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Executive Summary

Background to SILC

SILC is a voluntary organisation led and run by disabled people. Founded in 1997, we champion the idea that every person has the right to live independently and freely, with the same choices, opportunities and control over their lives as anyone else. We are a membership organisation run by and for those who use our services.

Since we agreed our last strategic plan in 2010 we have worked in partnership with Surrey County Council, the NHS and partner organisations in Surrey to enable more people to live independently through Direct Payments and Carers’ Payments, we have taken on the running of four town centre Hubs, and we have grown as an organisation with more staff and more volunteers.

Our Vision, Mission and Values

In preparing this strategic plan to take us through to 2018 we have worked with our members, Trustees, staff and stakeholders to review the key groups that SILC will serve, their ambitions, and what SILC can contribute to achieving them. This has resulted in a revised statement of our vision, mission and values:

SILC’s vision is that every disabled adult, child, older person and carer in Surrey will be able to live more independently, with the same freedoms and opportunities as anyone else.

SILC’s mission is to provide support and information to enable more people to live independently. Our staff and volunteers work with our clients and customers so that they can make informed choices about their lives. We work in partnership with professionals, agencies and people across Surrey to create an environment where these choices can be fulfilled.

SILC believes that everyone can live independently with the right support. At the heart of everything we do is the social model of disability and the concept of full human rights. We believe that these give a basis for treating everyone with respect, understanding and fairness. We also believe that disabled adults, children, older people and carers can learn from and support each other.
**Aims 2015 - 2018**

We have set ourselves four aims to help us deliver our mission by 2018, and we will track progress towards their achievement:

**Aim 1:** More people are living independent lives as a result of using SILC’s services, whether as clients or customers

**Aim 2:** More people know about the services that SILC offers and how we can help them live independent lives

**Aim 3:** The services SILC delivers are of a consistently high quality

**Aim 4:** SILC is a robust organisation with the capacity for continued growth and effectiveness.

**Activities and Priorities for Action**

SILC’s existing work supports these aims. We will continue to support new and existing users of Direct Payments and Carers Payments. We will continue to provide advice and information via the website, over the telephone and from SILC’s offices, and we will encourage peer support. We will continue to seek to diversify our income streams.

As part of our strategic planning review we have also identified a number of priority actions where we will focus our attention:

**Action 1A:** Recruiting and training more Personal Assistants

**Action 1B:** Developing a Care Act Trusted Assessor role

**Action 1C:** Supporting Personal Health Budgets

**Action 2A:** Making more use of the town centre Hubs

**Action 2B:** Raising the profile of SILC

**Action 3A:** Improving SILC’s ability to demonstrate its impact

**Action 4A:** Strengthening SILC’s governance

**Action 4B:** Improving communications within SILC.
Introduction

SILC – who we are, and where we’ve come from

SILC is a voluntary organisation led and run by disabled people. Founded in 1997, we champion the idea that every person has the right to live independently and freely, with the same choices, opportunities and control over their lives as anyone else. We are a membership organisation run by and for those who use our services. We work in close partnership with Surrey County Council and the NHS.

Since SILC’s previous four year plan (2010-2014) was published, SILC has grown considerably:

- Annual income has risen from just over £400,000 to over £1m
- The number of new Direct Payments each year, including one-off payments to carers, has risen from less than 1000 to more than 2000
- We have taken on new roles such as sales of equipment from the Hubs, championing people’s voices through Healthwatch, more support for carers through the GP carer payment and prescription scheme, and piloting Personal Health Budgets.

We have grown too as an organisation - the staff team has doubled in size to over 30, and we now have over 50 volunteers. We have introduced a new IT system, and strengthened our senior management team.

This growth has given a strong platform for the future. Our partners and commissioners say that our staff are expert in helping people find the right solution, and we have a good reputation for getting involved in the important conversations facing disabled adults and children, older people and their carers in Surrey. But we recognise that growth has brought challenges too – our office space is somewhat congested, internal communications are more complex in a larger organisation with a more diverse range of functions, and we need to continue to ensure our systems are safe and robust.
SILC – the changing world in which we operate

Over the past four years the world around us has also changed:

- Legislative changes such as the Health and Social Care Act 2012 and the Care Act 2014 have brought changes in the way local statutory bodies organise themselves, and new opportunities such as additional support for carers and the possibility of personal budgets for continuing health needs. Looking ahead, the Care Act will bring further changes, particularly a new assessment process for people looking for financial support with their care. There may also be future changes following the General Election in May 2015.

- The recession and austerity measures have put pressure on all services, and Local Authorities in particular are expecting further cuts to come. Charities, whether funded by government or through fundraising, are being expected to provide more and more, for less and less.

- The number of older people living longer and requiring care is growing, and is predicted to continue to grow quickly. At the same time, the cost of living in Surrey means it is likely to be increasingly difficult for people of working-age to afford to take critical but low-paid caring roles such as Personal Assistants.

- Technology may change the way some services are delivered, for example Surrey County Council is introducing a prepayment card for Direct Payments, and more people are using the web for information – for example our PA Finder facility to search for a Personal Assistant.

In order to grow and succeed over the next four years, SILC needs to be a flexible and adaptable organisation, looking out for the opportunities that change will bring.
SILC’s vision is that every disabled adult, child, older person and carer in Surrey will be able to live more independently, with the same freedoms and opportunities as anyone else.*

SILC’s mission is to provide support and information to enable more people to live independently. Our staff and volunteers work with our clients and customers so that they can make informed choices about their lives. We work in partnership with professionals, agencies and people across Surrey to create an environment where these choices can be fulfilled.

SILC believes that everyone can live independently with the right support. At the heart of everything we do is the social model of disability and the concept of full human rights. We believe that these give a basis for treating everyone with respect, understanding and fairness. We also believe that disabled adults, children, older people and carers can learn from and support each other.

*Our vision describes the world we want to see. Our mission describes SILC’s contribution to making that world a reality. Our values describe the beliefs that we hold and the way we will work in delivering our mission.
In order to make progress towards achieving our vision, and to achieve our mission, we have set ourselves four aims which we want to be true by 2018:

**Aim 1:**
More people are living independent lives as a result of using SILC’s services, whether as clients or customers*

**Aim 2:**
More people know about the services that SILC offers and how we can help them live independent lives

**Aim 3:**
The services SILC delivers are of a consistently high quality

**Aim 4:**
SILC is a robust organisation with the capacity for continued growth and effectiveness.

* SILC serves people referred to us by statutory bodies, and who may receive services over a long period of time – they have a client relationship with SILC. SILC also serves people who may only visit a town centre Hub or call the office with a single enquiry – they have a customer relationship with SILC. We have included both these words because they remind us of the range of people we serve.
SILC is already working hard to achieve these aims, and we will continue with our existing successful services. The 2013-2014 Annual Report describes the range of activity underway to help more people live independently and the improvements that are being made to strengthen SILC as an organisation.

We will therefore continue to:

1. Deliver the Direct Payment support contract on behalf of Surrey County Council, administer one-off payments to carers and the Financial Monitoring Service, and undertake the administration of Supported Managed Accounts.

2. Manage the administration of the GP carer payment and prescription scheme, providing advice to families so they can make the most of it.

3. Manage the town centre Hubs in Dorking, Epsom, Redhill and Walton, including a fully accessible shop selling a wide range of aids and equipment at Redhill, providing a base for benefits and other advice services, and managing a growing number of volunteers.

4. Running Peer Support groups, publishing a newsletter and engaging widely to raise the profile of SILC and the services it offers, and running one-off high profile events such as Choice Unlimited to provide inspiration and information.

5. Continue our involvement with Healthwatch Surrey, supporting its role as a “consumer champion” for both health and social care.

6. Undertake regular user surveys, and respond to feedback from clients and customers about how they have found our services and what can be done to continuously improve their consistency and quality.

7. Implement and embed the improvements we have made to systems and processes over recent years, such as the new IT and telephone system, a Customer Relationship Management System and an increased presence on the web and social media.

We will continue to work in partnership with Surrey County Council and the Surrey Clinical Commissioning Groups and with our partners in the other User-Led Organisations in Surrey.
As part of our strategic planning review we have also identified a number of priority actions where we propose to build on our existing services and focus our attention between now and 2018.

**Aim 1:** More people are living independent lives as a result of using SILC’s services, whether as clients or customers

**Action 1A:** We will identify and offer training to more people wishing to become Personal Assistants.

We will do this by:

- Piloting different approaches to PA recruitment and training
- Working with existing PAs on a “word of mouth” recruitment campaign
- Approaching groups looking for flexible work in Surrey and further afield, such as parents or students
- Making more of PA finder, including regular reviews of the content and considering options for specialisation
- Collecting evidence about the incentive/disincentive of pay rates to present to commissioners.

**Action 1B:** We will work with Surrey County Council to develop a Trusted Assessor role under the Care Act, which has the potential to allow many people to live independently.

**Action 1C:** We will work with the NHS to support Personal Health Budgets.

We will take part in the pilots and prepare for the roll-out phase by:

- Ensuring that SILC staff are trained in the new roles and responsibilities
- Working to understand what is required in the roll-out phase

Before taking part in the rollout of either of these programmes we will make sure that they will result in more people being supported to live independently, and that SILC will be properly funded to undertake the work.
Aim 2: More people know about the services that SILC offers and how we can help them live independent lives

Action 2A: Making more use of the town centre Hubs to promote SILC’s work and reach more people.

We will do this by:

- More visible promotion of SILC Services in Hubs
- Using the Hubs for public activities eg PA information events
- Using the Hubs for SILC staff, eg as an accessible location for meeting clients and for events such as training and meetings
- Developing “referral pathways” from the Hubs within SILC
- Reviewing the location of the Hubs to ensure they are visible
- Using the Mobile Hub to raise awareness of the permanent Hubs
- Testing the effectiveness of different approaches to promotion and advertising.

Action 2B: Raising the profile of SILC with key stakeholder groups, the local community, key professionals and members and potential members of SILC.

We will do this by:

- Developing and implementing an action plan to promote our key messages to our stakeholders
- Increasing media coverage for key achievements, and for our involvement in networks and projects
- Reviewing SILC’s visual style and web presence
- Developing publicity material targeted at professionals, and preparing articles for other organisations’ newsletters etc
- Developing a membership strategy.
Aim 3: The services SILC delivers are of a consistently high quality

Action 3A: Improve SILC’s ability to demonstrate its impact

We will do this by:

- Including qualitative questions in our annual survey
- Asking SILC staff to collect “personal stories” of changes that SILC’s services have supported
- Working with the NHS, Surrey County Council and our partner User-Led Organisations to collect impact data
**Aim 4: SILC is a robust organisation with the capacity for continued growth and effectiveness**

**Action 4A: Strengthening SILC’s governance**

SILC is a membership organisation, and its priorities are set by its members and the Trustees they elect. Over the coming years SILC needs to renew its membership, ensuring that it represents the changing groups that SILC serves, and to strengthen its Trustee Board.

SILC has expert and committed Trustees, however they are small in number and some skills are in short supply. We will therefore seek to strengthen SILC’s governance by:

- Promoting membership of SILC, and of the Trustee Board, widely through newsletters, through SILC staff visiting homes, and through the Hubs
- Developing a strategy to promote the value of membership to potential members, associate members and affiliate members
- Promoting the value of being a Trustee for personal and skills development, and for making lifelong friends.

**Action 4B: Improving internal communications within SILC so that staff know more about the breadth of work that SILC does, and they feel confident in drawing on this knowledge to offer a better service to clients and customers.**

One of the consequences of rapid growth and diversification is that SILC now undertakes a range of very different functions, and has staff in six offices as well as those who are home-based. We want to ensure that all staff know more about the breadth of work that SILC does, so that they are confident to draw on this knowledge to offer a better service to our clients and customers. We will do this by:

- Improving induction to cover all of SILC’s work and introducing a work shadowing scheme
- Establishing an intranet with FAQs, an email bulletin and additional “whole SILC” face-to-face communications such as awaydays
- Introducing a regular programme of training to keep staff up to date, drawing on specialist knowledge within and outside SILC
- Encouraging more staff to engage with our key stakeholders
- Reviewing our business processes to ensure they are robust.
Aim 1: More people are living independent lives as a result of using SILC’s services, whether as clients or customers

a. Growth in number of Direct Payments and new Direct Payments.
b. Survey information providing qualitative information from people using Direct Payments, including about how easy/difficult it was to recruit a PA.
c. More postings on and traffic to the PA Finder website.
d. PAs staying in their jobs for longer, because they are well matched with their employers.

We will also look out for changes in society that are making it easier for disabled people to live independently, for example in using public transport, and whether we are seeing more disabled people in the community.

Aim 2: More people know about the services that SILC offers and how we can help them live independent lives

a. More enquiries in town centre Hubs, more unique visits to websites, more followers on Twitter, more likes on Facebook, more calls to SILC’s office.
b. More people who visit a Hub subsequently use another SILC service.
c. A more diverse source of referrals to SILC eg from physiotherapists.
d. More approaches from the media to comment on relevant issues.

We will know that progress is being made towards these aims by looking out for, tracking and recording indicators of progress. To do this we will continue to run our survey of Direct Payments users, and also begin to survey Personal Assistants to gain their views on the quality of services we offer and the difference our services are making to their lives. We will also begin regularly to survey our staff, to assess the progress we are making in strengthening SILC.
Aim 3: The services SILC delivers are of a consistently high quality

a. Information from our clients and customers, and those who visit our website or call our office, including through regular surveys.

b. “Repeat custom” to our Hubs, telephone advice and website.

c. Feedback from our commissioners and partners eg Surrey County Council and the other user-led organisations, on quality and impact of our services.

d. Independent Quality Assurance and recognition, for example awards received.

e. Views from our staff and volunteers about areas of high quality and poor quality.

f. Our volunteers stay or progress, for example into employment.

Aim 4: SILC is a robust organisation with the capacity for continued growth and effectiveness.

a. Growth in SILC’s membership.

b. More members of the Trustee Board.

c. Staff report that they are more knowledgeable and confident in dealing with queries outside their direct area.

d. Commissioners and partner organisations report meeting a wider range of SILC staff.
Between July and December 2014 SILC commissioned NCVO (the National Council for Voluntary Organisations) to facilitate the development of an updated strategic plan.

The work was conducted in four phases:

### Understanding the External Environment
- Conversations were held with 10 key stakeholders, including commissioners and partners, to understand how they saw the strengths and weaknesses of SILC, and the opportunities that would arise over the coming years.
- The senior management team also prepared a “SWOT” analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) and a “PEST” analysis of likely changes in the external environment (political, environmental, social and technological).
- The output from these analyses was discussed and tested at staff and Trustee awaydays in August.

### Identityfication of Issues and Options
- From the awayday and AGM discussions a long list of potential priorities for action was identified. Some were ruled out at a Trustee meeting at the end of September, and the remainder were assessed in detail by the senior management team at a workshop in October, testing the extent to which they contributed to achievement of SILC’s Aims.
- The resulting draft priorities were discussed with staff and Trustees in November through an all-staff survey, team meetings and a Trustee workshop. Staff and Trustees were asked to rank their priority actions and to start to identify what activities should be taken to implement them, and how progress would be tracked.

### Review of Vision, Mission and Values
- The pros and cons of a new vision and mission statement had been debated at an awayday in December 2013, and the notes of this discussion were reviewed.
- At their awayday in August staff and Trustees considered whether there were new beneficiaries that SILC was supporting, and this informed a discussion with members at the Annual General Meeting in September.
- Revised Vision, Mission and Values statements and a set of high-level Aims were discussed with the senior management team in October, tested with staff in November, and a final version was agreed by Trustees at a workshop in November.

### Strategic Plan Preparation and Action Planning
- The discussions on the external environment, Vision, Mission, Values and Aims were summarised, and key activities and indicators were identified. A first draft of the 2015-2018 Strategic Plan was discussed by the senior management team and the second draft was agreed by the Trustees at a Board Meeting in December.
- The detailed list of actions and progress indicators became part of a management document which will inform business and financial planning for 2015-16.
If you would like more information about SILC’s work or how you can get involved, we would be delighted to hear from you. Find out more:

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