

Welcome to the

Pebbles

Newsletter



Pebbles
Care | Education | Therapy

Merry
Christmas



Director's welcome

We're coming to the end of a busy year after a tough few months for us all. I hope you're able to have some time over the Christmas period to spend with your loved ones and those close to you. As we approach the end of 2023, it is a time to reflect on the years successes and look forward to a positive start in the new year.

In the spirit of celebrating successes, our English homes got together in November for our annual young people's award evening. It was great to see everyone get dressed up and dance the night away. Our Scottish services are looking forward to celebrating their awards evening in January which I can't wait for!

I also want to take this opportunity to say a huge thank you to everyone who submitted entries into our annual Christmas Card challenge this year, the competition was fierce and the Board found it difficult to narrow down our winners. A special well done to those who made the shortlist.

It's been wonderful to again share staff successes during board meetings. Some highlights this quarter have been that Faiza, one of our Forensic Psychologists in Training, had her work presented at the prestigious Division of Forensic Psychology Annual Conference in Belfast in November. Ruby House's Registered Manager, Kimberley, received fantastic feedback from one of her young people's virtual schools. They said it best when they said,

"Kimberley is a true asset to Ruby House and it continues to be an absolute pleasure working with her." And our Whispers House team have received glowing feedback from one of their young people's social workers, stating that Whispers is the homeliest children's home they have ever visited - high praise indeed!

I'm sure many of you will be embarking on new challenges and personal targets this new year, I will look forward to hearing about them throughout January. Within Pebbles we are also seeking to make strides forward in 2024, opening new children's homes and developing new education provision, so exciting! Let's not forget that alone we can do so little but together the Pebbles family can do so much.

Have a wonderful Christmas and new year,

Chris Strong
CEO



Meet the Team – Paula Barclay

For the past 16 years, we have been fortunate to have Paula Barclay as part of the Pebbles family. Starting off her career journey as a bank worker and progressing her way to Deputy Manager. We caught up with Paula to hear more about her career.

Paula joined the Pebbles family at our Tanglewood home. Her career journey has paralleled the company's growth - from its humble beginnings with only two homes in Scotland, Tanglewood and Kyllimoons, to its expansion to 45 homes across the UK. Paula has evolved alongside the company, growing and navigating any challenges that come her way.

Paula's unwavering commitment and hard work saw her advance to the role of Deputy Manager at Tanglewood in 2010.

Throughout her years working at Tanglewood, Paula has cultivated meaningful connections with remarkable individuals, including Ann Moffat, who was previously the Registered Manager at Tanglewood and has since transitioned to the Compliance team.

Paula also shares history with Jane Kerr, Tanglewood's current Registered Manager. Paula worked with Jane as an Autism Practitioner in her previous job which she held for eight years prior to joining Pebbles.

Paula embraces the fact that every day at work is different because every young person is different and so what you see one day is not always necessarily what you'll see the next day. Paula demonstrates the patience of a saint at work, though she humorously acknowledges the different dynamic she has with her own kids. Having raised two daughters and now revelling in the joys of being a gran to a delightful six-year-old granddaughter, Paula brings a wealth of life experience to her role.

Beyond her working life, Paula loves spending time with her family, savouring moments outdoors through activities like walking, biking, or indulging in a good book. With an eldest daughter at 28, a younger one at 25, and her granddaughter who is her "wee best friend," Paula relishes the joy of spoiling her, embracing the cherished role of a gran.

Paula Barclay is not just a vital part of the Pebbles family; she infuses passion, dedication and humility into everything she does.

Remembrance Day - Saluting Our Heroes at Pebbles

On Remembrance Day we stood together in honouring and expressing our deep gratitude to the servicemen and women who have selflessly dedicated their lives to protect and serve our nation. We also celebrated our colleagues who have transitioned from the armed forces to become integral members of our Pebbles family.

At Pebbles, we take immense pride in the diverse talents and experiences our team brings, and our ex-servicemen and women are no exception. Their career journeys are testament to the incredible skills and values instilled during their time in service.

Luke Chadwick, Area Manager, said,

"Joining the Army at 17 was huge decision for me, but one that I have never regretted. It's something that I value more than most things and it brings me a huge sense of pride, especially during this time of year, at a time of reflection."

Jade Vallantine, Quality Improvement Manager, also shared her experience,

"My entry into the British armed services was to shape a very lively young adult who, safe to say, felt out of place and required some tweaking to fit into society. The military taught me a lot about who I can be as a person, provided me with a sense of pride and belonging and they made use of my 'rusty' edges, shaping me as a person."

The experiences and skills gained while serving in the forces have proven invaluable in shaping our colleagues into leaders within our organisation. The discipline, resilience and commitment instilled in them during their service have become the foundation upon which they've built success at Pebbles.

Jade discussed her transition into civilian life,

"When I left the armed forces, I knew at this stage I was ready to support others with the principles that I had learned from the military. That foundation provided me with the drive to motivate vulnerable groups to believe that they do belong."

"Today I am very proud of who I am, what I achieved in the British armed forces and where I came from, and my background story is my drive to promote and encourage all of the children and young people in my care to understand that they have an army of support."

Tracey, Learning and Development Manager, added,

"Being in the services is more of a way of life than a job and has taught me the importance of being supportive and empathic of others. It has instilled a sense of pride and integrity that continues throughout whichever role I have been in since the end of my service. Important skills such as being organised, methodical and having a good eye for detail have been invaluable in my role at Pebbles."

The dedication and passion of our ex-forces colleagues has had a profound impact on the children and young people in our care. With a unique ability to relate and understand, they inspire growth and resilience, and instil a sense of pride in the children and young people they support.

Luke shared how the transferable skills gained during his time in service have helped him create an environment where young people can flourish at Pebbles,

"The Army taught me how to remain calm, think logically and deliver solutions under pressure. Something that I feel is vital within my role and within the residential homes we work within. Albeit, in Afghanistan and Iraq, the pressure was from a far different source."

"Being in the Army is like being in a giant family. This is something that I try to create at Pebbles within my role, within my area and within the organisation. Replicating that sense of belonging and togetherness that I felt and still feel to this day. The homes we have are like families, each with their own quirks. Being in the Army showed me that no matter what walk of life you are from, you are all equal and have individual strengths. It is important to not only recognise these, but celebrate them together, as a unit - as a family!"

Together, as a Pebbles family, we honour, remember, and express our deepest gratitude to those who have served and continue to serve.



The sky's the limit - Dale Cairns

Meet Dale Cairns, who has been making a significant impact at Pebbles for just over a year. Dale has always worked in the care sector and has a passion for helping people and making a real difference in their lives.

Before starting at Pebbles, Dale worked with adults and young adults aged between 18-42 with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). Challenging times brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic inspired Dale to make the leap over into children's residential care when he joined the Pebbles family at our Stormont home.

During the pandemic, Dale also discovered his love for hillwalking – a newfound hobby for him that emerged as a response to the limited options for leisure activities.

Formerly a skateboarder and football player for Kinnoull Juniors, Dale and a few friends took to the hills, turning their new passion into a charitable endeavour. They took on An Teallach, which is just north of Torridon on the west coast of Scotland, to raise funds for the Archie Foundation – a local charity dedicated to assisting hospitalised children and their families. The endeavour raised an impressive £3.5k.



In the short space of three years, Dale has already summited 108 Munros and he aims to complete the rest of them within the next two years. He has his sights set on saving the Cuillin range on the Isle of Skye as his final Munros. One of Dale's proudest achievements is conquering the 12 Mullardoch Munros in 36 hours.

Dale's thirst for adventure doesn't stop there. With plans to tackle bigger mountains, he has set his sights on Mont Blanc and, the following year, Kilimanjaro. For Dale, the exhilaration of mountaineering is unparalleled—it's a feeling of absolute freedom.

In his pursuit of excellence, Dale Cairns, a valued member of the Pebbles team, has enrolled in a mountaineering course in March in Aviemore. This commitment not only reflects his dedication to personal growth but also underscores the remarkable work-life balance he has achieved while also making a positive impact at Pebbles. Dale really exemplifies the perfect harmony between career and personal passion.



giant spiders that promise not to crawl into your dreams at night.

However, the real stars of this terrifying tableau are the three teenagers living at Cara House. These young maestros of the macabre took decorating to a whole new level. With their deft hands, they conjured up a display that even Dr. Frankenstein would find impressive.

Our brave decorators dared to challenge even the ghosts in their own game and transformed Cara House into a haunted haven that will give visitors the spooks for years to come.

It wasn't just Cara House that got into the Halloween spirit this year, many of our homes got out their best decorations and carved pumpkins to celebrate.

Cara House Creates Spooktacular Sensation at Halloween Garden Competition

At the spooky time of year when cobwebs are spun with pride, pumpkins grin with glee, and skeletons just can't keep their bones together, Cara House made its spine-tingling entry into its local Halloween Garden Competition for the second consecutive year.

Picture this: over four nights, brave souls and enthusiastic trick-or-treaters embark on a haunting adventure through Cara House's eerily adorned garden. Community visitors follow a mystical map guiding them to the most hair-raising sights in town, and we're proud to say that Cara House was one of the highlights.

What truly set Cara House apart from the other ghoulish gardens was their dazzling light-up spider web – a sight so bright that even arachnophobes were left begging for more. They had giant light-up pumpkins that could light up a whole village, skeletons that have forgotten where they buried their treasure, and



St Teresa's



No 57

Amber House



Employee Engagement Survey Results

Thank you to everyone who took the time to complete our employee engagement survey, your input is hugely appreciated and will help inform our people strategy going forward.

The survey gave the opportunity to provide feedback on areas including organisation, team, supervisor, job passion, work-life balance, wellbeing, diversity, benefits, growth and development, recognition and appreciation, mental health and homeworking.

We have now analysed the results of the employee engagement survey and have identified areas where we are performing well and areas where there is room for improvement.

Thanks to your feedback we are currently reviewing our employee benefits package and employee recognition programme.

There will be some exciting changes coming in 2024 and we can't wait to share them with you.

Sharing our successes



One of our Forensic Psychologists in Training, **Faiza Ghafoor**, recently completed a systematic review as part of her course. Her review examined the research body on acquisitive crime among female offenders and involved reviewing over 8000 articles on the subject before narrowing down to 77.

Faiza completed this huge amount of work within a year which in itself is hugely impressive but also gained the recognition of having her work presented at the prestigious Division of Forensic Psychology Annual Conference (BFP) in Belfast.

Kimberley, our Registered Manager at Ruby House, recently received some wonderful feedback from the Virtual School that one of her young people attends.

"Kimberley continues to be a brilliant advocate and source of support for M. Her trauma-informed and attachment-aware approach is highlighted not only by her keeping M's views and feelings at the centre of our discussions, but also by celebrating her successes and cheering her on every step of the way. She always has M's best interests at heart and goes above and beyond to ensure that her educational, as well as social and emotional needs are met. Kimberley attends each bi-weekly check-in with

the team around M despite her busy schedule, to discuss M's educational progress, suitable interventions and share useful information. M has slowly started to reengage with education and is due to attend her first mainstream classroom-based lesson in the upcoming weeks – something which would not have been possible without Kimberley's unwavering support. Kimberley is a true asset to Ruby House and it continues to be an absolute pleasure working with her to support M."

A huge welcome to **Lauren** and **Margaret** who have recently joined our Commissioning team.

Claire Thirkell



Our team at **Whispers** received some wonderful feedback from one of their young people's social workers. They described the home as,

"The homeliest children's home I have ever visited, the only thing I would like to change is for all children's home to be like Whispers, I have no concerns at all. I get monthly reports and regular updates, although I visit so I already know what is going on. In my experience in working with children's homes this quality of communication is unheard of. This helps us get things done quickly together."

We would also like to take this opportunity to shout out **Paula Stewart** and **Chanice Clarry** who have recently joined the team and have been working nonstop to transform our Greenacres home and get it ready to welcome a new young person.

Thank you to **Jade Vallantine**, our Quality Improvement Manager, who has been a huge help and support to the teams at St Teresa's House and Gartons House.

Congratulations to **Phil Leary** and **Toni McConnell** who have both received promotions to Deputy Manager at Highview and Thistlebank.

Our team at No 57 have recently introduced employee of the month and the first winner is **Claire Thirkell**. Claire was nominated by the rest of the team for her inspirational passion for the role, being inclusive of religion and beliefs and the way that she has fitted in so well at Number 57.

No 57 would also like to wish a warm welcome to **Aamna Saddiquee**. She has been with us on agency for a number of years and now is officially joining the Pebbles Family.



A Thistlebank Success Story

Olim became part of our Pebbles family in March 2020. His journey from this point forward is nothing short of remarkable, highlighting the impact of the dedicated staff team at Thistlebank as well as Olim's own dedication and perseverance to turn his life around.

Before arriving at Thistlebank, Olim had been on a destructive path, being greatly influenced by his peers and becoming involved in petty crime and drug use.

Olim's initial weeks with us were marked by nervousness as he adjusted to a new living environment, new people, and a different routine. However, as he settled in, he enrolled at our Pebbles Muirkirk School and developed a strong rapport with Darren, the Deputy Headteacher. Olim worked closely with Darren to pass all his exams, which was an admirable feat due to Covid restrictions.

Over the course of the next three years, Olim experienced significant personal growth. He not only excelled in his academic pursuits but also forged meaningful connections with his staff team. Bringing consistency and routine, some members of the Thistlebank team were there to support Olim throughout his entire time at Pebbles, including Lorraine Bell, Richard Allen and Phil Leary. Olim also had unwavering support

from Registered Manager, Eileen and Area Manager, Annette, helping him to navigate challenges and make positive changes in his life.

Olim said of his time at Thistlebank, "The team at Thistlebank were always family to me, I never thought of them as my staff team. In particular, the support I received from Eileen was unbelievable – I couldn't praise her more. I would hate to think where I'd be without Thistlebank."

Olim's success story whilst at Thistlebank continued as he progressed onto college to study horticulture, eventually transitioning to work on a farm. Supported by the home, Olim also successfully sat and passed both his theory test and driving test on his first attempt. With guidance from Eileen and the team, he was also able to save up enough money to get his first car and enjoy the independence that comes along with it.

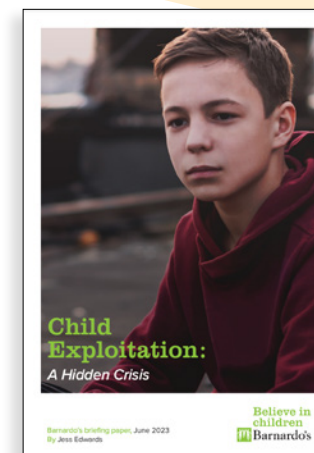
Olim has recently celebrated his 18th birthday and has embraced his independence and responsibility through moving on from Pebbles to live with his girlfriend. He has also successfully completed his apprenticeship with East Ayrshire Council and is now a fully qualified tree surgeon. Proof that Olim is always striving to improve and is dedicated to his chosen career path, he has already booked onto additional training – enrolling onto a climbing course, which focuses on aerial rescue.

The transformation of this young man from a troubled past to a promising future is a testament to the effectiveness of Thistlebank's supportive environment and dedicated staff, always with the support and input of the wider Pebbles Family. As Olim embarks on a career as a tree surgeon and embraces a stable and fulfilling life, his success story stands as a beacon of hope for others facing similar challenges.

We are so proud of the man that Olim has become and cannot wait to see what he achieves next.

Birthday Celebrations

Our young person at Tyne Close recently celebrated her 14th birthday in style.



Featured Resource: "Hidden Crisis"

This month's recommended resource is a briefing paper issued by Barnardo's looking into the Hidden crisis of Childhood exploitation, and really opens your eyes to the risks of young people.

Child Exploitation: A Hidden Crisis | Briefing Paper | Barnardo's (barnardos.org.uk).

www.barnardos.org.uk/research/child-exploitation-hidden-crisis

Pebbles Awards Night

All of our teams and young people in England got together at the end of November for a night of celebrations at our annual young people's awards evening.

Christmas Card Competition Winners

We are delighted to share the winners of our Christmas Card Competition this year. We had so many entries for our panel to review this year and want to say a huge thank you to everyone who entered.

Young People



1st place
H, Forest View



2nd place
K, Thistlebank



3rd place
C, Highview

Staff



1st place
Donna Watson,
Resource Manager



2nd place
Sandra Faulkner,
Deputy Manager at
Cambridge House



3rd place
Hadiya Tanveer, Deputy
Manager at Willow House
and Emerald House

For our Pebbles Christmas Card this year, H from Forest View who won first place has recreated Donna's winning entry. We can't wait to share it with you!

Learning and Development Updates

Message from the Learning and Development Team

We are in the process of developing further training sessions which have been identified throughout the teams and organising next year's training calendar. This will allow us to continue to support employees through their respective professional qualifications.

We continue to support new employees to the organisation with a comprehensive program that introduces our organisation's values, policies, and procedures. This training ensures you are well-prepared to embark on your journey in residential childcare, and essential to them within their new respective roles.

To increase awareness and to instil a therapeutic approach to supporting young people within our homes, we have our four Therapeutic Parenting training sessions. These sessions enable employees to understand the principles of Therapeutic Parenting and why it is crucial in providing nurturing and healing environments for children who have experienced trauma. We would encourage everyone to take advantage of these upcoming training opportunities to enhance their expertise and contribute to the wellbeing of the children in our care.

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Broad oak Does Bake Off

Our wonderful teams at Broad oak and St Pauls got together to host their own version of the Great British Bake Off and collectively raised over £100 which went towards the Young People's Awards Night.

Some of the treats on offer on the day were mint aero brownies, chocolate orange brownies, brookies, school cake, banana bread, lemon meringue cheesecake and victoria sponge.



Self-Care Corner

Taking care of yourself is essential to providing the best care for others. We foster a culture that encourages communication within our teams but for times when discussion may be difficult, here are some self-care tips to enhance your wellbeing:

Engage in mindfulness techniques such as meditation, deep breathing exercises, or yoga to centre your thoughts and emotions. Mindfulness helps you stay present, reduces stress, and fosters a greater sense of self-awareness, enabling you to address negative emotions constructively.

You should also try to limit digital overload. In this digital age, it's easy to get overwhelmed by constant notifications and information overload. Set boundaries on screen time, especially before bedtime, and take regular breaks from social media to reduce stress and improve sleep quality.



New additions to our Pebbles Family

A huge congratulations to **Paul from The Paddock**, who recently welcomed his son **Lorenzo George Mark Milligan**, born on 03.10.23 weighing 11lb 5oz.

Congratulations to **Caitlin from Kyllimoons**, who welcomed her son **Connor Laird** on 20.11.23 weighing 7lbs 10oz.

At **Prospect Place**, the team and young people have welcomed two new pet additions into the family. **Sausage the hamster** and **Boots the cat**.



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Keep in Touch Wednesday

Dates for 2024

17.01.24
21.02.24
20.03.24
Sovereign House

This is an opportunity for our colleagues who have been working from home to spend some time together face-to-face, celebrate successes, collaborate across teams, brainstorm and more.

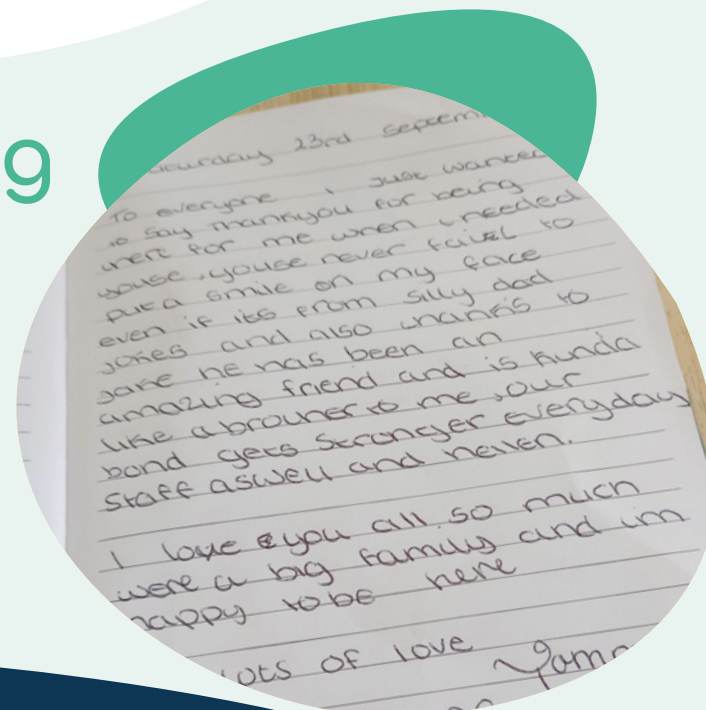
Members of our Senior Management Team will also be attending Keep in Touch Wednesday, making it the perfect opportunity to get to know them better and ask any questions you may have.

Lunch will be provided, so all you have to do is book your desk and come along! You can find information on how to book a desk in the head office calendar on Outlook.

A heartwarming message

Our Kyllimoons home has a compliment book available for our team and young people to write down any messages they'd like to share with the rest of the home.

One of our young people recently left the most heartwarming message.



Feedback and Suggestions

Your feedback matters.

If you have any suggestions for future newsletter topics or feedback on our 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.



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