



MATTERS

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A MESSAGE FROM JANE

Apart from taking the opportunity to wish all our supporters including commissioners, elected members, funders and partner providers a very happy Christmas and a successful 2022 I'd like to reflect on the last 3 months which, like the rest of 2021, have been very busy and challenging for everyone in OPAL with several highs and lows plus lots of opportunities requiring us to undertake a fair amount of problem solving.

We have, since August, continued to run face to face services in a careful and considered way trying as far as we can to keep our staff, volunteers and members Covid safe. This has brought many challenges; for example some of the venues we used to use have been closed or are much more expensive now or simply not suitable. Some of our members have been reluctant to leave their homes, whilst others can't understand why we can't return to everything as it was pre-Covid. But we have persevered and found a new way of working - ready to adapt whenever necessary.

Our AGM in November was held via Zoom. We were delighted to have Lady Redmond as the current Lord-Lieutenant of Cheshire join us along with many of our volunteers, staff, trustees and partners. Our theme was "Adapting, Adjusting and Supporting" and apart from reflecting on the way OPAL itself has managed over the last year we also received insights via presentations into the way several other organisations had coped. These presentations included one from Reverend Andrew Emison from the Methodist Church, Kevin Bradburne who is now an OPAL Trustee but also Director of Operations for the Youth Federation and one from The Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme Organisation. Thanks were extended at the AGM to all involved in OPAL, both directly and indirectly, as volunteers, staff, trustees and supporters - past and present.

This has been another difficult year for our trustees, staff, volunteers and members and I would like to extend my thanks to them all for all their efforts, resilience and willingness to adapt and adjust. Finally thank you to everyone who continues to support OPAL in whatever way - and let's hope for an easier 2022.

*Jane Colville
Chair of Trustees*

A RIGHT ROYAL OCCASION!

On the morning of October 14, Jane as our Chair together with Brenda, who is one of our OPAL Organisers, went to Chester Town Hall and joined many other representatives of local charities and organisations to meet with Prince Edward, Earl of Wessex and also with Lady Redmond, Lord-Lieutenant of Cheshire.



OPAL's invitation was in part linked to our Queen's Award which we had been awarded in 2020 but was also in recognition of the way in which we had managed through the pandemic. It was a pleasure to meet both Prince Edward and Lady Redmond and share a little with them of what OPAL offers.

ADAPTING, ADJUSTING AND SUPPORTING—OPAL AGM

On Wednesday 7th November, OPAL held its Annual General Meeting and were delighted that Lady Redmond, who has been recently appointed as the new Lord Lieutenant for Cheshire, was able to attend along with guest speakers Rev'd Andrew Emison and Kevin Bradburne and Rebecca Ellams, OPAL's Independent Examiner.

Presenting this year's Annual Report, Jane Colville explained that the theme was 'Adjusting, Adapting and Supporting' - reflecting the challenges of the last 12 months during the Covid-19 pandemic. Jane acknowledged the effort and commitment shown by staff and volunteers in providing continued support to those who use OPAL services and the Board of Trustees were also thanked for their work in ensuring that OPAL continued to provide services safely against a backdrop of evolving guidance and regulations.

Jane also acknowledged the support of partner organisations and thanked them for their support over the last year, including Cheshire West and Chester Council, who provided funding for additional befriending services, and other partners who have worked with us locally.



As well as showing a presentation on the work OPAL has carried out during the year, Rev'd Andrew Emison from Frodsham and Norley Methodist Churches and Frodsham/ Helsby Open Hands outlined some of the changes and developments he had been involved with over the last 18 months and reflected on the impact of the pandemic and Kevin Bradburne, Trustee for OPAL and Director of Operations for the Youth Federation provided a summary of how the Youth Federation has continued to support vulnerable young people over the last 18 months. The Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme Organisation provided a short slide presentation which was introduced by Jane and this outlined how they have adapted various elements of the Award programme during the pandemic.

To view this year's Annual Report please visit [https://www.opalservices.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/](https://www.opalservices.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/ANNUALREPORT_202021-FINALb.pdf)

[ANNUALREPORT_202021-FINALb.pdf](https://www.opalservices.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/ANNUALREPORT_202021-FINALb.pdf)

SHARING IS CARING

All of OPAL's What's Cooking groups began meeting up again in September but without the usual cooking and sharing of food due to Covid safety. Instead, a cup of coffee, a slice of cake and plenty of chat has been the recipe for the sessions.

The Autumn term in Frodsham and Helsby culminated in a talk from a volunteer from the Runcorn and District Foodbank, where we presented her with 6 bags of food kindly donated by OPAL members and volunteers attending Helsby and Frodsham groups.



AIR PURIFIERS



Keeping everyone as safe as possible whilst running our services is always OPAL's first priority and we are pleased to announce that, through a generous grant of £450 from Frodsham Town Council and additional OPAL funds, we have been able to purchase several Air Purifying units for use at our clubs and sessions across our areas. The purifiers sanitize the air within a room and early trials suggest they are effective in reducing the risk of COVID-19.

These will be a massive help as the colder weather approaches as it means we can reduce the amount of ventilation required i.e. having the doors and windows open. So we can all look forward to cosier and more comfortable clubs and sessions, while still staying safe. Thank you to Frodsham Town Council.





GETTING CRAFTY THIS CHRISTMAS....

The members and volunteers who make up the 'Knit for OPAL' group have been very busy in the lead up to Christmas.

Between them, they have knitted over 200 Christmassy covers for Chocolate Oranges.

The majority of these are to be gifted to OPAL Members, but we also managed to raise some funds with the surplus. A big thanks to everyone involved, especially the members and volunteers from the Clubs who had to keep the project a secret so as not to spoil the surprise!



CHRISTMAS SPIRIT

Christmas is always a special occasion at OPAL but maybe more so this year as, unlike last year, we are able to celebrate together. And whilst we have had to take special measures to keep COVID safe, we haven't let that stop us having some fun! Here's a look at what our groups and clubs have been doing in the run up to the Festive period....





FUNDING AND FUNDRAISING UPDATE

Over the last quarter we have continued to work hard to ensure OPAL have sufficient funding to support the services provided and this generally comes through us making applications for funding from external funders and our internal fundraising activities. We have recently been successful in obtaining funding for our OPAL Branching Out service from the National Lottery [Awards for All]. This is great news as it will allow us to start to expand that very successful service into other areas as we have hoped to do for a long time. The Co-Op have also made a payment to us of just under £4,000 which has been accumulated over the last twelve months from people shopping in local Co-Op stores and making OPAL their charity of choice. We were also delighted to receive a surprise cheque from ShareGift which is an organisation that collects shares that people choose to donate and they then periodically allocate sums to charities nominated by those donors.



OPAL would also like to express sincere thanks to those individuals and their families who choose to make donations to OPAL. Sometimes this is linked to the passing away of one of our members and sometimes it is simply an expression of thanks for the support provided. Whatever the reason, all donations are very much valued and appreciated. Thank you.

Our recent internal fundraising activity can be seen below and future plans include another soup lunch in a different location the New Year, involvement in Manley Knoll Open Garden Day on 22 May, a fundraising event on 21 September at Eaton Courtyard and hopefully an online auction.

HO HO HELSBY is a community Christmas event held in Helsby village on the first Saturday of December culminating in a parade and Christmas lights switch on.



For the third year, OPAL had a stall in the community centre during the day, and despite the awful weather, there were lots of visitors. We were able to catch up with old friends, and make some new ones,

plus had some fun fundraising with a water and wine table and a general sale. We raised £400 in total. Thank you to all the volunteers and everyone who donated items for the stall.

SOUP LUNCH FUNDRAISER

On Friday 15th October, OPAL held their first physical fundraiser since the pandemic. It was wonderful to be able to enjoy time together with volunteers and friends whilst helping to raise funds for OPAL. A raffle was also held and in total the event raised a fantastic £500.



Thank you to all the volunteers who helped at Fundraiser and to Jo, Juliette and the OPAL Fundraising Team for putting the event together.



As reported in previous OPAL Matters, 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.)

DATE NEWS!

PLEASE NOTE THAT OPAL CLUBS AND CARER SERVICES WILL NOT BE RUNNING BETWEEN FRIDAY 17TH DECEMBER 2021 & MONDAY 3RD JANUARY 2022.

Think about me, not my age