



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.

We are pleased to bring you our latest newsletter and to update you on how we have been continuing to deliver services for our customers over the last couple of months. I am incredibly proud of how our staff and customers have dealt with the lock down restrictions. I have seen some excellent examples of creativity and dedication which makes me proud to be the Chief Executive of Advance.



Although the Government has begun making tentative steps towards moving the country out of lock down we don't expect things to return to normal overnight and so are preparing for a longer, phased return. Our services have continued as usual, albeit in a slightly different format, and our customers have been well supported and kept informed throughout. We have provided a range of accessible [information for customers](#) and staff which is regularly updated. Taking advantage of technology has enabled our customers to keep in touch with their families and loved ones. We have also embraced technology throughout Advance which has enabled us to continue with our meetings in a virtual format and deliver housing and support services, uninterrupted.

We know that there has never been a more important time for people to look after their physical and mental well being so have provided staff with a range of free online activities and courses, counselling, financial guidance and a wide range of other services.

I would also like to thank our local authorities colleagues and commissioners for their support during this time. Our goal is that we emerge from this situation a stronger, more agile organisation which is part of a more united community.

Julie Layton, Chief Executive

NEWSLETTER 3 - 2020

LATEST NEWS



Mental Health Awareness Week

During May we supported [Mental Health Awareness Week](#). The theme this year was 'kindness'. Customers and staff from across our services captured on a sheet what Kindness meant to them:

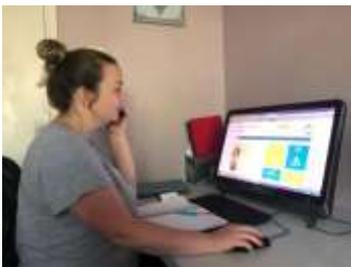
- 'being very nice and loyal'
 - 'making someone smile'
 - 'helping others who are having troubles'
 - 'saying nice things, taking care of each other'
-



Creating a 'wish tree'

Customers in Kidderminster have created a 'Wish Tree' in their garden to describe their hopes and wishes.

Service Manager, Jackie described how the idea came up at an informal meeting between customers and staff; "This was just a chance for everyone to discuss anything they are finding difficult or don't understand. We decided to create the tree for people to express how they are feeling and the different strategies they have for coping. I told the customers how proud I am of them for sticking to the guidelines on social distancing and hand washing."



Housing teams keeping in touch

Our dedicated housing teams are still working to make sure that essential services continue. Some have been calling just to have a chat with tenants to help keep their morale up, to re-iterate government advice, and to be a listening ear which has been well-received by everyone. Lots has been happening behind the scenes and we are now starting to plan ahead and take bookings for repairs in anticipation of restrictions lifting in the coming weeks.



Who doesn't love cake?

Customers in Melton Mowbray held a games and cake afternoon in May taking advantage of the good weather. Clare Grant Cakes, Melton Mowbray made a 'smile cake' to cheer everyone up. The flower decorations were created to reflect the colours of the Advance logo. Looks delicious!



Keeping fit in lock down

Nelly has provided community based-support to Khailam for several years. With so many public spaces remaining closed there has been a limited range of options to offer to customers supported in this way. Nevertheless Khailam and Nelly were able to create a (socially distanced) exercise routine at the local park.

Both enjoyed being out in the sunshine and now plan to do this every week.



Protecting our staff

We were delighted to have been contacted by a number of community organisations and individuals wanting to sew laundry bags and face masks for our customers and front line staff. These donations have been very welcome. We have been fortunate to have a small, but dedicated group of people sourcing PPE for our staff and are well stocked with all the necessary items to help them feel protected at work.



Sunny Cornwall

Our customers in Cornwall have enjoyed the recent sunny weather with lots of different activities. Malcolm recently got a new bicycle which he has been making the most of for some daily exercise, accompanied by his support workers who have brought their bikes along too! Brandon has been getting creative and

even made a time capsule to bury close-by and hopefully be discovered in the future.



Learning Disability Week

Another campaign that we support each year is [Learning Disability Week 15-21 June](#). This year's theme is 'friendship' and never has that been so important as during lockdown. Sal is a customer in Kidderminster who has kept in contact with her family and friends by sending cards and using technology. She counts the people she lives with as friends as well and they have enjoyed many activities together over the last couple of months. [Read more](#)

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)



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Advance · 2 Witan Way · Witney, Oxfordshire OX28 6FH · United Kingdom

