

Information and news for disabled and older people and family carers

# Independent Living News



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#partofthesolution - Promoting independence for over twenty years

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If you would like a regular copy of the SIL newsletter, and to help us adhere to our environmental policy to reduce production and postage costs, please forward your email address details to [shelagh.callaghan@s4il.co.uk](mailto:shelagh.callaghan@s4il.co.uk)

Deadline for article contributions in the Winter newsletter is Friday, 30th October 2020. Email to [shelagh.callaghan@s4il.co.uk](mailto:shelagh.callaghan@s4il.co.uk) or post to the address on the back of this newsletter. Don't forget the prize for every star letter/article printed is £25.



Welcome to our Autumn Newsletter,

Thank you all for continuing to support SIL during these interesting times. We have worked hard to minimise the impact of Covid-19 to any of our customers and we really appreciate your understanding when we have had to change things to ensure we meet with the rapidly changing guidance and more importantly, to keep you and our staff safe.

We now know that Covid-19 is likely to be with us for a while yet, with even the World Health Organisation stating recently that a viable vaccine could be some way off, if indeed one is ever found. The reality for us all is that the pandemic has really made us think differently about things and going forward we need to learn the lessons, should we see a similar or even more virulent pandemic in the future.

One of the positives that has come out of the pandemic is the recognition of front-line social care staff. About 90% of SIL's staff fall into this category, whether they work in Independent Living at Home (ILH), SIL Homecare or Direct Payment Support Services (DPSS). I am sure like us you will have been aware of their commitment and dedication, which has allowed us to continue to provide our services.

Nationally there has been a real increase in awareness of the importance of all key workers, the people who keep the country going, and although that has at times felt very NHS focussed, I think now more than ever there is much greater understanding and respect for support workers and care staff providing services in people own homes.

It is a shame therefore that the recognition hasn't as yet been picked up nationally by way of a sustainable plan and funding agreement for social care, and even the much promoted 'Green Care Badges' have not been forthcoming.

I am pleased to say that SIL does recognise the commitment and dedication of our staff and we have written to them individually to confirm this and have funded a 'Blue Light Card' for each of them, which gives access to a range of discounts and benefits.

Thank you again for your continued support and I look forward to the day when we can invite you to one of our events at our refurbished offices.

**Euan**

Caveat: Please note we print articles provided by third party organisations in good faith. SIL takes no responsibility for the accuracy of the information or content. Dates and times of events and activities are correct at the time of going to print.

## New look website coming soon



It's almost five years ago that our website [www.s4il.co.uk](http://www.s4il.co.uk) was last reviewed and since then SIL has new services, a new look and new technology at our fingertips. So, it's time to update and refresh but, as the website is there for you, we're asking - what do you want to see? To get you started, maybe think about these questions:

- When you last looked at our website, what were you looking for? Did you find it?
- What do you like about our current look?
- Is there anything that doesn't work for you?
- What would you like to see?
- Do you have favourite websites that just work for you? What do you like about them?



You can help us to make our website a great place to find information by sending your ideas on how you think it might be improved to [paula.palmer@s4il.co.uk](mailto:paula.palmer@s4il.co.uk)

## Face Mask Exemption Badges



We are all aware by now that in certain situations in both England and Wales face masks have to be worn. While for most people wearing a face mask is nothing more than a mild inconvenience, for some people with visible and hidden disabilities wearing a mask is something they are unable to do. However, it is an unfortunate fact that a number of people, especially those with a hidden disability, are often made to feel uncomfortable about not wearing a mask through unkind comments, or because they are challenged by those tasked with ensuring masks are worn. The Government and several charities have recognised this and there are now several ways you can show you don't have to wear a face covering.



There is a downloadable card on the .gov website which you can use on your mobile phone: [assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/903452/Exemption\\_from\\_face\\_covering\\_badge\\_for\\_mobile\\_phone.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/903452/Exemption_from_face_covering_badge_for_mobile_phone.pdf)

Or there are several badges available if a phone is not a suitable method of communication. The charity Euan's Guide is providing free 'face mask exempt' badges to help people who cannot wear a face covering to get out and travel without harassment. Visit [EuansGuide.com/badge](http://EuansGuide.com/badge)

If wearing a badge is difficult, a lanyard can be obtained from Hidden Disabilities. The lanyard and exempt card costs 55p. Visit: [hiddendisabilitiesstore.com/shop.html](http://hiddendisabilitiesstore.com/shop.html)

# Happy First Birthday to SIL's Homecare Services



A year ago a new service joined the SIL family when it acquired Abelia Homecare Services. The new team of support workers smoothly moved across to join our existing staff, and service users were supported with "business as usual" care.

The service was renamed SIL Homecare Services and has added a whole new dimension to the care we provide. No longer limited to 3 hour+ visits, we can now provide 30 minute care calls and this means that more people can afford to benefit from the same outstanding care and support for which SIL is well known.

We now provide a whole range of support from a short companion call, to the 24 hour, seven day a week complex care – and everything in between.

In the past year SIL's Homecare Services has grown from strength to strength and has quickly become a valuable part of the organisation and well respected by colleagues and service users for the team's outstanding professionalism and commitment.

The team were just about growing used to a new way of working within SIL, when the floods hit Herefordshire at the beginning of the year. Somehow, support workers managed to reach service users, sometimes resorting to walking through floods in their wellies, and everyone received the care they needed. That hurdle was successfully jumped, when of course Coronavirus struck!

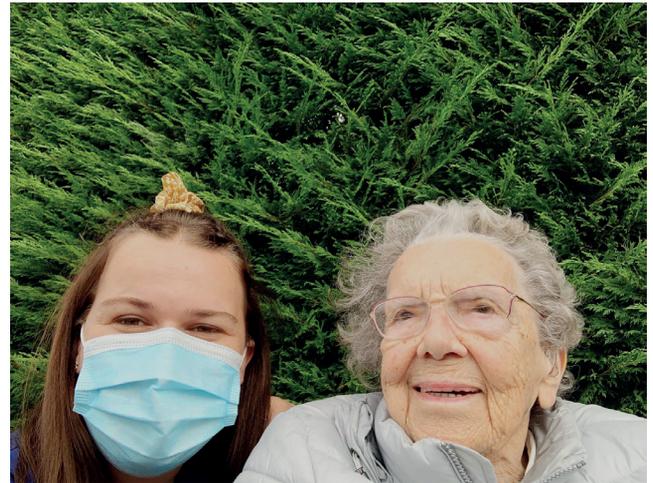


Suddenly, along with all SIL staff the office staff found themselves managing the support workers from home and dealing with the day to day running of the service from a distance. However, as with all our staff the challenge was met with good humour and hard work to ensure that service users still had the support they needed to enable them to keep safe at home.

All the staff within our Homecare Services team have undergone the same rigorous training as our other support workers, including infection control and how to safely prevent transmission of diseases. We also provide the correct level of personal protective equipment (PPE) to our staff and they are all trained on how to use it properly to protect the people they support as well as themselves.

We are so proud of what the new Homecare Service has achieved in the past twelve months and are delighted that the decision we took to acquire the business back in the summer of 2019 was the right one. We knew the old business shared our values and caring ethos, but what we couldn't know was how quickly it would become an essential part of our services.

Happy Birthday Homecare Services!!



# Looking for a Change?



The current pandemic has closed many businesses meaning that for many it's time to change career. If you, or someone you know is in this situation, SIL's support worker roles are not only rewarding and fulfilling, but provide job security, in a caring, supportive environment.

We support people to live independently in their own homes and the support work can vary from a short companionship visit, right through to 24/7 complex care. SIL offers a wide range of flexible working arrangements, so whether you're looking for full or part time hours; 24 hours at a time or 30 minute calls we can help find the role that suits your personal circumstances. We also offer zero-hour contracts for those that find it hard to commit to set working hours. SIL is CQC registered GOOD across all categories; offers excellent training and the opportunity for career progression; a staff discount card and rates of pay above the industry average. You can see why we have excellent staff retention rates!

Full training is provided and no previous experience is required. If you doubt that, then you might like to know our Registered Manager started life in a job centre and we have support workers from a huge range of backgrounds including working in a fast-food restaurant; a panel beater and a hairdresser.

If you're ready for a change then let us know! You can submit your CV to: [hr@s4il.co.uk](mailto:hr@s4il.co.uk) or for an application pack please contact the HR Team on 01568 616653.



# Join us and become a Trustee



Services for Independent Living has been supporting people since 1996 and is constantly adapting to meet the needs of our service users and respond to the challenges thrown up with changes in social care.

We now want to expand our Board membership and are looking for new trustees to help shape the future growth of this successful not-for-profit organisation.

By becoming a trustee you will make a real difference to the lives of the people we support and also help to develop the business and ensure it thrives for another 25 years and beyond. As a trustee we ask that you attend the monthly Board meetings, which last around two hours.

We require trustees to read the papers that are sent out the previous week to ensure they have an understanding of the business which will be discussed; to be prepared to use your skills and experience to join in discussions at the meetings; and be willing to undertake training offered to trustees from time to time to ensure they are up to date with SIL's working practices and their responsibilities as a trustee.

Angela Higham, Chair of SIL's Trustees and a service user, said: "We would especially welcome anyone who is living with a disability or is a family carer. An understanding of health or social care policy is desirable, and experience within a financial, management or personnel role would be helpful.

"SIL will pay your travel expenses, but more importantly this role offers you the chance to learn new skills and keep existing ones up to date."

If you would like to find out more, please contact one of our trustees or the CEO, Euan McPherson. You are most welcome to join a Board meeting as an observer if you would like to see how Board meetings are conducted. For more information please call us on 01568 616653 or email: [contactus@s4il.co.uk](mailto:contactus@s4il.co.uk)



**Angela Higham, Chair of SIL's Board of Trustees**

## SIL AGM



This year's AGM, scheduled for Thursday, 1st October, will be a little different. Because of Coronavirus, it will be a "virtual" event. The event will include all the usual formal business as well as the ILH awards, a regular part of the format for many years. More information about how to join will be posted on the SIL website nearer the time so please keep checking to find out how you can take part.

# In2 Programme



IN2 is a flexible and free programme for 15-24 year olds in Herefordshire that offers support to help them plan and achieve their next steps. The aim of this programme is to help provide the skills and confidence needed to make the right choices for the future. Support includes: Personal skills – building resilience and managing stress and anxiety; further education; employment support; and helping to increase confidence and motivation.



Any young person aged between 15 -24 years of age and who is not in education, employment or training; or who is at risk of falling into one of these, can self-refer or be referred by parents or support services, by contacting Landau's IN2 Co-ordinator, Jacob Hawkins, [Jacob.Hawkins@landau.co.uk](mailto:Jacob.Hawkins@landau.co.uk)

This project is delivered through the work of partner organisations located in Herefordshire and is funded by the European Social Fund and the Education & Skills Funding Agency.

# SIL Offices Reopen



At the end of March, following Government guidance, SIL closed its doors and office staff began to find their way through the new experience of home working. Five months on and the office has been declared COVID safe, meaning staff can return to their desks, if they would prefer to do this. There will be a gradual return to "normal" office working, but in the meantime services to you will remain unaffected, as they have throughout the pandemic.



However, it will be a very different office to the one they left in March. Since then the office has undergone a huge refurbishment bringing it into the 21st century. We invite people as always to visit us in the offices, but due to current restrictions we ask that you contact us first and make an appointment.

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