



**Happy 5th
Birthday RCS!**



(Providing OPAL Services)

Message From Our Chair

Welcome to our newly designed newsletter which celebrates RCS's fifth birthday.

Rural Community Services (West Cheshire), providing OPAL Services, was set up five years ago as a charitable organisation. Our aim is to enrich the lives of older people and carers living in areas of rural West Cheshire by enabling them to socialise more. We run three main services which all support independence, social engagement and a sense of wellbeing and belonging.



We run six OPAL clubs in Kelsall, Frodsham, Helsby, Tattenhall, Tarporley and Malpas, under the brand name of OPAL – Older People Active Lives. The clubs provide companionship, the opportunity to share a meal with others, a range of interesting activities, as well as plenty of laughter.

We also run two other services, BreakTime and GoOnline. BreakTime is a free service offering short breaks to carers of older people, tailored to the carer and the person they care for. GoOnline is a drop-in service which helps older people learn how to access the internet, with one-to-one support of volunteers. The sessions are run in social settings in local venues.

Although we have five part-time members of staff, we could not provide these services without the help of our wonderful volunteers, of whom we have around 200. To celebrate the contribution our volunteers make to our organisation we are holding a Volunteers' Day on 28 September. As well as providing workshops to enhance skills there will also be fun activities and, of course, lunch.

Our main funding is provided by Cheshire West and Chester Council but we also seek and receive donations and grants from other funding organisations to maintain stability and to prosper. We also actively fundraise through events, raffles and garden parties as well as running our own lottery. The lottery has monthly prizes totalling £245 all for just £12 for the year. Anyone can buy a ticket throughout the year so please contact us if you would like a chance to win.

RCS, which provides OPAL services, has a real value in our rural communities. In the next five years, with the help of all those who support us, we hope to continue this development. Most of all though, we want to continue to enrich the lives of older people and carers, to enable them to have fun, companionship and a better quality of life.

Jane Colville

Where You Can Find Us

OPAL Clubs



OPAL Clubs take place at

Frodsham: Methodist Church, Kingsley Road, WA6 6BA – Tuesdays

Helsby: Springfield, Chester Road, WA6 0BY – Thursdays

Kelsall: Methodist Chapel, Chapel Bank CW6 0QS - Mondays

Contact: Zoe Blocksidge 07562 619275

Malpas: Craddock Court, Off Mercer Close, SY14 8QY - Tuesdays & Thursdays

Tattenhall: Barbour Institute, High Street, CH3 PX—Tuesdays

Contact: Brenda Platt 07851 104210

Tarporley: Deeside Ramblers Hockey Club, Tiverton CW6 9AN - Fridays

Contact: Carol Hitchen 07851 253587

Why not contact our organisers to come and try one of our free taster days?

What our members say about our clubs:

'A great place to meet old friends and new'

'Great company'

'The best Club I've ever been to and I'm in my 90's'

'I wake up in the morning and think what day is it.. then think, "Oh good it's Thursday, club day"'

Where You Can Find Us

GoOnline



Troubled by Technology? Why not let us help you? GoOnline sessions are run in social settings at local venues:

Farndon: Lewis's of Fardon (coffee shop)

Kelsall: The Farmer's Arms

Oakmere: The Lounge, Chester Road

Frodsham: The Queen's Head

Malpas: The Old Fire Station

Tarvin: Tarvin Community Centre, Meadow Close

Contact Carol Hitchen on 07851 253587 or Jean Toyn on 07563 156220

BreakTime

Need a Break?

BreakTime is a free service which offers short breaks for carers of older people.

Operating throughout rural West Cheshire we provide flexible support, tailored to the needs of the individual. Our volunteers are locally based and fully supported by our staff.

If you know someone who could benefit from this, or would like to become a volunteer, please contact: Carol Hitchen on 07851 253587 or Jean Toyn on 07563 156220

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ON ALL OUR SERVICES, PLEASE VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT:

www.opalservices.org.uk

Meet One of Our Members

Dorothy York— Helsby OPAL Club

Dorothy was born in Ellesmere Port in 1923. She lived there until she married in 1945.

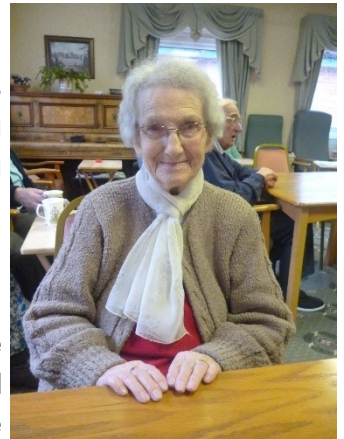
Dorothy left school aged 14 and got her first job training as a tailoress aged 16 and was paid 6 shillings a week. When she was 19 she worked for the Ministry of Food helping to write ration books and as a reward was once served lunch by Lady Bibby (shipping company) which was such a privilege. Her brother went to fight in the war, he survived but was injured. Dorothy later worked as a clerk dealing with company coupons and points, before leaving to start a family.

Dorothy met her husband through her cousin. Her husband delivered bread for the Co-op and often saw Dorothy's photo on the family's mantelpiece, thought she looked lovely and asked her cousin if they could be introduced. It was love at first sight, he played the piano for her and they courted for 5 years before marrying. They remained happily married until Dorothy lost Stan 8 years ago after nursing him through illness. They had 2 sons and now have 4 grandchildren and 3 great grandchildren, who all live fairly locally.

Dorothy has been involved in several organisations and still helps with correspondence for Dunham-on-the-Hill WI, in her village. She has been happily living at the Park Home site in Dunham for 28 years.

Dorothy joined Helsby OPAL Club in February. She thoroughly enjoys all aspects of the Club and feels it was a real opening for her. She says the atmosphere is caring and friendly. She loves the entertainment and quizzes and absolutely loves the meals, which have encouraged her to eat more after losing some weight.

Dorothy is really grateful for all the support she receives at the Club and is more than happy and privileged to appear in the newsletter.



Fundraising



We've been enjoying the summer sun (when we've been able to find it!) and with the help of the volunteers, have been raising money by selling tea and cakes at National Garden Scheme events.

Funding is always an issue for any charitable organisation. We are lucky to receive funding from Cheshire West and Chester Council which contributes greatly towards the running of our OPAL Clubs and our BreakTime services. In recent years we have received some money from The Williams Family Foundation to help us provide the technology we need to run GoOnline. Lloyds TSB has also been a contributor and

last year we were 'adopted' by the Lord Mayor. Funds from Equilibrium and the Sunflower Foundation helped us to provide a special day for our members last year. An individual donation from the late Duke of Westminster was also gratefully received. Other supporters make contributions too and we run events and have our lottery. Despite this, we are always in need of funds to strengthen and to improve our services. If you would like to get involved in fundraising for us, please get in touch at info@opalservices.org.uk, or if you would like to make an individual donation you can always do this online using the BT MyDonate website.

Meet One of Our Volunteers

Doug Lack — BreakTime

Doug with his dog, Sid



I hadn't given much thought to becoming a BreakTime volunteer before Carol mentioned that there was a shortage of people willing to help. I took a closer look at BreakTime, and I quickly saw that this is a really valuable service for carers who themselves need a bit of help. I also saw BreakTime as a way of doing something worthwhile and totally different from anything I had ever done before. I was a bit apprehensive at first about how I would adapt to the special circumstances of going into a stranger's house and befriending someone who has difficulties. I needn't have worried - Carol and Jean are always available to chat things through and they have been fantastic in giving me first class support.

I have been a BreakTime volunteer for over 2 years now, and have given support to three carers. Looking back on that time, the one thing that stands out is the gratitude of the carers for the help I have given. Just a few hours a week is all I give, but the carers are always so thankful for the time which gives them a break from caring without having to worry about their loved one. The other major experience has been getting to know the people involved – in each case someone with a fascinating life story and very grateful for being able to share it with someone willing to listen.

Being a BreakTime volunteer is not for everyone. The cared-for person has specific medical needs and is generally not in the best of health. This results in close proximity to illness and possibly death, and the witnessing of anguish by the carer. By becoming a friend of the family, such events inevitably cause emotional turmoil for the volunteer, and any new volunteer should bear this aspect in mind. My initial thought that BreakTime would provide a way of doing something different and worthwhile has been truly fulfilled. Every BreakTime session is different, requiring full concentration and adaptability to differing circumstances so very different to anything in my usual routine. And in terms of doing something worthwhile, the copious thanks of the carer after each session truly confirms how vital and important the BreakTime service is.

We rely greatly on our volunteers to help us to run OPAL Services and are always on the look out for more, so if you would like to help us out and become part of our friendly community please get in touch either by email: volunteering@opalservices.org.uk or call Jean Toyn on 07563 156220.

What We've Been Up To

Along with the rest of the country we've been celebrating the Queens 90th birthday



At Tarporley we had lunch out at The Stamford Bridge pub. Toasted the queen in her absence.



In Helsby we did quizzes and had a Royal and Famous Library Reminiscence box. We also had afternoon tea at Helsby, with a slide show of Helsby then and now, over the last 90 years.



And at Malpas we visited The Beeches Pre-school and had a buffet lunch in the club.



What's Next

Training



On 28th September, we have organised a day for all our volunteers. It will be held at Cheshire View, Plough Lane, Christleton, and will include information, workshops and of course lunch. We hope that as many as possible of our volunteers will be able to attend and that we will learn a lot whilst also having fun.

Later in the year we also aim to hold first aid training events for all our volunteers who need to renew their first aid training or would like to learn new skills. Our aim is to provide a programme of training based on the needs of our volunteers.

Events



In September Kelsall OPAL Club will be taking to the water with their annual Canal Boat Trip.

Tattenhall OPAL Club will also be enjoying the fresh air at Carol's Garden at Harthill in September. We will be learning to make flower arrangements, and enjoy lunch provided by Healthbox who are part of the Harthill Hub Project.



On Friday 30 September magic will be happening at Tarporley OPAL Club when we will be visited by magician, Pete Turner



Malpas members will be enjoying the music of Malpas Singers in September, a regular monthly event.

And on 14 October Tarporley will also be raising the roof with a sing-along with Ken Walker.

Frodsham OPAL Club are hosting a coffee morning on 29 September at the Parish Hall, Frodsham. Please come and join us.

We will also be celebrating the 104th Birthday of one of our Frodsham Members!

And Finally

Our new website is about to go live at www.opalservices.org.uk and we will soon be dipping our toes in the waters of social media. Watch this space!

And, if you would like to sign up to receive our newsletter on a regular basis, please email us at info@opalservices.org.uk.

Our work is funded through income from grant making bodies and the kind generosity of individuals who make donations to us, as well as some funds from the Local Authority. If you are making or updating your will, once you have considered the needs of your family, please consider a legacy to us. You know that every penny will be used to improve the lives of older people living in the rural areas of Cheshire West and Chester. Our Charitable Number is 1143753. Thank you very much.