



MATTERS

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A message from

Jane

New Beginnings



Spring is making a welcome appearance and as it does so OPAL is making a brave attempt to get fully back into business with all its services running as pre-pandemic, though with necessary attention paid to people`s safety and wellbeing, given that the people we support can be very vulnerable and the virus remains with us. We support people who vary hugely in the way they have reacted to the pandemic with some who have been desperate to return to face-to-face services and others who remain reluctant to leave their homes. Along the way we need to cater for both groups and all the others in between.

It has been a tough two years but we are tremendously proud of the way our staff and volunteers have coped and have remained loyal and committed and been flexible and supportive throughout. We were sad to say goodbye to Sam who left us at Christmas and who played such a key role for us as both Club Organiser but also leading on our communications activity. She is much missed. We are also sorry to be saying goodbye very soon to John Webb who has been an OPAL Trustee more or less from its inception. Meanwhile, we are delighted to say hello to Joanne, our new Tarporley Club Organiser and Lynda who will be supporting OPAL Branching Out services.

As with most challenges there have been a number of positives to come out of the confusion and frustration of covid. We have certainly learnt lessons and acquired new skills and partnerships. We work even more closely as a team and there has been more opportunity for staff and volunteers to better understand the full package of services that OPAL offers. We have developed some new `virtual` services as a result of the lockdowns and some of these will continue for the people whose circumstances prevent them from getting out much or from having much contact with others. For all these reasons we were delighted in January to learn that the Garden Parties at Buckingham Palace, cancelled in 2020, will be going ahead in May this year to celebrate the excellence of our Queens Award volunteers and that two volunteers are invited to represent OPAL.

We all hope we can now look forward to having a successful year ahead of us, even though we know we face many challenges ahead of us as our commissioners rethink the services they wish to commission on behalf of those they support. We know we will need to step up and respond in a positive way but one that respects and represents the interests of the people we are here for.

Very soon I will be stepping down from the role of Chair after several years and I`ll be handing over to Geoff Hope-Terry who has lots of experience working with charities and who, I am absolutely sure, will bring something very positive to OPAL.

Jane Colville – Outgoing Chair

OPAL welcomes two new trustees



Geoffrey Hope-Terry. (Chair Elect)

Geoff has worked on a wide range of boards across the private, public and charity sector since he retired from the position of Finance Director at the University of Manchester in 2006. He was brought up in Cheshire and, whilst his career took him all round the country, he and his wife couldn`t imagine ending up anywhere else. For the past 5 years Geoff has been Chair of Citizens Advice Cheshire West and a lot of what he learned there will be highly beneficial to his role with OPAL. Geoff will take on the role of OPAL`s Chair.



Juliet Compston

Juliet is a project manager with a track record of voluntary service. She is a founder aged 18, of the successful NSPCC Snowflake Ball and she joined the NSPCC full time as a project manager for the Millenium Full Stop Appeal in the North West. She has a strong focus on community related activities, is an OPAL volunteer driver and more recently a member of the fundraising team. Juliet lives in Manley, Cheshire and has two adult sons. She enjoys gardening, running, family sailing and bee-keeping.



OPAL Volunteers *shall* go to the Palace.

Earlier last year, having been awarded the prestigious Queen's Award for Volunteering, we were disappointed to find out that the annual Royal Garden Parties would not be taking place due to the pandemic. Recently we were delighted to find out that not only will the Garden Parties definitely be going ahead in 2022, but that places have been made available for two OPAL volunteers to represent OPAL. The Garden Parties will take place at Buckingham Palace in May and OPAL will be represented by volunteers Mary Thompson and Lesley Duggan.



Lesley is a retired social worker with a special interest in dementia. She tells us: "I have been involved with OPAL for six or seven years now, working with the carers support service. I have had some lovely families. During lockdown I made telephone contact with an elderly lady who proved very chatty and interesting. I was very surprised and delighted to receive the phone call letting me know my name had been drawn to receive an invitation to a Garden Party at Buckingham Palace in May and immediately went into planning mode. Google was helpful regarding dress expectations and comfy shoes are a must as there is a lot of queuing and standing. Hats are worn!!!"

Mary is a former Treasurer and volunteers with Tarporley OPAL Club. She says: "OPAL is a wonderful organisation full of very caring and dedicated people, both at staff and volunteer level, including the truly dedicated Trustee group which gives so much time to making OPAL the professional and caring Charity that it is. I am so pleased that OPAL has been recognised in this way and been given the opportunity to send two volunteers to a Royal Garden Party to represent the organisation. For me it is such a thrill, an honour and a privilege to be attending, and I will do my utmost to represent the Charity well."



News from our services

As face to face services begin to reopen, OPAL is off to a storming start with warming stories of members who are delighted to be able to get together once more. Here is a taste of what has been going on. With the Queen's Platinum Jubilee just around the corner there are going to be many more reports to come.

Branching Out Further at Frodsham library

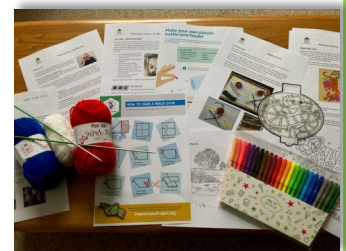
Branching Out has been running three What's Cooking groups, some craft sessions and the regular drop in session at Frodsham Library. Brio are now offering a range of gentle sports in the sports hall on a Thursday morning and many members like to take part in an activity like kurling before retiring for a chat in the library and a cuppa provided by the library staff. OPAL has appointed a new member of staff – Lynda Briody, to support the expansion of Branching Out activities into new areas. We hope to start some new sessions in Kelsall very soon.



Reaching Out and keeping active

OPAL continues to produce and circulate over 400 OPAL Reach newsletters on a fortnightly basis and in it we now feature the face-to-face groups that meet all across the rural area and the wide range of activities they enjoy.

Over one hundred and forty activity packs were delivered to OPAL members in February, with the usual mix of articles, reminiscence, puzzles, colouring and optional activities such as making a bird feeder and a paper folding peace dove. For those who are supporting our knitting projects, red, white and blue wool has also been distributed for our exciting Platinum Jubilee project.



What's New at GoOnline

OPAL GoOnline is now back to offering face to face sessions at Tarporley, Tiverton, Cuddington and Frodsham. OPAL GoOnline volunteers assist with all things to do with technology and the internet and that includes smart phone and tablets, not just computers and laptops. See the website for days and times of sessions, or contact Jean Toyn on **07923 425 239** for more information.



OPAL Funding and Fundraising

Funding and fundraising are of huge importance to the future of OPAL. In essence OPAL has five sources of funding available to it. For some years we have had two contracts with the Council to run our Early Intervention and Prevention services and our Carer Support services. We then apply for grant funding from a range of funders and we are grateful to have received a grant from Cheshire Community Foundation for £5,000 which is a Surviving Winter grant. We also fundraise through various events and activities. We receive donations and legacies which are most welcome, and we raise some funds through charging a contribution to the costs of some of the services we run.



In respect of the contracts we have with the Council, both are currently being recommissioned so, along with other providers, we are unsure what the future will bring but are working very hard to work in partnership with the Council as it consults on and considers what services it will be prepared to commission in the future.

OPAL Soup Lunch—Frodsham Community Centre

Our volunteers are brilliant at stepping up and doing all that is asked of them and so much more. Thanks to them OPAL's second 'Soup Lunch fundraiser, at Frodsham Community Centre on March 18th was a great success. The positive comments on the day could not have been better. Special thanks go to Sue in the kitchen, Brenda and Jean who organised the games and of course to all those who made wonderful soups and cakes.



Malpas OPAL Club

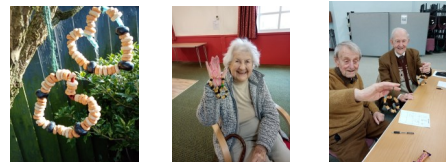
Member and volunteers have been making salt dough items for their Easter Tree and playing their favourite games.



Helsby, Frodsham and Kelsall OPAL Clubs

Had a Bird themed week in March and members made bird feeders out of pipe cleaners, Cheerios and blueberries. They monitored which birds the feeders attract and a Kelsall member reported that her entire feeder disappeared, possibly due to rogue squirrel activity!

Here, Joyce from Helsby and Giulio and Les from Frodsham, display their new found skills.



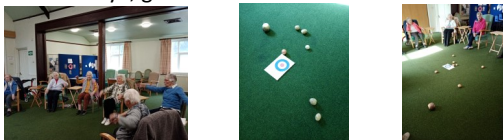
Frodsham OPAL Club

Celebrated reopening and Chinese New Year—the Year of the Tiger, colouring stained glass window lanterns, nibbling prawn crackers and giggling at the mottos inside fortune cookies.



Kelsall OPAL Club

Have been keeping fit with Maureen to music such as the 'Lord of the Dance' and 'Cruising down the river' and enjoying Vegetable Bowls, which is a take on carpet bowls but using random vegetables rolled at a bullseye, great fun!



Tattenhall OPAL Club

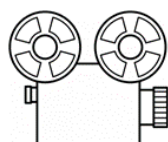
Were joined by a local poet and everyone came up with memories which were turned into poems which are now on show at the Barbour Institute in Tattenhall.

Church bells ring
as we near the Spinney,
children playing on a swing,
autumn leaves rustling through
while chip shop smells
drift on the wind.

Robert Dodd

Tarporley OPAL Club

Tarporley OPAL Club got back into action with their new Club Organiser, Joanne. The first order of business was to get to know each other better and what a great start! Members shared some inspiring and touching stories from their lives with the rest of the group and listened to songs from the movies and reminisced about old films. They then got a bit competitive with 'Play Your Cards Right', kept their brains busy with quizzes and charades and celebrated a 90th birthday! Finally in March they were able to sit down around the table and enjoy a hot meal together for the first time since the pandemic began: a much longed for moment for all Tarporley members. What better way to celebrate this milestone than with a roast chicken dinner and all the trimmings. Delicious!



Dementia session for Carers —Kelsall Equestrian Centre



OPAL Carers, Volunteers and staff spent a very worthwhile few hours with an Admiral Nurse from the End-of-Life Partnership in early March. She provided an excellent overview of the different types of Dementia and gave lots of practical advice for those caring for loved ones with the disease. Participants were able to share their own experiences through questions and discussion. So many of the OPAL family are caring for people with Dementia and the great benefit of this type of event was most evident during the afternoon. A future session will look at planning for the advanced stages of Dementia.

Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) visit Carers in Tiverton



In February an OPAL Carers' group enjoyed an informative talk by local PCSOs at Tiverton, on the theme of personal and home security, as well as receiving information about the Herbert Protocol. The Herbert Protocol has been used many times to help police and other agencies quickly and safely locate missing people who have dementia.

Wellbeing Hub—Frodsham

Frodsham has just opened a 'wellbeing hub' for all ages, to be known as 'The Hive'. Based in the bowling green café, the Hive has been financially supported for the first 12 months by Castle Park Trustees and the NHS Integrated Care Community Partnership.

OPAL Organisers Jean Toyn and Julie Ennis attended the launch and met the local Weaver Vale MP Mike Amesbury. OPAL looks forward to running regular OPAL sessions at the Hive and OPAL's GoOnline service has booked to run sessions there on a Tuesday Morning.

You can read more about the Hive in Frodsham Life:

<https://frodshamlife.co.uk/news/the-hive-a-new-wellbeing-hub-for-people-in-frodsham>



A warm Welcome to our new members of OPAL staff



Lynda Briody— Lynda has recently joined the team and will take over as the organiser for Farndon OPAL What's Cooking. She has been a volunteer driver since the end of last year, and currently supports the Tarporley Club. With over 30 years industry experience in customer service and leadership she hopes to use her organization and communication skills to create a welcoming and fun environment for OPAL members.

Welcome



Joanne Patel Joanne joined OPAL in January as the new Organiser for Tarporley OPAL Club and as part of the Carer Support team. Joanne has worked in the charity sector for 14 years, most recently as Wellbeing Manager for Age UK Barnet. Now firmly rooted in Cheshire with her young family, Joanne is loving both of her new roles at OPAL and the warm welcome she has received from members and volunteers alike.

Dates for your diary

Monday 2nd May 2022:

Visit the OPAL stall in the Village Hall, Manley Spring Fair.

Sunday 22 May 2022:

OPAL will be at Manley Knoll Gardens Open Day.

Wednesday 21 September

2022: Quiz night. Details tbc.

Saturday 22nd October

(Provisional) : Online Auction. Details tbc.

Think about me, not my age