

# Holding the Hope



**Elmore**  
Community Services

**Strategy, 2022-2025**



# What does this strategy do?

This strategy sets out the clear change that we seek to achieve for clients and in the services and systems that they rely upon and with which we work on their behalf.

True to our bespoke approach, this strategy puts people at the heart of Elmore—and that includes clients, employees, partners, commissioners, and trustees. Elmore cannot set out our hopes, objectives, and plans without acknowledging that many of the people we support are pushed to the brink of hardship and into difficulty by pressures which exist within society today. The vulnerabilities of the people we support are directly influenced by the decisions that are made about society and how we provide resources.

This strategy is **hopeful, optimistic,** and **ambitious** about supporting people and trying to change the pressures themselves. We set out why Elmore exists and the essence of our support.

We explain our choices and decisions about Elmore's services—who we are, who we will support, where we will work, and how we will provide support.

We make the case for the change we want to see in the world and explain how we seek to bring it about.

When Britain locked down during the early months of the coronavirus outbreak, there was an outpouring of feeling and compassion. People looked out for each other and looked after each other. Something profound in our relationships to each other was going on. We believe that this upsurge in **solidarity, care,** and **empathy** was a premonition of a better future. We believe that this outpouring demonstrated how things were always meant to be. As a caring organisation, Elmore will support clients and society to choose this path.

I want to thank every Elmore employee, trustee, client, and supporter for creating this Strategy. I also want to thank Oxfordshire Community and Voluntary Action for facilitating away days for Elmore to have the space to dream big. Now is the time for holding the hope.

*Tom Hayes*

**Tom Hayes**  
Chief Executive Officer





# Who is Elmore?

**Elmore Community Services (Elmore)** is a registered charity governed by a Board of Trustees to provide high quality services for marginalised and disenfranchised people in Oxfordshire.

Elmore was established in 1989 after a research project identified the weaknesses of service provision for people deemed 'difficult to place'. The result was a three-year pilot project for people with complex needs which continues to this day. We believe that we will always be here because people will always have needs which we were established to meet.

Elmore has grown, created services, and innovated solutions to give people the support and tools they need to meet a wide range of needs. These needs include personality disorder, mental health issues, learning disabilities, offending behaviour, anti-social behaviour, child protection, homelessness, sex working, drug and alcohol misuse, relationship breakdown, and domestic abuse and sexual violence.

We provide a range of mental health, complex needs, personality disorder, domestic abuse, and homelessness services. Our interventions can range from brief to longer term.





# Seeing the world as it is today

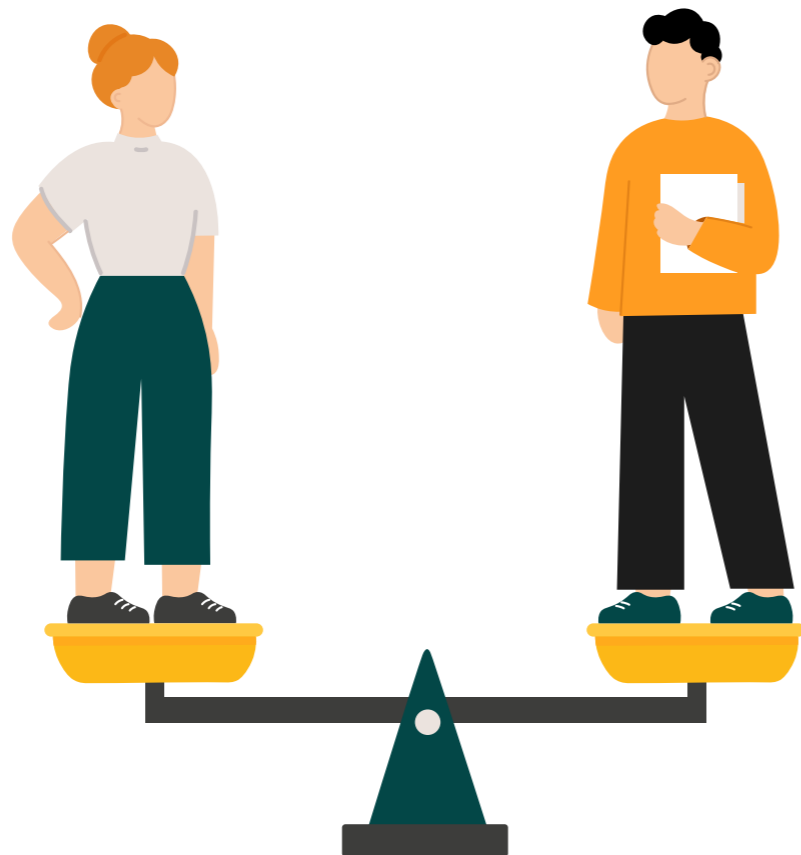
As a country, we have more than enough wealth, power, and knowledge to create systems that serve all our human needs. The real question has always been whether society has the inclination to meet everyone's needs.

Currently, the services and systems set up to support people receive too few resources to meet everyone's needs. Pressures are building up on Elmore clients, pushing them into difficulty and to the brink of hardship. These pressures are not accidental or inevitable, they are the result of a set of decisions made about society and how we provide resources.

We believe that these decisions manifest a set of values.

A market economy provides a way to exchange goods and services and make money which can be dedicated to important and valuable purposes.

A market-saturated society narrowly views human interactions through the lens of price and profit and measures success by wealth and riches. We believe that we increasingly live within a market-saturated society.



Why should a third-sector provider spend time in a strategy talking about market forces or political and economic decisions over which we have no control and very little influence? The answer is simple—Elmore supports people who are disadvantaged by such forces and we recognise that the best way to solve the root causes of disadvantage is to identify and tackle the structures that keep people locked into disadvantage and hardship. Below we identify some of these structural problems and solutions, from how we house people, set a higher standard of living, protect disadvantaged people so that they do not fall below it and can affordably move around their communities to access support.





# Let's look at...



## Housing

The failure to build social homes is relentlessly pushing up demand for private rental property at a much faster rate than it is becoming available, driving up rents, leaving renters with weak bargaining rights with landlords. In Oxfordshire, we have a lack of safe, affordable, and stable homes, which means our clients include the private renter relying on housing benefit, the family on a council house waiting list for years, and the low-income tenant pushed to the brink of homelessness or forced into rough sleeping.

## The society within which our clients live

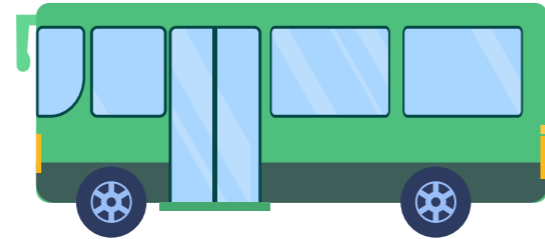
Our social contract defines what we expect as members of society and the responsibilities that we owe one another to make that possible. When people feel they do not have a stake, the social contract bends and breaks. Having a stake should mean that each person is able to meet their basic needs, yet society has made a set of decisions which includes pushing the minimum standard of living below which people should fall. Moreover, when society doesn't help people to meet the basics, it leads them to face the world on their own.





# Let's look at...

## Personal travel



For people without access to a car and unable to walk and cycle, bus travel is infrequent, expensive, and unreliable because, London apart, bus networks are deregulated. The people that we support can be cut off from places giving support or hampered from getting to important appointments because routes have been altered or withdrawn or a ticket costs too much.

## Personal finances



Before COVID-19, destitution was rapidly growing. This means not being able to afford the essentials that we all need to eat, stay warm and dry, and keep clean. The reasons for this are clear—high housing costs, stagnant and low wages, the exploitative nature of insecure work, and the limitations and inaccessibility of our social security system. Britain's social security system is broken when it expects adults without a job or other means of support to live on seventy-four pounds a week, less than half the amount needed to reach the 2021 poverty threshold.

## The state of the market

By honestly looking at the world we work within, we are better able to understand why our work is so essential. We are also better able to understand the ways in which underfunding of services can tie our hands behind our back and hamper Elmore's ability to recruit, retain, and enthuse talented, experienced, and passionate caseworkers. When funding for third-sector care is so low that providers struggle to pay wages that compete with pay in the retail and hospitality sectors, staff will leave in search of better pay and a lower level of stress.







# The Elmore Difference

We know what works because we have spent more than thirty years doing it.

With this new strategy, Elmore will continue to support clients in line with **our vision, mission, and values**, and go on advocating for the changes our clients tell us they need and the solutions they help to design. We will harness the expertise and experience of Elmore's caseworkers and develop new types of evidence to identify the very best practice and show impact.

## Our vision

Everyone is treated with dignity and humanity and feels able to look to the future with hope. Society meets the human needs we all share and becomes stronger as a result.

Services are sufficiently funded to flexibly engage and support people with complex needs, mental ill health, a lack of shelter, and trauma because of domestic abuse, sexual violence, and exploitation. Nobody feels pushed to the brink by the pressures in their lives.

## Our mission

To hold the hope for people, supporting and standing alongside them, so that they know they aren't on their own and feel empowered to look to the future.

To provide clients with the tools and support they need to achieve their potential and facilitate other services to support people and close the gaps that they might fall through.

To help eliminate exploitation and increase understanding about people's needs and hopes.



# Our values

The Charity is viewed by the team as skilled and unique. The sense of team is a distinctive feature of Elmore. So, too, is the feeling among frontline caseworkers and managers that they live their values through their service to Elmore and make a difference to lives.

## Bespoke

We respond with creativity and flexibility to people's needs and circumstances and support them to achieve the things that matter to them (not what others may want them to achieve). Elmore provides the right support—no matter how big the challenge or how small our control and influence.

## Non-judgemental

We never judge people because we believe in treating everyone with dignity and humanity and encourage others to do the same.

## Tenacious

We won't give up on people and support clients to expand their options, opportunities, and choices. We always raise issues that may be uncomfortable through a problem-solving approach.

## Integrity

We are honest with ourselves and those we work alongside and form authentic relationships as a result. Elmore is a trusted service provider, partner, and respected relationship builder with other agencies to ensure people get the right support when they need it.

## Empowering

We think outside the box to support people to increase their sense of control over all areas of their lives. We find new ways to help people to increase their sense of self-determination and hold the hope until they can feel hopeful about their own future.





# Strategy, 2022-2025

## THEME 1

### Leadership and Governance

Sub-theme	Outcome
Understanding Organisational Purpose	Everyone at Elmore knows why the charity is needed, what makes us distinctive, and the support we provide. Everyone understands the role they play in achieving our mission.
Leadership	Elmore is led by an effective management team and Board that provides leadership in line with our values and objectives.
Decision-making, risk, and control	Elmore can sustain services in the face of challenges that would otherwise limit its ability to behave as it would like to.
Equality, diversity, and inclusion	The leadership team of staff and trustees welcome, value, and empower people from diverse backgrounds to contribute to the charity's decision-making and services, and Elmore becomes an explicitly anti-discriminatory employer and service provider.
Openness, integrity, and accountability	Elmore is open about how we achieve our strategy and spend money.

## THEME 2

### Sustainability, Growth, and Consolidation

Sub-theme	Outcome
Establishing services	Elmore will grow to achieve our vision and growth will be strategic.
Strengthening services	When Elmore grows to fulfil our mission, that expansion will be sustainable because it will be accompanied by consolidation.
Utilising office space	Elmore has sufficient office space in the right places to meet current and future needs.
Being innovative	Elmore innovates services to meet the needs of clients and tackle underlying causes of problems.



## THEME 3

# Client-focused Delivery

Sub-theme	Outcome
Employee expertise	All employees have the skills, knowledge, and support to be effective in their roles.
Effective working practices	The Charity operates within a robust policy framework, backed up by key procedures.
Promoting lived experience	People with lived experience are influential in the governance and delivery of services.
Understanding and evidencing impact	Elmore can speak up for our model and the resourcing that it requires because we fully know and evidence impact. As a credible service provider, we shape agendas and contribute to the wider system's practice and knowledge. We learn the right lessons to ensure clients receive the right support.
Influencing and leading thought	Elmore influences the thinking and agendas of decision-makers and commissioners by becoming a thought-leader. We will lead thought by creating and sharing the three pillars of thought leadership: knowledge, opinions, and ideas.
Campaigning	Elmore sees change happening because we are proactive about positively affecting the issues that harm clients. Elmore advocates for change on the issues that clients care most about.
An enthusiastic partner that works collaboratively for clients	Elmore is a respected relationship builder and works enthusiastically and effectively with providers and partners to support clients' needs.







**[elmorecommunityservices.org.uk](http://elmorecommunityservices.org.uk)**

Elmore Community Services are a registered Charity (1090616)