

News Matters

Christmas 2025

Independence
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Wishing you a Merry Christmas!

Welcome to the Christmas News Matters



Welcome to our Christmas edition of News Matters! As we close out 2025, I want to take a moment to reflect on what this season means for all of us.

Christmas is often a time of joy and celebration—a chance to gather with loved ones, share laughter, and create special memories. But it can also be a time of mixed emotions, as we remember and miss those who are no longer with us. It's important to acknowledge these feelings and support one another with kindness and understanding.

In our last newsletter, I asked what everyone was most looking forward to at Christmas, and the overwhelming answer was being with family and friends. That really speaks to what matters most - connection, togetherness, and the relationships that enrich our lives.

Personally, as well as that connection with family and friends, I love to see all the Christmas Lights and take every opportunity to play those Christmas songs... not to forget my annual visit to the Thursford Christmas Show which just fills my heart!

This edition is packed with wonderful stories and achievements:

- **Our Christmas Competition** – Congratulations to the eight winners who each received a £30 Amazon voucher and thank you to everyone who entered and supported this festive tradition.
- **Celebrating Milestones** – From Sally Palin's incredible 23-year journey with Home Support Matters to Andrew's 50th birthday, these moments remind us of the dedication and commitment across our teams.
- **Community Spirit** – Highlights include craft fairs, festive meals, musical sessions, and creative activities across our hubs, showing the heart and energy that make our services so special.
- **Customer Achievements** – We're proud to share inspiring stories like Cherry's riding badge success and Rachael's appointment as Vice Chair of the Making It Real Board.

As we look ahead to 2026, let's carry forward this spirit of togetherness and continue making a difference in the lives of those we support and work with.

On behalf of the entire leadership team, I wish you and your families a joyful Christmas and a happy, healthy New Year. Thank you for everything you do.

And here's a festive challenge for you:

Hidden in this newsletter is the name of our "naughty elf" who escaped from the shelf. Can you find the letters and solve the anagram? Send your answers to [Isabel Timms](#) for a chance to feature in the next edition!



Zaliha

Zaliha Williamson, Managing Director

Christmas Competition

— 2025 —

Thank you everyone who entered this year's Christmas competition, and to all our colleagues who supported customers with this activity.

A big well done to our 8 winners who each received a £30 Amazon voucher.

Entries were judged by Dereham's Working Together Group and done anonymously with no one allowed to vote for their own.

As always 25 were chosen to feature on our [Facebook advent calendar](#) and we hope you've enjoyed counting down the days with us.



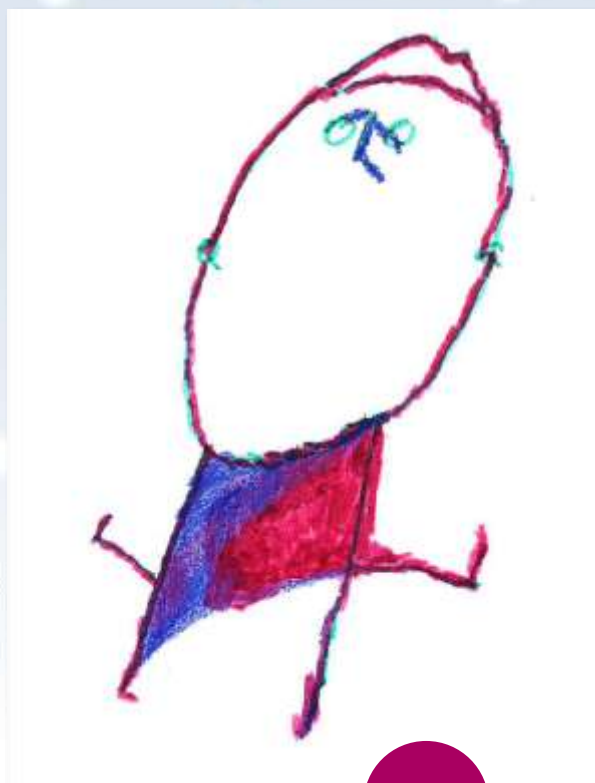
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Amie, Holt Community Hub



2

Downham Market Community Hub



3

Jason, Great Yarmouth Community Hub



4

Jayne, Norwich
Dementia Community
Hub

5

Richard, Norfolk
Industries



6

Simon, Holt
Community Hub





7

Clockwise from top left: Chloe, Elliot, Shelley, Lesley, - all from Great Yarmouth Community Hub,



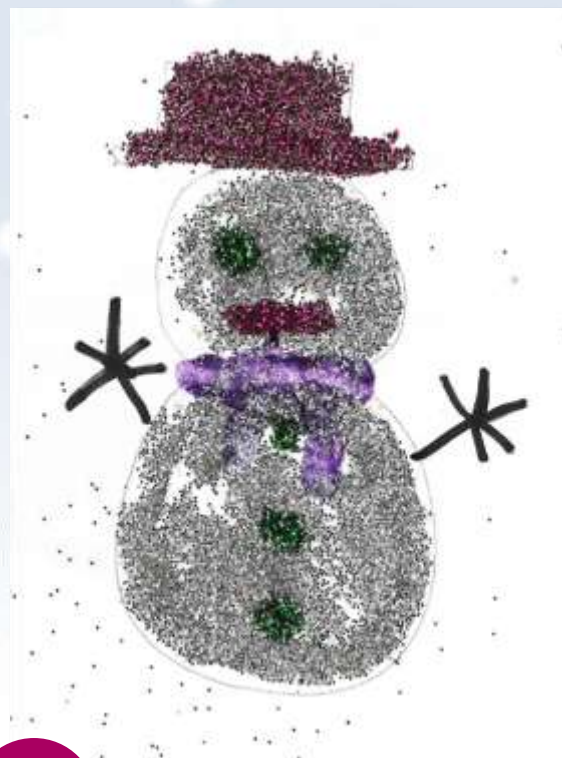
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Rosemary, Rosewood Community Hub



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Wendy, Pine Lodge



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Sadie, Norwich Dementia Community Hub



11

Glynis, William Day Centre



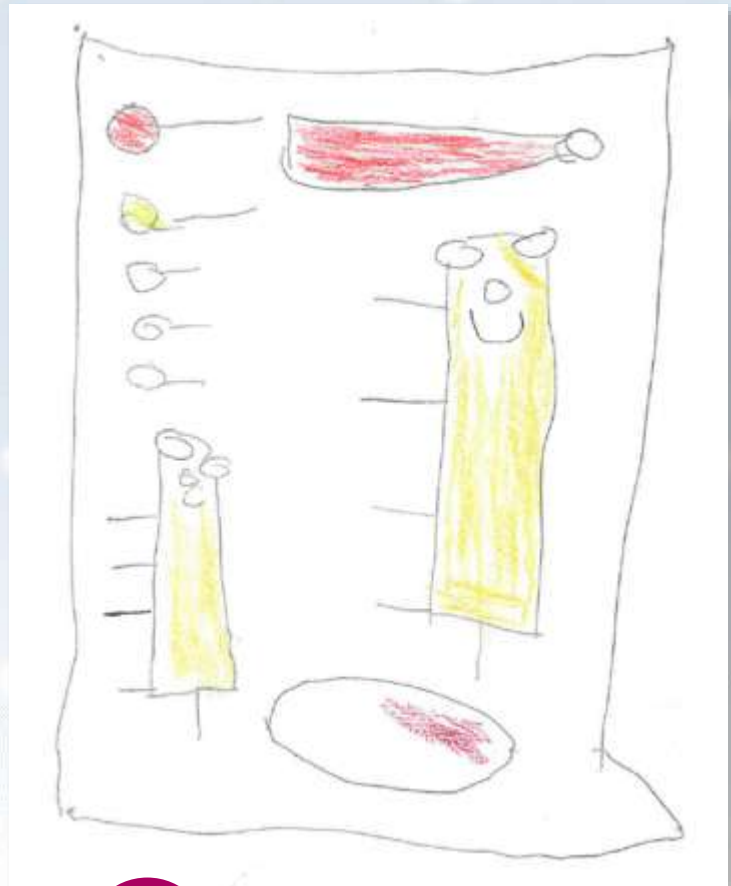
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Emma, Great Yarmouth Community Hub



13

Wendy, Great Yarmouth Community Hub



14

Freddy, Attleborough Community Hub



15

William, Norwich
Dementia Community Hub



17

Pearl, Crossroads
Community Hub



16

Matthew, Holt Community Hub



18

Pauline, William Day
Centre



19

WINNER Simon, Dereham Community Hub



20

WINNER Gordon, Crossroads Community Hub



21

WINNER Jackie, Attleborough Community Hub



22

WINNER Ray, Norwich Dementia Community Hub



23

WINNER Phyllis, Rosewood Community Hub



24

WINNER Lydia, Attleborough Community Hub



WINNER Ruth, Dereham Community Hub



25

WINNER Paige, Dereham Community Hub

Our Christmas Competition Winners!

We presented our winners with their Amazon vouchers ahead of Christmas, so they were able to buy themselves something nice in time for the big day.

Congratulations to Ray, Gordon, Jackie, Paige, Ruth, Simon, Lydia and Phyllis.



Jackie, Attleborough Community Hub



Ruth, Dereham Community Hub



Ray, Norwich Dementia Community Hub

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Phyllis, Rosewood Community Hub

You may have spotted that two of our winners are missing. **Paige** and **Simon** were unable to be at Dereham Hub to collect their vouchers, but we left them in safe hands and hope they are able to receive them before the 25th.



Gordon, Crossroads Community Hub



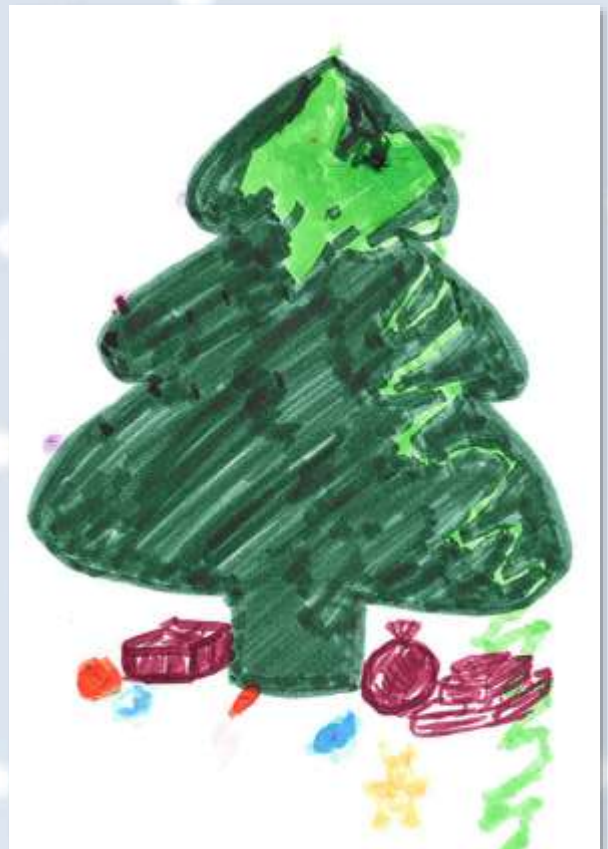
Lydia, Attleborough Community Hub

More Christmas entries!

With so many lovely entries, it felt wrong not to share even more of them, so here are a selection of the others we received. We look forward doing it all again and enjoying more of your creativity in 2026!



Nigel, Norwich Dementia Community Hub



Jill, Rosewood Community Hub



Alexa, Great Yarmouth Community Hub



David, Downham Market Community Hub



James, Dereham Community Hub



Jordan, Great Yarmouth Community Hub



David W, Holt Community Hub



Robin, Norwich Dementia Community Hub



W, Great Yarmouth Community Hub



Amy, Holt Community Hub



Aiden, Holt Community Hub



Drew, Attleborough Community Hub



Tommy, Attleborough Community Hub



Stephen,
Attleborough
Community
Hub



Ruth,
Dereham
Community
Hub

Merry Christmas

from around our services!



Holt Hub's naughty elf has escaped from the shelf and is back getting into all sorts of mischief. The Hub assures us he is sticking to the 'elf & safety' policy, but those chairs look a bit precarious to us 😊!



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Attleborough Hub held their Christmas meal early on 26th November and a fantastic time was had by all. Over 45 customers and colleagues enjoyed a fabulous festive lunch with all the trimmings and a delicious pudding prepped and cooked by two of our lovely colleagues.



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Norwich Dementia Community Hub had a visit from Musical Keys music therapist, Ian, to get everyone into the festive spirit shortly before Christmas. Ian brought lots of different instruments for everyone to play, including sleigh bells, finger pianos (also known as kalimbas), concertinas and a ukelele.



One song required everyone to join in and use their instruments to help call up the reindeer 🦌. It didn't matter that none turned up as we had the lovely Biffy instead - but if anyone does spot a reindeer wandering up the Dereham Road in Costessey, you'll know who to blame!

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Here's Sadie, Peggy, John, Veronica, Jayne and Willie, all getting ready to enjoy Christmas lunch at **Norwich Dementia Community Hub**.



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Attleborough Community Hub held their Christmas craft fair on 10th December, supported by customers, colleagues, parents, carers and the wider community. The Hub would like to thank everyone who contributed to making it such a wonderful event.



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The Assist Trust 35th anniversary Christmas Ball was held at Sprowston Manor Hotel on 12th December.

HSM colleagues Sheena, Tracy, and Jemma, accompanied Leah, Louise, Nicole, Harry, Simon, Tommy, and Paul to the event, where everyone enjoyed a three-course festive meal followed by a disco.



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Rosewood Community Hub

enjoyed their Christmas party on 19th December, with a festive sing along and a visit from Suffolk Road's resident Santa.



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Sprowston Community Hub

customers spent a busy morning baking and decorating these festive biscuits 🍪

We wonder how many made it home or if they all got eaten? 🤔



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Holt Community Hub had a day of traditional festive fun on 18th December, with lunch and board games, lots of Christmas jumpers, and elves Rachael and Chloe.



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Downham Market Community Hub has been enjoying a crafty Christmas with lots of lovely activities including making entries for our Christmas competition and these fabulous decorated yule logs.



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There was a huge turnout in the main hall for **Dereham Community Hub's** Christmas lunch, cooked by colleagues in the kitchen at Daisy's Café.



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Everyone at **Great Yarmouth Community Hub** has had a great time in the run up to Christmas. They've enjoyed a lunch, carol singers, and a party with the Hub's Father Christmas (AJ the caretaker).



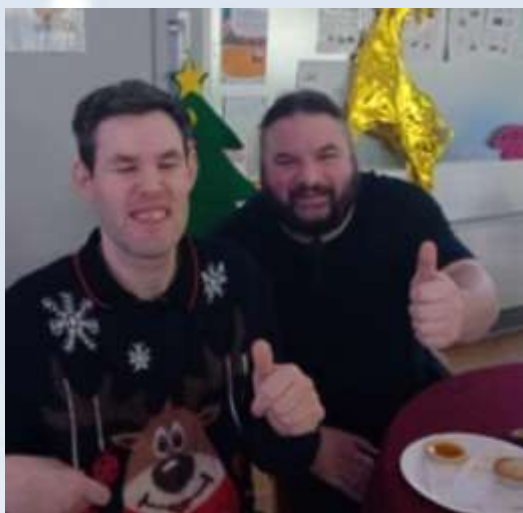
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Riding badge success

Customer Cherry has been riding for many years. She rides twice a week with her local Riding for the Disabled Association groups in West Norfolk.

She had previously been riding a horse called Tom (below left) but has recently graduated to a bigger horse called Margo (below right) based at the North Norfolk Riding Centre at Little Walsingham.

Cherry says that riding is good exercise and good for her confidence. She listens to what the instructors tell her and likes it when she gets badges for her riding. She has just got a new one for her balancing skills and has it sewn onto her riding waistcoat. Well done Cherry that looks like a lot of fun! 🐾



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Rachael's, Making it Real Board Appointment

We are delighted to announce that customer, Rachael, has been appointed Vice Chair for the Making It Real Board. This is a fabulous achievement, and one that Rachael should be really proud of.

Independent Making it Real Facilitator, Trish Morton, told us:

"Rachael is a great choice for Vice Co-Chair of the Making It Real Board and has a desire to make sure services work well for everyone. This was demonstrated recently when she used her presence on the Board to influence decision makers at NCC and help resolve transport problems for Independence Matters customers. She is always ready to get involved and wants to make a difference. Her hard work and passion make her the perfect choice for the Vice Co-Chair role. She will do a great job on the Board!"

Rachael told us:

"I have been part of the Making it Real board since 14th December 2023, so it has been two years. I had my interview in the morning then I got an email in the afternoon to say that I have got on the board and saying welcome.

Being on the board has helped my confidence grow and given me opportunity to work alongside others. It has also given me a different perspective about things and means important voices get heard.

I am very proud to be the Vice Chair and happy to be in this position. I am looking forward to working with lovely people, achieving a good outcome to any issue, and meeting new people, welcoming them and working alongside higher up people."



Making it Real Norfolk



The Making it Real Board is an independent group of disabled people and unpaid carers who work with NCC, NHS, and other partners to ensure social care services are co-produced and meet the real needs of users.

They champion co-production, meaning people with lived experience are involved in designing and changing services, not just consulted.

Celebrating Sally Palin's Retirement



A remarkable 23-year journey with Home Support Matters

We were proud to celebrate a truly special milestone as we marked the retirement of Sally Palin after 23 years with our organisation.

Over more than two decades, Sally has built an extraordinary legacy defined by dedication, kindness, and genuine care. She has been a constant, positive presence for both colleagues and the people we support, consistently going above and beyond in everything she does. Her commitment and warmth have left a lasting impact that will be felt for many years to come.

Sally, thank you for everything you have given over the years - your dedication, your compassion, and the heart you brought to every day.

We wish you the happiest, healthiest, and most fulfilling retirement. You will be greatly missed, but your legacy will always remain part of our story.

“

I want to share something very special. For over 23 years I've had the privilege of working with Sally Palin. That's more than two decades of shared challenges, laughter, tears, and countless moments that have shaped not only our careers, but who we are as people.

Here's to Sal, a colleague and a friend. Thank you for making these 23 years not only productive, but truly meaningful. Happy retirement!"

Su Carver, Care Delivery Director



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Meet Mel - one of our Home Support Workers

We are delighted to introduce Mel, one of our wonderful Home Support Workers, who has been with Home Support Matters for six months.

Mel's journey into care began on a very personal note. When her mum needed home support, Mel became her main carer and worked closely with professional carers who provided additional help. Seeing first-hand the kindness, patience, and compassion they showed her mum left a lasting impression and inspired Mel to pursue a career in care herself.

Today, Mel supports clients in the Norwich area and says she truly loves her role and the meaningful relationships she builds with the people she supports each day.

Mel would encourage anyone considering a career change to explore working in care, describing it as a role that not only makes a real difference to others' lives, but can also be life-changing in return.

We're proud to have Mel as part of the Home Support Matters team and thank her for the care and compassion she brings to her role every day.



Celebrating Andrew's 50th

We're delighted to celebrate a very special milestone as our Data & Systems Manager, Andrew, marks his 50th birthday.

Andrew plays a vital role behind the scenes, and we would like to thank him for his continued hard work, dedication, and expertise. His commitment and attention to detail make a real difference to the team and the wider organisation, and we are incredibly grateful to have him as part of Home Support Matters.

We hope Andrew enjoyed a fantastic 50th birthday, filled with happiness, laughter, and a well-deserved celebration. Please join us in wishing him all the very best for the year ahead.



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Proud to wear Pudsey bear

Sprowston Hub customers supported November's Children In Need day by painting their very own Pudsey t-shirts. Well done to everyone, you all look fabulous 🕶️



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Community Police Visit

Attleborough Community Hub would like to say a big festive thank you to the Community Police Team for coming to visit on 8th December.

Colleagues and customers enjoyed a brilliant and fun morning, particularly trying on the uniform and sitting in the police car! 🚓



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Halloween teatime treat

Hannah, Shereen and Ali from King's Lynn supported living got together with their friend Rachel, to make an apple cake for Halloween tea.



Everyone contributed to making the cake. The apples were picked by Rachel in the local park. The trees are part of a community orchard, and the apples are available for anyone to enjoy.



In the kitchen, Shereen and Ali helped prepare and cut up the apples.



Hannah whisked up the eggs. They all enjoyed the finished cake together. Well done ladies, that looks yummy 😊!



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Annual Report 2024-25

We're all super proud to share our Annual Report for 2024–25, which celebrates our achievements as a group, and highlights the incredible work everyone has contributed to over the past year.

A big thank you goes to all our colleagues for making Independence Matters and Home Support Matters a trusted provider and a great place to work.

[View the Annual Report 2024-25 here.](#)



Share your stories with us

We'd like to say a massive thank you to all the colleagues and customers who contributed to this edition of News Matters. We love hearing from you, so if you've got a story to share, please get in touch.

Email isabel.timms@independencematters.org.uk



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