

**THE  
BIG  
LIFE  
GROUP**

**BUSINESS  
PLAN  
2025-30**

# FORWARD

If there is anything the last five years has taught us, it is how to live with uncertainty. We have had everything from Covid, rising fuel and a cost-of-living crisis, to a cyber-attack. That's not to mention international conflict and war.



In the face of this, we adapted and changed. And as a result, we achieved a lot. We nearly doubled our turnover; we became a Real Living Wage Employer and reduced our pay gaps. But most importantly we focused on the communities experiencing the highest inequalities and we massively reduced our impact on the planet – cutting our carbon emissions by 60%.

There is no indication that the future is going to be any more predictable. The new Labour government is making sweeping reforms – not arguing for a smaller state, but a more efficient and streamlined one. It has started on a programme of cuts to welfare benefits and its fiscal rules will inevitably lead to greater financial restraint in the NHS, social care and education.

Prisons are overflowing and the housing crisis deepens. While we haven't seen the attack on equity initiatives that's happening in the US, politics in the UK and Europe is increasingly polarised, with divisive policies becoming mainstream.

Meanwhile wealth inequality continues to grow, and life outcomes for people in the poorest areas, and marginalised groups, continues to worsen. There has never been a time when our mission to fight for equity, in health, in wealth and in life has been more important.

What this means for us, in the next five years, is that we need to:

- Adapt and innovate; be faster and do it better.
- Drive efficiencies so that we can do more with less cost.
- Have a laser like focus on reducing inequity.

This business plan sets out how we are going to do that – the changes we need to make to our services, and the foundations we need as an organisation to deliver it.

**Fay Selvan** CEO, *The Big Life group*

# OUR ACHIEVEMENTS 2020-25

We have increased the number of people we work with each year and developed services in the new sectors.



We have increased the size of our workforce.



We have worked with more people each year, growing the number of people we provide individual support to by 25% to 64,000 a year.



We have actively engaged volunteers.



We have delivered services for all people and communities, with a focus on those where health and social inequalities are highest

We have reduced our carbon emissions by

60 %

- Adopting agile working
- Using more electronic records
- Moving to Office 365
- Introducing online booking
- Reducing the use of paper
- Making improvements to our buildings

We have continued to reduce inequity in our workforce, paying fair wages.



We have added a new building and a freehold lease to our balance sheet.



We have grown our assets from

£11m  
TO  
£14m

We have increased our group income by

80 %

from £19.5million to £36million.

We have invested in our assets while also achieving profitability in 4 of the past 5 years.

£850K

into our Apps and Data Warehouse.

£1M

into new Big Life Homes properties.

£1M+

investment programme into our community centres.

£1.4M

into our schools.



Through initiative such as our career development programme for staff from racialised communities, changes to our recruitment practices and adopting the Real Living Wage, we have reduced our ethnicity pay gap from 10% to 3.9% and our gender pay gap from 10% to 7%. We have retained our pay ratio between the highest and average pay at 3.1:1.

# IN SUMMARY

Despite public sector austerity, The Big Life group has nearly doubled its turnover over the last five years 2020-25, increasing the number of staff employed to around 700 and reaching more people than ever before. We made a small surplus annually, gradually increasing cash reserves and enabling investment in infrastructure, including the development of a data warehouse.

At the same time, need for the services the group provides has grown. The UK ranks as the ninth most unequal of 38 OECD countries for income distribution; wealth distribution is even worse - the poorest 25% of the population own just 0.5% of the wealth. The last ten years have seen little or no growth in income for households in the lowest 50% of the income distribution. The cost-of-living crisis, caused by rising energy prices following the outbreak of war in Ukraine, further exacerbated the situation.

As a result, another one million children were living in poverty in 2023, compared to 2011, up from 3.5m to 4.3m. And poverty impacts some communities and areas more than others. 47% of children in Asian families and 51% in Black families live in poverty. Manchester and Liverpool have the highest child poverty rates in the northwest, and there is a significant wealth gap between people living in the north of England compared to the southeast.

Whether you look at trends in addictions, housing, criminal Justice, mental health or physical health, the impact of inequality and increasing poverty can be seen. In the last five years we have recorded the highest number of drug related deaths. The prisons are overflowing, and the government had to introduce an emergency 'early release' scheme to relieve overcrowding. The lack of affordable housing has led to a rise in homelessness, and half of the families living in temporary accommodation stay for more than two years. Manchester has experienced the first fall in infant mortality since the beginning of the 20th century, with the death rate increasing by 40%. There has been an exponential increase in children going into care – a 36% rise over ten years.

Within this there are regional and demographic inequalities. Life expectancy has worsened for people in the north and regional inequality has grown, with people living six to nine years less than people living in the southeast. People from racialised communities are three times more likely to be homeless than white British people.

Inequality is impacting social cohesion as populist rhetoric blames immigrant communities or equality initiatives as the causes of inadequate housing or poor public services. Hate crime tripled over the last five years, with racially motivated hate crime the most reported. Antisemitic and Islamophobic hate crime both increased.

The new government elected in 2024 committed to fiscal rules, giving it little room to invest in public services. Its refusal to reverse the two-child benefit cap and proposed welfare reforms are likely to negatively impact the poorest. A lack of commitment to provide additional funding to cover public sector pay awards and unfunded national insurance rises suggests that the financial environment in public services is unlikely to get easier in the near future.



This environment creates a pressure for Big Life to do more to fight inequality and help more people change their lives. In the next five years there are opportunities to develop and grow what we do. **We will:**

## MULTIPLE DISADVANTAGE

- Expand and develop our problem-solving wellbeing coach service in justice, prisons, addictions, and homelessness services, influencing commissioners to adopt assertive outreach in addiction services and embed addiction in justice services.
- Expand and diversify Big Life Homes into other geographies and to other client groups: prison leavers, people at risk of homelessness, addictions, children's care and care leavers. We will have a variety of levels of support as required by people.

## PUBLIC AND MENTAL HEALTH

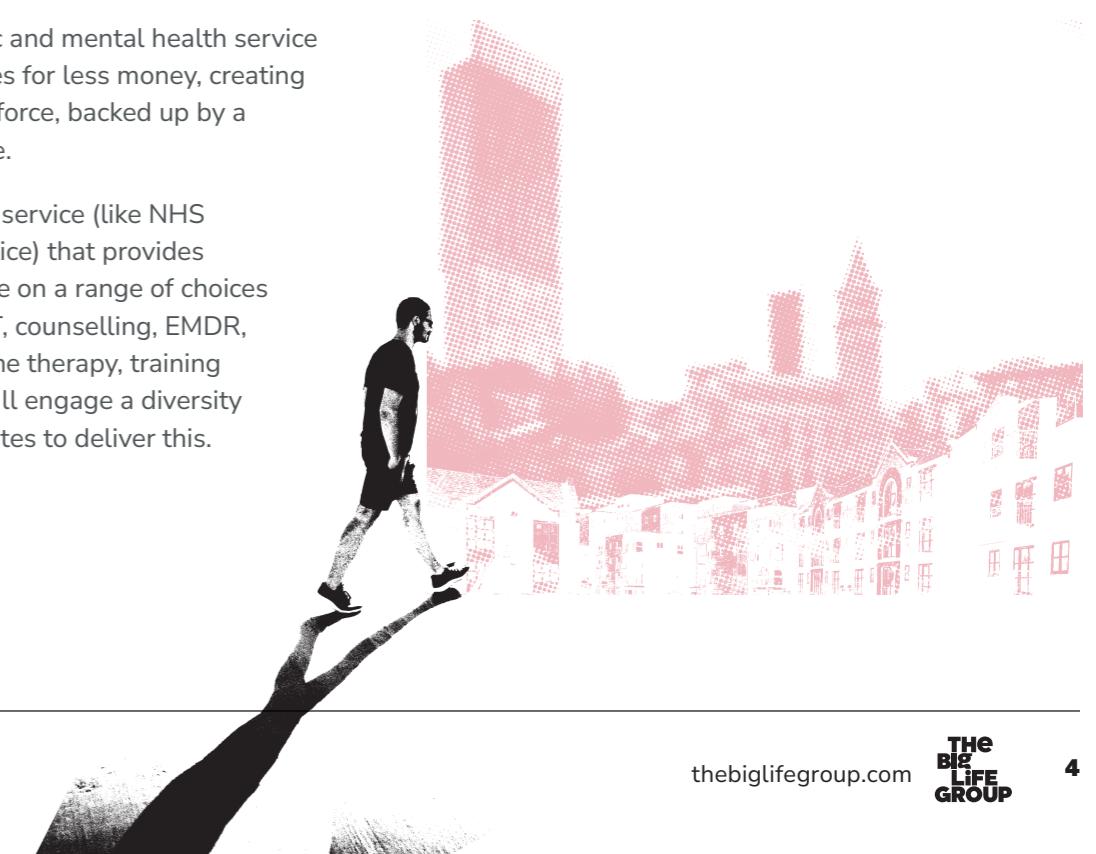
- Increase choice and control, improving outcomes for people and communities.
- Pilot an integrated public and mental health service to deliver better outcomes for less money, creating a more sustainable workforce, backed up by a modularised MMP course.
- Create a pay-for therapy service (like NHS consultants Private Practice) that provides assessment and guidance on a range of choices of therapy, including CBT, counselling, EMDR, wellbeing coaching, online therapy, training and virtual reality. We will engage a diversity of self-employed associates to deliver this.

## CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

- Develop children's homes, providing a high-quality alternative to private sector provision.
- Grow our Family Hubs.
- Continue to offer nursery provision to support our other services.
- Look for opportunities to bring in new schools to our Multi Academy Trust.
- Develop and grow specialist services, such as sensory services and support for children not attending school.

## ALTERNATIVE MODELS OF EMPLOYMENT

- Develop Big Issue North, Wesley and Big Life Training to provide a range of alternative routes into employment, bringing in more trading income, and delivering work and skills contracts such as Work Well.





# OUR MISSION

To fight for equity, in health, in wealth and in life.

To deliver this expansion, Big Life needs to strengthen its foundations. We will identify efficiencies through use of technology and innovation, which will enable us to work better with less. We will secure social investment to support business development.

We will use our data warehouse to help us focus on our mission to reduce inequality, by helping us understand if we are reaching the people and communities who are most in need, and – importantly – if we are achieving equity in outcomes. We will improve our ability to gather and utilise feedback from people with lived experience, to ensure that our services are effective and inclusive.

We will develop our systems and processes so that we are maximising the choice and control people have when engaging with us – their choice of who they work with, when they work with them, and how they work with them. We will aim to ensure that people we work with have access in real time to their information, so that they can use it to help themselves. We will improve our customer experience, reducing barriers and friction for people using our services.

We will have a highly trained workforce which is able to work with people facing multiple challenges, supporting them to build on their strengths and develop resilience, utilising the Big Life Way. Our values will drive our decisions. Our fight for equity includes a drive to reduce pay gaps internally, and to adopt working practices and cultures which are inclusive of diversity.

We will develop partnerships with other agencies in all sectors, so that we can provide better services for the people we work with. We will partner on innovations, research and pilot new ways to do things. We will share our findings to inform policy and practice.

We will stay connected to the communities we work in, challenging divisive narratives and building assets.

We will use the equity in our capital assets to invest in our estates to ensure we provide quality environments and reduce our carbon footprint.

# OUR VISION FOR 2030

**By 2030 we will be the go-to organisation for reducing inequality, working with communities and providing support in the north of England.**

**We will focus in areas and services where we can have the biggest impact on reducing inequality, where we can innovate and where we are a good fit locally.**

**We will prioritise communities that experience the highest health, social and economic inequities.**

# DELIVERING OUR VISION

We will deliver our vision through two objectives:

## Impact objective:

We will reduce health, social, and economic inequities through supporting more people every year to achieve their goals, working most with communities experiencing disadvantage.

## Social business objective

We will thrive as a business, delivering high-performing services that generate profits to reinvest in achieving our mission.

We will deliver our objectives by focusing on three impact pillars and our foundations.



## PEOPLE

Who we work with and the services we offer them.



## PLACE

How we embed our services locally and reach people.



## PRACTiCE

Our skill and knowledge of delivery in multiple sectors.



## FOUNDATIONS

We will deliver our social business objectives by building strong foundations in five areas:

- Financial strength
- Governance of performance and quality
- Digital and physical infrastructure
- Workforce skills and culture
- Innovation and partnership



## PEOPLE

### By 2030...

- We help 100,000 people a year to overcome challenges and achieve their goals.
- We reach more people from disadvantaged areas, proportionate to the local population.
- 90% of people who use our services are satisfied with the support they receive.
- Everyone using a Big Life service has choice and control about how they access it and the support they receive.
- Our services improve the resilience of the people we work with, supporting self-care.

## PLACE

### By 2030...

- Our services focus on communities facing the most disadvantage and are easily accessible by people with multiple challenges.
- We are embedded in communities and have a reputation for partnering with local organisations to solve problems.
- We work at scale to integrate services by creating partnerships with like-minded organisations.
- We are a trusted provider and have grown in areas where we can add value.

## PRACTICE

### By 2030...

- All our services use data and information to continually improve outcomes and evidence impact.
- Our expertise in delivery across multiple sectors ensures we deliver first-class services and support.
- We are contributing to research and evidence about effective ways of working.
- We are partnering with innovators to adopt new technologies and practices.
- We have delivered five innovation pilots, adopting one into service delivery
- We are reaching more volunteers with protected characteristics, proportionate to the local population.
- We make improvements as a result of feedback from people with lived experience

## FOUNDATIONS

### By 2030...

- We have a track record of profitability and a strong balance sheet, enabling us to invest in innovation.
- We have strong governance of performance and quality.
- We use technology to drive efficiencies, quality, and personalised services.
- We have reduced our carbon footprint by investing in our buildings and reducing waste.
- We have a highly skilled, trained and engaged workforce.
- We employ more staff with protected characteristics, proportionate to the local population.
- Our managers are confident in managing change.
- Our staff recommend us as a good employer.
- We have reduced our pay gaps to zero and have a pay ratio no higher than 3:1.

# OUR VALUES

Our values represent what we believe in. They guide all the decisions we make.



We stand up for ourselves, and the people and communities we work alongside, even when that makes us unpopular, or challenges accepted wisdom.



We find innovative solutions that work, never accepting the easy option or the status quo.



We act with integrity, speaking the truth to ourselves and others.



We are inspired by the people and communities we work with and share what we learn from them to inspire others.



We act with care and compassion and work to understand people's experiences. We take time to listen, reflect and continually learn.



We recognise and celebrate the unique qualities, gifts, insights and perspectives that different people offer.

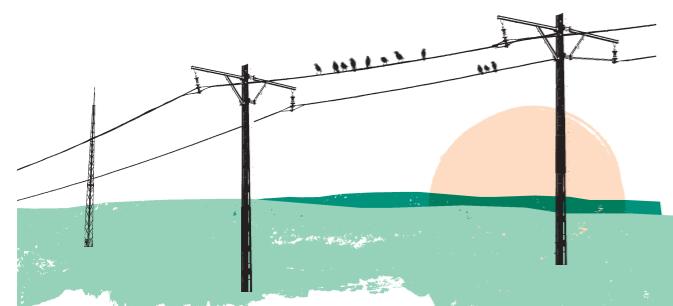
# THE BIG LIFE WAY

The Big Life Way is how we work.



## Be COMMUNiTY Led

We focus on what matters to communities, building on their strengths and recognising their aspirations



## Be CONNECTED

We have strong and lasting connections with our colleagues, partners, people and communities, achieving more together than we can alone.



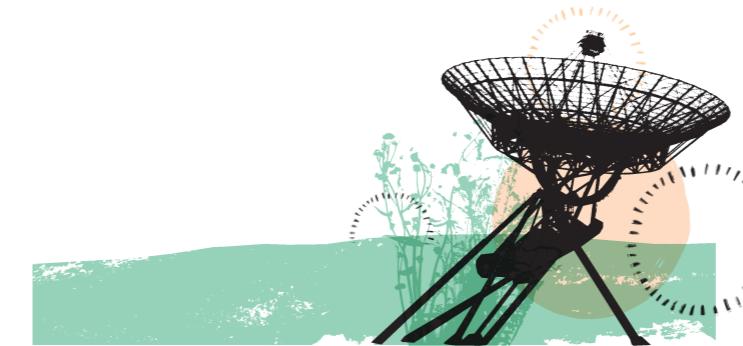
## Be RELENTLESS

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



## Be WORLD CLASS

We deliver world class services that offer opportunities, and fight structural and social inequity



## LISTEN LEARN CHANGE

We are a learning organisation. We listen to the people we work with and learn from the world around us, to change things that aren't right



## SEE PEOPLE NOT PROBLEMS

We work with people on all areas of their lives. We see the strengths in everyone, and work in a way that is informed by their life experience.



# THE BIG LIFE GROUP

We fight for equity –  
in health, in wealth and in life.

[thebiglifegroup.com](http://thebiglifegroup.com)