Leading the way in bespoke therapeutic care and education for young people

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OCT - DEC 2022

Welcome to the Pebbles Newsletter

Welcome to the last issue of our 2022 newsletters - we hope you enjoy it!









What a busy time we have had recently!

We held our group managers' conference on 13th October, and I was delighted with the day overall. Seeing so many people engage with the event was terrific.

The Scotland and England awards nights for our children and young people were also great successes. Although I could only attend the English awards night, I know from feedback that the Scottish night went really well too thanks to the huge efforts of all those involved in organising the event.

Much is still happening in the background at Pebbles as we look to support more children in 2023 by opening other homes and hopefully also our first Intake and Assessment Centre. The staffing numbers look as good as they have all year, which is very encouraging, and we are continuing to drive the recruitment process as hard as ever. Eilidh Peace, Head of Recruitment, and her team are doing a great job.

Mark Williams, Director of Operations, and the care operation team continue to exceptionally support young people across our homes, and it's fantastic to see how much our children are benefiting from everyone's solid commitment.

On the other hand, Julie Hedge, Commercial Director, and her team have been working very hard across several areas, including commissioning and the new education provision, which we hope to launch in 2023.

Overall, all our teams have performed extremely well in 2022, which hasn't been an easy year. The plan for 2023 is to continue to look at strengthening our teams and improving our services, always putting our children and young people front and centre in all we look to achieve.

Thank you for your trust in us during 2022. We look forward to working alongside you in the upcoming year.

PACE Yourself

this Festive Season

Words by Joy Wakenshaw, Head of Care at Pebbles Care



Well, it is that time of year again! How quickly the seasons fly by.

Before we know where we are, we are lost in the hustle and bustle once more. Christmas really can be a magical time. Unfortunately, it can also be a time filled with unpleasant memories that trigger all sorts of feelings such as shame, guilt, sadness, and anxiety. For those who cannot be with their families, for whatever reason, the sense of loss from this can also be overwhelming.

Whether you celebrate Christmas or have a different spiritual practice, it's a time when emotions can run high. Please take time to be sensitively curious and understand the feelings of children and young people in care for at this time when things can be difficult as much as enjoyable. Be mindful and aware. Look out for any changes in their mood and behaviour. Better still, let them know it's okay to share how they feel and acknowledge how difficult it can be for them. Please don't forget how important the PACE model will be in creating calm and nurturing environments for children and young people.

Christmas can also be a time of great hope and a chance to create new and positive memories with young people in care, as well as for helping them create Christmas rituals for themselves e.g., baking mince pies, decorating the tree, putting out stockings and leaving treats out, and even reading 'The Night Before Christmas.' I've no doubt that they will have their own ideas and cultural experiences that they may like to share too. Why not encourage them to talk about the things they like to do?



The quote to the left is especially true for Christmas. I am proud that it often reflects what our amazing care teams do all year round. As hope-keepers for our children and young people, our care teams do that little extra every day and not just at Christmas, so I hope you all are on the receiving end of such kindness yourselves.

> I hope you all have a peace-filled Christmas and a hope-filled 2023.





Pebbles' Christmas Card Competition:

Winning Entries

We are excited to share with you the winning entries of our Christmas Card Competition 2022! There were many beautiful artworks to choose from, and our panel thoroughly enjoyed reviewing all of them.

Young People



1st Place

D. (Murraythwaite) did a fantastic job using pebbles and other materials to create such a heartwarming design.



2nd Place

O. (Dala) showcased the magic of the festive season through this beautiful Christmas tree at night.



Joint 3rd Place

R. (Amber House) created such a joyful artwork that simply couldn't be left out!



Joint 3rd Place

H. (Forest View) shared a beautiful message that perfectly resonates with the Christmas spirit at Pebbles, which reads: "Christmas is about spending time with your family. Whether it's your family or your chosen family, they love you just the same."

Employees



1st Place

Jo-Anna McCulloch, Registered Manager at Murraythwaite, displayed amazing drawing skills with this lovely snowman.



2nd Place

Mirren Aird from our Dunfermline school created our very own (and quite cute!) Pebbles Santa.



3rd Place

Kirstie McGregor, also from our Dunfermline school, demonstrated amazing creative skills with her Celtic Christmas tree. Both the successful entries and the other submissions are fantastic, and you can find them all on our website at www.pebblescare.com.





Pebbles Group Managers Conference 2022

In October, we held our annual Managers' Conference, which was an insightful day and a brilliant occasion to get together and celebrate each other's achievements.

Future steps in our company's journey, as well as wonderful ideas to empower young people to thrive, were shared with 70 team members from across the UK who support Pebbles Care's growth and innovation.

The event included a session with Purple Story, where our managers were guided through ways of communication associated with personality traits linked to colours. This fun and interactive workshop was the perfect way to close such a great day!



Amazing Fundraising Initiatives for The

Awards Nights

Our young people are a continuous source of inspiration. Regardless of everything they went through, they keep warming our hearts with so many acts of kindness.

Knowing that we were planning the young people's awards nights, they decided to take part in fundraising initiatives to ensure the events could be successful. This not only goes to show how amazing they are, but also that at Pebbles they truly feel as part of a family.



Fundraising in Scotland

A group of young people and team members from our Murraythwaite home decided to climb Criffel to support the awards ceremony in Scotland.

Criffel stands 570m high; it's a short but steep ascent, and it was a lovely team challenge with lots of laughs and sore legs. The group exceeded what they wanted to raise for the ceremony and decided to purchase toys for the children's ward at the local hospital with the remainder.

Positive Update on Recruitment:

Welcoming Back Employees

Attracting new and experienced talent has been one of the biggest challenges facing the UK care sector in 2022. It has been widely reported that many care providers have struggled to fill their vacancies this year, and we are operating in an increasingly tight labour market.

We are therefore proud to report that since January 2022, we have reduced our care operations vacancies by 66%. We are also delighted to have welcomed back several highly experienced employees over the past few months.

Our Head of Recruitment, Eilidh Peace, has reported a trend:

"We have welcomed back three employees in November alone. These employees had previously left Pebbles to pursue new opportunities but have decided to return to continue their career development with us. This indicates that our company culture and training and development opportunities set us apart from other care and education providers. We are delighted to have them back."



Fundraising in England

E., from St. Pauls House, decided to raise funds for the awards night in England by using their amazing cooking skills. With the support of Sarah Kimpton, Registered Manager, E. made some mouth-watering goodies (including a bonfire cheesecake!) to sell at a local company and held an open house breakfast morning for the staff, raising £125 in total.

E. has shown an interest in becoming a pastry chef, so this was a good initiative to help them sharpen their skills and make their job goals more attainable. We are incredibly proud of our young person's contribution and look forward to their next delicious creations.









We believe that resilience and steps towards growth and development deserve proper recognition. This is the only way young people can realise how much they are worth and reach their full potential.

With so many milestones achieved by everyone during the last year, we therefore decided to organise two wonderful awards nights to celebrate the successes of our young people.



The Scottish Awards Night had 140 attendees, including team members, and each young person received an award, certificate, and voucher for several categories. Some of them include Presentation and Creativity, Effort and Determination, Thinking of Others, Commitment and Enthusiasm Towards College.

The venue looked spectacular with the balloon displays, thanks to Jane and Geraldine, our team members who were in charge of the décor. The joy during the event was contagious, and the dance floor was never empty!



The Awards Night in England was another great event to celebrate our young people. There were around 130 attendees, including employees, and all young people received an award and gift voucher. Examples of the recognitions are Most Brave, Best Fortnite Player, and Education Achievements.

Many young people went on the stage and made moving speeches. But the night also included a lot of fun moments, thanks to the disco, the candy floss and popcorn machines, and the chocolate fountain. At some point, there was even a huge conga going around the room!

Seeing our young people enjoying themselves so much at these events was simply amazing. We are extremely proud of everyone's achievements and look forward to witnessing all the wonderful things our children and young people will accomplish over the next year.











Senior Manager Award 2022

We are thrilled to share that Krysia Watson, Area Manager in Cumbria, won the Senior Manager Award

at the National Children & Young People Awards 2022.

These industry-recognised awards showcase innovation and best practice and pay tribute to those who excel in quality care provision.

Krysia was nominated by team members of our family because she is an outstanding leader who continually demonstrates passion and dedication in her work, and as a result, she was shortlisted as one of the eight finalists for the Senior Manager Award 2022.

The awards ceremony was held on 6th October, and among the 850 attendees, Krysia was supported by a group of colleagues who shared the emotions of the night with her. The joy spread across the table when it was revealed that Krysia had won such a prestigious award!

Our Area Manager was chosen thanks to her passion for leadership, management, and self-development, and because she knows how to get the best out of people, being able to create a positive culture that embodies the values of the organisation and drives success.

It is incredible to receive such recognition within the industry, so heartfelt congratulations to Krysia for this amazing achievement!



Krysia Watson

"I am absolutely thrilled and truly humbled to have won this award. I am incredibly lucky to have such a fantastic and talented team to work with, who challenge and inspire me on a daily basis. It really means so much to me and it is enormously appreciated. Thank you."





Dave's Story

From Residential Child Care Worker to Area Manager

Dave Hitchen, Area Manager, has an amazing story of development within our family. We strive to support our talented people to grow and progress within their roles, and this is an example of the many inspiring career journeys possible at Pebbles.

Before joining our team, Dave was doing something quite different. He worked as a gym instructor and lifeguard in a leisure centre. This job gave him the opportunity to work with many young people and children, which he thoroughly enjoyed, sparking his interest in pursuing a more meaningful career. He explored options and discovered the residential child care sector, deciding to become a Residential Child Care Worker in 2008.

Beginning a career at Pebbles Care

After about a year and a half of working in residential child care, Dave's journey with Pebbles began. He started as a Residential Child Care Worker and demonstrated skills and commitment, so he was supported to progress to the role of Deputy Manager.

Dave shone in this role too, and his line manager encouraged him to interview for the position of Registered Manager at Prospect Place, which he was happily accepted for.

This was an already operational home that had just been purchased from another child care company. Dave worked hard to ensure that the operations and culture of Prospect Place were aligned with Pebbles' high standards and expectations.

While Dave said that he found this a slightly challenging task at first, he believes that he gained valuable skills and experience during this process, and it was worth the effort. Dave went on to successfully manage Prospect Place for five years.

Afterwards, he felt that he was ready for a new challenge and put himself forward for a new Area Manager position that had become available. He was welcomed into this position in 2019, which he has worked and developed in ever since.

"In every role I have had with Pebbles, I have been really supported to develop within the role itself as well as when progressing on to new opportunities." – Dave Hitchen

Dave's favourite aspect of being an Area Manager at Pebbles is that he gets to witness the deep connections his team members create with their young people and the positive impact they make on their lives. He also enjoys visiting the different homes and building meaningful relationships with the wider team. Recently, Dave has started to deliver our Therapeutic Parenting training too, and he finds it extremely rewarding to empower colleagues to develop in their roles.

Development of the company

As Dave has been with Pebbles for over a decade, he has experienced many changes in the company, and he believes that Pebbles has progressed massively since he began.

A period in which the company has shown a great amount of progress is since the restructure in 2019. Dave shared that he has witnessed development in all departments and that the investment in an in-house psychology team and the Therapeutic Parenting model has made a big difference in how we support young people.

Dave believes that Pebbles is currently run by people who have the children's best interests at heart, and he's proud to be part of our organisation.

"Everyone in the company is striving towards embedding the same core values and this means that they want the best for our young people and employees. Colleagues and managers support you to develop, whether that's within your role or onto other opportunities." – Dave Hitchen







Glen Cottage First Inspection: Rated Good

Our Glen Cottage home recently received its first inspection by the Care Inspectorate, the regulatory body in Scotland.

The evaluation was a **4** - **Good**, which is usually the highest possible grade for a first inspection, and the feedback for the Registered Manager, Sheena, the Deputy Manager, Alisha, and the residential child care team was incredible.

The inspector made comments such as that the team is "remarkable" in the outcomes achieved with the young person and that their attainment with them is "amazing".

Our local team is doing a fantastic job in the home, and we are looking forward to their higher grade at the next inspection.







Featured in the "Scottish Journal of Residential Child Care"

We are delighted to have been featured in the special issue of the Scottish Journal of Residential Child Care, published to celebrate 20 years since it was established.

Pebbles Care stood out for our commitment to keeping siblings together as part of 'The Promise' set by the Scottish Government. The journal mentions how our robust referral process and individualised support have enabled two brothers to live at our Tanglewood home, enhancing their bond and sense of identity.

We'll always aim for siblings to live together, where possible, and are pleased that this has been recognised by such a remarkable journal.



A Touching Poem on Mental Health

One of our wonderful young people recently took part in a writing competition organised by CAMHS for Mental Health Awareness, submitting a touching poem that contains an encouraging message of hope and resilience for those struggling with mental health difficulties.

The competition covered the whole of Dumfries and Galloway, and we are very proud to announce that our young person was chosen as the winner. L. found the courage to share personal and possibly difficult thoughts and experiences with the aim of helping others in similar situations. The raw emotions contained in this poem are extremely touching and very deserving of this win.

"I will tell anyone who reads this, if you are going through any mental health struggles, there is someone out there for you to talk to. Don't let your problems slide or it can build up on you. Please take this advice from my poem; everything gets better in the end."

– L., Young Person

I started to tell the sea that being angry Mental Health Awareness doesn't help, It only makes things worse. Mental health is an ocean of destruction with an eruption. There is a lot of things you can do other than be angry or sad, They didn't look after me, Like doing some breathing exercises. But I looked after myself. The waves took one big breath, When the waves crash it makes my head bash. The waves started to relax and felt half of the problems go. My dad was a shore to all my siblings, I made my siblings lives better, I told him some of the things that happened, But worse for myself. I said I had a black cloud that followed me everywhere, The waves started to shout, surrounding But I started to kick it off then I got happier everything they touched. telling people about it. Family members have let me down, Soon the black cloud went away and that is But I got stronger than ever. what you should do, Anything bothering you, you must let I started to think about what the ocean was someone know. dealing with, I asked the waves, I said "talk to me, tell me The waves said I will, the waves led me back your anger troubled sea". to shore. It's like a stormy day on the rocks. The waves hissed don't judge me. My behaviour is caused by your kind, Your kind has let me down about your littering, I am worth nothing to your kind.





A Pamper Day for Simon

Simon Morley, one of our dedicated Compliance Officers, recently enjoyed a "pamper day" at Prospect Place.

Simon was on a regular visit to the home and loved accepting a manicure offered by one of our children. He said: "It was a good way of encouraging a conversation with the lovely person painting my nails."

It's wonderful to see our Compliance Team engaging with our young people during their visits and finding so many creative ways to engage with them.



Sarah Hutchinson at BBC Radio Leeds

On 10th November, our Registered Manager, Sarah Hutchinson, took part in the afternoon show of BBC Radio Leeds to discuss a Christmas advert of a popular UK brand that raises awareness about young people in care.

This was a great opportunity for Sarah to share her thoughts about the ad itself, but also to highlight how at Pebbles we recognise that Christmas can be a challenging time for young people in care. This is why, Sarah explained, during this time of the year, we empathise with our young people while trying to create new positive memories.

She went on to talk about the importance of finding common ground with those in our care to make them feel at home and build those life-changing relationships that become the conduit for change.

Sarah finally stressed that while our young people will have a safe and warm space to call home, there might be many



children in difficult situations during this Christmas due to the cost-of-living crisis. She therefore encouraged the audience to actively help children and families through food banks and by supporting local charities.

We are pleased that Sarah was invited to the show and would like to thank her for shedding light on the importance of being empathetic and understanding with young people in the care system during the festive season.

Congratulations to Our

Employees & Team of The Year 2022





Employees of the Year

Our Registered Managers, Sheena and Catherine, were credited with their ability to step in and help colleagues in other homes, whether within their remit or not, to ensure stability for our young people in various difficult operational circumstances.

Moreover, Sheena has been rewarded as she leads by example, not only for her own team but for all the teams within Scotland, and she is considered a mentor for many.

Team of the Year

The Recruitment Team was chosen because they have successfully steered us through one of the most difficult periods for recruitment in a number of years. They continue to build collaborative partnerships both internally and externally to give ourselves the best chances of filling our job vacancies as quickly as possible.

Moreover, our hiring time has been drastically reduced as a result of their tireless efforts. They have also successfully implemented a new job application system, which took many hours of overtime.

Congratulations to our employees and team of the year 2022 for these fantastic recognitions!







Fantastic Updates

from Our Schools

Dunfermline School

There have been a lot of changes in our Dunfermline school, from new faces to the addition of gravity defying activities, as well as some outstanding achievements across the curriculum by both pupils and the teaching team.

Pupils are working hard towards national qualifications in Numeracy, Literacy, Social Subjects, Science, Music, and Employability. In addition to this, they are building portfolios of ASDAN activities to gain their Personal Development

Some of our pupils have made excellent progress in Music so far this year. A group has been working hard on writing original rap lyrics and is looking forward to recording their performances with a sound engineer in the coming weeks. Another is practicing guitar and keyboard for her National 3 award, which involved learning to read both treble clef and guitar tablature in a very short time.

Students have been exploring their ancient native ancestors around their home areas and how they have influenced their lifestyles today. In Science, they have been exploring gravity through experiments both in and out of the classroom, including some pole-fit lessons.

Our teaching team has been looking at lots of activities outside the school. Badminton, boxing, and alternative fitness classes at Studio-X have been enjoyed by many of our pupils, and everyone is looking forward to taking part in equine therapy and outdoor education sessions, which will include mountain biking!

Pupils are coming together each week to discuss their experience of school, explore what improvements can be made, and express their wishes for their education. From this, students have enjoyed extracurricular activities such as bowling, and have planned the activities they will be doing as part of their timetabled outdoor education sessions.

As part of the wider achievement programme, some pupils have been volunteering at a local greyhound rescue. Each week, pupils don their all-weather gear and walk the dogs, showing commitment and care to the retired dogs. One of the pupils has taken this a step further by giving up her own time over the weekends to care for them.

Here are some pictures of the pumpkins carved by Dunfermline's pupils for Halloween. Their crafting skills hugely impressed our teachers!



Muirkirk School

Therapeutic Art

Our Muirkirk school organised a therapeutic art session, where pupils created some masks. The purpose of the masks was to encourage self-reflection and expression, allowing pupils to tell their stories and communicate how they see themselves.

The teaching team also organised a hot air balloon and 3D hand display. This activity was aimed at showing to students that at different stages in life we sometimes feel deflated, but we can always still have that dream and reach our full potential. The hands represent helping each other and giving that extra push.







Physical Education Programme

The school ran a physical education programme that involved skiing. Our pupils had never been skiing before and really enjoyed this activity.

Halloween Party

When Halloween arrived, the team at Muirkirk organised a party for all pupils, with lots of spooky decorations! This was great fun for everyone involved.









The nurturing nature of our teams is second to none, and this wonderful welcome bundle is just an example of it.

People at Amber House

As sometimes happens, the decision for one of our young people to live at Amber House was made quite quickly, so the team had limited time to prepare for his arrival. Even so, they went above and beyond to ensure he could feel at home from day one, knowing how difficult the first few days can be for a young person in a new environment.

"I think it is massively important to ensure the young people feel welcome, and this is one way we can start that." – Registered Manager at Amber House

Halloween Celebrations

at Cara House

Very well done to the young people and team members at Cara House for taking part in the local Halloween Trail with some impressive spooky decorations.

Everyone had great fun pulling this together, and our young people also enjoyed giving out sweets to the children visiting Cara during the Halloween weekend.

Engaging with the local community is something we highly encourage, and it's fantastic to see our young people taking part in activities like this.



Awards Nominations for Our Young Person at Dala House

One of our wonderful young people at Dala House was nominated by team members, his social worker and his CAMHS support worker for the Dumfries and Galloway Youth Awards. This was done under the participation category due to his help within the community through volunteering and his input with LGBTQ and CAMHS.

We are overjoyed to announce that our young person was named one of three finalists for the award. These awards are held in recognition and celebration of the involvement, dedication, and incredible achievements of young people in Dumfries and Galloway.

Our young person had an amazing time at the awards night, and although the award went to someone else, we all feel so very proud of him, especially as he's been acknowledged as one of the top three finalists for the whole of Dumfries and Galloway.

But there's more! Our incredible young person was also nominated by his social worker for the Grafter Award via North Tyneside Children in Care... and he won! The social worker commented to our Compliance team:

"I don't have any suggestions for improvements as everything is going amazingly well and he continues to make progress in all areas of his life with the constant support from the Pebbles' team."

Fundraising for Cancer Support

Sarah Kimpton, Registered Manager at Broadoak and St Pauls Houses in St Helens, was sadly diagnosed with cancer in November 2020, subsequently undergoing surgery to have it removed.

On the first anniversary of her diagnosis, she organised an afternoon of live music and entertainment at a local club in St Helens to raise funds for the Macmillan Cancer Trust and St Johns Hospice.

Young people and team members from Pebbles supported her in organising the event. They sold tickets on the door, helped set up and decorate the room, assisted with the buffet, and the team encouraged family and friends to attend. Some employees even got up to sing and showed off their talent during the afternoon!

It was a very successful event, and Sarah, with the support of our people, managed to raise over £500 for the cause. Our Registered Manager is now planning another fundraising initiative in the new year, and we look forward to learning what she will organise with her team and young people.







Happy News from our Homes

We have some fantastic news from across our homes.

Well done to our young people and team members for their accomplishments!

Amble Cottage

One of the young people at Amble Cottage is having weekly driving lessons and is booked in for their theory test. Moreover, a young person has gained a position at a hair salon as part of their college course placement, and another, who is a cadet, has been selling poppy pin badges.

Additionally, Donna Watson, the Deputy Manager, has been successful in her interview for the role of Resource Manager, which she will begin in January 2023.





Ruby House

R. remains very settled at Ruby House and continues to have an excellent relationship with his care team.

At parents' evening, he was given a positive report from all his teachers and received lots of praise for this. In November he received a Sports Leadership Award and an Excellence Reward for his work. He has 100% attendance at school, and his concentration in class has greatly improved.

R. is now able to talk to his care team about his thoughts and feelings and has stopped self-harming. His family time with his mother and brother is a very positive experience for everyone, and he now sees them more often.

Jasper House

F. will start school soon and is super excited about it. He has also developed a better and more positive sleeping pattern.

J. has settled well into the home and is beginning to build positive relationships with the care team.







When M. recently moved to Pebbles House, he sadly left two siblings behind. He also never had the opportunity to engage in any activities or hobbies before and struggled to cope in any educational environment.

In his first month with us, he made massive progress as he spent all his time with team members enjoying a variety of activities such as visiting theme parks, galleries, and museums, going camping, walking in nature, and going on bike rides. Moreover, M. was supported to engage with a local football team and to join the community activity programme. As a result, he engaged in lots of fun activities with local peers, which he loved.

The team at Pebbles House has been amazing in building positive relationships with M. and creating a family unit he felt he belonged to.

During the second month, M. shared that he was upset and worried for L., one of his siblings, as she had nowhere to live after moving from a foster placement. Rebecca Wilson, Registered Manager, contacted the social worker immediately. She shared M.'s worries and asked if we could keep these siblings together, as they had been together all their lives. The social worker agreed, and L. was reunited with his brother, enabling the two to spend lots of quality time together at Pebbles House.

The Registered Manager then worked closely with the local authority to enable contact with their birth mother, whom they had not seen in 10 years. Both M. and L. now have contact with their mother and have built a positive relationship with her.

L. now attends college full time and has a part time job, whereas M. attends an army preparation college full time, has a seasonal job, and plays rugby for Hull Ionians.

Both young people have thrived at Pebbles House, they feel safe, loved, and wanted, enabling them to reach their full potential and achieve the best possible outcomes.

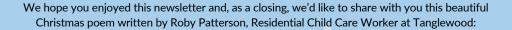






A Christmas Poem

by Robyn Patterson



Christmas isn't about the gifts, that's just a little part.

It's really about all the kindness and love that comes right from the heart.

The dreams of Rudolf the reindeer preparing himself to fly, the magical way that he guides Santa's sleigh high up in the sky.

Christmas is a time to share happiness and kindness to all we meet, even if it is just a smile to a stranger we see on the street.

The world becomes a lovely place at this special time of the year, where everyone's much happier and spreading Christmas cheer.

All your wishes can come true if you wish upon the brightest star, this Christmas I am sending love to you to know how special you are.





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