



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

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## NEWSLETTER 2 - 2018

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**T**hank you for your positive response to our last newsletter.

It has certainly been a busy time here at Advance. Since her appointment in January our Chair, Melba Wilson, has been settling into her new role while welcoming new Board members who bring with them a range of invaluable skills and experience. We will feature a short profile on each new Board member in upcoming editions of the newsletter.

Recently, I attended the launch of the National Housing Federation report '[Home Truths](#)' in St Austell which provides a clear picture of housing across the country. The pressures faced by general needs housing providers is echoed by those of us providing specialist supported housing. Although some councils are fast tracking planning applications for new developments - the pressure they face to gain the maximum commercial value for land often makes new developments unaffordable. We agree with the NHF and also call on Government to put in place incentives to deliver the long-term supply of affordable land.

The proven link between good quality housing, good health and well-being was emphasised by one of the speakers at the event. We see plenty of examples of this in our customers who, with the right support, are able to move from long stay care settings into more independent living. The rewards are myriad; not only from a broader financial perspective but, most importantly from a personal development and independence point of view.

As we come to the end of our financial year there are plenty of opportunities for reflection. It has been a good year for Advance with progress made against our [three year strategy](#). Going forward we plan to consolidate our financial position, improve our housing stock and look for new opportunities to grow our support and housing business so that we can help transform the lives of even more customers.

Thank you for your interest.

**Julie Layton, Chief Executive**

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NEWS



### **Cornwall service rated `Good' by CQC**

We are delighted that our domiciliary and supported living services in St Austell and Redruth have maintained an overall rating of `Good' in their recent Care Quality Commission inspection. [Read more](#)

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### **Supported Loving webinar**

Our Customer Engagement Manager, Rachel will be co-hosting a Learning Disability England webinar with Dr Claire Bates, the founder of Supported Loving. They will be discussing the importance of good support in making and maintaining relationships, focusing on relationships for people with learning disabilities. The webinar is free and will take place at 10-11am on Friday 27th April. [Read more.](#)

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### **Introducing Lexie Sims**

Lexie joined the Board of Advance in September 2017. She is a consultant specialising in people and talent development in both the public and private sector. She has been a trustee of a number of charities including the Scouts Association where she chairs the HR Committee. [Read more.](#)

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## AWARDS AND ACCOLADES



### **Disability Confident Employer Level II**

Advance is proud to have been awarded Disability Confident Employer Level II. As an organisation which provides services to people with a disability or mental health condition we feel it is important we lead in promoting employment for people with

disabilities. We are particularly proud of the work we do in our Employment service to help people with disabilities get into and sustain employment. [Read more.](#)

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### **Cyber Essentials standard**

Advance has been re-accredited for the Government Cyber Essentials standard. Cyber Essentials is a Government-backed, industry-supported scheme to help organisations protect themselves against common online threats. The Government requires that all suppliers who are bidding for contracts involving the handling of certain sensitive and personal information are certified against the Cyber Essentials scheme.

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## SUPPORT & HOUSING



### **New Developments**

Plans are progressing for our residential service in Newham to adapt it into more self-contained flats with a learning and skills hub and space allocated for younger people transitioning into adult services. We are also remodelling a property in West Oxfordshire for customers with learning disabilities which we hope to complete in the summer.

Our nine, new purpose-built flats in Luton are now fully occupied with Advance also providing support for the customers with mental health conditions who have moved in. In July we are looking forward to opening an accommodation pod for staff and marking the first anniversary of our housing and support scheme in St Austell, which has eight individual flats for customers with learning disabilities.

We are keen to expand our portfolio of support services and

interested also to consider other housing development opportunities. For more information please contact [Debbie Neill](#), Director of Support or [Graeme Jackson](#), Head of Investment & Development.

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### **Changes to Support for Mortgage Interest**

We are one of the few remaining providers of the shared ownership scheme for people with disabilities and mental health conditions. Support for mortgage interest (SMI) is used by many of Advance's customers to meet the interest charged on their mortgage. The Government is altering the way that it will pay SMI from the 6th April 2018. It will still be available for claimants who meet the criteria but it will become a loan with interest for any payments made by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP).

We are concerned that as this loan builds up it would reduce the equity in the property and it may prevent customers from being able to move if their personal or health circumstances require them to do so. We would like the SMI to stay with the person until they no longer need it or could move with them to a new property. [Read more](#)

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## EMPLOYMENT



### **Dignity Awareness Event**

Work Choice Advisor, Nikki Kaur recently went to a Dignity Awareness event where she met the Mayor of Walsall. The event was part of the [`Dignity in Care Campaign'](#) whose aims are to change the culture of care services and place a greater emphasis on improving the quality of care and the experience of citizens. [Read more.](#)

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### **Patrick lands his dream job**

Most people who get support from our Employment services team are referred to us by a job centre. After being made redundant, Patrick took the initiative and called us directly. Because of his visual impairment, he felt it would be difficult for him to find work. We were able to offer him a six-month Supported Business Placement on reception in one of our offices. We are delighted for Patrick who is over the moon as he has landed his dream job in the Civil Service. [Read more](#)

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### **Employment awarded supply chain accreditation**

Employment services have achieved a 'Good' Merlin Standard for their work in managing sub-contractors who help deliver our Department of Work and Pensions contract. We are pleased to have achieved this essential supply chain management industry standard.

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## CUSTOMER FOCUS



### **Safety Campaign**

One of the questions in our 2017 customer survey showed that around 16% of customers who responded did not feel safe in their community. To try and address this we have been running a safety campaign, culminating in a series of talks and workshops at our annual customer conference in June. Staying safe will cover many aspects including: online dating, reporting hate crime, keeping safe in the home and community.

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### **Dignity Action Day**

Dignity Action Day aims to ensure people who use care services are treated as individuals and are given choice, control and a sense of purpose in their daily lives. At our Advance service in Worthing Road, customers and staff chose to

celebrate the day with a number of inclusive activities. [Read more](#)

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### **Supported Loving**

On Valentine's Day we joined in the conversation on social media about relationships, sex and dating with the [#OpentheCan](#) campaign initiated by [Supported Loving](#). Research shows that, like everyone else, people with learning disabilities want a loving relationship with a partner. Yet in the UK just 3% of people with learning disabilities live as part of a couple, compared to 70% of the general population.

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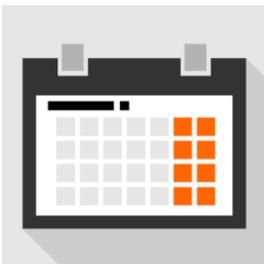


### **Customer Forum drives activity**

Our National Customer Forum group met recently to decide the future of the National Forum and plan for the annual Customer Survey and Customer Conference 2018. The ideas were flowing and thanks to their valuable input we are expecting some great things at the Customer Conference this year. [Read more](#)

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## LOOKING AHEAD



- **Annual customer conference** -19th June - Kassam Stadium, Oxford
  - **Local elections** - 3rd May. Resources and support will be available for those of our customers who wish to vote
  - **Mental Health Awareness Week** - 14th May - Advance will host a series of events for staff and customers
  - **Annual Customer Satisfaction Survey** - 16th April - what our customers think of our services.
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