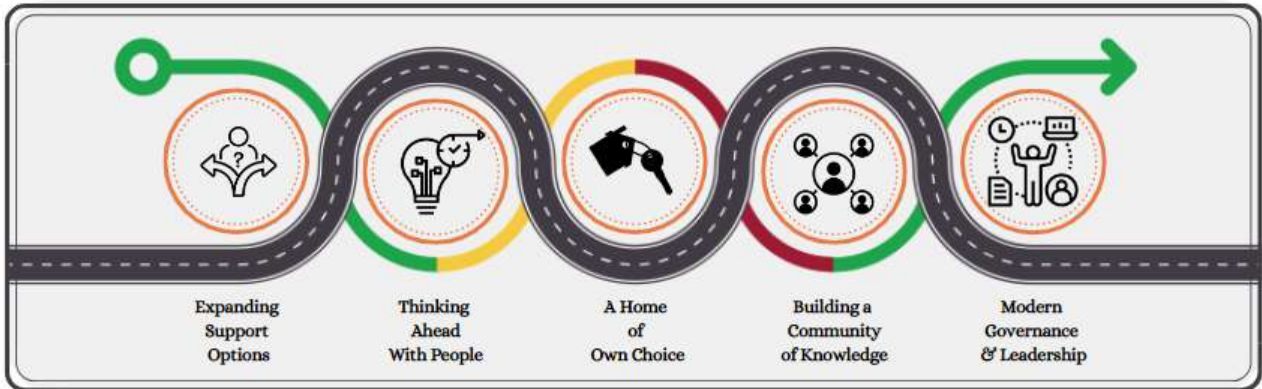
Strategic planning for this world should be a habit. It should start with the person supported and the impact, not the company goals. It should seek to design the future, not try to anticipate it. It should require the collective commitment and belief of all parties in order to achieve the end state and vision, not provide comfort in the maintenance of same. It should be built by testing, day after day. It should be iterative, flexible, robust.

The future is changing. The autistic representation is being embraced at decision making level, communities are recognising the need for acceptance, National Policy is forging ahead. The view of support services will be different in 5 years time. This plan sets our compass bearing with both the aspiration of the destination and the reality of the terrain in mind. It represents our intentions to pursue our vision and gives guidance for the path ahead, regardless what is encountered along the way.

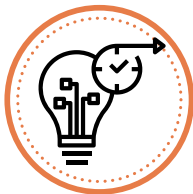
We are committed to the destination, but are open to the journey

2023 - 2027

Strategic Pathways



Expanding Support Options to become more responsive to meeting people's needs



Thinking Ahead towards self directed plans for the future for each person



Choosing your own home: supporting people to make informed decisions about where they live and who they live with



Building a Community of Knowledge to support a wide acceptance of neurodiversity



Modernising Governance & Leadership to ensure a strong and viable organisation

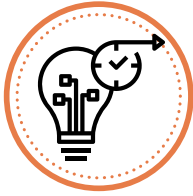


Expanding Support Options to become more responsive to meeting people's needs

- Create a planning pathway with parents and support networks to develop a coordinated approach for responding to living options and support services for the future using co-production methodology
- Engage with the HSE on a collaborative approach for sustainable growth of supports to meet the need for day and transition services
- Design and implement a practice and governance framework for the Community Living Options support services
- Work with the HSE to have a more responsive and coordinated approach to supporting and resourcing changing needs for people supported
- Collaborate with healthcare providers, housing agencies and the HSE to advocate for national strategy on best meeting the needs of ageing autistic adults

What Success Will Look Like:

- All support staff will have been trained in co-production methodology
- 100% Compliance with HIQA Homecare Regulations
- Support Reduction model in operation with consultation with HSE



Thinking Ahead towards self directed plans
for the future for each person

- Advancing and actioning the Positive Ageing strategy in Gheel
- Develop a careers planning framework and support service for the whole organisation to have access to
- Advance understanding and use of assistive technology for people to live more independently
- Redesign the support planning process to ensure that the biopsychosocial supports are in place to support each person's will and preference
- Introducing training and resources for all staff to ensure a commitment to aided language input to enhance each person's communication opportunities

What Success Will Look Like:

- Supported employment framework available to all parts of the service
- All people supported will have a completed support plan on GRASP
- All stakeholders will be trained in aided language input.
- 5 pilot sites in operation - using assistive technological solutions to support independence in the home



Choosing your own home: supporting people to make informed decisions about where they live and who they live with

- Develop Approved Housing Body (AHB) Status to incorporate the governance requirements of AHBRA and review options in the acquisition of suitable housing options into the future
- Working with the funders to create housing options for the people currently living in shared houses which is not in line with their will and preference
- Develop a future planning strategy for housing needs, with a dedicated resource with responsibility for housing supports and work with local county councils and housing bodies
- Redevelopment of the Fairview site to ensure the buildings are modern and individual, to meet the needs of the people who live there

What Success Will Look Like:

- Full compliance with AHBRA Regulations and Standards
- Creation of Inclusive Engagement toolkit and training rolled out to all staff to support housing preferences
- Housing Strategy published and in operation



Building a Community of Knowledge to support a wide acceptance of neurodiversity

- Create an E-Learning Platform to provide training and information to further enhance neurodiversity acceptance and community knowledge with resource allocated to access this for all staff
- Enhance family learning opportunities that are available and provide these in multiple mediums - such as online, in person and on e-learning platform
- Develop a Learning & Development focus within the organisation to support organisational learning and resources on embedding culture, mission and vision
- Ensure language used in internal and external communication is neurodiversity affirmative and the language and content is modern and representative of current preference of autistic people

What Success Will Look Like:

- Learning Management Software (LMS) will be integrated into GRASP to allow each staff member to access own training
- Enhanced learning opportunities available to all stakeholders in the area of housing, employment, decision making, communication, future planning and more



Modernising Governance & Leadership to ensure a strong and viable organisation

- Design a pilot project for the implementation of a new model of organisational design to redirect more time for direct support hours to be provided
- Support each region within the organisation to create location specific budgets to support with enhancement of local decision making
- Improve autistic representation with engagement and decision making within the organisation
- Ensure all processes within the organisation are neurodiversity informed, inclusive of recruitment
- Create and implement a governance structure and leadership programme to focus on development of leadership, values and employee support within the organisation

What Success Will Look Like:

- International model of best practice governance fully embedded within the Transition model of support.
- Effective leaders will have full control of own budget with support from Resource Department.
- Existing and emerging leaders will have access to a Gheel specific leadership programme to enhance practice and progression opportunities within the organisation



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