In this edition: a round up of summer events, work experience stories and customers share their volunteering experiences.
Sun shines on Sprowston Fete

A fantastic day at Sprowston fete saw the sun shining and lots of visitors having a great time. The many attractions included trying your hand at archery, wet sponge throwing, PAT dog Millie and live music.

There was also the opportunity to sit in the prisoner cell of police van, courtesy of the local Police Community Support Officer. The day was made extra special thanks to the Red Arrows who gave us a thrilling fly past!

The side stalls and barbeque helped make the day a huge success raising £455.58 for the Hub’s amenities fund.
Hello from Sarah


Summer was fun, the weather was mainly good and we had lots of fun events going on across the company.

A real focus of this edition is the insight into how we as a company and organisation support people in many aspects of work and work preparation, whether that’s through directly employing staff into Independence Matters, Norfolk Industries or Breckland Care at Home, or providing apprenticeships, work experience, student placements and volunteering opportunities.

We also support customers to have the same range of opportunities and achieve their goals and aspirations. Reading all the inspiring stories really shows how important having meaningful occupation is for all of us and our health, wellbeing and sense of who we are. A ‘work-life’ balance is equally as important and I was also struck by the fact that many of the stories talked about happy atmospheres, fun and being part of ‘something’ or a community, all of which make a powerful difference to someone’s life.

Speaking of fun; THE TAPS performance on page 5 will definitely make you smile, so make sure you get your tickets!

Sarah Stock
Managing Director, Independence Matters
Delivering care to homes in Norfolk

Based just outside Dereham, Breckland Care at Home became part of the Independence Matters Group earlier this year. We followed Care Supervisor, Ben, on a morning shift to find out what it takes to deliver high quality home care to communities in the heart of rural Norfolk.

Ben has worked in social care for eight years and moved to Breckland Care at Home in 2016. As a Care Supervisor his role combines being out on the road making home care visits (two days per week) with office-based tasks including overseeing care staff, carrying out assessments and organising rotas, as well as doing spot checks and covering absence.

The service’s home care visits operate on two daily shifts (7am-2pm and 4pm–9pm on a rota) from Monday to Sunday, 365 days of the year. The time spent per visit varies according to the individual. Service users are a mix of public and privately funded and the time allocated depends on the amount of funding they receive or what they, or their relatives, have chosen to have.

It’s a busy but rewarding role that carries a lot of responsibility. Ben’s first visit at 7am was close to home but his round then criss-crossed the villages around Dereham visiting around 10 service users during the shift.

Details of each visit are recorded in a folder at the service user’s home, reporting what has been done and any changes to the individual’s wellbeing, which helps the following shift to provide continuity of cover.

With a list of timed visits to keep to and vulnerable people dependent on your support, it’s essential to be a good timekeeper. Staff at Breckland are paid for their travel time and mileage, but there’s a lot to fit in at each visit and a good knowledge of the back roads is helpful to get you from A to B in the shortest time.

Many of the service users live independently and are reliant on the visits to deliver personal care, make meals and ensure medication is taken correctly. There is also a strong social aspect – many live alone or are unable to get out due to limited mobility – so visits also offer company and an opportunity to talk.
**Ben’s view**

You develop a good relationship with the service users and get to know them well and understand what they like and want.

Although it’s busy and you have a rota to stick to, it’s not stressful – most days go smoothly and you stay to plan. A hold up on the road can mean you end up running late but you learn to take it in your stride. I enjoy the freedom, I’d be unhappy at a desk all day - that’s not for me!

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**Breckland Care at Home in numbers**

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<tr>
<td><strong>58</strong></td>
<td>Service users</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>12</strong></td>
<td>Rounds, covering the towns of Fakenham and Dereham and all the villages around and in between the two</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>402</strong></td>
<td>Hours of care delivered per week</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>21</strong></td>
<td>Members of staff on the road providing hands-on care and support</td>
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**Update from our patron**

It’s been another busy season for our patron Will Smith. His racing has gone well and in Switzerland in June he posted time of 3 minutes 6 seconds in the 1500m (his favourite event) which gave him the qualifying standard for the London World Championships. Unfortunately with only a limited number of places available he wasn’t selected by British Athletics to compete for team GB this time. Although disappointing this will not put Will off. His attitude is ‘never give up’ and he’s now training hard in the gym to build up his strength to try to be selected next year for the Commonwealth Games in Australia.

After spending time at home in Norfolk over the summer, Will is now back at University in Twickenham to begin the second year of his law degree. Before he left he was able to call in at Dereham Hub to meet some of the members and is now looking forward to attending THE TAPS performance of ‘Elvis’ in October!

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**THE TAPs present ‘Elvis’**

Dereham Hub’s drama group THE TAPS will be performing ‘Elvis’ on Thursday 26th October at 7pm, at Northgate High School, Dereham. **Tickets are on sale now** priced £7.50 and £8.50. For more information contact the Hub on 01362 654654.

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**Interested in joining us?**

We’re recruiting! You need to be over 18, be able to drive and have a daily use of a car. All training will be given.

If you’re interested and want to know more contact us on 01362 667042 or email us at marketing@brecklandcareathome.co.uk

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**I Matter, People Matter, Carers Matter, Staff Matter, Excellent Care Matters**
Focus on HR

Independence Matters’ Human Resources (HR) team was created in April 2016 as part of a wider programme to bring in-house some of the central service functions provided by Norfolk County Council.

The four-strong team proactively manages all aspects of HR across Independence Matters. Alongside employment relations, contracts and variations to absence and governance reporting. Some of their main areas of focus are:

**Staff queries** - the team deals with a vast range of queries from staff and provides advice ranging from recruitment to staffing issues and interpretation of policies.

**HR Policies** - keeping our policies up to date is essential to ensure that, as a company, we are legally compliant and adopting best practice. A large number of HR policies and associated documents including the staff handbook are reviewed and updated annually.

**Training** – another aspect of the team’s role, they are currently working with an external provider to deliver Practical Problem Solving and Investigation training for managers.

**GDPR** – preparations for the new data protection regulations that come into force next year are a major focus and the team is part of a working party from across Independence Matters that will ensure all areas of the company will be compliant in time for the March 2018 deadline.

Meet the team

The team is managed by **HR Manager Amanda Rudd** who is qualified to Masters level and has a wealth of knowledge and experience in employment relations, deployment and managing change processes.

**HR Advisor Sam High** is Level 5 CIPD qualified and has worked for the company for over 15 years in many roles. She provides front line advice and guidance on a range of employment relations issues including absence, grievances and disciplinary. She is also the lead for HR Policy reviews and also provides HR advice to Breckland Care at Home.

Amanda and Sam are assisted by **Jane Green** and **Mary Eke** who both work part-time and provide office support that ensures the administration processes and turnaround times for processing paperwork are accurate and efficient.

Samantha High, HR Advisor

Some people are surprised to find out there are only four of us in our team and often think we are a big department! Our office is based at Dereham Community Hub and we are always happy for people to pop in when they are visiting.

Our photo above (left to right): Jane Green, Sam High, Mary Eke and Amanda Rudd.
A fun day out at Attleborough’s fete

Attleborough Community Hub held its annual summer fete on 17th August. With some fantastic Hub-made crafts for sale the main hall was kept busy and, with the sun out at just the right time, there were big queues for the BBQ.

Attractions included a tombola, tractor rides, a variety of side shows - and of course cake! A really fun day raising £670 for the Hub’s amenities fund.

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Nana’s story

Nana is studying to be a nurse for people with learning disabilities and recently completed 11 weeks work experience at the Hub.

“I was quite nervous before starting my placement as I didn’t know what was expected of me. However, by visiting the Hub prior to officially starting the placement, staff were able to reassure me that there was nothing to worry about.

I’ve been able to develop my communication skills and develop a therapeutic relationship with the Hub’s customers. I found out that they really enjoy coming to the Hub and participating in different activities on a daily basis. Joining in with these has given me a range of skills in how to participate in sessions. I’ve also learnt how to do risk assessments for customers doing activities. This is important as there may be unidentified risks and it ensures that the customers are kept safe.

The placement has given me the chance to go on training courses to develop my knowledge and I’ve been able to implement my learning whilst working with the customers. The skills I’ve learnt are transferable to the career pathway I’ve chosen.

I’ve also encountered new experiences which I’ll take with me throughout my training. I’ve connected with all the customers I’ve worked with during my placement and believe it’s a great way to develop your knowledge and skills as well as building professional relationships with the Hub’s customers and staff.”

Amelia’s Story

Amelia chose to do work experience at Independence Matters to help with her A-level coursework.

“I had based my Health and Social Care coursework on people with learning difficulties and therefore felt that doing some work experience at the Hub would be a great idea. I loved the bustling atmosphere and, although I’ve now finished my coursework, I recently attended again to do some additional work experience. This time, I was able to watch a musical performance put on by many of the customers and thoroughly enjoyed watching all of them have so much fun performing! I truly loved doing work experience at Independence Matters and would recommend it to anyone.”

Following Norfolk County Council’s recent Work Experience Norfolk campaign, we asked three students to tell us about their placements at Sprowston Community Hub.
James’s story

James is a great example of how both work experience and volunteering can lead to employment opportunities.

“I was a student studying towards a Health and Social Care extended diploma when I first came to Sprowston Community Hub. It was the second placement I had been on whilst on the course. When I came to Sprowston I was immediately greeted by plenty of friendly people, staff and customers alike.

Whilst on my work experience placement I could see the impact of the work I was doing, as well as the impact that all the other staff and volunteers were having on each and every customer. I was able to gain a lot of valuable skills thanks to my placement at the Hub and it really helped to improve my initiative working in a place where almost every day is different from the last. I’ve been able to enjoy lots of experiences with the wide variety of activities run there and enjoyed working in an environment which could sometimes challenge you and keep pushing you forward.

After completing my placement I was pleased to continue on as a volunteer whenever possible and have now been offered a role as a support worker and should be starting soon.”

Sensory Garden opens at Dereham Hub

On Monday 4th September Radio Norfolk came to Dereham Community Hub to speak with customers, staff and volunteers about the Growing Together garden project. The visit followed a donation for £1600 received from the National Garden Scheme (NGS) and the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) via the Elspeth Thompson Bursary.

Susan Copeland from NGS and RHS visited the Hub to officially open the garden at 11am on Monday 11th September. To coincide with this, volunteers at the Hub were invited to come along for a coffee and cake morning to thank them for all the support they give to staff and customers.

Our photo shows Susan Copeland (left) after cutting the ribbon to open the garden alongside volunteer Jean Walton (right).

Radio Norfolk were unable to attend the official opening but their interview (which was broadcast on Saturday, 9th September) is available on iplayer.

http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p05d3rwy
Supporting Independence

We take a look at how our customers are benefitting from working in voluntary roles, and at the support being given to help individuals into employment so they can lead more active and independent lives.

Theatre lighting technician, Daniel

Daniel is a lighting technician at a theatre in Norwich, which is a job he loves. He works on a voluntary basis, doing a double shift at weekends and sometimes helping out during the week, depending on demand.

He is responsible for operating all the lights in the auditorium, onstage and backstage, and for playing the PA announcements. He also carries out rig checks ahead of each performance to make sure every single light is working and does a blackout check (making sure everyone knows when this is taking place so there are no accidents!). He also operates the smoke machine and a laser which projects different colours onto the stage.

The lights are all operated using switches on a lighting desk and Daniel uses a head mic to communicate with the backstage crew who give him instructions, so he has a cue each time he needs to turn a light on or off. He also has a screen displaying each scene change to help him keep on track with what’s happening on stage, visible through a window.

It’s a lot of responsibility but he loves being part of the theatre environment and making friends with the cast and crew.

Daniel has always wanted to work in the theatre and particularly enjoys musicals. He is a regular theatre goer himself and has visited the Lyceum in London to see Bat Out Of Hell – a particular favourite. He has been working at the theatre for about three years now and was supported at first, but now goes solo and has worked on Christmas productions including The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe, The Snow Queen and The Borrowers.

He also recalls the time when he saved the day during a production of Shakespeare’s As You Like It, when the lighting system went down on the opening night and he had to use levers on the desk to operate the lights manually. The system is usually fully automated with everything programmed in, so this was a real test of his ability (and nerve!).

Now officially a member of the theatre’s lighting crew, Daniel’s next ambition is to move into theatre lighting design – something which the theatre’s directors are due to discuss at the Board’s next AGM.
Susan’s story

How support from staff at Sheringham Learning Hub helped Susan prepare for and find voluntary work.

Sheringham Learning Hub offers a core learning approach using a combination of desk-based learning and hands-on experience. Its key aims are to develop people’s independent living skills, support individuals into volunteering opportunities and, where possible, paid employment.

Thanks to the Hub’s support, Susan now has a weekly voluntary placement with Age Concern where she helps out at a day service, helping in the kitchen, setting up tables, serving meals, washing up, peeling vegetables and hoovering. It’s a role she loves and she gets to have her own uniform with her name on it. She was initially accompanied by a Hub staff member, but as the routine became familiar she gradually became confident enough to attend on her own.

Susan is rightly proud of achieving the five Age Concern qualifications needed for the role. These include Fire Awareness and Health & Safety Basics – all subjects covered under the Hub’s core learning syllabus.

The role is also helping her to learn about responsibility, as she recently had to ask permission for a day off to visit Cromer Carnival.

Sheila joins Independence Matters

Sheila began volunteering at Crossroads Community Hub in 2015 as part of her college course and continued after its completion. Since then, staff at the Hub have watched her develop and say her humour and sensitive character have helped her to become a valued member of the team.

Now, thanks to Support Into Employment worker, Steve Russell, Sheila has secured employment at the Hub as a lunchtime assistant, working alongside the staff team to serve meals and complete kitchen duties over the lunchtime period. Through the process Sheila has gained knowledge of the employment process and will now receive bespoke training relevant to her role delivered by Independence Matters training team.

This is the first time she has been in paid employment and says this ‘makes her feel happy’. The Hub’s staff have seen her confidence grow during her time volunteering and Sheila feels this will continue to help in all aspects of her life as result of this opportunity.

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Aaron’s story
How getting support to be independent matters

Getting a job isn’t always easy, but securing paid employment can play a vital role in helping people to live the lives they choose.

Aaron currently lives at home but is keen to live independently. Over the years he has struggled to get the support he needs, but a tailored approach provided by Independence Matters staff is finally helping him make progress towards the outcomes he wants.

With our support Aaron has taken his first steps towards finding a place of his own, applying for housing through the Breckland Key Select website and has put in ‘bids’ on several properties. He has viewed a couple of these, which has helped him understand more about what he wants and is now actively looking for something that suits his needs.

Aaron has undertaken a number of voluntary roles, including work experience at a local cat rescue centre where helped to care for and socialise the cats as well as working in their charity shop in town. He was offered a volunteering place at Quidenham Hospice but turned this down as he felt nervous about going on his own – all previous placements had been accompanied.

Aaron is very people orientated and likes working with others. He now volunteers at Laburnum Grove two days a week, where he makes drinks, socialises with customers and organises the games of dominoes.

He has also been involved in the Brewkery project, a brewing and baking business for people with disabilities where he has been learning to make bread, cakes and beer.

Aaron is keen to find paid employment as this will help him to become independent and have a place of his own. He has limited mobility, which has restricted his options in the past, but with our support he has applied for a blue badge for his mobility car and hopes this will give him greater access to work opportunities. He is being supported to actively look for work through regular visits to the Job Centre and attending job fairs and is currently looking at applying for two jobs, one as a receptionist and another as an apprentice chemist.

Aaron has also expressed interest in working in the media and his ideal job would be in television; he once fell down the stairs at The Forum and accidentally landed in the BBC area, where he promptly asked for a job! Nothing has come his way yet, but he remains hopeful.
My name is Ami and this is my story about my everyday life with Williams Syndrome. It’s a learning disability which means that I have hearing loss, tinnitus and sensitive hearing that makes me scared of things like motorbikes, sirens, hand dryers, roadworks, fireworks and loud bangs that appear out of nowhere.

I can’t have a lot of the things people love like, for example, dairy because if I have too much of it I’m sick for a long time. I really love my music because it is amazing, I love Scooter, Queen and Andre Rieu. These mean a lot to me because they all make me happy.

I’d like to introduce you to my family. I live with my Mum, she’s my full time carer. She baths me because I can’t do it on my own. I have a brother who is funny and loveable and my sister, who loves art and is very talented. My other sister lives away from home, but comes to see us a lot and I love it when she visits. We have a beautiful 20 week old cockapoo puppy called Luna. She is very fluffy and beautiful, she loves a walk and she loves the garden.

Independence Matters has helped me to use a bus, make new friends, get two jobs in care homes so I am helping people, focus on being positive, go into some night clubs, use money and do cooking. It’s also helped me face my fears, for example using escalators, and finally walk calmly when there is loud traffic. So there is my whole story. I hope you have enjoyed reading it and knowing what it is like to have Williams Syndrome.
A Festival of Music

Sprowston Community Hub’s Drama Group held a summer music extravaganza in July with some amazing costumes and brilliant performances. We asked Drama Group leader Sandra Phillips to take us behind the scenes and tell us how the show gets put together.

“The aim is for customers to gain confidence, build social skills and most importantly, have fun. The group puts on two productions each year and everyone is involved in deciding what the performances will be. This year, everyone wanted to sing and they each picked their favourite song. These were a mixture from the last 50 years so we called it ‘A Festival of Music’.

“A main performance will take anything from 12 to 16 weeks to put together. Once the content has been decided the script needs to be written along with stage directions and the music sourced. It's hard work but well worth it!! I have a great staff team in the Drama Group. Sandra Bailey, Dawn Webbon, Dawn Yull and many more in the Hub have a great role to play.”
“Each week everyone practiced their part, some changed their song halfway through, others decided they didn’t want to sing by themselves but with their friends. Rehearsals are organised based on each individual’s needs. We have a script for directional purposes but it’s not set in stone - customers sometimes change the words and often theirs are better!

“I find it so rewarding working in the Drama Group. It often brings a tear to my eye when someone has overcome a fear and when they get on stage to do their part I know they’ll put everything they have into it. To me, there’s no bad way to perform, customers often amaze me with their confidence and lack of inhibitions. I wish I had their confidence!”

Sprowston Drama Group’s next performance will be their Christmas panto ‘When Santa Ate Too Many Biscuits!’

Brendan
‘Great Balls of Fire’

Marion
‘Reach For The Stars’

Michael
‘Wake Me Up Before You Go-Go’

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New care provider visits Dereham Hub

Darren Frost and Hannah Woodward from Connect2Care (C2C) visited Dereham Community Hub in September and met THE TAPS who were busy rehearsing for ‘Elvis’.

C2C is the UK’s leading training and apprenticeship provider for the Health and Social Care sector and will be offering apprenticeships across Independence Matters. We’ll also be using their expertise to help us get the most out the Apprenticeship Levy funding. They offer a range of Health and Social Care Apprenticeships to suit all levels of staff from care workers to managers, administrative and housekeeping staff.

Both Sector Manager Darren and Training Assessor Hannah are keen to get out and about around our services and are looking forward to meeting both staff and customers over the coming months.

Christmas is coming!

We’re sure you need no reminding that the festive season is on its way, but our spies have been out and can confirm preparations are already underway.

Due to the amazing interest shown in the Hub-tastic rustic reindeer last year, Santa’s elves are busy in the workshop making sure there will be enough to meet demand this Christmas. They look great decorated with fairy lights and all money raised goes go back into supporting the people that matter – our customers.

If you’re interested in purchasing one, please contact Chief Elf Martyn on 01603 410377.

Get in touch

If you’ve got a story or event that you’d like us to cover, or would like to give us some feedback on News Matters, then please get in touch. Call 07767 212926 or email: isabel.timms@independencematters.org.uk

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