

News Matters

Summer 2026

Independence
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We join
Alzheimer's
Society's Trek26

Welcome to News Matters

Hello everyone and welcome to our Summer 2026 edition of News Matters. What a summer it has been! From heatwaves and community events to fundraising activities and summer fetes, our teams have continued to go above and beyond to ensure the people we support can enjoy the season safely and comfortably.

As I look through this edition, I am reminded of the incredible difference our colleagues, customers and communities make every day. The stories featured here reflect the compassion, dedication and teamwork that sit at the heart of everything we do.

I would like to begin by congratulating our PAS teams, who became the first services across Independence Matters to go live with Project Catalyst and our new Access digital systems. Major change is never easy, but the positivity, commitment and professionalism shown throughout the rollout have been outstanding. My sincere thanks also go to the Implementation Team and wider Digital Team, whose hard work and expertise have been instrumental in making this first phase such a success. It has been fantastic to see everyone working together to improve the systems and tools that support both colleagues and customers.

This edition highlights some wonderful examples of people coming together to support others. From the team at Crossroads Dementia Hub taking on the Alzheimer's Society Trek26 challenge, to colleagues supporting charitable and community initiatives across our services, you continue to demonstrate what it means to make a difference beyond the workplace.

I was particularly touched by the story of the under-7s football team raising funds for Rosewood Hub. Seeing young people supporting our older people's services is truly inspiring and a great example of community spirit in action.

We are also celebrating individual achievements, including the appointment of April Knights as Service Manager at Faro Lodge Respite Service. April brings a wealth of experience to the role, and I know many colleagues will join me in wishing her every success.

One story that especially stood out was the kindness shown by a stranger during a visit to Wroxham, who generously paid for two of our customers to enjoy a steam train ride. This simple gesture brought smiles to faces and serves as a reminder of the generosity and goodwill that exists within our communities.

Whether embracing new technology, supporting important causes, celebrating achievements, creating opportunities for customers or simply brightening someone's day, every story in this newsletter reflects the very best of Independence Matters.

Thank you for your continued hard work, commitment and care. I hope you enjoy reading this edition and feel as proud as I do of everything we achieve together.



Zaliha Williamson,
Managing Director



Crossroads trio take on walk for dementia

Congratulations to Marie, Lisa and Julie from Crossroads Dementia Hub on completing the Alzheimer's Society Trek26.

The trio walked 13 miles along the Norfolk coast on 1st August to help raise funds for the charity which provides much-needed support to people living with dementia and their families.

Team manager, Marie, said: "It was a wonderful day although hot and sticky. There was a large crowd and so many with emotional stories and reasons for supporting the cause. We were so pleased to be part of it. Our pink t-shirts created some discussion, and we definitely stood out in a sea of blue!"



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Help the team reach their £1k fundraising target

The team is 87% there and would appreciate any donations, large or small, to help them reach their goal of £1000. Click the link below to donate via Just Giving:

https://www.justgiving.com/team/independencematterscrossroads?utm_medium=TE&utm_source=WA

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Incredible response to foodbank appeal

Independence Matters **Employee Forum** ran a successful appeal on behalf of Norwich Foodbank during May.

We had an amazing collective effort from right across our services - not only by colleagues, but our customers and their families too. We were overwhelmed by the size of the response and are incredibly proud of what our Forum members collectively achieved 🍷

We would like to pass on our thanks to all the individuals who contributed to this worthy cause. The Employee Forum chose to support the foodbank for this appeal, as they are a like-minded organisation, putting local people at the heart of what they do.



All the donations, along with a cheque from Independence Matters for £100, were presented to Norwich Foodbank at Dereham Community Hub by Forum members Hollie and Gavin.

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Project Catalyst

PAS services first to benefit as rollout begins

Project Catalyst launched across our PAS Services in August, making them the first of our services to move onto new digital systems for rostering, care recording and day-to-day communication.

The launch introduces a modernised way of working and brings together:

- A new Rota and Scheduling Solution
- Digital Daily Notes
- Electronic Medication Recording
- Secure Messaging Service

Support Workers across all PAS services have begun using the new platforms and ways of working seamlessly, being able to use the app, start and end their shifts and complete daily notes without any major issues.

A huge amount of work has gone into preparing colleagues, data and systems for this first rollout, and our focus now is on supporting teams as they begin using the new ways of working in practice.

A huge thank you goes to everyone involved across both the Digital and Operational Teams. Your hard work, dedication, testing, training, and commitment have been instrumental in delivering this transformation and ensuring a successful go-live.

This is just the start as we look to update our processes, improve efficiency, and provide all our teams with better digital tools to support the people we serve every day.

Project Catalyst

✓ **Improving** how we record, plan, and deliver care.

✓ **One system** for care, rotas, training, and quality.

✓ **Less** paperwork, less duplication

✓ **Better** accuracy and compliance

✓ **Faster** access to information

✓ **More visibility** for families and customers



Project Catalyst

Adapting to a new way of working

PAS South team finds lots to like following the rollout

Since the introduction of Project Catalyst, our service has been adapting to a new way of managing rotas and workforce planning. As with any new system, there has been a learning curve, but overall the experience has been very positive.

Once we became familiar with how the system works, it quickly became clear that Catalyst offers many benefits to our service. The platform provides a structured and efficient approach to rota management, helping managers plan their schedules effectively.

One of the key strengths of the project has been the support available from the implementation team. Whenever a glitch or issue has been identified, it has been reported to the implementation analyst, who has responded promptly. Problems are either resolved quickly or investigated thoroughly, with solutions put in place to prevent them from recurring. This responsiveness has helped build confidence in the system and ensured that any disruptions have been kept to a minimum.



The app has also been well received. Colleagues have reported that it is easy to use and reliable, with very few issues experienced since its launch.

Although we are still becoming fully accustomed to all of Catalyst's features, the early signs are encouraging. The system continues to develop, and with ongoing support and improvements, it appears well positioned to deliver long-term benefits. We believe Project Catalyst will prove to be a valuable investment and an effective rota solution for the company for many years to come.

Lord Lieutenant visits Crossroads Hub



We were honoured to welcome HM Lord-Lieutenant, Lady Philippa Dannatt MBE, to our Crossroads Community Hub on 20th May.

The visit took place during Dementia Action Week and it was a pleasure to both meet and show her around the service.

The whole team appreciated her visit and the time she spent with customers, who demonstrated their painting, snooker, and sandwich making skills - as well as challenging her to game of dominoes!

Joseph volunteers

Customer Joseph has started volunteering at his local Age UK charity shop. He goes once a week and enjoys the interaction with shop customers and staff.

Volunteering is a great way of gaining workplace experience, and is helping him to learn new skills, including presentation, merchandising, money handling and social skills just to mention a few. Well done, Joseph!



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Celebrating 25 years at Norfolk Industries

Norfolk Industries was proud to recognise the 25th work anniversary of factory team member Jeremy.

Jeremy has been with us since 2002. He started in the wire workshop, before moving into the pet bedding side of the business, after the closure of the workshop in 2011.

There have been so many changes over the years, but Jeremy has remained a constant and reliable member of the team throughout.

25 years is an amazing achievement, and we celebrated with a cake and a card. Thank you for your continued commitment to the business Jeremy!

We welcome a new member to our team

A vacancy for a Senior Operative in our factory received over 151 applications! Following interviews, we were delighted to offer the position to our chosen individual who started on 18th August and is settling in well.



NI audit success!

Great news! We successfully passed our external ISO 9001:2015 audit in early July with a clean result and no recommendations in the final report. The auditors did offer a few suggestions relating to some of our forms, but these were informal observations rather than recommendations.

This is a fantastic outcome for Norfolk Industries and a reflection of the high standards maintained across the team. Congratulations to everyone involved!

School shows appreciation for our work placements

We love supporting individuals through our factory work placements and are always delighted to hear that we have helped make a positive difference to people's lives.

We recently received this lovely feedback regarding a work placement from Parkside School.



Everyone at Parkside is extremely grateful to you for giving this individual the opportunity and for providing such a safe, welcoming, and well-supported working environment.

He has gained many valuable workplace skills from this placement and has really enjoyed the experience.

The positive experience he has had with you is very much appreciated and we hope to have the opportunity to work with you again in the future.

Norfolk Industries



NORFOLK INDUSTRIES
FOR DISABLED PEOPLE
Part of Independence Matters

Rachael opens showcase event at The Forum

Customer Rachael officially opened the 2026 Making it Real Co-Production Showcase at The Forum in Norwich on 6th July.

Rachael, who is our representative and also vice chair of the 'Making It Real' board, read out a prepared speech which was broadcast across Forum's atrium to a large crowd.

This was a massive achievement and a huge 'well done' goes to Rachael - we are so proud of you!

Our Working Together Groups had a stall at the event which features displays from local community groups, charities, and Norfolk County Council teams, providing opportunities to connect with other organisations, share learning, and meet visitors.



Everyone on the stand took part and talked to the public about how we work together, recycling plastics alongside a local school which are turned into bird houses. We had a display of the finished products which had lots of people asking if they could buy them!

Display boards and visuals produced by Holt Hub demonstrated how we work in partnership with others, and the boards and other groups we work alongside. It's a very impressive list, superb work WTG's!



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Hub holds doggie themed tea party

Dereham Community Hub held a special dog-themed event on 24th June to raise funds for Battersea Dogs and Cats Home.

Despite being a mega hot day, the Doggie Tea Party was a great success. Everyone had fun with lots of refreshments, doggie-related face painting and things to buy.

The air conditioning kept everyone cool and safe, and we even had a few doggies turn up too.

All in all, the event raised a magnificent £130.35 for this worthy cause. Huge well done everyone!



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Kindness of a stranger brings smile to customers

Colleagues and customers from Sprowston Hub were on a visit to Wroxham when they were bowled over by the kindness of a complete stranger.

The gentleman from London was visiting on holiday when he spotted the group. He volunteered to pay for the two customers to ride on the steam train, telling support worker Kasha that he really appreciated what we do for customers. What a lovely gesture 🥰



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Keeping our cool in the summer heat

It may seem like a distant memory now, but keep temperatures to a comfortable level when the summer heatwaves hit was a big challenge.

To support everyone's wellbeing, we rolled out portable air conditioning across all our services. These were set up to provide dedicated cool spaces which offered relief during the most intense periods of severe heat, helping to reduce heat-related health risks.

Teams also found ways to help people enjoy time outdoors while the sun beat down, including at Sprowston Hub, where gazebos, paddling pools and parasols were all deployed. Our pics show manager Toby hard at work while customers Pip and Steven dip their feet on hottest day of year.



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Dereham Hub summer fete

What a fantastic day at Dereham's summer fete on 12th August with lots of visitors and some spectacular fancy dress with super-heroes in abundance.

Special shout out to superwoman Shirley, who used her superpowers to cook up a BBQ feast in the kitchen! 🥳



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Experimenting with AI at our WTGs

Following the production of a new easy read document about Artificial Intelligence (AI), customers at our Working Together Groups (WTG) were encouraged to try it out for themselves.

Holt WTG decided to create a cartoon-style picture with everyone choosing a random idea to put into the image. These included; a dinosaur in an open top red car, a toilet with someone in it drinking from a mug, and a policeman playing darts!

The group was delighted and couldn't believe how AI could be used like this. They then used AI to write a song about group member Heather which was a joy to listen to and made her quite tearful.

Norwich WTG asked for their image to include; a red motorbike on a stand, set in a park with a rainbow, and a girl wearing a blue top and trousers. Everyone thought the end result was pretty impressive!

Attleborough WTG asked AI to make an image including: a black labrador in the woods, a dog using a laptop, bluetits and a girl riding a brown horse.

They also created an AI generated pop style song about Service Manager, Gwen and were really pleased with the result!

At the start of each of the sessions, customers had not heard of AI, so being able to provide input and see it in action in this way has enhanced their understanding and been really beneficial.



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World Cup fever!

It might seem like a very long time ago now, but back in June and July the FIFA World Cup kept us in suspense as we waited to see if England 🐯🐯🐯 could bring it home (sadly not!)

Our Sprowston and Norwich Dementia Hubs found some novel ways for customers to get involved in the action, from a dart board penalty shoot out, to a super sized inflatable ball, headed here by football super fan Willy!



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U-7s team shows support for Rosewood

An under-7s football team has completed a sponsored run raising £655.00 for Rosewood Hub's amenities fund. The team is managed by the daughter of Hub manager Donna who said: "I am so proud of them all, especially my daughter Sophie who runs the team, and my grandson Dexter who raised the most, which was a fantastic £160".

The football team will also be promoting the Hub this winter, as they have purchased rain jackets emblazoned with the Independence Matters logo on the front and Rosewood's name across the back. Fantastic job!



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Archery for all at Sprowston Hub

In a summer full of sporting action, customers at Sprowston Hub have been putting their skills to the test with a spot of archery! 🏹

The equipment was purchased through the Amenities Fund, helping to create more opportunities for customers to try new activities, build confidence and, most importantly, have fun.



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BBQ at Waterden

Customer friends and family got together at Waterden for their annual summer BBQ in May.

A great time was had by all, with the afternoon spent together socialising under the shade of the trees in the garden.



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WTGs help shape NHS 10-year plan

Customers from our Dereham Working Together Group have been giving their views on how the NHS can work better for people with autism and those with a learning disability.

The group provided their feedback in a session at Dereham Hub facilitated by local advocacy group, Ace Anglia, which focused on three key topics; healthy, community, and digital.

Output from the session will be included in the advocate feedback being gathered by the NHS East of England Regional Co-production Group and will help to shape the NHS 10 Year Health Plan for England.

This was an incredibly important session, and we are proud to have been part of the conversation and grateful to Ace Anglia for inviting us to take part.



Daisy from Ace Anglia said: “Thanks for having us visit your group. We had a really productive session, and it was great to meet so many fantastic self-advocates.”

We look forward to hearing the findings from all the feedback, which will be shared at a face-to-face meeting in February next year!



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Fabulous fancy dress fundraiser

Colleagues and customers at Sprowston Hub dressed up to raise a fantastic £55.00 for their amenities fund. Costumes ranged from Where's Wally to a Rubik's Cube.

Needless to say, a fabulous time was had by all. Well done everybody!



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Crossroads celebrates special days!

5 June Fish & Chip Day

We had the nation's favourite dish on the obligatory National Fish and Chips Friday. How could you not! 😊 As always too good to resist ...mmmm!



7 July Chocolate Day

What else could we do today! Chocolate day so Nutella and strawberries are a must. You know how we like a cake here at Crossroads, no excuse needed 😊!

27 July Norfolk Day

We celebrated Norfolk Day with the absolutely necessary Norfolk delicacy, Samphire, and tried making Norfolk buns. Just crumbs remaining - so a success! The afternoon was spent with visiting entertainer dancing and singing galore, then discussion about the Norfolk lingo. We rounded off the week off with obligatory Fish and Chips (It would be rude not to! 😊)



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Happy, Healthy, Safe event a big success

We had a great time at the Healthy, Happy, Safe event at The Forum on 17th June and really enjoyed meeting everyone who came to have their card stamped at our stand.

It was a pleasure to meet so many customers, family members, colleagues and social care professionals from across the county, including Norfolk Fire Service who explained the fire risks around plug adaptors and how to safely charge batteries.

Back at our stand, we especially enjoyed asking, "What makes you happy?"—and being reminded that it's often the simple things that bring the greatest joy 🍷.

A big thank you goes to Opening Doors for organising such a successful event - The Forum was absolutely packed!



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Summer fete fun!

Sprowston Hub was blessed with a perfect day for their summer fete, with the temperature just right for the stands to be outside. Everyone had a fabulous time and enjoyed sitting in the police car 🚓 and meeting the donkeys 🐴.



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Simon demonstrates his skill in the kitchen



We were delighted to see South PAS support worker, Simon, helping out our Attleborough Hub colleagues for the day.

Simon was a chef before he joined our team, so helping out in the Bistro kitchen was an ideal way to show off his culinary skills (doesn't that food look fab!). It was also a great example of how we all work together #oneteam 😊

Hub's flower show visit

On Thursday 23rd July a group of Sprowston Hub customers went to the Sandringham Flower Show.

The Nancy Oldfield Trust had a stand there and our customers go sailing and do conservation with them, they helped to build the stand that you can see in the picture.



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Mini donkeys bring the fun

Holt Community Hub received a wonderful visit from Miniature Donkeys For Therapy and Fun in June.

Customers loved being able to interact with donkeys Jack, Lulu, and Chocci.

You definitely brought the smiles 😊 and we look forward to seeing you again soon!



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Massive congratulations to **April Knights** on becoming the new Service Manager at Faro Lodge Respite Services. Previously a Faro Lodge team manager, April brings a wealth of experience to the role. Well done, April, we wish you every success 🍀



The team at Great Yarmouth Community Hub said farewell to support worker **Alyson Green** on 21st May. Alyson retired after almost 27 years with us having previously worked at Caister Hub.



Congratulations to PAS South support worker **Geoff Wright** on successfully achieving his Care Certificate. Well done Geoff! 🍀

Endorsed by the Care Quality Commission (CQC) the certificate reflects our company values and ensures employees have the skills and compassionate values required for the role.

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



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