

Persona

We're all about you

Annual Report 2024





A Message from our Chair

Hello everyone. It is my pleasure once again as the chair of Persona's board to introduce our annual report.

On a personal note, I'm very pleased to have started my second three year term as chair. Wild horses couldn't tear me away as the saying goes! Persona remains the most values driven organisation I've worked with. I take real pride in sharing with everyone who'll listen how we operate and especially our commitment to engaging people we support in helping review and develop what we do together to help improve lives.

Once again, I'm delighted to be able to speak so warmly of our relationship with Bury Council. The range of discussions provide us with just the right blend of challenge and support, as well as looking at opportunities for how we can contribute even more with a range of partners to making Bury an even better place.

It's been a year too, when we've looked hard at how we continue to develop the way we provide care and support for Bury's people. I enjoyed attending one of the workshops where we worked together in exploring what we mean by 'enabling', ie helping people to build their own capacity to enjoy fulfilling lives in the way they choose. This is quite a new and exciting approach, building on the baseline quality of our services.

So let me finish once again with a huge thank you to all our staff, our partners, and - most of all – the people we support past, present and future, for making Persona the great organisation we continue to be!



Tony Hunter
Chair of the Board





Welcome to the Annual Review of Persona

Another year further on and another annual report filled with amazing stories and great successes. It hardly seems like two minutes since we put together our very first report as Persona, and here we are with an organisation that is nine years old already!

As always, it's been another busy year – is it ever not in social care? We've seen some major changes at a national level with a new government, new legislation and recently a new budget. It's too early to say exactly what all of that will mean in practice but it is guaranteed to make 2025 an interesting one!

So, in all the busyness what have we achieved? Well, I think the best way to sum that up is to say that today we are making a positive difference in the lives of more people in Bury; we're doing that whilst being a better employer with a more diverse workforce and at the same time we're being more efficient and reducing the relative cost per person of our support. Wow! That's massive isn't it?!

So, what does that look like in practice? Well first and foremost we have completed implementation of several initiatives which have allowed us to continue to deliver the same services more efficiently. This has meant that we have achieved the £2.5m contract reduction that we were tasked with, without compromising the quality of our support. We're making a positive difference in the lives of more people with our new scheme at St Mary's and our flagship Ageing in Place Pathfinder. We're attracting more people to want to work in social care through our innovative recruitment practices and our engagement with schools and colleges, meaning that we have a workforce that includes more young people and people from different communities. And we've implemented digital systems which are not only making our work more efficient but are improving the quality and person-centredness of what we do.

I am incredibly proud to be part of an organisation that has achieved all of this and that, in doing so, has improved the lives of our community through our services and the employment opportunities we offer. I want to thank everyone who works so hard to make that happen day-in-day-out. You bring your skills, talents and passion to everything you do and you really do make a difference.

I hope this annual report gives you a helpful overview of our year. It is a story of what great social care, great employment and great partnership can achieve.

Kat Sowden
Managing Director



Our Finance

In the financial year to March 2024 Persona made an operational surplus of £290K. The charts below detail actual and budgeted income and expenditure for 2023/24.

During the year we expected an increase in income from Bury Council for services provided, due to the staff pay award and the associated increase in contract income that accompanies this. The actual income was £240K more than budgeted due to additional income for the provision of intermediate care (IMC) in our short stay service and the reversal of a debtor reserve from a prior year. Other income was very close to the budgeted level for the year.

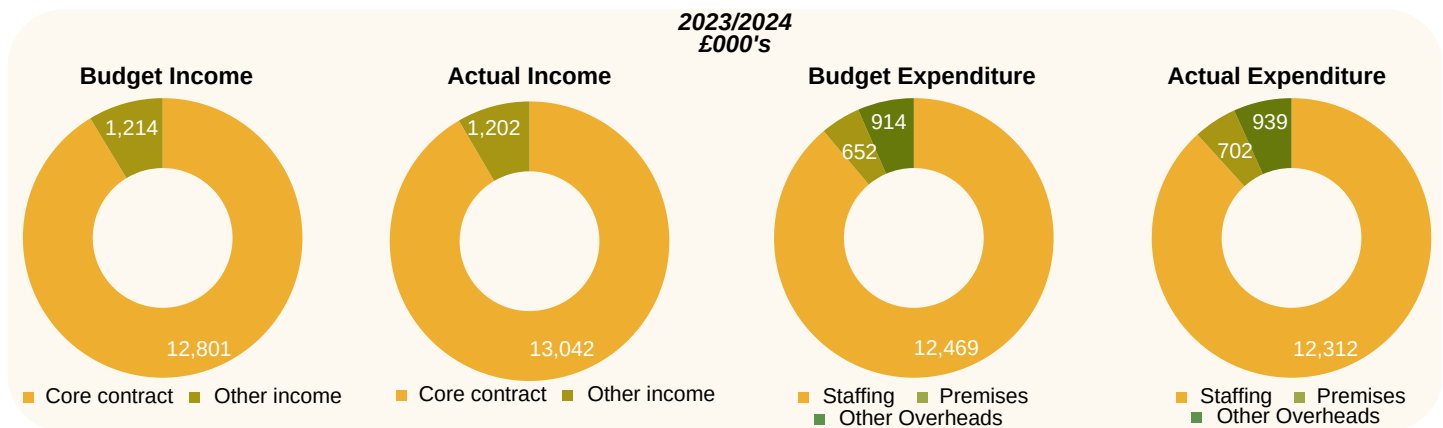


Our payroll costs increased by £1,265K compared to the previous year but were £158K lower than budget. The increase was predominantly due to the pay award implemented for the year 2023/24 and increased staffing costs for IMC.

Premises costs had been planned to remain largely in line with the previous year but actually increased by £45K. This was due to continued energy cost increases during the year.

Other overheads were £25K higher than budget and £323K lower than the previous year. The previous year included one off costs for planned restructuring activity which was largely completed in 2023/24.

Good progress was made during the year to deliver the 20% reduction in contract price that was requested by Bury Council, with all but £80K of the £2,500K requested either delivered or in progress by March 2024. The balance of £80K has been delivered in 2024.



People We Support

Persona continues to deliver flexible services to people living in the borough of Bury.

Quarterly surveys for people receiving support have been positive over the last year with the average overall score for Persona being 98.1 % satisfied with the service they receive.

During 2024 there has been no CQC inspection activity within Persona. We have continued to support managers and staff to prepare for inspection under the single assessment framework.



We have welcomed new people to Persona over the last year either from their family home or from another placement and teams have worked to ensure people have settled well and that they are supported to live the life they choose.

In September, St Mary's place successfully opened. This is a new service for eight young adults aged between 18 -25 years with autism.

The objective for this service is to enable people to develop the skills required to live independently. St Mary's will support people for up to two years and then provide a small amount of floating support in their new homes.

Our Partners & People We Support Told Us:

'I have recently started attending Grundy and it pleases me to observe the kindness and the attention given by members of your staff, who do an excellent job of caring for our needs. Such attention is given to all those in need and nothing is too much trouble for your staff; it is given freely on all accounts. In sometimes difficult situations, all your staff want to do is help those in need. I have lived quite a long time, and I am constantly aware of their kindness given freely and with a smile on their faces.'

[Get Social at Grundy Hub](#)



'There was a hive of activity in the sports, games and sensory sessions at Sunnybank and there was some really great energy in the room. It was wonderful to see all your supporting staff and people you support so involved in the session that made it uplifting for all involved. Well done day service.'

[Learning Disability Day Service](#)

'My mother has had a wonderful time coming to Grundy every Tuesday. She is so animated when she is picked up, you can see what wonderful work you all do. It has been a pleasure seeing her make new friends. The work you all do is fantastic, such love and care.'

[Get Social at Grundy Hub](#)

'Thank you for your care during his last six months. We know Queensberry was the right placement for him and feel sad that he wasn't able to fully benefit from being with you. Please thank all the staff who tried so hard to make his life better.'

[Supported Living](#)



'The team are extremely professional, approachable and nothing is too much trouble. They are extremely person-centred in all their work, always putting the service users first. They have been supportive in our joint work; always available when required and approaching everything in a friendly and creative manner.'

[Shared Lives](#)

'Many thanks and thanks once again for Persona's support and dedication in assisting his move back to Bury.'

[Supported Living](#)

'Well recommended and so caring, helping people to lead their best lives.'

[Shared Lives](#)

Our Strategy: 2024 - 2027

It's been an exciting year with the launch of our brand new strategy, 'enabling support which makes a positive impact'. It's directly aligned with Bury Council's 'Let's Do It' ambitions and it aims to ensure that we take a strengths-based approach, encouraging everyone we support to have aspirations and goals that we can help them to work towards.

Our strategy is split into four key areas:

Supporting More People

This year we've already increased the number of people we support in Shared Lives and Get Social at Grundy Hub.

We've also had a positive impact on more people through our Ageing in Place Pathfinder, working hard to understand the needs of older people living in Moorside and working with partners to make improvements in that area.

In September we launched an innovative transition scheme at St Mary's in partnership with Bury Council and Inclusion Housing, supporting eight young people with autism to develop their independence.



Improving Outcomes

We know we provide great support, but we believe it should always be continually improving. We want to achieve this by taking a more consistent approach to identifying people's goals and supporting them to work towards them. We also want to identify any barriers to people achieving their goals and work with partners to address these.

One of the barriers we have already identified is transport, so we've been developing some different transport options including a volunteer driver scheme in partnership with HMR Circle, and an assisted vehicle.

We want to co-produce more so that people we support are playing a lead role in service developments.

Digital Working

This year we completed implementation of Care Control so we now have one electronic care planning system across the whole of Persona.

We've also implemented Sensio falls prevention technology at Elmhurst and are seeing the system's benefits first-hand, in terms of less intrusive support and improved falls prevention.



Our Wider Impact

We've always had a keen interest in our impact in Bury beyond the services we directly provide; we've now built this in as a core element of the strategy.

We want to offer more social value so we can increase the positive impact we have on the wider Bury community. We also want to continue our journey of making social care a great place to work.

This year we were delighted to achieve Best for Inclusion in the GM Good Employment Charter Awards in recognition of our work to change our recruitment approach and increase our workforce's diversity.





Our Wider Impact

We take our responsibility as a large social care employer in Bury seriously and want to make a positive difference wherever we can. Over the past 12 months we've been focussing on:

Carbon Impact

We want to reduce our carbon impact wherever we can and our ambition is to achieve Net Zero by 2038.

We have been working with our green ambassador to encourage a whole host of grass roots initiatives with our Green Plan; in some buildings we've switched to LED lighting and in others we've adjusted the heating to reduce wasted energy as far as possible. Teams have really stepped up to the challenge, increasing awareness of recycling and 'switch off' campaigns.



Social Impact

We've continued to work in partnership with a range of not-for-profit organisations to share our Social Spaces venues for free.

We've re-opened The Green Café, sharing the space with a range of organisations to create a warm, safe community hub space. Our Ageing in Place Pathfinder has developed a community garden and created various volunteering opportunities so that people can develop their skills whilst improving their wellbeing.



Co-Production

Our Your Voice committee has continued to play an active part in the development of Persona, leading the development and launch of our REACH Retreat Holiday lodge at the start of the year.

We've developed a co-production charter which looks at how we ensure people are meaningfully involved in the work we do and the way that our services develop.

We've also been working closely with our staff director and staff ambassadors to take forward key areas of the strategy.

Our impact beyond Bury

We want to make social care a great place to work across the sector, not just at Persona, so we've been working in partnership with GM Good Employment Charter to encourage more health and care organisations to begin their journey towards member status.

We're also part of a board of employers supporting the GM Mayor's vision to level up technical education through the MBacc and looking at how this will work for social care.

Employment

Our approach to recruitment has been specifically redesigned to broaden our reach and enable more people to work with us.

As well as providing volunteering opportunities, we've provided 35 work placements, double the amount in 2023, so we have seen more young people joining our workforce and an overall decrease in the average age of our team.

We've also seen an increase in the diversity of our team with over 14% of our workforce being non-white British – a 5% increase since 2022.



Stories



Michelle voted in the local election this year “so I had a chance to have a say. I never used to think about voting, but I think it’s important for people to vote, as it is us that will be affected. Before I decided who to vote for, I saw policies and what the parties stand for and I chose through what was most relevant and important to me. On polling day I had a three minute walk to the community centre with my carer, Mandy and when I got to there I went to the counter and gave my name. I had to show my ID and they gave me a ballot slip. The poll clerks let Mandy come with me, to help me tick the box I wanted to vote for. I was pleased I voted, it made me feel glad I got to go and do it.”

Tigger lives just around the corner from Grundy Hub, but he’s made himself right at home and has been coming to visit nearly every day for 18 months. He enjoys staying in the lounge to people-watch and likes to sleep on one of the chairs closest to the radiator. People have bought him toys to play with, but all he wants to do is have a cuddle. Everybody knows him and if he doesn’t show up for a day, people miss him. Tigger has a very calming effect on those who feel anxious and he helps people reminisce, encouraging everyone to share stories about pets they have loved. Thank you, Tigger for putting a smile on everyone’s faces!



Isaac, Adam, Adrian, Megan, Dan and Jake volunteer at The Green Café and they enjoy it because: 'I enjoy helping the community, I like being part of a team.' Isaac. 'My favourite parts are talking to the customers and staff and making hot drinks.' Adam. 'I love interacting with everyone. I am hoping to gain more experience to look for paid work. I am very happy to be part of the Persona team.' Adrian. 'I enjoy challenging myself with a new role and meeting new people. My favourite part is going home knowing I've done something with my day.' Megan. 'I like coming up with ideas to get the café busier and I like doing a lot of different duties. I have volunteered before and I just enjoy doing it.' Dan. 'I enjoy meeting new people. I like working in the kitchen, I really enjoy baking and using the till.' Jake.

Stories



Liz was invited to be part of the interview panel to help us recruit new staff and she chose two questions to ask interviewees too.

'I sat in the interview room with the managers on the panel and we discussed how the interviews would work. I asked my questions to people who had come for the job. There were six in total, they all seemed very nice. After each interview, the managers asked me my opinion of the person we had interviewed and whether I thought they would be good for day service. I'm glad I did this as I learnt a new skill and enjoyed doing it. I think it's important for people supported by Persona to be involved in interviews because we know which people will make good support workers.'

Peter and Ralph have lived together for 11 years and when the opportunity to move came up, they did it together and welcomed George into their trio. Peter and Ralph enjoy football banter and sharing holidays. They didn't know George, but in the lead up to the move they met up a few times and found that he has similar interests! He is also a football fan, he likes going on holiday and has shown an interest in holidaying with Peter and Ralph. It was always George's plan to move out of his parents' house as he likes being more independent and making his own decisions. They all visited their new house before moving day and are getting along great!



In 2023, Sophie got the King's Award for volunteering in Bury Pride.

'It made me feel really proud, I was nervous when I received it but very proud of myself,' she says.

'I volunteered at Bury Pride again in 2024. I made sure the people there were okay and helped them if they needed anything. The thing I enjoyed most was the entertainment, it was very good. I think the best thing about volunteering is I get to meet new people; sometimes I can be shy, and I think this has made me more confident. Initially when I first started I was nervous, but I'm not anymore! If you're thinking about volunteering, I would say, if you're brave enough then just do it! It's really good to do.'



Our People

Recruitment

We continue to embed our inclusive approach to recruitment which, when we launched it, focussed on removing barriers that may have been preventing people from applying for roles within the organisation. As a result of these changes, we can see that the diversity of our workforce has changed from 9% to 14% of our staff being from ethnically diverse groups and the average age of our workforce has decreased from 48.5 years to 47.9 years over the same period.



This year we have focussed particularly on developing pathways for early careers, with a key focus on developing networks with schools, colleges and other community organisations to change perceptions of social care and encourage people to choose it as a career. One of the initiatives we tried as part of this was delivering a workplace safari in collaboration with Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) for 12 students in year 10 from a high school in Bury.

Progression

The first year of the Rising Stars programme is now complete, with seven employees completing the programme successfully. A review of the programme has taken place including feedback from our rising stars, their managers and other managers from across the services.

Going forward the programme will be adapted to enable a more flexible approach. This will also provide the opportunity for new starters in management roles to take part and for existing managers to attend refreshers for identified development sessions.



Learning and Development

Our annual staff workshops took place over the summer and focussed on the launch of Persona's new three year strategy, while also reflecting on how enabling we are when we are supporting people across our services. We heard some specific examples of how enabling practices have supported people to become independent or to maintain their skills.



In addition, we continue to support staff to complete the care certificate and sign up to and complete Level 2 Adult Care Worker Diplomas, along with other identified additional learning such as Positive Behaviour Support.

Looking Ahead

2025 promises to be another busy and exciting year. Persona will be 10 years old and we'll be finding lots of opportunities to celebrate this milestone anniversary. We'll also be getting deeper into our strategy and embedding more of that enabling approach into all we do. We'll be working in partnership with Bury Council to pilot a new way of measuring achievement of goals as well as supporting them in the planning of some new supported living schemes which are due to go live in 2025 and beyond.

Our digital journey will continue with the launch of a system for managing rotas which I know is going to make a positive difference in terms of efficiency for so many people. We'll be reviewing our Ageing in Place Pathfinder and looking at how we can take the learning and success of that and make it sustainable beyond the grant funding and potentially for more people in Bury.



We'll also be continuing to look at our employment approach and how we can continually improve, including looking at how we build on Rising Stars to develop more career progression opportunities and enhancing our training and development approach.

There's lots to be excited about but undoubtedly there will be challenges along the way, with the continued financial pressures on local government, alongside increasing demand and acuity of need. I have no doubt that we can rise to the challenge and that nine years of facing challenges head on and achieving amazing things gives us the confidence that we can achieve so much with the right attitude and that enabling approach.



Persona

We're all about you

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