

News Matters

Spring 2021

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



Welcome to the Spring 2021 News Matters



As I sit here writing this, it's beautiful weather outside with the sun shining and life feels more positive.

This edition of News Matters reflects that and is so full of positivity, hope and amazingly great stories and pictures; for those of you who know me well, I am lost for words!

Please do take the time to read and click on the links to see all the exciting things that are happening. There's a real sense of community, support and working together on so many levels and I think that is one of the positives to take from this pandemic.

It makes me feel incredibly humble and proud to be a colleague to so many amazing people and to share the lives of so many wonderful customers and families. This edition is all about people again and that is what really matters and what we have all missed.

It is incredible to see how everyone has pulled together, adapted and found new and innovative solutions to overcome the barriers that Covid (and the weather at times!) has presented. There's a real sense of resilience and staying true to our values during these times, putting the people we support at the heart of all that we do.

I love the theme of kindness as well that runs throughout, that is something we all need to hold onto and as Sonia says 'keep paying that kindness forward'. Stay Safe, Stay Positive and Stay Kind ☺

Sarah Stock, Managing Director, Independence Matters

Our brand new website launches

Our new, mobile-friendly website went live at the end of March. Developed with input from the customers and carers on our Stakeholder Board it has a new look, designed around our mission; to empower individuals, their families and carers, to live the lives they choose and remain independent.

Click on the link below to take a look:

www.independencematters.org.uk



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We feature on BBC Look East

We were excited to be invited by BBC Look East to take part in a segment for their evening news programme in March. The segment discussed the rollout of the Covid vaccine to people with a learning disability, and how this group had recently been prioritised due to their increased risk from the virus.

A cameraman and reporter, Melissa Rudd, visited George at his supported living home in Long Stratton. George was interviewed and said he was excited to get the job and be able to go places and see people again. He described the support he receives from Independence Matters, saying that without it he would struggle with daily things like cooking and cleaning.

Registered Manager, Dawn Banks (who took our socially distanced photos) said "George was amazing and we're so proud of his interview".



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George's dad was interviewed via Zoom and said that although George understood the seriousness of the pandemic and social distancing, this wasn't the case for everyone with a learning disability.

Team Manager Emma Cobley agreed - she was interviewed about the impact of the pandemic on her role and said it had been a challenge as tenants struggled to understand social distancing, PPE and why they couldn't do the things they would normally do such as go for a coffee.

The segment also featured family carer Frank, speaking via Zoom. Frank has two children with Down's Syndrome, one of whom is a customer of Independence Matters. He said each had received their first vaccination and were happy to be back attending their respective day services once a week.

The piece concluded with the hope that having the jab will enable families to get out and about together again this summer. We second that!



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Well done to our newly qualified colleagues

Huge congratulations to our most recent group of colleagues to achieve qualification success in a range of business/management and care related subjects.

Special congratulations go to Mandy Smy and Louise Hollis who both achieved a Distinction in Level 3 Business Administration.

Connect2Care tell us that this is virtually unheard of for this course so you have really excelled.

Our Training Facilitator, Lorraine Nuccoll, said: "Both learners said they found the course challenging at times, but I think this only makes their victory sweeter and shows great determination and ability."

Level 2 Certificates

Working with Individuals with Learning Disabilities – Hannah Tolman

Care and Management of Diabetes - Sandra Stillwell

Understanding Children and Young People's Mental Health – Kaitlin Fox

Nutrition and Health - Rita Hardingham

Understanding Autism - Morgane Auffray

Business Certificates

Principals of Team Leading - Lena Marie Armstrong

Level 3 Diploma in Business Administration - Mandy Smy, Louise Hollis

Sharon's big surprise!

Norfolk Industries General Manager, Sharon Tooke, was another to achieve success, gaining her Level 7 Management Diploma.

This is a great achievement and we let her know via a video call - [watch the moment of surprise when she hears the news!](#)



Julian Hammond, Managing Director of TIPS for Good Management Ltd, said: "Sharon's performance through this qualification has been nothing short of astonishing - a Level 7 Diploma is equivalent to a Masters Degree and she has absolutely smashed it. A remarkable achievement I am so excited to recognise."

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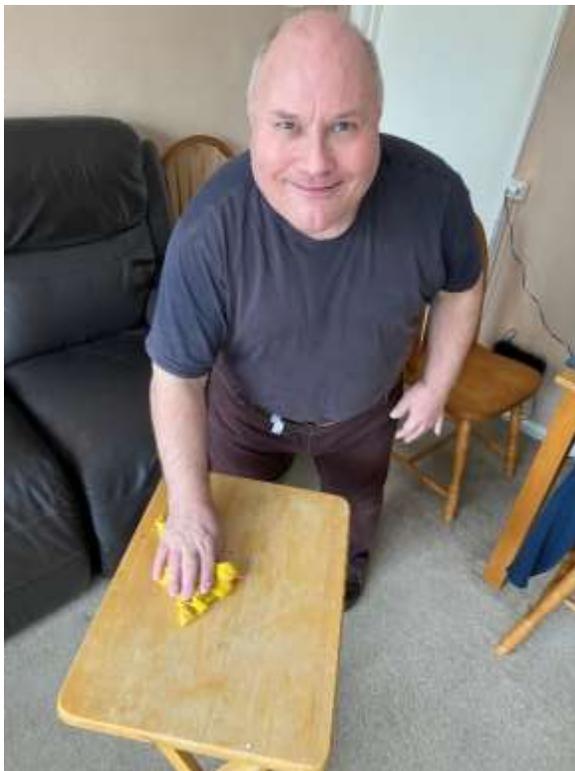
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Keeping lockdown boredom at bay

Many of us have struggled with spending the long, dark winter months in lockdown, but our colleagues at Home Support Matters supported living have been finding ways to keep tenants busy and enjoying life.



Above and left: T Maile enjoying a baking session and spending time in the outdoors!



Left: G Butcher is great at keeping his flat clean and tidy. He has also been supported to enjoy a more healthy diet in 2021 and goes on frequent walks.



Above: S Mash does exercise sessions on Zoom.

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Above: these tenants love to bake and go out for walking when the weather is not too cold.

Left and below: C Glover and P Burden who really enjoying cooking and baking.



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Covid vaccine rollout brings hope to us all

The vaccination rollout has been a major success but back in January we were hugely excited when colleagues at Pine Lodge became some of the first to get offered the jab. Support Worker Sharon Huxtable received her first shot on 25th January and shared her picture (top right) as a way of encouraging others to have the jab.

Those shielding were soon to follow and our MD Sarah and Business & Data Analyst, Rachel Miller (middle right) also shared their experience. Rachel said "For anyone worried, I've seen the process at two different surgeries as I've taken both my parents for their vaccinations too. They are so organised, the staff and volunteers absolutely amazing. We all found it a very good and reassuring experience."

The change to prioritise people with a learning disability at the end of February saw more of our customers being offered the vaccine. Holt Hub customer, Steven (bottom right), was keen to share a photo of his bravery certificate, which had been presented to him by Service Manager, Alison Pawley who had supported him during the vaccination.

Alison said: "I'm so proud of Steven for overcoming his fear and being brave, and his family and Trudy (the vaccination nurse) are too. It really was an amazing moment, Steven's parents were just thrilled - the relief on all their faces and the look that said 'we will be getting our lives back!'".

For customers like Steven, who are needle phobic or have a fear of injections, a [specialist clinic is available at the James Paget Hospital](#). It's run specifically for people with learning disabilities and/or autism and has been used by a number of our customers who have all reported that they found it very good. You can call the clinic directly on 01493 453732 or email the Liaison Nurse at rebecca.crossley@jpaget.nhs.uk

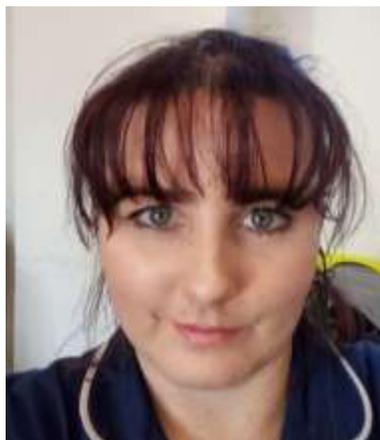


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Kindness of a stranger

At the start of the year, Home Support Matters Care Worker, Sonia Lawson, was going about her daily work when she found herself surprised and touched by the kindness of a stranger.



On 15th January, during a short break at work, she was fuelling up her car at Morrisons when a man pulled up next to her on the forecourt. He was driving a lorry with a winch on the back and a green arrow recycling sign on the front.

Seeing her uniform he asked where she worked and then said he'd like to pay for her petrol as a 'thank you' for the work that she does.

Sonia said: "I was absolutely floored by his kindness. I didn't get his name, but would like to thank him so much. We've all had a rough time during Covid-19 but it's the angels like this man who make it beautiful to be alive and see humanity at its best. If there wasn't a pandemic about, I would have given him a huge hug and a kiss.

I do my job for the love of the people I help, not for recognition or money, and the day that kind man paid for my fuel, I was struggling to stay chipper and consciously keep the anxiety at bay. He made me realise that there are lots of kind people in the world and we need to persevere through the tough times to see good results and show kindness along the way, because we never know what other people are going through.

He left me with streaky mascara as I cried at his beautiful gesture. You can count on it that I'll keep paying his kindness forward!

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Cyril's a welcome visitor to Hub garden

Lots of us have found pleasure in watching the wildlife in our gardens during lockdown, but Hub customers have taken it a step further, creating their very own version of Springwatch.

They've set up a camera so they can watch the visiting wildlife and capture all the action on the bird table. Currently they're enjoying [daily visits from a squirrel they've named Cyril](#), who loves eating the peanuts they leave out for him and sometimes brings a friend to share them with.



They've also set up a habitat area to attract wildlife which is coming along well and recently took delivery of a new greenhouse. They're very much looking forward to having their own homegrown fruit and veg to eat later in the year. Just don't let Cyril know it's there!

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Springtime activities at Crossroads Hub

Customers and colleagues at Crossroads have been celebrating events throughout the spring and taking the opportunity to get creative and have some fun!

To celebrate not just Mothering Sunday but mother's everywhere, customers were served afternoon tea all week with a delicious selection of goodies put together by support colleagues.

Everyone had some fun experimenting during Science Week. Inspired by Eyebrow Arts, they improvised with marble art to create their own universes and used the mixture to make cards. An activity that generated lots of laughter and proved age doesn't stop the fun times!

Mother's Day



Science Week



Chinese New Year



Chinese New Year saw customers make their own fabulously fun fans to celebrate and this was followed by some Chinese tasters. A great way to welcome in the Year of the Ox.

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Valentine's Day was another opportunity to get creative and customers produced some lovely craft pieces.

And finally some Easter themed fun which was helped along by the delivery of a lamb carvery from the Hub's local hotel/restaurant. What a very welcome treat for everyone!



Easter



Betty Brown's a winner!

We celebrated February's Love Your Pet Day with a Facebook competition to win one of Norfolk Industries' award-winning Animal Houses.

Kerry Green's eight week old Syrian hamster Betty Brown, was the winner. Kerry tells us Betty is very loving and a great companion and you can see her enjoying her prize house (bottom right) which has been coloured in by Kerry.

If you'd like to treat your pet, then visit the [Norfolk Industries online shop](#) to view the full range of products for mice, rats, gerbils, hamster, rabbits and guinea pigs.



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Dignity Action Day 2021 Care worker nominations

Home Support Matters recognised February's Dignity Action Day by asking customers to nominate the care or support worker(s) they felt offered dignity and respect on each visit and giving the reasons why.

Congratulations go to winners Ana De Matos, Elitsa Darakchieva, Hadi Fowler and Jackie Veitch, who each received a certificate and Love2Shop vouchers.

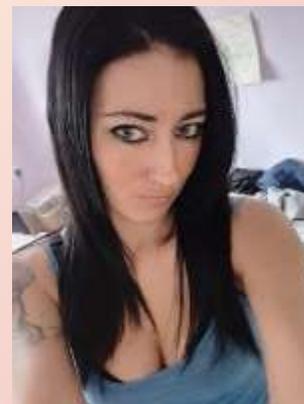
A big well done goes to all the other nominees (see list below) who each received a certificate:

Ian Rigg, Carol Raven, Marie Matos, Libby Pilgrim, Ayesha Graham, Rosie Hill, Paula Whiley, Josh Whittingham, Annaleigh Loades, Danni Woods, Diane Dakers, Kath Bradbrook, Tracy Archer, Caroline Timmins, Marie Carvelho, Lynn James, Shirley Doy, Rachel Vaughn, Janet Frasi, Anita Timberlake, Emma Matthews, Laura Field, Sheena Sadr, Felix Chivete Matthews, Sam Bryant, Jo George, Kerry Smith, Lisa Frost, Emma Matthews, Olivia Youngs, Mandy Cousins, Sara Carle, Natasha Roberts.

For each care worker nominated, Home Support Matters donated £2 to the National Dignity Council making a total donation of £80.



Winners: Ana De Matos (above), Elitsa Darakchieva (above right), Hadi Fowler (right)



“Both these care workers do a fantastic job of looking after my husband, they're marvellous!”

“It is a great relief to me having them support my husband, they are diamonds going above and beyond all the time”

“She has rarely missed a day coming to look after me, the continuity and consistency is a great relief to me.”

“I cannot fault any of these care workers, they tick all the boxes for me and meet my needs”

“We've been beside ourselves with this Covid lockdown, I don't know what we'd have done without their support”

“They go above and beyond in helping me reach my full potential. I have been able to do a lot more with their support”

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The 'Beast from the East' returns

As if battling with a pandemic wasn't enough, we experienced a spell of bitterly cold weather in early February reminiscent of 2018's 'Beast from the East'. Huge thanks go to all our colleagues who battled with deep snow and icy conditions to keep our services open and provide our customers with essential support.

It wasn't all bad though - these photos were sent in from around the county showing those who didn't mind the cold, having some fun as well as some beautifully picturesque scenes. We have to say though, that with the recent April snowfall it's definitely time for it to warm up now. Roll on summer!

Below: Our MD Sarah battles through the blizzards on her way to her first Covid vaccine appointment.



Above: Norwich taken by our MD Sarah



Above: support worker Gavin Challis saw this icy pattern on his shed window.

Below: early morning scene from north Norfolk



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Clockwise from top left: Countryside near Hales Green. Customer Bonnie with the snowman she made with her support worker. Rosewood's resident squirrel playing peek a boo. Our MD Sarah had to walk through this drift to get to her Covid jab! Chihuahuas Lola and Lily.



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Clockwise from top left: Seething Airfield. Alison Holmes braves the early morning chill. Alaskan Malamute Metz is in his element. Dereham, Robin Ward's dog had to wear two coats to stay warm.



Holt Support Worker, Lorna Kirby (left), literally went the extra mile to provide an outreach customer with emergency cover when their regular support worker found themselves snowed in.

Lorna also found herself blocked in by the snow but that didn't stop her. She walked for an hour in bitterly cold conditions and during a heavy snow fall to reach the customer's home.

Team Manager, Clare Smith, said Lorna should be incredibly proud of herself and "demonstrates how we will provide support as a service and pull together as a team no matter what obstacles are put in the way."

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Welcoming EVOLVE candidates in lockdown

We catch up with Norfolk Industries' recently appointed Assessment Support Officer, Sophie Staddon

The beginning of this year was certainly strange for us all with another lockdown and tight restrictions in place. We were grateful that Norfolk Industries was able to stay open, however this did mean strict safety procedures were needed. To reduce the risks, everyone using the building was required to undergo a full risk assessment and given a checklist on arrival each day.

Despite the challenges of Covid we were very pleased to welcome a new candidate onto the EVOLVE programme in January, joining us for the start of their journey towards employment.

Working with the EVOLVE candidates is an exciting part of my role. I come from a teaching background, but find working with them is helping me to develop new skills of my own too. I really enjoy spending one to one time with the candidates and seeing them excel in a working environment fills me with pride.

It's essential that Norfolk Industries provides the right environment to encourage people who want to work but struggle without support in the workplace. We pride ourselves on being supportive, non-judgemental and low stress, giving people the opportunity to develop in their own time, without pressure.

Our aim is for people to succeed and the EVOLVE programme has generated many successful outcomes for candidates over the years. We're incredibly proud of each and every one and are confident our current candidates will go on to acquire the skills needed to either continue in a volunteering role or move into paid employment.



Our **EVOLVE programme** is designed to develop skills for work and includes Accredited Learning Programmes, which are generally aimed at below qualification level. As a candidate, we work with you to identify and develop your strengths, avoiding desk-based learning and instead focusing on work-based activities.

EVOLVE offers three Accredited Modules.

Employability – covers effective workplace communication, teamwork, problem solving and safety at work.

Project planning – covers budget planning, risk assessments, making suitable decisions and how to gather information effectively.

Life skills – covers household skills, cleaning, developing confidence and effective communication.

We support you to choose the most appropriate modules based on the outcomes you want to achieve by the end of their course.

[Click here to find out more about the EVOLVE programme.](#)

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EVOLVE gives candidate Louise a chance to shine

Norfolk Industries is hugely proud of its EVOLVE candidate, Louise, who has worked tremendously hard over the past few months to successfully complete her Employability and the Life Skills programme.

Louise joined the EVOLVE programme with the aim of improving her confidence and workplace skills and we are pleased to say that, not only can she now work self-sufficiently on tasks throughout the factory, but is well on her way to securing a place as a Bank Worker for Norfolk Industries – something she says she would very much like to do!

EVOLVE Work Placement Assessor, Sophie Staddon, has monitored Louise's progress and gave her a glowing report.

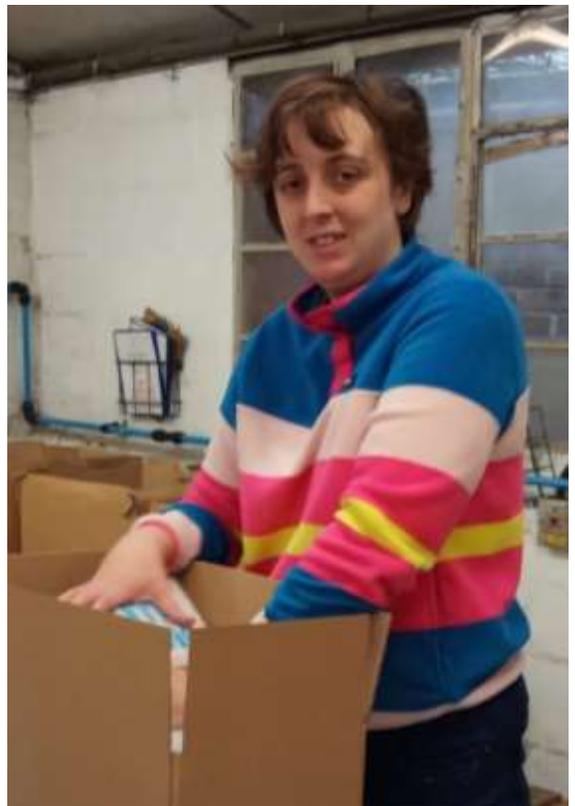
"I'm extremely impressed with Louise and her attitude in the workplace. She is motivated, hard working, organised and professional.

Nothing is ever too much trouble for her, and this can be seen with the amount of effort she puts into every job, setting herself targets to ensure that her performance is always improving from one week to the next.

She is willing to work on any task assigned to her and always asks if she is not sure of something - another positive skill.

She always has a smile on her face when she's working and is keen to learn new things. She hasn't been phased by the procedures we have in place for COVID-19 and follows them well.

She has progressed to providing demonstrations to other EVOLVE programme candidates, showing them how to build Orchard Toy boxes and pack them correctly. She is also confident at completing quality control checks throughout the day to ensure everything is finished as required – another excellent skill to have.



Above: Louise working in the factory packing boxes

Louise is always clear with her instructions and gave positive feedback to a new candidate on the methods they could use to improve their skills whilst they are working in the factory. She gets on well with her colleagues who always have excellent things to say about her and her work ethic.

I've really enjoyed working with Louise, she will be a great asset to any team and it has been a pleasure to be part of her EVOLVE journey. We all really hope that she will be able to join us as a Bank member of staff, covering holidays, sickness or for periods of increased production.



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Snowman fun inside at Rosewood Hub

We just love these photos sent in by our team at Rosewood Community Hub taken back in February's cold spell.

Whilst it wasn't safe or practical for customers to enjoy the snow outside, the Hub's support workers wanted to ensure they still had some seasonal fun - so they brought the snow indoors and used it to make tabletop snowmen.

What a fantastic idea and a great sensory experience for everyone. All achieved while sitting comfortably in warmth and safety of the building. We just hope they got taken outside before they melted away...



Reflecting on 2020

Customers in Dereham Hub's Studio bubble have created this 2020-themed collage, selecting the things they associate most with probably one of the least loved years ever. It's a theme that will resonate with us all, but is anything missing - what would you add?



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Table top projection brings a touch of magic to Harford Hill

Harford Hill has taken delivery of a Magic Table which uses light projection to transform a surface (usually a table top) into an interactive activity/game area. Support Worker Sam Webb attended the first customer session and explains more.

Although Covid restrictions and social distancing meant our use of the table was restricted, we were able to see its fantastic potential right away. Ideally we need a larger table and a darker room – both things we can easily put right - but despite this we found it an initial success, being both fun and mentally stimulating.

One customer enjoyed the table's more competitive offerings, particularly delighting in games of table football and ice hockey. He also enjoyed the 'race against the clock' game of guiding coins into a piggy bank to bank as much money as possible.

Another favourite was the fish pond simulation and the customer enjoyed coaxing the fish towards him and onto a plate. The splashing water sounds were an added stimulus and for future sessions we'd like to experiment by adding more sensory elements, for example water to dip our fingers into, that will enhance the experience and make the simulation all the more real.

In contrast another customer preferred the table's more gentle and non-competitive games such as popping bubbles where we made use of a paintbrush 'pop' tool to extend her reach. She seemed to enjoy the gentle popping sounds and how the light show responded to her touch. It's fantastic that the table has the ability to alter the speed of games and also the level of challenge to suit different people's abilities and needs.

Even on this first tentative use we could certainly see the vast potential for the table's future use. With the ability to handle floor, ceiling, table top and white board projections the possibilities are very exciting and I'm particularly looking forward to using it with our little visitors! This multi generational interaction is sure to bring laughter, joy and mental stimulation to all.



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Holt Hub gets 'hit' twice by Random Acts of Kindness!

Back in January Holt Community Hub found itself 'hit' with a letter from junior 'hitters' Tommy aged 4 and Toby aged 3 from Gorleston. The boys are part of a group that shows its appreciation for frontline staff by 'hitting' them with a random act of kindness and is best known for leaving edible gifts on ambulances and other vehicles to thank emergency workers.

Their aim is to show people they are appreciated and to boost morale and the team at Holt are pleased to say "job done!" with Holt team manager Clare Smith describing it as a lovely gesture which had touched colleagues.

But more was to follow. The family send Random Act of Kindness (RAKS) all year round and in February the team got hit again - this time with a mysterious package that turned out to contain biscuits. The gift arrived during the cold spell when unfortunately the Hub had no customers in due to the snow and only limited colleagues. The team sent their appreciation via social media with a selection of 'mug shots' showing them raising their mugs as they enjoy the biscuits with a cuppa!



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A day in the life of Paul Eaton

Care Worker, Paul Eaton, has worked for Home Support Matters for six and a half years.

He is part of their Enhanced Home Support Service (EHSS) team, providing short term support to individuals in their own home.

The service covers Great Yarmouth and Waveney, Norwich and South Norfolk and operates 24/7.

Each morning when I'm on shift I set my alarm for 5.45am, this gives me time to get showered and ready for the day ahead. I normally have a cup of tea, Red Bush black, and either toast and peanut butter or one of those sachets of porridge. I leave my house at 6.30am and my first customer is normally scheduled in for 7.25am.

Being an EHSS care worker is all about planning. Most of my customers are in the Norwich area, so average mileage to first customer is 20 to 25 miles from where I live. It's a non-time specific service, so I need to assess my rota daily, always prioritising customers with medication needs. It's important I have sufficient time to fit in all my visits, especially where customers need three or four visits throughout the day and having a good working relationship with the co-ordination team is essential - the EHSS coordinators are all amazing.

The weather has been very hit and miss this winter, we've had some heavy rain and recently the roads have been flooded. This has meant finding alternative routes to get to customers. A sat nav is a great gadget to have in the car and essential for an EHSS care worker.



I live in Beccles, so I travel on the A146 to Norwich, which is usually very busy, but the roads have become quieter during the lockdowns. I try to find side roads and short cuts, so I don't get caught up in lots of traffic. It comes back to planning your day, so you're not going back and forth across the city.

My first customer is a gentleman who had a stroke several years ago, he is paralysed on his right side and struggles with his speech. Prior to entering the property, I make sure I'm wearing the appropriate PPE; mask, apron and gloves. Using specialist equipment, I assist with his mobilisation into his wet room and support him with all aspects of personal care.

Once showered and dressed, his wife takes over his care, supporting him with his medication and breakfast. Before I leave, I complete the care worker logbook and have a quick chat with her. The visit takes around 40-50 minutes depending on how the gentleman is feeling as he can get very tired. I always tell customers and their family members we are there to assist and not take over, this seems to relax them and gives piece of mind.

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My second customer lives five minutes away from my first and on the same side of the city. Having two customers living so close to each other is a rarity and I know it won't be for long - EHSS is a temporary emergency service with an exit plan for all customers. On average I see my customers for three weeks before alternative care has been sourced or the person is no longer in need of care/support.

My second customer's needs are very different and I support with medication and breakfast only. He lives in the city centre and suffers from epilepsy and has mental health concerns. He recently broke both wrists which are now in plaster. He is reluctant to accept care and only allows me to assist with a wet shave occasionally and to make him a coffee. Like me he's a Norwich City fan, so through our mutual love of the game and the club, I'm slowly building on his trust and hope to be able to offer more assistance over time.

I visit around sixteen customers a day, but this varies depending on service demands and the travel distance between each. As the service is non-time specific the time I spend with each customer is based on their individual needs. I can support with welfare calls, all aspects of personal care, meal and drink preparation etc and each visit is tailored to the person's needs at that particular time.

During 2020 the service has seen an increase in customers needing support with mental health concerns. This brings extra challenges and can mean working with other agencies, making sure you keep the office informed and up to date as you gain knowledge about the individual. With these customers, more listening and communication is required, rather than personal care requirements. I schedule these visits later in the morning or early afternoon, so they don't interfere with medication visits.

I do an average of 110 miles per day, but this can increase especially if I am writing care plans for new customers coming onto the service. The co-ordinators are good at keeping me informed of rota changes. Volume of calls to and from the co-ordination team vary daily and it's essential to have a good working relationship with the office team and to keep in contact with them regularly.

I know it is important to look after myself so I can look after my customers. I always take a packed lunch with me, either sandwiches or on colder days a flask of soup, and carry around a couple of bottles of squash and a travel cup of tea. I eat and drink on the go between customers.

I usually finish around 7.30pm and get home by 8pm depending on how far away my last customer lives. If I work over my shift time, the co-ordinators always amend my time sheet so I get paid correctly. It can be extremely tiring, especially if I've been driving a lot between customers, but most days I feel energised from knowing I've made a difference to so many people through the support and care I've given them and to their to their spouses and family members...

Finally, I would also like to add that 2020 was particularly hard with the worry of working through the pandemic, but Home Support Matters has without fail managed to provide all the PPE required to keep the field team and the customers safe.

Support from the office staff, asking if we are OK, has helped too – the team is doing a great job and deserves recognition. The EHSS service is a great service and I love being part of the team.



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Connecting with Zoom brightens lives during the pandemic

The pandemic has got us all a lot more accustomed to using technology as a way of staying in touch. And with Covid restrictions limiting attendance at our Hubs, colleagues have adapted to provide weekly timetable of Zoom sessions for our customers.

The sessions combine entertainment and learning with a lot of fun and laughter, and offer a valuable opportunity to see familiar faces and keep in regular connect with both friends and colleagues.

The timetable is updated regularly and shared via a Facebook group and typically offers a mix of Life Skills, Sign Along, Wellbeing Groups, Quizzes, Catch Ups, Storytelling, Sing Alongs, Keep Fit and the very popular Friday Disco sessions (we love to end the week with a good disco!).

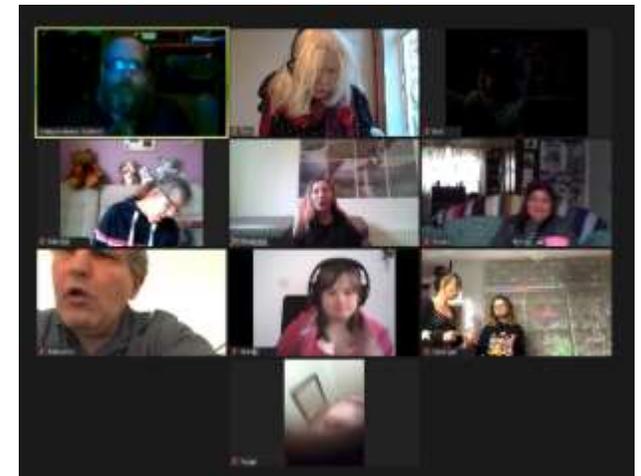
We dropped in on a Catch Up session to ask customers what they liked best about Zoom.

Annie – likes the sing alongs and seeing her friends – she tells her mum who she's spent time – and has also made new friends through the sessions.

Marion – says the sessions make her happy. She likes the quizzes and music and has made a new friend in Lewis.

Georgia – likes everything and comes on all the Zooms but singing on 'Fun Friday' is her favourite. She has also made new friends in Marion and George.

Chris – also likes the music, quizzes and storytelling. He has been attending since before Christmas and attends nearly all the sessions.



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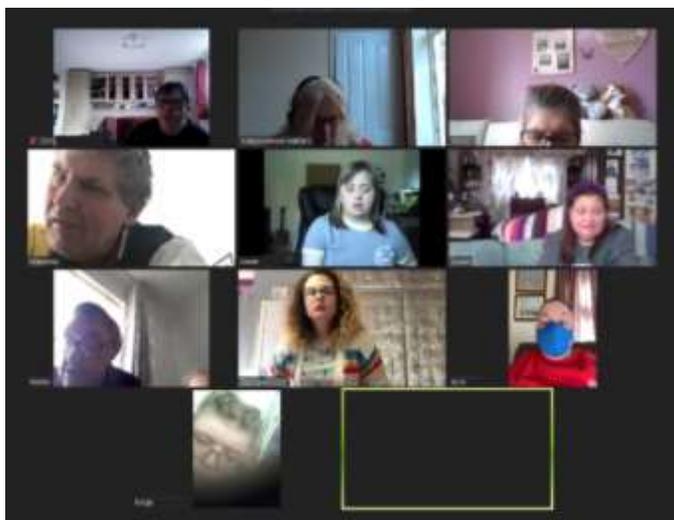
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Josh – likes being able to talk to his friends through the sessions. He would really like to see them in person understands this isn't possible at the moment and Zoom provides a way for him to interact with them.

Massimo – likes everything on Zoom! He likes to see people, and with limited numbers allowed at our Hubs due to Covid restrictions, he, like Josh, sees it as a way to socialise and interact with others.

Susan – enjoys the quizzes and likes keep fit (as long as it's not too energetic!). She likes to see her friends and misses Marion, Josh and Massimo so this is a way for her to keep in touch.

Walter and Alfie - both agreed that they want to get back to normal and see their friends.



The Catch Up session we joined took place in late February when vaccinations were hot news. Following a quick check round the Zoom room, we were delighted to hear that everyone attending had either received their first jab or had it booked!

Eyebrow Arts inspired crafting

We are proud to work with Eyebrow Arts and love their enthusiasm combined with a unique blend of performance, art and creative crafting.

They've been running weekly Zoom sessions for our customers throughout the winter months, and have delivered training to our Hub colleagues so they feel confident to run Eyebrow Arts-based activity sessions for themselves.

The team at Rosewood Hub were inspired to try out a number of their activities, including Spoon a Tune, sign language to the song Moon River and a story about a worm, after which our customers were helped to make their very own worms. How fabulous are they?!



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Delivering Gateway learning in lockdown

Support workers Shannon Walton and Emily Nurse (pictured below) have been supporting customers working on the 'Managing Self and Personal Safety' module of their Gateway Assured learning programme by creating an activity pack and holding Zoom sessions.



The packs were delivered to customers at their homes and consisted of all the stationery needed to complete the activities. The topics covered included a discussion on self-image where everyone was asked to consider how they see themselves and make a list of the things that they are grateful for.

Each customer created a scrapbook which they used to capture their responses, documenting their thoughts and giving them something to own and develop over time.

Team Manager, Hannah Clark, told us:

“Shannon and Emily have created really well-thought out packs for the customers – both for those who are staying at home during the lockdown and those still attending the Hub. They've put a lot of thought and time into preparing it all and deserve a mention for all of their hard work.

“It was also so lovely to see all the customers coming together through Zoom and reconnect with their friends. The response from customers and their families was great and it allowed them to spend some quality time together during the difficult times we are facing at the moment.”



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Getting ready for summer blooms

Customers at Attleborough Community Hub have working hard in the garden making a start on getting it planted out ready for a great display this summer.

They've been busy tidying and planting the raised beds, and sowing the seeds for their sunflower growing competition. Good luck to everyone, we hope the pests stay away and that they all flourish and get to grow super tall!



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Care / Support Worker of the Month



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We're here because we care

Home Support Matters has introduced a new monthly awards scheme to recognise and reward colleagues for their contribution and the positive impact they've had on the lives of others. The first quarter recipients are highlighted here and we'd like to say a big thank you to each of you – we feel privileged to have you on our team.



Josh Whittington

Josh was nominated for the consistent and professional support he gives to customers. He has a great attitude and always goes above and beyond to provide an excellent level of care and support, demonstrating real compassion for every customer he works with.

Josh has great people skills and works with individuals empathetically and responsively. He is very mindful of people's needs and gets fulfilment from ensuring customers enjoy the best quality of life possible. He recently worked alongside social services to encourage supported living customers to adopt a healthier lifestyle, coming up with ideas to empower individuals to make healthy choices for themselves, for example by planning meals ahead of shopping to help improve their diet.

Felix Chivite-Matthews

Felix was nominated for his skilled and professional way of working with supported living customers. This has been particularly noticeable during the pandemic when his motivation has encouraged them to get out and keep physically active. Where individuals have been in a low mood, going for walks and engaging in other physical activities has empowered them and been great for their mental health.

Communication is another of Felix's strengths and he has supported customers to make informed choices which have helped them stay Covid safe. This hasn't always been easy, but during the whole pandemic we are pleased to say not a single supported living customer has caught the virus.



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Colleen White and Bev Smith

Colleen and Bev were nominated for stepping in at the height of the pandemic to provide frontline support at Grays Fair Court Residential Home and Benjamin Court Reablement Unit after patients and staff tested Covid positive.

Colleen and Bev didn't hesitate to take on the work, despite the fact that it required an almost two hour drive each way, with a nine hour shift in between.

While on shift they not only cared for some very ill Covid positive patients but, due to the reduced staffing levels, also took responsibility for cleaning thoroughly, taking out rubbish and generally restoring order.

The pair worked solidly for seven nights, with four nights off before working a further seven nights - and offering more hours if needed. Together they went above and beyond in a very difficult situation, putting others needs and safety above their own and doing it with enthusiasm and humour.



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Check out our online news

Don't forget you can keep in touch with us via the news page on our website, including regular posts from our customer blogger, Jason.

[Click here to visit the Independence Matters website news page](#)



Hub customers get into the groove

We've said how we love a good disco on a Friday afternoon – well here's [a little clip of Attleborough Hub's customers](#) getting some practice in at their drama and dance group.



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And finally...



**RED
NOSE
DAY**

March brought us Red Nose Day and a chance to spread some smiles by asking colleagues for their favourite 'Dad' jokes to share on our social media.

So in case you are in need of a giggle or two and didn't spot them the first time round... here they are again...

What's the best thing about Switzerland? I don't know but the flag's a big plus!

What do you call a person that sets fire to her bills? Bernadette!

What do you call a French man wearing flip flops? Philippe Filop!

What part of the hospital has the least privacy? The ICU!

Thanks to Ann Beese

Where do whales get weighed? At a weigh station!

Thanks to Donna Pearce

I nearly got knocked off my bike by a council lorry this morning. "You idiot!" I shouted through gritted teeth!

I was going to buy some new slippers but I got cold feet!

How should you approach a Welsh cheese? – Caerphilly!

Thanks to Macala Overton

How do you make a tissue dance? Put a little boogie in it!

Thanks to Nicky Wells

What do you call cheese that's not yours? Nacho cheese! 🧀

Thanks to Carly Hernandez

What's the difference between a buffalo and a bison? You can't wash your face in a buffalo!

Thanks to Maggie Manton

What does the Greek cheese say to itself in the mirror? Hallo-Mi!

Thanks to Sara Basey-Fisher

What do you call two monkeys that share an Amazon account? Primemates!

Thanks to Sally Palin

Did you hear about the man who was run over by a steam train? He was chuffed to bits!

Thanks to Lorraine Nuccoll

What noise does a nut make when it sneezes? CASHEW!

Thanks to Sam Wiseman

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