

Disability Services Newsletter

General Manager Update *Wendy Pettifer*

MARCH 2020



I think for all of us, March 2020 was an unexpected and thoroughly extraordinary month...

WOODVILLE ALLIANCE AND COVID 19

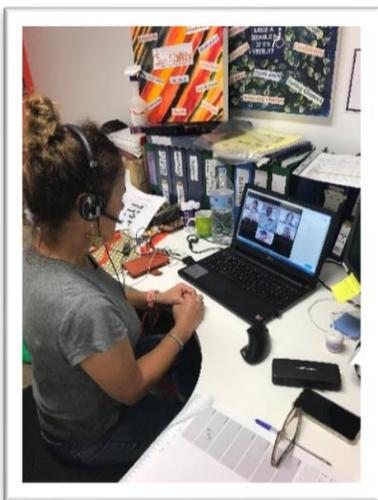
Hopefully you will have been receiving the regular letters from myself and our CEO Pam Batkin about all the work we have been doing to continue to provide our essential services in the safest way possible. We are happy that the Government has recognized the importance of disability services in our communities, and has designated our services as essential. This means we can continue to provide services to any clients who want or need them.

Since the COVID 19 crisis began just like everyone else we've had to make changes to the way we are operating – now our buses are sanitized after every trip, clients and staff have their temperature taken when they arrive at the centre and everyone is handwashing, hand sanitizing and social distancing. We've also got professional cleaners onsite every day to do a hospital grade clean and the building owners have twice a day cleaning of the communal areas. I've been really impressed by how well clients and staff alike have adapted to all of this and we are really fortunate that the size of our centre allows us to follow social distancing measures even though many of them do not apply to our services. This means that we are able to keep staff and clients as safe as possible under these difficult circumstances.

Although most clients are coming to the centre as usual, a few are taking a break from services for the moment, whilst others have reduced attendance to reduce any potential risks. Some have also elected to have one to one supports at home for a while. Please do give myself, Jenna or Toby a call if you are concerned or want to discuss services with us. I'm conscious that all the signs are that the current situation is likely to persist for some months and during this time, you will continue to need a break from caring, and clients who are not attending services will miss their friends, the social interaction and the change of scene. We're here to help and we will always try to accommodate your needs flexibly. The NDIA are also allowing participants to use funds flexibly, so if the support you need is different to usual – for example you might need help getting groceries – we can help with that too. We just ask that you bear in mind that generally any 1:1 support needs to be in blocks of 4 hours so that we can roster the work effectively, and that any travel involved is charged at 78c per km.



In the meantime, even if you decide not to have any services at all, we will be keeping in regular contact with you to check that everything is ok and we will be happy to give any advice or support over the phone that you need. We are well networked in the local community and we are keeping abreast of all the government assistance available so we may well be able to point you in the right direction for information if we are not able to help you ourselves.



LAUNCH OF WOODVILLE DIGITAL!

They say that necessity is the mother of invention, and these unusual times have made us all stop and think about how we might be able to do things differently and keep everyone connected, engaged and sane! In response to this, we are launching **Woodville Digital**, a range of activities delivered online that will enable clients at home to connect with their friends and staff in the centres via the wonders of digital technology. Expect dance lessons, exercise classes, choose your own adventure story telling, cupcake making, music and more – and if you have any ideas let us know. We've run a couple of test classes to work out the technology, and after a few teething problems we are ready to go! The sessions will be small groups combining clients at home with clients in the centre and supported by Disability Support Workers. And don't worry if you are a bit technologically challenged yourself – we've got easy to

understand guides to setting up simple online meeting applications available for you, and we can provide support as well. Look out for additional information, and we'll be getting in touch with families to ask them about registering for these packages. Toby is looking after this service development so if you want to ask any questions you can contact him on 0490 048 284.

INCIDENT MANAGEMENT AND BEHAVIOUR SUPPORT

Despite the very unusual times we are in, some things just carry on as normal. One of those things is our approach to incident management and the support of people with behaviours of concern, which is part of how we keep our clients and staff safe day to day – not just during a crisis like the current one.

An incident is defined as any unplanned event that has caused, almost caused or has the potential to cause harm, loss, injury or negative impact to the health, safety and wellbeing of a client or clients. We have policies, procedures and practices to guide staff when an incident takes place, but all staff know that they must report any incident to their supervisor and complete an incident report. Myself, Jenna and Mike review every single incident report, and make recommendations if appropriate in relation to them. Depending on the seriousness of the incident, it will be reported up the management line immediately, so a very serious incident would be reported as far as the CEO and the Chairman of the Board, but thankfully we rarely have incidents of this type. Incidents are discussed at Disability Operations Team meetings, Senior Leadership Team meetings and at the Board and we use them as opportunities to look at things like our systems, processes and practices so that we can learn and improve. Families should also be informed by a manager of any incident as soon as possible.



Some types of very serious incidents must also be reported to the NDIS Commission – these are called Reportable Incidents, and they include things like the death of a client, a serious injury, abuse or neglect, sexual misconduct and unauthorized restrictive practices. Restrictive practices are any practices that might restrict the rights or freedom of movement of a person with disability, and if needed those practices require authorization by the NDIS Commission.

We also have fortnightly Behaviour Management Meetings where any clients who are presenting escalations in behaviours of concern are discussed, strategies developed and any additional support from Behaviour Support Specialists is sought. For clients on our Behaviour Management Register, we also record all escalations of behaviour so we can better understand triggers and develop improved management strategies to support these clients. Of course, we also like to work closely with you – we know that you are the experts on our clients! If you want any further information on our approach to incident management or behaviour support, please do get in touch.

MARCH AND APRIL ACTIVITIES



March has been a little bit different to what we expected – but we know we are not alone in that! Unfortunately, because of the COVID 19 crisis we have temporarily suspended our evening and weekend programs. This is especially disappointing as we had a really successful launch of the dance program and another great outing for NightOwls to the footy. However, we will be right back to it as soon as we are able, so watch this space!

We also celebrated Harmony Day – always a wonderful way to celebrate the diversity of backgrounds of our clients and staff, and a great opportunity to try to delicious food from around the world.

The GeekAbility clients have developed great Easter activity packs which everyone has been enjoying. They are creating beautiful Easter decorations and will be making Easter hats. They've even come up with an ingenious way to ensure that everyone keeps their distance during the parade so we will be sure to get some photographs for the next newsletter.

CLOSURES OVER THE EASTER PERIOD

Please note that we will not be providing services over the Easter weekend – so we will be closed on Friday 10th April (Good Friday) and Monday 13th April (Easter Monday). Everything will be back to normal on Tuesday 14th April, so all that remains is to wish you a very happy Easter. Please heed the government request to stay at home (what an eggcellent excuse to eat all your Easter chocolate!) and keep well.

Best wishes

Wendy

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