



The Good Care Series

In our latest collection of articles, named 'The Good Care Series' we will be celebrating good practice and championing high quality care and support. We will be talking with customers and colleagues to explore what good care looks like for people with different needs and in different settings across our organisation.

Improved community integration and choice

This article explores a recent reorganisation, to support a new strategic direction for the Community Lives Service. The restructure aimed to utilise the skills, experience and strengths of the team to further improve the quality of provision for the people we support.

The Community Lives Service has ambitious plans, to build on the best of what we currently offer through our existing day opportunities and develop a wider involvement in the areas where

people live. Establishing opportunities for our customers to find companionship, develop new skills, improve their wellbeing, and enjoy life.

In September, Community Lives took another step towards this vision, with a team reorganisation. The restructure saw Kim Davis, longstanding manager of Woodley and Earley Day Service, take up a new position as Service Manager for Boyn Grove and Oakbridge Learning Disability Day Services. Kim also continues to oversee Westmead, Physical Disabilities and Long-Term Conditions Day Service. While, Karyn McNaughton, Service Manager for Wokingham Day Service and Out & About, broadened her role to encompass the two other Wokingham-based sites (Woodley and Earley Learning Disability Day Services). In addition, Maz Abraham (Deputy Manager) and Mellissa Keane (Service Coordinator Plus) have taken on extra responsibilities for Woodley and Earley Day Service and Westmead, respectively.

The rationale for this change was to create a single cohesive service in Wokingham and one in the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead (RBWM). Fostering an environment for less duplication and more

inspiration. Moving away from a focus on location and single site activities and introducing a menu of activities and experiences that offer greater choice to our customers and a chance to widen social networks.

Two months in, and Karyn has already been able to make changes which have advanced the service. She said "Maz and Jill our two service deputies are working more closely together, to streamline procedures and ways of working". They have also been able to increase service levels for 12 individuals, by introducing new activities including Forever Friends, a social group to discuss topics of importance and Zumba, with a qualified instructor. The biggest benefit has been greater opportunity for people to meet up with old friends and new, by opening up activities across the three sites. Karyn said "people we support are meeting up with friends they haven't seen since before the pandemic." As well as a greater choice of activities, Karyn continues "We had several people who either didn't like what was on offer at their day service or it wasn't appropriate. They now visit one of our other bases for part of their week." Alongside the activities provided at the three bases, the service is growing opportunities in the wider community. This means one of the bases is empty on certain days of the week, enabling us to adjust the rental agreement and save money for reinvesting in other parts of the service.

Kim is similarly making a positive impact in RBWM. She is working with Community Development Manager, Vicki Holt to develop opportunities for younger adults with learning disabilities (aged 18-25 years). Since arriving at Boyn Grove, Kim has been impressed by the quality of activities available to people with the most complex needs, she said "The team approach sensory activities with creativity, skill, and kindness. I'm keen to further enhance our service for people with profound and multiple learning disabilities and invest in sharing ideas and good practice across

Optalis." In terms of expanding people's social networks, Kim said "Karyn and I have worked together for so long we are able to facilitate people from both Boroughs coming together and making new friendships. Once a week, customers from all services attend a session at Dinton Pastures and we have held one-off inclusive events, like our bowling tournament. We're also excited to start a monthly car boot fundraiser in the New Year, which will provide yet another opportunity for people across Community Lives to join up". It is not just customers, who move across services, Community Lives colleagues have also started sharing their knowledge and experience. For example, Nighat Ellahi, Ethnic Minorities Development Worker, has started to increase her presence at Westmead, ensuring the interests of people from ethnic minority backgrounds are represented.



Julia Harris, Head of Non-regulated Services concluded **"For years now, Optalis Day Services have moved away from the idea of large day centres to smaller bases. Enabling greater connectivity to the local community. We have listened to how people want to spend their days and worked hard to offer more flexibility and choice. I'm so pleased to have such brilliant managers who are taking Community Lives from strength to strength."**