

We transform the lives of people with a disability or mental health condition by providing the best quality housing and support services to enable them to live the lives they choose, achieve their personal goals, feel valued and know their voices are heard.

NEWSLETTER 1 - 2021

Welcome to our first newsletter of 2021.

As we are now in our third national lockdown it can be challenging to remain optimistic. However, we are feeling more hopeful as we chart the progress of the vaccination programme and our own frontline staff and more customers are able to take it up.



In Housing, we continue to provide essential Housing management and maintenance services, but we have temporarily paused some non-essential services. This is subject to ongoing review of risk levels and any further national or local restrictions or guidance that may emerge. We will continue with our proactive calls to customers picking up issues and providing support wherever we can.

Our support services are continuing as before but in a modified way. We know lockdown is a challenge for many of our customer but we will continue to do all we can to support them to keep in touch with family and friends using technology while ensuring we use PPE appropriately and carry out regular risk assessments to protect staff and customers alike.

We have put on extra resources to support our staff as the prolonged restrictions on our movements and lack of face to face interaction with loved ones and colleagues does begin to take its toll.

I still believe our PRIDE values will see us through as an organisation and we have genuine cause to be hopeful as we see more and more people receive a vaccine on a daily basis.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Julie Layton'. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Julie Layton, Chief Executive

LATEST NEWS

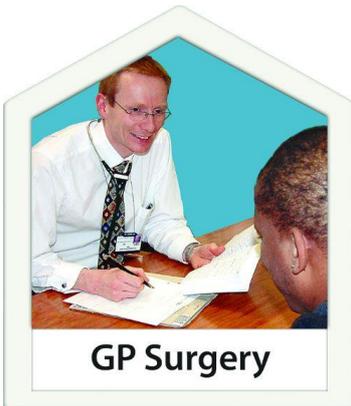


Rating maintained

We're really pleased that we have maintained the highest grades with the [Regulator of Social Housing](#).

Chief Executive, Julie Layton said: "We are delighted to have maintained our G1/V1 rating from the Regulator of Social Housing. It is testament to everyone's hard work that we have maintained the highest rating for both our Governance and Financial Viability."

CUSTOMER FOCUS



Improving customer health and well being

We recognise the health inequalities that people with learning disabilities and mental health conditions are likely to face. We are committed to understanding the barriers to better health that our customers face and putting measures in place that will help them improve their quality of life and life expectancy. [Read more](#)



Owning a home of your own

Chris was born with a hearing and visual impairment and mild cerebral palsy. None of this has stopped him however from working and owning a home of his own. At the age of 26 he decided he was ready for more independent living. After discussing it with his parents his mum did some research and came across a number of housing options including HOLD (home ownership for people with long term disabilities).

Chris chose his flat because it was in a great location close to town. He said: "I have my independence and I can do the things I want when I want." [Read more](#)



Digital inclusion

We have been working hard across all our teams and services over the recent months to make sure that our customers and support staff can adapt to the situation and still access health services and wellbeing resources. Promoting digital access has been a driving force behind our work around customers' health and wellbeing. In addition, we have a separate Health & Wellbeing group which are working on a future plan to overcome the other barriers that our customers might face. [Read more](#)



Betty gets her jab

Betty was over the moon to be one of the first of our customers to receive the Covid vaccine. She was supported by Support Worker Ilona from our Hackney Outreach service and said: . "I'm looking forward to the virus going away then things can get back to normal."

Support Worker Ilona said: "Betty and I discussed what was going to happen beforehand using easy read guides so there were no surprises and she knew what to expect. At the vaccination centre, everything was very well organised and straightforward. There was social distancing and we all felt safe. We were in and out really quickly. Betty had a big smile on her face for the rest of the day."



Life stories

We support our customers to live the life they choose. We encourage co-production and our customers have input into our plans and services. Each person we provide services for at Advance has their own story. We're pleased to be able to share some of these with you on our [Life Stories section](#).



Advance Collective

These virtual meetings are held the first Friday of every month and customers around the country are encouraged to take part. Topics at the Collectives have included:

- What people want from the online Collectives
- How people are managing during coronavirus
- Self-advocacy and knowing how to contact Advance
- Accessible information about coronavirus and the rules
- Wellbeing and looking after ourselves during lockdown
- Staying safe over Christmas
- What you want Advance to do for customers

Adam, Collective Co-Chair said: "We have had good feedback about the meetings from customers and staff. Some people also told us it's good to have a safe space to practice being online." For more information contact Collective@advanceuk.org .

[Download more gifs](#)



Human rights

The importance of relationships has really come to light over the past year, with many people isolated and having to stay connected in new ways during national lockdowns. Social isolation was already a reality for many people with learning disabilities and mental health conditions.

The human right to respect for private and family life applies to everyone, regardless of ability, gender, sexuality, religion or race.

We are all entitled to form and enjoy relationships and it is human nature to have desires and sexual urges. We believe people with learning disabilities or mental health conditions should be encouraged and appropriately supported to enjoy and explore these rights. [Read more](#)

HOUSING



Turning a service around

One of our housing schemes in Leicester provides stable homes for individuals with mental health conditions, with a number of residents also having physical disabilities. This scheme is a successful and positive place – however it hasn't always been the case.

Antisocial behaviour was a problem in the local community as well as the scheme. In the recent past residents were targeted for financial, verbal and physical abuse by locals. Garden furniture was destroyed and fires started in the garden as well as residents themselves developing serious substance abuse problems leading to antisocial behaviour.

This situation led to a lack of community feeling at the residence and no sense of pride in their home. [Read more](#) about how we resolved some of the issues.



New developments

Advance has set itself an ambitious growth target for the next three years. We have several developments in train including plans to purchase a bungalow in Oxfordshire where four people will share plus a self-contained annexe in the back garden. We are also in the process of buying 24 flats in Lincolnshire which we currently lease from another housing group. Buying the properties we will secure the flats for long term housing for people who require support. If you would like to discuss any potential future developments please contact our Head of Investment and Development, [Graeme Jackson](#).

USEFUL LINKS

Useful links ▶

We are proud to be involved with or members of the following organisations and support the good work they do to improve the lives of customers with long-term disabilities and mental health conditions.

- [Voluntary Organisations Disability Group \(VODG\)](#)
- [Association of Mental Health Providers \(AMHP\)](#)
- [Charity Works](#)
- [Learning Disability England \(LDE\)](#)
- [National Housing Federation \(NHF\)](#)

DIARY DATES



We will be taking part in the following events:

- The Autism Show - June 2020 (tbc)

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 Website

 Instagram

 LinkedIn

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