



VIEWS AND NEWS

APRIL 2015

Newsletter Name: We have struggled to think of a suitable name for our newsletter – if you have any good ideas – we want to hear from you.

Newsletter distribution: During the past year, I have sent out a number of newsletters to staff, but want to extend this to people who are supported by North East Community Care Ltd. as well. Everyone will receive a copy, either by post or email.

Newsletter input: It was hoped that we could form a sizeable ‘Advisory Group’ who would take responsibility for collecting information for ‘our newsletter.’ Unfortunately, only Stacey Grant and Dolina Mackenzie turned up to the last meeting.

If you are interested in getting involved or, you know of someone who would be interested in getting involved – we would like to hear from you.

Or, if you have any ‘stories’ about your achievements, photos, information you would like to pass on to others etc. Please send these to me. In the meantime, I would like to pass on our latest news.

Difficulties in recruitment of staff: Many of you will know that we have had a real struggle to recruit suitable Care Workers. We have tried numerous ways of recruitment, including putting postcards onto car windscreens at supermarkets, putting adverts on facebook, advertising in local press, getting staff to place adverts on their personal facebook pages, and NECC Facebook page and advertising on recruitment websites. What has been happening of late is, one or two people may express an interest, we send out application packs and in some cases we invite for interview. We have managed to recruit about 10 new Care Workers during the last year, but, we need more to keep up with the number of people we are being asked to support.

Many people withdraw early on, in the recruitment process and it is clear that they are not too interested in work, for reasons, only known to them.

I know that generally, rates being paid to Care Workers are low in comparison to many other jobs out there, especially in this North East corner, where oil companies pay rates which we cannot compete with.

It annoys me greatly that politicians and civil servants seem to be putting the blame onto care providers/employers for the rates being paid to Care Workers. There also seems to be a big campaign by some politicians to get rid of zero hours contracts. They seem to have very short memories and may not fully understand the competitive tendering process and procurement of services by local councils.

Approximately 20 – 30 years ago, I can remember when care providing companies, contracted by councils, would receive a block amount of money to provide services, with one of the conditions that wages to Care Workers was on the same scale as council staff doing similar jobs. Then came along the idea for councils to introduce "competitive tendering" which has driven care rates down, big national companies greatly undercutting good local companies, leading to rates being considered before quality. In those days, we could get 30 – 50 applications for one vacant job (we are now lucky if we get 3)

So, when you hear politicians blaming private and voluntary care companies for the rates they pay their staff, please be reminded that 'THEY' made the decision to introduce competitive tendering of care services and 'THEY' also decided to bring in multi national companies, who's main interest is in profit levels, rather than the needs of the people we support and the staff we employ.

We have to work very hard to survive, to compete with other care organisations, to hang on to our staff, recruit sufficiently to meet demand. However, NECC will continue to do their best to meet the individual and specific needs of the people we support, we will also strive to do our best to maintain or improve on the terms we offer staff:

I have always tried my best to be a good and fair employer and have always had a starting rate of pay for staff above the minimum working

wage. I now want to improve upon that and have a starting rate of £7.85, the amount which is called The Living Wage.

I have had very few complaints from staff about our zero hours contracts, and for some people, it may in fact suit them best to have such contracts. Politicians seem to believe that employees get a very raw deal if they are on zero hours contracts and I have argued the case with them when they were campaigning in street corners.

However, in order to lift morale with employees and to give additional job security, I am going to introduce fixed hour contracts for those who wish to have one.

I have also reviewed the pay scales for Community Care Workers, (please see attached) We will endeavour to implement all these changes within the next month. New rates will be backdated to 1.4.15

Who's who – contact details – new mobile numbers:

Alistair Law: 07715412730

Stacey Grant (Area Manager based at Craibstone) 07771346935

Shona Howitt – (Community Care Co-ordinator) 07715412987

New Client and Staff handbooks – during the past 4 – 6 months we have been reviewing policies and procedures and putting together NECC information for our clients and staff. We have put essential information into smart folders (which we hope you like) along with CD's with the same information. When we update or come up with new information, we will send you paper copies to put into your handbook. We plan to renew CD's annually. Any comments about these would be welcome.

Quality Assurance – we like to ask our clients about the service they receive from NECC. Sometimes in the past, it may seem that too many questionnaires are sent out. We have tried a number of different ways of doing this but not had much success. However, we came up with an idea to hand out postcards with only 3 questions – (we will change the

questions from time to time) So far, we have had a great response. IF you havn't already received a postcard – you will shortly.

Care Inspectorate Report – we recently had a visit from Derek Priest from the Care Inspectorate. I am hoping to get the report any time now. You will receive a copy in due course. You will also be able to view on the Care Inspectorate website. We were delighted with comments and grades we received. (Sorry that I cannot be more specific, but I would like to wait until I receive a copy of the full report.

Best Wishes

Alistair Law

Managing Director