



brighter futures

creative support, housing and employment

SUSTAINABLE - Ensuring that we have an organisation that will be here for as long as it is needed.

However good we are as an organisation today, if we don't plan for the future, then we risk letting down our current or future customers at a vital moment in their lives. An organisation is like an organism. If it is to succeed in the long term, it has to fit into its environment, giving and taking in a balanced way.

This paper gives some ideas about and pointers towards, sustainability. However, like all the other values papers, it requires understanding, developing and internalising by each of us in all of our day to day work if it is to succeed.

We can divide our thinking about sustainability into "3 'P's". They are People, the Planet and our Policies.

People

None of our work would be possible if we didn't have staff to do it or if people didn't trust us enough to ask for our help. Consequently, we all have a responsibility to nurture ourselves and each other. This means finding ways of supporting each other and getting the support we need to be effective.

It means adopting human resources policies that are transparent, fair and encourage a good work life balance.

Sustainability requires us all to safeguard and promote the good name of Brighter Futures to users, decision makers and the general public as well as to potential new colleagues.

Of course, we only exist to serve our customers. Doing this well is our core task and makes us more sustainable. *We adopted the Outcomes Star approach because it builds self-reliance and is customer focused rather than being process-driven. We work with people to help them develop ways of dealing with relapse so they can manage their own recovery and*

become more independent. The changes they make are more sustainable and does not rely on quick fixes, that don't empower people to make better decisions in the long run.

Planet

If we impoverish or destroy our planet then there will be no future for us. As an organisation we need to think about everything that we do to ensure that it respects, recycles and regenerates rather than destroys. This covers everything from the carbon footprint of our transport or heating policies to disposing of waste in a way that doesn't cause toxicity to be spread or using recycled materials wherever possible.

Policies

Written policies ensure that we are consistent in the help we give and effective in the ways we manage ourselves. Policies ensure that none of us are indispensable and, therefore the organisation will continue if we re not here for some reason. Written policies ensure that we do not have to continuously waste resources on re-inventing the wheel. They allow us to learn from each others` experiences and therefore to share and preserve the best of our thinking. Written policies should become corporate wisdom. They make us sustainable by protecting our values, methods and learning from pragmatism, false economies, individualism and forgetfulness.

The actual policies that we codify make us sustainable in the face of risks like unexpected hazards, illness, staff leaving, a building becoming unusable. Our annual budget is our central strategic policy. This guides our entire financial decision making and protects us from unexpected eventualities. It ensures that we are always prudent, but never lack entrepreneurialism.

Issues

Writing policies may sometimes seem like a distraction from the important work we do with customers. It is true that we have to decide to invest in this activity if it is to happen and this will sometimes take precedence over direct service delivery. In the short term, some customers may not get everything which they feel they want. However, if the effect of our policy writing is to ensure that future generations of customers get better care then the investment will have been worthwhile.

Sometimes sustainability (and the green agenda in particular) can be seen as an end in itself, rather than a more effective way of helping people. We must remember that, important though it is to think of the planet, we are primarily a people centred organisation.

Policies should give us standards by which to measure the effectiveness of our work. It is important that these are seen through passionate eyes. The standards laid down may be minimums which are necessary and we shouldn't be afraid of exceeding them if we can.

However good our formulation is, our policies will not last forever. We must keep them under continual review and ensure that we update them in line with changes in circumstances, new legislation or creative new thinking.