



Portland
Charity

5-YEAR PLAN 2021-26

A lifetime of opportunity



INTRODUCTION

The Portland Charity Group runs one of Britain's leading specialist colleges for people with disabilities. Portland College offers further education study programmes for around 200 young people. The College is externally recognised as a centre of excellence for autism provision.

Portland offers a growing range of adult education courses focusing on mental health recovery, employability and independence skills. Our adult education programmes are all delivered in partnership with the Inspire Trust Adult Learning Service and Academy Transformation Trust Further Education.

In adult social care, Portland Freedom offers fully en-suite residential facilities for further education, independent living and a dedicated respite care/short breaks suite. Additionally, we have a thriving enablement and opportunity day service.

Our main 32-acre woodland campus in historic Sherwood Forest, houses the award winning Woodland Adventure Zone and new for 2021, the spectacular Newstart Theatre and sports hall.

We have pioneered satellite centres in Nottingham City, Sutton-in-Ashfield, Mansfield and new for 2021, Worksop.

In 2020 we acquired a majority shareholding in a partner company Pollyteach Ltd - an alternative provision specialist registered school based in Kirkby-in-Ashfield.



WHY FOCUS ON PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES?

An estimated **31%** of people with disabilities live in relative poverty. This is 50% higher than for non-disabled people.¹

Around **51%** of people with disabilities of typical working age were classed by the government as economically active. This compares to 80% of their non-disabled peers.²

For adults with learning disabilities those unemployment levels rocket to over **90%**

People with disabilities in the UK score **SIGNIFICANTLY LOWER** than non-disabled on all key well-being measures.³

In the Districts local to Portland College, the percentage of adults on long-term benefits associated with disability and medical conditions is **SIGNIFICANTLY HIGHER** than the regional and English averages.⁴

1 Joseph Rowntree Foundation UK Poverty 2019/20 February 2020.
2 House of Commons Library Disabled People in Employment 01 April 2021.
3 Office for National Statistics Outcomes for Disabled People in the UK: 2020 18 February 2021.
4 Data from D2N2 Local Enterprise Partnership.

OUR VISION

All people with disabilities will have a lifetime of opportunity.

OUR MISSION

We deliver excellent programmes to inspire and empower people with disabilities to live more independent, fulfilling lives.

THE FOCUS OF OUR 5-YEAR PLAN

Portland Charity currently works with three key themes that directly address the challenges many people with disabilities face.

**HEALTH
AND
WELL-BEING**

INDEPENDENCE

**EMPLOYABILITY
AND
EMPLOYMENT**

We will continue to align our programmes and our development plans around those key themes, building on our current successes and the regional and national recognition we have already achieved. Our ambition is to build on our strong local reputation as a thought leader in specialist education.

Recognising the wider context in Britain and the world, we will work towards a concerted programme of action on sustainability and aim to publish a long-term plan in autumn 2022.

We also recognise that after 18 months of a global pandemic, there are considerable pressures on public finances, therefore our programmes need to offer clear value-for-money propositions and, where feasible, demonstrate efficiency gains.

In July 2021 the UK Government introduced a Green Paper, National Disability Strategy which focuses primarily on measures to improve the daily lived experience of disabled people: housing, employment, transport, healthcare, education and access to leisure and services. It also sets out measures to improve access to public services and public sector jobs. With the success of our Pathways programme and other award-winning education and leisure programmes, Portland Charity is not only ideally placed to work with the opportunities of a new national strategy but also can be a national thought leader in demonstrating exceptional value-added programmes in employability and housing.

During the plan period we will work to continue to improve the quality of all our programmes and aim to achieve Ofsted and Care Quality Commission outstanding grades, renew our National Autistic Society Advanced Accreditation status, gain Disability Confident Champion status and retain our Matrix Guidance Council accreditation.

HEALTH & WELL-BEING

We believe that happiness and health are the heart of a well-lived life. Our intention is to build positive actions into all our programmes to support and where necessary enhance individual well-being both mentally and physically.

Some of the programmes we have introduced over the last 3 years have this as their main purpose: for example, Recovery College and the Woodland Adventure Zone. We plan to grow this provision over the next 5 years by opening new locations for Recovery College (e.g. Worksop) and increasing usage of the Woodland Adventure Zone which is available at selected times free of charge to local schools and community groups.

Our innovative programme for developing skills of resilience and autonomous well-being is our Be Healthy, Active and Courageous programme. In 2020-21 we have trained 150 staff in this programme which builds physical exercise into a wide range of timetabled sessions, generates collective solutions to improve learner well-being and support and links all enrichment activities to at least one of the 5 NHS Steps to Well-being. Our next step is to roll out this training to staff delivering in care and adult education pathways.

Our physiotherapy service will lead on the development of a lifetime of support offer for people with disabilities, building on their innovative work around learning disability, virtual reality physical therapy and excellent facilities in our Elms therapy centre. In time, we will seek to extend community access across a range of therapies and look for new partnerships and funding opportunities to facilitate access.

Our research with College leavers and consultation with existing students and residents confirms that access to primary healthcare is an area of concern for people with disabilities. We are studying these issues in more depth and looking to create innovative partnerships in the latter phase of the plan.



INDEPENDENCE

This can be characterised in so many ways and ultimately is about providing genuinely person-centred provision.

The aspiration to improve housing supply for people with disabilities was an extremely popular option in the consultation on the plan. During the plan period we will undertake a number of actions:

- Refurbishing a campus bungalow, equipped with assistive technology as an independent living teaching space.
- Partnership with ADS Independent Living Solutions to build a prototype modular smart home using advanced building technologies, for teaching and research purposes.
- Build up to 35 independence flats by remodelling an existing residential block.
- Seek external partnerships to build disability inclusion into new developments and refurbishments of existing social housing stock.

We are currently seeking approval to deliver a Supported Living service registered with the Care Quality Commission. Subject to registration approval, there will be a limit of 10 individual units for Supported Living on campus. We see the expansion of this service in terms of people with disabilities living in ordinary neighbourhoods. However, the Supported Living service will be supplemented by a 'step down' provision, using campus properties for young people to transition from our Independent Living Service in preparation for leaving residential care.

Our research and consultation for the plan demonstrated time and again that many adults with complex disabilities have significant issues in terms of transport for access to a variety of services and recreation opportunities. We will create a pilot project to increase deployment of our transport fleet to provide travel opportunities for disabled people locally and seek to develop a partnership with a community transport provider to increase travel opportunities for disabled people locally/regionally. We will also look to build lifetime travel-resilience in young disabled people through more intensive independent travel training and a focused project to reduce the number of students relying on specialist transport services to travel to and from College.



EMPLOYABILITY AND EMPLOYMENT

The national and local data show that it is vital that we continue to pursue this theme very strongly.

The pandemic has necessitated rapid development of strategy to deliver home learning. We do not envision that a full study programme for Further Education could be delivered remotely, but there may be emerging opportunities to combine learning elsewhere (e.g. at home or in the workplace) with attending college. We will undertake a feasibility study in 2021-22 to assess what the market and opportunities might be for remote learning packages, particularly using digital communications.

Relationships with employers

- Continue with the Nottinghamshire County Council partnership to increase the annual number of Supported Internship places to at least 100 across the partnership.
- Developing improved teaching facilities for construction trades (with accessibility to other SEN providers).
- Building a manufacturing training facility on Portland campus (the target industry is furniture making, responding to the local labour market).
- Continuously review the curriculum to respond to local labour market needs, producing feasibility studies on health & social care and transport & logistics in 2021-22.
- Opening Portland Pathways and Progress with Portland in a number of town centre locations (Worksop, Nottingham, Newark, potentially Bolsover).



STAFF

Portland is a people organisation: around 80% of our expenditure is on our highly skilled, empathetic work force whose main work is with other people.

Since the introduction of the National Living Wage in 2015 we have ensured that the majority of our staff have been paid above that level and all staff have had an annual cost of living increase. In 2021 we will complete a comprehensive exercise designed to ensure fair pay across all the different roles we operate in the College. We are also actively exploring how we can improve productivity and financial efficiency and share those gains with staff in terms of higher salaries.

As an organisation, we believe we have provided considerable support to staff through the challenges of the pandemic. However, we plan to sustain our support and increase our investment in staff well-being once we are able to move out of emergency pandemic management. We have joined the Midland Engine Mental Health and Productivity Pilot scheme which gives us access to expert help and resources in managing for continuous improvement in this area. We will develop dashboard reporting on staff well-being to mirror the data we use to monitor our performance in this area for learners. Staff trained to deliver our Be Healthy, Active and Courageous programme report benefits for their own health in learning about and applying techniques they can use to support learners and residents.

We believe we can improve the productivity of already skilled staff with further investment in training and development and using digital technologies. For example, processes of daily record keeping which are essential in residential care settings can be made more efficient by replacing paper-based records with digital apps.

We also intend to build on existing skills by identifying more specialised roles that will be open to colleagues to apply for with commensurate higher salaries. We will also continue to support existing staff with a view to succession planning so that they are able to fulfil supervisory, management or more advanced professional roles.



VOLUNTEERS

Our charity is governed by skilled volunteers who work tirelessly to improve opportunities and outcomes for our learners and residents. We will continue to support the board with accurate, timely and transparent reporting and to access training and development opportunities.

Some staff training and development opportunities will also be open to all volunteers. This can be a great basis for moving from volunteering into paid employment. This is particularly relevant in developing the CVs and demonstrating employability skills for some people with disabilities.

We are keen to develop our use of volunteers to unlock new opportunities linked to the strategic plan. We envision using volunteers to help us overcome transport barriers, support extra-curricular and community activities and continue to improve the appearance of the campus. By investing in a Volunteer and Corporate Social Responsibility Coordinator we now have the capacity to develop robust systems to ensure both the volunteers and the charity achieve positive outcomes.

We will increase the level of volunteering through corporate social responsibility, converting the goodwill from local businesses into practical output on the campus. Where more specialised roles are required we will recruit for specific volunteers, such as minibus drivers, where a modest investment in training could unlock new services and activities using existing assets such as the minibuses.



PARTNERSHIPS

The ambition of our vision to create a lifetime of opportunity is not something we can achieve without influencing wider society and joining with like-minded organisations to deliver powerful change.

For example, our award-winning Pathways programme is aimed at generating a statistically visible reduction in the disability employment gap locally. It is funded in partnership with local businesses such as Linney in Mansfield. The Recovery College is validated by Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust and taught by tutors from Inspire Learning.

Inspire Learning are also partnering us to develop the Progress learner journey, opening up lifelong learning for adults with disabilities throughout Nottinghamshire. We also are working with Inspire Youth Arts who are bringing years of expertise and innovation in fully inclusive performance arts to help us make the most of the £1.6million investment in the Newstart Theatre and Sports Hall.

Our Independent Living service has been supported for several years by the wonderful tutors of Academy Transformation Trust Further Education based in Sutton-in-Ashfield. We have worked together with them to support the Let's All Eat foodbank initiative and now we are developing this partnership further to extend the lifelong learning opportunities in the county and beyond. A great example is capitalising on the Government's investment in Ashfield via the new Towns Fund to build a new construction academy, alongside many other exciting projects, with Portland developing a foundation curriculum on its own campus to complement the facilities in Sutton and Kirkby-in-Ashfield led by Vision West Nottinghamshire College and including our partners at Inspire and ATTFE.

Portland has a long history of innovation, often in partnership with Universities. During the plan period we will look to renew and deepen those links capitalising on our pioneering work in virtual reality physiotherapy and new developments like the stunning Smile Home created by ADS Independent Living Solutions.



FINANCIAL RESOURCES

The range of our developments and increasing the number of beneficiaries all requires investment and sustained programme expenditure. The charity has successfully navigated many transitions and funding changes and has a strong balance sheet and no debt.

This enviable position will enable us to invest with confidence and provide matched funding for new developments, building on very successful fundraising campaigns for the Woodland Adventure Zone, Newstart Theatre and new minibuses in the last 3 years.

It has also enabled us to invest in diversifying the organisation and looking to create long term financial stability through a very carefully managed strategy of commercial acquisition. It also gives us the potential to work collaboratively with other organisations that share our values and support our vision.

5-YEAR BENEFICIARY NUMBERS

Programme area	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
FE Study Programmes, non-residential	188	185	195	210	220	225
FE Study Programme, residential	11	10	13	15	17	19
Progress Adult Education	20	48	72	96	96	96
Supported Internships	5	11	13	16	19	22
Freedom Day Service number of beneficiaries	75	81	85	85	91	91
Freedom Independent living residents	25	26	27	27	27	27
Freedom Short Break clients	65	95	95	95	95	95
Freedom Supported Living	-	5	10	15	20	20
Recovery College	45	100	120	140	160	180
Pathways Employment Programme	45	50	65	75	90	90
Employer Engagement Pathways (active contacts)	40	50	55	60	65	65
Woodland Adventure Zone users (not included above)		500	600	700	750	750
National Citizenship Numbers (Portland)	100	100	100	120	120	120
Total number of beneficiaries	619	1261	1450	1654	1770	1800
Trading Surplus (Deficit) (£000s)	(131)	150	225	362		

OUTCOME BASED KPIs

Our 5-year plan shows our commitment to increasing the number of people who can benefit from our programmes. However, we also need to demonstrate that those programmes are effective and help individuals to achieve positive outcomes.

Initially using our 3 core themes we will test the effectiveness of our plan with a number of key performance indicators:

- Do the majority of participants on our programmes report improved mental well-being?
- Do the majority of participants on our programmes report increased physical activity?
- Do the majority of participants on our programmes feel safe at College?
- Have we met our target for supporting learners into employment?
- Have we met our target for the number of Supported Internships?
- Have we met our target for the number of people supported to live independently?
- Have we met our target for the number of people achieving independence learning targets?

These targets will be set and reported on annually.

The first report will be in September 2022.



Portland
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Portland College

Nottingham Road, Mansfield,
Nottinghamshire, NG18 4TJ

T: Main College Reception **01623 499111**

T: Student Recruitment **01623 499186**

E: marketing@portland.ac.uk

www.portland.ac.uk

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