

Fernleigh Activity Centre
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August 2019

Dear Customers, Families and Carers,

As Surrey Choices reaches its 5th birthday later in August we will all be reflecting on what we have achieved and the journey the organisation has been on. You may be aware that I joined Surrey Choices as Managing Director in November 2018, and so I thought this would be a good time to bring you some news and update you on what we have been working on.

The most important news to share with you is that Surrey County Council has made the decision to award Surrey Choices its next contract for services. The new contract will run from August 2019 to March 2025 and is a real expression of the confidence that the County Council has in Surrey Choices as a provider and strategic partner.

You may also be interested to know that for the past two years, Surrey Choices has managed to achieve a positive financial position, which has contributed to the confidence expressed in the company by Surrey County Council. It means that Surrey Choices is in a strong position to deliver on its future aspirations.

During April this year, Surrey Choices presented its business plan to the Shareholder Board in Surrey County Council, and I'm pleased to say that it was approved. The plan was developed together with County Council Commissioners which means we can be sure that the course we have set is aligned with the kinds of services they will be looking for in the future.

For Surrey Choices this means that we have committed to developing daytime provision which is more community based and which focuses on supporting people to develop and maintain their independence and to play a full and active role in their local community. We will be expanding our vocational learning projects and supporting more people into paid and voluntary work, as well as supporting young people with life after school in our new 'Future Choices' service.

In order to develop our daytime provision, we will be working with an organisation called The National Development Team for Inclusion, NDTi, who will support us to design how in future Surrey Choices will best be able to support people to live the kind of lives they choose. This autumn we will be inviting the people we support, their families and carers, our colleagues in Surrey Choices, and our partner organisations to come together to think about what they would like the support we offer to look like going forward.

To support our future endeavours around our daytime provision, we have been working with Surrey County Council's property services team. We know that some of our premises don't meet our expectations of flexible community bases or indeed the standards we aspire to. We will keep you updated over the coming months as to the progress we are making to ensure we have the right facilities in the right places.

Our residential short break service in Banstead is popular with families in Surrey and surrounding areas, and in addition to the residential service, we intend to develop flexible breaks which will help people to get out and about and spend time with friends.

Our Shared Lives scheme, which offers support to individuals within a domestic family environment either for breaks or for supported living, is set to grow and we have been busy recruiting more Carers so that we can support more people in this fantastic person-centred way.

Over the past few months we have been delighted to have been able to celebrate some of the achievements of the people we support, our partners, and our colleagues.

In June we held the EmployAbility 'Making A Difference' Awards, celebrating the achievements of people who are on their journey into the world of employment and also recognising the contribution made by employers who go the extra mile to provide inclusive employment opportunities.

In July, our Fernleigh Service won 'Four out of Five Flowers' for their allotment garden on a theme of sustainability at the RHS Hampton Court Palace Garden Festival, the world's largest flower show. Only four organisations were selected from over 200 applicants and we were thrilled with the team receiving their award from Hampton Court judge and top chef Raymond Blanc. The garden has now been relocated back to Fernleigh for all to enjoy.

Also in July, we were amazed and inspired by the Rhythm of Life IV performance at Camberley Theatre. Our dance troupe, Rhythmic Collision, partnered with children from Cordwalles Junior School, Camberley, in an inclusive show of interpretive dance full of energy and positivity, exploring themes such as family, change, love and friendships.

Earlier in the year, people from our services worked with the Surrey and Borders Partnership NHS Foundation Trust who won an award from the British Association of Radiologists for their joint work on raising awareness of breast screening for women with disabilities. Together they achieved almost double the amount of screenings which is great news for women in Surrey who are often overlooked and don't always get equal access to healthcare.





Many of you may remember that during 2017-18 we partnered with the Surrey, Kent and Sussex Air Ambulance to support their cause with our fundraising activities. We are proud to have handed over a cheque for £1,580 and thank all those who contributed. This year we are partnering with The Fountain Centre in Guildford, who provide vital assistance to individuals and families living with cancer. We have already held a number of events to raise money and it looks as if we will exceed our target.

Surrey Choices has a lot to be proud of, and we are amazed by what is achieved daily by the people we support and by our colleagues.

As Surrey Choices goes forward, we are keen to make sure we communicate with people and families in a way that makes sense, which is a challenge given the geographical spread and the breadth of services we offer. We intend to publish a six-monthly newsletter, the first edition of which will be coming out during September or October. Each service will of course continue to hold local meetings and share news as appropriate to local needs.

We would welcome suggestions from you if you have ideas for the best way to keep you informed, if you have ideas for the types of information you would like us to include in the newsletter, or indeed if you have comments or questions about this letter; please email: talktous@surreychoices.com.

A really good way to keep in touch with Surrey Choices is through social media where you can read all the news and also interact with us. You can find us on:

 Twitter: [@surreychoices](https://twitter.com/surreychoices)
 Facebook: [@surreychoices](https://www.facebook.com/surreychoices)
 Instagram: [@surrey.choices](https://www.instagram.com/surrey.choices)
 LinkedIn: [@surrey-choices](https://www.linkedin.com/company/surrey-choices)

Of course, if you have questions about the local service you are connected with or the care you are receiving, it is always best to contact the service directly.

I hope you have found this update helpful and do look out for the newsletter in the next couple of months.



Mette Le Jakobsen
Managing Director