



THE BIG LIFE GROUP BUSINESS PLAN 2020-25



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The
BigLife
group

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Introduction

When we wrote this business plan, the world was a very different place. It was before Coronavirus. We have made some small tweaks to it to reflect the new world we are in, but on the whole, we think our plan stands the test of time. For now, Coronavirus dominates our outlook on everything and we look forward to a time when it doesn't. Because of that, we decided to add this introduction, rather than radically change the context.

Coronavirus has hit us at a time when public services are already stretched from ten years of austerity, when the UK economic growth is declining and performing the worst of all G20 countries, and when inequalities have hit an all-time high. The poor are poorer, health and wealth inequality is growing. We know that the Coronavirus pandemic will lead to a recession – the IMF predicts it could be worse than the recession of the 1930s and there are grim predictions about the impacts on employment. Already we are seeing the impacts on wellbeing – with higher rates of anxiety and domestic abuse.

It is not yet clear how the government will respond in the longer term, but there are early hints of publicly funded investment in infrastructure (housing and transport) to stimulate the economy when social distancing controls are relaxed. In the short term the government has increased fiscal debt to meet the immediate demands of the pandemic, but it will want to rebalance its finances when the immediate crisis is over and so we are unlikely to see a lessening of the public sector austerity we have experienced over the last ten years.

This is an environment we are used to working in and it is one where our work is more important than ever. A lot of what we have included in this business plan will help us meet the challenges of the years ahead. And interestingly, some of our plans have been accelerated by the Coronavirus crisis.

Many of our staff were able to work from any location and had the equipment to do so, but the lockdown has meant that we have had to change our working habits and routines and move to agile working at a faster pace than we planned. Similarly we have had to drive our online services at a faster pace, and had to respond quickly to commissioners who recognised the value of our online services – such as Learn Well. We have been able to demonstrate our ability to be flexible and rapidly mobilise new services – such as telephone support lines. Our staff have been able to develop local partnerships and develop as part of local integrated responses to the needs of their communities in a way which was harder work before. And the value of an asset based way of working has clearly been demonstrated by the unleashed potential of our neighbours, families and friends, which has shown just how much more we can get done by working together, not 'doing to' people and communities.

The challenge for us going forward, is to make sure we don't lose what we have gained from this terrible time – our agility, our relationships and partnerships, our ability to act together with the communities we live and work in. We need to build on this as we face the challenges of the next five years. This is what this business plan should help us achieve.

It might look grim from where we are now, but I believe the Coronavirus pandemic has also unleashed a new positive force in our communities. Just like after the Second World War, when people from all backgrounds were thrown together by the common experience of rationing, or the blitz, or the untimely death of family members, so now people have become aware of their reliance on each other, on the good will of some of the lowest paid people in our communities – the nurses, bus drivers, shop workers.

I have to hope and believe that our generation has a similar response to the people of the 1940's – and says we don't want to go back to the way things were. We want a better, fairer society. The Beveridge report (which laid the foundations for the welfare state), was a manifesto for that different society and was a clear rejection of inequality. If there is one other lesson we have learnt from the Coronavirus pandemic – it is that we are powerful and able to make change if we want to. Let's hope that the Coronavirus pandemic marks a step change in our belief that we can collectively, make a difference, and make our world a better place.

***Fay Selvan, Chief Executive
The Big Life group***

Summary

The
BigLife
group

Big Life is in the business of changing lives. We fight inequality by working with people and places to create opportunities and inspire change.

The welfare state is failing to reduce inequality. In a time of stretched public services and deep societal division, we need to rethink the way we work. In every community we need to maximise our impact and bring about change. We will develop partnerships with communities, decision-makers and services to widen opportunities, grow local assets and build resilience.

There might be all sorts of things stopping people from getting where they want to be. People juggle their health, work, relationships and much more besides. People facing multiple disadvantages often face the biggest challenge, as the number and severity of issues directly affects their ability to make and sustain positive changes. When one thing goes wrong it can feel overwhelming and impact on everything.

Public services are often focused on single issues, so people facing multiple challenges are referred to lots of different places, have to repeat their stories and sit on waiting lists. The staff they see are only trained to deal with one issue, and services focus on their offer, not what someone wants. This is especially difficult to navigate for someone with little social support or financial means.

That's why all our services work with people on all areas of their life and help them with the things that matter most to them first, working with them to remove all the obstacles to changing their life for the better. We help people see the skills and support they already have so that they can build on it. To make sure we do this, we work in the Big Life Way.

To work in the Big Life Way our services use these principles:



We work with people on all areas of their lives. We see the skills and potential in everyone and value their life experience.

We believe all people deserve a first class service which develops their resilience, is led by them and responds to their priorities.



Everyone has the capacity to change, but we know it's not always easy. That's why we celebrate every achievement and we never give up.

We are not afraid to tread new ground. We learn from feedback and innovate to respond to new challenges.



We work in partnership with people and places to achieve more together than we can alone.

There might be all sorts of things stopping people from getting where they want to be

Public services are often focused on single issues, so people facing multiple disadvantages are referred to lots of different places. This is especially difficult to navigate for someone with no social support or financial means



We help people see the skills and support they already have so that they can build on them

People with multiple issues often face the biggest challenge. When one thing goes wrong it can feel overwhelming and impact on everything



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To make sure we do this, we work in the **Big Life Way**



Over the last eighteen years, The Big Life group has grown from a small community organisation to a large social enterprise. We now work with more than 65,000 people a year in some of the most deprived areas in the north of England. We deliver a broad range of services covering children and families, health and wellbeing, and skills and employment, and work with partners from all sectors to make the biggest impact.

But there is much more to be done. After ten years of public sector austerity and the coronavirus pandemic, services are stretched and many people are struggling. The safety net has failed and inequalities continue to rise. Since 2010, rough sleeping has doubled and the number of families that are homeless has increased by 42%. The number of children living in poverty has grown to 4.1m. 15m people live with a long-term health condition and 25% of them also experience poor mental health.

**BUSINESS
CHANGING
LIVES**

We have reviewed our performance and identified what more we can do.

We have three key priorities for the next five years:

We will work with more people and places to create opportunities and inspire change:

- We will work with more people to support them in all areas of their life.
- We will have volunteer opportunities in every service
- We will increase the opportunities for people to engage with our services through the use of technology, such as online chats, video conferencing and virtual reality.
- We will develop place-based plans for every area we work in, and develop partnerships and integrated working.

We will be a 'good' business with our social mission at the heart of all that we do:

- We will grow in our existing geographies to diversity our offer, and move into new areas where there is an opportunity to develop significant roots to anchor ourselves in a community.
- We will increase feedback to continually improve the quality of what we do
- We will invest in our assets and technology, ensuring we maximise efficiency and the quality of our data to drive service improvement.
- We will reduce our carbon footprint and implement agile working.
- We will have a legal structure that works for us and the people we work for.

We will have an organisation that enables us to work in the Big Life Way:

- We will have a management structure, IT systems and change process that facilitate staff and services working together.
- We will deliver our workforce strategy, ensuring we have diverse, trained and happy staff, shown by achievement of Best Companies 3-Star accreditation.
- We will have trained Multi-Modality Practitioners in every service and all staff will be trained in strengths based approaches.
- We will develop tools for people to have control of their own stories and data.
- Service user engagement will shape our services
- We will ensure that all our services are informed by research and evaluation, and we will measure the impact of our work.

How have we done?

Creating Opportunities for people to change their lives

	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Cases managed	34,854	38,616	47,849
Drop-ins	17,601	11,881	18,000

Figure 1: Service users by number of cases managed and recorded number of people attending drop-ins, over the 2017-2020 period.

The number of people The Big Life group have worked with on an ongoing basis has grown year on year, but the number of people using our drop-in services has decreased slightly. This mainly reflects changes in commissioned services, such as children's centres, which held a lot of drop in activities. The number of staff (FTE) in 2017/18 was higher than in 2018/19, and stayed relative stable in 2019/20 (485, 431 and 433 respectively), meaning that we had fewer staff working with more people over this period.

Over the last three years we have started to embed the Big Life Way by improving our assessment tools; developing and delivering strengths based training to our staff and partners; and trialling the My Life Goals app, which gives people tools to set and monitor their own goals. There is more to do to ensure that it is at the heart of all our services. We have developed the Multi-Modality Practitioner (MMP) role to enhance staff skills, enabling them to work with people on all areas of their lives. MMPs draw on strengths-based practice, using a toolbox of evidence-based assessments and interventions from the fields of mental health, physical health and long-term conditions, children and families, and work and skills. We have delivered the first pilot MMP training course with Salford University and are now developing it as an accredited Level 7 post-graduate qualification.

All services collate and monitor data to report on outcomes and continuously improve their effectiveness. With the exception of our Children and Families services, all services use an electronic case management system to efficiently identify trends and interrogate the data. We do not currently have the ability to track people as they access different services in order to see the impact of working on all areas of their lives.

In 2018 we developed Learn Well, an online platform that offers people tools and techniques to help themselves, as well as information about face-to-face training and support. Learn Well has 25 online training resources and 27 face-to-face courses topics such as resilience, food and mood and money matters. It enhances what we offer, enabling us to provide a comprehensive menu of support in all of our services.

To further embed the Big Life Way we moved away from describing the group by its legal structure (Big Life Company, Self Help Services, Big Life Centres, Big Life Schools, Big Issue North Trust), to describe our services as Children and Families, Skills and Employment, Health and Wellbeing, and Group Services. All staff are employed by The Big Life Company and identify as working for a service which is part of the Big Life group.

This gives us a clear description of what we do as a group: 'We deliver Children and Families, Health and Wellbeing, and Skills and Employment services'. However, we have more to do to encourage joint working between staff, as we can be delivering two services in one geography or two similar services in different geographies, and have little cross over.

Employment and volunteering are key opportunities we offer to people to improve their lives, and in 2019 we had 349 volunteers, giving more than 7,100 hours of their time. Of these, 29% said they were volunteering to gain employment and 49% said that volunteering improved their self-confidence. Although we have not historically collected 'move on' data for all our volunteers, our recruitment process encourages them to apply for vacancies in the group and case studies show that many of our staff have come through a volunteering route.

While the number of volunteers has increased over this period the distribution of volunteers across our services is very uneven, with most of our volunteers in our public health, community mental health and user involvement services. Volunteer Leads meet regularly to share best practice and we celebrate the contribution of our volunteers through a quarterly newsletter and an annual volunteer awards celebration. In 2018 we were recredited with Investor in Volunteering.

In the 2019 survey volunteers gave a variety of reasons for why they work with us. Most (78%) said they wanted to "give something back", and 49% said they volunteered to "support a service in their area". Volunteers also reported a number of impacts of working with us. 60% said they "feel useful and make a contribution", 49% said they had "increased self-confidence" and 47% had "developed skills to work in a team". Other impacts of working with us included "improving their health and wellbeing" (39%) and "developing job-related and vocational skills" (35%). One area where volunteers felt we could do more was to help them look at improving all areas of their life. Our new tools – Learn Well and My Life Goals – could help achieve this and need to be better promoted to volunteers.

Volunteers are now recorded on a database and as a result we have more accurate and detailed data. This shows us that:

- 41% of volunteers have been with us less than a year, but another 41% had been with us between 1 and 5 years.
- 63% of our volunteers are female and 36% male

Going forward, the volunteer database gives us the opportunity to gather more data on who our volunteers are and the impact that volunteering has.

We recognise the value of having a workforce with lived experience and the barriers they face in securing employment. Over the last three years we have worked to increase the number of staff we employ with lived experience and as a result in 2019, 30% of our staff identified as having experience of mental health issues, and 5% of our staff identified as having experience of addictions.

Doing Good Business

	2014-15 Audited accounts £	2015-16 Audited accounts £	2016-17 Audited accounts £	2017-18 Audited accounts £	2018-19 Audited accounts £	2019-20 Unaudited accounts £
Total income	17,656,198	18,709,646	20,099,995	17,318,923	18,423,480	20,754,060
Staff costs	(10,172,130)	(11,708,708)	(11,494,604)	(11,042,775)	(11,531,393)	(12,754,271)
Other non pay costs	(4,636,459)	(5,812,578)	(4,536,392)	(6,044,195)	(6,393,467)	(7,467,782)
Depreciation	(49,154)	(332,311)	(187,970)	(459,441)	(441,144)	(442,295)
(Deficit)/ Surplus	2,798,455	856,049	3,881,029	(227,488)	57,476	89,712
Staff numbers	530	534	495	431	399	470

	2014-15 Audited accounts £	2015-16 Audited accounts £	2016-17 Audited accounts £	2017-18 Audited accounts £	2018-19 Audited accounts £	2019-20 Unaudited accounts £
Fixed assets	6,368,745	7,385,428	11,175,062	10,899,784	10,604,952	10,475,741
Cash	3,374,512	2,428,291	3,234,064	3,173,477	2,919,323	3,291,195
Other current assets	2,668,599	3,101,646	1,457,445	1,627,883	1,866,404	2,511,076
Current liabilities	(3,889,376)	(3,671,007)	(2,946,870)	(3,131,893)	(2,798,256)	(3,601,593)
Creditors & provisions >1yr	(2,044,306)	(1,910,135)	(1,704,449)	(1,581,481)	(1,547,177)	(1,541,461)
Reserves	6,478,174	7,334,223	11,215,252	10,987,770	11,045,246	11,134,958

	2014-15 Audited accounts £	2015-16 Audited accounts £	2016-17 Audited accounts £	2017-18 Audited accounts £	2018-19 Audited accounts £	2019-20 Budget £
Average staff cost	(19,193)	(21,926)	(23,700)	(25,621)	(28,901)	(27,148)
Surplus as % of income	11%	5%	19%	-1%	0%	0%
Income growth	47%	15%	-9%	8%	6%	13%
Non pay as % of income	31%	34%	29%	36%	36%	38%
Pay as % of income	68%	68%	73%	65%	64%	62%

Figure 2: Key financial information including income/expenditure and balance sheet statements across the group over the 2014-2019 5-year financial period, including comparisons with staff numbers, reserves, and key ratios.

Big Life's turnover grew steadily until a 9% reduction in 2016/17, when we lost contracts in Stockton, Salford and Manchester. In the following two years, annual turnover recovered (by 8% in 17/18 and 6% in 18/19), and is now at its highest point in the period, at more than £20m.

The 2016/17 accounts are slightly distorted by additional income for new school buildings in 2014/15 and 2016/17. The deficit in 2017/18 was a result of the poor performance of employability contracts and nurseries. This was recovered in 2019.

Across the five legal entities all balance sheets are positive. The Big Life Company balance sheet recovered to a positive position in 2018/19 after two years. Target reserves of three months' salaries are exceeded by Big Life Centres and Big Issue North Trust, but Big Life Company and Self Help Services are still working towards it.

Management fees charged for Group Services have remained at 13.5% of income. Budgets are agreed by Boards at the beginning of the financial year and management fees paid quarterly. Changes are made in year when new contracts are secured or if performance payments are achieved, but a more formal review at mid-year and year end is proposed to streamline this process.

Following some major scandals involving Multi Academy Trusts, the EFSA have required a lot of transparency of intercompany transactions between the Big Life Company and Big Life Schools, and we have introduced benchmarking value for money metrics whenever possible. In the last three years the intercompany charges between the Big Life Company and its subsidiary charities (Big Life Centres, Self Help Services and Big Issue North Trust) have been simplified and the Board has been kept sighted of the repayment of intercompany loans.

The Big Life group consolidates the accounts of all the legal entities and shares one VAT group registration. This enables us to present the full group turnover when bidding for tenders. However, Big Life Schools has a different financial year (September to August) to the other companies and this makes accounting cumbersome.

Pay is consistently the highest percentage of expenditure at 64% in 2019 and as such changes can have the biggest impact on financial sustainability. While staff numbers have slightly reduced, the average staff pay has increased over this period. This reflects the increase of staff in better paid roles within the group – such as teaching staff. It also reflects recent increases in public sector pay awards and the National Living Wage.

Most staff are enrolled in a stakeholder pension and are entitled to a 5% matched contribution from Big Life. Uptake has gradually increased in line with statutory opt in requirements. However, some staff are enrolled in Teaching, NHS or Local Government Pension Schemes which have a larger employer contribution. These are staff employed in Big Life Schools or staff who have TUPE'd into the group following a service transfer. The Local Government Pension Scheme is incurring liabilities on the group's balance sheets due to poor performance of the bond market. Both the NHS and Teachers Pension Schemes are government backed defined benefit schemes and employer contributions are regularly adjusted to reflect any underlying deficit.

In our last business plan, we set a goal of achieving a turnover of £30m by 2020. We have not achieved this. The goal was based on a map of potential growth areas, which produced a figure of £32m. When a probability weighting was attached to the likelihood of growth in each area, the predicted turnover was reduced to £26m.

Our turnover is
over **£20m**



Our car
mileage
reduced
by **32%**



Our reserves grew
to **£11m** – most
of which was in
building assets



We paid **£80k** in
corporation tax



Mental health and public health services grew approximately in line with projections, as we secured two public health contracts, two drug and alcohol contracts, and two mental health contracts. However, we were unsuccessful in retendering for one drug and alcohol service, and our mental health crisis support service was de-commissioned.

We did not meet our projected growth within children and families services. This was partly a result of a change in government policy which no longer required schools to academise and a lack of opportunities to bid for new Free Schools in geographies close to us. There was also a continued reduction in Local Authority funding for family support and early help services. We explored bidding for a number of Healthy Children Services but were not successful, as commissioners preferred to retain these in NHS Trusts. We were also unsuccessful in retendering for our children's centres and nurseries in Stockton which was partly decommissioned and partly transferred to a lead NHS provider.

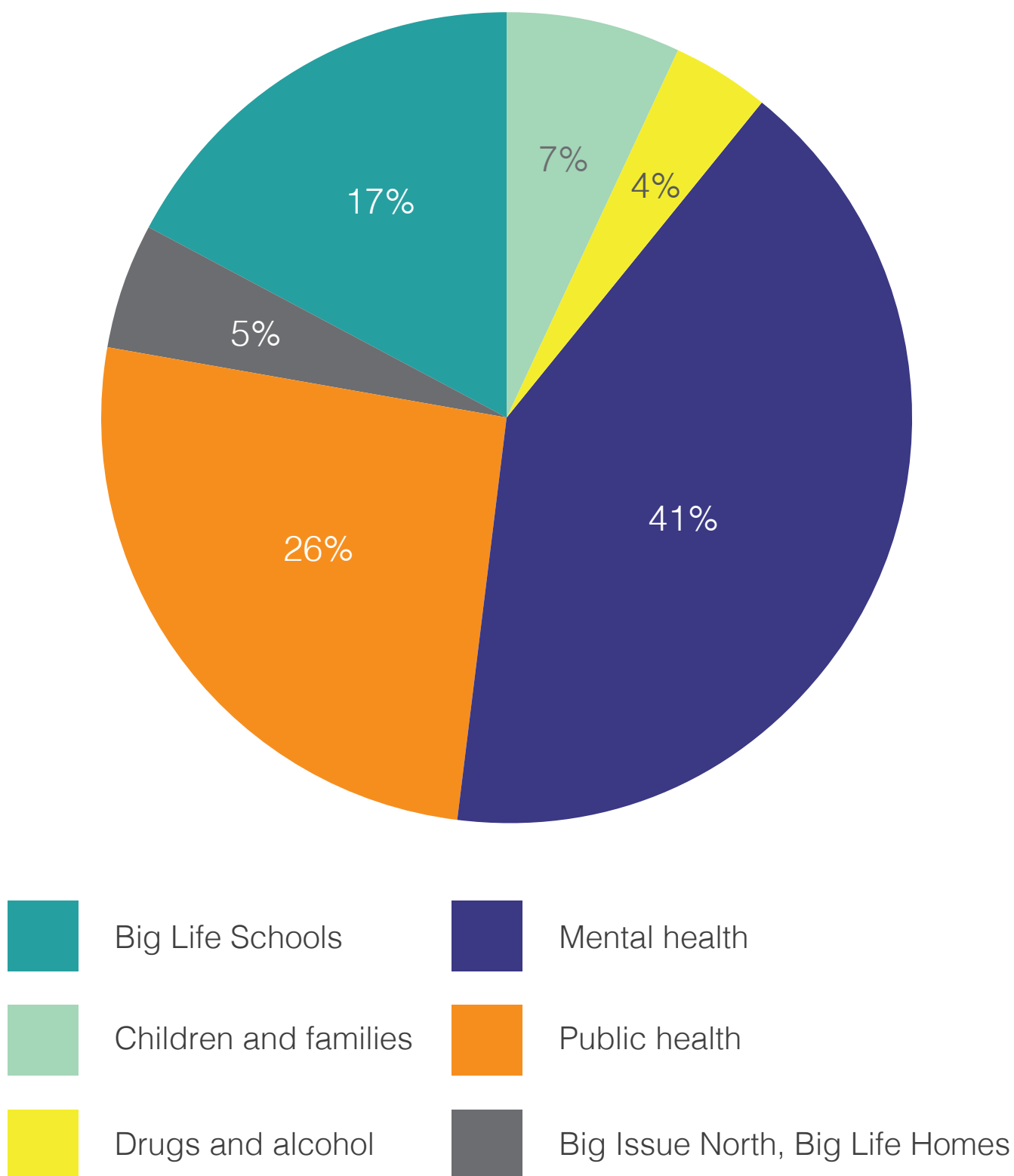


Figure 3: Distribution of services across the group.

Tendering for new employment contracts was deemed too high-risk, and by 2019 we no longer delivered any employability or skills contracts. We continue to deliver a small number of low needs supported living flats in Big Life Homes, but have not delivered any additional supported housing contracts during this period. We have developed new income generating projects in Big Issue North, including calendars and the New Issue. We have also developed Street Noise, a series of live music events raising funds for Big Issue North Trust.

The balance of services we now provide is as follows:

Looking at our geographical footprint over the last three years, we have reduced the number of areas we work in. After losing contracts in Stockton, our services are now concentrated in Liverpool and Greater Manchester, plus services in Cheshire, Leeds and Sheffield. Our services in Greater Manchester and Liverpool have grown over this period.

In the previous business plan we projected some growth through merger or acquisition, but this did not materialise. This is partly due to the changes in the education landscape which reduced the incentive for schools to join MATs. However, it also reflects that smaller charities and social enterprises often do not seek any such opportunities until their financial position is very weak, and that Big Life were not an obvious candidate for the larger organisations to approach. In 2019 we engaged Eastside Primetimes to undertake some search of potential for future growth through this route.

We set ourselves ambitious targets for increasing our fundraising and trading income, but overall income sources have stayed proportionally quite static, with grants accounting for just 7% of income. Our business development team has grown over this period, but has been focused on contractual income with public sector commissioners.

Research shows that third sector providers often provide a rich range of activities and are able to reach under-represented groups, however, as they deliver more commissioned services they find it harder to attract a diverse range of funding. This is reflected in the experience of Big Life. Whilst being commissioned to provide mental health and wellbeing services has enabled funding streams to grow, we have found it hard to attract a diverse range of funding which in turn has led to a narrower service offer, and ultimately less choice for clients. Similarly some of the services which have been commissioned for many years, such as the Zion and Kath Locke Centres, have not evolved in response to local needs and the community no longer feel as involved in their delivery.

Fundraising is primarily undertaken by the Big Issue North Trust, who raised £142k in 2019/20 from grants and individuals who give at events or through regular donations. The Trust has also had some success with raising funding through Street Noise events, but this is variable. We have started some successful corporate partnerships building on the work of the Big Issue UK nationally, with Freshfields.

		2019	2018	2017
Big Life Schools	LCP and UCP	7,327,049	7,481,004	7,442,460
Big Life Company	Big Life HQ	1,296,394	1,328,013	1,359,633
	Surestart, Longsight	532,236	583,720	681,275
Big Life Centres	Zion Centre	1,175,098	1,202,889	1,230,682
Big Issue North Trust	Raven House and Parr Street	66,827	23,607	30,981
Groups Assets		10,397,604	10,3619,233	10,745,031

Figure 4: Property related assets held by the group for the 3 year period up to 31 March 2019 based on Audited Accounts.

On 31 March 2019 the net value of building assets was £10.4m. By legal entity, this breaks down as follows:

- **Big Life Schools:** Assets of £7.3m, comprising the school buildings at Longsight and Unity. The buildings are subject to ESFA restrictions on both usage and potential security for loans.
- **Big Life Company:** Assets of £1.8m, comprising the group's headquarters and the children's centre at Longsight Primary School. HQ is subject to restrictive covenants until 2022 after which the covenants cease. Longsight Children's Centre is held under a long-term lease to Big Life Schools.
- **Big Life Centres:** Assets of £1.2m, comprising the Zion Centre. There is a head lease for the whole building with Places for People, who hold the sinking fund.
- **Big Issue North Trust:** Assets of £67k, comprising leasehold improvements at our Manchester and Liverpool Big Issue North offices.

The Kath Locke Centre's ownership is still being resolved and we are negotiating to transfer the building into Big Life Centres ownership.

Property assets are maintained to high standards on the basis of a cyclical maintenance programmes, funded by sinking funds. On 31 March 2019 £107,263 was held in a sinking fund for Big Life headquarters, while another for Big Life Schools held £20,419. An annual payment of £12k is made by Big Life Centres to a sinking fund held by People for Places for the Zion Centre.

Most of our growth has therefore been incremental and external investment has primarily been in buildings. In 2018 we engaged Numbers for Good to explore options for securing social investment and subsequently pitched for funding from Social and Sustainable Capital (SASC) to buy properties for Big Life Homes. The pitch was not successful first time, but we are now progressing with an alternative fund.

Alongside developing our relationship with SASC, we have also engaged with the social investment firm Charity Bank. Their investment would be more of a traditional loan secured against a fixed asset, and would require 25% cash investment from us. The scale of the total investment Big Life could receive is therefore limited by our free reserves.

Big Life Performance – Improving what we do

Over the past three years, the group has simplified its governance structure from eight legal entities to just five. This is in line with corporate governance best practice to reduce complexity. The group has continued to operate overlap boards, ensuring that the Group Board has oversight of all Big Life activities. The Group Board includes executives, non-executives and trustees who all work together in partnership to deliver the group's mission.

The Board Development plan, informed by annual appraisals of board members, has identified training needs and skills gaps. The board have had briefings to provide assurance on safeguarding, information governance, health and safety, and equality and diversity. The board members have visited services quarterly, discussing service issues with staff and participated in working groups, taking on 'lead roles'. There has been relative stability in terms of board membership, with the highest turnover in the schools' governing bodies. However, all boards have seen some turnover, which helps to avoid group think.

In 2017 the group secured the Investors in People Gold Standard for people management, and in 2019 moved to Best Companies. Big Life achieved the Best Companies 2-star accreditation for outstanding levels of engagement, and secured 26th place in The Sunday Times 100 Best Not For Profit Organisations list.

69% of all Big Life staff completed the Best Companies survey. This is lower than in previous years, although the survey was shared with casual staff who work infrequently and may not have been in the office during this period. Staff satisfaction and commitment to the Big Life mission has remained consistently high with 88% of staff feeling proud to work for the group and 85% love working for it. 90% of staff believe the group is run on strong values and principles and believe they can make a contribution to its success, while 94% of people agree that work is an important part of their life.

The Communications Team produces an electronic Big Life Bulletin twice a month and the newsletter Big News six times a year. 77% of staff get information about what's going on in the group from the Big Life Bulletin.

Staff turnover annually has been affected by changes in service delivery and at its highest in 2017/18 (when we closed some nurseries and lost some contracts), it was 42%. In 2019/20 it is projected to be just 13.77%, which is less than the national average of 23%. Stability in service delivery in the last two years has affected how secure staff feel in their jobs, which increased to 74% in 2019, from 70% in 2017.

19% of staff leaving the organisation left for career development, and this may be because we do not have the roles they aspire to grow into (such as High Intensity Therapists). One way we are addressing this is by developing the MMPs training course. 75% of staff believe their manager helps them to fulfil their potential, 85% feel the experience they gain from this job is valuable to their future, and 73% of staff feel the training they receive benefits them personally. Despite this, 32% of staff feel there are limited opportunities for them to learn and grow within the organisation and 39% think that they have skills that the group could use but doesn't.

To help staff learn and grow, Big Life has developed an online training platform, Learn Well, offering 35 courses. In 2019 these were accessed 480 times and it has improved compliance with mandatory training. The Group Induction has achieved 93% compliance, but Safeguarding, Equality and Diversity, and Information Governance have only achieved 72%, 77%, and 66% compliance respectively. (NB Safeguarding training for staff working with children and families is 100%).

90% of staff feel the group is run on strong values and they make a contribution to its success



Pay ratio is 3:1



Staff turnover rate was 14%



Staff sickness is just 5.96 days



26th place in The Sunday Times 100 Best Not For Profit organisation



Ofsted rates our schools as good with outstanding features



We continue to deliver a Confident Manager training course to managers, supporting them to be effective in their roles. We are now improving the course by introducing reflective journals and learning logs, which have to be discussed with line managers. All members of the Leadership Team have been offered professional development through masters' programmes. In previous years we have delivered a leadership course with Investors in Excellence, but we are currently developing our own internal course. Managers received coaching training to enable them to support staff development and all staff are supported to complete personal development plans.

The Apprentice Levy was introduced in May 2017, and Big Life have a current balance of £70k. 17 staff are now signed up to receive apprentice training, eight people are in the process of registering, and six staff have completed training. This will use all our levy, so new apprentice training will cost the group 5% of the cost, or will need to be funded by organisations donating their funds to us.

Over the past three years we have invested in training and developing Health and Safety leads across the group, and as a result 98% of staff feel their health and safety is taken seriously. Any lessons learned are cascaded through Big News and the Big Life Bulletin, as a consequence 86% of staff say they feel updated about lessons learned.

The number of days lost due to sickness has decreased over the past five years from 7.9 days per staff member to 5.96 days. This may reflect the positive impact of better recording on the HR Database, or the impact of new wellbeing initiatives. We have commissioned a new Employee Assistance Programme and have introduced Perkbox, an employee benefit scheme. In the last year, 48 staff have accessed the EAP helpline and there have been 475 visits to the online resources. 341 staff have signed up to Perkbox and 48% have accessed a 'perk', saving them more than £2,000.

A high proportion of staff feel that their manager takes an active interest in their wellbeing (87%), 70% of staff are happy with their work-life balance, but 35% of staff believe that they spend too much time working. 22% feel work interferes with their responsibilities at home and 32% feel under pressure to perform well. In order to move to a more flexible, agile working approach, we have started introducing teleconferencing facilities and equipment and are considering how to configure our buildings and facilities to enable people to improve their work life balance.

The diversity of our workforce has been consistent throughout this period, with around 31% of our staff identifying as BAME and 10% as disabled. The HR Database has allowed us to monitor staff with experience of addictions (5%) and mental health issues (42%) for the first time and this has helped us work towards a more inclusive workforce. In 2018, following the introduction of succession planning within the group, we identified a diversity gap in our senior managers and implemented an action plan to improve career progression and recruitment of BAME staff. This work is still being rolled out and the impact will continue to be monitored.

Gender pay gap monitoring shows that women are paid 9.8% less than men in The Big Life group. In comparison, the gender pay gap for the public sector is 14.1%, and for the private sector it is 17.9%. Our gender pay gap is not because men are paid more for the same work but because of the roles men and women have across the group. Although we have more women than men who are paid above the median salary, 90% of the lowest paid roles are filled by women.

In 2019 we undertook a BAME pay gap assessment for the first time. BAME staff are paid 10.3% less than our White British staff at Big Life. This is not because we pay White British staff more for the same work, but because a higher proportion of BAME staff have roles that are paid less. The BAME pay gap is not required to be collected or reported by organisations in the UK, but nationally the average pay gap for African/Caribbean and Black British people is between 5 and 10%, 18.9% for Pakistani people, and 21.6% for Bangladeshi people.

Staff are paid in line with the Local Authority NJC scale, the NHS Agenda for Change scale or the Teachers scale, while nursery staff are paid in line with the national living wage. This means that when they are awarded pay rises, this is in line with public sector counterparts. However, only 46% of staff think they are paid a fair salary for the responsibilities within their job and 40% are not happy with the pay and benefits they receive in their job. Over the last five years the average staff pay across the group has increased from £19,193 to £28,744. Pay awards have only been made in the last two years and so this rise in average salary reflects the reduction in lower-paid nursery staff as well as the increase in higher-paid professional roles in the group.

The pay ratio between the highest paid member of staff and the average paid staff is 3:1. This compares well with the public sector, which has an average pay ratio of 12:1 and the FTSE 100 where the average pay ratio is 145:1. The Big Life group also pays above the Campaign Living Wage to staff in all its services except the nurseries, where the lowest paid staff earn the National Living Wage.

In the last business plan we set ourselves a target of developing our digital offer without leaving anyone behind, and over the last three years we have developed our use of digital technologies in several ways.

The group website was redesigned in 2018. The site is more responsive to mobile screens, and allows users to interact through a service directory – using online contact options. In the most recent quarter, people viewed our service pages through the service directory 9,976 times, finding out detail about each service or being redirected to a service-specific website. Since the new site was launched in September 2018, we received 729 enquiries through the Contact Us form, and 274 expressions of interest in volunteering.

For service users we have also developed:

- My Life Goals app
- Learn Well
- Cashless payments through iZettle devices
- Card payments for services
- Text communications
- Big Views feedback portal
- Facebook groups

For internal quality and efficiency we have:

- Ensured all our services (except children and families) have an electronic case management programme that enables the interrogation of data
- Improved the HR database
- Developed Learn Well
- Introduced an electronic sign-in system to one centre
- Developed an online incident management system
- Introduced Mobile Device Management
- Introduced eRequisitions for the online authorisation and processing of purchases
- Supported agile working through providing more laptops and mobile devices to staff
- Introduced the Convene digital platform to manage board meetings.
- Introduced teleconference facilities in one site

To influence we have:

- Developed the Anon podcast
- Introduced new social media channels.

In 2017, we transferred to a new external provider for a remote desktop solution – EE. EE provide a 24 hour help desk service. The service has been more reliable than the previous provider, but still requires good internet connections for the running of applications. This can be a challenge for staff who are working on case management systems remotely. Going forwards we need to explore other cloud based solutions for improving remote working connection.

The costs for ICT support has grown over the last three years as we have implemented more technology and digital solutions. We have expanded the ICT team from 3FTE to 3.5 FTE. This team are responsible for new service implementations, purchasing and commissioning equipment, asset management, office moves and equipment installation, new software applications and upgrades. They also manage external contracts.

Managing multiple databases across different services creates additional demands on our ICT team, who have to be skilled in the management of a range of software products. Additionally, while most of our ICT is Microsoft based, Big Issue North and BLS use apple products, further adding to the requirement for a mix of skills.

The Big Life People database is provided by CDP Soft and tailored to the needs of each service. Most of this configuration is undertaken internally, but this places a big strain on resources. Increasingly our services and commissioners are wanting us to lead on more technological projects – My Story and shared case management systems – which is also placing demands on our scarce internal resource.

There have been key challenges in developing and using digital technologies across the group. These include successfully embedding the use of new tools with staff, and being able to finance or resource new developments. Additionally, we have not always had the expertise to design and develop solutions ourselves.

We have challenges collecting and managing data across the group. While most of our services effectively utilise case management systems to record and analyse data, we have to maintain and service five different case management software programmes (Estart, Paris, PCMIS, BLP,SHS) and reporting on group targets is manually compiled. Although some systems share similar or the same measures, it is not easy to analyse performance between two services using different software. Organisations that do one thing, or deliver one service are much more able to drive efficiencies and performance by using comparative data. Going forward we will look for ways to aggregate data across our different software systems, make reporting more efficient and analysis more effective.

The demands for digital and technological solutions is likely to continue to grow and going forward we need to ensure that we have correctly sized the resources and skills needed to deliver this agenda.

Over the past three years The Big Life group have secured or maintained the following quality standards:

- Investors in People
- Investors in Volunteering
- CHAS (Health and Safety)
- ISO9001 (Quality & administration standards)
- ISO14001 (environmental standards)
- Best Companies 2 star accreditation

We have been inspected by Ofsted at both our schools and two nurseries. The schools are both rated as Good with Outstanding features and the nurseries as Outstanding.

The Big Life group introduced ISO14001 standards to manage its environmental impact, and has

- Reduced paper usage through printing and photocopying from 2.3m sheets in 2017/18 to 2m in 2019
- Reduced car miles by 32% in the last two years.

Some of this impact is the result of conscious actions, such as to move to paperless meetings and case management systems, whereas some of the reductions (in car use for example) may reflect the loss of contracts further away from Manchester. While we know that more action has taken place, (such as replacing lighting for energy efficient bulbs and moving to glass milk bottles in our schools), we do not have a central recording system to monitor progress and establishing this will be key priority to reduce our carbon footprint.

By 2020 all of our services will be covered by the ISO standards. We have appointed a Quality Manager and Data Protection Officer to ensure we share best practice and quality assure our work. We introduced a cross-group internal audit, covering safeguarding, health and safety, and information governance. We are also developing cross group quality case notes audit which we aim to implement in the next business planning period.

The Group is GDPR compliant and is working towards Cyber Essentials accreditation. Greater public awareness has driven an increase in Subject Access Requests, which have risen from just 1 in 2017/18 to 82 in 2018/19 and to 128 in 2019/20. Our data breaches have declined over the last two years, partly due to the introduction of the DocMan system for sharing information with GPs. We have also introduced the Cryptshare system to improve the secure transmission of personal data to external agencies

In 2019 we developed an online Incident Management System, providing us with better quality information on safeguarding, incidents, and accidents. This will complement the group's reporting of Serious Incidents Requiring Investigation (SIRIs), which have grown from 19 in 2017 to 44 in 2019. These mainly relate to deaths of clients. The number of incidents has stayed relatively stable (at an average of 321 a year), and most of these were in the Health and Wellbeing division relating to managing suicidal ideation. All incidents are investigated and staff have been trained in Root Cause Analysis. Investigations have led to identified improvements and action plans which are monitored through senior management teams.

The quality of feedback we receive from our service users can really impact the quality of the services that we deliver. We currently operate a manual system for monitoring feedback and comments and complaints from across the group but this does not provide us with good qualitative data. In order to improve our understanding of the experience of people using our services we have undertaken three Service Experience Audits, engaging volunteers to 'mystery shop' our services. One was generic, one focused on complaints, and one focused on accessibility. As a result of these audits, we have made improvements to our accessibility information on our websites, and have produced generic information on safeguarding, complaints and information rights for all services to promote.

The number of complaints we receive each year is relatively consistent, and most relate to vendor conduct reported by members of the public. Health and wellbeing, and children and families services have forecasted an increase in complaints to the end of 2019/20, which may reflect increased reporting following the Service Experience Audit. However the numbers of complaints can be considered low when compared to the volume of service interactions. Complaints are currently managed by local services, but centralising complaints could ensure consistency and quality of learning. We should also explore other ways of monitoring the quality of interactions with our service users.

All services undertake exit interviews with service users to gather feedback on our services, but often people stop engaging before it is possible to do this. Centres also undertake annual surveys of users. To increase feedback we introduced Big Views in 2019. Big Views is an online portal for service users to respond to surveys and provide feedback in exchange for vouchers. So far only 104 people have signed up. If just 10% of our service users signed up in a year it would equate to over 6,500 people.

Service user involvement underpins many of our services, particular in their development stage. The Service User Engagement Policy has been updated and we have continue to deliver some well-respected service user engagement services (such as Community Voice). However in some services it has become quite restricted and, where services are highly specified by commissioners, resources can be quite restrictive.

Big Life Performance - Influencing

In the last three years we reduced the resource invested in national lobbying with government and political parties because we felt the focus on Brexit would leave little opportunity for impact. In previous years we have produced a manifesto to influence party policies, attended all three main party conferences and taken part in fringe meetings. In this period we did none of these and we also withdrew from membership of national networks and reduced attendance at national events.

Instead we concentrated on influencing closer stakeholders. We continued to produce impact reports and circulate them to commissioners, partners and key influencers. We held two Friends Dinners with key speakers (Afzal Nazir and Kier Starmer), with the aim of building our networks. We dedicated significant resource to participating in Greater Manchester devolution structures, attending 18 boards and meetings.

Following the emerging debate in the Labour Party about in-sourcing public services, we partnered with CLES to produce a paper – Putting Social Value Back into Public Service – and engaged in debate on the subject with key Labour MPs in the North West.

We aimed to influence wider public opinion to build understanding and challenge the dialogue of hate by developing our social media platforms and reach – redoing three websites and developing our use of Twitter and Facebook. We are currently developing our use of Instagram and LinkedIn. In addition we launched our Anon Podcast, which aims to tell the stories of the people we work with and build public understanding of their lives. However, we recognise that we do not have the levels of investment to become a big voice in public debate and our reach is limited to people who have contact with our services (such as commissioners and service users).

While we have not increased the quantity of our social media posts, our engagement rates have increased; the majority of this has come from people watching videos we post. The new Big Life website also gives greater prominence to our news and views section, and this has been mirrored by the start of a structured programme of blogs posted on the site, with a focus on encouraging these to be shared and debated through social media. In 2019, we have posted blogs on subjects including mental health provision, diversity in our workforce and child poverty. Posting on these subjects on Twitter and LinkedIn has seen the posts engaged with (liked, shared, links clicked on or commented on) more than 500 times.

All staff across the group now share one email domain to help promote a consistent brand. For service users we have continued to promote services by names and developed new digital engagement through Facebook, Instagram and Twitter in order to promote our services in communities.

The economy

In 2014 the UK was the best performing G7 member for GDP growth, and growth was steady until 2017. By 2019 it was the worst performing, with a 0.2% decrease in GDP in the last quarter. Inflation recovered since its peak in 2008 at 4.8% and in 2019 it was 2.2%. However, the 2020 Coronavirus Pandemic has had a catastrophic impact on the economy and the world is now facing an economic recession. The IMF predict that the world economy could shrink at its fastest pace for decades.

The UK government response is likely to include public sector investment in housing and infrastructure projects to help reboot the economy, but consumer demand is unlikely to bounce back to pre crisis levels when social distancing measures are reduced. Increased Sovereign debts and interrupted international trade are also likely to have a negative impact on the economy.

Whilst wages had begun to increase, they had not recovered to 2008/9 pre-recession levels. According to the IFS report, real wages declined by 3.2% since 2008, with individuals under 30 seeing the largest reduction of 7.2%. For working households, their average income after tax and benefits has slightly fallen from £35,100 in 2008/09 to £34,500 in 2016/17.

Since its peak of 7.6% in 2009, unemployment fell to 4.1% in 2018. However the OECD and Centre for Cities estimated it to be nearer to 19%. This would equate to 4.5 million adults rather than the official government figure of 1.3 million. The Coronavirus Pandemic is predicted to lead to a large rise in unemployment in 2020.

Inequality

As we enter 2020 income inequality in the UK is larger than many other European countries. The top 1% of people in the United Kingdom receive 13% of the income. This figure is double of that of Belgium (7%), and much higher than Sweden and Norway - both at 8%. In the top 100 UK companies, CEO's earn 386 times the National Living Wage.

In the United Kingdom, 14 million people live in poverty, with over half in working households. The richest 10% of households in the United Kingdom currently own 44% of wealth, whereas the poorest 50% own just 9%. Geographically, wealth is uneven, with the average household wealth in the South East being £387k, compared to £165k in the North West.

The national gender pay gap currently stands at 17.9%. The pay gap for BAME individuals is not reported, however statistics show that black male graduates earn 17% less than white colleagues. For Black, African and Caribbean people, in work poverty is at 27.5%. Nearly half of Black, African and Caribbean headed households in poverty. For Asian and Asian British headed households, this figure is 37%.

Over the five years to 2019, child poverty increased by half a million, with 4.1 million (34%) children living in poverty. Children from single parent households are at greater risk, with nearly half of them living in poverty. Pensioner poverty is increasing, and in 2019 is at 11%. 48% of people living with a disability live in poverty.

Social attitudes and cohesion

A survey on British social attitudes reveal that the UK is increasingly progressive. Two thirds of people do not believe homosexuality is 'wrong at all', an increase of 50 percentage points from 1983. The majority think that males and females are equally suited in working in a wide range of roles. Three quarters of the public have the opinion that science and technology is making our lives better. The UK is increasingly secular, with over half of the population not believing in any religion.

Conversely, hate crimes have continued to rise, with more than 94,000 recorded instances in 2017/18. This is an increase of 17% on the previous year and a 100% increase since 2013. 76% of instances recorded were related to race hate and 12% related to sexual orientation. Although some of this increase relates to improved reporting, key events such as the EU referendum and the Manchester bombings saw peaks in instances.

A Conservative party member poll reveals that 40% wanted a limit of the number of Muslims entering the country with 67% believing that parts of the country operated under Sharia law. Additionally, 43% did not want the country to be led by someone of Muslim faith.

In 2018, seven elected Labour party representatives were suspended or resigned after making anti-Semitic comments; 12 were expelled, 96 were suspended and 211 were issued with a notice of investigation.

The difference in opinion regarding immigration and social cohesion is reflective of socio-demographic groups and contact with people from different ethnic backgrounds. Only 10% of the lowest socio-demographic group were pro-immigration, compared to 40% of professional groups.

Technology

In 2019, 87% of all adults used the internet, and 99% of 16-44 year olds used the internet daily. 93% of UK households have internet access, with nearly all of these through fixed broadband.

Of the people who didn't use the internet, just under half were low-income households, and half were over the age of 75. Although the most common reason given was that they felt they did not need it, a significant proportion (34%) said they did not use the internet because of a lack of skills.

Currently, 49% of people in the UK cite social media as their main source of news, compared to 20% in 2017. The use of different social media platforms varies over time, but Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram are the dominant channels. The way people are expecting to engage with online information is also changing, increasingly through webchats, feedback, signups, and the use of tools.

However, there remains a lack of trust in online content and social media. Of the people who have never used the internet, security was a significant reason given (33%). Concern about 'fake news' following scandals such as Cambridge Analytica has meant that only 37% of social media users in 2019 thought the medium was impartial, compared to 58% for newspapers and 59% for the BBC.

Technology is now a significant part of how we spend our money. 7 in 10 people use cashless payments generally, and the percentage of all transactions that are cashless payments continues to rise. There is regional variation however – only 58% of people in the North West used cashless payments, compared to 70% and above in the South East, London, Midlands and Wales.

Technology also has a significant impact on how organisations in the third sector operate. However only 48% of charities have a digital strategy, and only 12% are looking at how this can change what they are doing. Funding has been reported as the main barrier (56%) to developing their digital offer.

Sustainability

The Earth's climate is getting warmer and 90% of this is caused by humans. The IPCC estimate we have 12 years to reduce emissions causing this global warming to avoid rising sea levels and the destruction of wildlife. If the Earth's temperature rises by more than 1.5 degrees, the planet will experience significant climate change such as drought, flooding, and extreme weather.

The UN have reported that disadvantaged groups in all nations will suffer disproportionately from climate change, and consequently there will be a rise in poverty across the globe and widening inequality. By 2050, the IPCC have estimated that there could be 200 million climate change refugees.

Public services

Since 2010 local authorities have had a 38% reduction in funding from central government. The impact on healthcare has been substantial. For the NHS, annual budgets rose by an average of 1.5% between 2010 and 2019, compared to an average of 3.7% since the NHS was established. Targets for treatment are failing to be met, with 55% of people waiting longer than 18 weeks for treatment. A&E waiting time targets have not been met since 2013/14. 2009 saw the number of GPs per 10,000 registered people peak to 6.91 but has since decreased to 6.13 in 2018. In Greater Manchester and Lancashire, this figure is just 4.6 per 10,000 registered people.

There have been 400 residential care home closures in the last five years, with major providers, such as Southern Cross, going into administration. In 2017, 37% of domiciliary care contracts were 'handed back'. Compared to 10 years ago, fewer people are eligible for public funded care. Factors such as these have contributed to 1.4 million elderly people being unable to access the care and support that they need. It is not clear how many providers will be able to survive the Coronavirus Pandemic.

For early intervention and family services, local authority spending has reduced by 40% in 2014 which has caused care applications to increase by nearly 20%. Since 2009, registered children centres have declined by over 30% and for areas that have avoided closure, local authorities have reduced services and staffing. Despite the 2019 announcement of additional funding, 80% of schools will receive less funding per pupil in real terms in 2020 compared to 2015. This will impact schools with high levels of disadvantaged the most. Mental health waiting times continue to be an issue with one in five children still waiting more than 6 months to see a specialist in 2017. The Care Quality Commission rated 30% of CAMHS inpatient and 39% of CAMHS specialist inpatient services as requiring improvement.

Despite NHS Mental Health Trusts income rising in 2017, inflation has resulted in them receiving £105 million less in real terms than in 2011/12. The 2008 launch of Increasing Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) was successful, however survey statistics reveal that in 2014 only 15% of people were offered the full range of NICE recommended services.

In regards to new social housing, funding has decreased, with the government focusing on private renting and shared ownership. The National Housing Federation estimates that 145,000 new social homes need to be built every year to keep up with demand.

The amount of accommodation for vulnerable people unable to live alone has declined. The amount that councils are spending on support single homeless people in England has fallen by 53% between 2008/09 to 2017/18, meaning almost £1 billion less being spent to support these people. This was almost entirely due to the removal of ring-fenced Supporting People funding after 2009, which was a government program designed to support vulnerable people living independently.

Between 2013 and 2017, funding for drug and alcohol services reduced by 15%, while drug-related deaths have been rising. In 2018, there were 4,359 drug-related deaths – an increase of 16% since 1993.

Impact on people

Inequality and deprivation continues to negatively impact people's lives and experiences across the nation. In the three years leading up to 2017, infant mortality rates has risen, reversing a long-standing downward trend. The infant mortality rate for Greater Manchester currently stands at 4.4 per every 1,000 births. The City of Manchester alone has seen a 40% increase in infant mortality rates in the last decade. 2019 saw the loss of the UK's 'measles free' status after childhood immunisation rates have decreased year on year.

There are now 15 million people living with long-term conditions, with people working in lower-skilled occupations are 53% more likely to have one. Those living in deprived areas develop long-term conditions 10 to 15 years earlier than average. Furthermore, 25% of people living with a long-term condition experience mental health problems.

Deprivation has also impacted life expectancy. On average, men living in affluent areas of the UK live 9.3 years longer than males living in deprived areas, and for women this difference is 7.5 years.

The number of families that are statutorily homeless has increased by 42% since 2009, with 71% of local authorities reporting increased in 2019. In Greater Manchester there are 1,500 households living in

temporary accommodation, with an average wait of 2 years for a permanent home. BAME households are disproportionately represented in homelessness statistics, with a rise of 48% compared to just 9% for White households. The number of homeless children is rising, with an estimated 131,000 in 2018 – a 59% increase in the past five years. In Greater Manchester this increase is 177%.

The number of rough sleepers in England has doubled between 2010 and 2019, and is currently an estimated 4,751 people. The number of homeless people dying on the streets has increased by 22% from 597 in 2017 to 726 in 2018. And, housing for the poorest is becoming less affordable. The cost of rent rose 60% faster than wages between 2011 and 2017, with people on the lowest incomes spending 75% of their earnings on housing costs. Furthermore, local housing allowance and benefit caps are making it even harder for those on low income to afford housing.

The private rented sector housing has expanded to cover 20% of the total housing in England in 2017, with the North West experiencing growth of 77%. 38% of the house expansions have accommodated people on the lowest incomes (bottom third). For children experiencing poverty 56% live in the private rented sector.

The issue of low pay continues to persist in Greater Manchester, with 19% of jobs below the low paid threshold, with most of these jobs held by women. Factors such as low pay, unemployment and poverty has resulted in food bank use soaring, with a 48% increase in use over the past two years. In the last year, 1.6 million food parcels were given out by food banks. This pattern of demand reflects the roll out of universal credit. Food poverty is directly associated to oral health, and figures show that 35% of five years olds in Greater Manchester have experienced tooth decay, compared to national figure of 25%.

Mental health problems appear to be increasing, with an estimated one in six adults affected by a common mental health problem. Levels of anxiety and trauma amongst the general population are predicted to rise as a response to the Coronavirus pandemic. Greater Manchester, Liverpool and their surrounding areas already have a higher prevalence of anxiety and depression than the England average. People living alone, unemployed or with a long-term condition are more susceptible to mental health problems. In the last year, 13% of people who claimed employment and support allowance has a psychotic episode, with almost half attempting suicide. Despite being the ethnic group most likely to be detained under the Mental Health Act, Black people have particularly low treatment rates, with 1 in 10 people not receiving a mental health treatment they requested.

Long-term migration has continued to be relatively stable since 2016. Last year, 612,000 people moved into the UK and 385,000 people left the UK, resulting in a net migration of 226,000. Work immigration has continued to decrease since 2016, while immigration for study has risen. Net migration of EU citizens is stable, but there are more people from Central and Eastern Europe leaving than arriving.

Government Policy

The 2019 election of a majority Conservative government meant that we had some certainty about the policies that could be introduced over the next five years – which are outlined below. However, the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic on the economy will result in a major overhaul of the government priorities, and so this should be considered in this context.

Public spending: The Conservative election manifesto committed to increase public spending across all areas. However, that was caveated with a statement that ‘public sector spending will not be more than 3% of GDP’. It also stated that if debt interest reaches 6% of revenue, then plans will be reassessed. Therefore, while the commitment was to end austerity policies, it is clear that the economic downturn resulting from the Coronavirus pandemic will lead to a major review of government policy.

Health: While the bulk of the manifesto concerns acute health services and primary care, the government say that they will extend social prescribing, and expand the new National Academy of Social Prescribing – an indication that strength-based, whole-person approaches are continuing to enter mainstream thinking. In terms of mental health, the manifesto continues the commitment to giving mental health parity of esteem, and talks about giving mental health patients ‘greater control over their treatment’.

Children and family services: The vast majority of the government’s commitments regarding schools is to continue the policies that they have implemented throughout the 2010s. This means that there will be a continued focus on free schools and academisation, with high-performing schools able to take over low-performing ones, and limited local authority control. The government will also look to expand alternative

provision for children with challenging behaviour. In terms of curriculum, there will be a continued focus on core subjects, although there is a commitment to invest in arts subjects, and in PE.

Away from schools, the government is committing to improve the existing Troubled Families programme, and to champion the development of new Family Hubs – although no detail of what these are anticipated to provide is in the manifesto. There is also a commitment to invest £1bn in affordable childcare, with provision before and after school specifically mentioned. There is no specific mention of nursery or children's centre provision in this area. There is, however, a commitment to spend £500m on youth services.

Immigration and community cohesion: Following Brexit, the government will press ahead with an 'Australian-style points system' for immigration, which may have significant implications for our service user groups – particularly in Big Issue North. The key criteria that most people wishing to live and work in the UK will need to meet are: a good grasp of English; good qualifications and education; and a clear job offer in place. All of these are criteria that our vendors are usually unlikely to have.

In terms of our current service users who are EU citizens, the government will continue with the EU settlement scheme.

As well having a direct impact on our service users, these immigration policies will contribute to the environment of division within communities that contributed to the Brexit decision. Equally, although it may not have a direct impact on many of our service users the government's approach to travelling communities is likely to contribute to that environment. The manifesto says that police will be granted powers to arrest and seize property and vehicles of unauthorised camps, and make intentional trespass a criminal offence.

Housing and Homelessness: The manifesto promises a 'better deal for renters', which includes abolishing 'no-fault' evictions and creating a system of lifetime deposits, whereby renters can transfer their deposit from one tenancy to another. It announces that there will be a white paper on social housing, which will look to enforce better regulation and quality.

With regards to increasing the number of homes available, the government are committed to continuing the Affordable Homes Programme. However, the manifesto also appears to be opening the door to a two tier system and nimbyism with regards to housing, as it commits to allowing existing communities to decide on 'design standards, allowing residents a greater say on the style and design of developments in their area'.

The manifesto only contains a paragraph on homelessness, committing to enforcing the Homelessness Reduction Act and expanding successful existing pilots and programmes – referencing Housing First and the Rough Sleeping Initiative as examples of these.

Social enterprises

In the UK, there are 99,000 social enterprises, employing 1.4 million people and contribute £24 billion to the economy. 42% of social enterprises are less than five years old, and only 5% have a turnover of more than £5 million. 48% of social enterprises made a profit in the last year with 27% breaking even. The top five co-operatives pay more tax in the UK than Facebook, Amazon, eBay, Starbucks and Apple combined.

60% of social enterprises provide services for the public sector. Despite the Social Value Act (2013), 59% of public sector commissioners that responded to the Procurement Trends survey reported that they were under pressure to procure the lowest price, with 55% stating that internal cost pressures were the biggest influence in their work. For procurement professionals, 64% stated that social value had become more important over the last 12 months.

Charities

There are around 167,000 voluntary and charitable organisations, although only 0.4% earn over £10 million each year, and 0.3% over £100 million. 19% of charities deliver social services, with Barnardo's, Save the Children and Oxfam in the 10 largest social care providers.

Over the past five years, there has been collapses in some third sector providers. Reasons for this include a mixture of governance and financial factors. These collapses include:

- **Lifeline:** A drug and alcohol service provider operating nationwide. They had a turnover of £62 million on their March 2016 accounts and operated nationwide.
- **Kids Company:** A children services provider operating in London and South England. They had a turnover of £23 million based on their December 2013 accounts.
- **4Children:** A children services provider operating nationwide. Their March 2015 accounts show they had a turnover of £30 million.

Over recent years, there has been loss of public confidence in the sector. British Red Cross, Macmillan and Oxfam were all found to be guilty of fundraising failures that used high-pressure selling techniques. Additionally, Oxfam International were found to be guilty of major safeguarding breaches in operations overseas. The impact of this can be seen by public donations to charities decreasing by 4% between 2016 and 18.

Smaller charities remain the biggest competitors for Big Life, such as Turning Point and Family Action. Turning Point deliver 244 health and social care services and have made investment into new digital platforms. Family Action have reported to have had significant growth over the past five years, having merged with smaller organisations to increase their scale and reach.

Multi Academy Trusts

In the schools sector, our competitors are other Multi Academy Trusts (MATs). In the UK, there are 738 MATs with most managing five schools or less (79%) and only a small number (5.4%) have between 12 and 25 schools. Nearly half of all the pupils in England attend a MAT school. In Greater Manchester, there are an estimated 76 MATs, accounting for just under a fifth of all schools in the area.

There have been some high profile scandals regarding executive pay, which has led to public concern and the EFSA requiring more transparency. However, MATs can vary considerably. Some are loose associations that share services and training, some share the same ethos or faith. More recently, there has been a growth in larger MATs being formed by a number of schools that 'come together', despite the ending of the regional schools commissioner and government drive for academisation. This may reflect the squeezing of resources in local authorities.

Public sector

In the public sector there are 135 acute hospital trusts, 17 acute specialist trusts, 54 mental health trusts, 35 community providers and 7,454 GP practices in England. The private and third sector combine to deliver 853 trusts and practices.

The NHS employ 1.5 million staff, which makes them one of the five largest employers in the world. The average management costs of NHS providers is 3% of total expenditure. 44% of NHS trusts overspent their budget in 2017/18.

According to the 2016 British Social Attitudes Survey, 63% of people were very or quite satisfied with the NHS, with 22% being very or quite dissatisfied. The Coronavirus has led to an increased public recognition of the value of the NHS and key workers.

Each year, the 408 local authorities in the UK spend £77bn. The largest chunk of money (42%) spent by local authorities goes towards education, followed by adult social care (20%) and children's social care (11.5%). Just 4.4% is spent on public health.

Between 2016 and 2018, 220 local government contracts were brought back in-house. The 2019 APSE survey showed 77% of councils planning to bring some contracts back in-house.

Private sector

Since the 1970s, the public sector has gradually increased the services it purchases from external providers. This growth has been in defined areas, such as infrastructure, ICT, criminal justice, community and specialist services. In the early 90s, just 5% of domiciliary home care services were provided by private companies, today this figure is 80%. Central and local government spend £251 billion on services from external providers in 2015/16.

In the past five years, following a number of crises and performance issues (Carillion, ATOS, rail franchises, and care homes), confidence has been eroded in private sector solutions. Concerns have been raised about the affordability of Private Finance Initiatives, the quality of outsourced services, the perception of private companies making profit from the public sector, poor pay and conditions for staff, and the viability of larger contractors.

Concern about the concentration of outsourced public services in four larger private companies has been expressed by the government. In 2012-13, the largest private sector providers of public services were as follows:

- **ATOS:** £0.7 billion
- **Capita:** £0.5 billion
- **SERCO:** £1.2 billion
- **G4S:** £0.6 billion

At least three of these companies worked across all government departments. They have grown significantly since 2000, including through acquisition of supply chain. The government encouraged larger private companies to sub-contract or manage supply chains to increase competition.

Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats

Taking into account what we have achieved in the last three years, allied with analysis of our competitors and the external factors affecting us and our service users, the following strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats have been identified.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong brand • Big Life Way provides a coherent theory of change • Staff commitment remains high • Good reputation with commissioners and strong track record of delivery • History of innovation and responsive to changing needs • Strong partnerships with public and voluntary sectors • Quality of services is good and recognised by regulators and external bodies • Corporate services are efficient and high quality • Governance is strong, providing direction and assurance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of investment funds for research and innovation (including technology) • Lack of success in securing grant funding • Need for investment in building assets • Reliance on the commissioning cycle • Use of data to affect decision-making and to influence • Skills gaps – grant/corporate fundraising, sales and marketing • Change management • Lack of staff development opportunities and disparity of T&Cs with public sector • Use of feedback to improve services.
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotion of the Big Life Way • Service areas that are likely to see investment (mental health, supported housing and schools) • Use of new technologies to increase efficiency, change how we deliver services and influence commissioners • Promotion of the MMP approach to become mainstream across all services • Develop new services in areas where anchor services already exist • Build on strong existing partnerships including with commissioners to proactively influence the shape of services • Mergers with other organisations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public sector pay awards and living wage – not reflected in contract values • EU citizens not able to stay, and tightening of immigration criteria • Possibility of being squeezed from both ends by insourcing to the public sector and creeping privatisation • Focus on commissioner targets at the expense of community and strength-based approaches • Silo commissioning makes delivery of the Big Life Way a challenge.

We will work with more people and places to create opportunities and inspire change

In a period of growing inequality and stretched public services, it is more important than ever to expand the opportunities we can offer. Some of these opportunities will be created through new services and contracts, but others can be developed from doing things differently and treading new ground.

We will work with more people to support them in all areas of their life, developing new ways to measure our impact. We will use ICT to track the services people use, such as electronic sign in, and sharing data (where appropriate) to increase efficiency and improve people's experience of using our services.

Most of our resources are spent on our staff. We know that the relationships between our staff, volunteers and service users are central to inspiring and supporting people to change. However, we also know that we can use technology to expand our services and the opportunities we offer. More and more people are using mobile devices to access the internet and using voice driven tools. The introduction of 5g technology will further drive this trend. To expand our offer, ***we will increase the opportunities for people to engage with our services through the use of technology, such as online chats, video conferencing and virtual reality***. We will expand our self-help opportunities across all our services through Learn Well.

We have developed a good volunteer offer in many of our services. Volunteering not only gives people the opportunity to change their lives, but it also enhance the support we can give to people working with us. We also know that volunteering can be key to developing inclusive and strong communities. In addition, volunteering is a good route for local employment and ensuring our services are delivered by people from the communities we work within. We will therefore increase the number of volunteering opportunities and make the volunteer experience consistent by sharing good practice and training staff. ***We will have volunteer opportunities in every service***, giving people the chance to get work experience, contribute to their communities and develop new self-help activities.

While we have focused on what volunteers can do for our services and the people we work with, we have not always focused on how we can support volunteers to achieve their aspirations. What we know about the achievements of volunteers is captured in often anecdotal stories or in case studies. The volunteer survey told us that they do not feel we support their overall wellbeing. We will train staff and amend our processes to ensure that we support volunteers in all areas of their lives, measure the impact of volunteering and use our data better.

We will have a new focus on the places and communities we work in. To deliver the Big Life Way we need to develop seamless services and reduce the barriers for people to use them. In some areas we may only deliver one service, but in many we deliver a number of services side by side, but they work separately, not taking opportunities for integration. How we work in each area needs to build on the local opportunities for working in partnership with local people and services. This needs a deep understanding of local areas and an ability to build relationships. ***We will develop place-based plans for every area we work in, and develop partnerships and integrated working***. We will understand local issues and work alongside partners, service users, commissioners and members of the community to build on assets, remove barriers, improve joint working and shape services.

The cycle of public sector commissioning is often disruptive to building strong long-term relationships in communities. It is a barrier to risk taking and learning to create new solutions together. So much of what we do is based on people and the relationships they have in communities, and yet commissioning often focuses on processes and price. We need to find new ways to influence commissioners before they design services and enter procurement. To drive quality, we need to work with commissioners to develop long-term partnering arrangements as an alternative to standard commissioning.

We have had some real success at developing strong partnerships with public and voluntary sector service providers, embedding our values and the Big Life Way into our work. We have been able to support smaller local organisations to grow their infrastructure and sustain their futures. We have helped to remove barriers to accessing statutory services and increase opportunities for people we work with. We believe that the best services are delivered by strong partnerships and we are committed to working together to develop them.

We need to exploit the opportunities that other sectors have to offer – many private sector businesses want to do their bit. We need to work with them to use these opportunities for the people we work with. ***We will develop a ‘Partnership Charter’, deep relationships with commissioners and new corporate partnerships***, to expand the opportunities we offer.

We will be a ‘good’ business with our social mission at the heart of all that we do

Despite ten years of public sector austerity, we have continued to grow our services. However this has not been even. Cuts in funding for children and family services, and supported housing have meant we have not achieved our ambitions in these areas. We have also found that our presence in some areas is reliant on one contract, and when this is lost we cannot sustain our other work. ***We will grow in our existing geographies and diversify our offer. We will move into new areas, where there is an opportunity to develop significant roots to anchor ourselves in the community.*** We will also look for opportunities to bring new services into the group through mergers and acquisitions that will deepen our engagement in areas or enhance our services.

But growth is not enough. We need to ensure we have the staff and resources to deliver a first class service to everyone we work with. ***We will invest in our assets and technology, ensuring we maximise efficiency and the quality of our data to drive service improvement.*** We need to ensure that we have the structures and technology to deliver efficiencies and enable us to work in new ways. We need to ensure that in trying to make communities better, we are not contributing to making them worse through our carbon footprint.

The growth plan for the next three years therefor builds on existing service delivery footprints. To deliver services in new geographical footprints, we need scale to ensure we have the infrastructure to do this successfully. To achieve our ambition to grow and be able to compete for larger public sector contracts we will need to look at other ways to grow, rather than just incremental growth. We will continue to explore mergers and social investment capital to help us achieve this.

We have plotted the potential growth of services over the next three years. Using the conservative weighting we project potential growth of existing services leading to a turnover of £21m in 2020/21, £23m in 2021/22 and £24m in 2022/23. The external environment gives us specific opportunities to deliver new services, including new free schools in Greater Manchester, an expanded housing offer in Liverpool, peer support services and a community-based offer in mental health, and diversified income streams for Big Issue North. Alongside this, we will build on our existing high-quality public health, family support, and drug and alcohol recovery services.

To deliver this expansion we will develop a comprehensive business development strategy which retains our business development team focus on public sector tenders, while expanding work on sales, grant fundraising, individual giving and corporate partnerships. It will build on the successful work already undertaken on Big Issue North Trust fundraising. Additional expertise on sales and marketing will be secured to ensure that we are not just good at ideas – but we are good at selling them too.

We have strong foundations for ensuring we deliver high-quality services. The Clinical Service Governance Board provides strong leadership, and safeguarding, information governance, and health and safety are well embedded in our organisation. We have introduced established quality-management systems into all our services and will embed them further to ensure that we are continually improving. We will further develop our internal audits to focus on quality, not just compliance, and ensure that we can track service improvement. As many of our services are one-to-one interactions we will enhance our supervision, case management and reflective practice through staff training and the introduction of new quality-management systems such as call recording.

We know that continual improvement is driven by having strong feedback systems from the people who use our services. The Service Experience Audit shows that on the whole our staff are caring and want to give the best service, often by resolving complaints as they arise, rather than supporting people to formalise them. There is much more we can do. Currently most feedback is received via exit interviews which are often not systematically reviewed, and our management of complaints focuses more on compliance with the policy than learning and disseminating lessons across our services. ***We will maximise feedback to improve our services by developing our complaints procedure and embedding Big Views.*** We will explore opportunities to increase 'instant' feedback through text messaging or simple polling devices in our centres or at events. We will establish a central reporting system to ensure lessons are learned from all forms of feedback and improvements introduced across all our services.

We collect a lot of data across our services and have a strong track record of reporting on outcomes to commissioners. Traditionally we have been ahead of the public sector in using technology to deliver services differently. We have achieved this by partnering with new technology companies wanting to promote their offer (e-therapy was a good example of this) and by buying and adapting off the peg platforms from providers (such as our case management systems). However we are in danger of losing our competitive edge in this field, particularly as the size of investment needed continues to grow. Going forward we will need to increase our investment in technologies and the skills our staff need to use them.

All of our services will have a case management system that will track the support we have given and the impact and outcomes achieved. We will explore developing a data repository to drive efficiency of reporting and benchmarking of performance. We will invest in developing or recruiting people with the skills to analyse data to drive service improvement. We will invest in ICT solutions which will drive efficiencies and improve the service user experience, such as online appointment systems.

We pride ourselves on providing first class environments for people to use our services, as often public services had the shabbiest buildings, longest queues and worst customer service. We will need to invest in our buildings to ensure that we maintain their quality, but also their responsiveness to the changing needs of the communities they serve.

The way we work and deliver services continues to change. More and more of our services are agile. We meet people in the places that suit them best. Sometimes this is one of our buildings, sometimes it is a GP or someone's home. We will continue to develop our technology to support staff to work from multiple locations, preparing for the opportunities that 5G may deliver.

We will reduce our carbon footprint and implement agile working. We have started a programme to minimise our impact on the environment. We have successfully reduced our paper consumption and car mileage. We will use the opportunity of updating our buildings to ensure that we minimise our use of resources by improving insulation and introducing energy saving or renewable energy technologies. We achieve ISO1400 and will develop a sustainability strategy that sets targets for reducing our mileage and energy usage, as well as recycling of waste, which we will be able to monitor centrally.

We have already simplified our legal structure, but managing multiple companies and charities still creates costs and can be complicated for people to understand. ***We will have a legal structure that works for us and the people we work for.***

We will have an organisation that enables us to work in the Big Life Way

Delivering the Big Life Way requires us to work differently. We need to ensure the way we manage our staff and resources helps us to continue to deliver first class services which put people in control, help them with all areas of their lives and takes a strengths based approach.

To do this we need to have services users at the centre of everything we do. We need to ensure we have appropriately trained staff and ICT which facilitates joint working. ***We will have a management structure, IT systems and change process that facilitate staff and services working together.*** We will need to develop greater integration between services we deliver in the same area, while maintaining good contract management.

We are proud of our service user engagement. Over the years many of our services (mental health, childcare, and community centres) have been started by local people wanting to improve their lives and those of their community. We have developed innovative ways for people to engage with us – such as the Service Experience Audit, Donuts group and Big Views. We are also commissioned to deliver user engagement in public services. But it is easy to be complacent, particularly when we are focused on delivering contract outcomes for commissioners. In order to deliver the Big Life Way we need to ensure that all our services are underpinned by strong service user engagement. ***We will revitalise service user engagement*** by ensuring all services develop plans for engagement, allocate resources to deliver it and incorporating service user influence as a key outcome for our place-based leads.

Alongside strong service user engagement at an organisational level, we need to ensure that the people using our services feel in control of the services they are accessing. We know that people are more likely to make and sustain change when they feel in control and able to build their skills and resilience. We have developed many tools to ensure that our services help people set their own goals and identify actions that they want to do, according to their own priorities. Our staff are trained to help people develop techniques and access tools to build up their own ability to cope with life's ups and downs. We have trialled new ways to help people feel more in control of their interaction with us such as My Life Goals, an interactive app on which people set and track their goals on their smart phone, which they can share with their support worker. We want to do more. Since the introduction of GDPR we (like all public organisations) have seen an increase in Subject Access Requests – people asking for copies of the notes we hold about them. Currently, most case management systems are used for our benefit – service providers and commissioners. We want to turn this on its head, ***so we will develop tools for people to have control of their stories and data.***

We also need to ensure that we can recruit, develop and support a workforce that can work in the Big Life Way. We know that we have a high level of commitment from our staff to our mission and values. We have been very successful at attracting a diverse workforce representing the communities we work within. But we have some key challenges – diversity at our senior manager level, BAME and gender pay gaps; staff experiencing high levels of stress, and restricted opportunities for development.

We will deliver our workforce strategy, ensuring we have diverse, well-trained and happy staff, and achieve Best Companies 3-Star accreditation. We have already started on this journey through our Graduate Programme, targeted use of the Apprentice levy, staff wellbeing group and BAME staff development plan. But there is more we can do. We will develop a plan to implement agile working across all our services. This will enable staff to feel more in control of their work life balance and manage their work around everyday pressures. We will develop our staff and our processes so that we nurture autonomy and professional judgement. We will review Terms and Conditions to explore opportunities for improving the offer to staff and proactively manage succession in order to eradicate the gender and BAME pay gaps. We will work to achieve a 3 star Best Companies rating by promoting staff engagement, wellbeing initiatives and flexible working practices.

We will ensure all our staff are trained in trauma informed practice and in a strengths based approaches. ***We will have trained Multi-Modality Practitioners in every service, and staff will be trained to deliver strengths-based approaches.*** This will give staff an opportunity to develop and grow within a service without having to move into a management role. The MMPs will be able to work with people who have the most challenges and are struggling to juggle between them. This will mean that other staff are able to work with people who will benefit from less intensive support.

We will support staff to develop their understanding of all the services we offer - such as Learn Well - and feel confident to help people use them. Our place-based working will increase staff knowledge of opportunities in the areas they work and help us to develop new ways of work together to remove barriers and improve our offer. We will encourage staff to learn from good practice across the group – such as the collaboration between Big Life Schools and the Big Issue North.

To embed the Big Life Way we have to continually change. We know that a strength of the group has been innovation in service delivery, but there has been less traction when embedding those innovations in services. When introducing new ways of working or new tools we will ensure a comprehensive change management process is adopted to support services and staff to make changes and to reduce the time between launch of a new product and adoption by services. Communications will be key to this. We need to ensure that we develop a communications strategy which helps us deliver internal change as well as supporting service users to be fully engaged.

While we collect lots of data, we generally only undertake research or evaluation when we are commissioned to do so. Across the group, we currently have a lot of data; however, it's held in numerous different systems and is difficult to analyse. We will introduce an integrated system that sits above service-specific systems, and provides good quality, real time data. This will enable us to evidence the impact of our work as well as back up real life stories with facts. ***We will ensure all our services are informed by research and evaluation, and we will measure the impact of our work,*** enabling us to continually reflect on the effectiveness of the Big Life Way, and continually improve. We will promote our research and evaluation to influence commissioners and policy makers, help reshape public services and promote the Big Life Way.

All Service Priorities 2020-25

<p>We will work with more people and places to create opportunities and inspire change:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will work with more people to support them in all areas of their life. • We will have volunteer opportunities in every service • We will increase the opportunities for people to engage with our services through the use of technology, such as online chats, video conferencing and virtual reality. • We will develop place-based plans for every area we work in, and develop partnerships and integrated working. 	<p>We will be a 'good' business with our social mission at the heart of all that we do:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will grow in our existing geographies to diversify our offer, and move into new areas, where there is an opportunity to develop significant roots to anchor ourselves in that community. • We will increase feedback to continually improve the quality of what we do • We will invest in our assets and technology, ensuring we maximise efficiency and the quality of our data to drive service improvement. • We will reduce our carbon footprint and implement agile working. • We will have a legal structure that works for us and the people we work for. 	<p>We will have an organisation that enables us to work in the Big Life Way:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will have a management structure, IT systems and change process that facilitate staff and services working together, • We will deliver our workforce strategy ensuring we have diverse, trained and happy staff, and achieve Best Companies 3-Star accreditation. • We will have trained Multi-Modality Practitioners in every service, and staff will be trained to deliver strengths-based approaches. • We will develop tools for people to have control of their own stories and data. • Service user engagement will shape our services • Our services will be informed by research and evaluation, and we will measure the impact of our work.
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Division priorities 2020-2025

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will develop and embed the Big Life Schools curriculum across our schools, delivering outstanding education and healthy, happy children. • We will invest in our buildings. • We will open two new Free Schools. • We will promote our integrated family hubs. • We will increase our early intervention and family support services, focusing on families with complex needs. • We will have case management systems in all our services which enable us to track progress and demonstrate impact. • We will secure funding to offer comprehensive out of school and community services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will grow our Talking Therapies services to meet prevalence targets and reduce waiting lists. • We will secure new investment in community, peer and self-help mental wellbeing services. • We will invest and revitalise our community buildings. • We will grow our drug and alcohol recovery contracts. • We will extend our public health work into four new areas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will secure investment and extend Big Life Homes. We will bid for new contracts to support people to live independently. • We will secure investment to support vendors of Big Issue North to develop skills and secure their residency. • We will increase the opportunities for vendors of Big Issue North to move on, such as coffee carts and work placements. • We will diversify our income streams through new products, such as calendars and The New Issue. • We will develop new corporate partnerships.
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Mental Health

Mental health is the largest service area in The Big Life group, at 41% of group turnover. Since the loss of the Sanctuary contract and Peer Support grant, this is primarily for the delivery of Talking Therapies. Community Services and the Neighbourhood Mental Health Team only make up 3% of the mental health division turnover.

Although we have grown in the last three years (by securing new contracts in Tameside and growing existing contracts), we have made a loss in the 17/18 and 18/19 financial years. In 2019/20 we will break even but, across the division, profit margins are small. Although the reserves target has not been met the Self Help Services balance sheet is strong.

In most areas contract performance is good, but we have had some challenges managing sub-contractors' poor performance – both third sector and NHS. Despite this we have managed payment by results contracts well and have excellent relationship with commissioners. In two of the five Talking Therapy contracts that we deliver, we have been working on integration projects this year. In one case, the integration was more expensive than expected and has been shelved for the time being. In the second case, work is ongoing..

In the future we face some key challenges to meet current and future IAPT prevalence targets, including staff turnover (16.42% in 2019 and 22% in 2018) and difficulty recruiting Psychological Well Being Practitioners in some areas. While this is national problem due to the lack of training places in recent years, it is particularly challenging for third sector providers who cannot offer the career progression of larger NHS organisations. Training for PWP's resumed in 2019 and we hosted 13 PWP trainees in the year and it is our intention to continue to support training for PWP's and HITs in coming years.

We have 200 staff, and the division benefits from a significant portion of staff with lived experience (experience of mental health 42% and addiction 2%). We have a relatively new senior management team whose main experience is in the Talking Therapies field and lacks diversity in comparison with the wider group (11% of managers are BAME, and 20% of mental health staff are BAME, compared to 31% of staff across the group. Investing in this team and the leaders of the future will be key to our work in the next five years.

Staff are committed to the values of the group and delivering the Big Life Way. 96% believe the group is run on sound moral principles, 94% feel proud to work for the group and 95% believe they can make a valuable contribution to the group's success.

42% of staff feel under pressure to perform well at work; perhaps reflecting the target driven nature of IAPT contracts, however, 87% believe their manager would be quick to respond if they showed signs of being under pressure and 88% believe their manager cares about them as a person.

68% of staff agree that on most days they feel exhausted when they get home from work and 26% believe that their health is suffering because of work. We will explore this with staff in order to better understand if this is as a result of the role or if it sits related to a wellbeing issue or something else such as caring responsibilities.

Extending our work life balance and flexible working practices may offer more opportunity to expand offer to clients, through more evening and weekend appointments.

While 86% of staff feel the experience they gain in their job is valuable for their future and 78% believe their job is good for their own personal growth, 20% of staff are bored with the work that they do and 30% believe there are limited opportunities for them to learn and grow within the organisation. 49% of staff believe they have skills that the organisation could use but doesn't.

46% of staff are not happy with the pay and benefits they receive in this job, only 42% feel they receive fair pay for the responsibilities they have and 39% feel they are paid fairly relative to people in similar positions in similar organisations. While staff delivering mental health services are paid on NHS salary scales, the group is not able to complete with NHS terms and conditions, such as sickness pay and pension contributions. The group will look at how it can improve terms and conditions for staff. Staff tell us that they continue to work for Big Life group because they share our values and feel that they have more scope to innovate and have input to the way that the services are delivered.

Staff are able to work remotely using technology to deliver a service across the geographies we work within, although the costs and quality of some community venues can be prohibitive. We have led the way in the delivery of online therapy and will be expanding this through the use of Learn Well, Skype and Virtual Reality. This will enable us to widen our service and offer more flexible times and locations for people to access services.

We currently use PCMIS for most of our Talking Therapy services. We are gradually discontinuing use of our bespoke database, developed in 2011 and now only used by two services and we expect these services to migrate in 2020/21.

In Tameside, we are currently configuring Big Life People to collate data across the Neighbourhood Mental Health Team project. This project is different from an IAPT service in that it aims to create an integrated service for people who have complex and enduring mental health needs. This means that they will be using a number of services at the same time. Big Life people offers a unique opportunity to collate data in one place and allow the service user to own their records.

Services, supported by the Clinical and Quality Assurance Lead, have a good track record of managing incidents and especially serious incidents requiring investigation. Services are involved in the development of Standard Operating Procedures. These SOPs, together with a commitment to staff training, case management and clinical supervision all contribute to good practice and ensure that we provide safe, high-quality therapy. This is particularly important for safeguarding. Safeguarding training is supported by case management and Designated Safeguarding Leads and monitored in reports to commissioners and the Clinical and Service Governance Board. Subject Access Requests have significantly increased since the publicity surrounding GDPR and this seems unlikely to reduce.

Our services will be in scope for ISO in 2020 and we will work to ensure that this is embedded in the way we work, helping us maintain the quality of our services and work towards improving our carbon footprint. As most of our service involves one-to-one interactions, monitoring the quality of this work poses challenges. Case management, clinical supervision and training ensures that our staff have the support they need when they need it. Health and Safety Leads, Designated Safeguarding Leads and the Information Governance Lead ensures that we have quality systems and processes for managing risks and the group audit checks compliance. We will embed the quality audit tools and implement electronic systems for quality control such as call recording.

We have a strong track record in reaching diverse communities across multiple areas of the North West. For example, in Rochdale, we developed a group offer for women delivered in Urdu. Our staff recently participated in a play demonstrating the impact of mental ill-health and the value of seeking help. The play was delivered at a number of community events and venues and was well-received.

While our service developed from the community, we now primarily deliver commissioned services. We recognise the value of providing a range of mental health services and have worked with Tameside commissioners to develop an innovative offer for people who would previously have struggled to get the help that they need. In the next five years we will work with partners and commissioners in the places we work to develop Peer Support and Multi-Modality Practitioners in all our services. We will also develop our services and partnerships to ensure we offer support to people who are waiting to access services.

We have a strong track record of working with volunteers, and in 2019 we had 102 volunteers in roles such as: providing peer support for eTherapy clients; other peer support; co-production workshops; and supporting facilitators of self-help groups. We will build on our experience of the Donuts co-production group to develop our range of service user engagement and expand our volunteering opportunities. We will embed Big Views in our interactions with clients to ensure that we can maximise the feedback we receive.

Moving forward there are a number of opportunity streams for mental health to explore.

- We will develop our experience of working with people with complex and enduring mental health problems by integrating services and seek opportunities to share the experience in other locations.
- We will continue to work with Clinical Commissioning Groups to innovate and develop services for those who are not well served by current services.
- We will explore developing a new crisis centre in the wake of the groups experience with Sanctuary.
- We will continue to develop services, sometime referred to as step 1 IAPT services, to support people who have a range of issues such as housing, employment, debt, and other health problems, while waiting for therapy or alongside therapy. Where this type of service is not commissioned, we will work with other service providers using our unique MMP practitioners to ensure that all service users can experience the Big Life Way.
- We will explore opportunities to offer Step 2 and Step 3 therapies. We have demonstrated our ability to act as lead provider for contracts including Step 1, 2 and 3 and to manage payment by results successfully. We will explore any opportunities with a realistic financial envelope and where we believe that we can add value.
- We will continue to develop partnerships that enable us to deliver a whole life approach to supporting our clients.
- We will develop innovative approaches to therapy and work with commissioners to mobilise these to offer clients wider choice, faster access to safe and reliable therapy, and make the best use of scarce resources.

The government's investment in IAPT is likely to continue to grow as prevalence targets increase. This may open the door to thinking more creatively about how we can engage with people through online platforms.

Challenges and threats exist for the mental health division moving forward. Increasingly commissioners are trying to secure more for their money and margins are being squeezed. New contracts are likely to have larger elements of Payment by Results and providers are more likely to be expected to carry risks. One of these will be increasing staff and pension costs, which may not be protected for non NHS providers. There is also a risk that commissioners will increasingly see NHS trusts as the preferred providers in terms of offering an integrated service. This will mean we will need to differentiate our service as much as possible.

We compete for contracts with NHS, third sector and private providers. We compete across steps 1 – 3 and for innovative opportunities such as the Tameside Neighbourhood Mental Health Team. We have developed strengths in governance, quality and compliance that allow us to compete with larger organisations but have retained flexibility and agility allowing us to be responsive to commissioners. We are moving forward with innovations such as a pilot application of virtual reality to deliver therapy, and the use of etherapy has been a significant and effective part of our offer for many years.

Not only will we need to deliver the highest performance, but we need to be able to promote our unique strengths:

- Reaching diverse communities
- Offering a digital service (virtual reality, video conferencing, e-therapy)
- Flexibility of appointment times (evening and weekends)
- Flexibility and agility in mobilising and expanding services
- Offering a whole person service through peer support, MMPs, and Learn Well

Public Health

Big Life has a strong reputation for the delivery of public health services. Public health services make up 26% of our group turnover and is the second largest area of our work. Big Life Centres has a strong balance sheet and has £1.1m in fixed assets in the Zion Centre lease. It is currently negotiating to take ownership of the Kath Locke Centre.

From our early roots, delivering the Zion Community Resource Centre, we have a long track record for person centred, quality services – what we now call The Big Life Way.

Our community centres (Zion, Kath Locke, and Energise) have been anchor services in areas and communities which have undergone significant change. They have also provided us with a stability in the provision of wellbeing services, which commissioned services have not. From them we have been able to build on the success of Being Well Salford to now deliver Be Well in Manchester and Living Well in Rochdale.

We have good relationships with commissioners and strong partnerships in Rochdale, Salford and Manchester, with a range of agencies including GPs, DWP, Early Help, housing, pharmacy and the voluntary sector. These relationships are built on a track record of delivery. We have been able to build our profile, acting as the prime contractor and investing in a diverse supply chain of third sector and community organisations.

Client management systems and data analysis in our commissioned services is facilitated through Big Life People client management database. It has enabled us to provide quality information to commissioners and partners, monitor our impact and directly impact service improvement. This is not reflected in our community centres where we need to invest in digital solutions to improve our services.

While we have good data on our public health services, we need to invest further in research and evaluation that demonstrates our impact. In addition we could do more to promote our services and the stories of the people we work with. Although we have developed some Facebook pages for promotion to service users, we do little social media promotion of our public health services.

Within some services there are particularly strong volunteering opportunities with 188 volunteers across Living Well, Manchester and Salford Centres. Our public health service started as a result of community activity and we continue to support this in our work. . Our centres have supported 61 community groups this year and our centres had 150000 attendances. Living Well has supported Kirkholt Millions and developed the community builder programme, supporting people to set up 56 new groups this year and helping a further 126 groups to increase or sustain what they are doing. Be well is investing in community activities through its social prescribing programme. Going forward we will invest in developing new opportunities for community engagement in our centres and services.

Our staff in public health services are diverse. 32% of our staff are BAME, 14% have a disability, 37% have experience of mental health and 6% have experience of addiction. Turnover for public health is 12.22% an increase from 5.85% in 18/19. Absence is 5.38%, which is consistent with previous years.

Public health has a committed workforce, 89% of people believe the organisation is run on strong values/ principles, 89% of staff feel proud to work for the organisation and 93% believe that they can make a valuable contribution to the success of The Big Life group.

While 84% feel the experience they gain in their job is valuable for their future, and 85% believe their job is good for their own personal growth, 14% of staff are bored with the work that they do, 34% believe there are limited opportunities for them to learn and grow within the organisation and 32% believe they have skills that the organisation could use but doesn't. 21% of staff would leave tomorrow if they had another job.

20% of staff believe that senior managers do a lot of telling and not much listening and 21% agree that managers would rather avoid conflict than deal with issues.

56% of staff agree that on most days they feel exhausted when they get home from work and 20% believe that their health is suffering because of work. We will explore this with staff in order to better understand if this is as a result of the role or if it sits related to a wellbeing issue or something else such as caring responsibilities.

49% of staff are happy with the pay and benefits they receive in this job, 46% don't feel that they receive fair pay for the responsibilities they have and 42% don't feel they are paid fairly relative to people in similar positions in similar organisations. Most of the staff in Public Health services are employed on NJC equivalent salaries and access the stakeholder pension scheme. A small number of staff are on protected NHS terms and conditions and access the NHS pension. Currently only one member of staff accesses a Local Authority pension, but as this is not fully funded it is incurring increasing liability on Big Life Centres balance sheet.

Our staff have the equipment and technology to work in the remotely in the community and we can further develop our buildings to offer more agile working options for staff.

Staff are trained to deliver strengths based interventions and the first Multi-Modality Practitioners have been trained in the Be Well service. We will utilise Learn Well and develop place-based partnership plans in the areas we work to ensure that we deliver the Big Life Way.

Our services will be in scope for ISO in 2020 and we will work to ensure that this is embedded in the way we work, helping us maintain the quality of our services and work towards improving our carbon footprint. As many of our service involves one to one interactions, monitoring the quality of this work poses challenges. Case management supervision and training ensures that our staff have the support they need when they need it. Health and Safety Leads, Designated Safeguarding Leads and the Information Governance Lead ensures that we have quality systems and processes for managing risks and the group audit checks compliance. Going forward we will embed the quality audit tools and implement electronic systems for quality control such as call recording.

We carry out annual surveys of our centre users and exit interview with service users who have accessed our coach or one to one lifestyle services. Going forward we will develop ways to increase the qualitative feedback we receive and embed Big Views in our service offer.

There are a lot of opportunities for developing our public health services in the future.

- We will secure the ownership of Kath Locke Centre and invest in it and the Zion Centre buildings, making them fit for the future, including improving their environmental footprint. We will use this as an opportunity to relaunch our centres with a new vision.
- We will develop our use of technology to widen our services and ensure that we are able to collect quality data on all our services. We will embed Learn Well, develop online services, Mobile Apps and implement electronic sign in at our Centres. Building on My Life Goals we will develop technologies that will allow people to control their own stories, set and monitor their own goals.
- We will bid for new public health services in other areas, Building on our success and experience in Be Well and Living Well there is an opportunity to tender for services in other geographies, acting as a prime contractor to smaller community organisations, and partnering with Primary Care Networks. Keeping in line with a whole person approach we could explore offering an integrated service with mental health and family early help hubs.
- We will promote the Multi-Modality Practitioner role so that all public services can offer a whole person approach and we will build on our consultancy work to sell our expertise in strengths based approaches.

Challenges exist for our public health services going forward. Funding for our community centres is insecure and the largest parts of our income is from two contracts, which are fixed term commissions. There is little funding for community development as most funding is directed to the delivery of nationally driven target outcomes. There are many competitors in this field, from both the public and third sector. There is also the challenge of increasing salary and pension costs which are not reflected in fixed price contracts. When bidding for new services the risks of transferring staff with Local Authority pensions may make them not viable for us to deliver.

This will mean we will need to differentiate our service as much as possible. Not only will we need to deliver the highest performance, but we need to be able to promote our unique strengths:

- Reaching diverse communities
- Offering a digital service (VR, SKYPE, e-therapy)
- Flexibility of appointment times (evening and weekends)
- Offering a whole person service through peer support, MMPs, and Learn Well

Drugs and Alcohol

Big Life have two Drug and Alcohol contracts under the Achieve brand, which currently cover 4 out of the 10 GM districts. Although the combined financial values are just under 800k, we are the largest sub-contractor in the partnership, and our influence is greater than how much money we get.

We previously delivered the Pathways contract in Rochdale, but this transferred to a new provider when it was recommissioned in 2017. We were fortunate to be able to retain some of the best staff when we secured the new Achieve service.

The Achieve Drug and Alcohol recovery service is a successful partnership primed by an NHS Trust. It comprises six partners in Bolton, Salford and Trafford and three partners in Bury. Achieve is an innovative model with a good reputation. Partners work well together to deliver a quality service which is delivering commissioner targets. Big Life values and the Big Life Way have been successfully embedded across the partnership which offers the opportunity to meet the multiple needs of service users through a variety of services. The Big Life Assertive Outreach Team in Achieve is seen to be adding value to the drug and alcohol treatment services.

We should ensure we learn the lessons about what makes a successful partnership from Achieve and ensure we embed it in our other partnership models.

Staff are able to work across the partnership at multiple locations utilising mobile technology to access Paris case management system. As the case management system is managed by the prime provider, we are unable to generate reports ourselves and there are some challenges with getting the quality of data in the timescales we require to utilise it effectively.

Drug and Alcohol services have come late to technology and there is an opportunity to develop a unique App and potential service user ownership of their own records. There is some resistance to developing online services for drug and alcohol clients as a result of concern about accessibility, however the use of mobile data across the population continues to grow. We will need to ensure that all new digital developments are suitable for mobile applications.

Staff in this area are strongly committed to the group with 94% believing the group is run on strong values and principles, 95% of staff feel proud and love working for the group. There is a strong sense of team with all staff feeling a sense of family and feeling their team is fun to work with.

Staff feel supported by managers, 100% of staff believing their manager takes an active interest in their wellbeing, 95% believe their manager cares about them as an individual, 89% believe their manager would be quick to respond if they showed signs of being under too much pressure.

All staff in Achieve feel that the experience they gain in this job is valuable for their future however 21% believe there are limited opportunities for them to learn and grow within the organisation and 33% believe they have skills that the organisation could use but doesn't.

74% of staff are happy with the balance between their home and work life and 90% disagree what work interferes with their responsibilities at homes however 42% of staff agree that on most days they feel exhausted when they get home from work and 15% believe that their health is suffering because of work. We will explore this with staff in order to better understand if this relates to their role directly or if it is as a result of wellbeing, long term condition or other issues such as being a carer for example.

74% of staff in Achieve are happy with the pay and benefits they receive in this job and 74% feel that they are paid fairly for the work that they do relative to others in the organisation. 68% feel they receive fair pay for the responsibilities they have and 68% feel they are paid fairly relative to people in similar positions in similar organisations.

The team includes people with lived experience, 30% have experience of mental health and 52% have experience of addiction. Our staff in Achieve are less diverse in terms of ethnicity, only 9% of our staff are BAME. 9% of the staff have a disability. Turnover for Achieve is 8.70%, a reduction from 19% in 2018/19.

There are some strong competitors in the drug and alcohol field including Humankind, Turning Point and CGL, all of whom are larger than us and have a wider footprint. However, as part of the Achieve Partnership, we have the opportunity to compete with them for new commissions in the future. To continue to build our drug and alcohol services, we will also need to ensure that alongside the Achieve brand, the Big Life brand is also seen by commissioners.

To promote the service and prepare for tendering, we should complete an independent service evaluation. We are in discussions with GMMH about how this can be progressed after it was taken out of the contract by commissioners to achieve a financial reduction.

Big Life Schools

Big Life Schools make up 17% of the group turnover. We currently have two primary schools in deprived neighbourhoods in Manchester, which are both rated by Ofsted as Good with Outstanding features. Big Life Schools are required to comply with the Academies Financial Handbook, and funding is paid directly from central government on a fixed per pupil basis.

As new schools the financial envelope is sufficient, but as the workforce length of service grows, costs become higher and the budgets more restrictive. Future funding for salary increases and pension rises is dependent on central government. Currently Big Life Schools balance sheets are positive, as they reflect the value of two new buildings. Both schools have delivered operational surpluses every year, but following depreciation of the buildings, this has shown as a loss.

The new school buildings offer a quality environment to pupils and staff. At Longsight we have recently undertaken improvements to create a shared reception with the children's centre and additional class room space. There is opportunity to develop the external areas to offer an improved outside learning environment and the children's centre could also be extended to offer more preschool nursery places.

At Unity we have developed plans to invest in a new nursery facility and relocate the staff and administration teams. These investments (partly funded by the Nurseries Capital Fund) will reduce the reserves on Big Life Schools balance sheet significantly, and it will be a priority to rebuild these reserves over the coming years.

Opening the two schools as new provisions mean the staff team have been recruited to work in a Big Life Schools and are committed to our values. Both schools believe the group is run on strong values/principles (97% UCP and 83% LCP), and feel proud to work for the organisation (82% LCP and 93% UCP).

We have two strong head teachers and have developed a strong Senior Leadership Team. Staff feel supported by their managers and believe their manager cares about them as an individual (86% LCP, 90% UCP) and believe their manager would be quick to respond if they showed signs of being under too much pressure (86% LCP, 79% UCP).

Staff feel that the experience they gain in their job is valuable for the future (97% UCP, 100% LCP), however nearly a quarter of staff believe they have skills the group could use but don't (21% UCP, 36% LCP) and in LCP 32% of staff agreed they would leave tomorrow if they had another job. 41% feel that power struggles have a negative impact in their team.

The staff within schools are diverse. In Unity Community Primary 38% of our staff are BAME and in Longsight 53% of the team are BAME. 5% of the staff at UCP and 0% of staff at Longsight have a disability.

Turnover for UCP is 7.14% (reduced from 9% in 18/19) and 12.50% at Longsight reduced from 21.9% in 18/19.

The absence rate in UCP is 3.4% compared to 1.6% in 2018/19. In Longsight the absence rate is 5.1% compared to 9.6% in 2018/19.

Longsight Community Primary has a high number of newly-qualified teachers and this can be a heavy workload on senior leaders. As a single form entry primary school, Longsight faces challenges to funding and covering phase leadership roles, which can best be addressed through close working across the Multi Academy Trust.

Big Life Schools are developing a framework for the development of our Teaching Assistant workforce. This will ensure we are able to support their development and help them deliver a first class education to our children.

Big Life Schools provide support for whole families. Both schools have family support workers and an early years/nursery offer. Going forward we should train all our Family Support Workers as Multi-Modality Practitioners. We have worked to streamline the assessment and tracking processes in our nurseries to aid

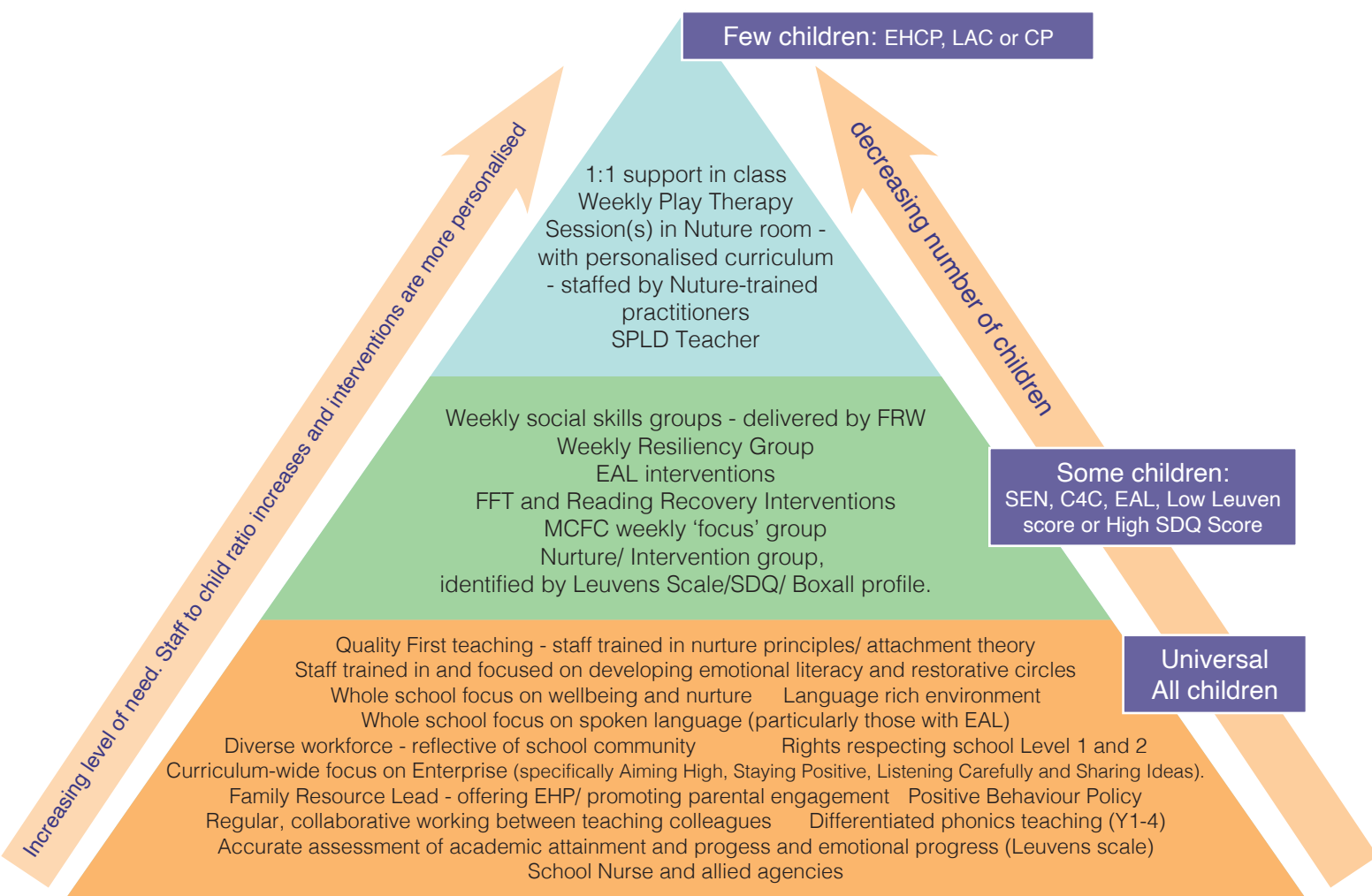
transition to school, Longsight have developed a 'passport' for children transitioning to other schools in the area. Longsight and Slade nursery are both judged as Outstanding by Ofsted.

Longsight Community Primary has the advantage of being co-located with the children's centre and the Executive Head oversees both provisions. This facilitates closer co-operation with early years services and enables strong partnerships with local partners. In 2019, the Executive Head has led on Greater Manchester initiatives to promote school readiness and this has contributed to building our reputation as a provider.

Corporate service support from the Big Life Company means that our schools have high quality corporate services (such as HR, Finance, Asset Management and Communications), which mean that teaching staff can focus on the children and families they work with. In 2020 we will ensure that ISO is embedded in the schools processes to ensure quality of administration and we can track initiatives which promote sustainability.

Big Life Schools MAT has invested in a member of staff to develop the new curriculum. Based on our Big Life Way, it will embed the latest evidence based interventions to promote the wellbeing and resilience of our children.

Big Life Schools have developed a comprehensive wellbeing programme where all children access a range of generic wellbeing interventions – such as circle time, outside learning, Rights Respecting and Growth Mindset activities. Every child is assessed against the Leuven scale and if they need some additional support they will receive some tailored interventions. These may be support with making friends, developing social skills such as taking turns, or support with oratory skills. Given the high level of deprivation in the areas we work, some of our children need additional support from external services – such as CAMHS or social services. We work closely with them to ensure our children have the best start in life. This can be a challenge when social services are stretched and often a lot of staff time is taken up with advocating for our children and their families.



Big Life Schools have secured external funding to deliver a range of community and out of school activities and play schemes, as well as the Big Chance – a volunteer training programme for parents and the local community. The Big Chance has been very successful and has enabled 9 people to move into employment at our schools. However, lack of funding has restricted opening hours for out of school activities and has impacted on our ability to retain staff to consistently build community engagement.

The improvements to the Unity building will provide more space for community activities, and we will continue to work with partners to expand the activities we have on offer. We also have the opportunity to utilise Learn Well to further expand the services we can offer to parents. However, as some parents don't speak or read English, we will need to think about other ways to support them. The restriction on access to English as a Second Language courses to people who have citizenship, is a continuing barrier which we will seek funds to overcome.

Both schools have good technology and equipment to engage children in education. We track pupil progress using Target Tracker and this enables teachers to support children with tailored interventions. Safeguarding concerns are logged on CPOMs, a separate database, which is efficient at ensuring we have accurate and quality records. However, we do not have a case management system for recording or tracking wellbeing or family interventions and this impacts our ability to monitor impact.

There some key challenges including competition from larger Multi Academy Trusts, reliance on government funding which may become restrictive, rising costs of staff, rising pension costs which are unmet by central government, and under-resourcing of nursery funding. Many of these may be outside our control, and we will have to manage to minimise their impact. However there are also many opportunities for Big Life Schools going forward.

The Free School programme and continued demand for new school places provides the opportunity to bid for more free schools in Greater Manchester. Expanding the Trust will provide us more resources to develop cross school services. Although we are a small Multi Academy Trust, we offer the opportunity to grow and develop in response to the needs of local communities. We have a strong governance model, with subsidiarity, where local governing bodies can directly influence the operation of the school.

We have the opportunity to promote our Big Life Schools Way and sell it as a product to other schools.

We should promote and attract funding to extend the Big Chance so that we can reach more people. We should promote the impact of the grant we already receive from our Charitable Trust funder.

We will seek funding to deliver a full range of out of school activities, to ensure our children have the same life experiences as children living in better off areas. This could be ideal for a corporate sponsor.

We will invest in a case management system to record the interventions and track the progress of children and families that we support. We will utilise this to evaluate the impact of our Big Life Schools Way.

As anchor services in communities, schools offer the group the opportunity to deliver long term services which are not subject to the commissioning cycle. They could enable us to expand our services and establish in new areas. We should develop our place-based plans with partners to extend our reach.

Children and Families

Children and family services now only comprise 7% of our group turnover. This reflects the reduction in commissioned services and our exit from unprofitable nursery provisions in the last three years. Considerable losses were made in the nurseries before our exit in 2017/18. The Children Centres, Outreach, Play and Stay and CAPS services, currently commissioned by Manchester City Council, have had static funding for the past five years, despite increasing costs and increasing staff salaries. We have managed this through restructuring staff teams and reducing costs, but in 19/20, this has resulted in the service making a loss. As all these services are now delivered through the Big Life Company (with the closure of Big Life Families Ltd); these losses have directly impacted on its balance sheet.

Big Life have an excellent track record in the delivery of high-quality children and family services. It has delivered a range of early intervention and family support services, but as Local Authority funding has reduced, so have commissioning opportunities. Despite this Big Life has continued to deliver a high quality service in Manchester, where we manage two Children Centres and associated services. The 2019 quality inspection by commissioners gave it 100% compliance after we achieved our family 'reach' targets.

Two of our nurseries – Slade Lane and Longsight – and Longsight Children’s Centre have all been rated by Ofsted as Outstanding. As a result we have a strong reputation in Manchester as a quality provider of children and family services.

In 2020 all children and family services will be in scope for ISO and this will help ensure the quality of our systems and processes. Safeguarding is a critical issue in this service and we ensure all our staff are fully trained and DBS compliant. Longsight Childrens Centre currently collects data on the City Council E-start system which does not facilitate the collation of good quality data. This has impacted on our ability to measure the impact of the work we do and to use the data to drive quality improvements. We have recently introduced electronic sign in to the centre which could enable us to track the services each family accesses. In the future we will explore using Big Life People to provide case management for the family support staff. This will enable us to better audit the quality of case files and drive improvement where needed.

Our Children and Family services had 31 volunteers in 2019. Most of these were recruited through the Big Chance programme with the aim of moving on into employment and training. While this is a great outcome, it leads to a high turnover and we need to explore ways to attract volunteers who wish to stay with the services for longer.

The Children Centre Steering Group is primarily attended by partner agencies and while this is really successful at promoting joint work, it does not provide a forum for local community to influence the work of the centre. Going forward we will explore new ways for the centre to gather feedback and engage with the local community, including embedding the use of Big Views.

The staff within Children and Families are diverse with 59% being BAME, 6% of the staff have a disability, and 10% have experience of mental health issues.

Turnover in children and family services is 12.33%, compared to 8.6% in 2018. Staff are committed to the group, 79% believe the organisation is run on strong values/principles and 76% feel proud to work for the organisation.

Staff feel managers support their wellbeing, 75% believe their manager takes an active interest in their wellbeing, 74% believe their manager cares about them and 70% believe their manager would be quick to respond if they showed signs of being under too much pressure.

There are some challenges in teams with 27% of staff feeling that they lack support from their manager, 23% feel that power struggles in the team have a negative impact, 30% feel that people in their teams use intimidation to get what they want and 30% feel that managers would rather avoid conflict than deal with issues.

33% of staff believe there are limited opportunities for them to learn and grow within the organisation and 40% believe they have skills that the organisation could use but doesn’t, 34% of staff would leave tomorrow if they had another job.

66% of staff agree that on most days they feel exhausted when they get home from work and 36% believe that their health is suffering because of work. We will explore this with staff in order to better understand if this is as a result of the role or if it sits related to a wellbeing issue or something else such as caring responsibilities.

55% of staff are not happy with the pay and benefits they receive in this job, 62% don’t feel that they receive fair pay for the responsibilities they have and 66% don’t feel they are paid fairly relative to people in similar positions in similar organisations. This mainly reflects the challenge of paying Campaign Living Wage salaries in the nurseries, which is a low margin business. The Nursery Education Funding for government funded ‘free childcare’ is lower than the cost of provision, and has to be topped up by parent fees for additional hours. In addition most competitors are in the private sector and only pay national living wage and offer worse terms and conditions than Big Life, in order to make the business profitable. Although it is a difficult business to sustain, we recognise the value of providing good quality childcare in the communities we work and the employment and training opportunities they create for local people.

The Longsight Children’s Centre building is owned by the Big Life Company and has recently undergone some refurbishment. It has the opportunity to expand to increase its footprint if new services require additional space, or existing services (such as the nursery) need to expand. However, opening hours have been restricted as the funding has reduced. The services is due to be recommissioned in 2020, and we will

aim to secure sufficient funding to extend opening hours.

We have delivered the Longsight Children's Centre since 2001 and as an anchor service it is much valued by the local community. It has enabled us to grow and develop new services, such as the Longsight Community Primary School. Although we have had to reduce services, it continues to offer a range of support services to whole families, including birth registration, stay and play, employability, volunteering, outreach family support, help with school registration and early years education. We will look to extend the service we offer through Learn Well, but recognise that there is a language barrier for parents who do not speak or read English. Restrictions in access to English language classes is something we will continue to campaign for, while at the same time, extending our volunteer led conversational English groups.

There are some key challenges going forward. The recommissioning of the Children's Centres, the impact of wage rises on affordability, and restrictions on NEF funding. However there are new opportunities arising from the government commitment to expanding 'family hubs', the 'troubled families' initiative and affordable childcare.

The Longsight hub model has an 18-year track record as a quality provision and has proven effective at improving school readiness and reaching some of the children most in need. This provides us with a good track record for influencing government policy and delivery of future commissions.

We should look to consolidate our nursery provision and expand on one site if it is more affordable, in order to make the most of any new investment in childcare.

As part of The Big Life group, our children and family services are uniquely positioned to offer a fully integrated service covering public health and mental health interventions. The Multi-Modality practitioners can help us deliver this.

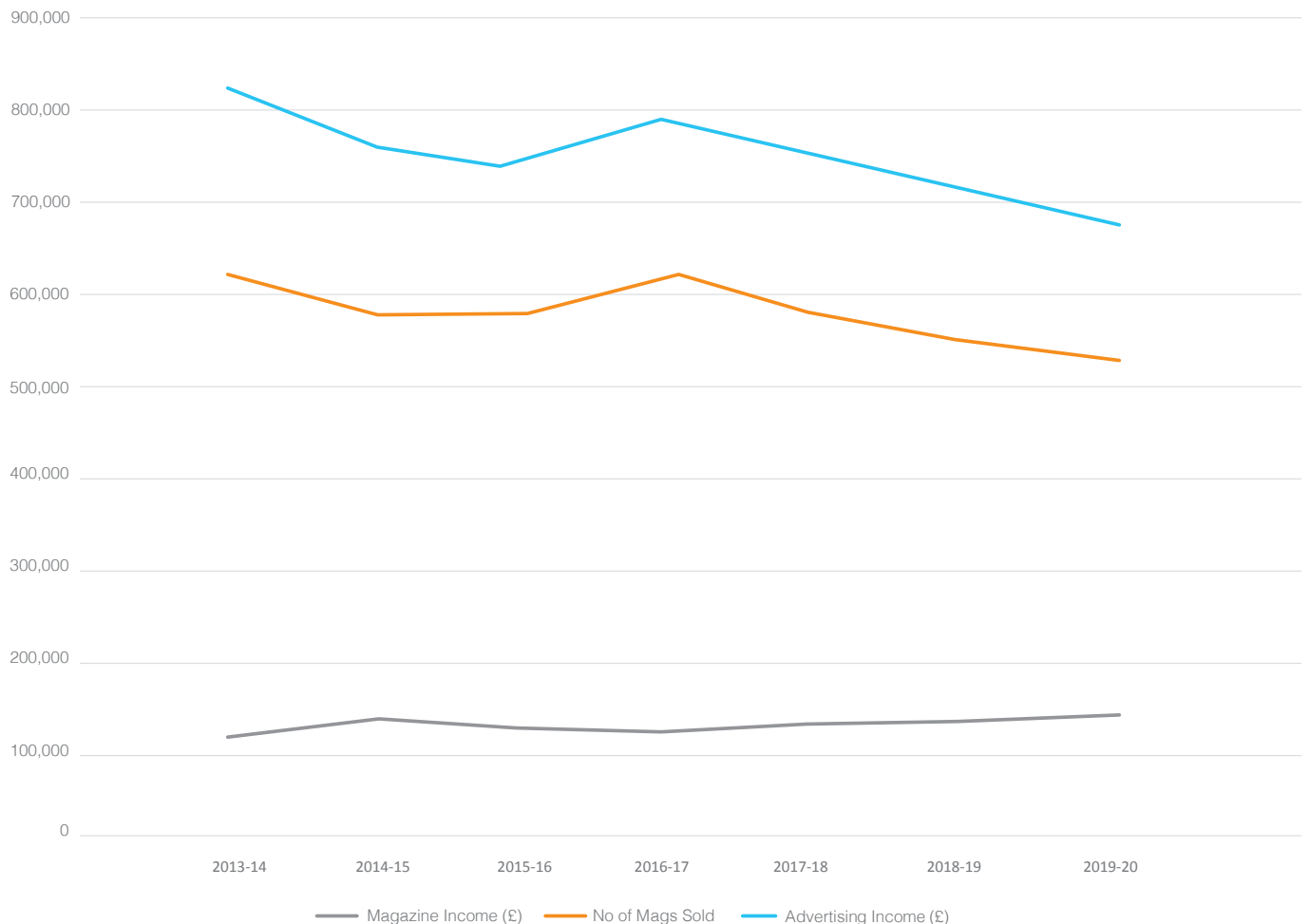
Our integrated family and school model is a unique offer we should make available in other areas. This could be by selling packages of support to schools or proactively approaching commissioners with the model.

Big Issue North and Big Life Homes

Big Issue North has been publishing a magazine since 1993. Its unique model of providing anyone in need with opportunity to earn an income makes it an essential service to stop people falling through the gap. However, over the last ten years advertising sales income has reduced and now stabilised at a lower level and magazine sales have gradually declined.

	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Magazine Income	£735,651	£791,884	£752,620	£712,975	£684,002
No. of Magazines Sold	573,592	621,288	586,846	551,290	538,529
Advertising Income	£121,434	£114,234	£128,664	£132,979	£145,284

Magazine sales and Advertising income



In the last three years, magazines sales have declined by an average by 7% each year. We have not implemented a price increase for the Magazine since January 2015 (2014-15 financial year, when then magazine increased from £2 to £2.50 (£1.25 for vendors to buy, from £1). Previous years have seen variations in sales, with a 2% reduction in sales in 2015-16 and an 8% increase in 2016-17. The price rise in January 2015, did not appear to effect sales. Comparison with Q4 2015 and Q4 2014 produced a reduction in sales of 15% but an increase in income (from the price rise) of 6%. In line with current sales trajectory, a price increase to £3, would increase income from £684,002 in 2019-20 (Quarter 4 forecast) to £751,248 in 2020-21. It would take a 15% sales loss to reduce income to the 2019-20 level. Based on previous years, any price increase would provide a buffer for the predicted sales loss. In light of this it would seem advisable to increase the cost of the Magazine to £3 in November 2020 on a permanent basis.

We have been able to reduce costs and utilise proceeds from a building sale to sustain the business through year on year reductions in income. In 2018 we closed the independent company and integrated Big Issue North into the Big Life Company, transferring its £350k balance sheet with it. In 2019/20 Big Issue North is forecast to make a loss for the first time in three years. The Big Issue North Trust continues as an independent charity. The Big Issue North Trust continues to manage regular donors well and each year has increased its income, from 96k in 2017/18, to 106k in 2018/19 and £122k in 2019/20. It has also managed to retain funding from a long term corporate donor, although at a reduced rate. In the last two years the Trust has also raised funding and raised the Big Issue North profile through Street Noise events. Following an introduction from BIUK we have established a strong corporate partnership with Freshfields and will be aiming to replicate this model with other companies. We have launched the Big Issue North shop, which has made an income of £8,219 in 2019/20. While this is a small amount, we would hope it to increase as we added to the products and did more promotion.

The Big Issue North leases accommodation in four offices and has leasehold improvements with a net book value of £76k based on the latest unaudited 2019-20 audited accounts.. In the last two years it has had to relocate two offices due to landlords selling buildings for redevelopment. Both of these offices are now in long term leases. We have introduced equipment for teleconferencing in one office and need to roll out into all our offices to facilitate agile working and reduce our carbon footprint.

Big Issue North services will be in scope for ISO in 2020 and we will work to ensure that this is embedded, helping us maintain the quality of our services and work towards improving our carbon footprint.

Big Issue North operate the Big Life People case management system but the reporting function needs further development for timely performance monitoring. Also it does not facilitate pitch management and going forwards we should explore further development which will enable us to drive sales.

In response to changing payment trends we have introduced the offer of cashless payments for vendors. This requires vendors to have a bank account, which many still seem reluctant to open. In addition, although mobile phones with data are a growing way for the population to access services, many of the most marginalised vendors do not have one.

The staff within Big Issue North and Big Life Homes are less diverse in terms of ethnicity than other areas of the group with 12% of our staff being BAME. These services have a high number of staff with lived experience with 39% of Big Issue North and Big Life Homes staff having experience of mental health issues and 10% experience of addiction. 12% of the staff have a disability, Turnover for the services is 28.13%, and this is higher than the 14% turnover in 2018/19 as a result of a staff restructure this year.

Big Issue North has a committed staff team, 88% of people believe the organisation is run on strong values/principles, 94% feel proud to work for the organisation and believe that they can make a valuable contribution to the success of The Big Life group.

Staff feel supported by managers with 94% believing their manager takes an active interest in their wellbeing and 88% agree their manager cares about them as an individual and would be quick to respond if they showed signs of being under too much pressure.

Despite this, only 53% of staff are happy with the balance between their home and work life 47% of staff agree that on most days they feel exhausted when they get home from work and 18% believe that their health is suffering because of work. We will explore this with staff in order to better understand if this is as a result of the role or if it sits related to a wellbeing issue or something else such as caring responsibilities.

Big Issue North has less scope for flexible working than other services and so teams should identify what they can do to enable greater flexibility for all staff.

There is a strong sense of team within the Big Issue North managers, all enjoy working with other managers, believe that managers do everything to support each other, and all disagreed that there are managers in their team for whom they have no respect however 43% of managers felt that at least one member of their team was underperforming.

Staff value their roles with 82% feeling the experience they gain in their job is valuable for their future, but 41% believe there are limited opportunities for them to learn and grow within the organisation. The Big Issue North staff team has reduced in size and so staff may see limited opportunities within their immediate teams, however there could be opportunities for development in the wider group. Managers should ensure all staff have personal development plans in place to enable their development.

Due to reductions in staff teams Big Issue North struggles to participate in all the local homeless and inter agency meetings in the four cities where it has offices (Liverpool, Manchester, Leeds and Sheffield). The Regional Manager and Team Leaders manage the satellite services, but more resource needs to be invested to increase sales outside the cities. Big Issue North will benefit from the development of place-based plans which facilitate joint working and partnerships with other agencies.

We do not have many volunteers working with us in Big Issue North and this may be an opportunity to develop. Following street noise events we have followed up people who have engaged with us and successfully recruited them to one off fundraising events. In the future we should explore investing in (or finding funding for) someone to develop and co-ordinate volunteers roles, as in order to sustain their interest we need more regular engagement.

While previously funding has been used for the delivery of support services, due to reductions in sales income, most funding has been directed at sustaining the Big Issue North Co-ordinator roles. Through these staff we continue to provide much needed support to some of the most vulnerable people in our communities. In 2019 The Big Issue North Trust provided a total of 1521 crisis interventions with vendors, including support with accommodation, employment, education, health needs and benefits and advice on citizenship.

We will further enhance the quality of our services by training Big Issue North Co-ordinators as Multi-Modality Practitioners. We will also explore ways in which we can support vendors to access Learn Well in order to broaden the services we offer.

Big Issue North has 350 vendors every week selling the magazine. The demographics and needs of our vendors have changed over time. Currently our vendors are 60 % Male, 40 % female, 28% of our vendors described themselves as British, 66% are Romanian and the remaining 6% of vendors comprise nationalities including Polish, Slovakian, Czech, Latvian and Italian. While the oldest vendor in 2004 was 65, our 2019 audit recorded five vendors aged between 61 and 65, one vendor between 66 and 70 and one vendor between 76 and 80. The amount of older vendors has also increased since our last audit in 2016, when only 15% of our vendors were over the age of 50. Overall, 11% of vendors said they had been in care during childhood, 7% had been in the armed forces, and 18% had been in prison at some time in their lives. 74% of vendors who have now been selling Big Issue North for more than 2 years, 53% have been selling for 5 years or longer vendors say selling the magazine helps them by

- Providing a way to earn an income: 88%
- Improving their confidence and/or motivation: 57%
- Improving their budgeting skills: 21%
- Providing a structure to their day: 29%
- Giving them something to do: 41%
- Signposting them to support services: 13%
- Providing support from staff to make changes: 19%

The magazine is reliant on the larger number of Roma vendors currently selling the magazine, and the potential fallout from Brexit and tougher immigration controls may impact on their ability to remain in the UK. We have developed strong links with the Romanian Embassy in Manchester and have facilitated workshops in all of our offices to support vendors to obtain the right to remain. This will continue to be a priority in 2020.

Big Issue North is a recognised public brand and has strong partnerships with retailers, police and politicians. Events such as the Big Sell have kept it current. We have a strong social media engagement (users interacted with our social media messages more than 130,000 times in 2019/20) which has been improved by the introduction of video stories. It has a wide footprint across the North and provides the group with an anchor service in areas where it may not have other services.

We have had some success in Liverpool at building on our Big Issue North team to secure new commissions. We have delivered the Community Voice service for 17 years and it has widened the range of opportunities for staff and vendors. It has built our reputation in Liverpool and has contributed to the overheads of the Big Issue North.

We will develop place-based plans for the areas we work in, so that we can maximise our partnerships and the support we can offer to vendors.

Over the last three years we have attempted to diversify the income streams to sustain the business, while widening the opportunities available to vendors. In 2017 we produced our first calendars for vendors to sell and in 2019, for the first time, we made a profitable return suggesting that we need to allow sufficient time for new initiatives to establish. We published a 'children's take over' issue which was funded by one of Big Life Schools. It provided a great experience for the children and wide publicity for the magazine. At the end of 2019, we have also launched the New Issue, which we expect will only break even in 2021, and make a contribution thereafter. In 2020 we will pilot a coffee cart scheme.

Given the timescales for return on these investments, the most effective way to return the magazine to profitability will be to increase the price. We have held off on this, while we were hoping to coincide a price rise with BIUK, but we may have to make this decision independently of them. Risks to this approach include management of vendor pitches close the BIUK offices and encroachment of their magazine into our areas. In the past we have considered joint working and merger opportunities with the BIUK, but these have always been rebuffed, with the only option being to give Big Issue North to them. We have always

resisted this option, as we believe we offer vendors a better service, and have always managed to sustain the business. If this ever becomes not the case, we should revisit this option.

Following the loss of commissioned supported housing contracts, we developed Big Life Homes to deliver low needs supported accommodation in Liverpool. Managed through the Liverpool Big Issue North office, it provided a contribution to the overheads of Big Issue North as well as a much needed service. Big Life Homes currently offers ten one bedroom properties for rent, but in 2020 will expand by another eight properties. These properties are leased by us from a developer, and make a 10% contribution per annum. We are currently bidding for some investment to purchase a further 20 properties in Liverpool, to expand the opportunities we can offer and the contribution.

Big Issue North provides The Big Life group with a media resource from which it has developed its campaigning. We have revitalised the Big Issue North website to offer the opportunity for more interaction and engagement. We have developed the Anon Podcast to showcase real people's stories, and latterly launched the New Issue, to provide an alternative to mainstream media portrayal of the people we work with. We need to get better at selling our products and will explore bringing in marketing and sales expertise, so that we are not only producing quality stories, but successfully selling them as well.