

CHANGING Lives



National Care
Group

YOUR POTENTIAL PLUS OUR COMMITMENT CHANGES LIVES

SPRING/SUMMER 2023





A warm welcome to the Spring edition of Changing Lives, National Care Group's colleague magazine.

The features in Changing Lives are written for our colleagues, the people we support and their families. To connect, celebrate and inspire with the brilliant things happening across the organisation.

It was with great pride we celebrated National Care Group's success at the HealthInvestor Awards earlier this month. Being crowned with the prestigious title of 'Community Support Provider of the Year 2023' is tribute to the hard work and commitment of our colleagues in all they do.

Our annual leadership conference took place in April. It was a pleasure to connect with so many in one place. I hope all those who attended felt as proud as I as we reflected on all we are achieving together.

The National Care Group Awards 2023 also took place in April and saw 400+ nominations by colleagues acknowledging each others

brilliance. Of course, all nominated colleagues are winners to me.

Over the first weekend of May, our colleagues, and the people we support celebrated a moment in British history as the coronation of King Charles III and Queen Camilla took place. It was moving to see so much joy and jubilation across National Care Group and it is a pleasure to see some of it captured in the pages of the magazine – and of course our front cover star, King Darren.

As a final note to all colleagues, I want you to make more noise about the brilliant things you do. Be loud and proud and share your stories with the marketing team, no matter how big or small, so they can write about them. Reading them is uplifting, thought provoking, and they shine a light on the darker days.

I hope you enjoy reading this edition of Changing Lives as much as I have.

James Allen
CEO National Care Group

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People we support achievement stories.

Since the National Care Group Colleague Forum launched back in February last year, your opinions have helped to inform the decisions we are making to become recognised as an employer of choice. During the Forum sessions we've received so much feedback, suggestions, and opinions on a range of subjects. Colleague engagement has often been high on the agenda for many of you, as it has been for the organisation.

It was with great anticipation that the new colleague engagement app launched at the end of February this year.

Since the app launched, it has been an absolute delight for me, and for the other members of the Exec Team, to see so many of you gradually embracing this new platform.

Almost 70% of colleagues have now joined, which is pleasing. I encourage those who haven't registered to do so, so you're not missing out on the National Care Group conversation.

You'll find details from the Colleague Forums, which are generally held quarterly, in the NCG Chat section on Engage.

Claire Leake
People Director

Using Engage

Engage has been introduced to provide all colleagues across the organisation access to National Care Group resources, news, support tools, and the ability to connect with fellow colleagues in one convenient place.

My NCG

The app will be the single platform where colleagues will securely access all personal HR, training, benefits, and payroll items, including from July access to payslips. It's important colleagues register to be able access the information.

Group Messaging

We are encouraging colleagues and teams who use group chat applications to switch to the group messaging functionality on Engage. It works just like WhatsApp but is a more secure mode of communication and exclusive to National Care Group. Easy to follow instructions are available in the Support Centre on Engage.



Social Posts







The posts appearing on the Engage news feed are really bringing the National Care Group family together. From colleague successes, work-i-versaries and sharing of encouraging thoughts, to uplifting stories, images, and video posts with the people we support.

Kudos Cards

If there's something National Care Group colleagues do well, it's recognising and appreciating one another. The Kudos cards are there to empower our colleagues, both those who send, and receive them. They are inspiring for all to see.





 MyNCG	 NCG World	 NCG News	 NCG Chat
 Wellbeing Hub	 Celebrate Success	 Managers Hub	 Support Centre

National Care Group's new colleague app Engage!


Join in the National Care Group conversation with Engage, the new colleague engagement and communication app.

Download Engage ESP
To iPhone from the Apple App Store
To Android from the Google Play store.

Engage is also available to use via desktop and tablet devices.



Scan the QR code or see your line manager for help on getting started!



Engage is available to use via desktop and tablet devices.

WIN A £20 Amazon voucher!
Tell us what you think about Engage.

We'd love to hear about our colleagues' experiences of Engage so far.

Complete the Engage Colleague Survey to be entered into a draw to win one of three £20 Amazon gift vouchers.

The survey can be found in the Support Centre on the colleague Engage app.





Through acquisition

In April, Nexus Support Limited, Essex became the latest organisation to join National Care Group.

Nexus provides individualised opportunities for adults with learning disabilities and associated support needs. Operating over 8 locations, the Nexus Team offers specialist care for up to 25 people.

Working closely with the individuals they support, their families and commissioning services have enabled Nexus, over the past 13 years, to develop and deliver consistent, high-quality person-centred support.

The additional collaboration between Nexus and National Care Group's existing Jamesons services in nearby Colchester will strengthen its provision of service in the region.

Commercial Director Mike Ranson said, "Nexus has an excellent reputation in Essex. The services and support it provides and, most importantly, its person-centred ethos fit well with the National Care Group vision and mission. I am delighted to welcome Registered Manager Natasha Nowell, Service Manager Dan Bishop, and all our new colleagues, to the NCG family."

Pictured above are (l-r) Dan Bishop, Natasha Howell and Mike Ranson.

Through successful assessments

We're not talking about any old assessment but an NCG assessment!

Referral management is part of the Commercial Team's responsibility and as National Care Group continues to grow, the efficient generation and management of referrals becomes ever more important to ensure our services remain sustainable.

Recently appointed to lead the Referrals Team, Samantha Marshall's focus is on the generation of referrals and, importantly on the quality and speed of our response to enquiries.

Supported by Nikki Carden and Carleigh Beddow who provide administrative support for the team, Samantha and the Heads of Referrals aim to ensure NCG can provide a quick and professional response to all enquiries.

Samantha said, "It is important we respond quickly to assess people and can submit a proposal that demonstrates our understanding of the individual, how we will meet their needs and, manage any risks involved in achieving the required outcome."

Whilst all providers should be focused on the individual we will support, we can be competitive and outshine others by being the most professional and responsive."

National Care Group regularly receives more than 500 monthly enquiries, and each month aims to undertake 50 assessments. To ensure all managers have the skills and support to respond to enquiries and undertake assessments, the team have delivered Referral Assessment and Proposal (RAP) process training to more than 100 colleagues and continue to provide regular training sessions for new colleagues.

Get in touch with Samantha, or regional Heads of Referrals, Mateusz, Andrea or Holly if you haven't yet been on the training, have any additional questions, or support needs from them.

All colleagues are also invited to the weekly RAP 'drop-in' surgery hosted on Teams every Wednesday.

Referrals support tools and the Teams link to the RAP surgery can be found in the NCG World section on the colleague Engage app.



NCG World

Through local authority relationships

As the organisation grows, so does the scope to extend the provision of support we provide alongside maintaining capacity at our existing services.

The Commercial Team has recently welcomed Rachel Stokes, Contract & Tender Manager to the team. Working alongside Director of Development, Belinda Robinson, Rachel's role is to actively pursue tender and contract opportunities to ensure we can deliver on our growth and that National Care Group maintains its existing relationships with local authorities. The Team is focused on developing new services to enable us to provide support where it is needed to meet local and national demand. To support this, Rachel continually monitors tender portals and correspondence and identifies tenders which are a good fit with NCG's aims and objectives.

Collaborative working with local authority commissioners plays a fundamental part in our growth plans. It supports our vision of becoming the best and most trusted care and support provider in the UK.

In recent weeks, our approach to these partnerships has resulted in NCG's success in winning approved provider status on framework agreements with three local authorities.

Successful bids were made to Sheffield City, Somerset County, and Staffordshire County Councils, to provide support for people with varying needs. It's a hugely competitive environment, often with hundreds of providers entering the process, so the new contracts come as great news.



Rachel Stokes pictured centre with Heads of Referrals (l-r) Andrea, Mateusz, Holly & Samantha

The success is testament not only to Rachel and Belinda's hard work, but a great example of collaboration between the operational and commercial teams. The production of a tender bid can be hard work and stressful for all involved. Belinda provides coordination and project management of the process, but we rely heavily on our colleagues to provide good examples of their work and the outcomes they achieve.

Using real life examples of your work as evidence, Rachel can present these in a way that demonstrates our commitment to delivering a quality service. Accurate recording of support and the sharing of good news stories about services and individuals means Rachel can share the lived experiences of the people we support. This in turn helps shape and inform the commissioners' decision making.

These new contractual relationships are helping increase NCG's delivery of care and support, to meet local demands, across our Steps, Oaklea Care and Wellington Support services. We are already experiencing an increase in the number of referrals for support and assessing people for our services in Sheffield. We are also looking forward to discussing a new service with the commissioning team because of the hard work of everyone involved in the process.

Through service developments

Our commitment to investing in service improvement continues. As the work at Chosen Court in Gloucestershire draws to completion, new investment begins!

National Care Group will invest more than £1m into service refurbishments at Shelton Care Group in Stoke on Trent this summer. Work will begin on Improvements to Regent Road, Networks, Caudon Place, Richmond Mews, and the Richmond Bungalow services.

Networks will see the biggest structural transformation and the introduction of some new kitchens. Works to Richmond Road will include a much-needed wet room conversion.

The people we support at Richmond Road have already started to pick the new colour schemes for their bedrooms.



8 Acres in Norfolk is nearing the completion of the second phase of works which forms part of the half-a-million-pound investment programme that began in 2021.

Working in partnership with the people they support, the service and NCG Estates Team have recently delivered substantial improvements to its grounds and housing facilities, including a new driveway and fencing development, as well as new kitchens and bathrooms in most of its flats.

The most recent phase of works will provide an environment for the people we support to be involved in meaningful activities that enhance their lives and wellbeing with the introduction of a summerhouse with a sensory room, bar, canopy, and outside seating.



It also features a refurbished activities room, a new polytunnel for gardening, and improved outside areas with raised beds and wheelchair access.

Investment from housing provider partners also continues with significant refurbishment works happening at Essential Care and Support's Cornwall Court and Clark House services in County Durham. Falcon Housing Association will be working on property and garden renovations throughout the summer.

Annual Leadership Conference 2023

Over 130 managers and senior leaders came together in April at East Midlands Conference Centre in Nottingham to reconnect, reflect, and plan. Changing Lives was once again the conference theme – representing the beating heart of our vision.



Welcome and Network Zone

The day began with a warm welcome from three learners from Regent College who formed our Meet and Greet Team. Sam, Thomas, and Johnathon welcomed colleagues at registration and guided them to the networking zones. A huge thank you to them for doing such a wonderful job.



The Network Zone comprised nine tables organised and hosted by support function colleagues and three external partners. It was an opportunity for operational colleagues to meet some of the people they talk to on the phone and email every day, in person. The tables included colleagues and partners from:

- Commercial Team | Regent College
- Quality Team | Metro Moneywise
- Finance & IT Teams | TLC
- Estates Team | Skills for Care



Our Conference Hosts

The conference was hosted by Chief Operating Officer Karen Lewis, along with Shaun Ridley from our Highlea Care service in County Durham. Shaun not only did a sterling job of supporting Karen to keep the day on track, but he also bravely shared his remarkable story of progression whilst living in supported living at Highlea.



The Workshops

Members of the executive team, regional operations directors, and support function leaders worked collaboratively to create four workshops. They were created to delve deeper into some of the key focuses that the audience were introduced to in James' update:

- Activating Leadership with Claire Leake and Alex Costa
- Activating Data Accuracy with Andrew Davies, Charlotte Lumley and David Rowe-Bewick
- Creating a Strategy of Wellbeing, Empowerment and Inclusion for the People We Support with Mike Cleasby and Jill Hopcraft
- Planning to Succeed with Mike Ranson, Karen Lewis and Rob Tooze



Update from CEO James Allen

James expressed his gratitude for all National Care Group's brilliant people doing amazing things. He reflected on the past year and how we're all feeling, which included a fun game of word ball, then focused on the future expectations.

He reminded everyone that at the forefront of our focuses should always be our Vision, Mission and Values:

- Our Vision** > is our destination > To be the best and most trusted care and support provider in the UK
- Our Mission** > is how we'll get there > Supporting people to maximise their potential in any way we can
- Our Values** > are our expected behaviours > Passion, Empowerment, Respect, Collaboration

He stressed the importance of looking forward and being prepared for challenges but equally, the opportunities we must seize along the way. He remains optimistic that the experience, knowledge, and professionalism developed across the organisation will be to National Care Group's advantage when things are difficult. He assured colleagues that help, support and guidance will continue to be available.

James outlined National Care Group's priorities which will continue to be:

- Delivering quality
- Growing the organisation
- Caring for, and developing our people

In return, he said we must all deliver consistently high, making the right decisions and choices for the people we support, and our colleagues.

James' lasting message is "We've got you", assuring our colleagues that the successes will be celebrated, and the support will be there when things don't go well.



We hope colleagues were updated on the conference by their managers. If there's anything you'd like to know, please speak to them.

Conference information, including the NCG films created by the regions, can be found in the Managers Hub on the colleague Engage app.



Awakening Your Potential

Motivational speaker Dani Grieveson supported colleagues to 'awaken the potential within'. She encouraged self-reflection, big thinking and energising habits, focusing on leadership and compassion. Dani presented The Wheel of Life, a tool to help you establish how you see each part of your life and identify key areas you can develop. We hope managers found this useful and took something away to implement within their teams.



National Care Group Cinema

Following the workshops, delegates were welcomed back to the main stage for a special showing of five short films created by National Care Group regions and Regent College. The homemade productions were an insight into some of the innovative and exciting things that have been happening. They included input from some of the people we support, some who helped create the content including Dean from Links Day Service who hosted a tour of their recently renovated Knight House building in Stoke-on-Trent and learners from Regent College who were the hosts and co-producers of their film.

Q&A hosted by Mark Mason

Mark Mason, Head of Estates and Procurement was welcomed back as Q&A host following an interactive and entertaining session the previous year. Mark fired questions from the audience, some sent in advance, to the Executive Team and Regional Operations Directors on stage.

There were many questions raised, two highlights included the following: Charlotte Lumley answered the question "Sometimes it feels like the same old services get all the internal recognition. Can you share tips on how other less heard of services can achieve better attention?"

Charlotte referenced the opportunity that Engage brings to shout about the great things being achieved by colleagues and the people we support. Charlotte also reminded and encouraged colleagues of the opportunity to work with the marketing team on case studies and of the process for nominating a colleague for a monthly Outstanding Achievement Award.

Claire Leake answered, "Can you update us on the progress of overseas recruitment and if there are any plans to roll it out across other services?"

Claire confirmed that the overseas recruitment campaign supported hire into all NCG businesses. Claire told the audience about the 58 overseas candidates who had accepted a job offer from NCG since January. 20 candidates were currently waiting for visa approval and 35 colleagues had already started on a sponsorship basis. Over 130 interviews had been held for future colleagues who are overseas nationals but already 'in-country' across all regions.



Training Talk

In this edition, we're sharing highlights of our continued investment in helping our colleagues reach their potential, as well as opportunities available for personal growth and development.

Nicola Airey Head of Learning & Development



Commitment to Care

Here's a snapshot of some of our colleagues who have completed their Care Certificate or All Wales Induction Framework recently. A huge well done to you all for your commitment to caring for the people we support.



Mitchell Wilson, Endurance Care Coppice Lodge



Lauren Davies, Shelton Care Group Regent Road



Training Highlights

Over the past year there have been:
12,270 attendees on in person training
1,446 courses delivered



Additional training of:

- 30 Mental Health First Aiders
- 32 Team Leaders Core Skills
- 63 Care Certificate Assessors
- 134 Medication Competency Assessors



Colleague satisfaction:

97% would recommend the courses
Courses rated an average 4.86 out of 5 stars

Professional Qualifications for Colleagues

There are currently just over 100 colleagues enrolled on professional qualifications (previously referred to as NVQs/QCFs).

We want to make **fully funded** professional qualifications more accessible for all colleagues.

National Care Group has recently partnered with TLC - The Training & Learning Company, one of the UK's leading training organisations providing qualifications in leadership and health and social care across England and Wales.

The below fully funded courses are now available with our training partner TLC:

- Adult Care Worker Level 2
 - Lead Adult Care Worker Level 3
 - Team Leader / Supervisor Level 3 (Management based Qual)
 - Lead Practitioner in Adult Care Level 4
 - Leadership in Adult Care Level 5
 - Business Administration Level 3
 - Operations / Departmental Manager Level 5
- Other courses may be available.



The Albert Road team taking training



Teresa Evans, Shelton Care Group Regent Road



Shannon Kernan, Shelton Care Group Oak House



Lewis Robinson, Affinity Supporting People North



Luke Althison, Endurance Care Kent Folkestone



Jamal Fankupi, Shelton Care Group Oak House



Kate Ritchie, Affinity Supporting People North



Callie Griffin, Oaklea Care Walliscote Road



Joshua Ford, Integra TyNant



Sai Aletti, Wellington Support Stepping Stones

These qualifications demonstrate that minimum standards of knowledge and competency are met, ensuring support workers can provide safe and effective care and support.

We encourage all colleagues to express their interest in any course they may wish to progress.

All training opportunities & information can be found in Learning & Development in the My NCG section of the colleague Engage app.



What's cooking at National Care Group?

New cooking initiatives, created for you, by you.

The first phase of our Big Cook Book launched in the spring, developed with people who are new to cooking in mind.

What makes the cookbook special is that the dishes have been created by some of our talented colleagues and people we support, who have each developed easy-to-follow recipes to make from scratch. The recipes are a range of sweet and savoury dishes.

We encourage our colleagues who need that extra help to follow the recipes for, and alongside, the people we support.

We'd love to hear how you get on!

Chef Laura Recipes & Video Tutorials

Some of the recipes in the Big Cook Book have been created by Chef Laura of our Abbeyvale Care Centre residential service in County Durham.



These recipes are accompanied by video tutorials for you to follow.



The videos can be found on the National Care Group YouTube channel or via Engage.



Level 1 Cooking Course

Dan Burgess, registered manager of our Endurance Care Deal & Hythe service, has created a new cookery course for the people we support at National Care Group.

Dan created the course to encourage the people we support to learn new life skills by starting to cook meals from scratch themselves.

The course includes important preparation guidance on hygiene and safety in the kitchen and includes a range of recipe ideas each in 'easy read' format with picture instructions.

The recipes range from basic scrambled eggs on toast to more challenging creations such as chilli con carne, quiche lorraine, and chocolate chunk cookies.

Dan and his team empowered the people they support to complete the course and they've all now passed, practising their new culinary skills on a regular basis.

Stuart, who is pictured above, is just one of the course graduates. Stuart joins others at the Endurance Care services in holding regular themed food evenings.

Feature your recipe in the NATIONAL CARE GROUP BIG COOK BOOK

We hope to update the cookbook with new recipes from our colleagues and the people we support.

We'd particularly really love to hear about cuisines from around the world that might be inspired by people's travels, or that relate to a passion someone might have for a certain culture.

It might be a recipe that relates to a special memory, a dish a relative has passed down, or one that is simply enjoyable to make – and eat.

Send in your recipes, telling us why you want to share it!

All information, including details of how to submit a recipe and links to Chef Laura's video tutorials, can be found in Learning & Development in the My NCG section of the colleague Engage app.



A Career for life

Celebrating Julie's 25-year social care career

Julie Cowens is the registered manager of our Highlea Care supported living services in Durham. She manages a team of over 140, supporting 75+ people, across 16 sites. Julie is also National Care Group's Menopause Advocate.

As Julie marks her 25-year anniversary, she shares her career journey with us and tells us why social care is her career for life.

Was it always your aspiration to work in social care? As far back as I remember, I always wanted to be a nurse. When I was little, my parents bought me a nurse's outfit and I never took it off. I went on to study Health and Social Care at sixth form.

What happened after sixth form? I started working part time in a pub when I was studying, and I had so much fun there I thought 'I don't want to be a nurse anymore'. Although I completed my studies, I focused my attention on being trained up for a managerial role at the pub. Then, out of the blue, I got a call one day to say the pub was closing down and, in a panic, I began applying for jobs.

Is this what led your career path back to care? Yes. I'd applied to Highlea Care for a role as a support worker and they called me to ask me to start the following week.

Highlea was my first real experience of social care and when I arrived for my interview and looked around, I thought, 'I don't know if I can do this.' Back then, social care wasn't well known, and I'd not really heard about learning disabilities. When I'd been on college placements it had always been children or elderly care, so I'd not experienced it.

What was your first experience of working in social care like? After my first shift I was allocated as a key worker and so I began researching people's conditions, really throwing myself into it. That's when I thought to myself, 'Why did I think I might not want to do this?'. Although it wasn't quite what I'd trained for, I knew I could care for these people and wanted to make a difference to their lives and I wanted to challenge myself.

Care for people with learning difficulties had been archaic and within an hour of me starting at Highlea I could see these people had lives and could do and be something, they had choices – it was a lightbulb moment for me.

Tell us about your journey to where you are now? After two years in the role, I successfully applied for a senior support role. It took me three years to first become a registered manager, but over the years I think I've done just about every role there is. I've been a deputy manager, quality manager, senior manager and troubleshooting manager.

The pub closing and me accepting the job at Highlea Care turned out to be the best decision ever, and I'd say it was ultimately because I was working with people with learning disabilities.

Why do you think has been the secret to your success? I never wanted to get too complacent, and I've always relished in the challenge of giving



something new a try. I was so hungry to learn and was always putting my ideas forward, which thankfully the owner of Highlea at the time was always receptive too*.

Care has always been my focus – getting the best for the people we support, speaking up for them, getting them involved.

**To this day, some of the processes in place across the organisation are because of Julie's initiatives.*

Today you're an inspiring leader. Who and what has been your inspiration? From day one at Highlea Care's Rosslyn House, I learnt so much. I had people around me who encouraged me and allowed me a natural progression – without force. They were always open to new ideas that I would come up with which empowered me.

The owner of Highlea at the time had worked in institutions where the care of the individuals was not the priority. She had such passion for care because of her experiences and it filtered down. She empowered us all to be involved in decision making and always lead by example. That's who I learned from and that's why to this day I'm still very much involved in everything.

What do you mean by everything? Today for example, I'm making discussion jars – little pieces of paper inside the jar with subjects on. Every service will get one and it will help give the support workers inspiration to spark discussion. The people we support need meaningful conversation, not just routine. Especially when they're unable to get outside, they can get agitated when their routines are broken.

Observing and acting upon the seemingly small things. For example, there was one lady who never had a birth certificate, so I made her one. She carried it around for two years, she was so proud. It can be such a simple gesture that means so much to that person.

What do you enjoy the most about your job now? Obviously, the people we support. But without a doubt, my colleagues. I come to work because I love it and even if I didn't get paid, I know I'd still be involved in some way shape or other.

What advice would you give to someone considering a career in care? Don't be discouraged by the myth that care is about making someone a cup of tea or doing their housework. Give it a try – it is so much more than that!

Any lasting thoughts on this being your career for life? Every year I think 'What can I try?' but there's always something I'm inspired to do. I'll do this job until they kick me out of the door – I'm going nowhere.



Susan Wilshaw, Shelton Care Group
Hazel Proudmore, Shelton Care Group



Julie Cowens, Highlea Care



Justine Jones, Shelton Care Group



Janet Taylor, Shelton Care Group



Gemma Waite, Endurance Care



Steph Sunter, Regent College



Alan Cunningham, Highlea Care



Della Bates, Steps Rotherham



Lukasz Majcher, 8 Acres



Hannah Overland, Endurance Care



Kay Lancaster, Shelton Care Group
Nicola Pike Hulme, Shelton Care Group



Nicola Thorne, Newfield View



Peter Hammond, Integra

Welcome to our Happy Page!



Claire McCabe

Name: Claire McCabe
Position: Registered Manager, Essential Care and Support, Abbeyvale
Years working in the sector: Since 2009



Where we hope to inspire you with stories of our colleagues who are unlocking their potential!

What do you think sets NCG apart from other employers? I've never worked as a Registered Manager for an organisation where they are supported so much. Executive team members, directors and regional managers visiting services was a rarity in my previous workplace. Unlike my previous employer, I feel we are empowered to contribute to important decision making.

What do you love about your role? I have loved being able to make the service my own, put my stamp on it, supporting my team and the individuals to achieve their goals. I love the variety in my role knowing each day is different. Due to the size of my service, I don't think there will ever be enough hours in the day, but I remind myself of why I do this.

What do you think has been the secret to your success? I thrived in my first role and did as much as I could to progress, working in different specialities to gain as much knowledge as possible. My quick progression from support worker to Deputy Manager, to then becoming a Registered Manager within 3 years was the result of this.

How did it feel to win North East Manager of the Year at the 2022 Great British Care Awards? I was over the moon to be nominated but genuinely didn't expect to win. When my name was called out, I cried tears of joy. It was one of the proudest moments in my life. More importantly, to be recognised by my employer was just amazing!

What are your priorities at present? To tidy my desk! I need to improve my work life balance but mostly, continue striving to maintain good quality services and see the people we support reach their potential.

How do you see your future career? I love working for NCG. I have no desire to leave, and I hope to progress should the right opportunity arise. When I was offered a permanent Area Manager role after covering maternity, I wasn't able to accept it at the time. I thrived in that role too, so who knows?

What advice would you give to someone wanting to progress? You must be positive, committed and not let others hold you back. You only have one life, live it the way you want to.

I became a mum at a young age, so I left school without any formal qualifications. Don't let something like this stop you. I've managed to learn everything needed to do my role, always making personal study time to learn and educate myself, embracing every bit of training available to me.

Any final words that you live by? "It's a bad day, not a bad life."

Tell us a little bit about you: I was born in the County Durham area where I still live with my husband and my dog Max. I have two beautiful children and two gorgeous granddaughters.

When I'm not at work, it's important I use this time to relax with my family; I especially love spending time with my grandchildren. Having had endless holidays over the years to exotic islands, COVID gave me a new appreciation for what we have on our own doorsteps. I love the outdoors and enjoy going to Northumberland, or the Lake District, spending time in our beautiful countryside. I also enjoy theatre shows, listening to music and watching TV.

What made you want to work in the care sector? If you were to ask any of my family or friends what I am like, they would say that "Claire will do anything for anyone". Having had a difficult upbringing and various challenges throughout my earlier life, I realised I wanted a more fulfilling job.

I used to be an estate agent. People from a local supported living service would come to do their banking at the office there. I got to know them and enjoyed communicating with them. This really is what helped me decide that working in care might be something I'd get a great deal of satisfaction from; I wanted to go home feeling I'd done something rewarding. I made the change and have never looked back!

When did you realise working in social care was the career for you? When I first began working in care, the team I worked with were not willing to take the people we supported on holiday. As an enthusiastic new starter, I was happy to volunteer. Seeing the individuals' faces light up made me realise the priority was to make a difference to these people. Today, knowing that I continue to make a difference and support some of the most vulnerable people in society is enough for me to continue my career in social care.

When you came to work at National Care Group (NCG) how did it compare to where you'd previously worked? I'd left supported living services where I'd worked with, and moulded, the same colleagues and people we supported over many years. It was a huge step for me to move to NCG. To say I was initially overwhelmed by how different things were is an understatement, I knew I had a lot of work to do. At one point I almost held my hands up and said 'I can't do this'. Thankfully, I was mentored by my fantastic Regional Operations Manager Caron Cook. She gave me the pick me up that I needed and I'm so grateful she did as it's the reason I'm still here.

National Care Group in Pictures



KING CHARLES III CORONATION SPECIAL



Take a bow for some of National Care Group's Create a Crown Challenge entries in celebration of the Coronation of Their Majesties King Charles III and Queen Camilla. King Darren of Yew Tree House was crowned the winning entry for his magnificent jewel-encrusted creation which he created with the help of support worker, Paula.

KING CHARLES III CORONATION
CELEBRATIONS MAY 2023





Seasonal Snapshots

MEET ELLIE Our first Support Worker Apprenticeship programme graduate



Ellie Gelsthorpe is a support worker at our Steps Rotherham service. She joined us as an apprentice straight from leaving school and was the first person to enrol on The Support Worker Apprenticeship programme, part of The National Care Group Academy.

Ellie has been working towards her Level 2 qualification in Health and Social Care since she started in November 2021. Her apprenticeship placement has involved her supporting people across each of Steps' five services. This has allowed her to gain valuable experience in many aspects of support, and across all types of personal needs.

Ellie's colleagues at Steps have observed what an impact she is already making, how much she has grown in confidence, and what an asset she has become to the team.

At National Care Group, we are so proud that Ellie recently completed her qualification, passing with **very good merit** - and several months ahead of schedule!

When we spoke with Ellie, she told us how proud she is of her achievements and that she is keen to progress to team leader. She told us how much she loves being part of such a great team and how varied and rewarding the role is. She mostly enjoys organising activities and days out for the people she supports, and generally helping them with all their personal needs.

Ellie is now officially a fully qualified support worker and has the opportunity to work towards her Level 3 qualification.

Well done, Ellie, you are unlocking your potential and the sky is the limit!



Inspired by these achievements?
Why not review our current vacancies?

[www.nationalcaregroup.com/
current-vacancies](http://www.nationalcaregroup.com/current-vacancies)

Hello to our new starters!

Here's a big and happy shout-out to the 682 new starters National Care Group has welcomed since the last Changing Lives newsletter.

nationalcaregroup.com

Our Brilliant People, Doing Brilliant Things



Meet our Outstanding Achievement Award winners from the past few months who are all shining examples of our colleagues performing to the company values of Passion, Empowerment, Respect and Collaboration.

Karen Lewis, Chief Operations Officer



October

Mark Howard, Atlantic Way Care

Nominated by Registered Manager Beverley Clancy for the dramatic progress made with a person we support suffering with mental health issues, going to lengths to support him and never giving up at times when there seemed little hope. Mark's determination, encouragement, and kindness has transformed the person's life.



November

Pauline Wood, Endurance Care Maidstone

Nominated by Regional Operations Manager Tara Fewster for the way in which she always demonstrates passion for empowering the people we support, always with the utmost respect, and how she empowered a local family she met in the community to consider a supported living progression for a relative of theirs with needs.



December

Shelton Care Group's Richmond Mews Wellesley View Team

Nominated by Service Manager Jake Durham for the impact made on a person we support's final weeks and consistently demonstrating empathy and respect. From completing an end-of-life course, planning her last holiday, and organising her birthday party – even arranging a personal birthday message from her favourite singer.



December

June Huntley, Deepdale National Neurological Services

Nominated by Regional Operations Director Rob Tooze for her dedication to providing support for our Oaklea Care Services in Somerset by relocating from the Northeast and working extended days to ensure medication monitoring, better organising the team and guiding individual colleagues to help build their skills and confidence.



January

Colwyn House Team, Affinity Supporting People

The team were nominated by registered manager Mandy Berry for the way in which they dedicated themselves to a person they support on end-of-life care. Delivering round-the-clock care to ensure her final requests were met including their promise to not let her die alone.



February

Chloe Garcia, Shelton Care Group's Networks Day Services

Nominated by Registered Manager Donna Walklet for the dedication, commitment, and passion she has shown to empower a person we support with many complex needs, working tirelessly to improve communication, create new opportunities, and provide consistency while overcoming many challenges.



March

Tina James, Endurance Care Worcestershire

Nominated by Registered Manager Kelly Smith in recognition of being an exceptional newcomer to social care embracing her new role and responsibilities with positivity and passion. She has proved to be a vital part of the team and is already making a difference to the lives of the people we support.

Outstanding Achievement Awards for national awards

Throughout the year, National Care Group's Executive Team recognise the incredible contributions made by colleagues and teams in the monthly Outstanding Achievement Award nominations.

Each of the monthly award winners are reviewed and shortlisted, with one being crowned the National Outstanding Achievement Award winner at the annual awards ceremony. (See the awards highlights on the next page for the 2022/23 winners.)

Furthermore, every Outstanding Achievement Award entry is considered by the Executive Team when entering national sector awards like the Great British Care Awards and National Learning Disability & Autism Awards.

If a colleague is recognised for excelling in one or more of the values, nominating them for the monthly Outstanding Achievement Awards could see them go on to winning even more!

Great British Care Awards Recent Success

Well done to the 13 brilliant colleagues and teams shortlisted in the regional awards in the autumn and huge congratulations go to our winners!

Winners

North East Registered Manager of the Year:
Claire McCabe, Essential Care & Support

South West Team of the Year:
Chosen Care

Highly Commended

Outstanding Contribution to Social Care:
Katie Fallows, Shelton Care Group

Details of the Outstanding Achievement Award nomination process can be found in Celebrate Success on the colleague Engage app.



Celebrate Success

National Care Group Awards 2023



Newcomer of the Year:
Winner: Sabine Channa, Endurance Care Maidstone
Finalist: Wendy Marshall, Endurance Care Worcestershire
Tunde Jotham representing Sabine



Winner
Karen Twigg

Wellbeing Champion:
Winner: Karen Twigg, Regent College
Finalist: Mark Mason, The Estates Team



winner
Claire Hipkins

Support Function of the Year
Support Function of the Year (Sponsored by TLC):
Winner: Claire Hipkins, The Quality Team
Finalists: The Estates Team



Operations Team of the Year:
Winner: Links & Networks Day Services, Shelton Care Group
Finalist: Bewdley Hill Team, Endurance Care Worcestershire



Clinician of the Year:
Winner: Julie Warren, Wellington Support
Finalists: Donna Collyer and Mandy Curl, Regent College
Wendy Khan representing Julie



Winner
Claire Carr

Rising Star of the Year:
Winner: Claire Carr, Jamesons Residential
Finalist: Gary Burgess, Endurance Care Kent



Support Worker of the Year:
Winner: Lucy Fathers, The Willows
Finalists: Louise Thomas, Endurance Care Worcestershire
Rebecca Gray representing Lucy



Manager of the Year (Sponsored by Towergate):
Winner: Kate Harvey, Walliscote Road
Finalist: Michelle Dobson, Affinity Supporting People



Winner
Wellesley View

Outstanding Achievement Award:
Winner: Wellesley View Team, Shelton Care Group
Finalist: Sharon Moody, Essential Care and Support



winner
Colwyn Avenue

Making a Difference Award:
Winner: Colwyn Avenue Team, Affinity Supporting People
Finalist: Rosslyn House Team, Highlea Care



CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL OUR WINNERS & FINALISTS

Meet the team

The Quality team supports our operational colleagues in many ways to embed quality systems across our services, ensuring the highest standards are met.



The team is led by Quality Director, Mike Cleasby.

Quality Director Mike oversees compliance of all regulated services, helping to embed person-centred approaches, and developing robust quality and governance systems. He ensures all National Care Group policies are up to date and reviews safeguarding and CQC notifications.

Heads of Quality Claire Hipkins and Natalie Chase-Caffyn ensure our services are compliant by carrying out quality assurance audits. They support our operational colleagues by driving quality improvements within services, supporting the delivery of achieving the highest outcomes for the people we support.

Head of Positive Behaviour and Practice Development Karen Douglas coaches and mentors our colleagues, and the people we support. Karen manages the Regional Positive Behaviour Business Partners.



L-R Claire Hipkins, Karen Douglas and Natalie Chase-Caffyn

Getting to know the Quality Team

The team answered some quick fire questions to help you to get to know them a little better.

MIKE 

HIDDEN TALENT: I play a mean game of poker
FIRST CONCERT: Billy Bragg
WORST FASHION DECADE: 80s - shell suits, leather jackets & cuffed jeans
MOST FAMOUS PERSON YOU'VE MET: Bob Holness, Jeremy Hunt, Paul Daniels & Patsy Kensit
FAVOURITE PLACE IN THE WORLD: I like a holiday on a hot beach on a remote island, but also love a quiet dog walk on the North Yorkshire Moors
HOW PEOPLE MIGHT DESCRIBE YOU, IN 3 WORDS: Caring, driven, attentive
WHICH CARTOON CHARACTER BEST DESCRIBES YOU? Road Runner
LIFE MOTTO YOU LIVE BY: Old ways won't open new doors (we all need to keep an open mind, be adaptable and ready to learn new things).

KAREN 

HIDDEN TALENT: History geek
FIRST CONCERT: Robert Palmer
WORST FASHION DECADE: 80s - leg warmers & headbands
MOST FAMOUS PERSON YOU'VE MET: Astro from UB40
FAVOURITE PLACE IN THE WORLD: Norway
HOW PEOPLE MIGHT DESCRIBE YOU, IN 3 WORDS: Passionate, determined, good sense of humour (that's more than 3 words, I know!)
WHICH CARTOON CHARACTER BEST DESCRIBES YOU? Donkey from Shrek
LIFE MOTTO YOU LIVE BY: Treat every day like it is your last!

CLAIRE 

HIDDEN TALENT: Problem solving
FIRST CONCERT: Big Country (early 80s)
WORST FASHION DECADE: Early 1900s - all those layers/corsets must have made it difficult to breathe!
MOST FAMOUS PERSON YOU'VE MET: Sir Jackie Stewart
FAVOURITE PLACE IN THE WORLD: Monte Carlo
HOW PEOPLE MIGHT DESCRIBE YOU, IN 3 WORDS: Challenging, helpful, caring
WHICH CARTOON CHARACTER BEST DESCRIBES YOU? Winnie the Pooh
LIFE MOTTO YOU LIVE BY: I do like eating & being with my friends
LIFE MOTTO YOU LIVE BY: The French say, 'ne pas mourir idiot' - don't die a fool. I use it to justify trying everything at least once, in the name of learning!

STEVE 

HIDDEN TALENT: I can wiggle my ears (but not if you make me laugh)
FIRST CONCERT: Spandau Ballet
WORST FASHION DECADE: 80s - just for the 'shell suits'
MOST FAMOUS PERSON YOU'VE MET: Brian Conley "It's a puppet." If you know, you know!
FAVOURITE PLACE IN THE WORLD: Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario, Canada
HOW PEOPLE MIGHT DESCRIBE YOU, IN 3 WORDS: Approachable, supportive, honest
WHICH CARTOON CHARACTER BEST DESCRIBES YOU? Woody from Toy Story
LIFE MOTTO YOU LIVE BY: Be the best version of yourself - nobody can expect any more.

NATALIE 

HIDDEN TALENT: I can knot the stem of a maraschino cherry with my tongue
FIRST CONCERT: Jackson 5
WORST FASHION DECADE: 80s - Spandex & leg warmers...really????!!
MOST FAMOUS PERSON YOU'VE MET: Denzel Washington
FAVOURITE PLACE IN THE WORLD: Crown Point, Tobago
HOW PEOPLE MIGHT DESCRIBE YOU, IN 3 WORDS: Brave, trustworthy, friendly
WHICH CARTOON CHARACTER BEST DESCRIBES YOU? Velma from Scooby Doo
LIFE MOTTO YOU LIVE BY: She's intelligent, has good problem-solving skills & always the first to solve the mystery... I love a good mystery
LIFE MOTTO YOU LIVE BY: Waste not, want not.

DANNY 

HIDDEN TALENT: Mixed martial arts
FIRST CONCERT: Tiesto
WORST FASHION DECADE: 90s - too much baggy denim
MOST FAMOUS PERSON YOU'VE MET: Joey Essex
FAVOURITE PLACE IN THE WORLD: Geiranger, Norway
HOW PEOPLE MIGHT DESCRIBE YOU, IN 3 WORDS: Compassionate, hardworking, innovative
WHICH CARTOON CHARACTER BEST DESCRIBES YOU? Batman
LIFE MOTTO YOU LIVE BY: Difficult roads lead to beautiful destinations. The best is yet to come.

Putting the Positive Behaviour Support team in the spotlight.

Part of the Quality Team, the Positive Behaviour Support (PBS) Team supports our service colleagues, and sometimes the people we support, to help with any behavioural issues or concerns.

As a relatively new team, we've put the spotlight on our Positive Behaviour Support colleagues to find out more about them and what they do.

Karen Douglas, Head of Positive Behaviour and Practice Development



YEARS IN SECTOR: 27
YEARS AT NCG: Almost 3

Describe your role:

My role involves coaching and mentoring colleagues and working with people we support. I support managers, teams and individual colleagues with practice development by way of working directly with them and delivering workshops to enhance knowledge in key areas.

I manage the Positive Behaviour Support team who are a wonderful team to be a part of.

What you like most about working at NCG:

The support I receive is fantastic. The people I work with are amazing and working for an organisation with a strong value base is a privilege. Working in the quality team is amazing, my role is varied, and I have the pleasure of working with so many different people.

The best thing about working in the sector:

Making a difference to both the people we support and colleagues, empowering people to live their best lives.

Introducing Chloe



Chloe Benjamin is new to the Positive Behaviour Support team, joining recently as the Regional Positive Behaviour Support Business Partner for the south.

To introduce Chloe, we've asked her some of the quickfire team questions.

Welcome to the National Care Group family, Chloe!

FIRST CONCERT: Take That
WORST FASHION DECADE: 90s - big wide leg trousers & platform trainers
MOST FAMOUS PERSON YOU'VE MET: Mike Tindall
FAVOURITE PLACE IN THE WORLD: Hawaii
HOW PEOPLE MIGHT DESCRIBE YOU, IN 3 WORDS: Compassionate, hardworking, innovative
WHICH CARTOON CHARACTER BEST DESCRIBES YOU? Dora the Explorer

Freedom to Speak Up Guardians

All members of the Quality Team are Freedom to Speak Up Guardians. They are here to provide our colleagues with another channel for them to speak up, offer support and escalate matters, and update on how the matter is being handled.

Information on reporting an anonymous concern can be found in the Support Centre on the colleague Engage app.



Steve Lamb, Regional Positive Behaviour Support Partner (North)



YEARS IN SECTOR: 28
YEARS AT NCG: 5

Describe your role:

My current role is a mixed and varied role; it involves travelling and being available to services within my region. Any circumstances in a person's life can influence the way they behave and sometimes it isn't always easy to know what some of those things are. My role is to help colleagues, and sometimes the people we support, to work out what factors are contributing to behaviours and explore ways to help minimise those factors or the impact of them. Ideally the aim is to then reduce the likelihood of things going wrong in the future and help with ways to try and keep people safe if they do.

What you like most about working at NCG:

Working for a company that has the right values, is so forward thinking and always looking for ways to improve is important for me. Everyone's focus on achieving positive outcomes and maximising people's potential. The phenomenal achievements of so many individuals, teams and services are uplifting.

The best thing about working in the sector:

Restoring faith in humanity. There are so many bad things in the world, but the commitment, dedication, and good will of colleagues in the care sector never ceases to amaze me. Here's to all the unsung heroes!

Danny Mann, Regional Positive Behaviour Support Partner (East)



YEARS IN SECTOR: 22
YEARS AT NCG: 1

Describe your role:

As Regional Positive Behaviour Partner I offer specialist input, advice, and support. I work in partnership with colleagues, the people we support, and their families to reduce challenging behaviours while aiming to increase the person's quality of life.

To support our operational colleagues, I can provide advice and support on the best ways to support a person proactively and reactively. I work with stakeholders to develop person-centred approaches to empower individuals through inclusion, choice, participation, and independence.

What you like most about working at NCG:

I like working for a value-based company that puts the people we support first. I have enjoyed getting to know teams and the people we support.

The best thing about working in the sector:

The best thing about working in social care is seeing and being part of the journey made by the people we support, especially supporting people to make friends, participate in new activities, get jobs, and become more independent.

Changing Lives

Heart-felt stories of how extra special bonds are formed between our devoted colleagues and the people they support.

Bethany & Stacie

Over 10 years ago when Bethany first started attending the day services where Stacie worked, her parents were anxious about her entering an unfamiliar environment. It was Stacie who was there to reassure them and who became Bethany's one-to-one support.

Bethany's parents came to entrust Stacie with their daughter so much that when they decided it was time for her to move from the family home to her own home, they wanted Stacie to be there to make the transition with her.

Stacie continued to support Bethany at day services and balanced her time to support her in her new home at our Newfield View supported living service. Emma, who had been supporting Bethany at home, joined Stacie at the request of Bethany's parents. Eventually Steph and Charlotte came on board and together they became Bethany's extended family.

Due to Bethany's profound needs, she requires 24/7 support. She is a wheelchair user who requires a hoist for transfers, is registered blind and non-verbal. She is also peg-fed. The intensities of caring for Bethany means only this trained team supports her.

With support from the team, Stacie has created such a person-centred support plan, developing ways of communicating with Bethany through facial expressions, body language and sounds. They have been on the most incredible journey of discovery with her.

Team Leader, Stacie said, *"We've established so much understanding of one another. An example is Bethany rubbing her left ear which lets us know she doesn't like something. We have names for some of her expressions too. Angry elbow is her way of telling us she wants to change whatever it is she's doing."*



It's been a labour of love for them as they've built on this unique language, going through a process of elimination each time Bethany makes a new expression or sound.

Stacie told us, *"There are still times when Bethany does something, and we think, 'that's new', and we need to figure out what it is. We go through a list of checks and monitor any change in Bethany to establish what she's trying to tell or show us. We try to respond then wait and see if she's calm. If not, we try something else. It can take a few attempts but once we're satisfied Bethany's happy, we know what it is for next time."*

The team keep Bethany active. Her social calendar is jam packed with days out and holidays, and they arrange meetups with her friend Sally, who she met at day services.

The devotion of Stacie and the team has made Bethany's quality of life so much better, enabling her to take control and make decisions. In turn, the team are fulfilled by what they continue to do.

As Stacie said, *"You can't not fall in love with Bethany"*.



Qadeer & Chloe

The bond between Qadeer & Chloe is quite remarkable. Their connection developed through Chloe's commitment to making life better for Qadeer. Despite the intensity and complexities involved, especially during his periods of unstable mental health and psychosis, she has supported Qadeer tirelessly.

Chloe has empowered Qadeer to be more independent, helping him gain confidence and giving him a voice. Qadeer doesn't speak English. To overcome communication barriers, Chloe not only taught herself to speak basic Italian, but she also developed a way of simplifying phrases and created a translation board to help her colleagues better communicate with him. Her efforts have been a tremendous help to Qadeer's family and community partners too.

Chloe continues to enrich Qadeer's life, encouraging him to participate in community activities most would be hesitant to do. She has learnt to embrace Qadeer's culture by embracing prayer mat and routine – values very important to him and his family – and insists her shift pattern ensures consistency for him.

Qadeer's life is so much more fulfilling with Chloe in it. She makes his difficult days bearable and the good days, she makes great.

Together, they are a team.

In recognition of her commitment to Qadeer, and other people she supports, Chloe was National Care Group's Outstanding Achievement Award winner in February (see pages 20&21).



In the Driver's Seat

How our colleagues go the extra mile to enrich the lives of the people we support.

Full steam ahead for Jesse

Jesse's passion for trains goes back to his childhood. He loves everything about them and loves to travel by train as often as possible, some days spending all day on them with no particular destination in mind. The biggest thrill for Jesse is planning the route, experiencing the journey, and chatting with the crew along the way.

Jesse likes to be certain he can make two trips to London each month. Impressively, Jesse knows almost all the London Underground AND Southeastern railway routes. He makes one visit with a support worker and one with his dad, who also shares Jesse's enthusiasm. They visit model railway and steam train fairs together, and Jesse looks forward to all his train endeavours so much he marks the days down on his calendar – with train stickers.



Jesse is a person we support at Endurance Care in Kent. He's a big character who often walks around the service with a train driver's hat on to make everybody smile. The team there know just how much Jesse's passion for trains enriches his life. They go beyond to help him achieve his goals, supporting him with planning, and managing his budgeting goal so he can take his train trips.

To support Jesse with his goal of keeping his room tidy, Service Manager Pauline Wood and Regional Operations Manager Tara Fewster knew just what to do. When Jesse was on a break with family, they got to work and created his dream London Underground themed bedroom. Jesse was thrilled to discover his new room, The Jesse Line, which he is super proud of.

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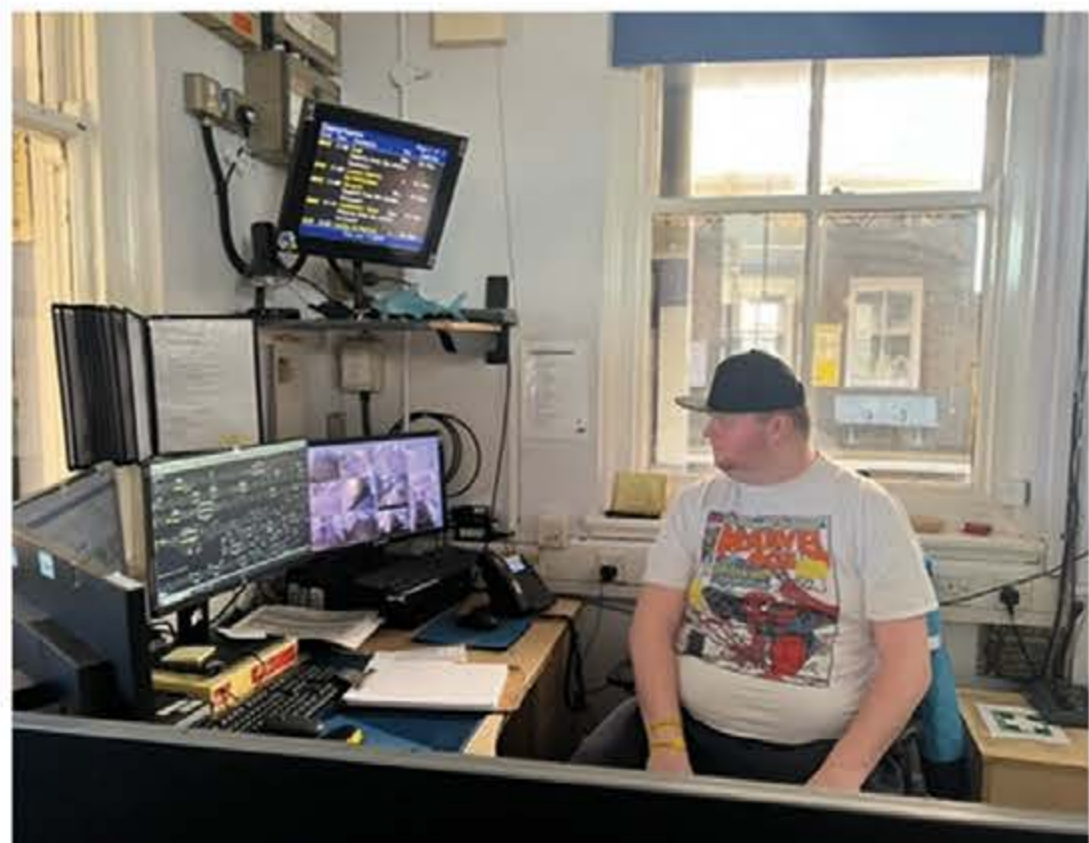


When Jesse had a much-anticipated birthday trip arranged earlier in the year, Tara stopped at nothing to make it an experience like no other for him.

Together with the Southeastern team at Ramsgate station, she gave Jesse a birthday to remember. From the personal welcome on arrival he received, being presented with a birthday bag of train goodies, to an exclusive behind the scenes tour of the station. Jesse was beside himself with joy. He visited the control room where he was shown how to dispatch a train, and even made a live platform announcement.

Before heading off on his planned journey to Sittingbourne, there was one last treat for Jesse. He was invited inside the train cab so he could truly experience what it feels like to sit at the wheel.

Jesse was elated with his surprise and the Southeastern staff enjoyed meeting him as much as he enjoyed his special visit. They were super impressed with his train knowledge too and have invited him back for another visit soon.



Joe & Duncan's ride of their lives

Joe and Duncan bonded over a newfound love of motorbikes after discovering a TV drama series about a motorcycle club. Together, they love to wear their 'Sons of Anarchy' waistcoats, likened to those worn by the programme's characters.

Being part of a motorcycle club was a TV dream beyond reality for the two of them, or so they thought. Support worker Lesley Mayhew put out all the stops to help them realise their dream.

Lesley contacted the local biking community, close to our Highlea Care service where Joe and Duncan live. What started out as a request to meet them, became so much more.

Joe and Duncan were invited as guests of honour. They were embraced by the members, who chatted with them over a drink about their shared love of motorbikes, making them feel part of their biking family. They allowed them to sit on a bike - and even rev the engine - which of course they were both thrilled with.



Just when Joe and Duncan didn't think it could get any better, they were both invited to become honorary members of the motorcycle club. They were given new dedicated club leather vests and official club badges. It is customary for bikers to have a nickname; Joe chose Fury and Duncan chose Flame. They both decided they wanted powerful names.

As members, Joe and Duncan will be invited to all upcoming events and regular meet ups. They've been introduced to the bikers' code of conduct, which they'll both be adhering to.

Excitement is one way of describing how the two of them are feeling about their new hobby. It has brought them a new sense of confidence and engagement.

Lesley's seemingly small gesture of reaching out to 'real life' bikers, and the overwhelming response from the club members, have brought so much fulfilment to the lives of Joe and Duncan.

Paul's new wheels to independence

Paul is taking to the road again thanks to the endeavours of the Endurance Care team in Folkestone.

Paul had always enjoyed being out and about but started finding public transport challenging. Paul has autism and is non-verbal. The noises, distractions and inconsistencies were causing him upset and he'd find it difficult to express his feelings, often shouting and making loud sounds that would leave him unsettled for days after.

Paul had been enjoying walking as an alternative but that too came with its problems. He has a condition which means he doesn't recognise when his body needs to rest so he would keep walking, regardless of how far he was going. He started to drastically lose weight and his GP advised he was to limit his exercise.

These issues drastically limited Paul and restricted his much-needed independence, impacting him greatly.



Paul began writing the words car and wheels almost daily. With no family to advocate for him and knowing the impact on his life, the team put out all the stops working tirelessly to champion Paul's request. What followed were months of meetings and phone calls with all those involved in Paul's care, compiling of evidence, and completing assessments.

As the process got closer to completion and there began to be hope, Paul's spirits were lifted. He'd get excited and would write new car related words down like the make and colour.

When they were given the green light, Paul was transformed. He started writing new words such as cathedrals, churches, garden centres, and castles – all the places he set goals of visiting safely and securely in his new car.



Our colleagues stop at nothing to make brilliant things happen!

Unlocking the potential of our new quality checkers

We're introducing National Care Group's new team of Quality Checkers.

Meet Christine, Elliott, Shaun, Aaron, Ellie, Steve and Charlotte, all people we support who were successful in applying for the positions.

The team will be working alongside the existing Quality Team in these very important, highly valued roles.

Our new team of Quality Checkers will be making observations from lived experiences and will give us a unique insight into how we can improve our services – for the people that matter the most, by the people that matter the most.

The newly created roles have been introduced to National Care Group as a way to measure the quality of our services from those that experience the care and support themselves. It is the people we support who are best placed to tell us what excellent quality of care looks like.

Guided by our Quality Business Partners, the team will visit National Care Group services to ensure the highest standard quality of care is being delivered. This will involve them asking a choice of questions, from a list they'll have, and writing a report on their findings.

The work our Quality Checkers will do will be invaluable to delivering positive outcomes. They too have newfound skills and confidence and have each achieved paid and meaningful employment with National Care Group.

Our Quality Checkers have undertaken formal training in order to prepare themselves with the skills, knowledge, and real-life implementation needed for the role.

We're already super proud of their achievements and wish them the very best in their new roles.



Nov 22: L-R Christine, Elliot, Shaun, Aaron and Ellie



Steve (2nd left) & Charlotte (far right) with NCG colleagues Gary & Gaby



Our new Quality Checkers in training

Unlocking the potential for our training assistants

Our Learning and Development Team embrace the people we support participating in colleague training, when appropriate to do so. Giving them the opportunity to contribute helps to build trust and makes them feel included. It can be empowering and uplifting.

Regional trainer Karen Milligan was preparing her training session. She needed an extra pair of hands to help deliver it and invited JP to support her.

JP was over the moon to be asked and more than happy to work with Karen.

Together, Karen and JP delivered Emergency First Aid at Work to colleagues at one of our Endurance Care supported living services in Kent, where JP lives.



JP embraced his role of training assistant, participating in all the activities that were delivered to the team. He felt proud when he was able to answer some of the questions the team had forgotten, which both Karen and the team were super impressed by.

When it came to the team practising their dressing skills, JP volunteered to be the patient.

JP said he'd had a really great time supporting Karen and especially enjoyed being bandaged, which he said was his favourite part of the day.

Over at The Willows residential service in Norfolk when the Learning and Development team arrived to carry out training, Georgina was enthusiastic about supporting them.

Georgina loves to be involved in many aspects of life at The Willows, including helping to run the service and assisting with cooking.



Georgina did a sterling job of supporting the team to delivering the Safety Intervention Training for colleagues and as the life and soul of The Willows, her enthusiasm shone throughout the day.

Unlocking the potential: Good news stories



Dean receives his Prince's Trust Award.

Dean is person we support at Essential Care and Support, County Durham.

He not only gained The Prince's Trust Entry level 3 in Employment, Teamwork and Community Skills, he went on to achieve The Prince's Trust Team Programme too. Congratulations, Dean!



Engagement Celebrations

Love is in the air for Barry and Shirley, two people we support at our Highlea Care supported living services in County Durham.

Barry and Shirley got engaged recently and they did it style by throwing a party for family and close friends. Congratulations to you both!

Not a National Care Group colleague?

Have the pages of this magazine inspired you?

Become a National Care Group social care hero

Experienced or brand new to the sector, if you have passion, are hardworking and want to make a difference to the lives of others, then we'd love to hear from you.

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Image courtesy of Polly Braden & Sally Williams - A Place for Me

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National Care Group Colleagues

Engage

Download the National Care Group Colleague Engagement App. Scan the QR code for details.



Power Apps

Download the National Care Group Service Directory (Available to download to android or Apple phones by searching Power Apps in the App Store - only available to colleagues with a NCG email address)



Virtual Colleague Chat Sessions

Details of our various sessions and how to join can be found in the NCG Chat section of the Colleague Engage App.

Share your stories

Share your stories via Engage or email them to



media@nationalcaregroup.com