



News Matters

Christmas 2023

Independence *Matters* 'the life you choose...'



INSIDE:

Celebrating Christmas
across our services

Welcome to News Matters

Hello everyone and welcome to the Christmas edition of News Matters.

I think that the Christmas edition always tells its own story and needs little introduction as it is filled with such joyous pictures of customers and colleagues together having fun. As always, I am amazed at the array of Christmas jumpers on display and that I never see two people wearing the same ones 😊.

What a brilliant year it has been, with lots to celebrate and share, we have had a fun time together once again.

I hope that all our wonderful customers, families and colleagues have an amazing Christmas time, whatever that might mean for you and however you are spending it. I hope that you all find time to relax, spend time with friends and families and have some 'me time'.

This time of year is a time when we remember those that we have loved and lost, and it can be a tough time for many people also. The festivities and bright lights often hide sadness and loneliness, so please do look out for each other, and just check in with some kind and caring words, as that is the best present that you can give.

Wishing you all a very Merry Christmas and a healthy and happy 2024!



Sarah Stock, Managing Director



News in Brief



Well done to Massimo who organised these festive events and made a poster for everyone to choose which ones they would like to attend.



We say a sad farewell to Dereham Business Support Officer, Ali, this December. We wish you a long and happy retirement – you will be hugely missed!

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Take a virtual tour of Great Yarmouth Hub



Yes, you read that right!
You can now take a [virtual tour of Great Yarmouth and Rosewood Community Hubs](#).



Our new interactive tool allows you to click your way around all parts of the building – just like using Google Earth!

The tool is aimed at helping prospective customers choose Independence Matters by giving them a preview of our facilities at the Hub.



We hope this will help spread the word about what we have to offer and that engaging with the tool will encourage more people to contact us and visit in person.

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Our Christmas Countdown!

We love putting together our [Facebook advent calendar](#) each Christmas and hope you enjoy counting down the days with us too.

Our 'Countdown to Christmas' images are also published here. Congratulations to everyone whose artwork was selected to be featured. 😊

1



WINNER Ian, Holt Community Hub

2



WINNER Lillian, William Day Centre

3



Jane, Rosewood Community Hub

4



Leah, Dereham Community Hub



5

Marnya, Crossroads Community Hub



7

WINNER Tabitha, Caister Community Hub



6

WINNER Denise, Holt Community Hub



8

Oliver, Dereham Community Hub



9

Monica, Rosewood Community Hub

10



WINNER Rachael, Holt Community Hub

11



Richard, William Day Centre

12



Tom, Dereham Community Hub

13



Simon, Holt Community Hub

14



Kim, Dereham Community Hub

15



Sharon, PAS South



16

Shirley, Dereham Community Hub



17

WINNER Shelley, Great Yarmouth Community Hub



18

Sarah, Dereham Community Hub



19

WINNER Karen, Crossroads Community Hub



20

Damon, Great Yarmouth Community Hub

21



Sandie, Crossroads Community Hub

23



Daniel, Holt Community Hub

24



WINNER Amber, Great Yarmouth Community Hub

22



Deborah, Dereham Community Hub

25



WINNER Craig, Dereham Community Hub



26

Wendy, Great Yarmouth Community Hub

(We know advent calendars have 25 doors, but we couldn't resist adding an extra one 😊)

Thank you for all your fabulous entries

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

Entries were judged by the Working Together group at Holt (with no one allowed to vote for their own!) assisted by guest judge, Finance Business Partner Dawn, pictured right with Working Together Group Co-Ordinator, Maria.



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Our Christmas Winners

Congratulations to...

- **Karen** at Crossroads Community Hub
- **Lillian**, William Day Centre
- **Ian**, Holt Community Hub

We also selected 6 entries to feature on next year's printed Christmas card:

- **Amber**, Great Yarmouth Community Hub
- **Craig**, Dereham Community Hub
- **Rachael**, Holt Community Hub
- **Shelley**, Great Yarmouth Community Hub
- **Denise**, Holt Community Hub
- **Tabitha**, Caister Community Hub

Congratulations also go to **David**, **Robbie**, **Martyn** and **Stephen** at Dereham Community Hub, and **Tobias** and **Michelle** at Sprowston Community Hub. Their entries were submitted last year but feature on our 2023 printed Christmas cards.

Each winner will receive a £20 voucher. Well done to everyone, it was lovely to be able to spread some festive joy and reward so many of you for your lovely Christmas drawings and collages.



Craig Dereham Community Hub



Shelley Great Yarmouth Community Hub



Amber Great Yarmouth Community Hub

We'd like to say a huge thank you to **Sylvia**, our Stakeholder Non Executive Director, who acted as our very own Santa Claus, travelling across the county to present each of the winning customers with their prizes!

We did hope to reach everyone in time for Christmas, but where this hasn't been possible, Sylvia will be back on the road in the New Year to deliver the remaining prizes in person ♡



Michelle Sprowston Community Hub



Stephen Dereham Community Hub



Martyn Dereham Community Hub



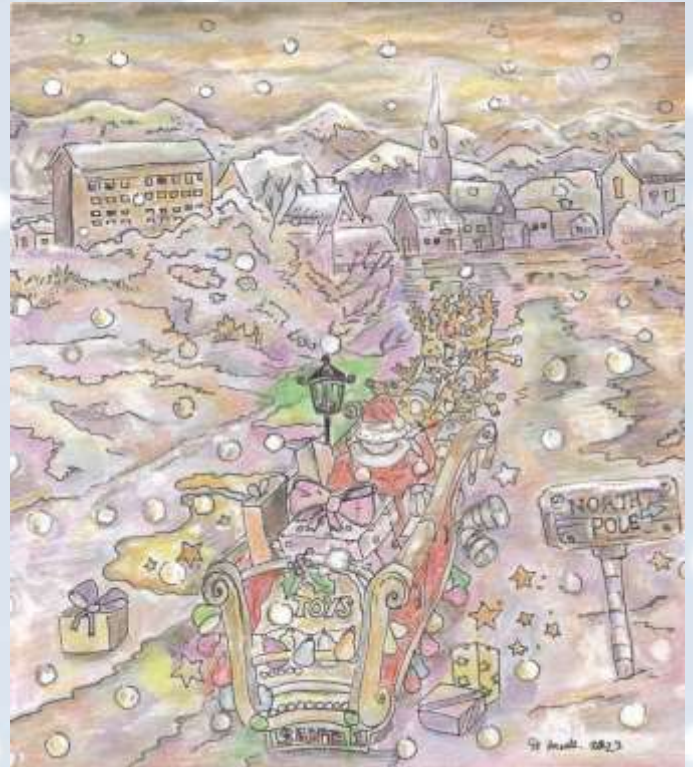
Robbie Dereham Community Hub



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HSM Christmas Competition



Our colleagues at **Home Support Matters** held their own Christmas card competition which was won by **Mrs Gleed** (snowmen above) and **Mr Hazell** (Santa's sleigh above right). Each winner received gift vouchers.

Mrs Gleed's entry was particularly special as she tells us her hands 'don't work well' anymore. She was helped by her grand-daughter Piper who is autistic, and this is the first time she has drawn independently without copying a picture so this was very special to her and the rest of her family.



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We love *Christmaaaaas!*



Norfolk Industries naughty elf on the shelf has been causing mayhem in the team's offices!

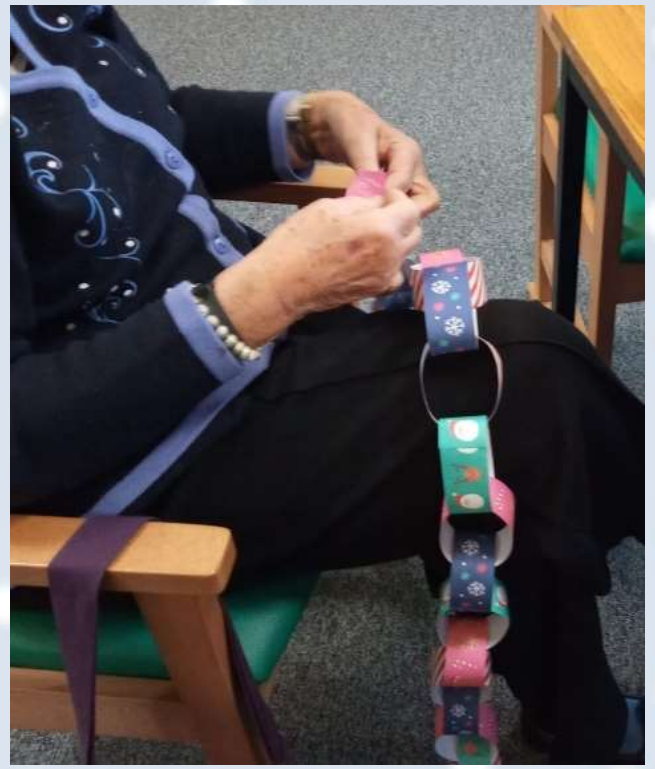


Rosewood Hub got into the Christmas spirit with a visit from their local primary school, Peter House Academy. Year 4 pupils spent time with customers singing Christmas songs and reading poems to describe what Christmas means to them. They also made each customer a Christmas decoration for them to take home for their tree!



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Customers at **Crossroads Hub** have been busy crafting their own Christmas decorations, including book folding and these rather clever paint brush Santas - can you spot them in the picture (right)?

A local business will be delivering Christmas lunch to the Hub ahead of the big day.

The Hub is delighted to have been able to arrange this and know it will be well received saying: 'You can never have too many Xmas delights! The festive spirit has caught us here... Merry Christmas to all!'



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There's also been some elf on the shelf magic and mischief at **Holt Hub** in the run up to Christmas, and a lovely festive display in the main hall.



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Norwich Dementia Community Hub

(formerly Harford Hill) welcomed back performers Hexachordia (above) for a wonderful concert. Everyone learnt about the different early instruments and even got to hear a song written by Henry VIII. Looks like Biffy enjoyed it too ☺

Ian from Musical Keys (right) also made a visit in early December. The Hub would like to thank them all for providing such stimulating music sessions, we really enjoy your visits.



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Dereham Hub took part in Save the Children's Christmas Jumper Day on 7 December as part of their Christmas Fayre. They have supported this many times in the past and it was lovely to see so many festive woollies back on display.



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Great Yarmouth Hub also kicked off their celebrations by taking part in Christmas Jumper Day.

Other events included a Christmas party day on 15 December. Festivities started in the morning with a special visit from Santa and Mrs Claus (photos on following pages).

This was followed by a disco and buffet prepared by all of Great Yarmouth Hub's fabulous support workers!! A great time was had by all!



Christmas cracker by Curtis, Great Yarmouth Community Hub

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Great Yarmouth Hub is lucky to have its very own Santa! Colleague AJ works a zero hours contract so he can be a caretaker by day and professional Santa for the whole of December.

Santa works weekends at Cherry Lane garden centre and does home and school visits. He doesn't charge for his services but asks for a donation to the RNLI if possible.

He and Mrs Claus took a break from their busy schedule to visit customers at the Hub and hand out gifts to everyone!



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Sproston Hub's festive music and drama production 'A History of the Monarchy' was directed by colleagues Chris Child and Tina Cutting. It celebrated monarchs from the Normans to our present King and included a few gruesome bits!! Who can you spot?



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Colleagues and customers at **William Day Centre** have been busy in the run up to Christmas with lots of festive activities. Here they are making mince pies and Christmas cards, including our e-card snowman winner.



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HSM branch staff enjoyed a Christmas meal at The Spring Tide in Lowestoft. Cheers everyone!



Introducing...

Hi, I'm Jessica Langley, I joined Home Support Matters in October as the Quality Assurance Officer. Although working in the care sector for 17 years, I was excited to start a new role within the quality team.

My background is predominantly working with customers with learning disabilities and complex needs in a residential setting, so I am looking forward to the challenges that domiciliary care has to offer!

The first few weeks have been incredibly busy starting with an in-depth induction and learning new process and systems. Everyone has been very welcoming, helpful, and I'm looking forward to continuing learning new skills and building relationships with the team to make a difference.



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Welcome to Fright Night!

It's billed as Norfolk's scariest Halloween event and described as 'Your worst nightmare' but customers Emma, Harry and Nigel felt perfectly at home on their visit to Primevil.

The trip was organised by PAS colleague Andrea, who was too scared to provide support at the event and handed over to support worker Gary 🙌!



Emma said: "It was a great night out meeting other people and spending a great evening together. I found the whole night fun and happy.

Harry said it was an awesome night meeting new people and spending time been spooked.

Both Emma and Harry are already planning their visit for next year.



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A grand day out!

Faro Lodge customers Nigel and Pat had a special day out with a trip to McDonalds and meeting 12-week old puppy, George. Aww, what a great way to spend the day ☺

Welcome...

We'd like to say a special hello to Jack Anthony-Knell, our new service manager at Faro Lodge. Welcome to Independence Matters!



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Let's get packing!

Norfolk Industries is now providing a packing service to local company Norwich Porridge, applying stickers to their packaging sachets before they are filled with product.

This is great work for people on our work placements and provides a quieter work environment for people who might struggle in the main factory in a team-based activity.

We are always looking for more packing work, so if you know anyone who might have some work for us, please get in touch. We can do most things but for health and safety reasons we are unable to directly handle food products.

Contact Sharon Tooke 01603 667957 or sharon.tooke@norfolkindustries.co.uk



Half bales added to our product range

Following a request from Bestpets, we made some alterations to our machinery so that our paper bedding bales could be made in 5kg (half) bales.

Aimed at dogs for kennel or litter bedding, or even rabbits and guinea pigs for larger beds, these are short paper strips produced in our teabag and coffee filter paper.

Available on [our website](#) for Click and Collect customers very soon.



Lovely feedback from a satisfied customer

“ Brilliant product! My Syrian hamsters and gerbils loved the different textures in this package. They love the flaked paper for tunnelling and the shredded paper is used for their sleeping areas. The filled tubes are also excellent for tunnels - my gerbils haven't managed to destroy the cardboard tube as quickly as they do with a standard toilet roll. A great service and a great company to support.

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Neurodiversity and Disabilities – blocks and barriers to employment

As a disability employer, Norfolk Industries is acutely aware of the very real struggles disadvantaged people can face when looking for paid employment.

The [EVOLVE programme](#) provides placements to those who are struggling in their search for work due to visible/invisible disabilities, learning disabilities, learning difficulties, Autism and Aspergers, as well as other barriers including long-term unemployment or a lack of work/life skills.

It was recently reported that the number of people inactive in the UK due to long-term sickness or disability has risen by nearly half a million since the pandemic. But what can be done to improve the situation?

EVOLVE Assessment Support Officer, Leanne Conner carried out some research through social media to find out more about the specific issues people faced when looking for work or attending interviews.

The feedback brought up a number of common themes and Leanne has created some guidance which she hopes will give employers a better understanding of the needs of people who are neuro-diverse, or have learning difficulties or disabilities, and encourage them to do more to support their needs.

You can [read Leanne's research results](#) in full on the Norfolk Industries website.



Leanne's Research Findings

Things that would help and support people who are neuro-diverse, have learning difficulties or disabilities.

- Have a printout of key information, numbers and names
- Offer a choice of face to face or online interviews
- Provide questions in advance or an idea of what might come up
- Limit verbal information and have more things written down
- Replace the interview with a written or practical exam that allows the candidate to demonstrate they can do the job
- Hold shorter interviews
- Offer part time, hybrid, or working from home options to suit the individual
- Make candidates feel safe and comfortable to share their diagnosis or disability information

Note that the responses are all personal to each individual. Not every person experiences things in the same and a person-centred approach is usually best to establish what works best for each individual.

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We welcome the IM Floating Support Team

Independence Matters' Floating Support Team has joined us at Norfolk Industries following the closure of the Ipswich Road site. It's great having them here and we're enjoying having more people around in the offices.

The Floating Support Team agrees saying: "NI welcomed us with open arms, no easy feat with all the extra furniture and people."

Our team supports around 60 customers in the Norwich area, with a range of disabilities as well as older people, to continue to live independently in their own homes.

It's lovely to have a permanent base where our support workers can drop in and our managers and admin colleagues can work in one location."

Stop Press!

Well, we asked for more packing work and our Christmas wish has come true already! We're busy doing work for Wensum Print – so far we've made up keyrings and just finished a batch of Christmas cards which we then put into envelopes and label up for posting.



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Bailey 'On The Air'

After a chance meeting while having her hob repaired, PAS East colleague Jean enquired about voluntary positions at Great Yarmouth local radio station, Harbour Radio.

Customer Bailey then went for a four-week trial at the station and has never looked back, with his confidence growing greatly.



Having started off making tea for the presenters and staff, Bailey is now putting together the playlists for their mid-week show. The show's presenter has even made a 'Baileys Playlist' jingle for when the playlist starts!

A huge well done, Bailey, we look forward to following your time with Harbour Radio.

HOW TO LISTEN

Tune in on a Wednesday between 11am and 3pm [online](#) or 107.4 FM.

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We love Larry!

Super cute Larry the therapy dog is a regular visitor to Dereham Hub where he is a firm favourite. Always ready for a cuddle, both colleagues and customers adore seeing him.



Learning about volcanos

The Studio Gang have been learning about the impact of volcanic eruptions and earthquakes.

These fabulous mini volcanos were part of an experiment and were made to erupt using a mix of secret ingredients!



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Introducing...

Our new HR Trainee, Emily Lloyd

Our HR Trainee role was created to provide a pathway and support the development of someone interested in starting a career in HR. It offers on-the-job learning with an established team, and the chance to study for an HR qualification.

The role benefits our HR function by providing additional support and ensuring we have the flexibility to develop and retain valued HR skills going forwards.

What is your previous role/experience, and what attracted you to the HR Trainee role?

I was a Support Worker for PAS South but have always had a keen interest in HR. With no experience it's very difficult to get into so this role gives me the opportunity to gain experience. It's also an apprenticeship, which I found very attractive. I enjoy working for IM so it was great I could stay with the company.

What do you hope to get from your apprenticeship?

I hope to learn and gain knowledge about HR, observe my HR colleagues to see the different roles that they do, and receive a Level 3 CIPD. I'm also looking forward to learning more about IM from a different side of the business.

When did you start, and how is it going so far?

I started in October and it's going very well! I've already learnt lots and I'm looking forward to learning more.



What is the biggest thing you've learned so far?

Navigating where to find information to answer the questions we get asked! I've learnt lots about different processes like the New Starter process. I'm learning every day, but things are starting to get easier and piece together.

How does your time as Support Worker add value to the role?

It means I can relate to colleagues and their situations and am able to offer advice based on experience. I also feel that having been in the company for a while as a support worker, I care about what happens and want to do my best for the company.

What's your favourite film?

My favourite film at the minute is Elf as we are approaching Christmas, but I recently watched the Harry Potter films and absolutely love them!

If you could be any character from Harry Potter for a day who would it be?

I would be Dobby the elf, because he is mischievous and very cute!

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The New Jersey Boys

In November the TAPS celebrated 25 years with their comeback show 'The New Jersey Boys', performed at Dereham Hub.

The musical is based on The Jersey Boys, which tells the story of the group The Four Seasons and the TAPS performed magnificently to a lively sell-out audience who joined in with a lot of well-known songs.

Frankie Valli was played by Justin, with Stephen as Bob Gaudio, Tim as Nick Massi and Robbie as Tommy DeVito. The supporting cast saw newcomer Jasmine as Mary Delgado and long-standing member Pam as Lorraine.

This was the TAPS first show since 2019 and both new and established members put 100% into the performance, proving they still had it.

The TAPS began as Dereham Day Centre drama group in 1998 when they performed The Wizard of Oz. I'm delighted to say that two of those original cast members still remain, Justin and Jo-Ann - who is the only original member to have appeared in all 19 years.



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A huge well done to everyone, who once again made me so proud. We would like to thank all the colleagues who gave up their time to help make the show a success, and to Michael Lyons Photography for the beautiful photos.

Next year we will be back with the show we didn't think we'd ever do, due to covid, but I'm pleased to say The Half Monty will be performed here in 2024!

Merry Christmas everyone and Happy New Year.

Claire Millman



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Working Together Group

Working Together Groups were presented with 'Thank You' and 'Great Teamwork' certificates for their participation in November's Working Together Event. People were really pleased and proud to receive these, well done and thank you again Kim, Craig, Pam, Tom, George, Stephen, Zoe, Melissa, Rachael and Braedon! It has been a pleasure working alongside you all 😊



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First Aid Training

Customers at Holt enjoyed a training session learning about basic life support with trainer Kev on 13 December. That looks like a lot of fun! 😊



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Wildlife blog

Hello everyone, the TAPS wildlife team here! What a great time we've had this year, getting out and about visiting Norfolk's wildlife/bird reserves.

We saw whooper swans, spoonbills and nesting swallows at Welney Wetlands and took a guided tour of the site and a picnic lunch. At Norfolk Wildlife Trust Cley & Salthouse marshes we watched a variety of wetland/wader birds from the hides, as well as marsh harriers searching for food. The sun shone all day, so we enjoyed a picnic lunch on the visitor centre's veranda overlooking the marshes, everyone said what a relaxing, beautiful place it is.

Next was Pensthorpe where we got to see lots of different species of duck and visit the wader enclosure, where we saw a lot of birds up close, including avocets and ruff black winged stilt.



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Jasmine bought some food to feed the ducks and geese so was very popular, we also saw flamingos and cranes.

We also visited Foxley Wood and Holkham where everyone was amazed to see the large amount of fallow deer and also some young fawns from this spring.



With winter now upon us, some small mammals including hedgehogs will now be hibernating. These little prickly friends are sadly in decline and we need to do all we can to help them, which is what we did in the summer when a small hedgehog was found in our poly tunnel. It was a bit warm and dehydrated but, after a call to the great people at PACT for advice, we put it in one of our hedgehog boxes with some food and water. After about half an hour the box was empty and it had gone on its merry way, hopefully into the dried wood pile close by. Always remember if you see a small hedgehog out during the day it may need your help.

Winter means migration for a lot of birds, especially geese, you may have seen and heard some overhead. Other birds visit us for the winter, mostly from Scandinavia, including redwings, fieldfares, and the waxwing, there seems to have been plenty of sightings of these in Norfolk this year. It's also time for the 'Snettisham Spectacular' when the tide pushes the wader birds closer to the mudflats and thousands of birds all take to the skies causing a huge display of wings and noise. If you've not experienced it, you can [catch videos on YouTube](#).

Winter may be cold, but it's also a great time to get out and watch birds and wildlife. Sometimes winter can lower our moods with dark nights and mornings, so there's nothing better for wellbeing than a great walk. We have another trip to Cley planned where we'll be wrapping up warm and hoping to see a lot more of our beautiful migrant and resident birds.

We hope you all have a lovely Christmas and new year, until next time best wishes from:

Tim, Justin, Stephen, Mark, Helen, Lucie, Jasmine and Claire 🍁 🍷 🍷

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Thank You!

Earlier this year we ran a competition asking customers to 'draw us a thank you'.

A selection of the drawings have been turned into cards which will be used across Independence Matters as part of our colleague recognition scheme.

The winners were presented with prize vouchers and a copy of their card by Sylvia and IM HR Director Andrea.



Jenna Attleborough
Community Hub



Ruth Dereham Community Hub



Joshua Dereham
Community Hub



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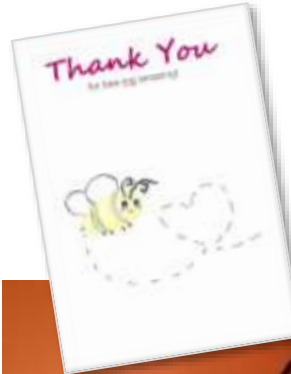
Stephen Attleborough
Community Hub



Sharon Dereham
Community Hub



Jason Great Yarmouth
Community Hub



Jill Rosewood
Community Hub



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