

Welcome to the

# Pebbles

## Newsletter



**Pebbles**  
Care | Education | Therapy

# Director's welcome

May I take this opportunity to thank you all for the warm welcome I have received from the Pebbles family. I am thrilled to be here as your new CEO and look forward to leading and supporting you all in providing the best care, education and therapeutic support for our children.

It's still early days and so my primary task at the moment is to get around our children's homes and schools to see you all in person. Throughout my working life I have been within the children's services field, more recently over the last 15 years I have worked in a variety of roles managing some of the largest independent children's organisations in the UK, leading schools, colleges, children's homes and fostering agencies. I also engage with a number of children's charitable organisations within my free time as well as helping coach children in local sporting clubs. Yes, I do enjoy keeping myself busy!

I have been a Teacher and Headteacher many years ago and so it was fantastic to review the external exam results achieved across our services. Our young people have done themselves and us proud by achieving so much in their GCSEs and National Qualifications.

When reflecting on the high quality care and support we give it's great to see a number of our young people successfully moving on from Pebbles and transitioning into semi-independence. Some practical examples are from Amble Cottage where a young person who was with us for six years moved successfully into Independent Living with a friend in Penrith. It's also amazing that four of the original care team when the young person arrived are still working at Amble! At Highview, a young adult has recently passed his driving test and got a

car giving him even more independence. He will be moving on from Pebbles at the end of this month, we of course wish him well and will look forward to hearing about future successes.

I am so keen to support our current staff in progressing with their career (should they wish to) and so have had some exciting initial discussions about career development. It's important to add that I will also afford my full support for staff to be the best they can be in their current role should this be their choice. A number of our Pebbles family have had positive work moves over the last few months including Dave Hitchen (Head of Care for England), Simon Morson (Area Manager), Helen Samson (Area Manager) and Karen Blanchard-Ellis (Head of Commissioning). A big well done!

Finally, can I urge you all to reflect on our core values so that as a Pebbles family we can ensure we support our children to be the best that they can be.



**Chris Strong**  
CEO



## Meet the Team – Charles Allen

Charles Allen, our Learning & Development Facilitator, has been part of the Pebbles family for almost 10 years. We recently caught up with him to find out more about his career journey so far.

Charles began his career at Pebbles as a Residential Child Care Worker, helping to create a nurturing and supportive environment for the children and young people in our care. He soon advanced to the role of Deputy Manager and then onto Registered Manager, where he continued to brighten the lives of our young people and his teams. Throughout his time in our homes, Charles worked across many of our homes including Highview, Kyllimoons, Earlseat, Tarra, Tanglewood and Kippsbyre.

After nine years, Charles decided to take the leap and move on from Pebbles for a new opportunity, working in a care role with a local authority. Charles soon realised that the grass wasn't greener on the other side, finding that the drawbacks of his new role outweighed the perceived benefits. After 10 months away, he returned to Pebbles in a new capacity – as a Learning and Development Facilitator. In his new role, he is able to share his wealth of knowledge and experience with new staff members, helping to foster a culture of continuous learning and growth. Not only that, it is also a new and exciting challenge for Charles and allows him to continually develop his own skills.

Outside of work, Charles is an avid football fan and when he isn't making use of his season ticket, he can be found out hiking. Charles has successfully summited 73 of Scotland's 282 Munros and already has his next hike planned. He also adores his two dogs, Hope and Ollie, who are Lhasa Apsos.

Charles is set to take the next big step in his life as he prepares to tie the knot in March 2024.

As we continue our mission to provide a safe and nurturing environment for the children and young people in our care, we are fortunate to have people like Charles who bring a wealth of experience, passion, and a strong sense of purpose to our team.





## Therapeutic Parenting in Pebbles Care

At Pebbles Care we recognise the importance of theoretical training for our therapeutic Residential Child Care Workers (RCCWs) and educators.

The aim is to help them understand and intervene (i.e. the other 23 hours) with children and young people whose adverse early life experiences can result in attachment and trauma difficulties.

The four sessions of therapeutic parenting provide residential childcare practitioners with an understanding of attachment, trauma, developmental trauma, child development and systemic theories. These provide the foundations for understanding our children from a theoretical perspective. There is also an emphasis on providing strategies for working with our young people. These are covered in the four theoretical days, with more emphasis on theory to practice in the ten workshops that they will attend. These are being developed by our in-house psychology team and will be ready to launch in November 2023.

Our therapeutic RCCW and educators are also expected to invest in themselves by recognising that they are Pebbles greatest and most important resource for intervening and teaching our children and young people to feel safe enough. Feeling safe allows them to begin to develop other social, emotional, and cognitive skills. The role of a therapeutic RCCW or educator is more than traditional parenting so, relies on the use of 'self' in being able to understand that behaviour is always communicating something, often unconsciously, in a bid to keep themselves safe. The child or young person's brain has not yet realised they are safe and therefore they may act on unconscious impulses to enable them to be safe.



Our role will be to recognise this, regulate ourselves and provide nurturing responses that can accept the child may be emotionally dysregulated, use empathy, curiosity or even playfulness in a bid for you to co-regulate them and make them feel safe in the present. This requires adults to bring 'yourself' to every minute and every day in a professional manner. Their interpretations of our children's behaviour and their ability to create safety for a child is paramount.

Over time, these nurturing and empathic responses will create predictability, which can help them feel safe enough to begin to trust adults will look after them, which enables them to develop the skills they require for navigating through life.

Consistent therapeutic parenting will provide the opportunity to develop new neural pathways that connect the lower part of the brain (the primitive survival) with the cortical brain (cognitive and executive functioning) which helps develop cause and effect thinking among other skills rather than living in their survival brain of fight or flight.

**Sharron Reilly**



# Stay flu free this winter with Medicash

Did you know that as part of our employee assistance programme, Medicash, you can claim back the cost of your flu jab?

Medicash also includes:

- Dental Treatments
- Free & Confidential Counselling
- Discounts on Gyms & Health Clubs
- Virtual GP & Prescription Service
- Optical
- Complementary & Alternative Therapies
- ...and more!

Hazel Ross, our Talent Acquisition Manager, has enjoyed the benefits of Medicash to purchase new glasses.



Hazel said,  
"It's so easy to use.  
You download the  
My Medicash app,  
upload your receipt  
and the money  
is back in your  
account within  
24 hours."

## GET STARTED

Scan the code below to download the Medicash app and access it with your unique policy number. If you don't know your policy number, please email [hr@pebblescare.com](mailto:hr@pebblescare.com)



SCAN ME



## Happy chickens make happy eggs – Chrissie Hadfield

Chrissie Hadfield is a newer face in the Pebbles family, joining this year as Registered Manager at our Tyne Close home.



In a short period of time, she successfully reopened her home and recently received an Ofsted inspection after only being open for three months, where Chrissie and her team received 'Good' across the board, which is a huge achievement.

The young person at Tyne Close is flourishing thanks to Chrissie and her team. She is coming out of her shell and finding her own identity. She has also made huge leaps forward in terms of her engagement with education and has been recognised by Eden Animal Rescue Centre for achieving over 100 hours volunteering. Previously she hadn't settled anywhere long enough to sit any assessments and hated school. Now she has found some structure and stability and is attending school full time and is enjoying it.

Chrissie is a big believer in the saying, 'happy chickens make happy eggs', knowing the importance of a happy and

safe household not only for the young people in our care but also for her team. She is a huge advocate for staff welfare, making sure that her team has everything they need to allow them to flourish in their career and provide outstanding care to our young people.

Chrissie is just as busy outside of work as she is whilst in it. Juggling being a mum, a school governor, running a local youth centre (with Blue Potts manager Kealey Rushworth), and playing rugby for Carlisle RUFC, being voted Vice Captain for the team. Pebbles are proud to be Chrissie's sponsor for the 2023/2024 season.

Chrissie started playing rugby around five years ago as she was looking for a way to do some exercise and get fitter. She never imagined she'd actually play on the team, especially since she had never even watched a rugby game before!

The team were extremely welcoming and although she was scared that she would

be out of her depth, she realised that there was a difference of experience across the team and that beginners were just as important as seasoned players. Chrissie is a big believer that sports, exercise and positive social groups create positive mental health. Not only has she gained a new love for rugby, she has also gained a new group of the most amazing people who come from all walks of life, who are inclusive, understanding and caring for each other on and off the pitch.

*If anyone is interested in keeping fit and trying something new, Carlisle Rugby Club offer something for everyone.*

*The men's team and the colts train Tuesday and Thursday at 6.45pm and the women's team train Wednesday at 6.45pm. There are also boys and girls youth teams available. If you would like to find out more about how to get involved, please feel free to contact Chrissie at*

***[Chrissie.Hadfield@pebblescare.com](mailto:Chrissie.Hadfield@pebblescare.com)***

## An inspiring journey

The team at Cara House want to share the inspiring story of 16-year-old N's journey of resilience and determination during his time with Pebbles as they are so proud of all he has overcome to be the accomplished and compassionate young man he is today.

N has shown incredible dedication and resilience as he tackled his illness and recovered to do his GCSEs, demonstrating his determination and intelligence throughout the entire process. Despite facing challenges, he never gave up, and his hard work paid off as he achieved remarkable results.

However, N's accomplishments extend far beyond his academic achievements. He is not only bright but also a truly kind and compassionate young man. He consistently goes out of his way to help others and shows empathy and understanding towards those around him. His genuine concern for others' well-being and his willingness to lend a helping hand make him a true role model in Cara House.

One of the highlights of N's journey was undoubtedly his prom night. He looked

absolutely fantastic in his suit, exuding confidence and charm. His positive attitude and radiant smile lit up the room, leaving a lasting impression on everyone present, even doing the worm across the dance floor! It was a joyous occasion that marked the end of an era and the beginning of new adventures for N.

N's journey serves as a reminder that success is not limited to academic achievements alone. It encompasses qualities such as kindness, compassion, and the ability to inspire and uplift others. He embodies these virtues wholeheartedly and his actions leave a lasting impact on everyone who has the privilege of knowing him.

As we celebrate N's successes, we are filled with pride and admiration for the exceptional young man he has become.

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We have no doubt that his future will be filled with even greater accomplishments, and we are excited to see him continue to thrive and make a positive difference in the world. N, you are an incredible role model, and we are incredibly proud of you. Keep shining brightly and inspiring others with your kindness, determination, and unwavering spirit.

We hope that this story of N's perseverance through illness and hard times to still develop and flourish into the best version of himself is as inspiring to you as we here at Pebbles have found it. This story really reflects how supporting our young people's progress so that they can flourish into inspiring, accomplished and considerate members of society is at the heart of everything we do here. It also highlights the fulfilment staff can achieve from beginning a career supporting our wonderful young individuals like N.

## Employee Spotlight

We are proud to shine the spotlight on several employees who have been on our learning and development courses over the past month:

Katie Perry, Claire Thirkell, Monty McMorrow, Fitzgerald Fyne, Kelsea Johnstone, Stuart Cowper, Anthony Reid, and Holly Gibson.

Thank you for your engagement throughout the courses you have completed!

## Self-Care Corner

Taking care of yourself is essential to providing the best care for others. Here are some self-care tips from your colleagues:

*"I recharge by spending quality time with my loved ones. It helps me stay motivated and positive."*

*"Daily journaling allows me to reflect on my experiences and emotions, which helps me process the challenges of this job."*

## Feedback and Suggestions

### Your feedback matters

If you have any suggestions for future newsletter topics or feedback on our L&D training programs, please don't hesitate to contact any of the Learning and Development Team.

Your insights help us improve and tailor our support to your needs.

Thank you for your dedication, compassion, and hard work in ensuring that the children and youth in our care thrive.

## Staff updates

**Our team at Kyllimoons have received some fantastic feedback from their IRO. Here are some highlights:**

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“Staff made every effort to form a warm and loving relationship with R, spend time with him walking and doing activities that he enjoyed and recognised the need to keep him busy and focused on activities that helped reduce his stress levels.”

“

“R was supported to attend a school associated with Kyllimoons where he formed positive relationships, worked well and achieved qualifications, leading to attending work experience and subsequently moving to a local college to achieve further qualifications.”

“

“Staff at Kyllimoons have been fantastic and focused on R’s needs. They have supported me as the IRO and made me feel welcome and settled when visiting. I believe that I have had a positive and strong relationship with staff and with the Registered Manager and they have all made such a difference in R’s life.”

The team at The Paddock would like to give a big shout out to **Paul McGregor**, our maintenance man for the south who has been and still is instrumental in helping the home be the warm and welcoming place it is.

A warm welcome to **Rebecca Williams-Seddon** who joins the Pebbles family as Registered Manager at our Cambridge and Blackbrook homes.

Congratulations to **Lisa Collins** who has been successful in the role of manager for Amble Cottage

Congratulations to **Stuart Cowper** who is now managing Cobbledyke as well as Stoneraise. And to **Kayleigh Slater** who has been successful in the role of Deputy Manager at Cobbledyke.

**Claire Watts** has recently stepped up to the position of Deputy Manager at Murraythwaite and the whole team is so excited to see her take up this new role. Murraythwaite would also like to

welcome **Abby Cherry** back into the team after heading off to go travelling earlier this year.

**Katie Lavelle-Sharp** has achieved a Distinction in her Level 5!

**Amble cottage** has received some glowing feedback from one of their young people’s social worker:

*“I could not wish for a better care team for G. She is cared for and valued within Amble Cottage with staff members who truly care about her.”*

*G is encouraged to be the best version of herself with lots of care, patience and support.*

*I have thoroughly enjoyed working with the care team. The practice from Amble Cottage should be the standard set across the board of other residential settings.”*

## Education updates

**Our pupils at Muirkirk have had an explosive start to the school year, undertaking science experiments, exploring simple circuits and exothermic reactions.**

They have also begun a 6-week course in climbing and bouldering. Our teachers are all impressed at everyone’s determination to ‘reach new heights’ and are looking forward to seeing their climbing skills improve over the course of the term.

We have also managed to add in some school trips including a fantastic opportunity for our Dunfermline pupils to visit the Navy Vessel Fort Victoria. The young people learned all about the jobs onboard as well as how the ship works. They even met the captain and were presented with a beautiful RAF wall plaque to hang in the school. Thanks to Matt who brings his therapy dog Daisy to school for organising this fantastic visit.



This term, all of our senior pupils from both Dunfermline and Muirkirk had the opportunity to complete a First Aid Qualification, gaining them a Level 6 qualification. All the pupils who took part did a fantastic job to listening to the presentation and taking part in the practical activities. We are delighted to share that every pupil (and staff member) who took part passed with flying colours!

*Find out more about what our pupils have been getting up to at both our Dunfermline and Muirkirk schools in our dedicated Education newsletter which you can find on our website.*

# Exam results

We would like to share a big congratulations to our young people who tried their absolute best to achieve their desired qualifications in a range of subjects and skills. We never fail to be impressed by how hardworking our young people can be.

**A huge thank you to our staff who put so much effort into encouraging and supporting our young people on their education journeys!**

## A special mention goes to:

**D at Ruby House** who has passed 5 GCSEs with an A in English language and a B in English Literature

**L at Broadoak** who passed his GCSE 4s and 5s – considering what he's been through this past year, he's absolutely smashed it!

**B at Murraythwaite** who has successfully passed her college course and has now started the next level course. She is studying early education and childhood studies this year at an NC level!



**S at Moss House** who was presented with two awards at school; one for computing and one for cricketer of the year. Previously S had disengaged in his school education for 18 months and it was looking like he was not going to return to any form of learning. He returned to his school in January of this year and has just completed year 10. We are a very proud team and looking forward to seeing what Year 11 brings.

**M at Moss House** who has just completed a 6-week cooking course with a company called Alfresco 75 and has done amazing! Off the back of completing this course, he has been offered some work experience and he is doing such a great job.

**B from Stoneraise** who has started her independence and we are so proud of her as she passed her Level one course in Health and Social Care at college.



# Learning & Development Updates

Our Learning and Development team has been as busy as ever over the last few months and has put together some updates, training opportunities and resources to help support everyone's continued growth and to continue to champion exceptional care for the children and young people in our organisation.

## Recent Developments

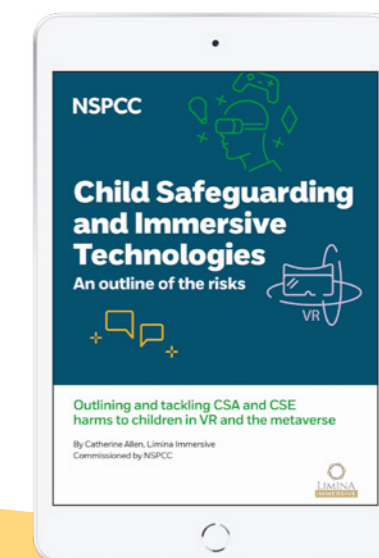
Over the next two years, the Government will invest £200 million "addressing urgent issues" and "laying the foundations for whole system reform."

In September 2023, as part of the implementation strategy, the Department for Education will start working with three local areas, known as "Families First Pathfinders". Up to nine more local areas

will join the Pathfinder programme in the second year of the strategy.

These areas will pilot key proposals from the strategy, including: new family help services, changes to child protection arrangements and greater use of family networks. There will be an ongoing evaluation of service delivery in these areas to establish how best to implement the changes on a wider scale.

The following report shows some new and upcoming dangers the children in our care face: [Child safeguarding and immersive technologies | NSPCC Learning.](#)



## Education case study

One of our young people from The Paddock has recently moved on to semi-independence and received her exam results back in June. Before joining the Pebbles family, M had not attended much school for around three years but

over the last two years attended Pebbles Education Muirkirk. We are so proud to share that M gained four National 5s, six National 4s and one National 3. This is such a huge achievement for M and would not have been possible without the support of the teaching staff at our school.

# Upcoming Training Opportunities



We are thrilled to offer a diverse range of training opportunities to enhance your skills and knowledge. These sessions are designed to empower you with the tools and insights necessary to provide exceptional care for the children and youth in our organisation.

**Induction:** For our new team members, the Induction training is a comprehensive program that introduces you to our organisation's values, policies, and procedures. This training ensures you are well-prepared to embark on your journey in residential childcare.

**Safeguarding:** Safeguarding is of utmost importance in our field. Our Safeguarding training equips you with the knowledge and skills to identify, prevent, and respond to safeguarding concerns effectively. Stay up to date with the latest best practices and legislation.

**Team Teach:** Enhance your de-escalation and positive handling techniques with our Team Teach training. This program focuses on non-restrictive methods to manage behaviour safely, promoting a safer environment for both you and the children in our care.

## FGM (Female Genital Mutilation)

**Awareness:** Join our FGM Awareness training to gain a deeper understanding of this sensitive issue and learn how to recognise, report, and support those affected by FGM. Together, we can contribute to its prevention.

**Witchcraft and Spirit Possession:** Our Witchcraft and Spirit Possession training will provide you with insights into these cultural beliefs and practices, helping you approach them with sensitivity and understanding while ensuring the safety of the children.

**Drug Awareness:** Stay informed about the latest trends in drug use among our communities. Our Drug Awareness training equips you with the knowledge to identify signs of drug use, offer support, and prevent substance-related issues.

## CSE/CCE (Child Sexual Exploitation/Child Criminal Exploitation) Awareness:

Protecting children from exploitation is a top priority. Our CSE/CCE Awareness training helps you recognise the signs of exploitation and provides strategies for prevention and intervention.

## First Aid: Safety is paramount in our line of work.

Our First Aid training refreshes your knowledge of essential first-aid techniques, ensuring you are well-prepared to respond to any medical emergency.

**Therapeutic Parenting:** Understanding the principles of Therapeutic Parenting is crucial in providing nurturing and healing environments for children who have experienced trauma. Join this training to expand your skills in this area.

We encourage you to take advantage of these upcoming training opportunities to enhance your expertise and contribute to the well-being of the children in our care.

Please get in touch with the training team to get booked onto the courses.



# New pet additions to the Pebbles family

One of our young people at **The Paddock** has recently welcomed a pet snake into the home.

Our Registered Manager at **Kirran Cottage**, Natalie, has recently welcomed the new addition of puppy Bobby. He is super cute and everyone in the home loves him.

Our young people at **Jasper House** recently got two hamsters who they've named AJ and Creed. They have been great for building our young people's independence and are supporting mental and emotional wellbeing. The boys have been enjoying trips to Pets at Home to buy new toys and snacks for their fur babies.

The team and young people at **Stoneraise** helped clear an old pond and refilled it. They went to the local pond to gather tadpoles and watched over the weeks as they grew into little frogs.



## Refreshed spaces

While our young person was away on holiday, the team at Prospect Place got to work to surprise her with a redecorated bedroom on her return. Our young person absolutely loves her new space!

Prospect Place weren't the only ones getting busy redecorating! Our team at Jasper House got together to do the shopping, measuring, painting, cleaning and drilling. They took their young person's love of football and TV series into account in creating and ordering art for his walls, and then added a few home touches with pictures of his family on the walls and from his home town and football club; the team even painted a blackboard and provided him with some chalks for additional art work.

At our Murraythwaite home, the team have done a bit of out with the new and in with the old! Our RCCW Sam discovered an old staircase in the home which had been boarded up. With some help from Paul from maintenance, the team has managed to create a lovely staircase.



## A budding musician in our midst

**At Jasper House, one of our young people has been struggling with his mental health and has really leant on music and the relationships within the home to support him through this difficult time.**

He began to write his feelings down in a notebook provided by the team and then created some amazing songs from these words.

He has written two songs so far and recorded himself playing instruments and his own vocals; even getting the team on board as backing vocalists which was amazing.

He really poured his heart, soul and experiences into this and loved that the staff became involved in this.

He also attended a local music festival where he spoke to other artists and proudly informed them about his music. They asked to hear these and showed a fantastic interest which encouraged more lyric writing!



## Birthday celebrations

**We recently celebrated our young person at Forth Craig and our young person at Amber House's 17th birthdays**

Other recent birthdays include our young person at Jasper House who turned 14 and celebrated in style. Everyone came in to wish him happy birthday and he went go-karting and to the arcades before a trip to Karen's Diner.



## Featured Resource:

### "Understanding Childhood Trauma"

This month's recommended resource is the book "Understanding Childhood Trauma" by Dr. Rachel Johnson. It provides valuable insights into the effects of trauma on children and strategies to provide trauma-informed care.

## Did you hear?

There's no end to the fantastic things our young people in the Pebbles family have been achieving, whether it be growing their very own produce or growing up and finding independence. We are so proud to see everyone flourish.

**Our young person at Highview who recently passed his driving test now has a car and has started working with a tree surgeon to gain more qualifications.**

Our young person at Kyllimoons has been working hard growing his own fresh produce in the garden. He has had lots of success with growing potatoes.

Our young person, F, at Amble Cottage is coming to the end of her placement after 6 years. F has grown into a bright, confident young lady who has maintained a full time job as well as studying at college, prepping for driving lessons and saving for a car.

F has already amassed a great deal of items for her new home and shown she can be extremely independent. Plans have been made to take F out for a nice meal with all the care team and spend time with her doing activities she likes before she moves on as well as helping her decorate and move to her new home and make the transition as easy as possible for her.

F has been at Amble Cottage for six years and in that time still has four of the initial six care team she moved here with. This is a true testimony to the dedication and drive of the care team to bring help and joy by being consistent and nurturing and helping our young people flourish.

F will be greatly missed and it will be an emotional time at Amble Cottage but we all know she will do well and flourish.

## YOUR EAP: PROACTIVE MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

**Worried about a mental health concern or life event?**

No matter what the problem is, your Employee Assistance Programme is designed to offer impartial advice and support right from the start. With telephone helplines for both in-the-moment support and ongoing treatment, our qualified counsellors are here to help 24/7, 365 days a year.



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\*Calls to 03 numbers are no more expensive than calling numbers starting with 01 or 02 and are included in free call packages from landlines & mobiles



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