



*Providing real opportunities  
for people with learning disabilities*



Life Opportunities Trust offers high quality housing and support to people with learning disabilities – enabling people to achieve greater independence and control over their own lives.

We support more than 80 people with learning disabilities across London and the northern home counties – from young people in their 20s to older people in their 80s and 90s.

By creating accommodation and support that is right for the individual, we enable people to take control of their own lives in ways that are exactly right for them.

“ Everybody has a choice. Everybody is entitled to say what they want.”

Lloyd, service-user



Life Opportunities Trust began in 1989 in order to help people with learning disabilities move from long-stay institutions to smaller services in the community.

In particular, we are proud of our supported living services created in partnership with local housing associations, with which we have developed excellent links over many years.

Today, Life Opportunities Trust is a strong, well-established charity that remains committed to offering individually-focused, friendly services of the highest possible quality.

We are therefore delighted that our services are frequently awarded the highest possible ratings at inspection – not only for the standards of our residential services but also for the quality of our person-centred planning.

If you would like to know more about any aspect of our work then please do not hesitate to get in touch.

**Ralph Verlander**  
Chief Executive



## Strategic Objectives

We will continually aim to provide:

- Services that surpass expectations
- Customer satisfaction
- Continuous improvement
- Quality and well-trained employees
- Stakeholder satisfaction.

# Power to make individual choices

At Life Opportunities Trust, we enable people to make the choices that feel right for them. Each service-user works closely with their key worker to create an individual programme of activities and goals that meets their individual needs.

## Recruitment

Service-users are involved in the recruitment processes of the Trust as well as those of the University of Hertfordshire and Westminster City Council and we are planning to extend this role to more of our service-users over time.

## Service-User Involvement

A key way of ensuring service-user involvement in our operations has been through the establishment of a Service-Users Steering Group. We believe that this is an effective way of gaining feedback from the people we serve, and assigned the establishment of the Group as a major project to a social work student on placement from the University of Hertfordshire. The Group has been extremely influential in guiding the progress of our person-centred planning systems and outlining the type of support our service-users want us to provide.

This work has been put forward to the Cabinet Office by our Charter Mark assessor as an example of best practice.

The Group has also been instrumental in helping us reconfigure our Head Office into a more accessible venue so that service-users

are able to make greater use of the facilities; they have even been able to use the Chief Executive's office for presentations and meetings.



## Lloyd's story

Lloyd lives in our Welwyn Garden City home. His brother lives in America and staying in touch is very important to them both.

Because of the time difference between the countries, it is difficult for Lloyd to phone his brother, so we purchased a computer for Lloyd, and staff supported him and other service-users in developing computer skills.

Now Lloyd regularly uses the computer to email his brother. He says: **"I have used the computer to write letters. All my photos are on my bit too."**



### **My own flat**

Manny, 22, lives in his own flat with support from a designated support worker. Manny joined us from a residential school and, thanks to support from our staff, he now has the confidence and independence to live alone – which is what he’s always wanted. He goes to the supermarket and plans his own daily activities such as swimming, tennis and college. Eventually it’s hoped that Manny can learn to use public transport by himself.

**‘I do my own washing now,’** says Manny, who’s gradually learning to do many of the things that staff used to do for him.

# Personalised accommodation and support

Life Opportunities Trust creates opportunities that allow people to live their lives in their own way, whether they want to live alone or in a small house or flat with other people.

**Supported living and domiciliary care** services give people the greatest possible say in how they live and the support they receive – whether they want to live by themselves or with a small number of other people.

**Residential care services** combine quality housing in small units with care and support tailored to the needs of the individual. All our services are furnished and equipped to the highest standards.

We also offer **specialist residential services** for people with learning disabilities who also have Alzheimer's disease, including staff specially trained to meet the particular needs of people with this condition.

All our services offer long-term support. However, we can also support people to move on to other forms of accommodation, such as independent living in their own homes, if this becomes appropriate.



Abbey House in west London is a supported living service for six people with learning disabilities. Created in partnership with Octavia Hill Housing Association, the service provides high quality accommodation combined with individual support to foster independence.



**“ It’s a service-user led service that really does respect and value each person as an individual.”**

Angela Tierney, Director of Care Services



# Susan's story

## My dream holiday

Susan had always wanted to swim with the dolphins but thought it was just a fantasy. But thanks to person-centred planning our staff made sure this was one dream that really could come true. They arranged appropriate flights and accommodation for Susan and two support workers. And our holiday fund helped towards the cost of a trip to Florida.

This was Susan's first long-haul flight and she enjoyed the hospitality of the air hostesses and even had her photo taken with the pilot.

Whilst in Florida Susan enjoyed the luxury of a villa with its own swimming pool. The hire car that she used was considerably larger than she is used to in England and gave her the opportunity to visit other parks such as Disney World and Epcot.

Nothing was too much trouble for the staff at these attractions – Susan was always waved to the front of the queue, and enjoyed herself so much that she didn't want to come home!



**"It was a holiday of a lifetime,"** says Susan, whose room is covered with pictures of dolphins. It's just one example of how person centred planning can help people achieve their goals.



### Tony's travels

Before coming to Life Opportunities Trust, Tony lived independently but wasn't really getting the support he needed. Tony loves his independence and travels all over London by public transport. But he needs support too, which is why a supported house is the perfect option for Tony. He can live life his own way, but knows that staff are there to help him when he needs it.

# Staff make the difference

The success of our services is in large measure due to the skill and commitment of our staff team.



*“ We’ve been working with the Life Opportunities Trust since 1993 and are pleased that the partnership is proving so useful to both parties.”*

Virginia Rosenfeld, Pre Qualifications Lead,  
School of Nursing and Midwifery, University of Hertfordshire

We employ around 160 people, including some 120 support workers, all individually trained to support people with learning disabilities. They are all trained in person-centred approaches to ensure that services are tailored to individual wishes and needs.

Their skill and commitment is central to delivering a quality, person-centred service – and every member of staff receives regular training and development to help them continually improve the service they offer.

62% of our staff are qualified to various levels of NVQ and 40% are currently studying for NVQ and other care qualifications.

We commit over £50,000 per year to staff training.

Many of our staff have been with us for five years or more, and this continuity is highly valued both by service-users and our professional partners, who can build long-term relationships with our employees.

## Diversity

We also benefit from a highly diverse workforce, with around half our staff coming from minority ethnic communities. We value highly the different experiences and interests they can bring to supporting our service-users.

We wanted to find out how well our commitment to diversity worked in practice, so we have signed up to, and are well on the way to achieving, the Investors in Diversity standard. We are working towards this with the help of a steering group, made up of LOT service-users and staff.



Paul Witter joined Life Opportunities Trust in 1993 as a volunteer and eventually worked his way up to become home manager at our Lowdell Close service in West Drayton, a residential service for four people with learning disabilities.



**“ Our staff are committed and motivated. They only want the best for our service-users.”**

Erica Lloyd, Director of Human Resources

# *Long-term partnerships*

We are proud to have built strong long-term relationships with a wide range of housing associations, local authorities and other partners who share our aims and vision.

Octavia Hill Housing Association, for example, worked closely with Life Opportunities Trust to create a new supported living service for six people with learning disabilities in west London.

They converted an old hostel to make modern, wheelchair-accessible housing, with Life Opportunities Trust offering individual support to the six tenants.

Care managers in local authorities also build strong relationships with our staff, based on years of working together to achieve shared objectives. Many local authority staff comment on the quality of the service we offer and value the continuity that comes from years of working together.

Our staff training is delivered in partnership with the University of Hertfordshire, who offer NVQ training in levels 2-4 to support workers, plus higher qualifications to managers.

The University tailors its training to reflect precisely the needs of our employees. As part of the partnership, we also offer work experience placements to students on the University's social work and nursing courses.

***“ We've been working with LOT since 1992 and have always found them to be friendly and responsive.”***

Dee Millar, Contracts Manager,  
Hertfordshire County Council



"The strength of the team is each individual member. The strength of each individual member is the team..."

Welcome to Abbot's Langley  
Team Workshop

David Amiran

Halina Waterhouse

# Continuous Improvement

Every person we serve has the right to expect the highest quality in the service they receive.

That is why we have developed and adopted a comprehensive range of systems and activities that commit us to reviewing the way we work and help us to achieve continuous improvement.

We pride ourselves on the quality systems which we have achieved and maintain. Quality is a constant in the way in which we support our service-users each day. At the heart of this are our person-centred planning and best practice standards.

Person-centred planning is vital for the development and tailoring of support programmes around each individual's wishes and aspirations, and we devise staff training programmes to help achieve these aims.

Additionally our services are regulated and accredited externally. We continually strive to exceed minimum standards and have been classed as "excellent" by the Commission for Social Care Inspection.

ISO 9000 has helped us to redesign our paperwork to be more user-friendly and accessible using more visual aids.

The Investors in People standard has also helped us to refine our training systems so that together with the Charter Mark our customer focus is maintained. We were especially proud to be the first learning disabilities charity to be awarded Charter Mark status.

And mindful of the safety and security of both service-users and staff, OHSAS 18000 Health and Safety has enabled us to develop our health and safety systems and respond quicker to changes in legislation and practice by helping set up better processes of review and evaluation.

In 2008, we were awarded star status in the Sunday Times Best Companies award. Confident that a happy staff group will deliver better services, we invest heavily in our staff welfare and development.



# Plans for the future

The Board, together with the executive team, has agreed the following objectives:

- To become an even better provider of individually-focused services
- To understand and meet the wishes of the people we serve
- To develop and expand our services
- To maintain and improve training opportunities
- To continue to provide quality services at good value
- To maintain and improve our environmental impact.



“ We tailor our service to the individual because everyone’s so different.”

Angela Tierney, Director of Care Services  
Life Opportunities Trust

## Governance

LOT's Board of Trustees come from a variety of professional backgrounds: care, property, legal, financial and business sectors.

The Board meets quarterly, as do the Finance and General Purposes and Residents and Staff Committees. The Trustees oversee the financial development of the organisation, care practices and terms of employment and are a major force in ensuring the continued success of LOT.

To find out more about our services, or how we can help you, please contact our Head Office at the address below.

### **Life Opportunities Trust**

Hempstead House, 1 Hempstead Road, Kings Langley,  
Hertfordshire WD4 8BJ

Tel: 01923 299770 Email: [info@lot-uk.org](mailto:info@lot-uk.org)

Web: [www.lot-uk.org](http://www.lot-uk.org)

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