

POSITIVE FUTURES



Achieving dreams.  
Transforming lives.  
Annual Report.

2017

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“In September 2016, with funding from the Big Lottery, we started a new support service for families”

# Chief Executive's report



Agnes Lunny OBE  
Chief Executive

At the end of March 2017, we supported 371 people, including adults, children and their families and carers.

This was a slight reduction on the previous year, because our Big Lottery-funded Better Futures pilot project for older carers was concluded. We are continuing to support the carers involved in whatever way we can, including assisting them to establish their own support group. The project's impact was measured and reported on by the University of Ulster. Better Futures also helped us produce the Carers' Charter, which has the potential to improve the lives of all carers and in particular, lifelong carers, across Northern Ireland.

Across the other services in the organisation we supported an additional 63 people compared with 2015-16.

In September 2016, with funding from the Big Lottery, we started a new support service for families. Over the next 5 years, Brighter Futures will help 100 children (from birth to 12 years) in the Fermanagh area to develop new skills and strong, nurturing relationships with their carers, siblings and the wider community.

In keeping with our Strategic Aims, by March 2017, 97% of people in our Supported Living Services had taken part in “The Life I Want” project, meaning that they each benefit from a personalised support planner. This has led to significant improvements in giving people control over their lives.

During the year, we increased the number of people who use their own money to access our support services from 43 to 60. Self-Directed Support gives people flexibility in choosing the support that best suits them.

One of our other main Strategic Aims was to increase the number of people who know about Positive Futures and the services we offer. To this end, we enjoyed a number of successful charity partnerships, including those with the Northern Ireland Assembly and the Lord Mayor of Belfast.

We also enjoyed significant media coverage, including items on BBC Newsline and BBC Breakfast News, as well as interviews on BBC Radio Ulster's “On Your Behalf” programme and BBC Radio 4's “You and Yours.” An item featuring 92-year-old carer Jenni Hull was viewed a remarkable 1.7m times on the BBC's Facebook page.

A major challenge in 2016-17 has been a further reduction in public sector funding for services at a time when our costs for providing those services are increasing. We have put a number of measures in place to deal with this. Like the rest of the care sector, we have had difficulty in recruiting staff in some areas but we continue to work to improve the situation.

A challenge in the coming year will be the National Living Wage and how it is applied to staff who sleep over as part of their duties. Despite the fact that health and social care commissioners are, to date, unwilling to make a determination as to how night time support is categorised in terms of National Living Wage, we will continue to engage with them and other key stakeholders to ensure that changes are appropriately funded.

My thanks, as always, to our dedicated staff and volunteers, who are such a vital part of what we do at Positive Futures.

# Speaking up for carers

Lifelong carers joined us at Parliament Buildings, Stormont, in June 2016 as we launched a blueprint for a better deal for carers across Northern Ireland. The Carers' Charter is a 12-point "bill of rights" which we have asked Health and Social Care Trusts and Government Departments to sign up to.

**It includes demands for:**

- A Carers' Bill for Northern Ireland, similar to that enacted in England in 2014
- A simplified and more streamlined Carers' Assessment
- A reduction in paperwork and bureaucracy
- A single point of contact for carers when dealing with statutory agencies.

Carers returned to Stormont in September to reinforce the point. A special event in the Senate Chamber enabled them to address relevant Assembly Committees with their concerns. Speakers included Sherol Matthews, who cares for her son William, Lynne Keery, whose son James has complex needs, and Positive Futures' Finance Director Liam Dorrian, whose three children have varying degrees of learning disability.

We also ensured that the media focused on carers' needs in 2016-17. Sherol spoke on BBC Radio 4's "You and Yours" programme

and on Belfast 89FM. Jenni Hull, who at the time was 92 years old, spoke to BBC Radio Ulster's "On Your Behalf" programme and BBC Newsline. She had cared for her son Martin, who is in his 50s and has Down's Syndrome and dementia, since his birth. Martin has since been admitted to residential care. The Newsline interview was viewed a staggering 1.7m times on the BBC's Facebook page.

The suspension of the Assembly and Executive in January 2017 limited what we could do to keep the issue of lifelong carers on the agenda at Stormont, but we have continued to lobby individual MLAs and all those with an interest in the subject.

Many older carers describe their caring duties as "non-stop."



**Concerns we have heard from them include:**

“I was very despondent about what lay ahead for (my son). People are shocked when I say it, but we wished he would die before us.”

“Health and social service staff have no idea what my daughter needs, and they have no time to find out.”

“Society’s attitude needs to change. When I told somebody recently that I was a retired teacher and a full-time carer, his eyes glazed over and he switched off. We’re invisible.”

**The Chief Executive of Positive Futures, Agnes Lunny, said:**

“For too long, society has paid lip service to the value of carers, without making any appreciable difference to their situation or wellbeing.

“All we’re asking is that lifelong carers are recognised for the valuable contribution they make to society and that they don’t have to battle “the system” on top of dealing with the needs of their loved ones.

“We need simplification of paperwork, a single point of contact for carers with Health and Social Services, and joined-up Government, so that Departments work together.”

Green Party MLA Steven Agnew, who sponsored the Carers’ Charter event at Parliament Buildings, said: “Carers are a precious resource and yet they receive little recognition. Many older carers are among the most vulnerable people in society, and they deserve our protection and respect. I’m proud to support this initiative.”

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Agnes Lunny, Chief Executive of Positive Futures



# Positive Futures comes of age

This year we celebrated our 21st birthday – and to mark the occasion we held a number of special events.

Perhaps the most spectacular celebration – in visual terms at least – was Parliament Buildings at Stormont being lit up yellow in our honour in October 2016. It marked the end of our year as the Northern Ireland Assembly's chosen charity.

Then, in early 2017, we were delighted to be the special guests of a number of Mayors and Council Chairs across Northern Ireland.

Our first stop was Lisburn and Castlereagh Council. At the Island Centre, the Mayor, Councillor Brian Bloomfield MBE, gave everyone a guided tour. He even involved two of the people we support in a demonstration of how the Mayor can silence any councillor's microphone. He showed us the Mayor's Parlour, recounting the rich history of the city.

A week later we celebrated with our Newry Services as we were hosted by Council Chairperson Gillian Fitzpatrick. Gillian, who has a background in mental health nursing, was interested to hear Majella Toner's story and to learn how Positive Futures had made such an impact on Majella's life.

Noel Curran, whom we also support in Newry, took the opportunity to have his photograph taken while wearing the Chair's chain of office.

In the year 2017-18 we would enjoy a welcome from a number of other councils. More on those visits in next year's Annual Report.

The hallmark of all the events, which involved a total of around 300 staff, volunteers, people we support, families and other guests, was the commitment and dedication of everyone who works for Positive Futures in making a real difference to people's lives.

**Our Chief Executive, Agnes Lunny, said:**

"It never ceases to humble and inspire me when I meet the wonderful staff and volunteers of Positive Futures and hear their stories and the stories of the people we support. The council receptions were a great opportunity to share those great stories with our hosts and with other guests at the events. It made me proud to be Chief Executive of this fabulous organisation.

"We thank the Mayors and Council Chairs who invited us and look forward to a continuing relationship with councils across Northern Ireland."



# Lives transformed

At Positive Futures, our mission is to work together to achieve dreams and transform lives. The extent of that transformation can be remarkable, as the following two stories illustrate.

## Jayne's story

By now, Jayne would almost certainly be living in a large institution in England or Scotland, far away from her home town.

Instead, Jayne, who has extremely complex needs, is living in her own house and is proud of having played a starring role in a theatrical production of High School Musical.

Since childhood she has been fascinated by High School Musical and in particular the character Sharpay. As the strapline on our logo says, we're in the business of achieving dreams and transforming lives, so we made it our mission to make her ambition come true.

Jayne, who's 20, has been supported by Positive Futures for three and a half years. It hasn't been easy for her or her support workers. Jayne has paranoid schizophrenia and an acquired learning disability caused by her mental health issues. She is affected by delusions and hallucinations, meaning that her behaviour can become extremely challenging.

Lack of provision in Northern Ireland means that people with Jayne's needs are often consigned to residential care across the water. Being in an alien environment cut off from family and friends simply heightens a person's isolation.

Darragh McCullagh, from our Positive Behaviour Support Team, says: "Jayne's ability to play a leading part in High School Musical is one example of how our bespoke support pays off.

When Jayne first came to us, the whole idea that she would be able to take part, never mind star, in a theatrical production would simply not even have been considered. Through the commitment of our staff and their determination to make Jayne's dream come true they supported her every Monday evening to go out to her drama group. She has a DVD of her performance that she's rightly very proud of."

Jayne also wanted to go to a club in the town where she lives. She visited during the day and the staff there very kindly showed her around the disco. Jayne visits the bar regularly (during the day), and she is aspiring to some night enjoying the clubbing experience. "To anyone else this might not seem like much," says Darragh, "but for Jayne, it's massive. We're increasingly seeing big things happening for her. Her staff team are devoted to her."

"Sometimes things don't work out, but we persevere. She is learning how to de-escalate her elevated levels of anxiety and is continuously developing new coping strategies to manage challenging situations."

Jayne speaks very positively about how she lives, and mental health professionals involved with her care have remarked on what she has managed to achieve.

It just goes to prove that not having the word "can't" in our vocabulary makes a huge difference to the people we support.

Barry's ability to live his life on his own terms and to engage with the community would not have happened without Positive Futures and the dedication of his support staff.

## Barry's story

Barry has such a complex range of medical conditions and challenging behaviours that, until Positive Futures came into his life, he had effectively been regarded as someone for whom little could be done.

During his childhood, he lived in Muckamore Abbey Hospital and his future looked bleak. Because of his medical issues, which include uncontrolled epilepsy, he was not expected to survive. His challenging behaviour also meant that the idea of an independent life seemed out of the question.

Then, more than 20 years ago, Positive Futures entered the picture. Barry, who is now 45, lives in his own home and makes his own decisions. He has difficult days, as we all do, but his life is light years away from the existence some people expected him to have.

His Positive Futures staff team is devoted to him – to such an extent that some who have moved on to other jobs still keep in contact with him and visit him in his home in Bangor.

As a result of his past experiences, Barry has major difficulties trusting people. To gain that trust takes time and perseverance.

His likes and dislikes also have to be accommodated. He always wears a Superman shirt, for example, and it must be the right one – even if that means his support staff having to phone five different shops when buying a new one.

Barry was very close to his mother Molly, who died in 2014. It was a very difficult time for him and he still talks about her.

His support staff played a key role in helping him through the trauma. One of the high points of his week is visiting his brother Colin, who lives in Belfast.

Perhaps the most remarkable thing about Barry is his ability to recover from serious health setbacks.

“He’s been at death’s door a number of times,” says Lynzi Bunting, Deputy Service Manager at our East Coast Supported Living Service, “but the following week he comes bouncing back. Any time he’s in hospital, we continue to support him 24 hours a day to act as his voice and fight for his rights. Even though Barry has significant difficulties with verbal communication, his staff team understand what he’s trying to communicate better than anyone else.”

At home, a major part of Barry's daily life is ensuring that household chores are done properly. Cleaning windows, vacuuming, tidying, making tea – nothing is too much trouble. “He can peel a potato with a butter knife – and can do a better job of it than someone with a proper vegetable knife,” says Lynzi.

In short, Barry's ability to live his life on his own terms and to engage with the community would not have happened without Positive Futures and the dedication of his support staff.

He's a great example of how everyone – regardless of the complexity of their need – can have a great life if they get the right support from the right people.



Barry is pictured with his Senior Support Worker Maria

# Making a difference

Volunteers are a vital part of what we do every day. We don't have the space to celebrate everyone's valuable contribution, so here is a small selection. Thank you to all those who give up their time to make a difference to the lives of the people we support.

## Going the extra mile

Michael volunteered for a year with our Better Together Project and transformed the life of Thomas, an adult with a learning disability who had been identified as "hard to reach."

While all the Better Together volunteers do remarkable work, Michael went the extra mile – literally. He bought himself a bike and took up cycling so that he and Thomas could explore areas like Cave Hill and the Lagan Tow Path. He also signed up as a Positive Futures' driver to give Thomas the opportunity to go further afield, on fishing trips to Donaghadee and go-karting in Bangor.

When Thomas joined Better Together, he was very nervous about using public transport, to such an extent that he avoided travelling by bus. Michael supported him to overcome his fear. He is now able to travel by bus on his own and feels much more confident.

Michael also supported Thomas with his budgeting skills, encouraging him to manage his money and keep track of his spending.

## Donna's dedication

Donna has chalked up an impressive 200 hours of volunteering in just two years, despite having to study for her A Levels.

During the summer holidays she often volunteered every day. Even when her A Level studies were at their height, she tried to help out at least once a week. She has also encouraged two of her friends to follow in her footsteps as volunteers.

Lakeland Family Support Service Manager Tracey Armstrong said: "When I first met Donna she was quiet and shy, but keen to gain experience in working with young people. Volunteering has boosted her self-esteem and has given her the confidence to apply for university."

In her time with us, Donna has been willing to turn her hand to almost anything. She has been involved in cooking, swimming, arts and crafts, Zumba, pottery and accompanying young people to the cinema. She has even helped out with fundraising. Most of her work has been in group activities, but more recently Donna has volunteered on an individual basis with one young person we support.

## Volunteers needed

At Positive Futures, we're always looking for volunteers.

We need people aged 16 and over, who are caring, friendly, responsible and have patience and understanding. Your background doesn't matter, although we will need references and an Access NI check.

If you prefer to work behind the scenes in roles like administration, fundraising, IT support or driving, you can still make a big difference to the lives of the people we support.

Find out more by visiting the volunteering page on our website [www.positive-futures.net](http://www.positive-futures.net) or email: [volunteering@positive-futures.net](mailto:volunteering@positive-futures.net).

## You've got a friend...

Ruth has made a real difference to the life of Willie at our Windermere Supported Living Service. Willie has health and communication issues. Owing to his particular needs, he is sometimes unable to concentrate for extended periods. Ruth has spent evenings with Willie when he has not been able to engage much with her, but she has persevered.

When the two of them are out together, she introduces him as her friend.

The feeling is mutual. When Ruth appears, Willie smiles and waves, usually going straight to her bag to see what activities she has brought for them to do. They share an interest in arts and crafts, baking and going out for coffee. Ruth has also accompanied Willie on trips to the Continental Christmas Market and W5.

Willie relies heavily on his staff team, but such is his trust in Ruth that when they are out and about he is happy to leave the staff behind.

Even when Ruth was on university placement in Dublin and had to suspend her weekly visits, she made contact with Willie's staff team to say that she would soon be back and would like to volunteer her time again.

## The art of volunteering

Dorothy Wyness has volunteering down to a fine art – to such an extent that the young people she supports have been involved in four major art exhibitions in the time she has been with us.

But her expertise in creativity is just one aspect of Dorothy's contribution to Positive Futures. She also helps with summer schemes and other activities and starts work early to ensure that everything is ready before the children arrive.

If the Service is short of volunteers she always helps out when she can, and is very supportive of other volunteers and staff.

Dorothy's input into the art group has helped the young people grow in self-confidence and emotional maturity. They are more patient with themselves and others and generally have a better understanding of the world around them.

One art exhibition was at the Long Gallery in Parliament Buildings, Stormont, where MLAs and local artists appreciated the young people's creative talent. One artist said the work was of such a high standard that it would not look out of place in a London exhibition.



# Fundraising in style

**“We thank Max Mara for allowing us to be part of one of the biggest dates on the Northern Ireland social calendar in 2017”**

Agnes Lunny, Chief Executive  
of Positive Futures

One of the biggest events on Northern Ireland's social calendar in 2017 – an exclusive show by Max Mara – benefited our work.

The show, at Belfast City Hall in March, featured the Max Mara Spring/Summer 2017 Collection. It was hosted by kind permission of the Lord Mayor Alderman Brian Kingston.

The night included a ballot for some superb prizes, kindly donated by Max Mara and other corporate supporters.

Our Chief Executive, Agnes Lunny, said: “We're very grateful to the Lord Mayor for use of the beautiful surroundings of the City Hall. We thank Max Mara for allowing us to be part of one of the biggest dates on the Northern Ireland social calendar in 2017. We also extend our thanks to all the other corporate supporters who bought tickets or otherwise contributed to the success of the event.”

## Support we can bank on

Our Better Together Project, helping vulnerable and disadvantaged adults with a learning disability, has received a £5,000 boost from the Santander Foundation.

Better Together operates in socially deprived areas including north and west Belfast. It provides mentors for people who fall outside traditional employment, education or day support.

The Santander Foundation offers Discovery Grants to UK registered charities for projects that help disadvantaged people in local communities.

Agnes Lunny, Chief Executive of Positive Futures, said: "This grant will make a real difference to people's lives, particularly at a time when our funding from Government sources is under pressure from spending cuts. It will help people engage with other members of the community through social and leisure activities, thus reducing their isolation. Many of the people our organisation supports can feel like "forgotten people" in society."

Amy Slack, Manager at the Santander Foundation, said: "The Santander Foundation makes hundreds of donations every year to good causes throughout the UK. Our local branch is committed to playing a key part in the community and we are delighted to be supporting Positive Futures, and hope the donation makes a real difference to local people."

## Santa's helpers were game for a laugh

Fans at the Ballinamallard v Glentoran game in December 2016 couldn't believe their eyes during the half time break.

Two teams of Positive Futures' elves took to the pitch to decide who would be the champions among Santa's Christmas helpers.

Fermanagh elves took on their rivals from Lisburn and Bangor in a five-a-side match during the break in the Irish Premier League game.

It was all part of our Elfy Living event, during which our Managing Director, Dermot Parsons, raises money by carrying out all his official duties in the week before Christmas, dressed as an elf and going by the name Tiny McJingles.

Dermot – at 6'5" in his stockinged feet – is the biggest elf on the block. Our Operations Director, Jo Corcoran, joined in the fun in 2016 by answering to the name Gingersnap Snoozysocks.

## Music to our ears

Positive Futures was the chosen charity for the Hilden Beer and Music Festival in August 2016.

Our volunteers and staff provided face painting and other activities for children. We benefited from donations and from a ballot for donated prizes.

Pictured are the event's headliner, award winning blues singer Kaz Hawkins, with young festival-goers Brent Donaldson and Joseph Walsh.



# Meet the team

## Directors



Agnes Lunny  
Chief Executive



Dermot Parsons  
Managing Director



Joanne Corcoran  
Operations Director



Gail Reavy  
HR Director



Liam Dorrian  
Finance Director

## Trustees

Miriam Somerville (Chair)  
David McMillen  
Peter Shaw  
Anne Clydesdale (resigned from the Board 31.03.17)  
Karen Pearson  
Laurence Taggart  
John Alexander  
Gerardine Cunningham  
Ian Edwards (appointed to the Board 17.06.16)  
Mary Bryce (re-appointed to the Board 06.09.16)  
Carol Workman (appointed to the Board 06.09.16)

## Auditors

ASM (B) Ltd  
Chartered Accountants  
20 Rosemary Street  
Belfast BT1 1QD

## Company Secretary

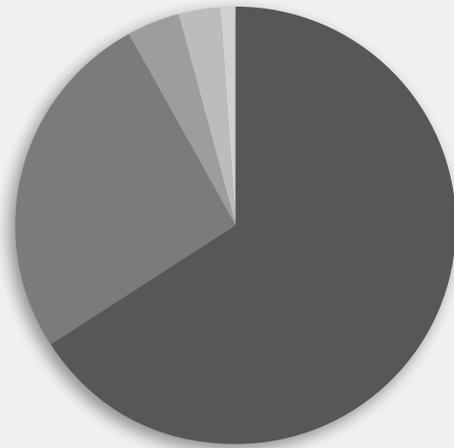
Dawn Morrow

# 2017 Finances

## Incoming resources

Health Board and Trust Income .....	£5,901,554	66%
Supporting People income .....	£2,284,226	25%
Income from people we support .....	£467,007	5%
Other fees and grants .....	£264,834	3%
Gifts and other income .....	£48,965	1%

**Total – £8,966,586**



## Resources expended

Direct care staff costs .....	£7,007,950	77%
Head office staff costs .....	£987,472	11%
Other staff costs .....	£49,701	1%
ICT costs .....	£53,585	1%
Travel, subsistence and volunteers' expenses .....	£294,993	3%
Training costs .....	£105,083	1%
Premises and insurance costs .....	£268,522	3%
Depreciation .....	£134,290	1%
Other support costs .....	£172,894	2%

**Total – £9,074,490**



#### **Find us on Twitter and Facebook**

Mention us to your friends – the more followers we have on social media, the more we can spread the word about the services we offer for the people we support and the good news about the difference we are making to the people we support and their families across Northern Ireland.

#### **Join the conversation:**

If you have a Twitter account, you can follow us @PFTweets or find us at [twitter.com/PFTweets](https://twitter.com/PFTweets)

Or find us on Facebook:  
[facebook.com/positivefutures95](https://facebook.com/positivefutures95)



POSITIVE FUTURES

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