



Appendix 1
Nexus Care

Annual Report

2021/22

Contents

1. Background to Nexxus Care
2. The Board
3. Vision, values, and strategy
4. Overview of services
5. Annual objectives and performance
6. Annual accounts 2021/22
7. Key achievements 2021/22 and ongoing issues
8. Developments for 2022/23 and future years

Background to Nexxus Care

1. Nexxus Care was established in 2011 as a local authority trading company (LATC) and is 100% owned by Staffordshire County Council. The company began trading in 2018 and is registered with Companies House, company number 0748276.
2. In 2017 the Council decided to develop it as a provider of care in the face of:
 - a) the need for additional reablement capacity to support the urgent care pathway and reduce delayed transfers of care.
 - b) the need for a contingency during the procurement of home care services in case insufficient independent care providers were available; and
 - c) the Council's duties to ensure and sustain the market under the Care Act 2014 and the need for a "provider of last resort".
3. Nexxus Care provides a range of services including reablement, home care and Extra Care. During 2021/22 it continued to provide a lateral flow device testing service in order to help manage the Covid pandemic. Also, during 2021/22 it took over provision of care at two residential homes.
4. Nexxus Care now has 340 staff, an increase of 39% on previous year due to the care home transition. Nexxus Care had an annual turnover in 2021/22 of £8.444m, £2.205m (35%) greater than the previous year. Reserves on 31st March 2022 were £78,305.

The Board

5. Nexus Care has a Board of Directors comprising of Staffordshire County Council Members and Officers, and the Chief Operating Officer, who collectively set the vision and strategy for the business and oversee operational delivery.
6. The Council's Chief Executive is responsible for the appointment of Directors. All directors present and past are registered with Company's house.
7. Nexus Care Directors on 01 April 2022 are, however please note Helen Riley is now retired (July 2022):
 - Simon Ablewhite (Finance Director)
 - Cllr Mark Deaville
 - Dr Richard Harling
 - Clair Muldowney (Chief Operating Officer)
 - Helen Riley
 - Cllr Mark Winnington
8. All of the above have confirmed that they comply with the responsibilities of Directors as set out by Company's House and can be found by the following link:

<https://companieshouse.blog.gov.uk/2019/02/21/7-duties-of-a-company-director/>
9. The Board meet monthly, and the Chief Operating Officer provides an update on all operational areas in a set format covering key aspects of the business. All meetings are formally documented, and actions recorded/tracked.
10. An organisational structure for Nexus Care is included in Appendix 2.

Vision, values, and strategy

11. The Nexus Care vision is:

To provide quality, cost effective and innovative care through a highly motivated and professional team enabling citizens to enjoy healthier, more fulfilled lives

12. Nexus Care vision has adopted the following values:

- We are ambitious, courageous and empowering.
- We support and enable our staff to make things better.
- We are open to doing things differently and will make best use of new technologies
- We are bold and willing to take difficult decisions in a commercial operating context.
- We will make a contribution to tackling climate change

13. Nexus Care's strategy is:

- The focus of operations is to intervene in the care market on behalf of the Council.
- We will be available to offer a 'provider of last resort' in the event that the market is unable to provide care.
- We will grow business with the Council by agreement with commissioners.
- We will operate to same 'rules' as other providers in the independent sector.
- We will seek to offer services to self-funders within the conditions of the 'Teckal' exemption.
- We will operate with Staffordshire and on the borders of the county.
- Our risk appetite is "moderate".
- We will embrace new technologies
- We will minimise our carbon footprint and make a contribution to tackling climate change
- We strive to be an exemplar provider of services in the care industry

Overview of services

Reablement

14. The aim of reablement is to maximise people's level of independence, often after a period of illness or stay in hospital. The service works with people to set and achieve their goals. A successful outcome is to achieve these goals, prevent hospital readmission and minimise reliance on ongoing care and support, with a target of no more than 66% requiring ongoing care and support.
15. The reablement service has a CQC registered manager and receives referrals from hospitals in East Staffordshire, Tamworth and Lichfield. The service completes the necessary risk assessments and support plans prior to care commencing. It assesses within the first 72 hours whether the client is able to complete a reablement period of up to 6 weeks, with occupational therapist input monitoring their progress throughout. Should the individual have ongoing needs the service completes a Care Act assessment to determine their eligibility for Council funded care and support and those that are eligible are referred to the brokerage team to source it.

Home care

16. The home care service provides care and support to clients with assessed eligible needs. Home care consists of two operational branches based in Cannock and Stafford. Each branch has a CQC registered manager and teams including care co-ordinators, field care supervisors and administrators. Clients include Council funded, NHS funded, and privately funded individuals.
17. The service is on the Council's standard home care contract and works to the same terms and conditions as all other contracted providers. The branches access the Council's online portal to identify and accept new clients in the same way as other contracted providers.

Extra Care

18. The Extra Care service provides care and support at three schemes: Mill Rise, Brunel Court and School Court. People live in their own flats within the schemes and receive care and support in their own homes. Each scheme has a CQC registered care manager and team leaders. The service works jointly with the housing provider.
19. The service maintains a presence 24 hours to meet needs during day and night. Should a flat become available the service works with the housing provider to place a new resident that requires care and support.

Residential Care Services

20. In July 2021, Nexus took over the running of two residential care homes Meadowyrthe in Tamworth and Bracken in Burntwood, following a decision by the previous provider not to renew its contract with the Council. Each home schemes have a registered manager and a deputy manager
21. Transfer of the services to Nexus was successfully managed to a tight timescale, including CQC registration, insurance, and TUPE of 108 staff.

Lateral Flow Device Testing

22. The service was terminated 31st March 2022 in line with national guidance. 153,000 tests had been completed and a further 156,000 home test kits distributed. Key members of the team were invited and thanked for their contribution to the response via HM The Queen platinum celebration and all staff personally thanked via a joint communication from Nexus and Staffordshire County Council.

Annual objectives and performance

23. For 2021/22 Nexus Care set the following objectives:

- a) Provide commissioned activity
- b) Maintain and improve quality
- c) Balance the books
- d) Keep the staff happy
- e) Grow the business
- f) Help the Council to reduce costs

Provide commissioned activity

Reablement

24. In 2021/22 Nexus Care was commissioned to provide 660 hours of reablement per week on a block amount. Activity above the block hours is paid at an hourly rate as per the contract. A reconciliation is completed at the end of the year to ensure that an appropriate payment has been made. Nexus Care delivered on average 653 hours of reablement per week, broadly in line with the overall target. The service has 27 support workers.

25. 2021/22 Reablement Summary:

- 343 people started the reablement service.
- Average duration of service was 23 days, against a target of <28 days
- 73% successfully completed reablement and required no ongoing care and support, against a target of <66%
- 27% were transferred to ongoing care and support (Target <50%)
- Other reasons for the service being terminated were due to either deceased, readmission to hospital or an initial failed discharge.

Home care

26. During 2021/22 the Cannock branch provided around 2,200 hours of care per week and the Stafford branch 350 hours per week to a total of 184 clients. This is approximately 6% of all Council commissioned home care capacity. The service had 137 care workers. Activity and capacity in 2021/22 was slightly below the 2,600 hours of care per week and 163 care workers in 2020/21, reflecting difficulties in recruitment and retention of staff.

Extra care

27. During 2021/22, the service was provided around 750 hours of care per week to a total of 68 clients across the three schemes. The service had 35 care workers. Activity in 2021/22 was slightly up on 2020/21.

Residential Services

28. Bracken has 34 beds and Meadowyrthe 41 beds for permanent residents. Nexus have been able to open a new emergency respite service at Meadowyrthe which was previously suspended under the former provider. This has made a further 10 beds available.

Maintain and improve quality

29. Reablement and the Stafford home care branch have a dual CQC inspection. The most recent Care Quality Commission (CQC) rated Stafford reablement and home care as 'Good'. The CQC report is available here <https://www.cqc.org.uk/location/1-4314896520>
30. Cannock home care branch has not been inspected by CQC since it was transferred from Allied Healthcare to Nexus Care. The branch currently holds an overall rating of 'Good' and is rated 'Good' in all domains. As with reablement and the Stafford home care branch, policy, processes and systems introduced recently have improved quality - for example regular internal audits, robust recruitment practices, and digital scheduling of visits.
31. The Covid pandemic has had an impact on reablement and home care services, reducing the number of care and support workers due to isolation, as well as affecting recruitment and retention. Agency staff have been used to maintain services, which may be a concern to the CQC on inspection.
32. School Court and Mill Rise Extra Care schemes have not been inspected by CQC since they transferred to Nexus Care. School Court currently holds a rating of 'Good' overall and in all domains except for 'Well Led', which is rated as 'Requires Improvement'. Mill Rise is rated 'Good' overall and in all domains.
33. Brunel Court was inspected by the CQC in April 2022 and achieved a rating of 'Good' overall and in all domains with extremely positive feedback. The report can be found here. <https://www.cqc.org.uk/location/1-7772220803>

34. At the point of transfer to Nexus Care Meadowyrthe had a CQC rating of 'Requires Improvement' and 'Inadequate' in the Well Led domain; Bracken House had a CQC rating of 'Good' overall. Meadowrhythe had a CQC inspection in January 2022 and the outcome is awaited.
35. Nexus has been working with the Council and Entrust to complete a programme of improvement to the estates at both Meadowyrthe and Bracken. Innovative technology including digital care management systems has been implemented at both sites to support medication and care planning processes. Assistive technology has been introduced to improve quality of care and has welcomed greatly by staff and residents. New posts have been introduced in both homes along with additional training to the workforce to improve quality of care. An experienced operational lead has been appointed in order to oversee quality management and works closely with the staff and senior management team, ensuring a holistic approach and transparency of performance.
36. The results of the 2021/22 client and employee survey are included in Appendix 3. The majority of feedback was positive, 91% of service users would recommend Nexus Care to family/friends and 99% felt their care staff always treated them with dignity and respect. The response rate for employees was also positive, 73% would recommend Nexus Care as a place to work.
37. Incidents, complaints, compliments for all services are logged on to a dedicated system, monitored by the operations team for key themes and trends, and discussed with branch managers monthly. Events cannot be closed until a senior manager approves that all relevant steps have been taken and they are fully resolved. A summary of events is shared at monthly Board meetings.

Nexus Trading Services CQC Provider ID - 1-4155218218						
Location ID	Registered Service	Division	Overall CQC Rating	Last inspected	Inherited Rating?	CQC Review
1-4314896520	NEXXUS STAFFORD	HEMECARE	GOOD	04/03/2020	No	04/08/2022
1-4314896520	NEXXUS REABLEMENT	HEMECARE	GOOD			
1-6722658760	NEXXUS CANNOCK	HEMECARE	GOOD	26/04/2016	Yes	Not Stated
1-7773983641	NEXXUS SCHOOL COURT	EXTRA CARE	GOOD	05/06/2019	Yes	Not Stated
1-7772220803	NEXXUS BRUNEL COURT	EXTRA CARE	GOOD	12/04/2022	No	04/08/2022
1-9882814509	NEXXUS MILL RISE	EXTRA CARE	GOOD	02/10/2019	Yes	01/08/2022
1-11057494587	NEXXUS MEADOWYRTHE	RESIDENTIAL	REQUIRES IMPROVEMENT	02/10/2019	Yes	04/05/2022
1-11057494647	NEXXUS BRACKEN HOUSE	RESIDENTIAL	GOOD	01/03/2018	Yes	Not stated

Balance the books

38. Annual accounts for the year 2021/22 have recently been audited by an external auditor and show a profit of £18,791. No concerns have been raised. A summary of the financial position of the company is included at Appendix 3.

Keep the staff happy

39. One of the biggest challenges across all services is recruitment and retention of staff. Home care is not a preferred career choice for several reasons including long and unsociable hours, travelling, and the level of responsibility against rates of pay. Challenges with recruitment and retention have been exacerbated by the Covid pandemic and the increasing cost of living. Additional measures have been put in to place such as increases to hourly pay and mileage rates.
40. Nexus Care staff turnover during 2021/22 was 64%, compared to 38% in 2020/21. This is reflective of the stability within the sector currently, alongside many other industries facing the same challenges. These challenges are continuing in 2022/23.
41. Nexus Care continues to work hard to attract new staff and retain existing staff. Some of the methods we have introduced during 2021/22 include:
- Winter essential packs, including branded items to support front line workers on a day-to-day basis offering personalised packs for each service
 - Welcome bonuses to join the company.
 - Perks such as discounts at hundreds of attractions and high street stores.
 - Reduced monthly cost for any car issues.
 - Digital technology allowing more time caring and reducing paperwork.
 - Improved communication methods such as online platforms.
 - Increased engagement with leadership and management team.
 - EarlyPay – allowing staff to access funds before they are due to be paid.
 - Pilot of electric vehicles
 - Increased mileage and pay
42. An apprentice has been employed and is currently working towards Business and Administration level 3. Following completion, a marketing role will be developed to focus on recruitment and retention of staff alongside building the brand to attract new clients and grow the business.

Grow the business

43. Nexus Care saw significant growth in 2021/22 with Meadowyrthe and Bracken House residential homes transferring into the business.
44. Given the growth and diversification of the business, the Board undertook a review of the governance and structure of the company, and for reporting, monitoring and accounting purposes have split the operations into 3 distinct divisions: home care (including reablement), extra care and residential care. The intention is that each of these is financially sustainable in its own right with minimal cross subsidy.
45. Nexus Care continues efforts to recruit in reablement and home care in order to offer greater capacity.
46. Further expansion is being explored for 2023/24 and can be found further down in this report.

Help the Council to reduce costs

47. 155 people (73%) completed reablement with no further need of ongoing care and support, potentially averting cost of around £4.5m had all of these required an ongoing home care service (based on 28 hours per week).
48. In home care Nexus Care follows the Trusted Assessor model which allows clients' care and support to be flexed up and down depending on their needs. Any requirements for increases in hours and opportunities for decreases in hours are pursued as part of routine management of the service.
49. Nexus Care assists the Council to reduce non-contracted home care by taking on these clients wherever possible. This allows proper quality assurance, gives a guarantee of continuity of care, and often reduces costs.
50. Nexus Care seeks to maximise occupancy at Meadowrhythe and Bracken in order to make best use of the capacity and reduce the number and cost of placements in the market.

Annual accounts

51. The turnover of the business in 2021/22 was £8.444m, an increase of 35% over the previous financial year. £2.3m of the increased turnover related to the transition of care home services, which are provided at cost.
52. A small in year profit was reported of £18,791, more detail is included in Appendix 3.

Key achievements and ongoing issues

Achievements

53. Nexus Care made some key achievements during 2021/22. These include:
 - Maintaining good quality services during the Covid.
 - The smooth transfer and subsequent successful running of two residential homes.
 - Successful wind up of lateral flow device testing with key individuals recognised nationally for their part in the service.

Ongoing issues

54. **Staff recruitment and retention** remains a key challenge. Nexus Care continues to explore innovative ways to recruit and retain, informed by feedback from staff themselves. Pay is a big factor but there are other issues that are important to staff such as how they are treated and how their individual circumstances can be accommodated by working patterns.
55. **Covid** still presents an ongoing risk of increased demand, rising costs and staff absence. Compounding challenges with staff recruitment and retention.
56. **Stability in the market** will also remain a challenge for Nexus Care. As a 'Provider of Last Resort' the company is expected to be able to respond quickly if other providers fail. To date the transfer of services has been managed successfully.

Developments for 2023/24

57. Nexus is committed to offering the Council a cost-effective alternative to the independent adult social care market. Nexus remains ambitious and keen to

expand further as long as this can be achieved safely and without compromising existing services.

58. Nexus Care is exploring further expansion of the business including:

- Potentially developing 'Step-Up reablement' service in line with the Council requirements
- Additional home care, Extra Care and care home services in the event of provider failure. With the care market increasingly fragile it is essential that the Council has an option to transfer services when providers fail as this can happen suddenly and at any time.
- Potential learning disability services including respite and Supported Living, subject to the outcome of a detailed appraisal of options for these services by the Council. Nexus could offer a sustainable and value for money alternative to the independent adult social care market. Staff would be secured through planned transfer of services from existing providers. The company would need to ensure that it had access to the appropriate knowledge, experience and skills, as well as additional management capacity and funding to support the transfer of services.
- Growing existing services through recruitment of new staff. This is likely to be challenging in the short-term, however the company will be investing in marketing initiatives to improve recruitment and retention of staff alongside building the brand to attract new clients and grow the business.

59. Nexus Care will continue to review and improve processes and ways of working and invest in systems that will allow services to reach a CQC 'Outstanding' rating and establish it as an employer of choice across Staffordshire.