

Paradise News



SUMMER 2026

**Celebrating
community at
Paradise Open Day**

HOPE
programme
opens up
workplace
opportunities

PARADISE SERVES UP A
SCOOP of
CREATIVITY
AT SOMERSET ICE-CREAM PARLOUR



Welcome

Hello and welcome to the latest edition of Paradise News!

Looking back over the past few months, there is much to celebrate at Paradise House, from creative community projects to exciting new opportunities that support people to develop skills, confidence and independence.

‘...the warm and welcoming community spirit that makes Paradise House such a special place.’

One particularly significant development has been the new employment pathways opening up through the HOPE (Helping Others Progress in Employment) programme at SGS College. It’s been wonderful to see adults at Paradise House learning practical workplace skills and beginning to explore voluntary and paid work. Experiences such as attending a local job fair and meeting employers directly are important steps towards fostering independence, strengthening workplace skills and widening future possibilities.

Creativity and community partnership have also continued to flourish. From designing an imaginative under-the-sea themed Easter egg for the Painswick Easter Trail to bringing “Sherlock” the sheep to life for St Mary’s Church, the talent, teamwork and enthusiasm shown by everyone involved has been remarkable. These projects not only showcase artistic skills but also highlight the value of working together with local organisations and celebrating shared community events.

Our annual Summer Open Day was another fantastic occasion, bringing together families, friends, staff and visitors to enjoy live music, art activities, wellbeing sessions and, of course, some incredible cakes and refreshments. Events like these are a wonderful reminder of the warm and welcoming community spirit that makes Paradise House such a special place.

On behalf of everyone here, I’d like to wish all people living at Paradise House, their families, friends and staff a very happy and enjoyable summer. We look forward to sharing more news with you later in the year.



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A proper good day out in the

Black Country

Paradise House enjoyed a proper good day out at the Black Country Living Museum.



The award-winning open-air attraction in Dudley invites visitors to leave the 21st century behind and experience the sights, sounds, smells and tastes of the Black Country's past.

Heather, Charlotte, Rachel, Jenny, and Erik were supported by the Paradise activities team as they explored the 29-acre living museum, which has been recognised as one of England's best large visitor attractions.

The museum is made up of carefully reconstructed shops, houses, and industrial workshops that tell the story of life in the Black Country across more than 250 years of history.

Throughout the visit, the group explored recreated streets filled with historic characters sharing stories about what it was like to live and work during the Industrial Revolution and beyond.

A particular highlight was the museum's 1940s–1960s area, where visitors could spot vintage transport, step inside traditional shops and houses, and even visit the iconic red telephone boxes – including one featuring the famous “Talking Clock.”

The museum's collection includes more than 100,000 objects, ranging from small personal items and letters to larger industrial artefacts such as buses and anchors. Travelling on a vintage bus around the site gave everyone a real sense of stepping back in time and experiencing the region's history first-hand.

Chloe Hubbard (Adult Activities Coordinator) said: “It was wonderful to see everyone so engaged throughout the visit. The museum really brings history to life in such a hands-on and meaningful way, and there was so much to explore together. The vintage bus ride and the old-fashioned streets and telephone boxes were definite highlights of the day.”



HOPE COURSE

OPENS UP EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR PEOPLE LIVING AT PARADISE

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New employment opportunities are opening up for adults at Paradise House!

People living there are taking bold steps towards working life through the HOPE (Helping Others Progress in Employment) Agency course at South Gloucestershire and Stroud College (SGS).

The 16-week programme equips participants with practical employability skills while giving them the full college experience, helping them gain confidence and independence as they explore voluntary and paid work opportunities.

The course teaches practical skills, from CV writing and interview techniques to communication and workplace confidence. Recently, the group attended a job fair in Cheltenham, speaking directly with employers about potential opportunities and gaining first-hand experience of the recruitment process.

Mark Stanley (Person-Centred Skills Facilitator) is leading the support for adults on this journey. Mark, who joined Novalis in 2008 and worked as a Senior Care Worker until last August, is now focused on helping adults find meaningful voluntary and paid employment opportunities.

"It's inspiring to see the adults engage so positively with the HOPE course," he said. "They're not just learning skills – they're discovering what they're capable of and taking real steps towards independence and employment."

"Since moving into this role, a big part of my focus has been on finding meaningful voluntary and paid work for people living at Paradise House. The HOPE course is a fantastic stepping stone – it's helping people build the confidence and skills they need to take that next step."

The HOPE Agency is a free programme that helps adults with learning difficulties, disabilities, or mental health conditions find long-term employment with inclusive employers who value their talents. Participants benefit from personalised support, one-to-one coaching, and ongoing guidance, even after starting a job.

Mark added: "What makes HOPE unique is its personalised approach. Each adult has a tailored employment plan and continues to receive support once they start working, helping them succeed and develop further."

According to Mark, Shelley and Laurence are already making the most of the experience. "Shelley has shown a real quest for learning, and both she and Laurence have embraced the whole college environment. Laurence already has a friend studying there and has been using his student card for discounts at pubs and other local spots. It's fantastic to see them enjoying college life while building skills for their future."

Shelley is also putting her learning into practice – she works at the Sue Ryder charity shop in Stroud and recently asked to take on extra hours. She's now employed for an additional two hours every Saturday, a clear sign of her confidence and ambition.

With the combination of support from Mark and the HOPE team at SGS, adults at Paradise House are turning aspiration into real opportunity, building skills, confidence and independence along the way.

'What makes HOPE unique is its personalised approach.'

ALL WELCOME *at* PARADISE OPEN DAY



Paradise House welcomed families, friends and members of the local community to its annual Open Day this summer.

The event provided an opportunity for visitors to celebrate the work taking place at Paradise and take part in a range of activities throughout the afternoon.

Guests enjoyed a BBQ, home-baked cakes and soft drinks, all prepared by the Trust's domestic and maintenance teams. Live acoustic guitar music was performed during the event, creating a relaxed atmosphere as people spent time mingling together across the buildings and gardens.

A variety of activities were available in different areas of the site. In the Health and Wellbeing Centre, staff offered a range of pampering sessions including face painting, glitter art and manicures.

The art room also hosted a creative activity led by Art Co-ordinator Eppie Short, linked to raising awareness of the skylark, a bird whose numbers are in decline. Skylarks nest on the ground but sing high in the sky, and the project explored themes of care, space and awareness, drawing links between the natural world and life at Paradise House.

Participants created printed paper rings representing a "circle of care", incorporating embossed skylark designs and selected words and patterns. The activity formed part of a wider display of artwork created by people living at Paradise.

Registered Manager Alison Hurlock said the event was a positive reflection of the community at Paradise House.

"It was really pleasing to welcome so many families, friends and community members," she said. "The Open Day is an important opportunity for people to come together and see the work that takes place here. The Skylark Project was a particularly meaningful activity and was enjoyed by those who took part."

She added: "I'd like to thank all staff teams for their hard work in organising and supporting the event, and everyone who attended for helping to make the day a success."





“It was really pleasing to welcome so many families...”





I'd Like to Be Under the Sea:

Joining the Painswick Easter Trail!

People living at Paradise worked with staff to create an under-the-sea themed Easter egg for the Painswick Easter Trail – a popular annual event organised by Painswick Playgroup, which is celebrating its 35th year.



St Mary's Church – a long-standing creative partner of Paradise House – invited the team to design the egg displayed at the church, one of the stops on the trail.

Following the theme of "Coral", the group explored coral reef environments, looking at the wide range of marine life they support as well as the impact of pollution, particularly single-use plastics. This informed the design, which focuses on sea plants and creatures while also making use of recycled materials.

Milk bottles and plastics were repurposed alongside papier mâché and textiles. A variety of techniques were used, including weaving, embossing, painting, blanket stitching and wrapping, helping to build texture and detail. The project also gave participants the chance to try out and develop new creative skills, which will be used again in future work, including a planned sculpture trail in Dursley.

The project involved a wide group of people, including Jenny, Charlotte, Jonathan, Rachael, Freya, Isabel, Kirstie Nayegon-Bishop (Daytime Activities Leader) and Eppie Short (Arts Co-ordinator), along with other people living at Paradise House who contributed ideas throughout.

Eppie said: "Projects like this bring people together and give everyone the chance to contribute. Using recycled materials to create something imaginative has been really rewarding. The finished piece received positive feedback and everyone involved should feel proud of their contribution to a project share with the wider community."

Kirstie added: "It's been a great example of teamwork, with people sharing skills, supporting one another and offering ideas when challenges came up. There's been a real sense of enthusiasm, creativity and pride in what we've made together. A big thank you to everyone involved, and to St Mary's Church for inviting us to be part of such a valued community event and for their ongoing support."

The egg was installed at St Mary's Church on 2nd April and remained on display until 12th April. During the main Easter fête, residents Hills and Shelley also helped out, running a stall where they sold egg hunt maps and raffle tickets.



A VICTORIAN ADVENTURE AT HOLST HOUSE



A group from Paradise House stepped back in time with a visit to the Holst Victorian House Museum in Cheltenham.

Freya, Maxine and Carl explored the house where composer Gustav Holst was born in 1874, discovering what life was like for a Victorian family.

They admired the instruments in Holst's Music Room, including the piano on which he composed "The Planets", and explored a working Victorian kitchen, bedroom, scullery and nursery.


"Visits like this bring history to life in a way you can't get from books."

The visit offered a hands-on glimpse into 19th-century daily life and a chance to experience the history of Cheltenham in a unique, interactive way.

Chloe Hubbard (Daytime Activities Leader), who accompanied the group, said: "It was fantastic to see everyone so engaged, exploring the rooms and imagining what life was like back then. People really enjoyed the kitchen and the Music Room, especially seeing Gustav Holst's piano – it sparked a lot of curiosity and conversation."

She added: "Visits like this bring history to life in a way you can't get from books. It's brilliant to see people connecting with the past, asking questions, and sharing their thoughts about Victorian life."





Placement with purpose: Ellie and Jenny's Paradise experience

A placement at Paradise House is giving two familiar faces the chance to see social work from a whole new perspective.

Ellie Dall and Jenny Hook are currently completing their final placement as part of their BSc degree apprenticeship in Social Work at the University of Gloucestershire. The pair – who are both long-standing members of the team at Cotswold Chine School – are due to qualify this summer before graduating in November 2026.

During their 100-day placement at Paradise, they have immersed themselves in a wide range of hands-on social work experiences. Both students have worked closely with multidisciplinary teams, including Speech and Language Therapy and Occupational Therapy, and contributed to group work with adults on topics such as safety and relationships.

Ellie has been involved in Mental Capacity Act assessments, Best Interests meetings, safeguarding work and staff training, as well as helping to develop systems around incident reflection and safeguarding processes. Jenny has focused particularly on strengthening person-centred practice, ensuring that the voices of people living at Paradise remain central to decision-making. "This has involved being creative in how we communicate and how we enable people to share their views in ways that work best for them," she explains.

Together, she and Ellie also delivered group sessions and staff training on "mate crime" – where someone pretends to be a friend in order to exploit or take advantage of another person – helping to raise awareness of an important issue for those accessing the wider community.

For both, the placement has been a significant shift from their previous experience working with children. "I have only ever worked with children in my career, so it was a big shift to work with adults," says Ellie. "I have developed so many social work skills around understanding different communication needs and empowering the adults to ensure that their voice is central."

Jenny agrees, highlighting how the experience has deepened her understanding of adult social care and legislation. "I've been involved in areas such as mental capacity assessments and best interests' decisions, which has developed my ability to support individuals in a way that respects their rights and individual needs," she says.

Despite the learning curve, both have found the placement hugely rewarding. Ellie describes the warm and welcoming environment: "It's so lovely to see everyone getting out into the community more and enjoying all their activities... it really is Paradise!" Jenny echoes this sentiment: "We received a very warm welcome and have loved being part of the Paradise community. There's always something going on."

They are also keen to challenge any misconceptions about life at Paradise. "It's not somewhere sleepy where nothing happens," says Ellie. "The people living there are constantly out and about... working in local cafes, volunteering... sailing, lawn bowls – the list is endless!"

Both Ellie and Jenny will soon return to CCS, bringing with them valuable new knowledge and experience. Ellie will return to the role of Designated Safeguarding Lead, while Jenny will become Head of Care (Children's and Families). The pair will also be continuing their learning on the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE).

Their time at Paradise has sharpened their skills and shown firsthand the value of putting adults' voices at the heart of care.

WOOL EWE LOOK AT THAT?



**PARADISE ARTISTS BRING
SHERLOCK THE SHEEP TO LIFE**



**Who knew a sheep on wheels could cause such excitement?
A local sheep called Sherlock has been brought to life thanks to the
creativity and teamwork of a talented group of Paradise artists.**

The project was commissioned by St Mary's Church in Painswick, which requested a life-size sheep to feature in its Easter celebrations and upcoming church festival in July. Reverend Sarah Haslam recently visited Paradise to explain the meaning behind the project, sharing that the sheep symbolises the congregation following together in faith and community.

Sherlock was created by Rachael, Ethan, Freya, Shelley, Maxine and Jenny using an imaginative mix of repurposed materials, including a stool with castors, wire, fabric, cable ties, newspaper and sheepskin. Collage and basic upholstery techniques were combined to give Sherlock both structure and plenty of personality.

The project also celebrated Painswick's rich history. Known as one of England's oldest wool towns, Painswick's prosperity was built on wool production and weaving, which helped fund many of the town's beautiful historic buildings, including St Mary's Church itself.

Arts Co-ordinator Eppie Short said: "Making Sherlock has been a wonderful experience – there's something

magical about seeing a pile of fabric, wire and a stool turn into a full-sized sheep. The adults really enjoyed experimenting with textures, shapes and details, and everyone's personalities have sneaked into Sherlock in little ways. He's full of character – just like the people who helped create him!"

“Making Sherlock has been a wonderful experience...”

Sherlock's adventures are far from over. After appearing at the church for Easter, he returned to Paradise House for the Open Day where he helped welcome visitors and even held signs directing people around the event.

With his quirky charm and larger-than-life personality, Sherlock has already become something of a celebrity at Paradise – and it seems certain he will continue bringing smiles wherever he rolls next.

A SCOP

OF CREATIVITY BRINGS UNDERWATER MAGIC TO CLEVEDON SEA FRONT



A Somerset ice cream parlour is getting a colourful underwater makeover this summer – courtesy of Paradise House.

People living at Paradise have been busy crafting a UV-lit, aquarium-style window display, filled with shimmering sea creatures, handmade ice cream cone artwork, and a nod to some of the world's endangered species.

The project is taking place at Aldo's Ice Cream Parlour in Clevedon, a family-run business recently reopened by Alessandra Sormani.

Alessandra, a former college colleague of Arts Co-ordinator Eppie Short, invited Paradise to take part. She has a long-standing interest in community projects and creative collaboration and is passionate about supporting the work of adults with learning disabilities.

"People living at Paradise House have been exploring textures, shapes, and colours to create a lively underwater world," says Eppie. "It's wonderful to see their ideas come together, and including some endangered species gives everyone a gentle reminder of why we need to care for our oceans."

"This installation shows how art can bring people together..."



A key feature of the display is its use of recycled materials. Everyday items like plastic, cardboard, and other discarded materials have been transformed into fish, coral, and other sea life, combining creativity with an eco-conscious message.

"It's been inspiring to watch people develop new skills, express themselves, and create something that the whole community can enjoy," adds Eppie. "This installation shows how art can bring people together, spark conversations and make a difference."

The window display will be in place throughout the summer, offering a colourful, thought-provoking, and joyful addition to the Clevedon seafront. Everyone is invited to stop by and enjoy the creativity and community spirit that went into every piece of the installation.





PARADISE COOKS UP LIFE SKILLS

People living at Paradise took part in a practical cooking skills session designed to support independence and everyday life skills.

Shelley, Lucy and Hils, supported by Mark Stanley (Person-Centred Skills Facilitator), began their session with a shopping trip to Tesco in Brockworth, where they selected ingredients for their meal. The experience included choosing items together and working as a team throughout the process, helping to build confidence in everyday decision-making.

Back at Paradise, the group prepared an udon noodle stir fry, with each person adding their own preferred ingredients. The session provided an opportunity

to develop practical cooking skills, teamwork and independence in a familiar and supportive environment.

Once the cooking was complete, the group enjoyed sitting down together to share the meal they had created, accompanied by a bottle of Schloer.

“These sessions are all about supporting people living at Paradise to build confidence and independence in everyday life,” said Mark. “From shopping and cooking to sharing the final meal together, every step is about choice, participation and enjoyment.”



‘Once the cooking was complete, the group enjoyed sitting down together to share the meal they had created...’







FREYJA

FAMILY, FRIENDSHIP AND CREATIVITY

Continuing our series celebrating people living at Paradise, we're delighted to feature Freya, who lives in Oak and Pine.



For the past 17 years, Freya has been a much-loved member of Paradise House. Known for her warmth, creativity and friendly nature, she enjoys a busy and fulfilling life surrounded by the people and activities that matter most to her. She's a familiar and positive presence within the community, always ready to take part and share in what's going on.



Freya enjoys a wide range of activities, including sailing, cycling and yoga, which help her stay active and engaged. She also loves attending the Kingfisher Treasure Seekers discos – inclusive social events where music, dancing and a welcoming atmosphere bring people together. These occasions are a particular highlight for Freya, giving her the chance to socialise and enjoy time with friends.

Creativity plays a central role in Freya's life. She especially enjoys spending time in the art room and the crafts and textiles space, where she often takes part in creative projects such as printmaking and making colourful Hama Beads designs. Her enjoyment of art has been inspired by her mum Janet, who is a keen painter, and this shared interest continues to be a meaningful connection between them.

Family means the world to Freya. She regularly spends weekends in Cheltenham with Janet, where she enjoys relaxed time together, including walks, local events, and visits to concerts and art exhibitions. She also loves

visiting her brother Luke, his wife Jo, and her nephews Otto and Felix in London, making the most of time spent together as a family.

This year, Freya celebrated her 40th birthday, marking a special milestone. She enjoyed a memorable trip to London with her family, including a visit to see the hit musical *Mamma Mia!* (you can read more about this and see photos on Page 20). Back at Paradise, the celebrations continued with pizza, a cinema trip, and time spent with friends Lucy, Kirsteen, Alison and Sharon, making it a joyful occasion shared across her different circles.

Senior Care Worker Catherine Thompson said: "One of the loveliest things about Freya is how much she enjoys sharing experiences with others. She loves being creative, especially in the art room, and she's always keen to join in with activities and celebrations. Freya is a real joy to have as part of the Paradise community."





SETTING SAIL AGAIN: PARADISE RETURNS TO THE WATER

People living at Paradise are once again taking to the water for an exciting and inclusive outdoor learning experience.

They are returning to Royal Yachting Association (RYA) Sailability courses at South Cerney Sailing Club, where the calm waters provide the perfect setting for learning, development and enjoyment.

The national RYA Sailability programme is designed to make sailing accessible to everyone, offering structured, supportive sessions that are tailored to individual needs. Participants are paired with one-to-one instructors and supported to progress at their own pace, building skills in a safe and encouraging environment.

From learning basic sailing techniques and understanding wind direction, to developing water safety awareness and steering skills, the sessions offer a practical introduction to life on the water.

Tim Presland (Deputy Manager) said: "It's fantastic to see people returning to an activity that has already proven so successful. Sailing offers something really unique – it builds confidence, encourages independence, and gives people the chance to try something completely different in a supportive environment."

Alongside technical learning, the programme also provides valuable social opportunities, with participants spending time together on and off the water as part of a wider sailing community. Many have already begun working towards RYA Sailability awards, progressing through entry levels and beyond depending on their development.

Tim added: "What stands out most is the enjoyment people get from it. You can see confidence growing week by week, and there's a real sense of achievement when new skills are mastered."



“Sailing offers something really unique – it builds confidence, encourages independence, and gives people the chance to try something completely different in a supportive environment.”





MILESTONE BIRTHDAYS FOR MAXINE & FREYA



Maxine and Freya celebrated special birthdays this year!

Maxine marked her 60th birthday with a trip to London accompanied by Paradise care worker Julia Troy.

The highlight of the visit was seeing *Come Alive! The Greatest Showman Circus Spectacular*, a live show inspired by *The Greatest Showman*, featuring incredible acrobatics, music and circus performances – which Maxine absolutely loved.

Before the show, Maxine and Julia met up with four family friends for an Italian meal, making the celebrations even more special.

The following morning, the pair enjoyed exploring some of London's famous landmarks by bus and on foot, including Piccadilly Circus, Trafalgar Square and Buckingham Palace, before heading to Paddington Station to catch the train back to Paradise.

"It was such a lovely trip and a wonderful way for Maxine to celebrate turning 60. She really enjoyed

the show and had the biggest smile on her face throughout the evening. Spending time with friends and exploring London together made it a birthday to remember," said Julia.

Meanwhile, Freya celebrated her 40th in London with her mum Janet and her brother Luke, his wife Jo and her nephews Otto and Felix, where they enjoyed a trip to see the hit musical *Mamma Mia!*

Dressed in sparkling outfits for the occasion, the family embraced the spirit of the show and created some wonderful memories together.

The celebrations also included a beautiful heart-shaped 40th birthday cake, making the occasion even more special.

Back at Paradise, the celebrations continued with pizza, a cinema trip and time spent with friends from Oak and Pine, including Lucy, Kirsteen, Alison and Sharon.





GOING WILD AT **LONGLEAT!**

A group from Paradise House enjoyed a memorable day at Longleat Safari Park.

They travelled through Longleat's six-and-a-half-mile safari route, where they saw a wide range of animals up close, including lions, tigers, giraffes and leopards.

One of the most talked-about moments of the day came in the monkey enclosure, where Longleat's well-known troop of rhesus macaques climbed across the cars. Known for their mischievous behaviour, the macaques kept everyone entertained as they explored the vehicles passing through.

Longleat describes the macaques as one of the park's favourite attractions, with the highly social animals spending much of their time foraging, grooming, playing and interacting with their troop mates. Their cheeky behaviour certainly made a lasting impression on people living at Paradise.

Away from the safari drive, the adults also enjoyed exploring the park's other attractions, including a journey on the Longleat Railway, which offered scenic views across the grounds and provided another opportunity to relax and enjoy the day together.

The visit gave everyone the chance to experience new sights, spend time outdoors and share a day filled with memorable moments.



The best things in life ARE FREE...



Harvey and Elisa proved that you don't need a big budget for a big experience as they made the climb to the local landmark Devil's Chimney for a rewarding outdoor adventure.

The idea for the trip came from Elisa, who suggested a budget-friendly outdoor activity that would offer fresh air, exercise and a change of scenery.

Despite wet weather on the day, the pair embraced the conditions and made their way up Leckhampton Hill Nature Reserve, supported by Mark Stanley (Person-Centred Skills Facilitator).

The climb took them to the striking rock formation known as the Devil's Chimney named for its unusual shape – a crooked limestone pillar rising dramatically from the ground.

Mark said: "It was a wet day but that just added to the adventure. It was a simple outing, but a great example of independence, choice and enjoying the outdoors."



“...a great example of independence, choice and enjoying the outdoors.”