



Older People Active Lives

ANNUAL REPORT 2020/21
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2021





A message from Jane Colville, Chair of Trustees

Welcome to our 2020/21 OPAL Annual Report. Back in 2019 who would have imagined we would be writing in the way we are about the year that has passed - but will never be forgotten. As so many people have said, it has been an unprecedented time for everyone with very great challenges and demands facing so many.

We decided to base this Annual Report on a theme that seems to fit so well with the experience we have had - that of Adapting, Adjusting and Supporting. These three elements certainly mean a lot to us in OPAL as you will see as you read the report.

As the pandemic took hold in the UK in March 2020 and we entered lockdown we had to adapt quickly to the very limiting restrictions in our lives. We found ourselves able - through our staff skills and experience - to create a weekly fun filled but informative newsletter that went to all our members and volunteers. This quickly became something that was part of people's new routine and was looked forward to by many. We also introduced a Telephone Befriending service run by staff and volunteers and many came to rely on this, especially if they had limited contact with other people.

We tried hard to adjust some of our existing services to fit with what was a very different environment. For example, as the weather started to improve, we tried to visit members making full use of their outside spaces but still taking care to socially distance and keep people safe. These efforts were very weather dependent but we kept trying and were quite inventive at times about bringing people together in ways that were safe but allowed them more scope to communicate with and enjoy each other's company.

The support our staff and volunteers have offered our members and families over this time has been staggering and we are deeply grateful as it has meant so much to those we provide services to. As an organisation we have received support in droves over this period and we cannot thank enough those who have provided this. It has enabled us to do what we do best and offer people who are at great risk of being socially isolated and lonely to feel more connected and valued. Cheshire West and Chester Council (CWAC) and our health service commissioners have been extremely supportive as have many funding bodies. This has allowed us to continue to operate and, in many respects, raise our game as it became clear that this crisis was not a short term affair.

So, it's a very big well done and thank you from me to all involved in OPAL whether at its core or on the periphery. If ever there was a time to need to pull together 2020 was that year - and we did, helped by so many.

Jane Colville

Our principal objective is to provide a benefit for older people who are in need of social inclusion because they are housebound or socially isolated and are finding it difficult to take part in social activities in their community without the support of others.

03
MESSAGE
FROM OUR
CHAIR

16
COMPANY
INFORMATION

04-05
ADAPTING

14-15
FINANCIAL
STATEMENT/
BALANCE
SHEET



06-07
ADJUSTING

Older People Active Lives

12-13
OUR STRUCTURE,
OUR TEAM,
OUR GOALS

08-09
SUPPORTING

10-11
FINANCING



TELEPHONE BEFRIENDING

Our telephone befriending service has been one of the key lifelines for our members and carers during the pandemic and would not have been possible without the unwavering support from so many of our volunteers. On Wednesday March 18th 2020 - before the official lockdown came into force, OPAL made the difficult decision to close all face to face services. We were able to set up a fully operational telephone befriending service within 10 days and it has proven to be a great success, enabling people, who are socially isolating and unable to see others, to have a friendly voice on the phone at least once a week for a good long chat.

During this reporting period, over 100 members of the OPAL community have received regular befriending calls.

As lockdown continued we were able to reach people beyond our OPAL membership - becoming a social lifeline to many older people and carers who were isolating and had little contact with others and this service will continue thanks to additional funding from CWAC.

“What you are doing is making a real difference. She really appreciates your efforts, as indeed do we as her family.”



TELEPHONE BEFRIENDERS

OPAL REACH



Kindly printed by **FARRALLSGROUP**

When the doors closed on our clubs back in March 2020, OPAL realised finding temporary ways to keep in touch with our members, carers and volunteers would be vital. Three staff and a trustee got together over Zoom (which was new to us all then!) and Reach was born - a weekly newsletter containing news, updates, quizzes and games and community information. Whilst a lot of our volunteers were able to receive this online, we knew we would need to post to the majority of our members and carers and we were very fortunate that a

locally based firm, Farrall's Group, stepped in and offered to print the newsletter for free. Our funding team were able to source provisions to cover the cost of the postage and envelopes and we were on our way!

95% of survey respondents said that receiving OPAL Reach had made them feel less isolated during lockdown.

The team had presumed that Reach would probably last for a few months but it is no surprise to anyone now that it continues to be well received by all of the OPAL community - so much so that at March 31st 2021 we had produced 48 issues along with 7 special supplements.

REACH

DOORSTEP STOPS AND GARDEN VISITS

Adapting to a new world of lockdowns meant physically meeting up was very difficult - but not impossible as our staff and volunteers proved by taking advantage of every opportunity to meet up with our members and carers.



Whether dropping an activity pack on a doorstep and having a quick socially distanced chat or, subject to the good ol' British weather playing ball, arranging a visit in members and carers gardens - OPAL tried hard to supplement our newly implemented services such as Reach and Befriending Calls with a face to face catch up.

DOORSTEP STOPS

GARDEN VISITS

ACTIVITY PACKS

On 24th August 2020 the first OPAL Activity Pack was delivered to our club members. Filled with activities including crafts, colouring, reading, reminiscing and quizzes they were very welcomed. Since then, we have expanded distribution of the packs to users of all our OPAL services. Throughout the last twelve months we've continued to adapt both what we provide in these and how we get them out to people. Where possible, these were delivered in person via doorstep visits but during lockdowns, we posted these out to ensure the safety of everyone.

“I love receiving my Activity Pack—I take my time going through each thing one by one—it's like a treasure chest”.

At Christmas our clubs would usually be delighted to welcome children from local primary schools to come and sing carols with our club members. Sadly, we were unable to arrange these this year but instead asked our local school children to make their own bespoke Christmas cards for all our members and these were added into our Christmas Activity packs. We were delighted so many primary schools participated in this project.



ADAPTING

ACTIVITY PACKS

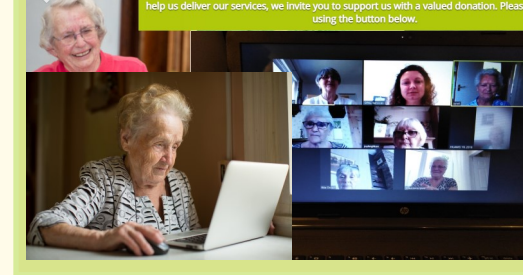
ONLINE

ONLINE

Possibly one of the most valuable methods of communications for everyone over the last year was being able to make contact online - whether on a virtual meeting, sending emails, documents or even accessing vital information and support services. Our OPAL trustees and staff adapted quickly, learning to make use of all the technology we had available to us including Zoom, Teams and SharePoint and ensuring that we updated our online communication - our website and social media channels—as often as we could.



Branching Out continued to have close ties with CWAC libraries, moving on line with 'Online Elevenses' part of a digital inclusion project. The sessions were joined by volunteers, members and library users and as well as chat, we were entertained by some great speakers.



Our GoOnline volunteers adapted to providing our services via telephone and more funding was sought for a new pilot - OPAL InTouch—which will provide one to one support for older people in rural areas helping them access and use I.T.

CLUB MEMBERS

Prior to the pandemic, our OPAL club members looked forward to their weekly get togethers at our clubs across Cheshire West, enjoying a full day of socialising, activities, entertainment and a two course lunch. They have had to make huge adjustments through the pandemic and, being among the most vulnerable of society, many had to isolate for long periods. But in true club member style, they have been very appreciative of the

services we have implemented as an alternative, such as befriending telephone calls, the weekly newsletter Reach, activity bags and doorstep visits.

Feedback from our members has shown we have managed to keep them from feeling socially isolated and alone despite the constraints we have all had to come to terms with. Sadly, our original

member numbers have declined during this time, with many moving to be with family or into full time care. However, the promotion of our COVID-19 services helped us identify members who weren't known to us originally and we have been delighted to welcome them into our community.

“OPAL has certainly surpassed all expectations.”

29 people joined OPAL club membership during lockdown.

BRANCHING OUT AND WHAT'S COOKING

Branching Out has offered different activities and extra ways to make social connections since 2019 and, although prior to the pandemic was only available in the Frodsham and Helsby areas, we were able to engage with members and volunteers from across all the rural areas during lockdown.

Crafty members of Branching Out offered their skills and, along with volunteers from across other OPAL services, became the backbone to a variety of craft activities. It started in the summer with members helping to make craft packs for the Age-Friendly Cheshire “Creative Kindness” project and grew from there into making craft packs for all the OPAL Activity Bags.

Zoom became a new phenomenon for many and was the communication tool of choice for the ‘Knit for OPAL’ project launched in August 2020. Thanks to kind donations of wool from Jo Morley we were able to offer knitting projects with varied ranges of difficulty. Knitting packs were added to the deliveries of our regular Activity Packs for members of all our services who expressed an interest. Our aim to make blankets for our clubs was surpassed and we were able to offer surplus blankets to the homeless and refugees via The Share Shop in Chester.

What's Cooking unfortunately did not make the transition to Zoom, but through Reach and the Activity Packs, recipes and food related ideas were shared.



CLUB MEMBERS

CARERS

BRANCHING OUT

ADJUSTING

GOONLINE

WHAT'S COOKING

OPAL INTOUCH

CARER SERVICES

It's been a difficult year for all our OPAL community and sadly we have been unable to run our usual carer breaks and group events or our vital sitting service. Instead, along with OPAL Reach, Befriending and Activity Packs, we have also been able to provide :-

- ◇ Carer Zoom sessions—an opportunity for a catch up with other carers and on some occasions we provided guest speakers (including a hairdresser which was most welcomed by staff and carers alike!).
- ◇ Doorstep catch-ups with members of the carer staff team - including a special festive delivery in December.



- ◇ Carers' Rights Day 'Know Your Rights' special Zoom meeting with visitors, including CWAC, answering questions and advising how to access information.

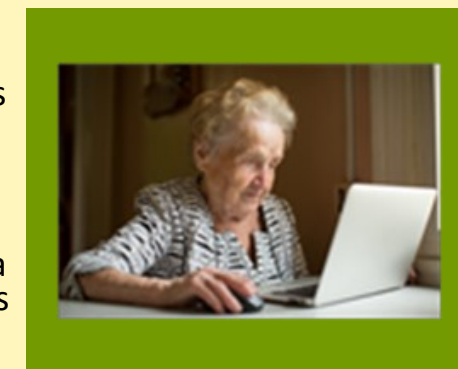
Towards the end of this financial year, OPAL were delighted to be awarded new funding to continue and increase the support services we can offer to our carers.

BreakTime Plus will commence from April 2021, and our Carer Sitting Service will also resume as soon as COVID-19 restrictions allow.

“I will be eternally grateful to OPAL for all the support provided. Be proud of what you do & how you are making a difference to everyday lives.”

GO ONLINE / OPAL IN TOUCH

Our successful GoOnline service ran several times a week prior to the pandemic and was a face to face service, offering drop in facilities to help older people and carers understand and utilise all forms of technology across our rural areas. During the pandemic however, our volunteers have had to adjust to a new way of supporting - over the telephone - and this has brought with it its own difficulties. But our volunteers have risen to the challenge and managed to help clients from all areas of the OPAL community and beyond - providing extra support and advice for example on using video conferencing or ordering shopping online.



Mindful that there was still a large percentage of our community who didn't have access to the digital world - including not having equipment, broadband or basic I.T. knowledge, we also began a funding plea to help us set up a new service and we were delighted to be awarded a grant through the Masonic Charitable Foundation (London Office), the Cheshire Province and from Cheshire West LTTA fund. This enabled us to proceed with

our very exciting new service - OPAL InTouch which will provide older people, who currently have limited or no access to the digital world, an opportunity to sample a variety of communication platforms selected against their individual needs.

A volunteer is appointed to each client and they will support them on their I.T. journey.

Over 200 remote support calls were made during this period

AWARD WINNING VOLUNTEERS



The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service

Despite COVID-19, volunteering at OPAL went from strength to strength, recruiting 30 new volunteers and two new trustees over the last year. As the pandemic continued to influence everyday life, our volunteers showed their adaptability taking on new roles including Telephone Befriending, Activity Pack and Reach distributing, proof reading, article contribution and lots more.

Our GoOnline volunteers have continued to work remotely and are now supported by our new OPAL InTouch volunteers enabling clients and carers get online for the first time.

In addition, our fabulous volunteers have come up with innovative ideas to support older people and carers who are isolated at home. For example, our 'Shed Talk', created by a volunteer, is aimed at getting men together for a virtual catch-up and proved popular during lockdowns. Our newly formed Knitting Group have produced some fabulous gifts for members including Easter bunnies, twiddle muffs and blankets. And finally, through the efforts of one of our volunteers who has been trained by the Readers Organisation, we have been able to establish an OPAL Readers' Group that meets virtually each week. Our Reader volunteer shares a short story or excerpt from a novel or poem and the group then have a chat about it. This has been a really enjoyable experience for everyone involved!

Volunteers also contributed to our OPAL calendar project – providing photographs of Cheshire views. These calendars were given to members as part of their Christmas packs as well as being sold to our OPAL community to raise funds.

In October, our safeguarding training for volunteers went ahead virtually. This was well attended and a useful insight into this vital area.



BY ROYAL APPOINTMENT

On June 2nd 2020 OPAL volunteers were awarded a prestigious Queen's Award for 'Valuable Contribution to Voluntary Work'. This is the highest achievement a voluntary group can receive in the UK and a testament to the dedication and hard work of all our volunteers.



The Lord Lieutenant of Cheshire David Briggs, M.B.E., K.St.J, honoured OPAL at the virtual AGM in October and gave a very well researched speech commenting on the amazing role our volunteers provide to the community and calling them 'spreaders of happiness' -

"You are a special charity. Of 4,000 charities in Cheshire only 4 received this Award - making you all truly one in a 1000! "

As OPAL's own way of saying thank you for our volunteer support, and to celebrate Volunteers' Week, goody bags were delivered to every volunteer. These bags included an afternoon tea, a certificate and a new

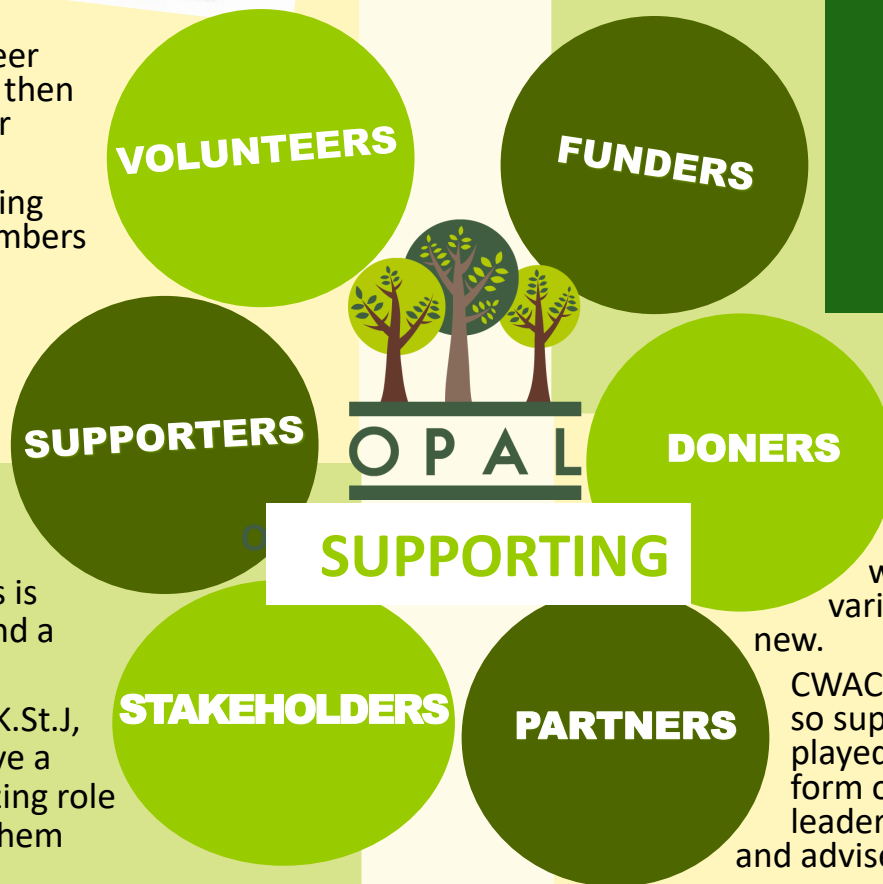
OPAL badge.

We were able to spread this fantastic news further, with several OPAL volunteer case studies being included in local and national press, again acknowledging their hard work and expertise.

FUNDERS AND SUPPORTERS

This year, more perhaps than any before, we have needed to be very active in seeking funding for our services and have attracted support from current and new providers, both locally and from further afield. We raised £14,234 additional funding for the year, comprising grants, donations and fundraising activities. OPAL would like to thank the following for their support - enabling us to keep supporting our community through the toughest of periods.

Cheshire West and Chester Council (CWAC), Westminster Foundation, Anne Duchess of Westminster's Charity, Co-Op, Vivo, Marjory Boddy Charitable Trust, INEOS, Marshes Community Benefit Fund, McCarthy & Stone, Masonic Charitable Foundation, The Big Lottery Awards For All Fund.



PARTNERS

Following lockdown in late March OPAL had to make radical changes to what it was offering to older people and carers in rural west Cheshire and we were supported throughout the year and in a variety of ways by a number of partners - some old friends and some new.

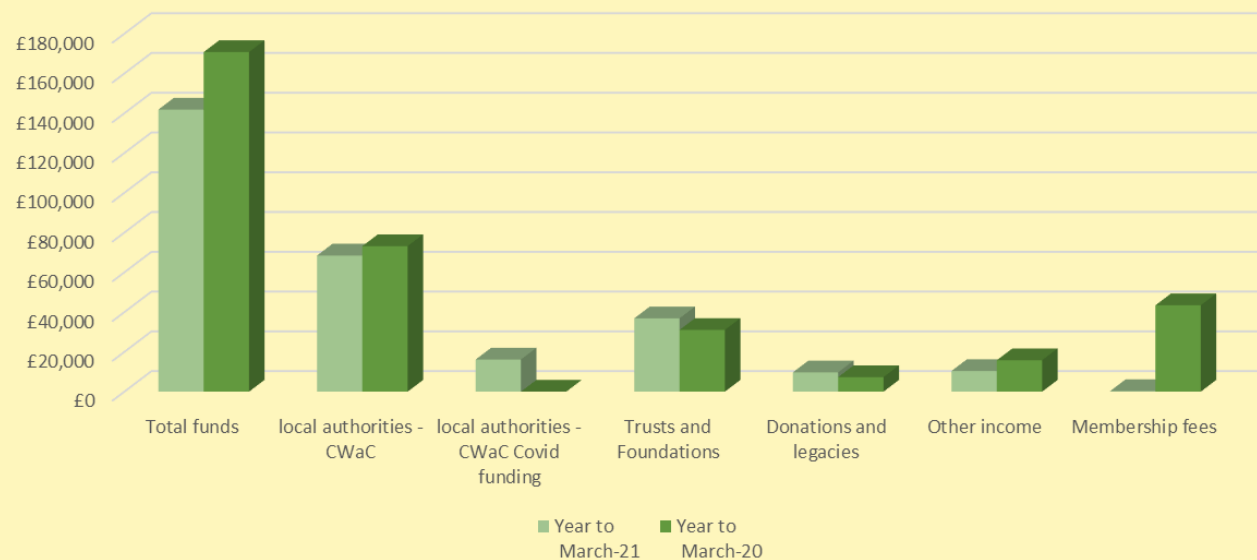
CWAC, the Carers Trust and CCA – who are our commissioners - have been so supportive and understanding through these tricky times. CWVA have played a significant role in providing practical advice and equipment in the form of PPE, referring volunteers to us and co-ordinating a key group of leaders (drawn from the statutory services and the Third Sector) to guide and advise us steer a path through the pandemic.

The Parish Councils that operate within the areas we provide services have been helpful too in disseminating information about OPAL to local people and signposting people to us. We have continued our relationship with the library service - albeit with a different product to offer people through lockdown. The Thursday "elevenses" sessions via Zoom proved popular and were varied in content. It was great to be able to co-produce these with library colleagues. Likewise, we were delighted to work with the Readers organisation and they trained a few OPAL volunteers to become readers and share their skills with other volunteers and members of the OPAL community in what became very positive and relaxing sessions.

Last but by no means least, mention must be made of Farrall's Group who have been so very generous in their support throughout the year. They have printed all our weekly OPAL Reach newsletters and in so doing enabled us to continue to produce what for many has been a lifeline for those who would otherwise have been cut off from society.

OPAL MONEY MATTERS

Year on year funds



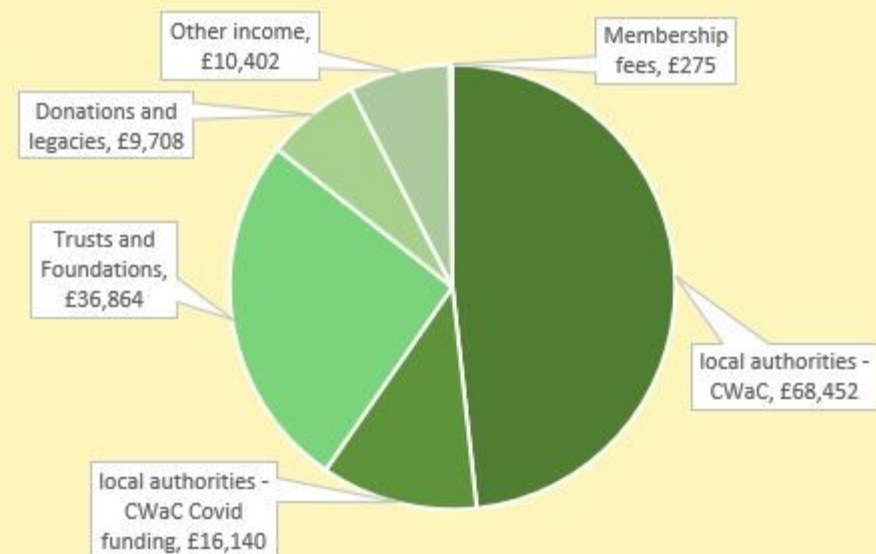
YEAR ON YEAR FUNDS

OPAL was the recipient of additional funding from the Covid-19 Community Response Fund as contributed to by CWaC and the Westminster Foundation and administered by CWaC. In addition funding was made available from Anne Duchess of Westminster's Charity, Co-Op, Vivo, Marjory Boddy Charitable Trust, INEOS, Marshes Community Benefit Fund, McCarthy & Stone, Masonic Charitable Foundation, The Big Lottery Awards For All Fund.

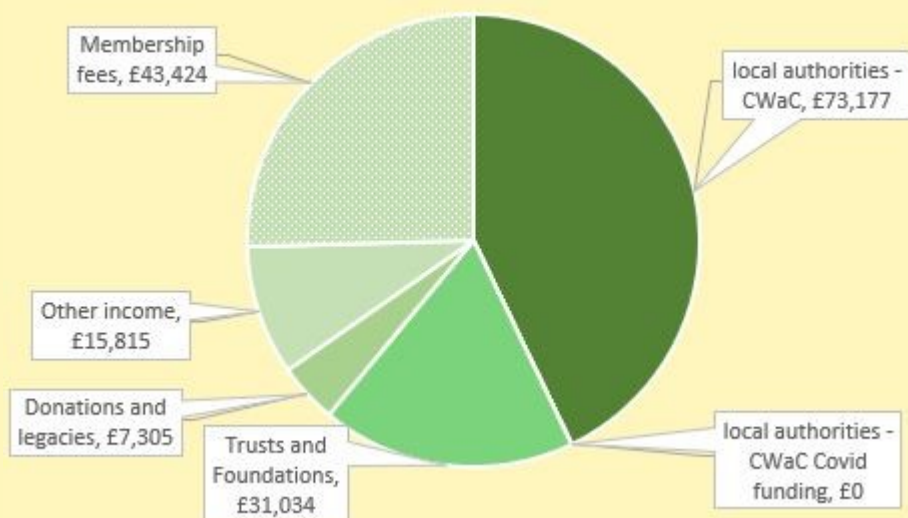
However the Covid pandemic restrictions had a devastating effect on income obtained from club membership fees, because we were unable to run our clubs. Additional costs were incurred producing OPAL Reach and providing activity bags.

	Year to March-21	Year to March-20	Movement
Total funding	141,842	170,756	(28,914)
Staff costs	97,712	93,085	4,627
Volunteer costs	835	11,705	(10,870)
Activities	15,010	47,785	(32,775)
Admin	18,580	12,159	6,421
Fundraising	122	2,503	(2,381)
Total expenditure	132,259	167,237	(34,978)
Net surplus/ (deficit)	9,583	3,519	6,064
Reserve funds	214,285	204,702	9,583

2020/2021



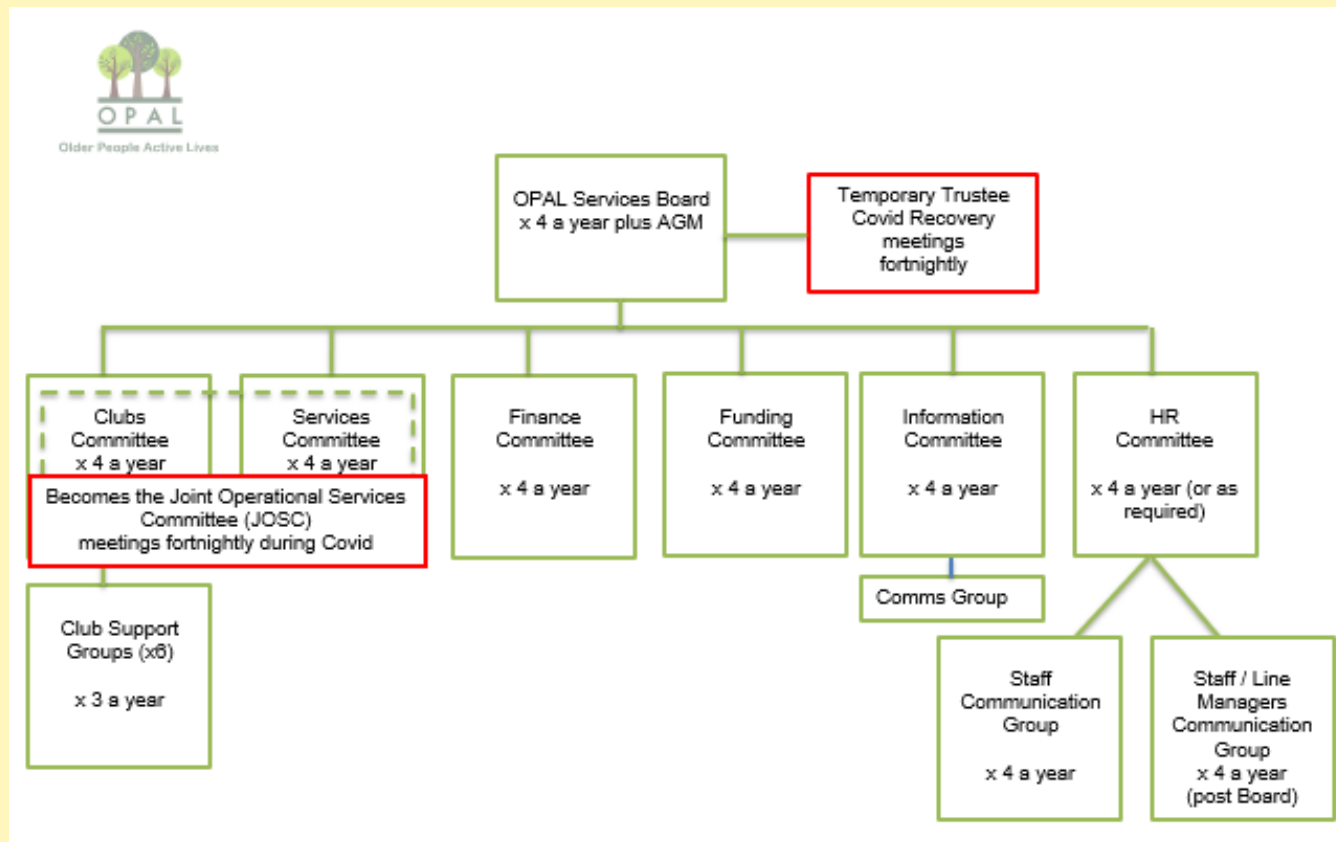
2019/2020



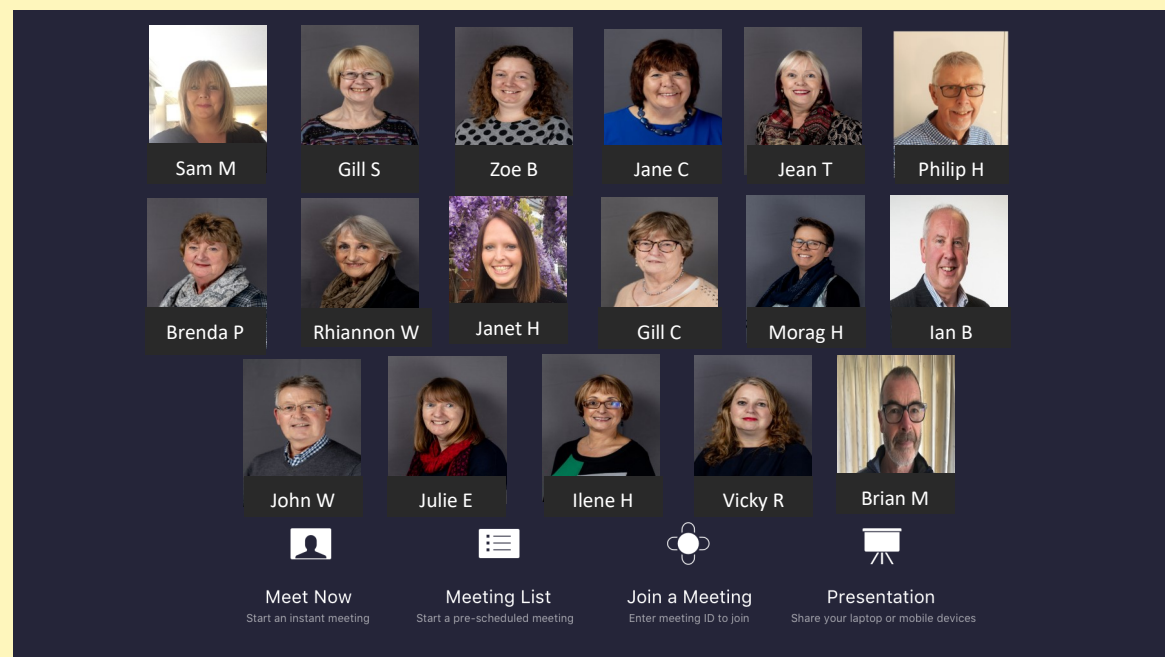
KEY POINTS

- Funds from CWaC increased by £11,400 due to additional £16,140 in grants from the Covid-19 Community Response Fund.
- Trust and Charity Foundation funding increased by some £5,300 and any reduction on the part of any past funders was mitigated by new funding streams from CWaC, Anne Duchess of Westminster's Charity, Westminster Foundation, Co-Op, Vivo, Marjory Boddy Charitable Trust, INEOS, Marshes Community Benefit Fund, McCarthy & Stone, Masonic Charitable Foundation, The Big Lottery Awards For All Fund.
- A £5,400 reduction in other income by COVID-19 restrictions was partially mitigated by a £2,400 saving in fundraising activity costs.
- The £43,100 reduction in Club membership fees were partly mitigated by £14,200 of additional funds in other areas and a £35,000 reduction in overheads, resulting in a net funding surplus of around £9,600 for the year.

OUR STRUCTURE



OUR TEAM - APRIL 2020 TO MARCH 2021



TRUSTEES

**Ian Bailey, Jan Bailey, Gill Clough, Jane Colville, Philip Hearfield,
Ilene Hoyle, Brian Mackie, Vicky Ridgway, Gill Swash, John Webb,
Rhiannon Wilson**

STAFF

**Zoe Blocksidge, Julie Ennis, Janet Handley, Morag Hutson, Sam Moggan,
Brenda Platt, Jean Toyn**

KEY ACTIONS FROM OUR 2019-2020 ANNUAL REPORT

Our main aims for 2020 that featured in last Report are set out below, and, whilst COVID-19 had a huge impact on all of our services and the charity as a whole, we were pleased to have achieved all our actions and, in addition, met new ones inevitably created during the pandemic.

- ✓ **Introduction of the new OPAL image and brand including;**
 - a) a legal name change to OPAL Services (Rural west Cheshire)**
 - b) a new logo**
 - b) revised core values, aims and objectives**
 - c) production and sharing of our story**
- ✓ **Increase the numbers, diversity and skill mix of our volunteer force**
- ✓ **Increase the number, diversity and skill mix of our Trustees**
- ✓ **Obtain access to a wider range of funding streams and sources**
- ✓ **Implement a comprehensive policy review framework**

KEY ACTIONS FOR 2021/2022

Actions for 2021/22 are difficult to predict, given the uncertainty COVID-19 has brought to the world. The pandemic has reinforced for us the plight faced by those who are, for various reasons, unable to leave their homes and be in contact with others and it is vital that we continue to make every effort to maintain and develop services which seek to mitigate the worst effects of this.

- **Re-establish services which involve face to face contact in a Covid secure way**
- **Maintain a range of remote services which are available to those unable or unwilling to leave their own homes**
- **Develop training plans for staff, volunteers and trustees**
- **Review and revise the Business Plan**
- **Explore the possibility of providing an improved service for older people with dementia and their carers living in rural west Cheshire**
- **Further develop our Branching Out service**
- **Establish our OPAL InTouch service working alongside OPAL GoOnline**

Our Financial Statements

At March 31st there were eleven trustees on the OPAL Board of Trustees who are also Directors of the Company for the purposes of Company Law. Ms Ilene Hoyle resigned as a trustee in August 2020 and Ms Vicky Ridgway resigned in September 2020. Two new trustees were elected during the year - Ms Jan Bailey and Mr Ian Bailey.

The procedure for the appointment of trustees is set out in the Articles of Association.

There must be at least five trustees but no maximum is set.

Responsibilities of Trustees

The trustees are responsible for preparing the Annual Report and the Financial Statements in accordance with the applicable law and regulations. Company law requires the trustees to prepare financial statements in accordance with UK Generally Accepted Accounting Practice (UK Accounting Standards and applicable law). The financial statements are required by law to give a true and fair view of the state of affairs at the charity and of the surplus/deficit of the charity for that period.

In preparing these financial statements, the trustees are required to :

select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently

make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent

prepare the financial statements on the ongoing concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in operation.

The trustees are responsible for keeping proper accounting records which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charity and which enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006.

The trustees are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

So far as the trustees are aware:

there is no relevant information of which the charity's independent examiner is unaware the trustees have taken all steps that they ought to have taken to make themselves aware of any relevant information and to establish that the independent examiner is aware of that information.

Declaration

The trustees declare that there were no Serious Incidents, as defined by the Charity Commission, or any other matters which should have been brought to the attention of the Charity Commission.

Small Company Provisions

This report has been prepared in accordance with the provisions of Part 15 of the Companies Act 2006 relating to small companies.

Independent Examiner

Rebecca Ellams has been re-appointed as independent examiner.

This Trustees Annual Report was approved by the Board of Trustees on 8th September 2021.

This summarised financial information contains extracts from the OPAL Services Statement of Financial Activities, a full copy of which is available by emailing morag.hutson@opalservices.org.uk

OPAL SERVICES (RURAL WEST CHESHIRE)

BALANCE SHEET

AS AT 31 MARCH 2021

	Notes	2021 £	£	2020 £	£
Fixed assets					
Tangible assets	11		1,887		2,405
Current assets					
Debtors	12	766		12,923	
Cash at bank and in hand		234,931		217,789	
		<u>235,697</u>		<u>230,712</u>	
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	13	<u>(23,301)</u>		<u>(28,415)</u>	
Net current assets			212,396		202,297
Total assets less current liabilities			<u>214,283</u>		<u>204,702</u>
Income funds					
Restricted funds	14		51,549		46,369
<u>Unrestricted funds</u>					
Designated funds	15	45,126		44,067	
General unrestricted funds		<u>117,608</u>		<u>114,266</u>	
			162,734		158,333
			<u>214,283</u>		<u>204,702</u>

Company Information

OPAL Services (Rural West Cheshire) is a company limited by guarantee.

Charity name	OPAL Services (Rural West Cheshire)
Registered company no.	7521625 (England and Wales)
Registered office	18 Utkinton Road, Tarporley, Cheshire CW6 0HS
Date of Incorporation	8th February 2011
Date activities commenced	22nd May 2011
Accounting reference date	31st March
Registered charity no.	1143753

Board of Trustee Directors 2020/21

Mr Ian Bailey	From 10/3/21
Dr Jan Bailey	From 10/3/21
P Cllr Mrs Gill Clough	From February 2011
P Cllr Mrs Jane Colville	From February 2011, Chair
Mr Philip Hearfield	From June 2019, Secretary from October 2019 and left March 2021
Mrs Ilene Hoyle	From January 2015 and left August 2020
Mr Brian Mackie, CA	From March 2020, Treasurer from March 2020
Dr Victoria Ridgway	From March 2018 and left September 2020
Mrs Gill Swash	From July 2017
P Cllr Mr John Webb	From October 2011
Mrs Rhiannon Wilson	From September 2019

Company Secretary Philip Hearfield

Independent Examiner Rebecca Ellams FCCA, Hall Livesey Brown
HLB House, 68 High Street, Tarporley,
Cheshire CW6 0AT

Bankers The Co-operative Bank plc, PO Box 101, 1 Balloon
Street, Manchester M60 4EP

Think about me, not my age