



Strategy & Plan – 2024 & 2025

Strategic Context

History 2009- 2019

1. Since its small beginnings in 2009, as a grassroots community of disabled people working together, BuDS has always 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 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, could transform the lives of disabled people.
2. However, until 2020, BuDS' business model was not similarly successful. The charity 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 had many strengths, such as making the charity agile and well-informed, it also had the great disadvantage that BuDS 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 failed due to lack of resources and many others never got beyond the concept stage. This approach also had the significant risk that the loss of two or three key volunteers at the wrong time could be a huge set-back or even fatal to projects, which badly affects disabled people's interests.
3. BuDS Trustees took the strategic decision in late 2019 to gradually evolve the charity to a more effective model. While retaining a focus on volunteer support, BuDS also wished to secure longer-term funding to support a small core staff team. This staff team would provide additional capability and continuity to allow BuDS to deliver more projects on a more sustainable basis.

Covid Expansion: 2020 – 2022

4. The coronavirus pandemic that began in March 2020 greatly accelerated the planned strategic move from a purely voluntary charity to a mixed model of paid staff and volunteers. During the period 2020/21 and 2021/22, BuDS moved from a very small voluntary charity with projects led personally by Trustees to a small charity with (at its peak) 14 paid staff and over 150 active volunteers. Nearly all those projects were Covid-related in some way and funded by short-term Covid emergency funding. Early 2022-23, however, saw the abrupt end of Covid contingency

funding and BuDS was forced to retrench pending replacement funding from other sources, with staff numbers falling to 5.

Recovery 2022-23

5. In April 2021, BuDS adopted strategic goals for the next 2 years. The table below shows the objectives and the extent to which they were achieved by December 2023.

2021 Objective	Progress to December 2023	Future Action
<p>Evolve Covid projects into Non-Covid or Mixed projects which are still of high value to disabled people</p> <p>Appoint a paid service manager for the Covid projects if they look likely to continue.</p>	<p>Mostly achieved. The Fair4All Card, BuDDies & Enquiries projects were all successfully established as funded standalone projects or services for 2021-22. Major 4-year development funding was achieved for the F4A Card. However, funding for BuDDies and Enquiries expired in 2023-24 and has not yet been replaced.</p> <p>Change of Circumstances. It is now clear that Covid will continue to be a very significant issue for disabled people for the foreseeable future, and a permanent project will be needed. This must be funded to succeed.</p>	<p>Secure continuing and/or development funding for BuDDies and Enquiries; implement F4A Card development and secure match funding.</p> <p>Secure funding for Covid project to allow appointment of paid coordinator and development of project workstreams</p>
<p>Revive and develop the Fair4All Access/Public Spaces, Events, Benefits and Attitudes/Hate Crime projects.</p>	<p>Mostly achieved. Funding was secured for Fair4All Access/Public Spaces, Attitudes/Hate Crime projects in 2022 & 2023 and Events was part funded over the same period. Benefits was rolled into Enquiries. However, funding for 24-25 is not in place for any project.</p>	<p>Secure continuing and/or development funding for all projects, while accepting some may have to be temporarily dormant.</p>

<p>Appoint a paid service manager for Fair4All projects when needed.</p>	<p>Not achieved. While the need for part-time Fair4All Project Managers is established, no funding source has been identified.</p>	<p>Build managerial capacity into future funding bids.</p>
<p>Continue to develop housekeeping functions and build up volunteer teams in these areas</p>	<p>Partly achieved. While progress has been made in developing finance and HR systems, little progress has been made in developing volunteer teams in these areas.</p>	<p>Take forward into 2024-26 Strategic Plan</p>
<p>Continue to develop and expand Reach4Work and apply for funding for those projects so that volunteer teams can be properly supported by paid staff.</p>	<p>Not achieved. R4W funding has expired, and the service has slowly diminished. Revival is urgently needed.</p>	<p>Take forward into 2023-24 Strategic Plan</p>
<p>Build BuDS as a social community through starting to develop the BuDS Include function</p>	<p>No progress has been made in this area.</p>	<p>Review appropriateness of objective in 2024</p>
<p>Maintain the size, skills and commitment of the Trustee Board.</p> <p>Put in place a succession plan to allow the retirement of the current longstanding chair in 2024 without loss of key skills and experience.</p>	<p>Partly achieved. High quality candidates were recruited in 2022 and 2023 but retention has been poor in 2023 and there are currently (Dec 23) 9 vacancies, although two prospective candidates and 5 applicants are being advanced.</p> <p>Partly achieved. A detailed succession plan was made for 2022 involving the recruitment of three Vice Chairs alongside the identification of candidates for Chair. Despite widespread advertisement, there were few suitable applicants, and none continued to appointment. The requirement for the officers to be Buckinghamshire</p>	<p>Take forward into 2023-24 Strategic Plan</p> <p>Take forward into 2023-24 Strategic Plan</p>

	residents was a significant barrier to recruitment.	
Evolve the BuDS constitution and legal form to suit future needs, including establishing a charitable company.	In progress. A plan has been set out to move the charity to the form of a charitable company by 2025; and changes to the constitution are scheduled to be agreed at the 2023 AGM for implementation over 2024-25.	Take forward into 2023-24 Strategic Plan

6. Summarising strategic progress from April 2021 to December 2023, the overall picture is encouraging but with significant concerns. BuDS successfully pivoted from a strong Covid focus to a mixed portfolio of projects, and successfully managed the abrupt end of Covid contingency funding in 2022-23. However, progress towards full funding of our projects faltered in 2023. Despite efforts, there also remain significant weaknesses in the Trustee Board, without a clear succession arrangement in place, and some housekeeping functions remain weak. These areas will need sustained work in 2023-24.

Values

7. BuDS has adopted formal values ([BuDS Values.pdf](#)) which are due for formal review in 2024.

Strategic Principles

8. The Trustee Board adopted the following strategic principles in 2019:
- a. 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.
 - b. 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. We must be careful to balance expansion of projects and services with the need to manage housekeeping functions like finance, HR and governance. 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.
 - c. 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.

9. These principles remain in force but will be formally reviewed in 2024-25.

Strategic Plan – 2024 & 2025

10. Complying with our values and the strategic principles listed above, BuDS will work opportunistically and flexibly in 2024 & 2025 to achieve the strategic goals listed below

Governance/Housekeeping

11. These are the strategic goals relating to the charity's governance and housekeeping functions:

- a. **During 2024, restore the full effectiveness of the Trustee Board** by:
 - i. By March 2024, agreeing a revised succession & recruitment plan including a new skills and experience assessment for the Trustee Board
 - ii. By the end of 2024, recruiting and inducting a new Chair, Secretary and Treasurer, and Executive and Non-Executive Trustees, with appropriate experience and skills to enable the Trustee Board to fully fulfil its responsibilities.
- b. **By December 2024, to have secured Charity Commission agreement to the constitutional evolution of BuDS** from a purely local charity to one with a national area of benefit, able to recruit Trustees nationally, and with a mixed portfolio of national, regional and local projects.
- c. **By December 2024, to have in position a constitution suitable for a modern user-led disabled people's organisation**, with a minimum of 75% of Trustees identifying as disabled people but with scope to have a limited number of non-disabled non-executive Trustees.
- d. **By December 2024, to have formed the new BuDS Disability Service company and applied for it to have charitable status**, so that the full transfer to charitable company status can take place in 2025.
- e. **By the end of 2024/25, appoint a 'Chief Officer'** to manage the charity's projects and housekeeping functions, ideally through evolution and development of the present Projects & HR role and post-holder.
- f. **By Autumn 2024, modernise the charity's finance systems**, by appointing a finance assistant to work with the new Treasurer; completing the change from Excel to SAGE for all accounts and bookkeeping; and embedding budgeting and bookkeeping skills in more staff and volunteers.
- g. **By June 2024, create a fundraising team** to generate donations, sponsorship and other non-grant income.
- h. **By June 2024, restore the full Safeguarding & Welfare function**, through the recruitment of a Safeguarding & Welfare lead Trustee and additional volunteers.
- i. **By June 2024, appoint a Communications Officer and voluntary Comms team** to manage the charity's communications and social media and to meet the comms needs of projects.
- j. **By Dec 2024, strengthen the Volunteer Coordination and Support function**, by extending the hours of paid volunteer coordination and building a stronger volunteer team.

Projects

12. These are the strategic goals relating to the charity's services and projects.
- a. During 2024, secure funding to allow the appointment of **two part-time project managers** to improve coordination and delivery of projects and services, and increase the role of **Volunteer Coordinator** from part to full time, to support additional numbers of volunteers.
 - b. **During 2024/25, maintain all current projects and services, and secure funding** for them so that each has the staff support needed to make them sustainable, with a preference for multiyear and development funding. No additional projects or sub-projects will be started without specific Trustee approval.
 - c. **Continue to recruit volunteers for services and projects** so that each project is adequately staffed to deliver its goals and objectives.
 - d. **Maintain and develop volunteer support, welfare and safeguarding**, so that volunteers feel and are happy, fulfilled and safe.

Agreed by the Trustee Board: 6 January 2024

Next Review: April 2024