

Independence Matters Group

Impact Report

2026



Health and Wellbeing



Independence and Confidence



Skills and Employment

Social Value



Connected and Inclusive



Environment and Conservation

Caring...

is at the heart of everything we do.

We're proud to support adults with learning disabilities and older people to live with dignity, joy, and independence. Care isn't just a service—it's about building real relationships, showing kindness, and truly valuing people.



We believe in the power of local, employing people from our own communities, creating meaningful jobs, nurturing local talent, and ensuring our care reflects the values of those we support.



We're not just committed to caring for people, but for the environment too, by making thoughtful, sustainable choices every day. Caring locally, growing together—that's what drives us.

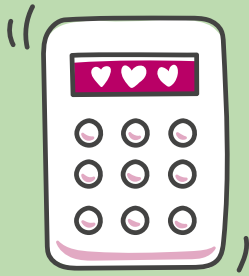


We know that delivering real social value is an ongoing journey. That's why we're always listening, learning, and looking for ways to do better.

We're not just working in the community—we're part of it. Local, compassionate, and committed to continuous improvement.



Our 2025-26 impact in numbers



737,059

Total number of care hours delivered



18,646

Total number of training hours



732

Number of local staff employed



£1,185

Total ££'s raised for charities



5,077

Customer volunteering hours



1,246

Total number of customers supported

Customer Bob

Improving Bob's Quality of Life Through a Capable Environment



“When behaviours of concern increase, it is difficult for the customer and those around them. The team worked hard to see beyond the behaviour and demonstrated true compassion in wanting to improve things for Bob. The team recognised the importance of creating a capable environment to make appropriate changes and ensure the right support was in place. A major achievement was at Christmas when he joined me in the kitchen to cook lunch for the Hub. He thrived that day – it was so emotional.”

Ali Pawley, Service Manager

Independence and Confidence



Drama groups create opportunities for customers to challenge themselves in new ways. Each performance is a result of **hard work, dedication, and teamwork**, that helps build resilience and confidence. The finished performance boosts self-esteem and is a joy to see.



Regular pamper sessions give our **older customers a real confidence boost**. Getting hair and nails done in our in-house salon helps individuals to feel valued and can reduce anxiety for those with dementia. — *“The ladies love choosing their nail colour and reminiscing about the hairstyles on trend in their youth.”*

Visits to our Hubs by Norfolk Police build trust in authority and aid discussions around hate crime. They are also **great for engagement as customers** can sit in patrol cars and try on handcuffs! — *“I was scared when I first saw the police, but after they spoke to us, they were kind, nice people.”*



Karen is getting great value from her reminder clock, which gives her clear prompts to take her prescribed medication. With this support, she's less likely to miss doses, which can cause a real dip in her mental wellbeing. It's a **hugely helpful tool** in supporting her independence.

Health and Wellbeing



Pop in wellbeing sessions, facilitated by Home Support Matters (HSM)'s trained **Mental Health First Aiders**[®], provide a safe, confidential space for people to talk, decompress, and access guidance. This **proactive approach** supports individual wellbeing and fosters a workplace culture where people feel **listened to, valued, and supported**.



Gratitude and Kindness Boards

encourage colleagues to recognise and celebrate each other's positive

actions. Creating a **space for kindness** to be shared helps build a workplace where people **feel valued, motivated, and proud** of the difference they make every day.

We launched a **new digital service** giving Independence Matters (IM) employees and their dependents quick access to **professional health advice**. Online GP offers next day appointments with qualified clinicians, **7 days a week**, and supports wellbeing by enabling health concerns to be addressed promptly.



Wellbeing Wednesdays at our Hubs strengthen social connections, boost physical, mental and emotional health, and provide a safe place for customers to discuss important wellbeing topics such as **health checks, racism and anti-bullying**. — *"We learn about how to check for lumps and go to the doctor if you have any, you do not want to get cancer."*



Classes delivered by **Forever Fitness** and hosted at **Holt Hub** are encouraging customers to take up exercise. Aimed at older adults, the sessions offer **gentle chair-based exercises**, making them perfect for customers to join in. Afterwards everyone enjoys **tea, biscuits and a natter** – supporting mental wellbeing and strengthening community ties.



Skills and Employment



Customer Gary struggled to cope **following the loss of his mum** but is now thriving after taking on a volunteering role at a local wildlife-gardening centre. He loves being outdoors, so joining the team at **Natural Surroundings is a perfect match for him**, spending time in the community in this beautiful setting has benefited his mental wellbeing.

Working Together Groups and Co-ordinator, Maria, contributed their **Easy Read expertise** and lived experience to co-produce a set of **4 'best practice' videos** for a Norfolk County Council (NCC) project. These will be included in a suite of e-learning modules for use across NCC and IM.



Norfolk Industries encourages and supports **work placements** to be the best they can be. When

a young man with a significant speech impairment joined, **we worked as a team to improve his confidence**. Gradually as his communication improved, he progressed to join the busy team working on the factory floor. — *“Thank you to the team for being so kind and supportive.”*

We supported **two Learning Disability (LD) nurse students** with placements at our services, exposing them to a broad range of experience and learning, working with a **multidisciplinary team (MDT)**, health and social care professionals, and attending appointments with customers. — *“I had a lot of opportunities to interact with other professionals.”* Svetlana



Customer JB had very **little confidence** but has transformed into someone with determination and commitment. After supporting him to enrol at City College and complete a **MINT course**, he has now successfully transitioned his learning into employment and is proudly **working at the Norfolk and Norwich Hospital**.

Connected and Inclusive



HSM's annual Macmillan Coffee Morning welcomed over **40 individuals and raised £387** for the charity. Beyond the fundraising, the event brings people together and connects us with the local community in a positive and meaningful way.



The appeal of the Antiques Roadshow came to Holt when we hosted a **WeBuyVintage** event. Locals brought along jewellery and other collectibles

for valuation with a view to selling. Disappointingly, no unexpected treasure came to light, but **everyone was treated to tea and cake at the Hub** and had an enjoyable time.

HSM invested in **warm winter kits** for emergency distribution to vulnerable customers. Proactively taking steps to **protect the wellbeing** of those **most at risk** supports our promise to act with care, compassion, and community focus.



HSM **distributed a leaflet** to customers, designed to **help them avoid scams** and stay safe online. It provided clear, practical advice, to help them **safeguard their personal information** and feel more confident in the digital world.

Dereham Hub customers raised money from **sponsored walks** and other events which they used to **fill 18 shoe boxes** that



were donated to Norwich-based homeless charity **St Martins Housing Trust**. —
“The shoebox donations were really well received. They were distributed from our Somewhere Safe to Stay Hub and definitely made a difference over the Christmas period.”
St Martins Housing Trust

Environment and Conservation



A visit by **Norfolk Master Composters** explained the environmental benefits of working with nature and how composting can reduce the amount of waste we put into landfill. Everyone went away inspired to compost more waste, both at our services and at home.

Norfolk Recycles encouraged us to reduce our environmental footprint by taking better care of our waste. We learned what should go into household waste bins, what was recyclable at the kerbside, and what needed taking to the recycling centre.

Hands-on learning helps us build knowledge and respect for the natural world, and we are grateful to the **National Trust at Blakeney** for sharing their expertise and continuing to



provide us with opportunities to get closer to nature. — *“Thank you all so much for your support with our work for ground-nesting seabirds last year. We can’t wait to work together on more conservation projects in 2026!”*
National Trust - Norfolk Coast

Caring is in our DNA and extends to the **wildlife** in our **Hub gardens**.

When a **baby hedgehog**

was spotted outside in daytime, colleagues provided emergency care before contacting a local rescue sanctuary. And a **distressed blue tit**, found frozen in ice by **driver Debbie**, was resuscitated and gave her the satisfaction of watching it fly away unharmed.



Our services are **disposing** of their **kitchen waste** in a more **environmentally friendly way** thanks to the rollout of food waste bins. The collected waste goes for anaerobic digestion which turns it into biogas for electricity generation, and bio-fertiliser for use in agriculture.



Case study

Belonging, Purpose and Opportunity – Lewis’s café volunteering story



Everyday life can present significant challenges for Lewis. As a person with autism and ADHD, he can become easily overstimulated and finds busy, noisy environments difficult to manage.

At our Community Hub, he experienced frequent periods of distress and needed a high level of support to help him feel safe and settled.

When we received an invitation for a customer to be part of a volunteering team at a local Community Café, Lewis was not an obvious candidate. Located in the town centre, it required him to spend time in both a public-facing space and a bustling kitchen environment – each a significant challenge for him.

“It’s been wonderful for his self-esteem”

Lewis’s Mum

Initially he easily became overwhelmed needing space to feel calm and safe. Over time he has developed confidence which has supported his resilience. Starting with less demanding jobs, such as putting

out cruet sets and crockery, Lewis has now progressed to working as part of the busy kitchen team and is able to take on more difficult and demanding tasks, including chopping vegetables and getting involved in meal preparation.

The other volunteers are all hugely supportive of Lewis and say he ‘brings a good vibe’ to the kitchen. Although he was quite reserved initially, he has ‘really come out of his shell’ and now feels like ‘an integrated member of the team’.

For Lewis, volunteering at the café has significantly benefitted his social and communication skills. He now uses signing to proactively communicate with fellow customers at the Hub and is demonstrably more empathetic to others. It has also given him a sense of purpose and achievement, and he is visibly proud of the contribution he makes.

Much of Lewis’s success can be attributed to café organiser and founder, Taila Taylor, who is herself mum to a child with autism. Her sympathetic and supportive approach have enabled Lewis to develop into a valued member of the café team. They also demonstrate how individuals with disabilities can succeed when provided with the right environment and opportunity.





Case study

Alla's story



When war broke out in Ukraine, Alla's life changed forever. As the conflict escalated, she was forced to flee the country with her young child, leaving behind her successful career as a doctor.

Arriving in the UK, Alla was determined to continue her medical career, but her Ukrainian qualifications were not directly transferrable. Undeterred, she began looking for work that would allow her to use her skills while she undertook the extensive studying and retraining needed to practice as a UK doctor.

On a visit to Lowestoft Job Centre, Alla met Home Support Matters Recruitment Officer Jess Button, who immediately recognised her compassion, professionalism, and strong healthcare background. At interview it became clear Alla would be an excellent fit for a role in the care sector and we were delighted to invite her to join us as a care worker.

Over the two years that Alla worked with Home Support Matters, she became a deeply respected and much-loved member of our team.

“Alla's time with us was a mutual learning experience. She brought a wealth of medical knowledge and a thoughtful, analytical approach shaped by her training in Ukraine. At the same time, she embraced our person centred, community focused approach, developing new skills and deepening her understanding of UK care standards.”

The people she supported praised her for her warmth, calm presence, and the sense of safety she brought into their homes. Many formed strong and lasting relationships with her, appreciating her ability to listen, comfort, and genuinely connect.

From the beginning, we knew Alla's long-term ambition was to practise medicine in the UK, and we were committed to supporting her journey. We offered flexible hours to support her studying and regularly checked in on her progress, celebrating each milestone and adjusting her rota as needed. We also supported her in navigating the complexities of UK medical registration, encouraging her at every step.

Alla has now moved on to realise her dream of practising as a doctor in the UK. While working with us, she balanced an extraordinary amount, caring for others, raising her child, and completing demanding medical studies. Her dedication, compassion, and resilience shone through in everything she did, and we are incredibly proud to have supported her during this important chapter of her life.



Case study

Mr K's story



Having struggled with alcohol dependency for most of his adult life, Mr K's physical and emotional health had reached the point where he required hospitalisation.

On discharge from hospital, but with a long road to recovery still ahead, Home Support Matters stepped in with a care package to support his daily needs. Whilst he was reluctant to accept this, he recognised it was necessary for him to return home safely.

Human connection is often the catalyst for change and, recognising him as an individual, rather than a set of problems or tasks, his support workers took the time to understand his emotional needs and his underlying motivations. Gradually they built up a trusted relationship, and their compassionate presence and belief in Mr K's ability to recover, became a source of encouragement and motivation for him.

As weeks passed, Mr K gradually reduced his alcohol intake until he stopped drinking entirely. His physical health improved dramatically. He regained mobility, eventually walking unaided and going to the shops independently.

In response to his progress, we reduced his support from two workers to one and continued to adapt his support to match his changing needs. This allowed Mr K to take increasing

“It was incredibly rewarding to support Mr K's journey. Helping him regain control of his life reminded me why I do this work. Even when it's challenging, the positive impact we make is truly the best part of the job.”

Chris Shelley, Care and Support Worker

ownership of his recovery, reinforcing his sense of autonomy.

After six months of sobriety, a milestone that once felt unachievable, Mr K felt strong enough to give back to others. He began volunteering twice a week at a local homeless shelter and soup kitchen.

When asked about his newfound independence, Mr K shared that although he would not miss needing physical support with daily tasks, he would miss the conversations with his support workers. These relationships had become an important part of his journey. Now, he hopes to offer the same encouragement and support to others that the Home Support Matters team offered him.

Mr K's journey illustrates that transformative outcomes arise not simply from delivering services, but from learning alongside people, responding to their unique circumstances, and empowering them through compassionate relationships.



Case study

Hayley's story



Hayley began receiving support from our PAS team in January 2024. Until then, her mum had been providing all of Hayley's care, but due to changing personal circumstances, she hoped to encourage her to take steps toward greater independence.

Receiving support from the team encouraged Hayley to open up about a longstanding aspiration: she had always wanted to become a Support Worker herself. To help her explore this goal, they arranged for Hayley to volunteer at our Sprowston Community Hub – an opportunity she has embraced with enthusiasm.

The Sprowston team is thoroughly enjoying supporting her through the process. They have noted her growing focus, excitement to learn, and commitment to contribute meaningfully to the Hub's activities.

During her very first volunteering shift, Hayley demonstrated remarkable independence and confidence. She attended on her own, introduced herself warmly to staff and customers, and approached her duties with positivity and maturity. Hayley even handled a challenging customer interaction with calm politeness, respectfully asking them to wait their turn - showing assertiveness, reassurance, and emotional control.

The Team Manager at Sprowston shared that Hayley 'did amazingly well' highlighting her readiness for further skill-building and future opportunities.

“I like speaking to the people there, I feel comfortable and feel like I get on with everyone OK”.

Hayley

Throughout her sessions, Hayley has taken on a range of practical tasks, including serving drinks and helping with kitchen closing duties. She quickly picks up new tasks, follows instructions carefully, and takes responsibility with pride - all signs of developing strong workplace skills.

Her interactions with customers and staff have further strengthened her sense of belonging within the community. Hayley's polite, friendly approach and willingness to introduce herself shows her growing confidence in social situations and her commitment to building inclusive relationships.

Beyond practical skills, the volunteering experience has had a meaningful impact on Hayley's emotional wellbeing. Receiving positive feedback has boosted her self-esteem and sense of purpose. The structured activities and supportive environment also help provide stability and a positive routine.

Furthermore, it has given her valuable insight into the role of a Support Worker, and she continues to express interest in pursuing a career in this sector. Her confidence has flourished, and her experience at the Hub has been a significant step toward her future aspirations.

**We couldn't have done it
without your support**

Thank you...

NCC

Thank you...

Colleagues

Thank you...

**Partner
Organisations**

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**Independence
Matters**



**Home Support
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We're here because we care