



SoLO STRATEGIC PLAN 2010 – 2013



SoLO's Mission Statement

"Through delivery of positive, stimulating activities, SoLO unlocks and develops the potential in our learning disabled members, offering them opportunities to increase their self confidence and build skills, independence and friendships"

1. Introduction and background

Solihull Life Opportunities started life in April 2000 when a need was established for a different approach to respite services for people with a learning disability. This different approach evolved into the organisation it is today, providing over 5000 social and leisure activity sessions for more than 500 children and adults with a learning disability within the borough of Solihull and the surrounding areas.

The organisation is managed by a group of volunteers who form the Trustee Board and operated, under the leadership of the Chief Executive Officer, through a mix of 9 paid full time staff, 50 paid part time staff, additional sessional workers and 110 volunteers. The organisation is also influenced and directed by a Service User Reference Group comprising of 10 members with a learning disability.

Social and Leisure Activities are a vital component of a well-balanced life providing the learning disabled member the opportunity to experience life away from home, grow in independence and develop new friendships and skills.

In July 2010, the Trustee Board worked with the Service User Reference Group to develop a new vision for the organisation which would form the basis of the strategic approach taken by SoLO from April 2011 when the current business planning cycle finishes.

A business planning process was followed incorporating wider staff feedback through a consultative team day, test and challenge session with the Project Managers and sign off by the Trustee Board.

The vision for SoLO is captured under 4 headings:

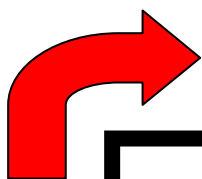
S ustainable services that are future proof	O pportunities that provide a diverse range of life experiences for people with a learning disability
L inks with other providers within Solihull and neighbouring areas to enhance the lives of our members and increase their life choices	O utstanding services, delivered by highly skilled and professional people leading to a reputation of being the best provider

Our strategic plan is the blueprint for ‘What’ we will do in the future to ensure that we continue to fulfil our core organisational goal which is:

“To add value to the lives of people with learning disabilities”

The plan will provide the direction for our organisation and will form the basis for an Operational Plan which will identify ‘How’ we will work to achieve our strategic intentions. The Operational Plan will form the basis for our staff’s individual objectives for each year and the Trust Board will track progress on these through a performance management process.

2. Our Strategy for the future



The world is changing and the years of block funding to provide a range of services to a number of people are coming to an end.

In the world of personalisation, people who are assessed as requiring a service will be given their own budget to spend.

The new government, with a projected term of 5 years, are championing this approach.

This will provide a number of challenges to SoLO:

- Services will need to be marketed to appeal to the individual purchaser with a clear unit cost, simple message of what is on offer and a straightforward approach to accessing them.
- There will be competition to provide services.
- The move from block funding to individualised purchasing will have a cost implication for the organisation and require additional infrastructure in financial management.
- There will be a large number of people, not meeting the criteria, who will not be eligible for a personal budget but will still need services.

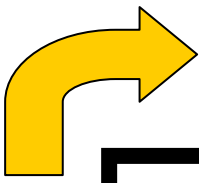
What SoLO will do:

In the short term (within the next year)

1. We will develop our fundraising capacity and pilot a dedicated fundraising post with a requirement to raise funds on a 1:9 ratio providing an additional £35,000 of income.
2. We will formalise and systemise a process for the promotion and management of direct payments – incorporating two tier payment scheme to ensure that those who don't have access to individualised budgets are not disadvantaged.
3. Services will be available on a unit cost basis to maximise the variety of funding streams and offer choice.
4. We will reduce our operating management costs by 5%

In the long term (within the next five years)

1. We will be the market leaders in day time activities for people with a learning disability in Solihull and the surrounding areas.



Opportunities
**that provide a
diverse range of life
experiences for
people with a
learning disability**

Life opportunities are the same for a person with a learning disability as any other person – they want the opportunity to have meaningful day time activities, either through work or social interactions, they want to make and maintain friendships, they want a home of their own.

SoLO currently provide social and leisure opportunities in the evenings, at the weekend or during the holidays for children and adults with a learning disability.

We plan to use this model that we have successfully developed and adapt it to increase our members' opportunities during the day time as a creative alternative to day services.

Currently, the main provision within Solihull covers:

- Catering services
- Farming and agriculture
- Woodwork
- Traditional day service

There are other limited options available in terms of volunteering placements, but these are, in the main, un-co-ordinated.

The challenges to SoLO are:

- The open market will bring in competitors who have experience of day time provision in other areas
- The traditional model of day service with door to door transport is a familiar, safe provision which will be difficult to persuade some people to move from
- We are reliant on the provision of community based facilities from which to run services
- The budgets that people will receive to purchase their services with will not be generous

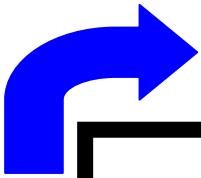
What SoLO will do:

In the short term (within the next year)

1. We will extend the current range of services that we provide to include; fulfilling day time activities, supported employment opportunities
2. We will assess the feasibility of purchasing a building to serve as a 'hub' for our services and provide a base for our office function.
3. We will continue to provide evening, weekend and holiday activities, giving respite to parents and carers

In the long term (within the next five years)

1. We will research and develop social firms, as part of our day time provision, where appropriate.
2. We will develop a wider family support model, including support for siblings.



Links with
**other providers
within Solihull and
neighbouring areas
to enhance the lives
of our members and
increase their life
choices**

SoLO has a strong track record of partnership working, which is evidenced by its involvement in bodies such as the Children's Trust and the Learning Disability Partnership Board where it represents the wider voluntary sector. It has also been a key player in bodies such as the Not for Profit Group, Solihull Independent Living Consortium and has led on multi-disciplinary work in relation to Person Centred Planning. It also works closely with parents and carers in the delivery of services to those most vulnerable. It also works in partnership with its volunteers to deliver services.

The new Government has outlined in its manifesto its wish for organisations to work together, particularly in the delivery of health and social care and funders are requiring partners to work together. Future funding,

when not channelled through the individual budget route, will not be available so readily to smaller organisations.

The challenges to SoLO are:

- Our partners could be our competitors in an open market
- Partnership working takes time and effort to ensure that it is both effective and efficient

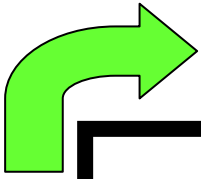
What SoLO will do:

In the short term (within the next year)

1. We will continue to develop our relationship with parents and carers – recognising them as influencers in the lives of their sons and daughters.
2. We will increase our profile through technology, networking and the media to maximise our place in the market.
3. We will review our current relationships and concentrate our resources on those which maximise the outcomes for our learning disabled members.
4. We will continue to recognise the value that volunteers bring to our organisation and plan for a 5% increase each year, particularly supporting increased day time activity.

In the long term (within the next five years)

1. We will campaign and lobby government and decision makers to ensure that those who are most disadvantaged get their voices heard.



O

utstanding

**services, delivered
by highly skilled and
professional people
leading to a
reputation of being
the best provider**

SoLO has a reputation for delivering excellent services which is evidenced by Outstanding ratings from Ofsted particularly in relation to 'Enjoy and Achieve' and 'Making a Positive Contribution'. SoLO's volunteers have won awards in relation to their contribution to the learning disabled members and the charity achieved Investors in People Bronze Standard in 2009.

An outstanding service is one that is person centred and not service led. The organisation has a set of values that determine the behaviour of the staff and volunteers and this is evidenced through excellent provision.

The challenges for SoLO are:

- A competitive open market can drive costs down and this can impact on the quality of service delivery. SoLO needs to balance its drive towards quality with a similar drive towards cost efficiency.
- The requirements of accreditation are time consuming and costly
- SoLO cannot afford to lose its reputation for quality provision as this is its major selling feature.

What SoLO will do:

In the short term (within the next year)

1. We will ensure that there is a clear set of values and behaviours that reflect a person centred approach throughout the organisation.
2. We will invest in the development of staff and volunteers

In the long term (within the next five years)

1. Our services will meet all appropriate national and locally recognised standards.
2. SoLO will continue to be known by its reputation for quality services

Financial Considerations

Due to our vision of growth and development, we anticipate that SoLO will grow in numbers of projects, ways in which it receives its funding, numbers of employees and volunteers that it involves to deliver its services.

Area	2006/7	2007/8	2008/9	2009/2010	2010/2011	2011/2012
Turnover	£267K	£304K	£409K	£520K	£624K	£686K
Growth		14%	34.5%	27%	20%	10%
Projects	20	23	24	26	29	30
Employees*	65	73	98	115	126	132
Volunteers**	80	103	78	106	120	140

Rationale

Turnover: We anticipate a similar growth in 2010/2011 as we have increased our projects and are starting to promote individualised payments. Our prediction for 2011/2012 is conservative, but will be reviewed in light of the October spending review and also the opportunities that will open up with the personalisation agenda and the opportunity for people to purchase our services directly.

Growth: Our growth has been steady, and whilst we anticipate a slower rate of growth, we are still planning for more activities in the future as we know that the demand will grow based on the demographic evidence.

Projects: We are planning more projects, but these we anticipate will be more substantive in the future – with more hours assigned to each person and with a mix of day time and evening provision.

Employees: We are planning for a growth in employees but are working towards employing people on more substantive hours which will reduce our supervision hours and overhead costs.

Volunteers: our numbers of volunteers dipped in 2008/9 – this was for two reasons: our recording of volunteer activity became more sophisticated, so we are now assured that all those volunteers we record are actively involved in a regular activity. Also, we invested in a Volunteer Pathway Co-ordinator – whose role is to track volunteer activity, to support staff in their supervision of volunteers and to ensure that the volunteer pathway from initial enquiry to placement is both efficient and effective.