



# Putting People First update

Edition 15

August 2011

## The Support With Confidence Scheme comes to Wokingham Borough!

Support With Confidence is a new scheme run jointly between Trading Standards and Adult Social Care, and it provides vetted and approved service providers for personal care and other domestic help, such as home maintenance, gardening services or even dog walkers. It gives those receiving personal budgets, and those wishing to buy in care services peace of mind, that they can use the scheme's members with confidence - knowing that they have been vetted and are properly trained to do their job.



Support with  
**Confidence**  
WEST BERKSHIRE  
AND WOKINGHAM

The scheme will also help social care customers to select personal assistants, knowing that any potential employee has signed up to the Code of Practice for the scheme.

As yet, no-one locally is approved although the scheme does currently have some Personal Assistants going through the process to become approved, and hope that they will be towards the end of the autumn.

For more information about the scheme, or if you are a provider interested in joining the scheme, please contact West Berkshire and Wokingham Trading Standards on 01635 519930 or email:

[supportwithconfidence@westberks.gov.uk](mailto:supportwithconfidence@westberks.gov.uk)

## More Choice Champions trained

A group of social care customers with disabilities and mental health problems, and a carer looking after a disabled person have finished training as Choice Champions to support people who are new to self-directed support.

Choice Champions share their experiences of personal budgets and offer advice to people who are either receiving assistance from Adult Social Care Services for the first time, or are switching to the new system of personal budgets.

The group's training consisted of learning mentoring and leadership skills, and safeguarding vulnerable adults issues were also covered as part of the course.

The Choice Champions scheme was introduced in 2010, when 14 people with learning and physical disabilities were trained to provide peer support to other people who want to choose and manage their own care and support arrangements. The scheme proved to be very successful, and over the past year, Choice Champions have been very busy supporting people through mentoring as well as delivering training for both customers and local providers of social care services.

If you'd like more information about the Choice Champions scheme, please contact Marlena O'Donnell, Development and Improvement Officer, on (0118) 974 6773 or email:

[marlena.o'donnell@wokingham.gov.uk](mailto:marlena.o'donnell@wokingham.gov.uk)



L-R from top: Karen Morton, Ann Hunter, Irene Fisher, Cllr Bob Wyatt, Julian Gatrack, Marlena O'Donnell, Kevin Ward

## Celebration of Age event is back!

Wednesday October 19, 2011, 10am to 3.30pm  
at Loddon Valley Leisure Centre

If you are aged 50 or over, why not come along to the annual Celebration of Age event, hosted by the borough's five Older Peoples' Forums!

Free activities on offer include:

- Tai Chi • Pilates • Swimming • Line dancing
- Nordic walking • Wall climbing • Arts and crafts
- Seated exercises, and lots more...

As well as activities, there will be lots of useful information stands on the day, and a buffet lunch will be provided.

For more information, or if you require transport, please call Amanda Gordon on (0118) 974 6850 or email: [amanda.gordon@wokingham.gov.uk](mailto:amanda.gordon@wokingham.gov.uk)



## The Council's new adult social care company!

Wokingham Borough Council launched **Optalis** - its new adult social care company for adults with a disability, and older people - at the beginning of June 2011.

Optalis now controls and runs all the borough council's adult social care provided services. This includes day centres, employment services, domiciliary care, residential care and supported housing services, as well as brokerage and support, and sensory needs services. The bases for these services remain the same, while the head office is located at The Old Forge in Wokingham town centre.

A large part of why the company was set up is due to Putting People First; because adults who are entitled to personal budgets are now allowed to choose who provides their social care, rather than being told by a local authority's social services. This is really positive for the borough's residents, but it has meant that the council's long-established care services couldn't be guaranteed to be able to survive.

Moving to a separate company allows those services to better manage their costs and to better respond to personalised care needs, ensuring they will continue to be attractive to personal budget holders. It will also grant new flexibilities and freedoms that are not possible as part of a council set up. And, as Optalis is now operating competitively in the social care market, its services will be available to those who previously may have wanted to buy, but were not able to because of legal restrictions on the council selling its services.

Existing and future clients are set to get the best of both worlds; having the choice of a proven high quality service, and also one that has freedom from public sector requirements.



Mike Walsh, Managing Director of Optalis

Mike Walsh, Managing Director at Optalis, said: "We have been working hard to ensure the transition period is smooth and those customers already receiving a social care service should not notice much difference day-to-day other than the change of organisation name and image. Most importantly, people should continue receiving support from staff that they know and are happy with because the council staff delivering the service have been transferred to Optalis."

### How to get in touch with Optalis:

Tel: (0118) 974 6832      Minicom: (0118) 908 8201

Email: [info@optalis.org](mailto:info@optalis.org)

Web: [www.optalis.org](http://www.optalis.org)

## Wokingham Borough Council offers further help to local small-scale care and support businesses

Following the success of the scheme to give start-up grants to small-scale care and support providers in 2009, the Council is once again inviting applications from social care providers employing less than five people to apply for small grants to help them get their businesses started.

During 2009/2010 the Council helped a total of **12** new care and support providers under the scheme.

The Council is now offering more grants and is particularly interested in supporting new providers offering personalised services to help older and disabled people to access leisure, sports, educational, social or cultural activities to encourage more options for people who have a social care need to access activities in the community. This is recognised as an important part of helping people improve their quality of life.

They will also be requiring applicants to seek accreditation with the Council's new **Support With Confidence** scheme to help ensure that people setting up these new services have had appropriate checks and training. (More information can be found about this on page 1 of this newsletter.)

If you have any ideas about the sort of services you would find helpful please let us know and we can take this into account when advising applicants and awarding grants.

You can call Mike Stillman, PPF Commissioning Officer, on (0118) 974 6788 or email: [mike.stillman@wokingham.gov.uk](mailto:mike.stillman@wokingham.gov.uk) or Steve George, Social Enterprise Development Manager, on 07786 534922 / [steve.george@wokingham.gov.uk](mailto:steve.george@wokingham.gov.uk).

More information about grants for micro-enterprises can be found on the Council's website at: <http://www.wokingham.gov.uk/socialcare/wokingham/micro-enterprise-grants/>



Debbie from Flair helps a client do their weekly shop. Flair were one of the small businesses to receive a start-up grant in 2009.

## @ The Acorn: the new weekly social club for adults aged 18+ with learning disabilities

@ **The Acorn** begins on Tuesday 6 September, 7pm to 9pm at the Acorn Community Centre, Fernlea Drive, Woosehill, Wokingham, RG41 3DR.

The club will give adults with learning disabilities the chance to make new friends and try new activities in a relaxed and suitable location.

They can play games, listen to music, do cooking, 'chill' in the sensory room or just hang out with friends in the Rainbow Café.

There is a charge of £2 per session which can be paid on the evening of attendance.

For more information about the club, please call Michael Lodge at Mencap on (0118) 979 8539 or email: [admin@wokinghammencap.org](mailto:admin@wokinghammencap.org)

*(Please note: 1:1 support is not currently provided.)*

