



Passionate
about
possibilities.

Strategic Plan

2026 - 2030



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I have used DIAL's services for the last few years with excellent results. The service you give is excellent - I think we are spoiled for choice in Barnsley. I have enjoyed any interactions I have had with DIAL. They are positive and friendly. I have donated to help you carry on!

Foreword

Since our founding in 1985, DIAL Barnsley has been built on a simple belief that disabled people are the true experts in understanding their own needs. Over the last four decades, we have evolved from a small organisation into a vital independent, user-led charity that stands as a cornerstone of the Barnsley community.

As we look forward, our mission is more critical than ever. We continue to operate in a national landscape where the cost of living and shifting welfare policies create significant barriers for disabled people and those living in poverty. Locally, we face a new political era in Barnsley, and we embrace this change with a positive, proactive spirit. We see it as an opportunity to demonstrate the efficiency and impact of our peer-led model, showing that when disabled people are empowered to lead, the entire community benefits.

This Strategic Plan is our roadmap for the next three years, centered on four key pillars: Choices, Connections, Chances, and Changes.

At DIAL, we are "passionate about possibilities". We don't just see the barriers, we see the talent, the resilience, and the aspirations of the people we serve. By placing our community at the heart of everything we do, we will continue to influence local service provision and champion an inclusive vision for Barnsley.

I want to thank our dedicated staff, our insightful volunteers, and our committed trustees who live our values of being inclusive, expert, innovative, and responsive every day. Together, we will ensure that the next four years are defined not by the challenges we face, but by the progress we make toward a truly inclusive community.

Sharon Brown
Chief Executive Officer

Choices

We will ensure that disabled people and their families have the expert information and advice they need to make informed decisions about their lives.

Chances

We will create pathways for people to achieve their full potential through volunteering, education, and shared governance.

Connections

We will work hard to reduce social isolation and build a community where everyone feels engaged and valued.

Changes

We will advocate for healthier lifestyles and the removal of systemic barriers to wellbeing.

About Us

DIAL Barnsley is a user-led organisation and registered charity for local disabled people. Established in 1985, it was founded on the belief that disabled people are the experts in understanding the needs of disabled people, and on a commitment to sharing that lived experience and knowledge to support others.

Today we remain an independent user-led organisation, providing a wide range of advice, information and support services which respond to the needs and demands of local disabled people, their families and carers.

Our trustees and management team are actively involved in local networks and partnerships, representing the views of disabled people with local service planners and providers and helping to influence and shape service provision and developments.

By placing the people we serve at the heart of everything we do, we have built a strong reputation for successfully engaging with local disabled people. We are passionate about the possibilities open to our community, and our aim is to enable and empower people to achieve their aspirations and live independent lives.

**Our vision is for
a Community that
is truly inclusive**

**Our mission is to
support and empower
disabled people, their
families and carers to
address poverty and
social exclusion and
improve their health and
wellbeing**

Our Values

Inclusive

We include anyone who has rights under the Equality Act's definition of disabled people. This includes anyone with a physical/sensory impairment, mental health condition, learning difficulty or long-term health condition. We also recognise anyone who declares themselves to be a disabled person.

Expert

As an organisation run by and for disabled people, we have a unique and insightful perspective. Our history and work provides us with a depth of knowledge on the issues and barriers faced by disabled people in Barnsley. We use this knowledge to add value to our own work and that of the public, private and third sectors in order to effect change for disabled people.

Innovative

We are adaptable, embrace change and try new ways of doing things. We work in an imaginative and flexible way, seeking feedback to help us innovate.

Responsive

We listen to the needs of and work in partnership with disabled people and our stakeholders.

National Context

Understanding Our Changing Community

The 2026 to 2030 period marks a pivotal era in national disability policy, presenting a complex web of legislative changes alongside persistent financial pressures. While the government aims to increase economic participation, disabled and low-income communities face significant restructuring regarding health-related benefits. Locally, the environment in Barnsley is defined by a shift in leadership and a steadfast commitment to community resilience. Despite political changes, DIAL Barnsley remains a vital link between the disabled community and decision-makers, ensuring that local reform is grounded in the reality of residents' lives.

National Policy and Benefit Restructuring

The most significant national change impacting the community is the fundamental restructuring of health-related benefits. From April 2026, existing claimants of Universal Credit who receive support on the grounds of limited capability for work-related activity will continue to receive their same rate. However, for new claimants after April 2026, this amount is cut in half, frozen until 2030, and renamed the Health Element.

A higher rate remains accessible if the element began before April 2026, or if a person is terminally ill. It also applies to individuals meeting Severe Conditions Criteria, which requires a lifetime diagnosis by an NHS healthcare professional and constant, lifelong satisfaction of specific activity descriptors.

The phased scrapping of the Work Capability Assessment is currently underway, moving toward a single assessment system based on the Personal Independence Payment model. The government plans to fully abolish the Work Capability Assessment in 2028, meaning any extra health-related support in Universal Credit will be based entirely on eligibility for the daily living component of Personal Independence Payment. For many, this has decoupled financial support from the ability to work, creating a higher threshold for assistance.

Advocacy, Employment, and Living Costs

The ongoing Timms Review of 2026 has overhauled the Personal Independence Payment assessment process. While intended to increase efficiency, a proposed change to score points in a single activity rather than cumulatively was scrapped. Even though it was abandoned, the proposal heightened anxiety across the disabled community and increased the demand for expert advocacy.

Conversely, the Universal Credit Act 2025 introduced the Right to Try, allowing disabled people to enter the workforce or volunteer without the immediate risk of losing their benefits or triggering a reassessment. This presents a unique window to support those wishing to explore employment within a safer framework.

Financial pressures remain a critical issue, as research consistently shows that disabled households face higher unavoidable costs for energy, specialised diets, and transport. With inflation-linked benefit increases often failing to cover these extra costs, poverty rates among disabled people remain disproportionately high.

Health Integration and Education

National policy is increasingly focused on the social determinants of health, recognising that poor housing, debt, and social isolation are direct drivers of health inequality. This aligns with a holistic approach to supporting the whole person rather than just their benefit claim. Furthermore, the 10-Year Health Plan and the Better Care Fund reforms of 2026 and 2027 have shifted the NHS focus toward neighborhood health, moving care out of hospitals and into local communities. This places a premium on peer support and befriending services that prevent crisis admissions.

National policy has also begun to systematically identify and support unpaid carers through improved assessments and respite support. However, the financial allowance for carers remains a point of significant debate as it fails to meet the true cost of providing full-time care.

For the younger generation, the Schools White Paper 2026 is currently being implemented. The introduction of Digital Individual Support Plans and a more inclusive universal offer in mainstream schools aims to provide earlier support. As these changes embed, families are increasingly looking to the voluntary sector for guidance on navigating this new, tiered system.

Local Context

Following the May 2026 local elections, Barnsley Council is under the control of Reform UK. This new era is approached with a positive and proactive mindset, viewing it as an opportunity to demonstrate the tangible value and efficiency of user-led services. By focusing on common-sense solutions that empower individuals to be self-sufficient and active participants in the local economy, a strong partnership can be built with the new administration.

Despite these political changes, the core needs of the town remain. Collaboration with the Council continues in delivery of the Barnsley 2030 vision to make Barnsley a place of possibilities. Local efforts directly support the Council's Enabling and Healthy Barnsley themes by reducing the burden on statutory social care through early intervention. Through Pathways to Work, Barnsley aims to cement its role as a national leader in integrating health, skills, and employment support while continuing to provide high-quality, peer-led advice.

Impact

Long Term Goal:

A community that is truly inclusive

Strategic Outcomes

Medium Term Change:

DIAL service users will achieve the following four Strategic Outcomes if all services are delivered successfully:

Choices

More confident to make informed choices.

Chances

More able to achieve their potential.

Connections

Feel less socially isolated and more engaged in their community.

Changes

More able to live healthier lifestyles

Activities

Information, advice and guidance - specialist welfare benefit advice

Activities

Increase opportunities - volunteering, governance, employment/education

Activities

Facilitate activities that bring people together

Activities

Facilitate activities that improve health and wellbeing

Sustainability

Long Term Success:

The long-term success of the Theory of Change is underpinned by a commitment to strategic sustainability and continuous investment in organisational capacity:

Financial

- Diversify income by seeking new grants, contracts, and social enterprise initiatives.
- Build and maintain strategic partnerships to ensure financial strength.

Impact

- Monitor and evaluate impact, using methods aligned with client preferences e.g., questionnaires.

Workforce & Capacity

- Training and development for all staff, volunteers and trustees and identify skills gaps
- Strengthen employee engagement to retain staff
- Implement succession planning
- Maintain an inclusive and innovative culture

Strategic Outcomes

As a result of implementing this Strategic Plan, DIAL will achieve the following outcomes:

Choices

Disabled people, their families and carers are more confident to make informed choices

Chances

Disabled people, their families and carers are more able to achieve their potential and are actively involved in shaping and delivering our projects and services

Connections

Disabled people, their families and carers feel less socially isolated and more engaged in their community

Changes

Disabled people, their families and carers are more able to live healthier lifestyles

Choices

Aims & Objectives

Aim 1

To improve access to information, advice and guidance so disabled people, their families and carers have increased understanding and are better informed to make choices

Objectives

- ➔ To provide universal information to disabled people, their families and carers
- ➔ To provide peer led welfare benefits advice and guidance to disabled people, their families and carers
- ➔ To build the skills of disabled people, their families and carers around their IAG issues which enable them to be self-supporting
- ➔ To develop services that address the social welfare needs of disabled people, their families and carers and pilot innovative solutions
- ➔ To provide services that empower disabled people and carers to exercise their rights

Chances Aims & Objectives

Aim 2

To increase access to opportunities for disabled people, their families and carers to achieve their potential

Objectives

- ➡ To provide a range of volunteering activities to upskill disabled people their families and carers
- ➡ To provide a range of support services that enable disabled people, their families and carers to achieve their employment, educational and life skills aspirations
- ➡ To offer traineeships within an advice setting
- ➡ To offer opportunities for disabled people and carers to be involved in our governance

Connections

Aims & Objectives

Aim 3

To reduce social isolation of disabled people, their families and carers

Objectives

- ➡ To facilitate activities that bring people together to share, learn and reduce social isolation
- ➡ To explore and develop other models of increasing social inclusion
- ➡ To develop information resources that help connect people and encourage inclusion

Changes Aims & Objectives

Aim 4

To increase the opportunities for disabled people, their families and carers to have healthy lifestyles

Objectives

- ➔ To facilitate activities that improve the health and wellbeing of disabled people, their families and carers
- ➔ To raise awareness of healthy lifestyle options which enable disabled people, their families and carers to make an informed change
- ➔ To facilitate activities that promote positive mental health for disabled people, their families and carers, enabling them to build confidence and resilience

Success

Principles and Approach

To ensure our success, we are guided by the following principles:

-  Led by disabled people and use a peer support model, recognising that lived experience matters.
-  Use co-production; disabled people, their families and carers at the heart of every decision we make.
-  See the disabled community as a strength and an asset - disabled people are actively involved in designing, developing and delivering our services.
-  Speak up and influence commissioners and decision makers about the issues that affect disabled people, their families and carers.
-  Invest in a skilled, well trained and compassionate workforce.
-  Continue to monitor, evaluate and measure the outcomes of the work that we do.
-  Ensure that measuring the social impact of our work is a core organisational strength.
-  Work in partnership with others to strengthen services and create better opportunities for our local community.
-  Stay alert and responsive to social, economic and political changes that may affect the people we support.
-  Use our resources wisely, delivering value for money while maintaining high-quality services.

Excellence

Performance Measurement and Quality Assurance

In order to measure performance and ensure we continue to provide a quality service, we will focus on:

-  Achieving external recognition of quality.
-  Learning and development.
-  Developing a range of social and other impact measures.
-  Retaining AQS and other accreditations.
-  Improving organisational systems and processes.
-  Being accountable to the people whom we serve and responding to feedback that drives business improvement.



VOLUNTEERING
QUALITY AWARD



Finance

Organisational Sustainability

To maintain organisational stability, we will continue to:

-  Comply with the Charities Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP 2026) and Financial Reporting Standard (FRS 102).
-  Manage our resources appropriately and implement financial controls to reduce risk.
-  Comply with the Charities Commission requirements for building financial reserves.
-  Maintain and build key relationships.
-  Maintain existing income streams and identify new sources of income to further investments in our community.
-  Explore new partnerships and collaboration opportunities.
-  Build innovative projects and programmes that attract new investment.



Co-production

User-led Approach

We use the practice of co-production to ensure that disabled people, their families and carers are at the centre of what we do. In order to maintain this approach, we will:



Recognise people as assets by valuing the skills they bring, which are essential to delivering effective services.



Value work differently by recognising all forms of contribution, including the ways people support one another.



Promote reciprocity by ensuring people are involved in ways that both give and receive support.



Build social networks by using peer support as a key way to share knowledge and skills.

People

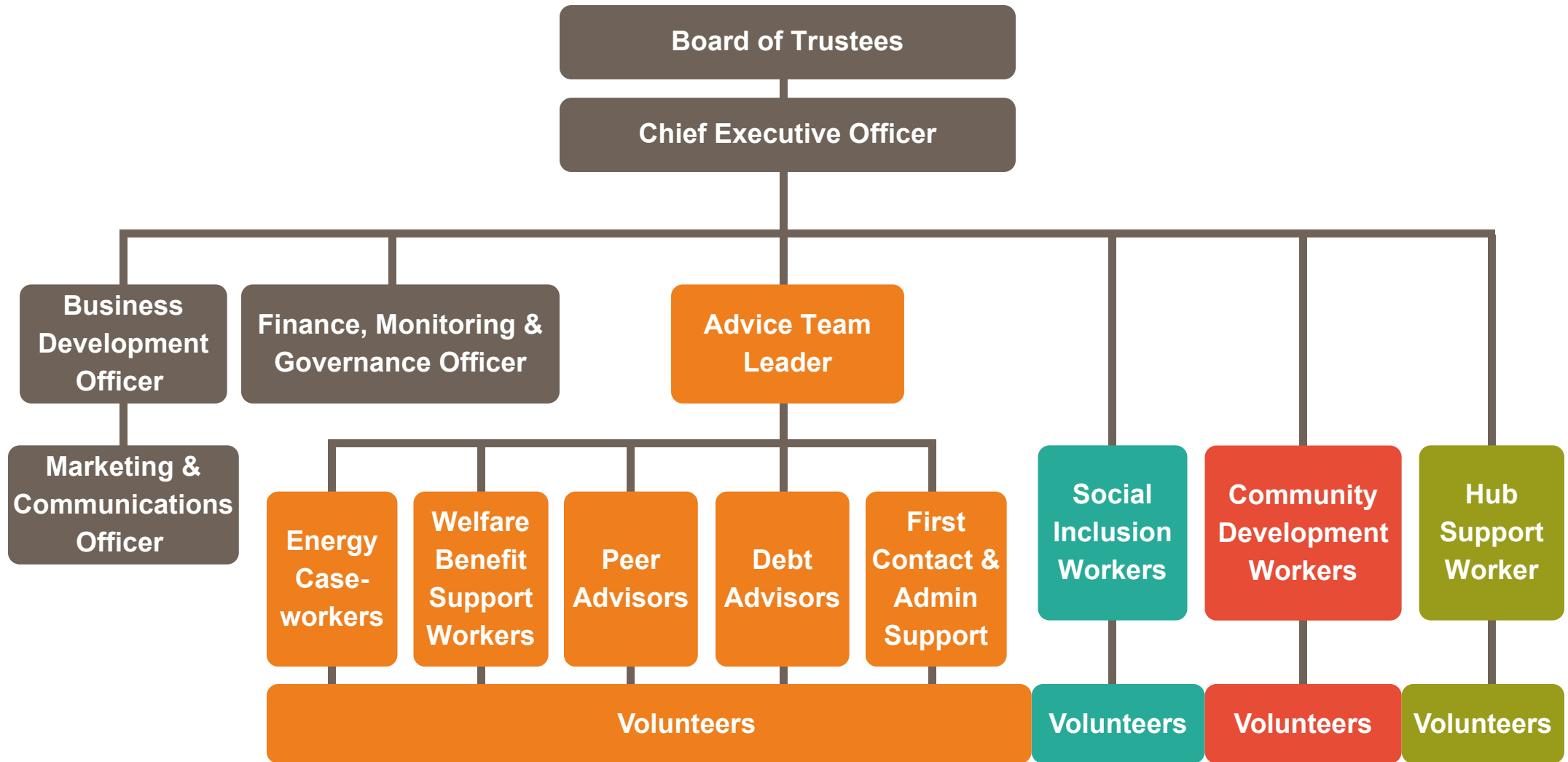
Our Team

We are committed to being an equal opportunities employer and we will:

-  Recruit the best people from a diverse range of backgrounds.
-  Continue to be a Real Living Wage employer that pays staff fairly.
-  Retain staff by providing employer in-work benefits and an employer led pension scheme.
-  Maintain an inclusive and innovative culture where staff and volunteers can develop and thrive and have their voice heard.
-  Support staff and volunteer wellbeing in the workplace by being a Mindful Employer and providing mental wellbeing support.
-  Retain volunteers by offering substantial opportunities, traineeships and a rewards scheme, ensuring volunteers are supported and encouraged to develop their skills.
-  Recruit volunteers from our communities with lived experience.



Organisational Structure





Passionate
about
possibilities.

'Supporting and connecting local people'

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