



Organisational Strategy 2026-2030



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Foreword



This strategy has been developed in a challenging context. Demand for support continues to rise, while the wider system remains under sustained pressure. Funding does not always reflect the true cost of high-quality delivery, and we have seen the direct impact of changes in commissioning.

These pressures have brought greater clarity. We are clearer about where we add value, what makes our model effective, and what we need to do to remain sustainable. Demand for our services continues to grow.

The strength of Response lies in our people and the relationships they build. We see this every day in the outcomes achieved for those we support, often in complex and difficult circumstances.

This strategy builds on that foundation. It sets out how we will focus our work, strengthen the organisation, and continue to deliver practical, consistent support centred on the individual.

We are not assuming the external environment will become easier. Instead, we are building an organisation that can operate within uncertainty, with a clear purpose, a sustainable model, and the flexibility to adapt so we can continue to meet the growing need for housing and mental health support across the Thames Valley.



Nicola Leavesley

Nicola Leavesley
Chief Executive

Lucy Weston

Lucy Weston
Chair of Trustees



Who We Are



Response is a mental health and housing charity supporting people with mental health needs and multiple disadvantage across Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire.

Each year, over 500 adults and young people rely on us for mental health support and a safe place to live. We work alongside each person as they rebuild confidence, regain stability and move forward in their lives.

We have been working in the Thames Valley for over 60 years. Our experience is rooted in supporting people whose needs are often the most complex and the least well met elsewhere.



Our Values



Our values are what make us unique. They represent how we define ourselves, our conduct, and our organisational priorities.

CARING



The human connections we build with each other help us to provide compassionate and individualised support.

SAFE



Fostering an environment where everyone feels secure and able to be themselves.

CREATIVE



Encouraging and celebrating innovative solutions, acknowledging experimentation is part of the creative process.

ASPIRATIONAL



Inspiring everyone to believe in themselves and achieve their personal goals.

Our Vision

Response exists to improve the health and wellbeing of people experiencing mental health challenges and multiple disadvantage. We enable people to live well, feel valued and have a sense of belonging in their communities.

How We Work








We deliver co-produced, psychologically informed services that combine housing, mental health support and practical life and tenancy sustainment skills.

Our approach is built as a continuum of care, from early intervention through to intensive specialist support. This allows us to respond to people at different stages using a consistent approach to care and support.



Across all of our work, we are:

-  Person centred, shaped by individual goals and strengths.
-  Trauma-informed, recognising that many of the people we support have experienced significant trauma, and ensuring our services respond with understanding, compassion and appropriate support.
-  Co-produced, with people actively involved in shaping support including those who have a lived experience of mental health services and or supported housing.
-  Neurodivergent inclusive, adapting how we work to fit the individual.
-  Helping people build the confidence, skills and resilience to live independently, while accessing the right support at the right time and in ways that reflect their individual needs and circumstances.

We recognise that mental health challenges and multiple disadvantage are not experienced equally. People from global majority communities, those facing structural inequality, those without support networks, and those experiencing poverty, insecure housing, or digital exclusion often face greater barriers to accessing support and poorer outcomes. Our approach is designed to respond to this.

Response in a Changing External Environment



The external environment is increasingly constrained and complex, with growing tension between rising expectations and limited resources.



Improved outcomes and greater efficiency are expected from services, often within flat or reducing budgets.



The people we support are experiencing increasingly acute mental health needs alongside housing insecurity and multiple disadvantage, with many requiring support that falls between traditional service boundaries.



At the same time, the cost of delivery is rising, driven by workforce pressures, National Insurance increases, living wage increases, other inflationary increases and higher operating costs across the sector



Government and regulatory bodies are introducing higher standards and additional requirements, including housing quality, safeguarding and environmental compliance.



These requirements are essential to improving quality and safety, but they also bring additional cost and operational complexity to delivery.



Digital transformation, security and system expectations continue to increase, with greater emphasis on data, reporting and assurance.





Alongside this, the gap between demand and available provision continues to widen, as services face capacity constraints and increasing levels of need across mental health and housing systems.

Response's role remains to work in that space between services, providing stability, continuity and trusted relationships where systems are fragmented or under pressure.

We will continue to adapt to this environment while maintaining focus on what matters most: safe housing, consistent trauma-informed support, and improved long-term outcomes for the people we support.



"My idea of support is just to show people that there is an end goal..."

~ Tony Nanton, Young Persons Supported Accommodation Housing Officer

Why This Strategy, Why Now?



The mental health and housing system is under sustained strain. Demand continues to rise while resources are constrained. People with the most complex support needs are still falling between services. At the same time, expectations are increasing, with a stronger focus on community-based support, prevention and accountability.

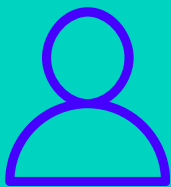
There remains a gap between policy intent and lived experience.

Too often, people encounter systems designed around organisational structures rather than need and the individuals ability to access services. Services operate with different thresholds, responsibilities and funding arrangements, creating fragmentation.

For many people, this results in:

- delayed access to support
- repeated crises
- avoidable hospital admissions
- unstable housing
- poor long-term outcomes.

These issues are particularly acute for:



People with serious mental illness and multiple disadvantage



People with mental health needs at risk of homelessness



Young people and adults unable to access early support

Response works in the space between these gaps. We provide stability and continuity where services are fragmented, alongside practical support that helps people move forward with their lives.



Early intervention is a vital part of good mental health support and remains central to Response's work with young people through services such as the Thatcham Hub. With our supported housing services for adults and young people, our focus is different as we are already working with people who require care and support to live well in the community. While early intervention support is often provided by partner organisations, Response's expertise lies in supporting people whose needs have become more complex or longer term. We work alongside statutory and voluntary sector partners to provide specialist mental health, housing, recovery and community-based support, helping people to maintain stability, build independence and achieve their personal goals. Our focus is where Response is best placed to have the greatest impact within the wider system of care.

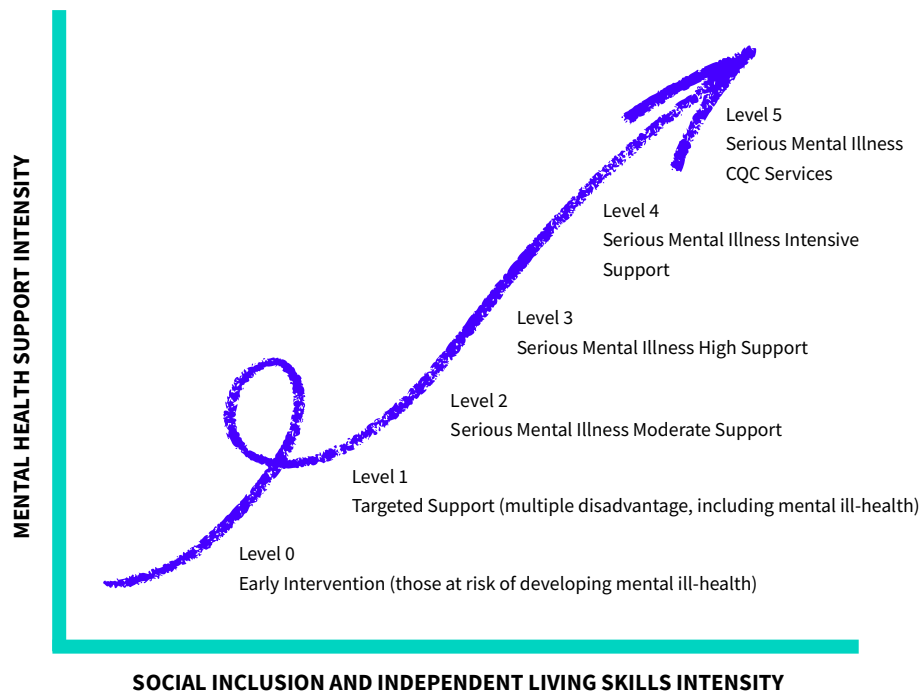
To continue doing this, we must also strengthen how we operate as an organisation. This strategy sets out how we will do both.

A photograph of a woman on the left wearing a red hijab and a man on the right in a brown corduroy shirt, both sitting on a dark grey sofa and laughing. A large, hand-drawn blue speech bubble with a white outline is positioned in the center, containing a testimonial. A thin blue line connects the left side of the speech bubble to the woman's head.

"Response really got me
a life...I'm so grateful."

~ Individual supported by Settled
Oxfordshire

Our Model: A Continuum of Care



Response delivers support across three connected areas:

Specialist support and housing

For people with serious mental illness and multiple disadvantage, including those experiencing homelessness, trauma, substance misuse and complex needs.

Focused support and housing

For people with mental health challenges who are at heightened risk of homelessness and instability, and who may not meet thresholds for specialist services.

Early intervention

For young people and adults who need support before issues become acute.

Across these three elements, we:

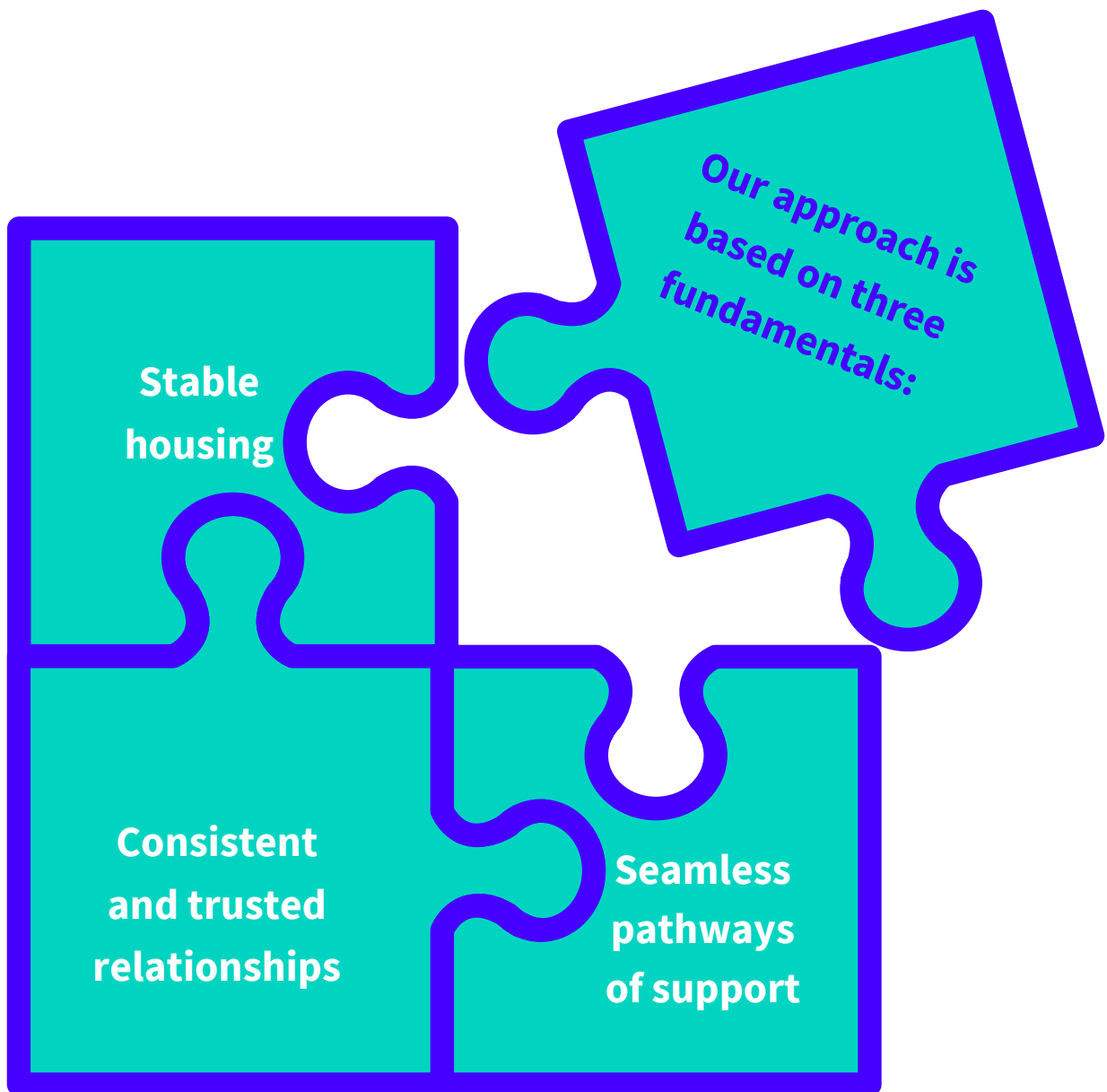
- respond across different levels of need
- apply a consistent model, values and ways of working
- support mental health, community integration, life skills and independence at every level
- bring together our offer in a clear and cohesive way.

Our Strategic Priorities and What We Will Achieve by 2030



This strategy is built around four priorities. These define both what we will deliver and how we will work.

Too many people experience support that is fragmented, inconsistent and difficult to access. In addition, housing, health and social care are often organised separately.



Everything in this strategy is designed to deliver these consistently.



PRIORITY 1

Person Centred Mental Health Support



By 2030, more people will receive timely, effective support and fewer will reach crisis without earlier intervention.

We will strengthen our continuum of care, so support is experienced as connected and consistent, by focusing on three groups:

People with serious mental illness and multiple disadvantage

We will strengthen specialist rehabilitation and supported housing, supporting recovery, reducing avoidable admissions and enabling long-term stability.

People at heightened risk of homelessness

We will develop a clearer offer for people whose support needs are significant but often do not meet thresholds. Our focus will be on early stability, tenancy sustainment and preventing escalation.

We will do this by strengthening partnerships with housing, health and community services, identifying people earlier, and providing flexible support that responds to changing needs. We will help people navigate services, address barriers to accessing support and work, build independent living skills and sustain their housing. By intervening earlier, we aim to prevent homelessness, reduce crisis presentations and improve long-term outcomes.



Young people

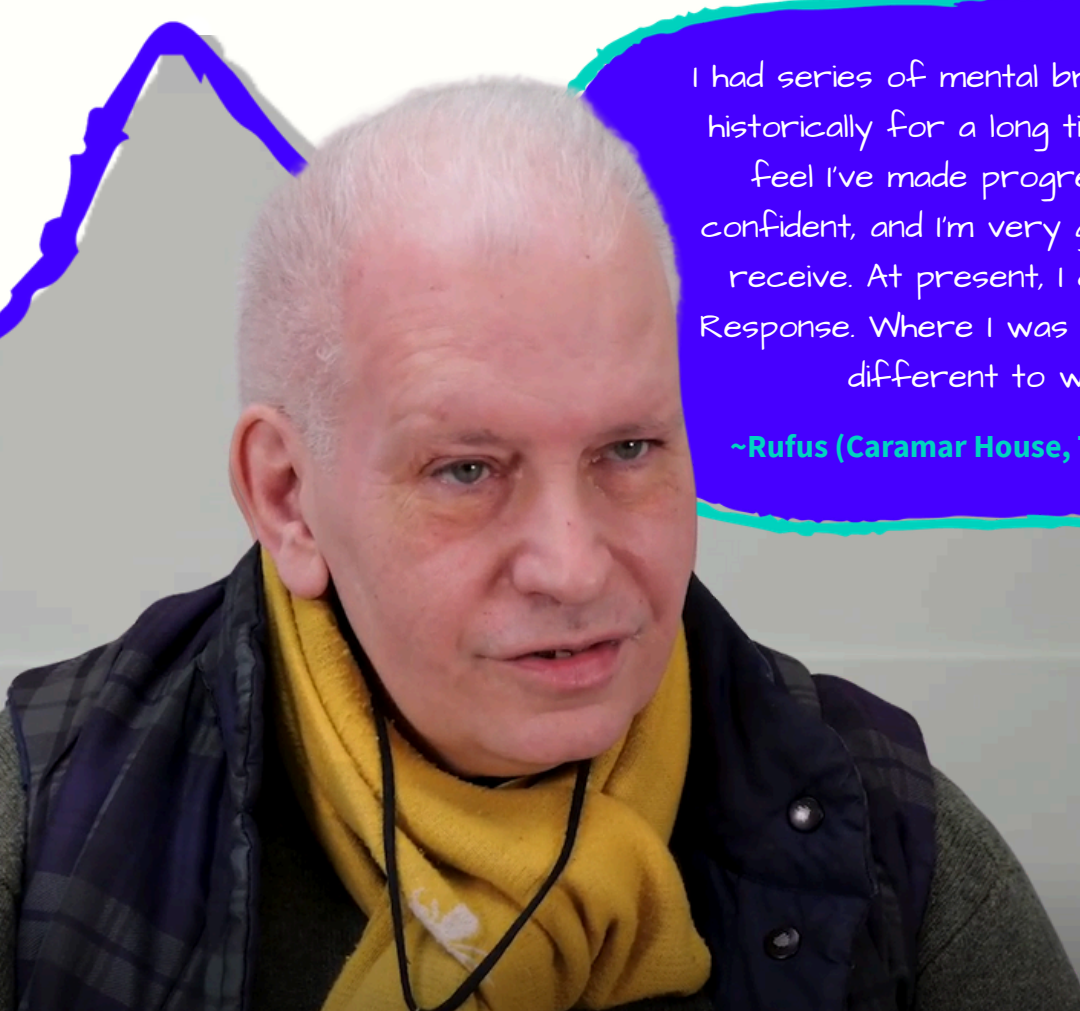
We will expand early support, helping young people get the help they need before problems escalate and reducing the need for more intensive services later.

Across all areas of our work, we will listen to and involve the people we support, recognise how past experiences can affect wellbeing and behaviour, and help people build independence while receiving the support they need.

By 2030:

- More people will be supported across all levels of need
- Most will show sustained improvement in mental health and wellbeing
- More people will engage in meaningful activity
- More people will move into and sustain appropriate accommodation.

We will ensure our services are accessible, inclusive and responsive to the different communities we serve, particularly where outcomes are currently unequal. We will use data and feedback to identify groups that face barriers to accessing support or experience poorer outcomes and will work with those communities to shape and improve our services. This may include providing information in accessible formats, offering culturally responsive support, strengthening partnerships with community organisations, and improving staff understanding of different lived experiences, and reviewing referral pathways with partners to ensure people can access support at the right time. We will regularly monitor access, experience and outcomes across different groups and use this learning to reduce inequalities and improve the reach and effectiveness of our services.

A portrait of Rufus, a middle-aged man with short grey hair, wearing a dark blue quilted jacket over a yellow turtleneck sweater. He is looking slightly to the right of the camera with a neutral expression. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

I had series of mental breakdowns I have had them historically for a long time. Since I've been here, I feel I've made progress at being more self-confident, and I'm very grateful for the support I receive. At present, I couldn't function without Response. Where I was five, six years ago is very different to where I am today."

~Rufus (Caramar House, Thatcham, Berkshire)



PRIORITY 2

Safe, Stable Homes



By 2030, all Response housing will meet clear standards of safety, quality and suitability.

For the people we support, housing is more than accommodation. It is the foundation from which recovery, independence and wellbeing can grow. A safe and stable home provides the security people need to manage their mental health and build the life they want.

Although housing and support are governed separately, we deliver them in a coordinated way, so people experience joined-up support that responds to their individual needs.

Our housing plays a critical role in:

- enabling hospital discharge,
- preventing admissions,
- reducing homelessness,
- supporting long-term stability.

Our model provides an alternative to hospital admission and temporary accommodation, delivering stable, relationship-based support that achieves better long-term outcomes. It reduces pressure on crisis services and supports more effective use of health and housing resources by enabling people to remain safely in the community.

This is particularly important for people at risk of homelessness, where early access to support and housing prevents escalation into crisis, reduces avoidable use of high-cost services, and creates a more stable environment for recovery and for developing the skills and confidence needed for independent living.

By 2030:

- All properties will meet upcoming required standards
- All properties will provide psychologically informed environments
- We will have invested in environmentally friendly energy solutions in our owned properties
- Access to supported housing will better reflect need
- Tenancy sustainment will remain high.



PRIORITY 3

System Leadership and Collaborative Partnerships



By 2030, Response will continue to play a clear role in shaping how services work across the region and at neighbourhood level as both a delivery partner and a contributor to system design.

We are a core partner in the Oxfordshire Mental Health Partnership, where services are brought together to provide a coordinated response. Members of Response's Executive Team also chair partnership committees, helping to shape direction, strengthen collaboration and ensure shared accountability across the system. Staff from across Response also contribute to partnership forums and working groups, supporting collaboration and shared system working.

This approach continues to develop and demonstrates the value of more connected working. Across the wider region, partnership working is less consistent and can be difficult to navigate. As systems evolve, there is an opportunity to strengthen collaboration more consistently.

We will contribute by:

- bringing insight from frontline delivery and lived experience
- supporting more connected pathways
- working collaboratively across organisations
- advocating for the role of the voluntary sector
- ensuring lived experience informs decisions.

WE ARE BETTER
TOGETHER
The Oxfordshire Mental Health Partnership

By 2030:

- Partnership working will be more consistent at regional and neighbourhood level
- Pathways between services will be clearer
- The role of the voluntary sector will be better recognised
- Lived experience will be embedded.

Our aim is to help create a system where people can access the right mental health support and supported housing at the right time, without having to navigate fragmented services or reach crisis point before help is available. We will achieve this through strong partnership working with housing, health and voluntary sector organisations, improving coordination and ensuring support is more joined up around people's needs.

Our aim is to contribute to a system that works more effectively for the people who rely on it.



PRIORITY 4

Stability and Sustainability

By 2030, Response will be a financially resilient organisation with a skilled and supported workforce.

Our workforce is central to our impact. We will continue to invest in:

- specialist skills, including trauma-informed practice and complex needs
- career development and progression
- wellbeing and support
- an inclusive culture where all colleagues can contribute.

Alongside this, we will further strengthen our organisational resilience by:

- diversifying income including increased unrestricted income through fundraising
- reducing reliance on single contracts
- strengthening governance and financial planning
- improving systems and processes.

By 2030:

- Income will be more stable and diversified
- Workforce retention and wellbeing will improve
- Systems will support consistent delivery
- We will be able to adapt without compromising quality.

Our Commitments

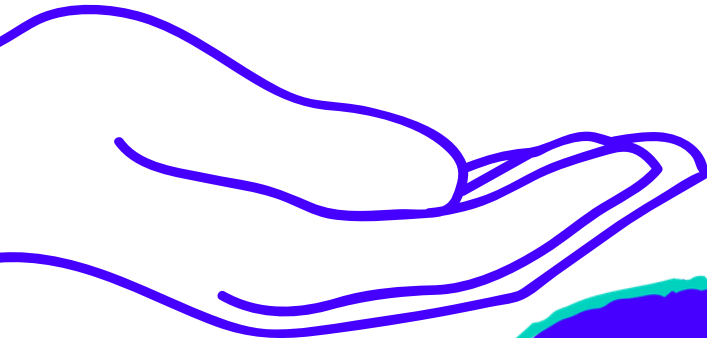


Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

We recognise that not everyone has the same opportunities to access support or achieve positive outcomes. People facing poverty, discrimination, language barriers, digital exclusion, insecure housing, poor mental health or a lack of support networks often experience greater barriers to getting the help they need. This is particularly true for people with serious mental illness, who often experience the greatest barriers to accessing support and being heard. This is also the case for some of the most vulnerable people in our communities, whose voices are too often unheard and whose needs can be overlooked.

We are committed to reducing these inequalities and ensuring our services reflect and respond to the communities we serve. We will identify and remove barriers to access, listen to and amplify the voices of people with lived experience, and create an inclusive environment where colleagues and the people we support feel valued, respected and able to be themselves.

By doing this, we aim to improve access, reach underserved communities and achieve better outcomes for the people who need our support most.



*"...She seems much more empowered
...Previously, her support has been about
needing to tell her story of how unhappy she
is and how she needs help. This feels really
practical and it is looking more useful to her"*

~ Parent of young person supported by Response

Co-Production

People with lived experience are central to how we design, deliver and improve our services. Their insight is essential to making sure support is relevant, effective and shaped around what people actually need, helping us achieve better outcomes.



How We Will Measure Success

We will track a focused set of indicators, including:

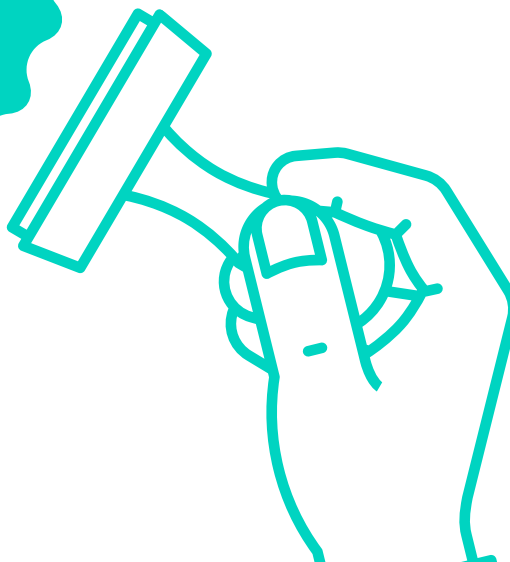
- number of people supported
- number of people in employment, education and training
- mental health and wellbeing outcomes including good physical health
- housing stability
- quality of housing provision
- workforce retention and wellbeing
- financial resilience.

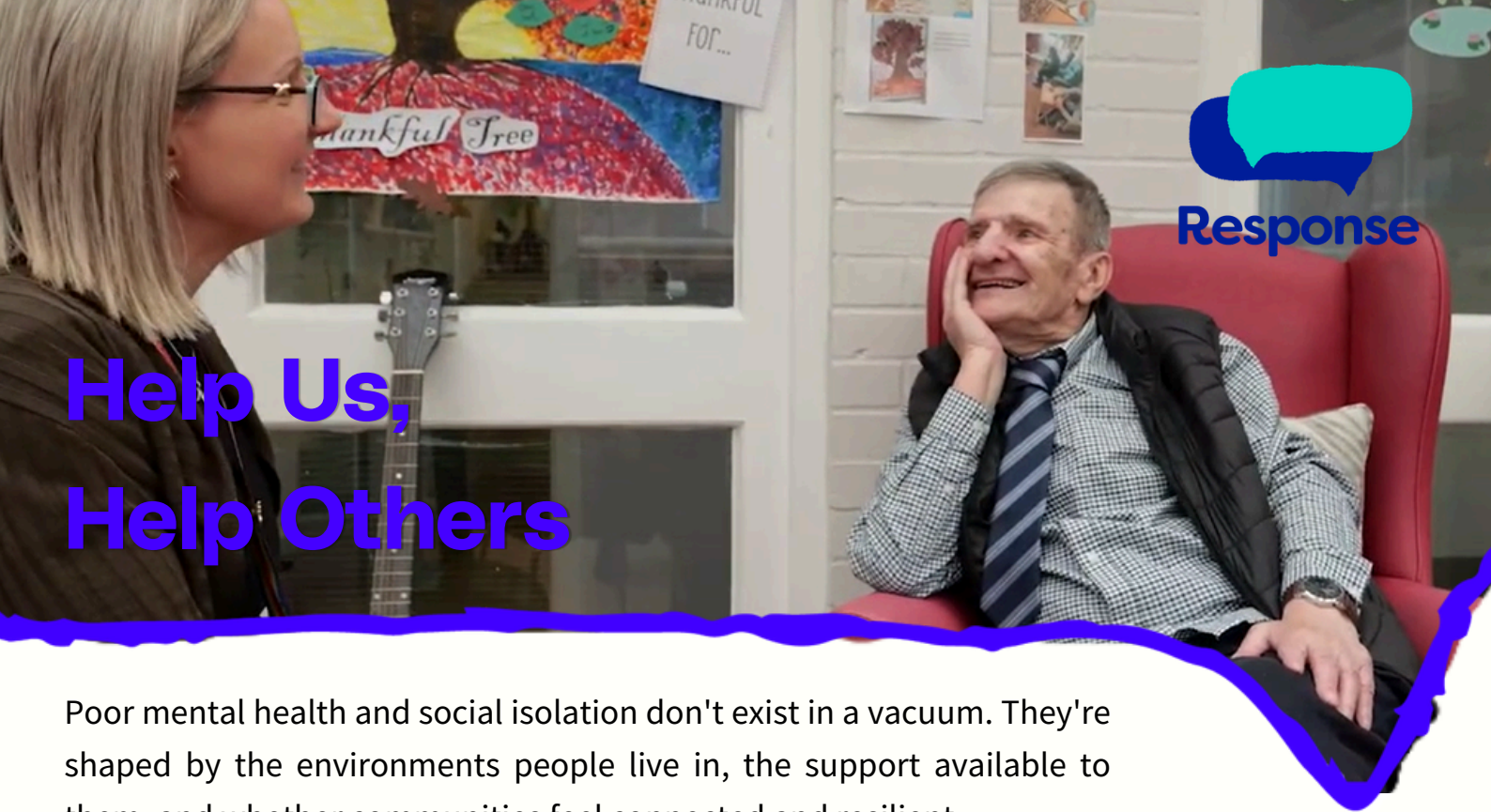


"I feel very good about my path to recovery and my increased independence."

~ Individual supported by Response

Progress will be reviewed regularly, with clear accountability at Board and Executive level.





Help Us, Help Others

Poor mental health and social isolation don't exist in a vacuum. They're shaped by the environments people live in, the support available to them, and whether communities feel connected and resilient.

Changing that takes more than one organisation. It takes people, partners and communities working together toward the same goal. At Response, we're committed to doing things differently, and building the kind of communities where everyone has a chance to flourish. With the right backing, we can do more of this.

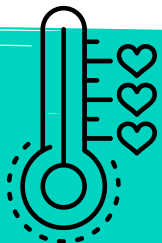


Partner with us

We work with organisations, businesses and commissioners who want to make a real difference to mental health and community wellbeing in Oxfordshire and beyond. We'd love to hear from you and discuss how we can transform lives together.

Donate

Every pound goes directly toward the services and people who need them most. From supported housing and community hubs to one-to-one recovery support, your gift helps us reach further and respond faster.



Fundraise for us

Whether you're taking on a challenge, organising a workplace event or doing something entirely on your own, fundraising for Response puts money where it matters. We'll support you every step of the way.

Final Note



Response exists to support people whose lives are often shaped by needs that are complex and multiple, and systems that do not always respond in time.

Our focus is on providing effective mental health support, a stable home and joined-up interventions that help people rebuild their lives. Where possible, we will act earlier, prevent crisis, and reduce the need for emergency or repeat intervention. We will work to make support feel connected rather than fragmented, so people are not left to navigate systems alone.

We will work in partnership across housing, health and wider support services to improve coordination and reduce reliance on crisis-led and high-cost provision. Our model offers a more cost-effective alternative to hospital admission and temporary accommodation, while supporting better recovery outcomes and giving people the stability they need to regain confidence, skills and independence.

To deliver this well, we will continue to strengthen our organisation, so it is resilient, well governed and able to provide consistent, high-quality support over time. This includes investing in our workforce, maintaining safe and high-quality housing, and embedding trauma-informed, person-centred practice across everything we do.

We are clear about the pressure the system is under, and we are clear about what that means for the people who rely on it every day.

This strategy sets out our commitment to delivering support that makes a real difference in people's lives: helping people feel safe, rebuild stability, and move towards independent living with dignity and hope.



Nicola Leavesley

Nicola Leavesley
Chief Executive

Lucy Weston

Lucy Weston
Chair of Trustees





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Response



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