



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 4 - 2020

Welcome to our newsletter. We are pleased to bring you a range of stories and information about our work and services at Advance.

We are continuing to provide services for our customers, albeit with some adjustments. However, we've noticed the longer the constraints around Coronavirus continues, the harder it is for some of our customers to cope particularly those with existing mental health conditions. During lockdown it was clear and unambiguous as to what was and wasn't allowed. This in between time is taking its toll on some of our customers, which our Director of Housing, Ian Gilders writes about in [his blog](#) for the National Housing Federation campaign 'Homes at the Heart'.



We had a very successful recruitment campaign during lockdown for support workers and have reduced our reliance on agency staff as a result. We are preparing ourselves for a potential second wave and restrictions as we move into Autumn/Winter and the inevitable flu season on top of Coronavirus.

Our staff have been very flexible and have continued to deliver high quality services to our customers. We know the longer this goes on we all feel the strain of not seeing our colleagues face to face and we miss the social interaction and camaraderie we get from being in an office environment. Being aware of this we have a range of resources available to staff to support good mental health and well being. We will mark World Mental Health Day on 10th October with a message around building resilience to cope with future challenges.

This week we published our Strategic Plan 2020-23. It builds on the success of the last three year strategy and has a focus on:

- Delivering the highest quality homes and services that make a difference to peoples' lives
- Growing our services so that more people benefit from them
- Being the best high-performing organisation we can be

We hope you all continue to thrive in your working and personal lives and would like to thank you for your ongoing interest and support.



Julie Layton, Chief Executive

LATEST NEWS



Our homes are key to living well

Our Director of Housing, Ian Gilders wrote a blog highlighting the challenges some of our customers faced during lockdown. This was published during the theme of 'living well' week for the National Housing Federation's 'Homes at the Heart' campaign. [Read more](#)



Strategic Plan 2020-23

We are pleased to share with you our Strategic Plan 2020-23. We delayed publication from April so that we could focus our efforts on responding to the Coronavirus pandemic. This also enabled us to review the targets and plans in the strategy to reflect our learnings from the lockdown experience. You will see many references to lockdown and learnings from COVID-19 specifically the need to engage digitally with our customers and to focus on staff wellbeing. We hope you find it interesting. [Read more](#)



Report and Financial Statements

We are also pleased to publish our [Report and Financial Statements for 2019/20](#) which have been subject to review and approval by our Board and independent auditors. The Report charts our progress in the final year of our Strategic Plan 2017-20. Over the last three years we have made steady progress against our ambitions and strategic objectives. The report highlights our achievements which provide a solid foundation for the future.



Annual Customer Report published

Our Customer Report 2019-20 shows the impact of our work on the lives of our customers. Customer contributions to the report make it clear how their involvement is key to providing high quality services.

Customer members of the Advance Customer Partnership have driven both the design and content of the Report, and we would like to thank them for their hard work. Their input helps us to be sure that we are giving customers the information they want and that is relevant to them, in a way that they find accessible and engaging. [Read more](#)

CUSTOMER FOCUS



Gardening reaps delicious rewards

During lockdown AJ has been very busy gardening. With the support of staff, AJ planted and looked after a huge strawberry crop in his back garden. His first harvest was ready in July. AJ proudly picked strawberries every day and shared them with other people in his building.



Something to celebrate

Gary came to Advance at the end of May, overcoming a lot of changes on top of lockdown challenges. In six weeks he achieved so much, including a new position at a local charity shop (something he's never done before), making firm friends with his new housemates, and celebrating his birthday in July at a surprise party with cards and cake followed by the first group meal out since lockdown.

Service Manager, Beverley said, "Gary was over the moon and everyone enjoyed themselves. I loved the smiles, this makes you forget the stresses and pressures."



Helping others in need

Gary is one of our shared owners in the Bristol area. He has spent his time during lockdown looking after others in need in the local community when he signed up to join the government response voluntary service.

Gary has spent time shopping for those of his neighbours who are elderly or otherwise at risk, spending time chatting to lonely members of his community, carrying out welfare calls and also delivering prescriptions.

Joanne Bonner from the shared ownership team feels he's a great example to others. Joanne said: "I'm really moved by his selflessness during what is also a very difficult time for him."

If you would like to find out more about shared ownership

see our [dedicated section](#) on the Advance website.



Going round and round for charity

Sixty-nine year old Michael was supported by Housing Officer, Erika Hulbert and Housing Outreach Worker, John Bennett to fulfill a fundraising challenge. Michael got on his tri-cycle to raise money for the NHS and the Dogs Trust and cycled 31 laps around The Oval, Oxford.

He uses a wheelchair to get around the house and a tricycle for stability when out and about. [Read more](#)

HOUSING



The Autism Show online

We were due to exhibit and speak at this year's Autism Show in Birmingham but unfortunately, due to the outbreak, this has been delayed until 2021. We are pleased to be taking part in the virtual marketplace set up by the show organisers for the week of 12-19 October. You can watch our webinar talking about HOLD (home ownership for people with long term disabilities).

Find out from Graeme Jackson, Head of Investment & Development at Advance and Specialist Mortgage Broker, David Abbey from MySafeHome about how having a long term disability should not be a barrier to home ownership. [Find out more](#)



Keeping in touch makes a big difference

Advance has always made welfare calls to more vulnerable customers but the importance of these calls has become especially clear during recent months.

Our housing team is usually very hands on and would visit customers in person as well as interact over the phone. During lockdown this obviously had to change and so the team made sure to call our customers over the age of 70 to see how they were getting on and make sure they understood the government guidance.

Special plans were also made for one of our housing customers who doesn't use a phone – measures were put in place by team member Kevin to make sure the customer received his medication, food parcels and was able to receive his new bank card. Then, when allowed, Kevin made frequent welfare checks on the customer. [Read more](#)



New contractor appointed

Advance have now appointed a new Fire Risk Assessment Contractor, Fire Safety First. They will be carrying out all our Fire Risk Assessment for our schemes, which Advance carry out every three years. Fire Safety First have over 20 year experience in fire safety for supported and general needs housing, and the majority of their assessors are ex-Fire Officers. We look forward to working with them as the safety of our customers is paramount.

SUPPORT



Building a career at Advance

Sinti joined Advance when she was only 19 and unsure of her career path. She has used determination and a positive attitude to make use of the training and support we offer at Advance to see her career with us grow and develop.

Just a few years later Sinti is now the Service Manager for Dorset with 22 customers with Learning Disabilities who require a mixture of support, some of whom live in Advance properties in and around Bournemouth and Christchurch in

Dorset. She leads a team of 16 staff at various locations.

You can [read more](#) about how Sinti progressed her career and what opportunities there are in support.



A cake in memory of Mum

Sarah lives in Evesham. She is seen here with a Welsh tea bread (Barra brith) that she used to enjoy cooking with her Mum. Every year on her birthday Sarah likes to cook this special cake, to remember her Mum who has sadly passed away.

People experience loss and bereavement in different ways and we can support them through this process. Sometimes a loss of a loved one is marked for many years. We have policies and guidance to enable staff to support customers in dealing with loss and bereavement and respect their wishes to mark personal events in the way they wish.



Garden project in Cornwall

Support Worker Steve and one of our customers from Mount Pleasant in Cornwall decided to buy some wood and make their own picnic table. Retailing at £250, the wood cost them just £50 and it was a project they both enjoyed working on. We are very impressed with the end results!

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:

- [World Mental Health Day](#) - 10 October
- [The Autism Show online](#) - 12-17 October
- [National Safeguarding Adults Week](#) - 16-22 November

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