LOTS HAS BEEN HAPPENING for the residents at Markyes Close in the last two months. At the end of May the builders handed over the first bungalow after all the building work had been completed on time. The three people who had been living at The Lea moved back into new bedrooms and the remaining five people who had been in the second bungalow moved over to the new building. For one man, who finds change difficult, the builders have managed to partition off his bedroom in the second bungalow in such a way that he has been able to stay safely in his own room, which has been less of an upheaval for him.

Aspire and all the staff and people living at Markyes Close are really pleased with the work done on the first bungalow and although two people are currently using other rooms as temporary bedrooms it has been great to move in and all be together again.

Above: Gill in the brand new kitchen the day before people moved back into the first bungalow.

More information about Aspire at www.aspirehereford.org.uk
THE HIGHLIGHT in the new bungalow is the purpose built new kitchen with varying height work surfaces, although the new kitchen is temporarily doubling up as an office for the next 12 weeks while the building work continues.

The large through lounge with windows on three sides and patio doors out onto the garden is light and airy and a great communal space. The wide corridors are nice and bright with the kitchen window giving extra light into the corridor behind it. The new bathrooms with the built in tracking from the bedrooms have been excellent and are already in daily use.

Once the development has finished Aspire will be having an extra resident making nine in total. This will require some creative thinking to accommodate an additional person, whilst still providing excellent support for the people living there who have very complex needs and varying health issues.

The additional space that the redevelopment has provided will be very welcomed and every room will be utilised for activities and relaxation purposes.

There have also been recent changes in the provision of day activities in the county that will mean the loss of some day services, some may be closing in the future. Markyes Close will be focusing on social and leisure activities for its residents once the development has finished and they have their sensory room completed.

Fred’s shed

As part of the new build the plan had been to put up a shed in the garden for Fred to use as a private space for his hobbies. Fred has lived at Markyes Close for over 3 years.

One of Fred’s favourite activities is to take apart and put back together objects such as anything mechanical, locks, clocks, radios and old electrical items etc.

Some of these ‘stripped out’ items can be hazardous to other residents if left lying around so in his new shed he will be able to go out and potter at any time that he wants to and keep his personal items safely in there.

Above: Fred enjoys a cup of coffee in his new shed joined by key workers Louisa and Chris
We are currently planning for each person to have a timetable with individual sessions in the sensory room. On a recent visit to IKEA for new furniture and kitchen equipment we bought a number of things that will be great to use in the sensory room. This has been a lot more cost effective than purchasing from sensory room suppliers.

One idea we are exploring is a DVD that turns a normal TV into a visual fish tank.

Several of the people at Markyes Close used to live in Hereford and used services in the city. They have formed friendships with others living over there. We take people to meet with friends and to take part in activities several times a week, but travel costs resulting from this are quite high.

“One idea we are exploring is a DVD that turns a normal TV into a visual fish tank”

We are reviewing our day activities with each person so that they include activities we can do at home, locally in Ross on Wye as well as travelling to Hereford and beyond. We still want to maintain friendships but need to be aware of the costs involved, especially in the present economic climate of Council cuts in funding.

We like to be able to do spontaneous activities, when the sun shines so we take advantage of the lovely summer weather and go out on picnics to the Forest of Dean. When it’s cold and raining we hold impromptu music sessions at home.

Gail’s lessons learnt

AS WE ARE developing our ideas about the new sensory room, all the key workers have done an assessment with the person they support looking at what their sensory needs are and what they want to get out of using the sensory room.

This has helped us to plan the room and its equipment and to think carefully about both the equipment we need and how we will manage the use of the room. It should be an individual experience for each resident.

Lobby - the new central entrance lobby at Markyes taking shape in June.
NICKY BENSON, a community learning disability nurse at Wye Valley NHS Trust, was the nurse manager in the 1990s who set up the two bungalows. People with a learning disability who have dementia can benefit from specialist services to address their support needs related to having a learning disability.

Nicky is part of a wider multi-disciplinary team providing a county wide specialist service to people who have a learning disability, which include residents at Markyes Close.

The team offers support from psychologists, psychiatrists, speech and language therapists and physiotherapists and provides advice and support around holistic assessment, continence care, positive behavioural management, health care screening, and communication as well as dementia awareness training for staff. This includes supporting people to retain and continue using their independent living and communication skills and assisting care staff to be creative in their use of various communication and behaviour management techniques.

Nicky says “I’m delighted with the development work at Markyes Close which will provide people with learning disabilities with modern and bespoke living accommodation. It’s definitely a step in the right direction to ensuring people with learning disabilities and related dementia get the right support they need to live as independently as possible”.

CATHERINE POWER, Markyes Close activities worker has worked for Aspire for twelve years. Each week at Markyes Close there is a timetable of activities for people to take part in. Some activities are available every week such as the day centre in Hereford, the Yam Jams music and rap session and swimming at a local school.

Some people don’t go to these timetabled activities; instead there are 1.1 or small group activities. One man goes out every week to an evening leisure link group, he also likes going to the pub regularly.

“The main challenge is planning a programme for each of the residents to take account of their changing needs”

The main challenge is planning a programme for each of the residents to take account of their changing needs. Catherine says “The activities require forward planning as people needs change. We are looking at new and different in-house activities for those who now prefer to stay home more.”

Catherine is the key worker for one man who is getting slower and can’t walk so far now. He used to walk into Ross for a coffee, but now he needs a wheelchair for part of the trip. Catherine says “he loves to go out; he just needs extra support sometimes”. 