



Strategy & Plan - 2020 – 2025

Update December 2021

Strategic Context

History 2009- 2019

1. Since its small beginnings in 2009, as disabled people working together, BuDS has identified the biggest barriers facing disabled people and set up many pilot initiatives to tackle them. BuDS pilots have covered a very wide range including accessibility, events, transport, work, hate crime, benefits and social care services. Most of these pilots have been exceptionally successful and this work has made BuDS one of the most expert disability organisations in the UK, with a portfolio of proven pilot projects which, if implemented on a larger scale, would transform the lives of disabled people.
2. However, BuDS' business model has not been similarly successful. We have attempted to maintain sustainability and independence by keeping costs exceptionally low and relying wholly on volunteers, primarily disabled people themselves, to run the charity and its projects. While this approach has many strengths, such as making the charity agile and well-informed, it has the great disadvantage that BuDS has persistently lacked the resources to follow-up on its successful pilots and to take up opportunities to do more to help disabled people. Some great projects have failed due to lack of resources and many others have never got beyond the concept stage. This approach also has the significant risk that the loss of two or three key volunteers at the wrong time can be a huge set-back or even fatal to projects, which badly affects disabled people's interests.
3. BuDS has always been an activist charity that wants to make Buckinghamshire a better place for disabled people. The charity knows *how* we can achieve this – now BuDS need to evolve its business model so that we can *lead* the process of making change happen.

Coronavirus – 2020 – 2022?

4. The coronavirus pandemic from March 2020 has changed the strategic landscape for BuDS. The acute demand for support meant BuDS needed to expand, and the additional availability of volunteers and crisis grants helped us to expand. This has had the effect of greatly accelerating the strategic move from a purely voluntary charity to a mixed model of paid staff and volunteers.

5. BuDS has now moved from a very small voluntary charity with projects led personally by Trustees to a small charity with 14 paid staff and nearly 100 active volunteers. Nearly all these projects are Covid-related in some way and funded by short-term Covid emergency funding. Most projects are still led personally by Trustees, with staff coordinating and supporting volunteer project teams. Only one project, Reach4Work, has a service manager to whom all project staff and volunteers report.

Growth Strategy

Remaining True to Our Core Beliefs

6. BuDS will continue to be an effective advocate for disabled people and tackle the problems most important to disabled people themselves. We will maintain our independence so we can continue to pursue an autonomous agenda. Our Trustee Board will remain principally made up of disabled people themselves and we will remain an activist organisation for and by disabled people, both volunteers and employees. BuDS will remain wholly committed to the social model of disability and implement the social model in all its activities.
7. Where we see disabled people's interests being neglected or abused, and those responsible will not work collaboratively with us, as a last resort, we will continue to vigorously protect disabled people's rights in public.
8. The full Trustee Board should complete a 'True to Beliefs Checklist' at every quarterly meeting.

Making Change Happen

9. BuDS has always sought to drive permanent, sustainable transformational change for large numbers of disabled people, primarily through our Fair4All (including numerous sub-projects) & BucksWorkability projects. These externally-focused projects involve careful research, informed, innovative thinking, sustained education, lobbying and influencing, being a critical friend, and forming strategic partnerships with councils, the NHS, businesses and voluntary sector bodies. These projects have taken a back seat during the Covid crisis but must now increasingly come back to the fore, incorporating Covid projects into them.
10. In order to ensure that our expanded projects are high quality, sustainable and help the maximum number of disabled people, BuDS will seek grant funding (and possibly contract funding) to develop them and to employ staff to support our volunteers. We will make sure that any funding or contracts do not come with strings attached which could endanger our independence and core values.
11. A 'project board' showing all active Change projects, their status and future plans should be prepared and reviewed at full Board meetings.

Disability Services

12. BuDS has always helped disabled members of the BuDS community, and some of those ways of helping have now evolved into defined and professional services such as the Fair4All Card, Reach4Work and BuDDies. These services need to continue to develop to help BuDS to include and help more disabled people. We will seek grant funding (and possibly contract funding) to develop them and to employ staff to support our volunteers. We will make sure that any funding or contracts do not come with strings attached which could endanger our independence and core values.
13. A 'services board' showing all active services, their status and future plans should be prepared and reviewed at full Board meetings.

An Evolved Business Model

14. BuDS will continue to have a sustainable business model with costs kept low and with a mix of equal-status volunteers and employees, primarily disabled people themselves. As a consequence of the coronavirus pandemic, we have abruptly moved from a small entirely voluntary charity reliant on goodwill to a small charity with far more volunteers and 12 paid staff. This is a welcome start but runs the risk of 'growing pains'. We must be careful to balance expansion of projects and services with the need to manage housekeeping functions like finance, HR and governance.
15. A 'housekeeping report' showing all internal functions, their status and future plans should be prepared and reviewed at full Board meetings.
16. The ultimate goal remains for BuDS to move to a sustainable position where we have a stable base from which to operate with sufficient paid staff to manage the essential functions of the charity, ensure change happens and that services are delivered to a high quality. This evolutionary change, which has been accelerated by the coronavirus pandemic, will enable us to take full advantage of the many opportunities we have to protect the interests of disabled people and support them. We will always have a back-up plan in place in case of a funding shortfall which means we have to revert to a 'basic' purely voluntary model.

Diverse Funding Model

17. BuDS will continue to have a mixed source of funds and will never be reliant on one or two funders. So that we remain sustainable and independent, our basic core costs will continue to be covered by a variety of grants and donations. We will seek grant-funding and other income for our projects, so that they are sustainable and contribute to the core costs of the charity. Council, NHS and government grants and contracts will be considered for change and service-delivery projects but not if the terms of the grant or contract endanger our independence and core values.

Strategic Plan

18. BuDS will work opportunistically and flexibly in 2022/23 to achieve the following strategic goals:

- a. Secure longer-term strategic grants of the order of £150,000 pa to fully fund the core functions of the charity and its essential staff and infrastructure over a 5-year period. This includes the charity housekeeping functions, fundraising and senior manager post.
- b. When it is safe to do so, develop an office and project base to support a hybrid working model where staff and volunteers have choice about where they wish to work.
- c. Continue Covid-related projects which are still of high value to disabled people. This will be done by maintaining volunteer teams and applying for smaller additional and continuation funding for those projects so that staff expertise can be retained and output maintained.
- d. Maintain existing Fair4All projects and develop dormant or evolving Fair4All projects. This will be done by building volunteer teams and applying for grant funding for those projects so that volunteer teams can be properly supported by paid staff. Appoint a paid Fair4All Project Manager when needed.
- e. Maintain existing Disability Services and evolve new or additional services as opportunity arises. This will be done by building volunteer teams and applying for funding for those projects so that volunteer teams can be properly supported by paid staff. Appoint a paid Disability Services Manager when needed.
- f. Continue to develop and expand Reach4Work and apply for funding so that volunteer teams can be properly supported by paid staff. Appoint a Reach4Work manager when needed.
- g. Continue to develop housekeeping functions and build up volunteer teams in these areas. Appoint an Admin Manager when needed.
- h. Build BuDS as a social community through starting to develop the BuDS Include function.
- i. Maintain and increase the size, skills and commitment of the Trustee Board including planning a successful transition to a new Chair.

19. The broad plan to achieve these strategic goals is as follows:

- a. By the end of 2021/22, secure a strategic 'core cost' grant income of £150,000 pa for 3-5 years. This enables the retention and development of the core functions of the charity and the development of an office base.
- b. By the end of 2021/22, have identified and made grant applications to maintain and/or expand each individual project or service for the next 3-5 years. This enables the retention of staff and skills and allows the expansion and development of projects.
- c. In 2022, specifically recruit non-project volunteers to support housekeeping functions.
- d. In 2022, appoint a lead Trustee for BuDS Include and recruit a volunteer team to develop suitable social and community projects.
- e. In 2022, fill all Trustee Board vacancies including recruiting/appointing a new Chair and Deputy Chair with effect from November 2022.