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Photo Credit: Emmy, Oakleaf Client

Autumn/Winter 2021

At Oakleaf, we aim to make our services accessible to all. However, from the start of Covid-19 all our support had to be delivered remotely, meaning we needed to form a separate, online community for clients.

The stress and the social disruption caused by the pandemic left many of our clients feeling lost, lonely, anxious, depressed and uncertain about the future. As a team, we felt it was incredibly important that we could continue to show that no matter what, support is always available.

Now, as we move through autumn, we continue to provide support both online and in-person at Oakleaf HQ and outreach locations - with Covid-19 safety procedures in place.

We have expanded our support by making sure our wellbeing activities, IT training, support groups, one-to-one emotional support and counselling is available in-person, online and over the phone; meaning every one of our clients has access to support should they need it.

We continue to increase the variety of our virtual and face-to-face wellbeing activities and workshops now that restrictions have been lifted, running 4-6 activities every day. Some of our recent sessions include: our Wildlife group, Massage Therapy, Neuro-Linguistic Programming, Fitness sessions at ActivZone Gym, Football, Photography, Wellbeing Walks, Social Anxiety course, Women's group, Choir, our Kickstart Wellbeing Course and many more.

Our Upholstery and Garden Maintenance training courses have resumed while our IT training courses are now being offered online as well as in-person. You can view our current client calendar of wellbeing activities on our website with additional information regarding our services, which is updated regularly.

If you have any queries or comments about our services, please do get in touch: info@oakleaf-enterprise.org.

MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING AWARDS



We are thrilled to announce that Oakleaf has been shortlisted for the Mental Health and Wellbeing Awards 2021. These UK-wide awards are a celebration of excellence in mental health and wellbeing interventions, and we are very grateful to have been chosen alongside other deserving charities.

WORLD MENTAL HEALTH DAY

This year's theme for World Mental Health Day on Sunday 10th October is 'Mental Health in an Unequal World'.

The day provides an opportunity to advocate making quality mental health care for all a reality, and to empower people to look after their own mental health and provide support to others.

This has been a mental health pandemic every bit as much as it has been a physical health pandemic. The need for meaningful support in our local communities has become paramount as we've navigated numerous challenges. However, many communities and groups who experience poorer outcomes are overlooked. For example, Surrey is perceived to be an affluent county, yet research finds that a dozen Surrey wards have a higher rate of mental health issues among children and young people than the national average. (1)

One of the biggest obstacles for people struggling with mental ill-health is confronting societal stigma and misconceptions, making it incredibly difficult to seek out support. It is therefore so important that we open our eyes to the inequalities that exist on our doorstep and make it known that help is and always will be available to those who need it.

(1) Surrey JSNA Mental Health, 2016

ADDITIONS TO OAKLEAF STAFF

We were delighted to welcome lots of new faces to the Oakleaf team this year.



MIKE OVER

EMPLOYMENT ADVISOR



LORENA CEBRIAN

EMPLOYMENT ADVISOR



MICHELLE WALKER

LEAD ADMINISTRATOR



ALEX ANDERSON

COUNSELLING SERVICES ADMINISTRATOR



CHLOE NORRIS

SOCIAL ENTERPRISE ASSISTANT



TONI MITCHELL

SOCIAL ENTERPRISE ASSISTANT



RUPERT FARBRIDGE

HORTICULTURE ASSISTANT



GEORGE HARAKOPOULOS

IT ASSISTANT

ELAINE'S STORY

We recently had the privilege of sitting down and filming Elaine, one of our clients, who shares her story and experiences during her time at Oakleaf and throughout the pandemic.

"I was on my own, I had a really good job, which paid my mortgage. I was really lucky. I had a great life. Then I got ill, couldn't pay the mortgage, basically lost

everything and ended up in Farnham Road Hospital.

You think it can't happen to you. I trotted around in a suit with a clipboard, I managed staff, I ran meetings... and then I lost my

home and I lost my job, and the only way to get me through the day was drinking and smoking. I know it wasn't the answer, but it blurred the edges, so that's what I did for a long time, and then I had a stroke.

People would mention Oakleaf because there was no structure in my life. I didn't want to go at first but eventually one day decided to stop by. I did a yoga class and really enjoyed it. I liked the people; they were very nice. No one would ask anything that made you feel uncomfortable, there was no judgment. It was a difficult thing to get here, to get through the door... but it's just been amazing.

The pandemic left me feeling really isolated;

standing outside my dad's bungalow and not being able to go in and give him a hug; it really magnified my pre-existing issues I had. I think Oakleaf was ahead of everyone else in getting things that you could do online really quickly, like yoga, art and so on.

Oakleaf has given me more confidence. I'm feeling fitter, I'm learning art, I'm learning things I haven't expected to, and there's always more being added. It has been my way forward. At Oakleaf I feel like I walk into another world where time passes and I don't think about the bad things... feeling depressed, feeling fed up. My mind has been happy. I'm actually happy for the first time in a long time and I'm just really grateful.

I'm ashamed to say that I didn't know places like this could exist and make such a difference - it didn't touch my world. In my nice shiny office in my lovely big building... I didn't know that people could struggle so much or could be in so much pain. To my shame, I thought that people who were struggling with mental health issues were frightening or weird. I didn't understand. But it's not true. We've all got different stuff going on... but they're just people... we're just people. It can be anyone, regardless of your financial or social situation and it's that stigma that needs to go."

[You can also view Elaine's full story on the Oakleaf YouTube channel.](#)

COUNSELLING SERVICES

We are pleased that our counselling provision has expanded over the last year. Between April 2020 and March 2021, we doubled our counselling capacity and held 1,263 counselling sessions.

Our counselling services are now available in the evenings in addition to normal working hours, and our waiting list has reduced significantly. To find out more, [visit our website.](#)



AN EVENING WITH OAKLEAF

We had a wonderful time at our supporter event 'An Evening with Oakleaf' on 26th August. We were delighted to bring together some of Oakleaf's key local supporters to thank them for their support before and during the pandemic, highlighting our work over the past 18 months. We look forward to continuing to support the mental health of people throughout Surrey as we move through 2021 into 2022.



MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID TRAINING

We would like to express sincere thanks to the Guildford Pavilion for continuing to welcome us to their beautiful facility to host both our Adult and Youth Mental Health First Aid courses.

To find out more about the training or if you would like to book your place on an upcoming course, please visit our website or email jenclay@oakleaf-enterprise.org



OAKLEAF CLIENT BARBECUE

We were delighted to hold our annual Client Barbecue at Oakleaf on 22nd September for the first time since 2019. It was an enjoyable afternoon bringing together the Oakleaf community after all the pandemic challenges. The weather cooperated and in addition to a delicious barbecue, we had entertainment from the talented Oakleaf choir, our volunteer saxophonist Ian and even a magician.

A big thank you to all clients who attended, and also to the volunteers who helped make it a success including C&C Group, Lovetts Solicitors, WSP and Smith and Williamson. Also a huge thank you to Zurich Community Trust and Virgin Media O2 Together Fund for their financial support.



OAKLEAF'S FUTURE

Has Oakleaf had a positive impact on you, your friends or family members during the pandemic?

If the answer to this question is a confident 'Yes!', please could you consider leaving a gift in your will to help our work to continue?

The cause of mental health has never had a higher profile; a significant consequence of the pandemic is that, finally, there is recognition that positive wellbeing is important to everyone. Alongside this realisation has been a huge increase in the demand for our work.

Your support would be highly appreciated. We always ask that everyone making a will considers providing for their family first, but if you are thinking of making or amending your will this winter, we would be most grateful if you could make a gift to support the ongoing delivery of our vital mental health support for local people. Thank you.



SURREY COMMUNITY PROJECTS FUND

Oakleaf has been based at our Walnut Tree Close premises since 1995. There are many positives to this location, including being near transport links, the town centre and the beautiful river Wey – and yet our building looks tired and we would dearly love to greet clients at a more modern and comfortable place, where the building better reflects the friendly welcome inside.

We might now have the chance to transform the Oakleaf experience. Your Fund Surrey is a pot of funding from Surrey County Council. They seek to use this for capital projects, to improve community groups such as Oakleaf. If we are successful with our application, we plan to buy a new home for Oakleaf, one where we can deliver all our usual services but still within Guildford.

We would be delighted if you might help us to demonstrate local support for our project by visiting our page on the [Your Fund Surrey website](#) and agreeing with the 111 people who already support our idea.

We are still seeking our precise location within Guildford for the new Oakleaf premises. Please do get in touch if you know of suitable premises, which we could purchase and adapt as our new headquarters.

CLIENT SATISFACTION SURVEY

We conducted a Client Satisfaction Survey in August 2021 with feedback from our clients. While the impact of the pandemic was clear, it was great to see the positive impact Oakleaf has had.

In our August 2021 survey

100%

of clients agreed that **Oakleaf helped them improve their mental wellbeing**



In our August 2021 survey

96%

of clients agreed that **Oakleaf helped them feel less isolated**



"Oakleaf has encouraged me to step outside my comfort zone when it comes to my social anxiety. The staff have been endlessly supportive and caring throughout my time as a client."

"Oakleaf saved my life, helped me feel more positive about getting a future and pulled me back from the edge a lot of times."

"Oakleaf helped minimise my slips. Built my confidence, enabled me to see things more positively. Got me to try new things; made me feel that I matter, help is always available and I'm not alone."



We were so grateful for invaluable support from the [Community Foundation for Surrey](#) before and during the pandemic.

Their Coronavirus Response Fund helped ensure Oakleaf could develop and maintain remote support such our 'Check-in and Chat' sessions, wellbeing activities and support groups; it also meant we could accommodate more clients, including those too anxious to attend face-to-face sessions or who resided further away.

"We were able to provide a 'home away from home' for clients at a time when conversations surrounding mental health were needed more than ever."

- **Kelvin, Oakleaf Outreach Engagement Project Lead**



We are thrilled to have been awarded £5,000 from Ansvor as part of their 2021 Community Campaign! This grant will fund the next iteration of our Kickstart Wellbeing Programme.



KICKSTART WELLBEING PROGRAMME

Here at Oakleaf, we are pleased to continue running our Kickstart Wellbeing programme, helping clients take important steps towards a more positive and healthy lifestyle. The 12-week intensive course enables clients to improve their physical health and in turn, impact positively on their mental wellbeing.

"I have been to many gyms and classes in my years but at 57, this course has seen the most significant change in me. I now look at exercise techniques as well as what I fuel my body with differently.

It has made my mind stronger and helped my self- esteem and confidence.

I feel I can face the strange world we live in with a better stride and a smile on my face. " - **Oakleaf Client**

OAKLEAF AT HOME

What matters this Christmas?

Thoughtful gifts from Oakleaf At Home.

Chloe and Toni's journeys to recovery have been very personal but they both share the same desire and passion to get back into the workplace and to enjoy the very real

mental health benefits that come with employment and working as part of a team.

Did you know just 8 hours of paid employment a week creates the same mental health benefits as working a 40-hour week? ⁽¹⁾ Our social enterprises aim to provide real-world work experience in a supported environment creating a stepping stone back into work.

Oakleaf At Home is launching in October to showcase and celebrate the abundance of creative talent and hard work that lies within Oakleaf.

We are bringing a stunning and stylish range of home accessories and gifts to you, available at

www.oakleafathome.com or through Oakleaf's main website. Our cushions feature the unique artwork of some of our clients and are hand made to the highest craftsmanship drawing on the expert tuition delivered in our upholstery workshop.

Two months into the setting up of Oakleaf At Home, Chloe and Toni are gaining work experience and transferable skills and, not to forget, producing beautiful cushions. All profits from sales will be reinvested into Oakleaf Enterprise to create more employment opportunities and support those looking to get back into work.

When you draw up your Christmas list this year, add a little bit more.

(1) Cambridge University and University of Salford, 2019



CHRISTMAS CARDS

We are proud to announce that our new range of Oakleaf at Home Christmas cards will be on sale shortly. We have three unique designs, each featuring beautiful artwork from our clients. 100% of the proceeds from sales are reinvested into Oakleaf Enterprise.

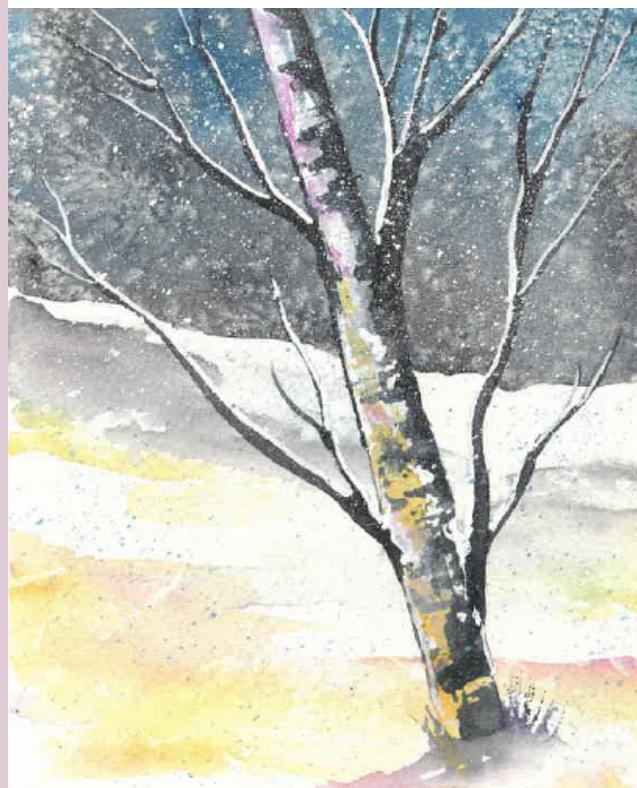
Pack of 10 A6 size cards, plus envelopes, for £5.00.

Order yours now:

info@oakleafathome.com

OAKLEAF
AT **HOME**

Beautiful design for better wellbeing 



We truly appreciate all our supporters and will continue to do all we can to look after the mental health and wellbeing of the Oakleaf community.

If you are able to make a donation to Oakleaf and help fund vital mental health, employment and wellbeing support, we would be most grateful. If you are interested in supporting Oakleaf in any way, please get in touch by emailing:

jenclay@oakleaf-enterprise.org

or phoning:

01483 303 649

For updates on Oakleaf and all things mental health, be sure to follow us on social media:



@_Oakleaf



@Oakleaf_Enterprise



Oakleaf Enterprise



Oakleaf

Website: www.oakleaf-enterprise.org

Email: info@oakleaf-enterprise.org

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oakleaf 
MAKING LIFE WORK WITH MENTAL ILLNESS

NEWS

