

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 5 - 2020

Welcome to our final newsletter of 2020. What an extraordinary and challenging year it has been but I am very proud that we have maintained our services and supported our customers throughout.



As we navigate our way towards the end of the year I've reflected on a number of things. I'm really pleased how our staff have handled the added pressure of the Covid 19 outbreak including; wearing PPE, helping our customers to keep in touch with their families as well as to keep fit and engaged in the absence of external activities and clubs. Most of our staff have coped really well but the relentlessness of the restrictions do take their toll so we have put more energy and resources into providing as much support for health and wellbeing as possible.

We have put a lot of effort into providing useful information on our [website](#), including accessible information. We are supporting the Learning Disability England [campaign](#) for Government to produce more accessible information in a timely way. In line with this we have published an Easy Read version of our [Strategic Plan 2020-23](#) and [Customer Report 2019-20](#).

Although we have already been recognised as a Disability Confident Leader and accredited by Investors in People - Silver but we wanted to also make sure that equality and diversity issues are given equally high priority within the organisation. Our new Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Group will be leading the way and have started out by holding conversations with colleagues across the organisation to help us identify what we are doing well and where we need to do more.

Also, there have been some changes in our senior team and I would like to thank Debbie Neill our outgoing Director of Support for all her hard work over the last five years. She leaves our support services with a strong quality and outcome focused team in place. This leads me to welcome our new Director of Support, Sinéad McHugh-Hicks. Sinéad is an experienced social care professional and joins us from a long and varied career at Dimensions.

In closing I would like to offer you my sincere good wishes for the festive season and hope that it will be a restful and enjoyable time. We look forward to working with you in 2021.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Julie Layton'. The signature is stylized and cursive.

Julie Layton, Chief Executive

LATEST NEWS



Women in Housing Award 2020

Chief Executive Julie Layton has been recognised in the Women in Housing Awards, sponsored by Inside Housing. The Awards honour and celebrate 20 female leaders, innovators and change makers who are making a difference across the social housing sector. [Read more](#)



New Executive Director of Support

We are delighted to welcome Sinéad McHugh-Hicks who has joined Advance as Executive Director of Support, responsible for the strategic leadership of our support services and championing innovation and excellence in everything that we do.

Sinéad has joined Advance after an 18 year career with [Dimensions](#) and will be taking forward our ambitious agenda for support services. [Read more](#)



New Head of Governance appointed

We are pleased to announce that Rachael Gilleard has joined Advance as our Head of Governance / Company Secretary. Reporting to Chief Executive, Julie Layton, Rachael will work closely with our Chair, Marie Li Mow Ching, our Board and Executive Leadership Team to ensure we maintain the highest standards of governance. Rachael will play a crucial role in advising the Board on all corporate governance matters and in supporting the organisation to deliver its strategic objectives.



Marking Black History Month

Around 25% of our workforce are from the BAME community and we heard from several colleagues about what Black History Month means to them. [Read more](#)

IN OTHER NEWS



Social Housing White Paper

On 17 November the Government published the social housing white paper. The white paper puts forward a lot of proposals that will change how social landlords operate – from new tenant satisfaction measures, to improved complaints processes, to the removal of the 'serious detriment' tests. Our existing commitment to and early adoption of the NHF *Together with Tenants* commitments puts us in a good position to respond to the charter for social housing tenants set out in the paper.



Together with Tenants

In October the National Housing Federation launched their Together with Tenants initiative across all housing associations. As an early adopter, we are proud to have helped shape the scheme in order to make sure our customers' voices were heard.

You can read Customer Engagement Manager, [Rachel Fox's blog](#) on how Advance has been putting involvement into practice during the pandemic.



Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion group had its first meeting in October. The key objective of the group will be to develop a more inclusive culture at Advance. The group will be responsible for promoting positive role models and celebrating diversity and

inclusion; it will have a role in advising the Board and Executive Leadership Team on the development of an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy that makes diversity and inclusion a core theme of our people management strategy.



Customer Survey Results

The 2020 Housing Customer Satisfaction Survey has now closed, and we are pleased to see an increase in the response rate to 29%. The Satisfaction Survey is just one of the ways that we gather feedback from our customers and use their insights and experiences to continually improve services.

A full analysis and action plan will be developed and shared in the new year. In the meantime, we are pleased to share that customers have told us that they feel safe in their homes, they feel listened to, and they are happy with the quality of their homes.



National Safeguarding Adults Week

This [National Safeguarding Adults Week](#), we took time to step back and reflect on what we have learned about keeping our customers safe over the last year. While being COVID safe has of course been a priority it's important that other areas aren't neglected. As part of the week Catherine Jones, Quality Improvement Manager in Support ran a series of safeguarding workshops for staff. These sessions gave a change to learn lessons from what has happened in the last year, get to grips with the safeguarding policy update and ask any questions about safeguarding.

Advance
Housing

Peer Service Reviews

Apply before February 10th if you want to get involved

We need you!

What is the Peer Service Reviews Project?

- A new way for staff and customers to work together to make services better for everyone
- A project involving customers and staff from across housing
- A project which gives customers the opportunity to speak and give feedback to another customer

What would I do as a Peer Reviewer?

- Travel to visit Advance services other than your own
- Meet new people and talk with them about their experiences
- Report back to the Customer Partnership to make sure the feedback is acted on and a difference is made

Peer Reviews

Our Peer Reviews project continues to ensure we are providing high quality support services, giving customers the opportunity to share any concerns with a trained Peer Listener (who is also an Advance customer). We are currently recruiting more Peer Listener volunteers to ensure that everyone can have their voice heard.



Not all disabilities are visible

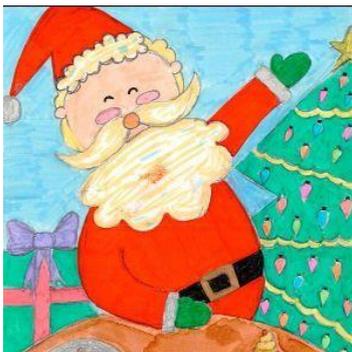
December 3 was [International Day of People with Disabilities](#). The theme for 2020 is that 'Not all Disabilities are Visible' to spread awareness and understanding of disabilities that are not immediately apparent, such as mental illness, and learning disabilities.

Jason is one of those people that if you saw him on the street, you might not know he has complex needs. It's important that we all remember not to judge others based on what we can see. Read more of [Jason's story](#).



The Transition Network Event

We were due to exhibit at this year's [Transition Event](#) in Solihull which showcases the range of services that are available as young people with additional needs transition into adult services. Organisers brought this online and we were able to showcase how Advance can support people into shared ownership through a government-backed scheme HOLD. [Read more](#)



Winning Christmas card design

Every year we invite our customers to send in their designs for the Advance Christmas card front cover. Congratulations to Paige from Lincolnshire for her winning design. All Advance customers receive a signed card from us each year and this year is no exception.



Advance Collective goes online

On the 1st Friday of every month the Advance Collective will be meeting online! The Advance Collective is a chance for customers to give us their feedback, hear more about what's happening at Advance and meet other customers from around the country. Customers choose the topics, and in December we focused on a look back over the year, where to find [accessible information](#) and some festive fun and crafts..



Three Ways & Fosse Way School event

Our friends at Three Ways & Fosse Way School have turned their transition event for the B&NES area into an online virtual fair. This will showcase the range of services and support for students with additional needs and their parents in preparing for transitions to college, work and independent living. <https://bit.ly/2lzLnUy>

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)

 Facebook

 Twitter

 Website

 Instagram

 LinkedIn

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Our mailing address is:

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