

MATTERS

A message from Jane



I am so pleased to say that things seem to be moving at last and thanks to the vaccination programme and the care and sense displayed by so many we would appear to at last be able to open up services for people to enjoy. Most of our service offers will look a little different whether in terms of the venue they are in or the time periods covered or the activities being arranged. Our Organisers are working so hard to make sure people remain safe and well whilst being able to have contact with old and new friends.

We now see clubs reopening and a revamped and exciting carer support service in the form of Breaktime Plus. This new service will bring with it all sorts of opportunities and activities for carers and the people they care for. And as our OPAL GoOnLine starts to meet up again with face to face sessions, we also welcome the commencement of our exciting new digital inclusion service, OPAL in Touch, aimed at bringing communication technology to older people who have had no experience at all of any aspect of this.

We have expanded our staff team and welcome Joy Walker and Maria Hudson to our BreakTime Plus team. They will both help plan and deliver our carer support services and we are very lucky to still have Sam and Jean who remain working for OPAL but undertaking other roles.

Our Trustee recruitment campaign continues and the latest trustee to join us is Kevin Bradburne. Kevin has lots of experience in the world of services for young people and in safeguarding too and he will be bringing lots of new ideas and possibilities to OPAL.

I hope you enjoy this edition of Matters and that you stay safe and well as we start to enjoy more normal lives.

*Jane Colville
Chair of Trustees*

SPREADING THE NEWS

Over the last couple of months, OPAL have been attending events updating people on the reopening of our services, the introduction of new projects and our very own lottery as well as spreading the word that we are in need of more volunteers for the many different roles we offer.

Pictured are OPAL organisers Jean and Brenda at the Malpas Community Day and Zoe, Brenda, Jane and Joyce attending the Frodsham Festival in the Park.

Many thanks to all staff, trustees and volunteers who helped with the setting up and delivery at these events.



BACK TO CLUBS,STEADILY

As lockdown restrictions gradually began to reduce, our Club organisers were able to start planning a return to our day clubs. OPAL's first priority is always the safety of our members and volunteers so our return to clubs has been slow and cautious. The COVID levels in Cheshire have remained higher than the national average and this includes those over 60 years so, before opening any service, we have put specific measures in place including asking all participants and volunteers to have received both COVID 19 jabs and all volunteers and staff being required to undertake a lateral flow test the day before attending any service.

On Thursday 12th August our Tarporley Club opened its doors once again at Deeside Ramblers Hockey Club. Two sessions were held during the day, one in the morning and one in the afternoon with smaller groups meeting up. The members were delighted to be able to meet face to face with each other again and enjoyed an Olympic quiz.

The following week, Kelsall Club held its first meeting since March 2020 and one of its volunteers, Jane, brought in some beautiful flowers which really made the venue look cheerful. Members enjoyed some exercises with Maureen, a regular favourite activity at the club, as well as a good catch up over a cuppa. Helsby, Frodsham and Tattenhall clubs have also reopened sessions with their members enjoying some old favourite games.



Our wonderful OPAL knitting group had been working hard over the last few months to produce a beautiful hand knitted purse for each member. The purses were filled with sanitizer, tissues and a COVID mask and the members were all delighted with their welcome back gifts!



KEEPING IN TOUCH



Recognising, even more so during the pandemic, the need to enable as many older people in rural areas as possible to benefit from using I.T. – OPAL have introduced its newest service – OPAL in Touch. The service is offered across the rural areas of west Cheshire to older individuals who have limited or no experience of using I.T., enabling them to stay in touch with family, friends and their communities. Experienced OPAL GoOnline volunteers will support and mentor individuals to demonstrate the positive aspects of using communications technology.

On Wednesday 25th August, OPAL GoOnline and OPAL in Touch volunteers and clients opened their session to members of the Cheshire Freemasons Charity to thank them for their generous donation of £15,000. Also attending were volunteers and members from Tarporley OPAL club. The visitors really enjoyed the hospitality and the opportunity to see how their funding is being put to use.

Jane Colville, Chair of the Board of Trustees for OPAL Services, said:

"We're so delighted to receive this funding which has enabled us to get this vital project off the ground and will go directly to those we help."



OUT AND ABOUT WITH BREAKTIME PLUS

Since the last edition of Matters, BreakTime Plus carers have been busy meeting at various events and locations across Cheshire West. The first indoor event took place in Tarporley and members enjoyed a picture quiz as well as some one to one GoOnline support. Since then, the group have met in Ashton Hayes for an afternoon coffee and catch up, in Farndon at a local garden centre and on 18th August enjoyed a Boat Trip on the River Dee followed by lunch at the Snugbury's Café overlooking the River.



We were delighted to have David Harvey, Chief Executive Officer of Cheshire and Warrington Carers Trust, join us for this event and he commented -

'I really enjoyed meeting with carers on the Chester Boat trip and it was fascinating to see the back of houses from the riverfront! It was clear to see how much everyone valued meeting up and the work put in by Jean and Sam. Lunch afterwards was a real bonus.'



The following week the group were invited to a private tour at the Grosvenor Museum where Learning Officer Virginia Kettle gave an excellent talk about the museum. The group enjoyed looking through a 1950s reminiscence box and had a game of *Show Me, Tell Me*.

For further information on BreakTime Plus please contact joy.walker@opalservices.org.uk

WELCOME JOY & MARIA

We are delighted to welcome Joy Walker and Maria Hudson to our OPAL staff team. Both organisers will be working on our OPAL BreakTime services and have dived straight in joining some of our carers on our days out including the river boat trip and equestrian centre tour and visiting sitting service clients at home. Joy and Maria are really looking forward to rolling out new activities and events over the next few months as well as getting to know more sitting service clients.



Joy

Maria

BRANCHING OUT AGAIN....



OPAL Branching Out offers a range of activities and social get-togethers to reconnect people with their local community and benefit from social connections. Members can attend as many or as few as they wish, enabling people who have fluctuating health or carer duties or regular diary commitments to participate.

A new programme of events will start in Autumn 2021 with drop-in sessions at Frodsham library resuming on a Thursday morning from mid September with the chance to find out more about all services OPAL offer and the opportunity to book a place on social sessions. The activity cafe is set to reopen in October. For further information please contact Julie on 07512 632 515 or via email Julie.ennis@opalservices.org.uk.

FUNDING AND FUNDRAISING UPDATE

OPAL's funding team continues to work hard to secure the funds that allow us to continue and improve our services. In this issue of OPAL Matters we are very pleased to report that we have received two highly valued grants. One from the Marjorie Boddy Trust that will help us to deliver our OPAL GoOnline and OPAL in Touch projects and also support the recruitment and coordination of volunteers. The other is from the Voluntary Community Faith and Enterprise (VCFSE) Grant, which over an 18 month period from October 2021 will enable the restart of our OPAL Branching Out service.



OPAL Branching Out currently operates in the Frodsham and Helsby areas and our aim is to expand this over time. Due to the fantastic efforts of staff, volunteers and trustees, our successes in securing funding this year covers most of the services we run. We still have some gaps and like many charities we are never able to ease up. We are always having to think ahead to ensure that funding is in place for the coming year and ideally beyond.

We are delighted to report that our internal fundraising activities have at last been able to restart. Once again this is thanks to the efforts of volunteers, staff and trustees.



Our latest event is a Soup Lunch fundraiser being held at Kelsall Community Centre on Friday 15th October from 12.30pm until 2.30pm. A light lunch of soup followed by cake and a hot drink will be provided and the cost is £5 per person. For tickets please contact Jo on 01928 787899 or email joquilter72@outlook.com or Juliet - julietcompston@googlemail.com

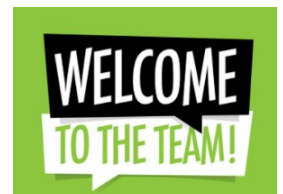
OPAL are now part of One Lottery. Tickets cost £1 a week and 50% of all tickets sold goes to support our older people and carers in rural west Cheshire communities. Buy your ticket today and help the OPAL cause! You could win prizes of up to £25,000 at <https://www.onelottery.co.uk/support//opal-services> or call 01865 678679.

(Supporters must be 16 years of age or older. See website for terms and conditions.)



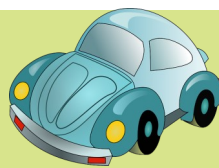
OPAL WELCOMES A NEW TRUSTEE

Kevin Bradburne is our newly appointed Trustee. Kevin is a director at a local children's charity, a public governor at CWP and a Magistrate in East Cheshire. Kevin says he is very much looking forward to promoting OPAL's amazing work.



WE NEED YOUR HELP!

As our services begin to open up once again the safety of our members, volunteers and staff is paramount. With that in mind, we are currently operating on a one driver one member ratio and so are in need of temporary additional drivers for all our clubs. The role involves collecting a member from their home, taking them to the club then returning to collect them at home time. If you would be able to offer some support - either in the short term with driving - or long term for any of our volunteer roles please contact our Volunteer Co-Ordinator, Janet Handley, on 07592 464856 or email janet.handley@opalservices.org.uk



HOLD THE DATE!

OPAL'S ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING WILL TAKE PLACE ON

WEDNESDAY 10TH NOVEMBER

DETAILS TO FOLLOW VIA OUR WEBSITE AND SOCIAL MEDIA.

Think about me, not my age