MARKYES CLOSE was built in the centre of Ross on Wye in the early 1990s as part of the closure of a local long stay hospital for people with a learning disability.

The development is of two bungalows joined by an interconnecting walkway. Two of the eight people who live in the bungalows are original residents and are now in their 50s. As these and other people at Markyes Close have aged it is has become apparent that the two buildings are not well adapted for the needs of older people.

In early 2012 aware of the growing need for good support for older people with a learning disability, Aspire decided to develop Markyes Close as a specialist service for older people with a learning disability.

“We are really pleased to be developing our services to better meet the needs of older people with a learning disability”, said Judith Weir, Aspire chief executive.

Residents, staff, friends and advocates enjoy lunch in the garden (top), and (above) Markyes Close residents Harry Beaumont (with a friend’s dog who wanted to join the bus ride!), and Fred Gundy, on holiday in Devon.

More information about Aspire at www.aspirehereford.org.uk
People

GAIL COOPER, the registered manager, is leading the changes at Markyes Close. As well as coordinating the move of three of the residents into a rented house locally, Gail is working with the architect and builder on the detailed design and layout of the bungalows. Having worked at Markyes Close for over 15 years, Gail is passionate about providing person centred care for older people with a learning disability so that they can lead active and healthy lives.

Lessons learnt so far

1. Having staff with knowledge and experience from different care backgrounds has enhanced the quality of support, we have lots of different skills to share with each other.

2. We have spent a lot of time with the architect and builder getting the environment right for people. We have considered peoples’ changing needs in relation to their mobility, sensory needs and what is best for people who have developed dementia. We have looked in detail at the design, decoration, lighting, appliances in the bathrooms and kitchens as well as the use of assistive technology.

3. In order for people to stay healthy and have a good quality of life it is important to work in partnership with local specialists such as those in dementia care, end of life care and support for people after a stroke.

TO DEVELOP its specialist service for older people with a learning disability at Markyes Close Aspire have:

1. Developed a detailed business plan and shared it with local authority commissioners and others.

2. Recruited staff with experience in supporting people with a learning disability and in supporting older people.

3. Worked with CQC to change its registration, so that it is now a care home for older people.

4. Been successful in gaining capital and development funding for the refurbishment and adaptation of the building and the development of their services to better meet the needs of older people with a learning disability.

In January 2013 work started on the redevelopment of Markyes Close.

To reduce the effects of changes on Markyes Close’s oldest and frailest residents the building work is taking place in two phases. Several more active residents have moved into a temporary new home in a rented house locally. The other residents are living in one bungalow while the other is being converted.