



Friends of 1st Homecare

SUMMER 2023

News and views from 1st Homecare for staff, clients and their families



A few thoughts

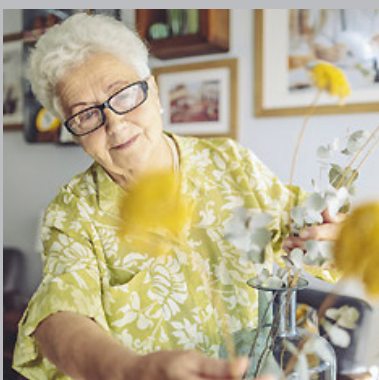
From John Rennison, CEO



My family and I have just returned from a summer holiday break and I hope you, our valued customers, health partners, and carers, are also managing to enjoy some downtime with loved ones. It is so important to connect with family and friends and to take a break in these busy times.

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We were delighted to return from holiday to the news that, for the 4th year running, we have been given an award as a Top 20 Care Group in the country by homecare.co.uk. This is the country's leading homecare website and the award is given to companies based upon real customer feedback. So firstly, I would genuinely like to thank everyone who took the time to leave a positive review, it means a great deal to the team! To be awarded four years in a row is a real testament to the quality and consistency of our service and shows how well our local managers are able to deal with the issues which arise each and every day. Well done and thank you to all the office staff and to all the carers for their continued efforts to support individuals to remain in the comfort of their own homes.

However, I was concerned about news reports of abuse of migrant workers. It's obviously great to see that the Government has allowed some 50,000 carers into the country to help alleviate the shortage of carers following the return of so many East European carers to their home countries after Brexit. But one of the unintended consequences of this is that many new care providers are operating with large numbers of immigrant carers who may not know their employment rights and who may be easily exploited by their unscrupulous employers. My concern is that the mis-treatment of carers will shortly be exposed and once again people who may have been considering a career in care will be deterred from doing so.

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A few thoughts (continued from front page)



You will have seen our story about Lucy from Zimbabwe in our last newsletter and from our point of view we have employed a small number of overseas carers and have given them full training and they are working out well. For us, it's good to know that these carers are able to send some funds to their home countries where their families are facing major issues with electricity and fresh water shortages. Recruitment is of particular interest to us as we continue to grow our 1st Homecare business. And I'd welcome your views if you'd like to drop me a line.

Our live-in business continues to grow and we welcome Sinead Brooks as manager joining us from another (and larger) live-in care provider. Our key asset is that we can

offer both live-in care and domiciliary care support from our local offices. There are many care providers who cannot provide both services so our unique service seems to be very well received.

The team has also been busy with our transfer to a new care management system called Careberry. We moved over to the new system in July at Leighton Buzzard and the other branches will move over next month. Overall this will enable us to provide even better care with better lines of communication but please be aware that there may be a few glitches as we connect up all carers to their new apps and client families to their new apps and bear with us as we get to grips with new ways of working.

And finally – we are delighted to announce that we are going to be extending the 1st Homecare family. We are opening a new branch in Buckinghamshire and have identified the town and the manager to run it but I'll announce this in our next edition.

In the meantime, I hope you enjoy the rest of the Summer.

Take good care, John

WELCOME TO... Sinead Brooks



Sinead has a successful care career under her belt, most recently as Care Assessment Manager for a well-respected live-in care company in London. We are really pleased that Sinead is joining us to capitalise on her expertise and knowledge in the live-in care sector and we welcome her on board at the start of August. Sinead was awarded Care Assessor of the Year at the prestigious Great British Care Awards and I'm sure you'll agree is a very personable addition to our Live-In Care Team. Sinead is looking forward to meeting the carers and her office colleagues and welcomes the challenge of making a difference to the lives of our 1st Homecare clients.



A SPOTLIGHT ON KINGS LANGLEY

Celebrating 272 years combined service of its team this year!

The number 272 might sound like a bus route but in fact it is the total number of years of service completed by the loyal and caring team at our Kings Langley branch. Two staff members alone are celebrating 25 years of service and several more are being recognised this summer for 15-20 years of service. This equates to an astonishing average of 11.5 years of service per employee.



There are 4 office team staff based in Kings Langley and a team of 22 carers who are out and about in the area covering Abbots Langley, Watford, Croxley Green, Chipperfield and Rickmansworth. The team supports clients by enabling them to remain in the comfort of their own homes in the safe knowledge that a professional, trained and kind person will be stopping by to support them with their everyday needs.

The longest serving member of the office staff team is Sharon, who celebrated 25 years of being with the company recently. Sharon started back in 1997 and progressed her career over the years, and she is now senior carer on the Intake Team undertaking risk assessments with clients, writing their care and support plans, meeting with and providing initial care for new clients to settle them in, and

ensuring that they are satisfied. Branch Manager Helen Backhouse says of Sharon: "Sharon has invaluable experience gathered with years of working with clients so she knows exactly how to best match clients with the right carers. You have to be firm but fair in her role and her years of experience have taught her amazing communication skills. She has a fabulous way of saying no to people which can be a difficult part of the job."

Helen continued: "Our team is trained to the highest standard and there are always opportunities for self-development and career progression. We operate an open-door policy and see most carers at least once a week when they come in for an update and cup of tea. They know there is always someone on hand to support them."

Carer Omaira received a company 'Values Award' for her dedication and for great client service and feedback after an equally impressive 25 years. Omaira has worked at the Kings Langley office since March 1997. Despite - as she said - "slowing down somewhat over the past few years" (she says she's getting too old!!), Omaira remains a reliable and valued member of the team and is always bubbly and smiling.

And earlier this year in 2023 the duo of carers Wendy and Janet celebrated nearly 50 years' service amongst just the two of them. Clients say these two senior carers are "reliable and trustworthy" and "nothing is ever too much for them."

CEO John is delighted: "The number of years of service completed by the Kings Langley staff is extraordinary, and a testament to the office team. I'm proud of the sense of belonging that our carers have and the culture we have that enables our employees to remain so satisfied in their roles."

"There is so much more to care than the public realises. Our team always go the extra mile, really taking the time to get to know the clients they look after. Care is not just about personal care and medication, but about meaningful relationships in familiar surroundings."



Celebrating learning success!

In our last Newsletter, we wrote about our Values, one of which is our commitment to quality of care, and the fact that we encourage our care staff to undertake professional qualifications so they can provide even better care to our clients.



It is an integral value of 1st Homecare to promote continuous on the job training to carers who would like to progress their careers. So, we would like to recognise two carers from our Leighton Buzzard office who have been studying hard to invest in their future and offer the best possible service to their clients. We cannot applaud them enough! We are delighted that Jaie has just been awarded his Level 2 in Adult Health and Social Care and Vicky passed her Level 3 in Adult Health and Social Care. Both have been studying diligently for the past year to achieve this industry recognised qualification.

Jaie has been with us full time since June 2019 and has studied hard over the years as he had no previous experience in the care sector at all. Vicky has been in care for many years and with 1st Homecare since 2016 (with a short break). She has progressed her career by taking part in lots of training alongside her day job as a carer and has now moved to an office-based position as senior carer. She still visits clients to carry out care herself, undertakes care plan risk assessments and care plan writing, and does supervisions and spot checks to support carers. Congratulations to both Vicky and Jaie!

Well done team! If anyone is interested in taking up training please let your branch manager know and we can support you in finding the right course.

Joining forces with the Alzheimer's Society



Continuing the theme of learning and education, we are pleased to say that we are going to be working with the Alzheimer's Society to train our teams as Dementia Friends.

1st Homecare looks after many clients living with dementia and we see first-hand the effect it can have on the lives of those diagnosed and their friends and families. Dementia Friends is an initiative launched by the Alzheimer's Society to educate the wider public on dementia and to take positive action to support people living with dementia. The Alzheimer's Society, is made up of people with dementia, carers, trusted experts, campaigners, researchers and clinicians. It is the UK's largest collective force of people with unparalleled knowledge and over 40 years of experience addressing the biggest challenges facing people living with dementia. We are so pleased to be rolling this initiative out amongst all our 4 branches and will be cascading information and videos to the team over the summer.

Anyone can take part so if you are interested do take a look to find out further details and join us in helping the community! Click 'Become a friend of Dementia' to find out more.



CASE STUDY

Going the extra 8,300 miles to help... why 1st Homecare is rated Outstanding in Responsiveness!

We have an “Outstanding” in Responsiveness from the Care Quality Commission at two of our branches, and as an organisation, we always try to go the extra mile to help – not only our clients but as a very recent case study shows, we are happy to give care advice to people who are trying to sort out their care arrangements, and are facing numerous options that they have to navigate through to arrive at the best solution.

We recently received an enquiry via our new “live chat” function at a weekend from a couple living in Eswatini (formerly Swaziland), one of whose parents (living in England) were receiving live-in care from a different provider. They were looking for an idea on costs but also some advice on other options.

We responded to them the same weekend and arranged a call with them for early the following week. John, our CEO and Su, our Interim Live-In Care Manager advised the family on, among other things, the possibility of them being able to secure CHC funding, whether repatriation of one of the parents to Eswatini was possible and how they might go about that, and even, whether the parents needed live-in care at all. We subsequently looked into some of these options for them and gave them some further information. They were grateful, and we were very happy to have been able to offer some help, even without knowing if they would become clients of 1st Homecare. We understand what a very difficult thing it can be trying to sort these matters out, when so much has to be taken into account, and are always willing to reach out and help where we can.



Coffee Mornings



As part of our work with the Alzheimer’s Society we will be introducing regular coffee open mornings at all of our branches to talk all things dementia, remaining independent and living life to the full. We will be arranging the first ones this autumn so watch this space!

Our Values Shout Out



This summer we would like to make a special mention of our lovely carer Amy. Amy joined our Oxford Branch in just January this year and always brightens everyone’s day with her infectious smile. She was awarded a Values award for going the extra mile when our client needed additional help. She stepped in to provide morning and evening care and cover the additional support needed at the weekends, until we were able to introduce a second carer.

“Amy exemplifies our Values of Compassion and Caring with a Smile and we are lucky to have her onboard!” says Oxford branch manager Michelle.



Moving upwards and onwards...



There have been a few changes to the teams in our branches this summer.

We are delighted to announce that Helen Backhouse has been promoted to Branch Manager of the Kings Langley office. Helen is one of several long-standing employees at this branch, in fact, she has worked there since 1997 (with a career break for children) and has for the past 2 years been assistant branch manager, working very closely with former branch manager Lesley, and knows the carers and the clients extremely well. This is a very well-deserved promotion and we all wish her success in the role.

Helen's promotion comes because of the retirement of Lesley Bignold from the role of manager at Kings Langley. Lesley has been part of the Kings Langley office since 1998 and has been a great asset, ensuring first class care to clients and providing strong, supportive and nurturing leadership to the carers and her office team. Rather than lose Lesley altogether from the group, we offered her a newly created role as Group Compliance Lead and are very pleased that she accepted. This is an excellent example of how we like to nurture talent at 1st Homecare and create opportunities to suit changing lifestyles.



Courtney Sherwood sadly decided to move on from her role as our Live-In Care Supervisor and left at the end of July to take a short break before deciding on her next steps. We wish Courtney all the very best in whatever she decides to do as her future career.

Careberry – no it's not a new superfood!



Digitalisation is such a buzz word in most industries nowadays and Care is no exception. To be at the forefront of our industry we are constantly looking at our processes and ensuring we operate with the greatest efficiency and in line with best practice. We went digital (and paperless) with our rota and care planning systems 5 years ago, at a time when many care providers were still operating with paper systems, so we like to think that we were in the forefront of care digitalisation. We gave an update on data security in our last newsletter and this month we wanted to let our readers know about our decision to move from our existing digital rota and care planning systems to a new system called Careberry.

Careberry will provide us with a far more efficient, joined up and user-friendly rota and care planning system, benefitting staff, carers and clients and allowing more of our time and resources to be spent on care. Our support team in the branches are working hard to move all client and staff data over to Careberry as we write. If you are reading this and are one of our customers and valued clients, rest assured you will see little change, the main one being that we will be moving to a new "Next of Kin" app but we will inform you when it is ready to be installed. There will also be small changes to the formats of the invoices but in all other ways it will be business as usual for our clients and loved ones. Please be aware that there may be a few glitches as we connect up all carers to their new apps and client families to their new apps and bear with us as we get to grips with new ways of working.



Our CEO speaks at a conference on going digital

In July our CEO John spoke at the Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes (BLMK) Future Digitalisation of Social Care Conference 2023.



He explained to an audience of 100 delegates from care homes and home care providers and the Director of Digital at the Care Quality Commission, Mark Cotter, the benefits 1st Homecare has encountered by going digital. When we first took over the business with the first office in Leighton Buzzard, we inherited a paper-based system, as most care provider systems were in those days of 2012.

Paper payslips, paper rotas, paper record sheets from clients, paper medical charts, paper notes from conversations with clients and families. Let's just say there was lots of shredding involved as we converted to a paperless, digital, system! There have been huge benefits in going digital, to both our staff and to our clients and their families, which include:

- Our "Next of Kin" app provides extra peace of mind to family as they can see immediately what care has been provided and get up to date information about how their loved one is;
- Carers can spend more time caring and less time handwriting care records;
- Care records are filed digitally so less scope for misfiling and less scope for lost records;
- We can work more easily with external health professionals such as social workers and doctors when required as records can easily be electronically shared

We always gather feedback from our employees and our customers and so far we've only had a positive response, as demonstrated by a couple of quotes:

"I find the app a real bonus as I can keep an eye on Mum while I'm at work."

"There is an app families can use to see notes from each visit, which is brilliant. I would highly recommend 1st Homecare."

Overall, the talk was well received by the delegates and we are progressing well with the introduction of Careberry and the next phase of the digitalisation of 1st Homecare.

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