



OPAL Services Impact Report 2025/2026



Introduction from OPAL Chair of Trustees

In 2020 OPAL received the Queen's Award for Volunteering; the MBE for charities.

When David Briggs, the Lord Lieutenant of Cheshire, presented the Award he said "OPAL is a special organisation; it spreads happiness."

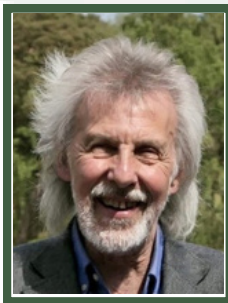
That is still true today.

The stories and analysis in this report demonstrate how OPAL continues to deliver great outcomes and I'd like to pay tribute to our brilliant staff and volunteers who work so hard to provide life-changing interventions for disadvantaged older people across rural West Cheshire.

We couldn't achieve any of this without them. I am very proud to be a part of this special, local charity.

Geoff Hope-Terry

Chair - OPAL Services





OPAL's Mission

Our Mission is to offer accessible, enjoyable and enabling activities for older people in rural West Cheshire, in order to reduce isolation and loneliness.

We aim to benefit older people and their carers who may be housebound and/or socially isolated, and who find it difficult to be part of their community without the support of others.

What our members say...

I always felt at home at OPAL. Looked at different clubs and OPAL is the best.

The community, coming here and meeting people, learning things, joining in, it's just great.

It got me using the laptop and gave me confidence.

Being able to get out and socialise.

Volunteers are so helpful.

Getting me up and out, meeting other people.

Someone different to talk to.

Having other people in a similar situation to talk to.

Getting out. It takes you away from the terrible isolation, gives you something to hang onto.



Older People Active Lives

Our Services



OPAL Clubs

are there for older people who might be finding it hard to get out and spend time with others locally. Our Clubs offer companionship, activities and laughter.



Branching Out

aims to reconnect people with their local community and to feel the full benefit of having social connections and interactions.



Carer Support

enables unpaid carers to gain some relief, for a short period, from caring responsibilities. We provide a programme of outings for carers to meet other carers in similar situations.



Good Neighbour

is a befriending service delivering support and friendship to older people living at home. A volunteer is matched to the older person and they meet weekly.



GoOnLine

helps older people in rural areas learn how to access the internet with the aim of fostering use of the internet to pursue their interests. We provide drop in sessions at community venues.





Older People Active Lives

Headline NUMBERS

11,000

Volunteering hours
across OPAL in
2025



415

Older people
accessed
OPAL's services



£2.59

Social Return On
Investment generated by
OPAL for every £1
invested





Older People Active Lives

Impact on **LONELINESS**

100%

of members said that attending OPAL has helped them to socialise and meet new people

81%

of members said that attending OPAL has prevented them from feeling lonely or isolated

94%

of members said that attending OPAL gives them something to look forward to



Impact on WELLBEING

87%

of members
said that
attending OPAL
has helped with
their mental
wellbeing



64%

of members
said that
attending OPAL
has helped
with their
confidence



60%

of members
said that
attending OPAL
has helped with
their physical
wellbeing





Older People Active Lives

Impact on **VOLUNTEERS**

94% of volunteers say overall they have benefitted from volunteering with OPAL



94% of volunteers say volunteering with OPAL has enabled them to give back

**“Helping at OPAL is an experience I’m glad I haven’t missed.
It’s worthwhile and I feel valued.”**

85% of volunteers have a better understanding of the challenges facing older people

66% of volunteers say they have improved wellbeing through volunteering with OPAL

62% of volunteers have gained new skills through volunteering with OPAL



Feedback from **MEMBERS' RELATIVES**

The mental health nurse recommended it for her brain health. Also good for me to have a break and chance to go out.

This is the only time she isn't in the house on her own.

Peace of mind that Mum has a little bit of a social life each week apart from carers and us.

Doctor and memory nurse advised social interaction and structured thing in the week.
The only thing he ever does without his wife or a paid carer.

Gives me some time to myself and family.

CASE STUDY - Clubs



After retiring, S started experiencing shaking hands. He was eventually diagnosed with a central tremor, which causes his hands to shake and the more he concentrates on fine movements the worse it becomes, making eating and drinking difficult sometimes. It can also affect his speech. This led to anxiety when going out with his wife.

His GP referred him to the local hospital OT department, and they chatted to S about what he could do to get out and socialise more. They gave him a list of local activities with OPAL being one.

He was apprehensive at first but came along for a taster session and immediately hit it off with fellow member K, they both share an interest in motorbikes. With 3 other men to chat to he had plenty to talk about, and equally he enjoys talking to the female members as well and finds the mixed ages of the group makes things interesting (early 70's to late 90's).

Some activities he has been sceptical about at first but has embraced them all. He particularly enjoyed "Finland Day", based around his backpacking adventures as a young man. He shared funny stories; he made Scandinavian art and ate a smorgasbord! His daughters phone him to see what he has been up to at Club, and it's given him more to talk about.

CASE STUDY - Branching Out



JL joined the Frodsham Branching Out group after his wife passed. Before her passing she made him promise to go out and join a group as she was concerned that he would be lonely. JL joined the group for this reason, wanting to make new friends and build up his confidence.

He enjoys attending the group, learning new things as quite often there are talks or demonstrations relating to food, having other people to talk to and enjoys the quizzes as finds them challenging.

Since joining the group JL has gone onto join six other groups in the area admitting that he now has a wide circle of acquaintances and is working on developing some of these into friendships.

CASE STUDY - Good Neighbour



RW was referred to OPAL by the Therapy team at Cheshire & Wirral NHS Partnership. He had been moved into a new house, but his mobility was declining, and he had had a couple of falls and lost confidence in getting out and about. RW also has cerebral palsy which affects his speech, and this also impacted his confidence in terms of leaving the house and meeting new people.

We arranged for RW to have a Good Neighbour volunteer, and they met weekly at his home. Initially, RW was quiet but both he and the volunteer enjoy playing chess and this helped to break the ice and start to build the bond between them. Two months ago, they went out of the house on their first walk together. It was significant step and walking his own street was a major achievement for him.

RW's confidence is growing, and he and the volunteer have had some great conversations covering everything from motorbike racing to artificial intelligence. Since their first walk together they have gone out into the village as the goal was to gently reconnect him with his local surroundings and community. This has progressed with RW taking the bus and having a day out in Nantwich.

CASE STUDY - Carer Support



P is the carer for her Mum who was diagnosed with vascular dementia 3 years ago and the only information and guidance they were given at that time was to help Mum maintain her social life - 'if you don't use it, you'll lose it' became their mantra. 18 months ago her Mum had a nasty fall whilst out on her daily walk with the dog. This experience both caused quite a dip in her dementia and caused her to lose so much confidence.

They then discovered OPAL and now attend as many events and activities as they can each month, meeting so many lovely new people and going to new places. When the first Carer Support Group meeting came around Mum and P attended and found those two hours to be wonderful. P got to spend time with the other carers whilst Mum was off having fun in another room, being cared for by the amazing staff and volunteers.

P said "It's not often I get time to myself and to be able to spend those two hours in the company of people who really 'get' what I'm going through whilst Mum is being looked after is such a relief. I get two hours where I just don't have to worry about Mum".



Older People Active Lives

CASE STUDY - GoOnLine



The client sadly lost her husband recently, like many relationships he did all the online activities using an old computer leaving her completely lost when he unexpectedly passed away.

She found the computer slow, very difficult and stressful to use. She also struggled with access to the many online accounts he had set up. We provided the client with a Samsung tablet and helped set this up for her to use, finding and downloading her husband's passwords saved on the old computer.

She was shown how to use e-mail, messages, google search and guided through on-line banking on the tablet, all of which she can now do with confidence.

She was also shown how to use "Compare the Market" as she had car and house insurance that needed renewal, she found deals that both suited her and saved her money for which she was very grateful.

3 YEAR PLAN 2025 - 2028



The strategy for the 3 years is to consolidate OPAL's position as a trusted provider across rural West Cheshire.

Whilst additional growth is not an objective over this period, it is recognised that the demand for our services is increasing and additional services, which run alongside our existing offer, could also be contemplated if there is a clear need. However, this must be on the basis of quality of service and meeting the needs of our communities and members, not growth for the sake of it.

Working more closely with suitable partners, in terms of both operations and funding, will be explored as routes to increased sustainability.

Specific objectives to support the strategy over the next 12 months include;

- Undertake a full review of each OPAL service to ensure there is still a need and we are addressing it appropriately,
- Look at ways of improving our volunteering offer and measurement to ensure sustainable numbers for the long-term,
- Investigate inter-generational projects to encourage younger people to become involved with OPAL's services,
- Identify potential strategic partners with a view to - joint bidding, cost sharing, or capitalising on devolution opportunities in Cheshire.





Older People Active Lives

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www.opalservices.org.uk



Want to join us?
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volunteering at OPAL



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