

# Oak Farm Leisure & Activities Club (OFLAC)

However, when Covid-19 happened, OFLAC was forced to stop in-person provision, and activities were moved online. OFLAC arranged for tablets to be provided to any user who didn't already have one. OFLAC increased their activities

to three times per week, providing virtual support. They also provided help and reassurance to users and their families, everything from shopping and collecting medication to emotional support.

Over time as restrictions eased, OFLAC offered doorstep visits to their users, and arranged socially distanced walks. This included not only assistance such as shopping for them and collecting medication (as many of the users' families are vulnerable as well) but also providing reassurance. OFLAC were unable to carry out their usual fundraising activities. However, they continued to receive Council funding for most clients, and used Action Hampshire's newsletter to identify new grants they were eligible for.

Once in-person provision was legally permitted, OFLAC gradually returned to in-person groups. Many were nervous about returning, and so the organisation trialled small groups at first.

OFLAC is a charity which provides a social network and learning hub for adults with a learning disability. Based in Farnborough, they support 30 users who come to sessions twice a week. The activities provide vital care not only for the users themselves, but it also offering much needed respite for carers.

Pre-pandemic, the club was running smoothly and fundraising activities enabled the group to offer days out and other activities, on top of the funding provided by Hampshire (HCC) and Surrey County Council (SCC) for day-to-day activities. An annual Community Gala, where service users perform onstage alongside volunteer actors, in front of a live audience is a particular highlight, boosting confidence, breaking down stigma and highlighting all the things that people with a learning disability can do.





previously made bird boxes and bug hotels to go in the garden and will look to make/repair them moving forward, as it was an activity that the users found very fun.

Longer-term, the main issue OFLAC's users face is anxiety/fear. Many are finding the loosening of restrictions scary, and other global events such as the war in Ukraine, also cause worry. OFLAC's groups provide a vital support and a safe space for their users. The staff and volunteers have built up strong trusting relationships which enable users and carers to feel safe and comfortable voicing their worries without being judged. OFLAC, like many VCSE organisations in Hampshire, has ongoing challenges around funding and recruiting volunteers, both of which are required to continue supporting service users through these challenging times.

Find out more about OFLAC:  
<https://www.oflac.org.uk>



They are now back to 90% of their pre-pandemic capacity. The organisation introduced new precautionary measures, such as increased ventilation by opening doors and windows, use of masks for staff and volunteers when in close contact with users, and ensuring both staff and users are fully vaccinating. Users were asked to test before attending. However, it has become more difficult to get testing kits, even for their vulnerable users.

As confidence increases and users return, the group is looking forward to restoring the garden area at the club and repairing the raised beds where they grow vegetables. They also hope to improve the memorial part of the garden where they plant flowers, which helps users through the loss of another user or a loved one. They have



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