

**RESPOND**)  
from hurting to healing

**Strategic Plan 2022 - 2025**

## **Contents**

- Introduction from the Chair and CEO
- Background
- Vision, Mission and Values
- Our ambition
- Strategic objectives

**Oliver Lewis - Chair of the Trustees**



On behalf of Respond's Board of Trustees, I am so pleased to present our new Strategic Plan 2022-25. The plan is informed by our service users, our staff, and those who have commissioned services from us. Respond provides a psychodynamic trauma informed approach to autistic people and people with learning disabilities who have experienced trauma. We have grown in size and reach over the last few years, but even if we were to grow tenfold, we would not by ourselves be able to meet the enormous unmet need across the country, and indeed internationally. In the new strategic period, we will of course continue to provide therapy and specialist advocacy ourselves, but there is an emphasis on sharing our expertise with others in a variety of means, so that they can integrate a trauma-informed approach into their work and help even more people.

Over the next three years we will continue to work with children, young people and their families as well as their schools. We will play a role in supporting public bodies as they move people out of long-stay institutional settings into the community, ensuring that the trauma of institutionalisation, as well as any previous trauma, is identified and recognised, and the risk of re-hospitalisation is reduced. We will also continue to work with people who have caused harm to others with the aim of reducing the risk of re-offending, and we will work with those who are the victims of offending too. In our family service, we will continue to help people and their networks to reduce isolation, increase coping mechanisms and prevent abuse. Using our experience of delivering online therapy during the pandemic, we will expand our digital therapeutic offering, especially for young people.

In order to achieve these outcomes, we have a new focus on data: capturing both the numbers – for example percentages of people who report an increase of self-confidence after a course of psychotherapy – as well as the stories of the people who we help. We are also focusing on making sure that Respond has the policies, procedures and systems in place to ensure that it is financially sustainable, as well as able to attract and retain high quality therapists and other staff, so that we can help even more autistic people and people with learning disabilities and/or autism who have experienced trauma.

**Dr Noelle Blackman - CEO**



I am delighted to be sharing with you our new three-year strategy. Over the last few years despite the pandemic, Respond has grown significantly, sadly the need for our work seems never ending. Because of this growth, we are now in a much stronger position to ensure that the important work we do can reach more people and influence change in the environments in which our clients live.

We have also reviewed our vision, mission and values in order that they more clearly reflect how we work as well as what we do. Respond is serious about modelling the change we wish to see in society through living our values.

Over the next three years we aim to increase year on year the number of clients we support through direct services and training. An important way to increase our impact on people's lives is to educate and influence the environments and systems around our clients, through increasing our training, consultancy and reflective practice delivery as well as finding ways to influence the national agenda.

We believe that once statutory services and other organisations recognise and understand the impact of trauma on people's lives and are able to develop a more trauma informed approach, they will see that the health, social and economic benefits are wide reaching.

We will work towards creating this change through continuing to develop and strengthen our range of unique psychotherapeutically informed services and our organisational infrastructure to achieve our aims to the very best of our ability. We're excited about what lies ahead.

## 1. Background

Respond is a national charity which has been running for over 30 years. For many years we were a small charity providing psychotherapy from our clinic in London and providing training and consultancy nationally. Originally, we supported people with learning disabilities who had experienced abuse, then we expanded to include autistic people without learning disabilities. Respond practices a “trauma informed approach”. This means that we consider the impact of trauma in the lives of people with learning disabilities and autistic people, on individuals, families (or networks) and the whole social and political system. This approach enables space for reflection, specifically considering that the societal response to autistic people and people with learning disabilities can be traumatising. Therefore, the trauma informed approach ensures that we’re not re-traumatising individuals or families, rather we have a space to think.

Our services have grown, and now as well as psychotherapy we provide advocacy and other support. We have developed into a medium sized national charity, working with children, young people, and adults, who have a learning disability and/or who are autistic and have experienced trauma. We also work closely to support their families who are themselves experiencing trauma. We have a Head office in London and a base in the Midlands.

## 2. Vision, Mission and Values

**Our vision is that all people with learning disabilities and autistic people who experience trauma are empowered to thrive.**

**And our mission as an organisation, that we reduce the impact of trauma in the lives of people with learning disabilities and autistic people, by developing trusting relationships, through psychotherapeutically informed services.**

To achieve our mission and maximise our impact we have set ourselves the following five strategic objectives -

1. *Increase public understanding and knowledge of the psychodynamic trauma informed approach*
2. *Provide a whole system approach when supporting children, young people, and their families*
3. *Improve the wellbeing and social integration for people moving out of long stay institutions into the community*
4. *Reduce the risk of offending for those who may cause harm to themselves or others*
5. *Reduce isolation, increase coping mechanisms and prevent further abuse*

**Our values** underpin our behaviours and support our approach to our mission.

**Respect** - We are considerate about the thoughts, feelings, rights and opinions of everyone we connect with

**Safe** - We build and develop ongoing professional relationships based on trust

**Inclusive** - We bring together and reflect on a broad range of diverse contributions to drive our unique approach

**Compassionate** – We listen and understand that people’s experiences may impact the way they relate to others

**Empowering** - We enable people to build on their strengths in order that they can achieve their goals.

### **3. Our ambition**

We are delighted to be entering our thirty-first year at the start of our next three-year strategy period, continuing to champion our work with autistic people, people with learning disabilities and their families who have experienced trauma. In recent years we have grown quickly, with our funding changing from historically being heavily dependent on Trusts and Foundations to developing more diverse income streams, in particular through contracts for our work supporting “Homes not hospitals” for people leaving long stays in hospitals.

In our last strategic period, we supported on average 250 unique direct beneficiaries per annum, and approximately two or three times as many people through the professional network, providing highly intensive and often longer-term services including individual psychotherapy, forensic psychotherapy, family support, COSA (Circles of Support and Accountability), young people’s services, transforming care and advocacy, including IDVA, ISVA and specialist women and girl’s advocacy. Therefore, each year we supported approximately 750-1000 unique individuals (direct beneficiaries and professionals). We do not have an accurate baseline in our figures and outcomes, therefore data collection and reporting on outcomes are key areas we will be focusing on in this next strategy period. Our work with autistic people and people with learning disabilities who have experienced trauma, means that we work across several sectors: often in partnership with VAWG sector (violence against women and girls), the NHS, Social Care, Education, Children and Families Services and other voluntary sector organisations. We have a strong reputation, and we want to build and expand on this over this next period with the aim to use our expertise to influence more widely at a national and governmental level.

Like many charities we have experienced considerable challenges, particularly due to the Covid pandemic, however, we also learnt a great deal and enhanced our national presence through online services which we will continue to develop. As part of our work to draft this next strategy, we have reviewed our vision, mission and values and undertaken research with a range of external stakeholders to inform our thinking.

For this next three-year strategy period, we want to focus where can we have the most impact, to build on what we do well and develop our organisational capability based on managed growth, with a financial plan that underpins the organisational strategic plan.

We want to continue providing a variety of services that are accessible and inclusive to our diverse beneficiary group, although the balance of services may shift, to increase our reach, our partnership work, our pioneering training, and consultancy.

This will be a period of transformational change for Respond, where we aim to influence others nationally to recognise the importance of understanding the impact of trauma and changing practice. In addition, following a rapid period of income and staffing growth, we will also focus on developing our systems, processes and culture to underpin our strategic objectives and continue to build our long-term sustainability.

We are passionate about providing services both for our beneficiaries and in collaboration with our beneficiaries and therefore a key element of our new strategy is to increase our co-production and co-delivery with people with lived experience. We also want to continue to develop the diversity of voices across the organisation ensuring representation at all levels and will be ensuring that we develop our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion strategy to deliver the objectives in our strategic plan.

We aim to increase year on year the number of direct beneficiaries we support (in person and online) as well as the support to the professional network (which includes multi-disciplinary teams and health care providers for example), through our case management approach and formal training.

Therefore, by year 3 of our strategy we will have considerably increased our reach, to over 1,300 beneficiaries (both direct beneficiaries and professional network and 800 professionals trained per annum, which is approximately a 50% increase on our current training delegate numbers by year 3.

The detail in our strategic objectives below will show how we intend to achieve our ambitions.



## **Strategic Objectives**

These objectives have been developed from our own specialist knowledge, our close collaborations with the voluntary sector, NHS England, and external stakeholder research. This has included our understanding of the needs of our beneficiaries as well as the changing commissioning context, including the Integrated Care Systems Framework. We will continue to deliver a variety of high-quality national services, in this next strategic period.

### **Objective 1 - Increase public understanding and knowledge of the psychodynamic trauma informed approach**

In the last strategic period, we undertook a training delivery pilot in the Midlands, delivering 80 days of training across the year, across the region and we provided trauma informed approach training to the third sector. In Northern Ireland we trained all learning disability nurses (working with children and adults) following the Muckamore Abbey Hospital scandal. We also co-designed and co-delivered with family members, training to professionals working with families on the impact of trauma on families.

*In this new strategy, we want to champion the Respond model, which is systemic, trauma informed and psychodynamic. We believe our model which incorporates these three theoretical approaches has the highest level of impact and is therefore the most impactful way of working with people and families who have experienced repeated trauma.*

### **By 2025 Respond will have -**

- Increased our reach and trained 800 people per annum nationally;
- Ensured that 15% of our training is co-delivered; and
- Evidenced that 80% of trainees have increased their understanding of trauma in the lives of people with learning disabilities and autism.

### **How we will get there –**

- Increase our reach and accessibility of our training through formal training, professional network support and consultancy;
- Ensure that all training is inclusive and developed through consultation with people with lived experience from a diverse range of backgrounds;
- Develop and disseminate learning materials through a variety of accessible formats including easy-read, digital, social media, conferences, webinars, publication and through our networks, with an aim to influence law, policy and practice; and
- Gathered evidence of trainees on their understanding of trauma in the lives of people with learning disabilities and autism.



## **Objective 2 - Provide a whole system approach when supporting children, young people, and their families**

In the last strategic period, the young people's service was delivered largely in West London in schools and online. The young people's service was impacted considerably due to the pandemic and budgetary constraints in schools. We piloted online work during the pandemic to young people and their family members and the results of the pilot were that many young autistic people were more able to access online therapy.

*In this new strategy period, we will continue to evidence that the best way to support a child or young person is to understand them within the context of their family and wider networks. Within this we work dynamically in supporting systems such as schools who work closely with children and young people to include their families and carers. This is what we call a "whole system approach".*

### **By 2025 Respond will have**

- Supported 80 young people and 240 professionals; and
- Evidenced that as a result of our interventions, young people are better able to cope with their experiences of trauma and abuse with improved emotional wellbeing, with 70% young people reporting decreased psychological distress and 60% young people reporting improved emotional wellbeing.

### **How we will get there**

- Re-establish an inclusive thriving young people's service
- Increase our accessibility through digital online work with young people for those who it will make the most impact; and
- Engage nationally with SEND leads at governmental and local authority levels to support schools to become more trauma informed in their approach with children, young people and families.

### **Objective 3 – Improve the wellbeing and social integration for people moving out of long stay institutions into the community**

In the last strategic period, we were piloting our transforming care model, working with our first client in 2018 to support them out of hospital and into the community. Following this success as a pilot, we were commissioned to continue this work in the Midlands with a 3-year contract from 2020-2023.

*In this new strategy period, we will focus on the initiative “Homes not hospitals” which is a development on from “Building the right support” (a development from the “Transforming care” model). This work is resource and time intensive and focuses on people who are traumatised, who often spend long periods of time in segregation. We work with other professionals ensuring that the person is supported to move safely out of hospital to a carefully selected provider. The work is with the system as well as the person, ensuring that the person is understood as traumatised rather than “mad or bad”. We may also provide a circle of support and accountability, and / or therapy as part of the package of care. The overall aim is to enable the person to live a good life in the community and not to return to hospital.*

#### **By 2025 Respond will have**

- Supported 12 individuals to have moved out of hospital, 80% of whom remained in the community and reported that they are experiencing a good quality life.
- Supported 36 families, with 65% who reported an increased capacity to cope.

#### **How we will get there -**

- Work with “Care and Treatment Review Leads” (NHS England) to offer a variety of support for individuals in the community, having gained an understanding of the multiple factors that have led to individuals being stuck in the hospital system; and
- Develop direct psychotherapy and advocacy to families of people in secure settings.

#### **Objective 4 - Reduce the risk of offending for those who may cause harm to themselves or others**

Both our Circles of Support and Accountability (COSA) and our Forensic Services were impacted by the pandemic. Forensic clients are people who have caused or are at risk of putting others at risk, which includes sexual behaviour which may harm others, or serious and repeated self-harm and violent behaviour. These clients are at risk of further offending, and the work is more effective in-person. During the pandemic, in-person work with this group this was not initially possible, so we prioritised finding secure ways to continue the work, albeit on a smaller scale.

*In our next strategic period, we will continue to work with people who have a forensic background. To stop the cycle of abuse, we will work both with people who may cause harm to others, as well as those who have experienced abuse themselves.*

#### **By 2025 Respond will have –**

- Delivered long term forensic psychotherapy to 20 individuals with their network of professionals reporting 60% reduction in likelihood of re-offending.
- Conducted COSA with 15 individuals, who report a 70% reduction in isolation.

#### **How we will get there –**

- Work in a productive partnership with a leading forensic psychotherapy training organisation enabling us to take on forensic trainees on placement and supports the development of our own therapists;
- Commission an external evaluation of our work that articulates the impact of our intervention in relation to prevention of offending and reoffending; and
- Deliver a forensic psychotherapy group supported by the COSA service.

## **Objective 5 – Reduce isolation, increase coping mechanisms, and prevent further abuse**

In the previous strategy period, we were able to extend our advocacy service to work with more clients across London and nationally, by expanding our team to two Independent Sexual Violence Advocates (ISVA's), a specialist young women's advocacy and a domestic violence specialist. Our Survivors Psychotherapy service piloted a national online service in the pandemic and the results showed that we were able to reach people with an 84% improvement in wellbeing reported. We expanded our Family Services to include a Family Trauma project. We carried out research with the Tizard Centre and Challenging Behaviour Foundation which showed that families with people with learning disabilities and autistic people were traumatised by the system. As a result, we were commissioned to provide therapy to traumatised families across the UK.

*In our Survivors Psychotherapy, Family Services and Advocacy Services we're particularly interested in thinking about the intersectionality of individuals experiences in relation to their trauma. Most of our direct beneficiaries experience repeated trauma which leads to social isolation, difficulty accessing services and increased risk of further abuse. Therefore reducing isolation and increasing coping mechanisms to prevent further abuse continues to be a priority in our ongoing work.*

### **By 2025 Respond will have –**

- Increased the national reach of the digital advocacy service by 50%, reaching 180 people each year.
- Evidenced that clients reported 70% improvement in wellbeing and 70% reduction in isolation across the Survivors Psychotherapy and Family Services.

### **How we will get there**

- Develop an ongoing group run collaboratively between the advocacy and psychotherapy services;
- Work collaboratively with people with lived experience and integrating their experience to ensure that the services we're offering are equitable, diverse, and inclusive and best meet the needs of our beneficiary group;
- Work with families who have experienced trauma to support them to become peer advocates for each other;
- Work with commissioners and providers to encourage them to shift the "blame" from so-called difficult families to recognise the experience of complex post-traumatic stress disorder (CPTSD) with the aim that the families can access the specialist support they need.