

Independent Living News

Spring edition:

March—May 2026



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If you would like a regular copy of the SIL quarterly newsletter, please forward your email address to shelagh.callaghan@s4il.co.uk

Deadline for article contributions in the Summer newsletter is Wednesday, 27th May 2026. Please email your content and any images to shelagh.callaghan@s4il.co.uk

Welcome from SIL's Chief Executive, Euan McPherson



As we welcome the lighter days and renewed energy of spring, we're pleased to share an update on how our charity continues to support people across our homecare, supported living, and Direct Payment Support services. This season brings significant developments across the UK social care landscape - changes that shape not only our work, but also the lives of the individuals and families we support.

Across the country, adult social care remains a major national priority, with the government setting out new ambitions for a more responsive, person-centred national care service for 2026–2027.

Yet despite this positive direction, local authorities continue to manage deep financial pressures, with sector leaders warning that councils face substantial funding gaps and increasing demand for services. These pressures make our role—and the partnership between charities, providers, and communities—more important than ever.

We are proud to continue working with **Providers Unite** to champion the voice of the social care sector and raise awareness of the essential work carried out by care workers and support teams nationwide. Together, we're raising the profile of social care, highlighting the challenges facing providers, and pushing for sustainable long term solutions that protect quality care for all.

This spring also brings some welcome national developments: increases to the National Living Wage and National Minimum Wage, which will benefit hundreds of thousands of care staff across the country and an increase to the Minimum Income Guarantee which will mean many people who pay towards their care costs will be better off.

Casey Review Team Visits SIL



The government has commissioned a review of adult social care led by Dame Louise Casey and on Friday, 12th December, SIL had a visit from the Review Team.

This was quite an honour as we were the only provider in Herefordshire that they visited and we must thank Ellie Chowns MP for recommending us.

Many of SIL's front line and office staff attended the meeting, held at SIL's offices, and were able to share the real lived experience of working within the care sector. SIL's staff were brilliant, speaking honestly about their passion, commitment and love of the work—despite the challenges.

The Review Team were given a good understanding of the issues facing everyone in the sector, but particularly of SIL's professionalism in difficult circumstances. They were impressed by the positive culture that shone through and the knowledge that SIL has from 30 years of delivering care in Herefordshire.

Photo: Euan McPherson and Ellie Chowns MP, with members of the Review Team and SIL's Chair Nick Green.

SIL's Charity of the Year 2026



Herefordshire Growing Point

Breaking barriers, building purpose through nature.



Nurturing Wellbeing for Every Body and Mind

Join our weekly gardening therapy sessions designed specifically for individuals living with mental and physical challenges.

What We Offer:

- Expert Guidance: Led by qualified, experienced horticultural therapists.
- Total Accessibility: A safe, joyful and fully accessible garden environment.
- Holistic Growth: Enhance your mobility, boost cognition, and improve overall wellbeing.
- Community: A friendly space to grow skills, confidence and make lasting friendships.

For more information:
Call: 01432 805705
Email: info@growingpoint.org.uk
Visit: www.growingpoint.org.uk

Each year SIL's staff and trustees choose a local charity to be its charity of the year. Throughout that year every event SIL hosts raises money for the chosen charity, so it's a way of supporting another local charity and of building links across the county.

Over recent years SIL has supported Marches Family Network, Echo, Megan Baker House, Yeleni Therapy & Support and Guide Dogs for the Blind. Last year we supported Accessible Herefordshire and raised over £500.

This year our chosen charity is Herefordshire Growing Point. Based in Credenhill the charity helps people living with physical or mental challenges, or ill health, to enjoy the therapeutic benefits of gardening. They work with adults, young people and children across Herefordshire and their horticultural therapy has been making a real difference to the lives of vulnerable and disabled people for more than 30 years.

One of their horticulturalists ran a wreath making workshop as part of our Christmas Jumper Day event in December and they visited our offices in January to replant our hanging baskets. It is also planned that they will attend our Easter Eggstravaganza on the 9th April with some spring flower activities. The event will take place between 2pm—4pm. Please call 01568 616653 for more details.

Photos: Left, guests at the Christmas Jumper Day making wreaths; right, SIL service user and trustee Dave, with support worker Bill and horticulturalist Katy.



Accessible Activities at The Courtyard



Hereford's fully accessible centre for the arts has a couple of lovely activities this Spring.

On Tuesdays, 11am—12pm, from the 14th April—14th July, **Playing Together** are interactive dementia friendly play sessions for older adult and pre-school children along with companions and parents.

Inclusive Drama runs at 4.30pm on Fridays during term time. Children 6+ can step into the spotlight at a fun, welcoming, and empowering drama class designed especially for young people with SEND. The sessions will build confidence, communication skills, and friendships in a safe and supportive environment.

For information about either of these events, and the whole range of accessible events being hosted this year, visit: courtyard.org.uk or call: 01432 340555

Joy Club Is Back!



Joy Club Juniors

Friday 29 May, 4pm - £6

Get ready to dance! This fun-filled event is specially designed for young people with additional needs and disabilities to enjoy with their families. Expect an incredible atmosphere with glitter, glow sticks, and plenty of energy! This session will be led by Becky Cook.

Young people under 12 must be accompanied by an adult for the whole session.

Joy Club (Adult Rave)

Monday 1 June, 4.30pm - £6

Joy Club is back! Hereford's Inclusive Adult Rave at The Courtyard for adults with learning disabilities.

A chance to have a rave with DJ Andy in the Studio, glitter and glow sticks included!

Both events are supported by The Beefy Boys.





Herefordshire Growing Point



Mental Wellbeing Walks

Step into the Herefordshire landscape to heal, energise, and find inspiration. Join our monthly mental health walks, led by Growing Point's horticultural therapists and body psychotherapist Lauren Jones, to celebrate the joy of nature. It's a space to connect with like-minded people, share experiences, and discover how movement and the outdoors support mental well-being.

It is a very gentle guided walk for anyone experiencing mental challenges.

Funded by Herefordshire Community Foundation.

**Dates: 9th April , 1pm
13th May, 1pm**

The walk will be one hour long, including a break for tea and coffee.

To book, please call 01432 805705 or email
amelia@growingpoint.org.uk



Older Driver Refresher Session



Driver refresher

A two hour practical driving refresher for Herefordshire residents aged 70 or over



Twitter Facebook Instagram Herefordshire Council

herefordshire.gov.uk

When you reach the age of 70 you will need to renew your driving licence if you wish to continue driving. To help older drivers feel more confident and to be updated on current driving methods, Herefordshire Council is offering a subsidised refresher session.

To qualify you must be aged 70 years or over and pay your Council Tax to Herefordshire Council. The session will last up to 2 hours in your own car and cost £20, but note the fee cannot be refunded if you cancel after the session date is booked.

On receipt of your application an Approved Driving Instructor will contact you and arrange a time and place to meet. An experienced instructor will offer guidance, tips and information tailored to your specific needs and a written assessment will be posted to you with feedback.

Before applying you need to make sure all your driving

documents are correct, driving licence, MOT, road tax and insurance.

The refresher is not a driving test or a medical driving assessment. For more information about the driving refresher email roadsafetyeducation@herefordshire.gov.uk or call 01432 260946.

Chatty Café Launched

Community Power is a local charity dedicated to supporting and connecting communities across Herefordshire — and they are delighted to be launching Hereford's very first Chatty Café!

Every Monday from 10.00am – 12.00pm, the Chatter & Natter sessions offer a warm, friendly space where people of all ages and backgrounds can drop in, enjoy a drink, share a chat and make new connections.

Whether you fancy a good natter, a gentle conversation or simply being around friendly faces, you'll find a seat at the table. Their goal is simple: to reduce isolation, spark friendships and bring people together, one conversation at a time. Everyone is welcome, no booking needed... just turn up and say hello! If you would like to volunteer to help host a Chatter & Natter table at this venue complete the form at: thechattycafescheme.co.uk/volunteer/table-volunteer-application/



Singing for the Brain



Singing for the Brain brings together those living with dementia and their partners/carers in a friendly, fun and social environment.

There are two groups in Herefordshire, one in Ross on Wye, which meets at Walford Village Hall, Walford Road, Walford, Ross-on-Wye, HR9 5QS and one in Hereford, held in St Martins Church Hall, Ross Road, Hereford, HR2 7RJ.

The Ross on Wye group will meet on the following Wednesdays between 2pm—3.30pm: 4,11,18,25 March, 1, 22,29 April and 6 and 13 May.

The Hereford group is scheduled to meet between 10.30am—12pm on the same dates.

There is no charge for attending, but a suggested donation of £2 per person would be welcomed.

For more information call 07756 771134 or email denise.wood@alzheimers.org.uk



Rejuvenate!

On the first Thursday each month you can get crafty with the Rejuvenate! team, who meet at The Courtyard, Edgar Street, Hereford, HR94 9JR, between 10.30—12.30pm.

Rejuvenate! has been running for many years with the aim of helping carers get back to enjoying some form of creativity—which is often one of the first things to go amongst caring responsibilities.

Rejuvenate! is a community group supporting Carers and former Carers in Herefordshire through its newsletter, social media and email.

The Rejuvenation, their free newsletter, is packed with ideas, articles and information to help you stay connected and inspired. They feature artists, places of interest and share links to local support.

To receive your free copy please email carersofherefordshire@outlook.com





UK Government

NHS



**I MAY HAVE SHINGLES
PHARMACY**

Providing NHS services

NHS

Dispose of
unwanted
medicines at
this pharmacy



Think pharmacy first

Shingles? Your pharmacist can now provide treatment or some prescription medicine, if needed, for seven common conditions, without you seeing a GP.

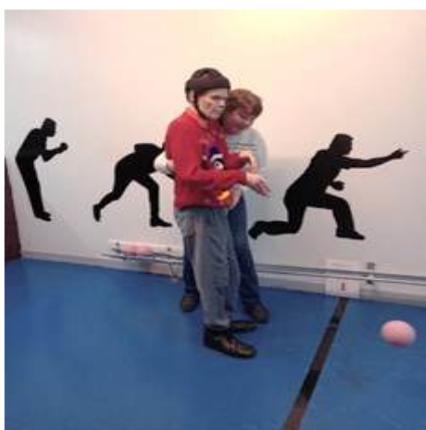
Find out more: [nhs.uk/thinkpharmacyfirst](https://www.nhs.uk/thinkpharmacyfirst)

Subject to age eligibility, including 18 years and over for shingles prescription medicine.
Service available at majority of pharmacies.

Winter Snapshots from Independent Living at Home

Our service users have sent us lots of photos of what they've been up to during the past few months. We enjoy seeing how busy they've been, so we'd like to share with you some ILH snapshots from the Winter of 2025-26.

Thanks to all our support workers who take the photos.



Winter Snapshots from Homecare Services

Homecare support workers have been making some short videos of service users, but unfortunately we can't share those here! But, we have lots of lovely photos below.

If you'd like to see the videos you'll need to keep your eyes open on SIL's Facebook and Instagram!



Spring Plant Fair



29th April 2026, 10:30am – 4pm

Garnons, Byford, Hereford, HR4 7JX

Entrance £8 per person



We are delighted to hold our annual plant fair at **Garnons** again this year. Specialist nurseries, horticulturists, and makers of garden-related products will be offering early-season inspiration. Visitors will also enjoy the rare chance to explore the beautiful parkland and walled garden. Unfortunately due to lambing, **no dogs allowed**, other than assistance dogs.

Delicious home-made refreshments available all day.

Please bring cash to pay for entry and purchases. Card payments are accepted, but Wi-Fi can be unreliable.

All funds will support the work of The Cart Shed Charity. We use horticulture and woodland based crafts to empower individuals to self-manage their mental and physical health effectively. In 2017 the Charity was awarded the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service.

Further information:

01544 318231

www.thecartshed.co.uk

Reg Charity No 1167802



Mayglöthing



Signs & Labels
HEREFORD



Hidden Disabilities Sunflower



Many people live with disabilities or health conditions that are not immediately visible. These can include neurological conditions, chronic pain, autism, learning disabilities, mental health conditions, respiratory illnesses and many other long-term health issues.

The Hidden Disabilities Sunflower scheme offers a simple, voluntary way for someone to signal that they may need additional understanding, patience or assistance.

Originally introduced in the UK in 2016 at Gatwick Airport, the initiative has grown into an internationally recognised programme. Today, the sunflower symbol is used across the UK and worldwide.

Wearing the Sunflower does not mean someone is asking for special treatment. Instead, it indicates that they may:

- Need more time
- Require clearer communication
- Benefit from additional support
- Need patience or understanding during interactions

The scheme is entirely voluntary. People choose when and where to wear the Sunflower, depending on how they are feeling and the situation they are in.

Lanyards can be bought from the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower website: hdsunflower.com.uk and cost from £6.

Serious Mental Illness

Healthwatch Herefordshire is running a project to better understand the barriers people living with Serious Mental Illness (SMI) face when trying to access healthcare. This could include challenges like booking appointments, communication difficulties, stigma, transport issues, long waits, or simply not knowing where to turn.

They particularly want to speak with people living with conditions such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, or other psychotic illnesses, and with people carers, family members or friends supporting someone with an SMI. Your experiences, good or bad, can help shape improvements and make services more accessible for others. Conversations can be informal, confidential, and will always be handled sensitively.

If you would like to share your experiences email: info@healthwatchherefordshire.co.uk to find out how to get involved.



Herefordshire Growing Point

Rewilding Without Barriers

A 6-Week Journey into the World of Birds
Discover. Connect. Protect.

Explore the wonder of birds! Discover how to identify local species, protect their future, and create a thriving backyard sanctuary, specifically for people living with acquired brain injuries and learning disabilities.

Course Details:

Begins: Monday, 9th March 2026

Duration: 6 Weeks

Time: 10:30 AM — 2:30 PM

Place: Herefordshire Growing Point

To register telephone 01432 805705



Experience the joy of nature:

- Bird Identification
- Building bird boxes
- Planting for birds
- Bird habitats
- Bird Song



Autism Support in Herefordshire



Autism West Midlands (AWM) run an Autism Confident programme which is another form of support growing rapidly in popularity! During this programme the team discuss different characteristics of autism over 6 weeks, as part of a small, supportive group where individuals meet to seek knowledge and support and develop further understanding of their autism.

The topics covered are: Autism Awareness, Social Communication, Flexibility of Thought, Sensory, Anxiety and Disclosure. This programme is ideal for those who have received a recent diagnosis or want to understand more about their diagnosis. Similar to their 1:1 sessions, this programme can also be offered both face to face and via Microsoft Teams.

To access either their 1:1 support or the Autism confident programme you can contact them at: herefordwrcs@autismwestmidlands.org.uk or call 0121 450 7575

Discussion Forum

AWM created a discussion forum to offer an online space for autistic individuals in the Herefordshire and Worcestershire area to discuss topics including organisations who can offer support, characteristics of autism, financial benefits, reasonable adjustments and so much more!

All activity within this discussion forum is moderated and approved by the admin team during Monday-Friday from 9am-5pm.

To join the discussion forum, visit: www.facebook.com/groups/awmherefordwrcsdiscussion

Disabled Persons Railcard



From 1st March the Disabled Persons Railcard (DPRC), which offers 33% off rail travel, will be expanded to help more people apply for the card using documents they already have, eg a Blue Badge, rather than having to fill in more paperwork.

From September, in the second phase, eligibility will be available to a wider range of people, to include those with hidden disabilities.

These will require clinical or professional evidence, but will include some long-term or degenerative medical conditions and neurodiversity, not eligible criteria at the moment.

These reforms form part of a wider commitment to removing barriers that prevent people from travelling with confidence. By aligning DPRC evidence with documents already used by other transport schemes and by developing clearer guidance for more complex assessments, the industry aims to make the application process simpler and more customer-friendly.

SIL's Annual General Meeting - Thursday, 1st October.

This will be a very special event as we are celebrating **30 years** of supporting people in Herefordshire.

Please email shelagh.callaghan@s4il.co.uk if you would like to be sent an invitation and are not already on our mailing list.



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discover what else you can
do with the NHS App today.

