

Optalis – Further Briefing On Potential Service Changes



What is Optalis?

Optalis is WBC's own Adult Social Care company. Created 11 years ago as a Local Authority Trading Company, and now jointly owned by WBC and the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead, we work in close partnership with the council's adult social care team to provide a wide range of care services across the Borough.

Cllr Hare and Matt Pope are directors of the company, providing oversight and direction.

Our formal aims are to:

- Transform and improve the delivery of adult services
- Secure the stability of the workforce
- Identify and deliver opportunities for joint commissioning

**We operate a wide
range of different
adult care services
for Wokingham
Borough residents,
including:**

- Supported employment training for people with learning disabilities and autism
- Day services for people with learning disabilities
- Independent living services, providing care support for people with learning disabilities and autism in their own homes
- Extra care services for residents at four retirement facilities in Wokingham, Woodley and Winnersh
- Day services for people with physical disabilities
- Residential care for older people with dementia
- Reablement services
- 'Out & About' evening and weekend activities

Operational Performance

- **Business as usual** – we have continued to ensure that all our services have operated to the high standards required by the Care Quality Commission (CQC) and the Care Act, despite the ongoing challenges of the pandemic. As Covid restrictions have eased, we have been delighted to welcome more residents back to our day services.
- **Finances**
 - 2021/22 - we met our budget and delivered additional savings of £184k to the council.
 - With the support of WBC, we are proud that all our people are paid at the rate of the National Living Wage or above in 2022/23.
 - We expect the next few years to be increasingly challenging from a financial perspective, primarily because of the impact of the rising cost of living on the recruitment and retention of care staff. Use of agency staff is expensive, and we are working hard to keep this to a minimum in a very difficult employment market.



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Transforming Optalis





Transformation Agenda

- New Services
- Improving Existing Services
- Ability Travel
- Other Opportunities

New Services

- Optalis is supporting WBC by taking on at least 10 new and existing services across the borough, covering a wide variety of different care needs. This expansion is possible because of WBC's investment in a new Peripatetic Team for Optalis, which has given us the capacity to transfer and initiate new services as required by WBC.
- Last year we successfully launched the first of these new services at Gorrick Square in Wokingham.
- In April this year we opened WBC's new Learning Disability and Mental Health services at Hatch Farm in Winnersh. Feedback from customers and their social workers about the beneficial impact of the new service on their lives has been extremely positive.
- Preparations have been well-advanced for the transfer of the respite service at Loddon Court in Earley from previous provider Dimensions to Optalis.
- We are working closely with WBC's ASC team on the timetable for opening further new services in 2022 and 2023.

Improving Existing Services

- **Reablement** - capacity and productivity enhancements are planned for our START team, to support residents where reablement will give them a higher quality of life than they would receive through traditional care packages.
- **Day Services** - we have relaunched our services for people with physical and learning disabilities under the Community Lives brand. The pandemic confirmed:
 - That these services are often a lifeline for residents and their families, who faced a range of difficulties when the services were closed or restricted.
 - There is increasing demand for a wider range of more innovative activities taking place across/within the local community, in place of traditional buildings-based services.

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We are therefore working closely with WBC to develop an enhanced range of services to offer to our Community Lives customers.

- **Out & About** – this popular service has been consistently oversubscribed in recent years. We are now investing so that we can offer residents an even wider range of evening and weekend activities.
- **Care Management** - WBC has provided funding for a new electronic care management package. This will allow us to provide support for residents in a more personalised, transparent and efficient way.

Ability Travel

- Our best-in-class Supported Employment service provides support and training for customers with a wide range of disabilities who are looking for work.
- We recently expanded the service by introducing our new Ability Travel skills training, which helps our customers to gain higher levels of independence and confidence when using public transport.
- Having launched the service in partnership with South Western Railway, Network Rail and Reading Buses, we have now expanded the range of partners to include ²Great Western Railway and the Southeast Communities Rail Partnership. This has allowed us to introduce a new programme of ‘Try a Train’ training days on the North Downs line, which have been very well-received by residents.
- We planned to hold a special ‘Station Adopters’ event at Wokingham station on 24 June, as a celebration of our new partnership with SWR, supported by our friends at CLASP Wokingham and their choir. Due to strike action, this event will now be rescheduled for a date later in the year – any Members who are available on the day will be very welcome to join us.

Other Opportunities

- We have been working with WBC's commercial advisers to develop additional opportunities for income generation for the council.
- We are running pilot trials of new ventures. These provide work experience and paid work for people with a range of disabilities, supporting them to develop skills for employment, and include:
 - Ability Cleaning – providing commercial office cleaning services
 - Ability Catering – providing packed lunches and teas for customers
 - Our new 'Well Turned Out' training shop - this is a specialist recycled clothing store. We also supply interview clothing free of charge to people using our Supported Employment Services.

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Thank You

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