

Strode Park Foundation



Strode Park
Foundation

Caring since 1946

Strategic Review & Business Plan 2025 - 2028



www.strodepark.org.uk

Registered Charity No 227794

Our Strategy 2025 - 2028

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Our Mission, Values and Vision

Our Mission

Strode Park Foundation, established 1946, is an independent voluntary organisation working to provide high quality services to meet the changing and individual needs of people with disabilities.

Our Values

Our values - **Care, Inspire, Together** - are at the heart of everything we do and how we treat each other. They provide essential guiding principles about the way that we work and set the tone for our culture, and identify what we, as an organisation, care about. They will help our staff make important decisions to choose between right and wrong ways of working.

Our Vision

To provide high quality care services which meet the needs of people with disabilities, helping them to achieve their goals and live the life they choose.





Executive Summary

Strode Park Foundation develops generic business plans on a three-year cycle. These broad strategic plans are supported by annually reviewed budgets, on-going risk assessments, and individualised project plans. This flexible approach enables the Foundation to respond positively to emergent opportunities and threats.

The aim of the strategic business plan is twofold. Firstly, it is a tool to facilitate prioritisation and the allocation of resources and, secondly, it provides a framework of tangible goals that serve as a reference to measure the charity's success in fulfilling the mission of meeting the needs and wishes of people with disabilities.

This plan is presented in seven main sections. The first section offers a review of the Foundation's achievements during the last three years and notes progress towards the targets set by the Council of Management and the senior management team.

The second section provides a brief overview of the major driving forces shaping the health and social care sector, both locally and nationally and notes the challenges that Strode Park Foundation must overcome to continue to provide top quality services for people with disabilities.

Section three outlines broad strategic objectives for the next three years, while the fourth section presents a detailed draft budget for 2025/26 designed to facilitate the achievement of these strategic objectives.

The fifth and sixth sections offer synopses of the on-going Human Resources Strategy and the Fundraising, Communications and Events Strategy.

The final section is a summary of the key risks identified by the senior management team and Council of Management together with an outline of the strategies, policies and procedures designed to reduce the likelihood or impact of the recognised risk. This risk analysis is a 'dynamic' document and is subject to change as new risks and mitigating strategies are identified.



Achievements and Challenges

Sandwiched between two positive years, 2023/24 was an extremely difficult time for Strode Park Foundation. For the first time ever, the CQC rating for two of Strode Park Foundation’s seven services dropped from ‘Good’ to ‘Inadequate’ and although these lower ratings were only in place for three months, the impact was profound.

The decrease in referrals and the cost of remedial action combined to generate a loss of £1,760,000 which eradicated the reserves built up through surpluses made in previous years. The consequential impact on cashflow, and the required remedial actions noted below tested the resilience and fortitude of the staff and the Trustees.

However, continually inspired by the wonderful achievements and spirit of the service users, the Foundation sustained improvements to the services and continued to advocate for the rights of people with disabilities.

Thirteen of the fourteen strategic objectives set in the 2022/25 Business Plan have been achieved or significant progress has been made towards these goals.

More precisely:



GOAL 1

Despite the slip in regulatory ratings for Strode Park House and the Coach House in 2022, all six of Strode Park Foundation’s current registered services retained or regained ‘Good’ CQC ratings in 2023.



GOAL 2

Strode Park Foundation set a target of reducing vacancies and improving staff retention and implemented strategies to achieve these aims. One strategy was a pay rise for carers significantly above the rate of inflation. The outcome has been impressive with the number of employees increasing from 310 to 365 between April 2023 and February 2025.



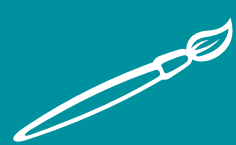
GOAL 3

Service users continue to play a role in decision-making processes and each service remains committed to broadening and deepening service user involvement further, for example, by including a service user representative on the Council of Management.



GOAL 4

The annexe at Lady Dane Farmhouse was converted into two supported living units for people with disabilities and the first tenancy was issued in 2024.



GOAL 5

In 2022, Strode Park Foundation successfully tendered for a new Day Opportunities contract from Kent County Council (KCC). In 2024, Strode Park Foundation reviewed the financial viability of this contract and concluded that it remained worthwhile. KCC has subsequently sought a reduction in the fee rate which Strode Park Foundation was unable to accept. The service is now being marketed to individuals in receipt of direct payments.



GOAL 6

Governance has been strengthened even further by the appointment of new members to the Council of Management each of whom has commercial or social care knowledge and experience.



GOAL 7

The digital transformation and upgrade has continued with further implementation of Person Centred Software (ecare planning system), Atlas (emedication administration system), and RotaMaster (roster management system).



GOAL 8

The sale of the unused land at Redwalls was completed in 2022 and the sale of Redwalls itself was concluded in late 2024 (see point 9 below).



GOAL 9

The objective of improving financial reserves was not achieved. However, in 2023, the Council of Management recognised the need to strengthen reserves and boost working capital and to this end made the difficult decision to close the Redwalls home and to sell the building.

All six of the residents living at Redwalls were successfully accommodated elsewhere in the Foundation and all members of the staff team were offered suitable redeployment opportunities within Strode Park Foundation.

The funds from the sale of Redwalls were received in 2024 and, as planned, have strengthened the cash position.



GOAL 10

The 'Register of Risk' was expanded and deepened and risk reduction and mitigation strategies strengthened. A member of the Council of Management has been assigned to lead on-going reviews and to submit regular reports.



GOAL 11

The charity has continued to initiate infrastructure improvements, most notably those required by changes in legislation including post Grenfell fire detection and prevention system upgrades and electrical safety work.



GOAL 12

The Foundation introduced initiatives to enhance staff well-being including extending membership of the Staff Council and offering a confidential counselling service.



GOAL 13

Revenue from the Theatre in the Park and charity shop, together with receipts from grant giving trusts, individual and corporate donations, and legacies, continue to provide vital funds.



GOAL 14

Strode Park Foundation has continued to promote and embed positive organisational values through the annual staff awards, in job adverts, in individual supervision, and during initial induction and orientation training.

In addition to the above goals that had been identified in the previous Business Plan, the Strode Park Foundation team is proud of many other accomplishments in the last three years. These successes have related to both wider corporate ambitions and to more localised achievements for individual services.

From an organisational-wide perspective, it is pleasing to report that the Foundation has achieved the following:

- Every service has received the top five-star Environmental Health and Food Hygiene Rating
- The Foundation has retained the NHS approved Certificate of Health and Safety Compliance (CHAS)
- The Foundation has remained an accredited 'Disability Confident Committed' organisation
- The mortgage secured against Strode Park House and the Coach House has been paid off ahead of schedule.

Achievements for individual services have also been very impressive and include, but are certainly not limited to, the following:

- Supporting several residents to be able to administer their own medication
- Supporting people to develop new skills including budgeting and baking and celebrating these with achievement ceremonies
- Developing communication hubs for friends and families
- Platters Farm Lodge successfully managed changes in the contract arrangement with Medway Council and developed and marketed a buoyant non-block contract service
- The continued development of strong links with community teams including physiotherapists, speech and language therapists, psychologists, and specialist nurses
- The facilitation of several epilepsy workshops for staff and residents' family members
- Lady Dane Farmhouse staff and residents have been the focus of a safety video produced by Kent Fire and Rescue Service depicting best practice in fire safety in care homes.

The above achievements could not have been secured without the backing of the local community. Strode Park Foundation is extremely proud to have been named the 'Charity of the Year' by the Lord Mayor of Canterbury (2024/25), Herne Bay FC (2024/25), and the Forrest of Blean Rotary Club (2023/24). This recognition is truly appreciated.

Everyone at Strode Park Foundation is immensely grateful for the generosity of all the local businesses and the many individuals who support the Foundation either through financial donations or by volunteering in so many ways, including at the charity shop and the Theatre in the Park.

This continued support for the Foundation is a vital component of the charity's mission to provide services of the highest possible quality for people with disabilities.



The Health and Social Care Environment

‘Crisis’, ‘unsustainable’, ‘in turmoil’, ‘catastrophic cuts’, ‘residential care shortages’, ‘worsen hospital bed blocking’, and ‘a perfect storm of challenges’; these words and phrases have all been used in mainstream media reports about social care in the first two weeks of February 2025.

Everybody accepts that the key ingredient in providing a healthy, effective, sustainable, and truly caring sector is attracting and retaining a skilled and dedicated workforce, including carers, nurses, and managers.

It is estimated there are almost two million adult social care posts in England but attracting and retaining a domestic workforce without adequate funding is an impossible task. The vacancy rate in the social care sector is considerably higher than that in the NHS and the UK economy as a whole. Low pay, stressful working conditions, and unfavourable media coverage combine to make the sector an unappealing career choice.

In the two years immediately after the Covid pandemic, many social care providers, including Strode Park Foundation, responded to the challenging domestic labour market by recruiting from overseas. However, changes to Government policy on dependency visas have contributed to a fall in international applications for social care and nursing jobs. Indeed, applications in 2024 were less than one-third of the rate of 26,000 per quarter in the previous year.

And the labour crisis is not just limited to care workers but extends to more specialised clinicians, including therapists and nurses. Information published by the Royal College of Nursing (RCN) and Skills for Care report the following stark figures:

- over 11,000 nurses will quit the profession within the first 10 years post-qualification
- overall vacancy rates range between 30% and 40% with nursing homes being at the top end of the range
- Nursing staff turnover rates are between 35% and 45% per annum
- Nurse enrolment numbers have dropped significantly and are down by 40% in some geographical areas.

The RCN reports that increasing patient need, poor morale, increased scrutiny and poor pay are the lead factors underpinning this trend.

These workforce challenges require a fundamental and positive shift in the funding arrangements for the care of the most vulnerable people in our society.

A ‘Sector Pulse Check’ report commissioned by Care England and Hft, echoed these concerns that have been raised for more than a decade and concluded that

‘It is beyond doubt that our sector is at a tipping point.’

The report confirmed the outcome of the Government commissioned investigation by Lord Darzi, which concluded ‘social care has not been valued or resourced sufficiently’.

Alarming, but accurately, the ‘Sector Pulse Check’ noted that in 2024 one in three care providers in England had ceased to trade or had closed part of their organisation or handed back contracts to local authority funders.

Locally, a 2024 KiCA (Kent Integrated Care Alliance) survey of more than 200 care providers in Kent indicated that 79% considered that their businesses were becoming financially unsustainable, whilst 67% considered that they would not be able to fulfil their contracts with Kent County Council.

These closures and contract hand-backs are not ‘provider failure’, which is the back-covering phrase adopted by local authority commissioners to describe care home closures. These closures are indisputably an indication of the long-standing insufficiency of funding for social care. An insufficiency which has been denied for so many years by elected Council members and by the Executive Officers they have appointed.

And the problems are about to deepen.

There is no indication that the key local funders have the means or will to increase fees to offset forthcoming increases in essential costs. Not least of these are the changes in National Insurance (NI) rate and threshold and the increase in the National Minimum Wage announced in the latest budget.

These pay challenges are exacerbated by considerable increases in insurance costs as a consequence of the Covid pandemic and exceptional increases in energy prices resulting, in part, from the war in the Ukraine.

Further, as well as resisting sector-wide lobbying for a social care exemption to the NI changes, the Government has announced that it will not implement the recommendations of the Dilnot Commission into social care funding and has, instead, appointed Baroness Louise Casey to undertake another review. However, the Government has stated that this review will not report until 2028.

Whilst the announcement of Baroness Louise Casey’s review is welcome, a further three years of the current failing and unfair system of social care funding is far too long.

The situation is perilous and, like everyone else involved in the day-to-day delivery of vital and precious services to society’s most vulnerable people, Strobe Park Foundation lends its voice to the call to local and national governments to ensure adequate funding and to break the cycle of failure to reform social care now.





Ambitions and Objectives

‘By necessity, Strode Park Foundation’s plans for the short and medium-term focus on a return to profitability and strengthening of cash reserves. The charity is determined that the strategies employed to achieve these goals will not undermine the high quality of care provided.

To achieve these ambitions the Foundation’s plan for 2025/28 retains the following three key elements:

i) Service Improvements

The Foundation will aim to retain Good or Outstanding ratings from CQC for all regulated services and will endeavour to maintain the top 5-star environmental awards.

The Foundation will continue to commission regular, independent quality assessments to identify where additional improvements can be achieved. These quality assessments will be supported and enhanced by a programme of on-going review and strengthened audits.

The complexity of the medication needs of Strode Park Foundation residents means that there can be up to 40,000 separate drug administrations each month. In this context, it is vital that the ordering, stock checking, storage, administration and recording of medication transactions is managed accurately and efficiently. Therefore, the Foundation as a whole, will continue to test and implement new eMAR systems which will reduce the potential for errors.

As and when affordable, there will be further investment in buildings and equipment, including a programme of redecoration for bedrooms and shared areas.

The creation or upgrading of indoor and outdoor sensory stimulation spaces will also be an objective.

Similarly, and subject to available funding, the Foundation will seek to purchase new specialist, disability adapted vehicles to begin the process of replacing the current aging fleet.

The capital investment programme will, to some extent, be contingent on successful fundraising campaigns. These campaigns will be supported by updated and enhanced marketing materials.

Importantly, the Foundation will endeavour to achieve these objectives whilst expanding and deepening service user involvement in decision making processes, especially in relation to staff recruitment.

ii) Improved Financial Performance

On the income side, high occupancy remains vital to the financial performance of the Foundation.

The Foundation will also continue to press funders for fee increases that truly cover the cost of providing the appropriate level of care and which offset inflationary increases,

On the cost-side, the management team will continue to analyse rotas to ensure that staff are deployed in the most cost-effective way.

‘Additional cost savings will also be explored with a focus on ensuring the best deals possible from energy and utility providers.

The Foundation will also consider the affordability of paying off the residual mortgages held against Footprints.

iii) Strengthening Staff Resources

Despite a national and local staffing crisis, Strode Park Foundation has been extremely successful in improving recruitment and retention rates between 2023 and 2025.

The reduction in the use of agency staff between 2023 and 2025 was a major achievement and a continuation of this trend will remain a goal for the next three years.

The availability of strong, committed, and well-trained staff teams is the key to continuous improvement in the care services and Strode Park will continue to review its recruitment systems to ensure maximum efficiency.

As we move forward, the Foundation will remain committed to providing an impressive level of in-house training for all staff members, including supporting new cohorts of Carers who wish to undertake the Nurse Associate training which has proved very successful in recent years.

The Foundation will also strengthen specialist training in learning disabilities and autism, the application of the Mental Capacity Act, and leadership and management skills.

It has been a challenging period, and everyone associated with the Foundation deserves credit for their on-going commitment and determination to ensure that the interests of the people who rely on the services are always at the forefront of everything we do. This has been the guiding principle and underpinning value of the charity since its incorporation nearly eighty years ago and it continues to drive our mission today.





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