Story: engaging with what customers really want in Mole Valley

Mole Valley District Council's Service Manager and Communications Team were tasked with transforming services, raising awareness and improving sales when it came to social care and community support. The challenge was to compete with commercial operations offering personal independence technology, so as to expand the reach and impact of the social centres and community transport.

To get a true picture of how their services were viewed, Mole Valley held focus groups with service users and voluntary and charity partners. They spoke with staff who provide the services and, separately, their managers. They then worked with Surrey Adult Social Care's Housing and Benefits officers, to create a picture of residents real needs.

The responses and discussions shaped the design of new branding and opened up different opportunities, ideas and commercial routes. The brand turnaround was shaped both through users and through channeling the passion of staff. The emphasis was on friendly bus drivers, vibrant social centres and kind Telecare agents answering the calls through the night.

Mole Valley Life was born as a result, designed as a new over-arching, positive and friendly brand that worked across services. It promoted a positive vision of life for older residents, and showed that Mole Valley, as a council, could assist customers in their daily lives.

The new branding rollout has been led by the input of the initial focus groups. Branded stands were set up at the district's major Christmas events, leading to over 1,000 engagements in the build up to Christmas 2018. Winter advice leaflets were distributed directly to over 5,000 carefully selected households, and everything from uniforms to buses have been re-branded and re-styled.

New services, including the use of virtual reality, are being introduced, and teams are working on new ideas to reach out more directly to children of potential users. The outward-facing, modern and fresh branding gives the service an opportunity to excel and to reach further. But it also boosts confidence amongst existing service users, by being part of something they helped create.