

# Our History

## A snapshot of Choice Support's history

### 1984

- A group of pioneers and innovators from the statutory, voluntary and housing sectors gathered together in Peckham, south London, and came up with the idea of forming Southwark Consortium (name changed to Choice Support in 1998) to help with the closure of Darenth Park Hospital, a large learning disabilities institution in Kent. This was the first such consortium to be formed in the UK.

### 1985

- First project worker appointed.

### 1987

- Established as an independent charity.
- Commenced work on the closure of Darenth Park Hospital, the first large learning disabilities hospital to close in England.

### 1990

- By now employing 11 staff and acting as managing agency for 44 properties.

### 1991

- Moved to new headquarters in Barry Road, East Dulwich, South London.
- Individual Budgets piloted in the London Borough of Southwark.
- Set up some of the first examples of supported living in the UK.

### 1992

- Two health authorities transfer responsibility for learning disability services to Choice Support. Camberwell HA services transferred to direct management, whilst Lewisham & North Southwark HA services transferred to newly formed charities, ONIS and Blue River, with Choice Support sub-contracts. This was the first large-scale externalisation of NHS learning disability services.
- Established one of the first service brokerage pilots in the UK, which ran for 5 years.
- Over 130 people receiving care or housing support.

### 1994

- Choice Consultancy Services formed.
- Celebrated 10th anniversary.

### 1995

- Set up Fighting Fit Project which established Health Action Plans six years prior to the publication of Valuing People.

### 1996

- Published [Unlocking The Imagination](#), [Give Us a Voice](#) and [Life Without Jargon](#).

### 1997

- Commissioned to open services in Hackney.
- ONIS and the Blue River Project join the Choice Support group.

### 1998

- Commissioned to develop new services in Buckinghamshire and Greenwich.

### 1999

- Further new services opened in Southwark.
- ONIS/Blue River merged to form one charitable subsidiary.
- Over 250 people receiving support from Choice Support.

### 2000

- Took over Supported Living services in north Lincolnshire.

### 2002

- Supported 28 people to move from hospital in Buckinghamshire.

- Commenced first service directly commissioned by parents.
- Became an NVQ Training provider in NVQ level 2,3,4 and Assessors Registered Assessment Centre.
- Became an OCN LDAF Foundation Training Provider.

**2003**

- Commissioned to support 40 people to move out of a hospital in Wakefield to new supported living services.
- Commissioned to provide support for 18 people in Leicestershire based on a supported living model.
- Managed DoH funded Unlocking Potential project in partnership with Southwark Council and Paradigm, achieving a transition to direct payments for 22 families / people with learning disabilities.
- Commissioned to support 18 people in 3 services in Southampton.

**2004**

- Moved to new head office at 100 Westminster Bridge Road, London SE1 7XA.
- Celebrated 20th anniversary.
- Awarded Investor in People status

**2005**

- Assisted in the closure of Highbury Hospital, Nottingham, providing new services for 12 people.

**2006**

- Commissioned to develop new services in Haringey, Bedfordshire, Milton Keynes and Nottinghamshire.
- Won contract to provide support for 80 people in Wakefield.

**2007**

- Commissioned to develop new services in Sutton and Merton.
- Received a Royal Society of Arts Award for campaign against bullying.
- Retained Investor in People status on reassessment.

**2008**

- Took over supported living services to 43 people in Stockport.
- Published First and Last, an account of 25 years involvement in hospital closure.
- Implemented e-learning across the whole organisation.
- The charity Signature Care and Support joins Choice Support group structure.
- Quality Checkers established, employing people with learning disabilities to check and monitor services.

**2009**

- Took over services for 41 people in Merton and Sutton, plus further new services in Buckinghamshire, Milton Keynes, Nottinghamshire and Greenwich.
- Celebrated 25th anniversary.
- Won a national contract as a partner with Skills for Care and achieved funding for NVQs.
- Commenced working with the Centre for Welfare Reform on the Citizenship in Practice project.
- Charles Spencer appointed President after 18 years service as Chair.
- Awarded Matrix quality standard for information, advice and guidance.
- Regional Director, Charan Singh, awarded Lifetime Achievement In Care category at the 2009 National Care Awards.
- Completed work on the closure of Orchard Hill Hospital, the last hospital for people with learning disabilities to close in England.

**2010**

- Signature Care and Support fully merged into Choice Support
- People with a learning disabilities employed as trainers
- New services opened in Worksop, Mansfield and Congleton.
- Over 950 people now receive support from Choice Support.
- Registered a new Shared Lives Agency with CQC.
- Became the first provider in the UK to convert a traditional block contract (Southwark) to 83 individual service funds and individual budgets.
- Launched new Challenging Behaviour strategy and a range of staff trained to deliver training by

the Institute of Applied Behavioural Analysis.

- 31 people now trained as Quality Checkers.
- Retained Investor in People status on reassessment.
- Case study about Choice Support's work in Southwark included in a [Department of Health](#) publication released alongside the Government's Vision for Adult Social Care.

