

News Matters

Spring 2026

Independence
Matters

'the life you choose...'



INSIDE:
Launching our
new life skills rooms!

Welcome to News Matters



Welcome to our spring edition of News Matters.

I have to say, spring is one of my favourite times of year – everything feels a little brighter and there's a real sense of freshness and renewal in the air. I especially love it when the daffodils start to appear; for me, they're a sure sign that longer days and new beginnings are just around the corner. As Wordsworth so beautifully wrote, "And then my heart with pleasure fills, and dances with the daffodils." It really captures that lift in mood that comes with the season.

You can really see that same sense of energy and positivity reflected in everything that's been happening across our services. Reading through this edition, it really comes through.

Pancake Day is a firm favourite in our household but if I'm honest, was a bit chaotic this year! I definitely wasn't brave enough to attempt the impressive flipping skills I've seen from some of our services in this edition... I think I'll leave that to the experts for now!

On a more serious note, what really stood out to me in this edition is the incredible work from all of you. Behind every activity, every new initiative, and every success story are colleagues who care deeply and go the extra mile every single day. Whether it's supporting customers to develop life skills, creating fun and meaningful experiences, or simply being there with kindness and patience – it all makes a difference.

I'm especially pleased to see the continued focus on developing our environments and services, and I know none of this would be possible without your commitment and willingness to embrace new ideas.

I'm so proud of the teams we have and the culture you create. It doesn't go unnoticed, and it's what makes Independence Matters such a special place to be.

Thank you for everything you do – I hope you enjoy reading this edition and seeing just a snapshot of the impact you're having.

Zaliha

Zaliha Williamson, Managing Director



Dereham Hub gets a glow up!

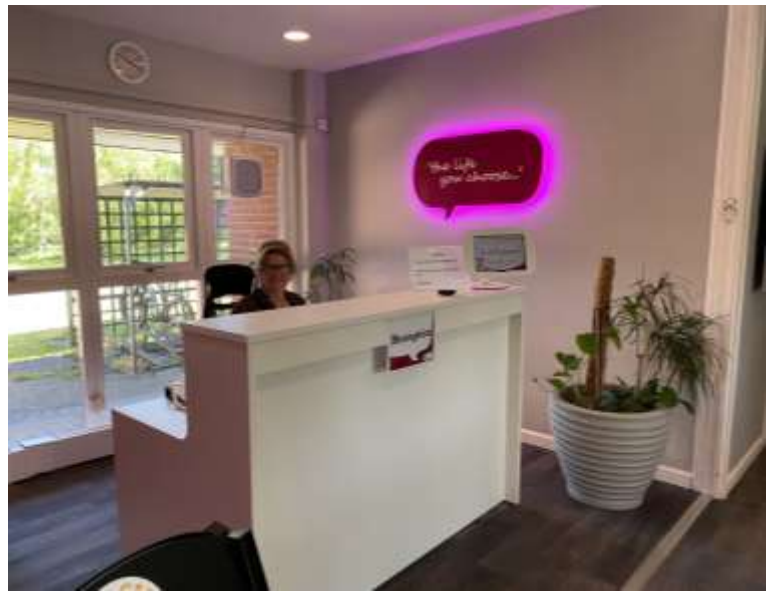
On 30th April we unveiled a new look to Dereham Community Hub, marking the culmination of many weeks of hard work and dedication.

The results speak for themselves - the Hub has been transformed with a refreshed interior, vibrant new branding for Daisy's Café, and the launch of an amazing new life skills apartment.

Designed as a modern, welcoming learning environment, the apartment supports customers to develop essential life skills such as bed making, ironing, hot drink preparation, and food preparation.

It also features a brand new lounge seating area, creating a comfortable and inviting space to relax and engage in learning activities.

The improvements don't stop inside. Outside, the transformation continues with new planters and a beautifully reworked seating and patio area – the perfect spot to enjoy the lovely weather we've been having 🌻 🌻



Independence
Matters

'the life you choose...'



The new life skills apartment was officially opened by **Norwich City footballer Emiliano Marcondes**. Customers were thrilled to meet Emiliano and enjoyed trying the new furniture for size!

This is just the beginning of a major programme of investment that will be rolled out across our services, helping us to deliver improved facilities and create even better environments for both our customers and our colleagues.



What a great day it was showcasing and celebrating all the recent hard work at the Dereham Hub. The feedback on the life skills room from customers, families, carers and professionals was overwhelmingly positive. We are excited to see the positive impact this will have with our customers and how technology can assist with everyday skills and outcomes customers want to achieve.

"This is just the start of an exciting journey at the Hub as we evolve and I want to say a special thank you to the staff and all those involved for embracing these changes and making this happen.

Having Emiliano Marcondes come up celebrate with us was a really special moment for us all and we are very grateful for him joining us on the day".

Charlie Collier, Service Manager



Independence
Matters

'the life you choose...'



Independence
Matters

'the life you choose...'



Independence
Matters

'the life you choose...'



Independence
Matters

'the life you choose...'

Life skills learning at Great Yarmouth

A new, fully equipped, life skills room has opened at our **Great Yarmouth Community Hub** earlier this year and is playing a key role in supporting customers to live more independent lives.

Our photos show the different learning activities on offer and the benefits of each such as improved motor coordination and building of transferable skills.

Making the bed

Promotes independence, routine, and personal responsibility, and helps maintain a clean personal space.



Doing the laundry

Helps individuals take responsibility for hygiene and personal care. Requires the ability to sort clothes and complete follow-up tasks such as folding and putting clothes away.



Handling cooking equipment

Our kitchen provides a safe environment to learn about operating appliances including a hob, oven, microwave, kettle, air fryer, and essential utensils like knives and chopping boards.

We'd like to thank our brilliant photographer Steve Wright 📷 for perfectly capturing the action. [Click here to view a video message](#) and hear from Steve why he loves to work with us at Independence Matters.



Food preparation

Cooking is a hugely important life skill that supports healthy living and includes learning around food hygiene, meal planning, and safe use of kitchen equipment.



Washing up

Not everyone's favourite task, but it supports hygiene and requires the ability to follow a sequence of steps to clean, rinse, and dry dishes, as well as awareness of hazards such as hot water and sharp objects.

Food waste

Learning about food waste helps individuals stay safe by making informed decisions about food storage and expiry dates. It also helps reduce unnecessary waste and supports safe daily living.



Making a hot drink

We all love a cuppa, so this is a life skill we practice a lot! It involves safely operating a kettle and managing hot liquids. Developing this skill improves confidence, motor coordination, and awareness of kitchen safety.

Healthy eating

Learning to make balanced food choices, plan meals, and manage portion size encourages healthy eating and supports wellbeing by empowering individuals to make informed decisions about personal health.



Recycling

Our life skills learning includes understanding how to dispose of waste correctly, what can be recycled and following local collection routines. This promotes environmental responsibility and daily-living organisation.



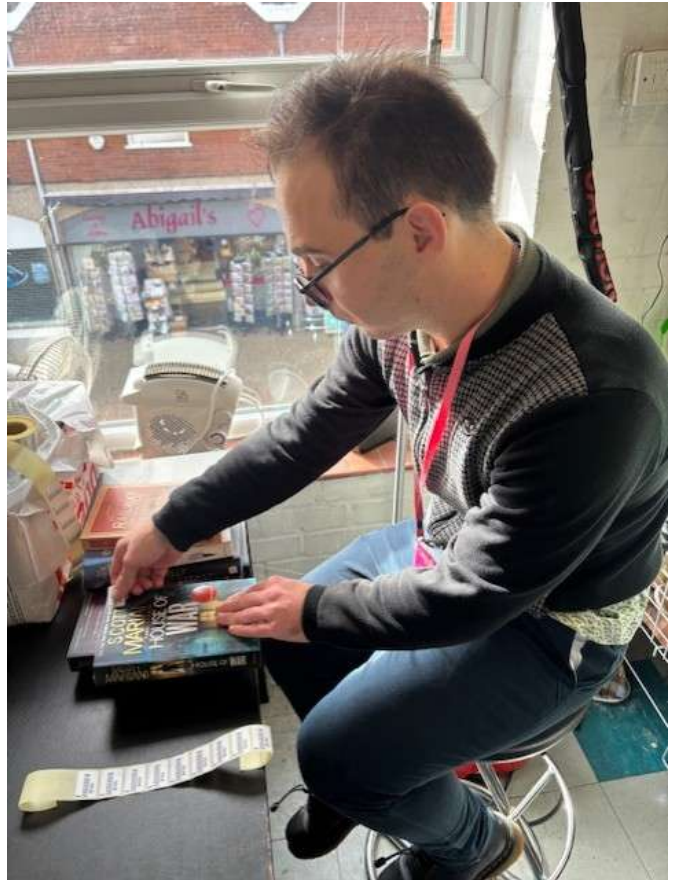
Like to know more? Contact us at:

Great Yarmouth Community Hub, Suffolk Road, Gorleston, NR31 0LJ

T: 01493 650504 E: great-yarmouth-community-hub@independencematters.org.uk

Independence
Matters

'the life you choose...'



Tom volunteers

Tom volunteers at Priscilla Bacon Charity shop in Dereham and attends with his 1:1 support Gavin.

He very much enjoys it and helps out with a variety of jobs including sorting deliveries, pricing up donations, serving customers, and doing the banking. The staff there very much look forward to his cheery chatter and seeing his smiley face each week. Well done Tom!



Independence
Matters

'the life you choose...'

A Flipping Great Pancake Day

It wouldn't be February without pancakes, and our services found some different and unique ways to celebrate Shrove Tuesday.

Attleborough Community Hub dodged the kitchen 🤖 and gave everyone the opportunity to toss their pancake without making a mess!



Independence
Matters

'the life you choose...'



Independence
Matters

'the life you choose...'



Meanwhile at **Holt Community Hub** customers were served these fabulous pancakes made in the kitchen by colleagues.



Independence
Matters

'the life you choose...'

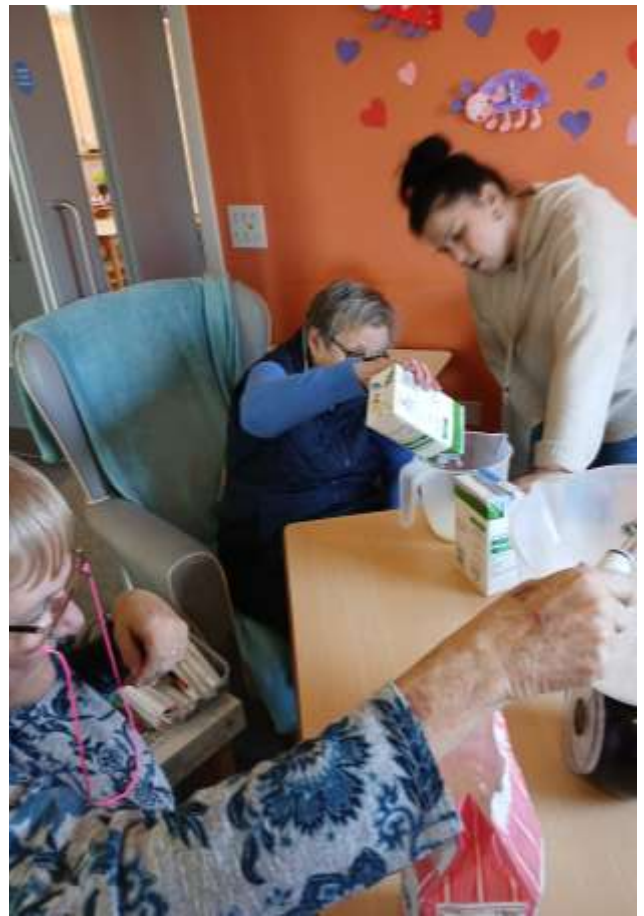


Independence
Matters

'the life you choose...'

Customers at **Rosewood Community Hub** prepared their own pancake batter which colleagues cooked for them and served up with a selection of toppings.

They also prepared a game that simulated tossing the pancake and enabled customers to have a go for themselves. They laughed so much it was so lovely to hear!



Rosewood customers also made cards for Valentine's Day 💜 One gentleman customer ended up with six or seven cards which had been made for him by the ladies.

They had each decorated the cards and put in their own verses. They also placed glitter and hearts in the cards so when he opened them - he got covered in glitter 🤩!



Valentine's
Day
with love
from Holt
Hub X



Independence
Matters

'the life you choose...'

Spring visit to Gressenhall Museum

Dereham Community Hub's Studio and TAPS groups got together for a trip out to Gressenhall Museum's open day on Friday 13th March.

It was a very chilly day, especially when we rode on the tractor, but despite this everyone still had a great time – and got to see the new baby lambs. Spring is definitely here!



Independence
Matters

'the life you choose...'



Independence
Matters

'the life you choose...'

Visit to Holt Fire Station

Customers at **Holt Community Hub** visited their local Fire Station in March.

They got to take a close look at the fire engine and meet firefighters, Tony and Luke.

Tony has been a firefighter for 49 years and Luke has been a firefighter for 9 years.

The customers took the opportunity to ask them some questions.

Q How many fires were there in the last year?

A Their year goes from March to April, in this time over 200.

Q How old do you have to be to be a firefighter?

A You must be over 18 but there is no upper age limit.

Q What happens if there is gas and electricity at the fire?

A The firefighters have to turn it off first.

Q When do you practice?

A On a Thursday evening.

Q What kind of incidents do you attend?

A Car accidents, house fires, field fires.





Independence
Matters

'the life you choose...'

The TAPS Wildlife blog

Hello everyone and welcome to our spring blog. We start by introducing our newest member Jo-Ann. You might recognise her from the drama group as she is one of the original members from 1998, but now she is with us on Wednesdays she wanted to become part of the team.

As we write this the sun is shining, the birds are singing, and this morning on our nature walk we saw five peacock butterflies!



The warmer weather means we will sadly be saying goodbye to our winter migrants. The whopper and Bewick swans, and lots of different geese, will be flying our skies to cooler climates, along with the fieldfares and redwings.

But as we say goodbye to them, we welcome our spring migrants, the swallows, swifts, and of course the cuckoo, as well as various warblers, who will be making their long journey back from Asia and Africa. It's always lovely to see the first swallows and hear the first cuckoo, so keep your eyes and ears peeled. You can track the cuckoos online and view their long journey to us – it's amazing how far they fly.

This year celebrates 100 years of Norfolk Wildlife Trust. The oldest in the UK it was founded on 6th March 1926 as Norfolk Naturalists Trust by Dr Sydney Long who bought 435 acres of marsh at Cley to be preserved forever as a bird breeding sanctuary.

Independence
Matters

'the life you choose...'

The charity now manages over 60 nature reserves, including our TAPS favourite Cley & Salthouse marshes, as well as Hickling Broad, and Foxley Wood to name a few. In 2024 the Trust also opened Sweet Briar Marshes near Norwich as a new reserve, which is wonderful. Claire is a longstanding member of NWT, who do an amazing job in providing a safe haven for wildlife and are very dear to our hearts. If you fancy joining, you can do so easily online and feel part of Norfolk's leading force in protecting wildlife.

2026 also celebrates the 100th birthday of our national treasure Sir David Attenborough, on 8th May. He's a huge hero of ours and we'd like to wish him a very happy birthday and thank him for all his hard work over the years.

We will end this blog with Jo-Ann's favourite things and some photos Claire has taken of some birds that have visited for the winter, like the brambling. Until next time enjoy the joys spring can bring, and get out and enjoy nature, it's amazing what you'll find and how good it can make you feel.

Keep watching wildlife and help where you can. Best wishes Justin, Tim, Mark, Lucie, Stephen, Jo-Ann and Claire

Jo-Ann's favourite things

Bird; Bluetit

Wildlife creature; Hare

Time of year; Summer

Plant; Rose

Insect; Butterflies



Independence
Matters

'the life you choose...'

Hollywood comes to Attleborough!

All the famous names were out in force for the premiere of 'Stars in our Guys' performed by Attleborough Hub's drama group at the world famous 'Deep End'.

Parents, carers, and colleagues lined up on the red (well, green actually) carpet to take their seats, all eager to witness the most entertaining and emotional performance ever to be held at the Hub.

The star-laden cast owned the stage with their performances and have gained confidence gained and strengthened relationships by being part of such an amazing group. Credit goes to colleague Mel Jackson who led the group, with valuable input from other members of the support team.



Above: John and Freddy as the 'Men in Black', fighting an Alien (colleague Kerry) to the theme tune from the film.



Right: Stephen J as 'Marty McFly' performing the song 'Johnny B Goode' from the film 'Back to the Future'



Above: Sam as 'Donkey' (with Elle as Dragon) performing 'I'm a Believer' from the film 'Shrek'

Below: Lewis and Nathan as 'Batman & Robin'





Above: Andrew performing 'Singing In The Rain' from the film of the same name.



Above: Conor as 'Danny Zuko' performing 'Greased Lightnin'" from the film 'Grease'



Above: Jenna as 'Mary Poppins', (with Wendy as a pigeon), performing 'Feed the Birds' from the film 'Mary Poppins'.



Above: Stephen M, Morgan and Gus fighting off Marshmallow Man (Kerry) performing to the song 'Ghostbusters' from the film of the same name.



Above: Lynsey as 'Dorothy' singing and signing 'Somewhere Over the Rainbow' from the film 'The Wizard of Oz'.



Above: Shelly singing 'Dancing Queen' from the film 'Mamma Mia'.



Above: Marc performing 'Yellow Submarine' with Ruby as a crab.



Above: Hub 'Drama Queen' Mel at the interval with a trolley selling the wonderful items made by the customers at the Hub.



Above: Suzanne singing 'My Heart Will Go On' from the film 'Titanic'.



Above: Stephen E was off on a 'Summer Holiday' performing the song from the film of the same name.



Above: Stephen B as 'Danny Zuko' with his 'Pink Lady' (Maddie) performing 'You're the One that I Want' from the film 'Grease'.



Above: Jackie as the terrifying shark from the film 'Jaws'.

Independence
Matters

'the life you choose...'



Above: Shirley as 'Baloo the bear' singing 'I Wanna Be Like You' with 'King Louie (Jane)' from the film 'The Jungle Book'.



Above: Sarah and Andrew as Mimsie and Caractacus Pott performing 'Chitty-Chitty-Bang-Bang' from the film of the same name.

Working together to strengthen Positive Behaviour Support

Independence Matters (IM) has been working closely with Supporting Positively on two projects to improve how **Positive Behaviour Support (PBS)** is used across our services.

PBS is all about understanding people better and creating the right environments to help them live happy, meaningful lives.

We were one of only two organisations chosen to take part in the original pilot project, which focused on using the **Capable Environments Framework**.

In simple terms, this helps services make changes at every level – from everyday routines to leadership – so people are supported in the best possible way.

The project has been a real success. It has already led to positive changes across IM, helping PBS become more consistent and more deeply embedded in the way we work.

Because this was the first project of its kind, it was written up as a research paper and published in a respected academic journal called the **Tizard Learning Disability Review**, which is linked to the University of Kent. This means the work being done at IM is helping to inform and improve practice beyond our own organisation.

The research was also shared at the **PBSUK Annual Conference**, where it was presented to an audience of more than 100 people. The presentation highlighted the strong commitment shown by IM and the positive outcomes that came from working together.

We are incredibly proud to be part of work that is already making a difference on a wider scale. We will continue building on this progress as we strengthen Positive Behaviour Support across all our services.

Sam Wiseman
PBS Lead



Celebrating Easter!



Some fabulous Easter bonnet and decoration making at **Norwich Dementia Community Hub.**



Independence
Matters

'the life you choose...'

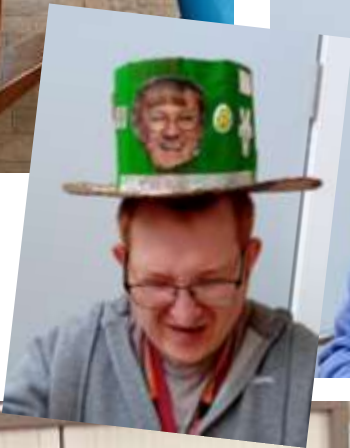


More Easter activity at **Norwich Dementia Community Hub** this time in the kitchen making yummy Easter Nests.



Independence
Matters

'the life you choose...'



Some less conventional but equally fabulous Easter bonnets crafted at **Holt Community Hub** !



Independence
Matters

'the life you choose...'

Learning about AI at our Working Together Groups

Co-ordinator Maria has been supporting customers in our Working Together Groups (WTG) to understand more about Artificial Intelligence (AI) - what it is and what it can do. And what better way to learn than through practical experience! The WTGs had fun and laughter creating their very own masterpieces in the form of random creative images.

The groups also experimented with music and used an AI app to make Country and Western songs about their friends and even a pop song about a service manager (we won't say who!).

As part of this work, a new easy read 'All about AI' document has been produced to help make knowledge of AI more widely accessible to our customers.



The WTGs reviewed the document and felt that it gave them some really helpful information and improved their understanding of AI.

Meanwhile, a customer at our Great Yarmouth Community Hub has been independently exploring the possibilities of AI and created these fabulous Easter images, which they asked us to share with you 🐣🐰



Independence
Matters

'the life you choose...'

Andy lends a hand packing

Norfolk Industries has been busy with a packing contract for pet product brand, Sir Woofchester's.

The doggie dinners are supplied to the hospitality industry for use in dog-friendly accommodation across the UK.

Our packing team was assisted by IM's H&S Officer Andrew Griffin, and is great example of cross service working, as it really helped us out at a busy time.

Volunteers were involved in the work as well as Bank Workers and together we made up 1200 dinners over the course of two days.



“It was a truly wonderful to have hands-on experience at Norfolk Industries.

It was a privilege to see firsthand the amazing opportunities Norfolk Industries provides for individuals to gain valuable, life-changing work experience and learn essential life skills, both in paid and voluntary roles.

As an animal lover, preparing meals for our furry friends was an absolute treat. I immediately felt like part of the team – it's such a caring, supportive environment, one that genuinely brings a smile to your face.

I sincerely thank Norfolk Industries and everyone who makes it such a special place for the warm welcome I received. I am incredibly proud to be associated with such a wonderful part of Independence Matters and to have had this memorable experience.”

Andy

Norfolk Industries



NORFOLK INDUSTRIES
FOR DISABLED PEOPLE
Part of Independence Matters

Happily packing for Happy Pet

Norfolk Industries is delighted to have a new contract packing customer, Happy Pet, who supplied us with dog toys that needed the barcodes re-labelling. We completed the task in two days - that's over 2000 toys re-labelled in total!

Following the dog toys, we are moving on to their Flippy Fish product. This will be a trickier piece of work as we need to open them up, take out the mechanism, unscrew a panel and insert batteries - then close them all up again and repackage them. It's going to take some nimble fingers, but we are looking forward to the challenge!



Fire destroys our car park

You may have seen in the news that a fire broke out at former nightclub, The Talk, on Oak Street in early April. We have used the carpark at The Talk for over 40 years thanks to a long-standing relationship with the owner. Unfortunately, the fire has left

asbestos on the car park surface and it has now been permanently closed. This leaves us without parking. We are working hard to find a cost-effective alternative, but in the meantime, parking is limited to the forecourt, with cars moving out when lorries come in.

Norfolk Industries



**NORFOLK INDUSTRIES
FOR DISABLED PEOPLE**
Part of *Independence Matters*

Winter activities at our services



Customers at our **Pine Lodge replacement care** service have kept busy with a range of activities over the colder months. These include cooking, going out to dinner, having a pamper night, and taking part in the RSPB big garden bird watch.



Independence
Matters

'the life you choose...'



Crossroads Community Hub customers supported the Big Garden Birdwatch and enjoyed pancakes, as well as a fun flipping game. They were also inspired by the Winter Olympics to take up the (less cold) winter sport of carpet curling.



Independence
Matters

'the life you choose...'

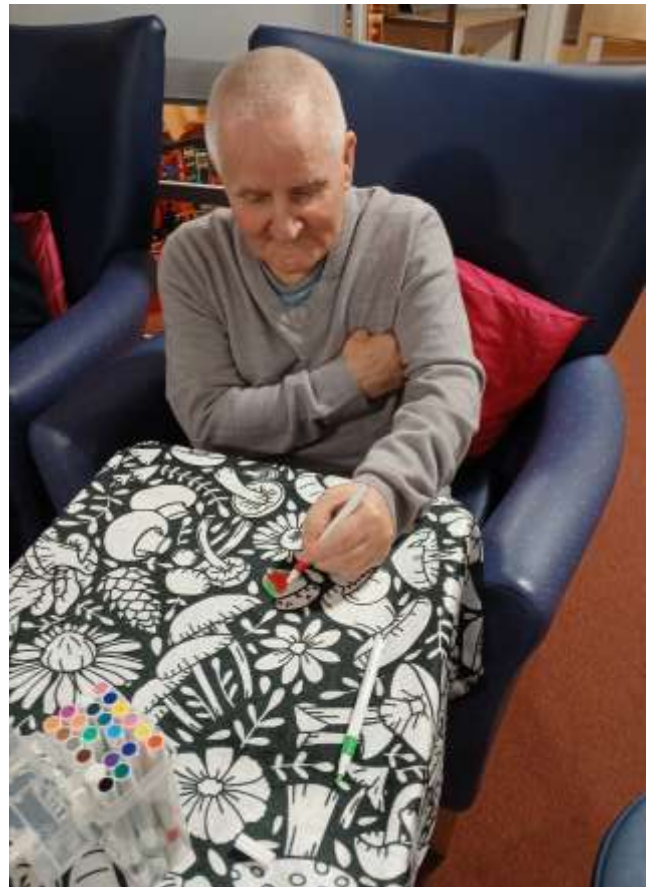


Customers at **Norwich Dementia Community Hub** have had a busy winter of activities. From cuddling cavies to filling up the bird feeder, making sand models, using the work board, colouring tablecloths – or to simply maintaining friendships like the duo above 🥰.



Independence
Matters

'the life you choose...'



Independence
Matters

'the life you choose...'

The People's Cause robot dog donation

We would like to thank former professional wrestler, Zak Bevis, for the generous donation to Norwich Dementia Community Hub of a sensory robot dog.

Robo dogs mimic real dog behaviours, such as barking and responding to touch, and can offer significant therapeutic and emotional benefits, particularly for older adults and individuals with dementia.

Zak is known locally for his charity work, providing free meals to those in need in Norwich through his business Zaket Potato. He also set up and runs The People's Cause CIC which raises funds to support local individuals and families.



Tulips for Tapping

Trudie made her annual trip to the Tulips for Tapping House near King's Lynn, and this time took her friend Rob with her.

Grown by her brother and his wife with open days to raise money for the local hospice, Trudie loves visiting the fields and looking out for her brother on TV.



SEN school events

Sprowston Community Hub colleagues Macala, Iain and Louise attended two local SEN school open events in March and April.

The Clare School and Harford Manor events were aimed at students who are leaving this year and looking for service providers who can offer ongoing support to them and their families.

Macala said "It was great to get to speak to so many people and show them the activities that we and our other services are able to offer."



Sprowston customer Liam has been learning to use the photocopier. BSO's Lynne and Sarah think he'd make a great new member of their team 😊



Independence
Matters

'the life you choose...'

Recognition for volunteer *James*

PAS North customer James, volunteers at the British Heart Foundation in Castle Quarters.

On 20th January he received a certificate of appreciation to mark his 8th year of voluntary service.

All of James's support team would like to congratulate him and say a massive **well done** on this amazing achievement 🎉😊

Here's to many more years!



Recruitment news

A big welcome to our new recruiter Carol Paulsen-Yull who joined us earlier this year. Carol has already been out and about attending successful events at the Jobs Fair at The Forum in Norwich and the Health and Social Care Careers Discovery event at the UEA in April.

If you're interested in working for us you can view our current vacancies on the [Careers page of our website](#).

Get in touch

We'd like to say a massive thank you to all the colleagues and customers who contributed to this edition of News Matters.

We love hearing from you, so if you've got a story to share, please get in touch.

Email isabel.timms@independencematters.org.uk



Independence
Matters

'the life you choose...'