



Premier News

January 2012

Issue 1

Talking Point:

Our website has been through a bit of a makeover, it's still a work in progress but why don't you take a look and let us know what you think?

www.premiercareplymouth.co.uk

Talking Point:

Our Community Engagement Strategy is now available, please call Lauren Johns on (01752) 547252 to get your copy!

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Welcome to Premier News

When I was first given the task of making this newsletter I must admit that I was a little worried as newsletters are well known for being difficult to keep running, especially when one person is in charge because it can be hard to find interesting things to write about on a regular basis.

After a lot of thought it made sense that it shouldn't just be one person doing all the work, it should be a team of people, including the people using the service, and so the idea ran away with itself and before I knew it the newsletter was almost complete.

I would be lying if I said it was difficult because in actual fact I've really enjoyed every second of it and everything came together so easily with everyone's help that I've found myself with ideas which I didn't get to add this time but will have for the next time (if invited back to act as editor again). I hope that you enjoy the newsletter and if you have any comments to make or any suggestions for the next issue please get in touch - see back page for contact details.

Martin Malloch
Community Engagement Officer

Looking for Volunteers

The government may have toned down their references to the 'Big Society' but that doesn't mean the idea is forgotten. We are currently working in partnership with other organisations such as Achievement Training to search for volunteers who can help support service

users during times when funding is not available.

Volunteers are generally either people who need some experience to get paid work or are generally keen to make a difference and give up their spare time to improve people's lives.

There are many benefits for

volunteers including having lots of training to help build knowledge and skills to do their job and build up that all important CV.

If you know anyone who might be interested please ask them to call Lauren Johns for more details on (01752) 547252.

Interview with a Director

It's fair to say that you are the owner of a very successful business, despite the up's and down's. What is it that made you want to start a business in care in the first place?

I worked in care from a very young age, working with older people that had Alzheimer's, dementia and other mental health conditions, I absolutely loved the job but found it extremely frustrating that there never seemed to be enough time in the day to spend any quality time.

I decided that I would become a manager and I did at quite a young age, but the naivety showed, I thought as a manager I could make a difference but I felt that I just worked to another set of rules out of my control. I became very despondent and left the care industry for the educational sector, I never moved away from Health and Social Care though I became a lecturer for City College Plymouth. After about 15 years of working for the College I decided that I wanted to return to the sector, with all the changes that had been happening such as Valuing People etc. I once again felt inspired to work within direct practice, but with one condition, I owned or co-owned the business – this resulted in Premier Care (Plymouth) Limited being launched in June 2006.

Do you look back and sometimes wonder if you should have started a completely different type of business, something less stressful like a cardboard box factory or maybe a factory which makes those little spring toys that walk down the stairs?

If I am being completely honest I do at times but then I see the fantastic work that our staff do and it makes it all seem worthwhile. I have seen individuals that we support grow and flourish over time, once labelled as difficult and challenging, the staff have observed and developed the individuals skills and their own in understanding how to meet individual needs and I think this is reflected in the support that was particularly given in our first two residential care homes – the staff are a fantastic asset to this company and without them we would not be here today. So I would like to say a BIG THANKS to them all!

As mentioned there have been up's and down's, what do you think the lowest point was and how did you keep the business going?

The lowest point was at a stage in the early days when we thought we might lose the business, we considered redundancies and went down to £1,000 in the bank. All the directors thought that it was over and feared for the service users and staff within our company as this would massively impact on them. However instead the Directors got stuck in and worked extra hours and we survived, and I am thankful for that.

We've kind of got a bet going on your answer to this. Often people will say that someone in their lives had a big influence on them (not necessarily a famous person) so who would you say influenced you the most? Karen says Peter Andre (which is ridiculous!) I thought Nelson Mandela and Natalie thought Michael Jackson...

It might seem strange, but actually it was Shaun, my partner, he has always encouraged me to do whatever was necessary to achieve my goals and aspirations, he has been a big driving force in my life, let's be honest he has moved all around Plymouth so I could use our private houses to kick start the business.

All of us were wrong, so the money rolls over for the next interview which is a little disappointing as I was hoping to put the deposit down on an diamond studded backscratcher - what is the most extravagant thing you have ever bought and why?

£20,000 for a BMW Convertible – it looked good.

Do you believe money buys happiness?

No not really, I believe money helps to relieve people's stresses and strains in life, but its not the be all and end all.

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Tracey Underwood
Managing Director

“The Directors
got stuck in and
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Interview with a Director (Continued)

If you were stranded on a desert island, who would you choose to have with you? (you can't include me by the way!)

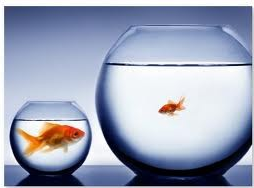
My 23 month old daughter, it has been difficult trying to run a fairly new business in this difficult climate and managing the challenges of motherhood at this stage of my life, however I wouldn't be without her.

What are your hopes and dreams for the future? (erm... yes, we stole this question from PCP)

To continue to build for the future of Premier Care – providing a service that we are all proud to be part of and more importantly be in receipt of.

It's all about the people we support!

Premier Staff



It's always going to be a little scary when you start a new job - meeting new people, learning new ways of working and that general feeling of being a little fish in a big pond. I hope that all our new staff members find the staff team they work in supportive and that very quickly they are supported to build the confidence to be a valuable addition to the company as a whole. So it's a warm welcome from everyone at Premier Care to:

Amber Smith - Chrissie Parsons - Joyce Tettey

There are some staff members who have worked for Premier Care for quite some time and we wanted to take this opportunity to say a huge thank you for your commitment to the company - especially for the support you have given the service users over the past three or four years, it's very much appreciated:

Jackie Squance - Carole McAdam - Annette Robson - Clare Hocking

The Perfect Support Worker Is....

We carried out a survey during the recent Service User Planning Group to try and find out what the most important quality of a support worker is according to the people we support, below are the top 5 answers.

1) Understanding



4) Funny



2) Drives a Car



5) Helpful



3) Quiet



In the Spotlight - Care Farms

It may not be exactly the right time of year to start working on a farm (despite our very mild winter so far) but this might be worth planning ahead for. Care Farms have started popping up all over the UK and provide people with learning disabilities a chance to get stuck in and take part in activities such as animal care, pony care, woodcarving and even blacksmithing - working towards qualifications in each of the subjects. If you're interested you can go to <http://www.carefarminguk.org> and look at the selection of farms in Devon & Cornwall - I've picked out just one of them below to show you the sort of things on offer.

Lower Sharpham Barton Farm - Totnes



This is an 85 acre organic farm based in the rolling countryside near Totnes on the edge of the River Dart and is run by ROC (Robert Owen Communities).

It is a day opportunity and training service offering work experience in a variety of areas such as animal care, blacksmithing, horticulture, forestry, conservation, woodcarving, pony care, machinery maintenance, dry stone walling and retail work.

Life on the farm not only provides vulnerable people with the chance to take on a new range of practical skills and tasks but also offers the chance to socialise with other people.

The farm also gives people the chance to formalise their skills by working towards accredited qualifications such as N.P.T.C. and ASDAN employability awards.

For more information please contact:

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Featured Article - 'Thai Flood Crisis'

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Most people have heard about the current crisis in Thailand with flooding throughout the country, including the capital Bangkok.

In late July 2011 the flooding began during monsoon season (the rainy season of a country), by early November there had been 506 reported deaths as a result of the flooding.



By November 6th 2011 over 3 million have been affected and this flood has been described as the worst yet in terms of amount of water and the people affected.

A massive 156.7 billion Thai Baht has been lost in damages, this is just over £3 billion British pounds.



My part in this story started when I was chatting to my best friend who has family affected by the flood in Thailand. We talked about it until late into the night and somehow (I'm still not sure how it happened to be honest) me and my partner agreed to go over and help them in any way we could for a while before setting out to travel across Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam for 3 months.



I approached Martin (my manager) and explained the situation which I must admit I was quite nervous about doing but I needn't have worried as the full management team have been very supportive and let me know as a valued employee that they are willing to hold my position in the company open until the time I return in March 2012.



With the 27th December fast approaching we've been making all the necessary preparations but it still doesn't feel like it's real and I have to pinch myself occasionally to remind myself it's actually happening.

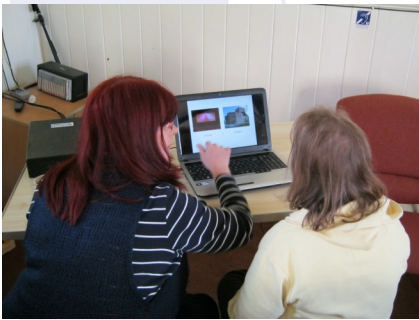
I do count myself as extremely lucky to have the chance to provide hands on assistance to people in need and I'm aware that not many other people get this chance so this is a plea for your help, any amount you can give will be much appreciated so please make a visit to <http://english.redcross.or.th/home> and make a donation.



'Sawatdee ka', I'll see you in 3 months!

Clare Hocking (Foster House)

Service User Planning Group



The activity preferences computer programme was extremely popular.

The first ever Service User Planning Group got off to a great start on 11th January 2012 at Ford Baptist Church.

There were a variety of activities on offer including a fun flashcard game, a complaints, compliments and suggestions table, a role-play game (interviewing staff members), a computer programme designed to show activity preferences and a photo

symbol table which helped us to find out more about what each individual is looking for in a support worker (see page 3 of this newsletter for the most popular answers from this activity).

After tea, coffee and biscuits everyone was able to take part in some fun activities such as table tennis, pool, snooker, bowls (and much more) but unfortunately there just wasn't time to fit in the Makaton Bingo as had been planned - this will definitely be a welcome addition to the next meeting.



This activity helped us to understand what people look for in a staff member



There were various discussions on the comments, complaints and suggestions table

From the activities carried out at the service user planning group we have been able to gain lots of useful information about how we can improve the service we provide as well as learning more about those things that we do well and should be shared with others. The group has given people the chance to be able to voice their opinion and have some control over their own lives and we want to keep on doing this and continue making it better.

The next group is planned for April 2012 and we want it to be even more person centered and even more meaningful, so please, if you have any ideas /suggestions get in touch by any of the ways shown on the back page of this newsletter, we'll be very glad to hear from you.

It just remains for me to say a big thank you to all of those who came and to those who weren't able to make it - I look forward to seeing you in April 2012!



The community engagement strategy which is now available on request

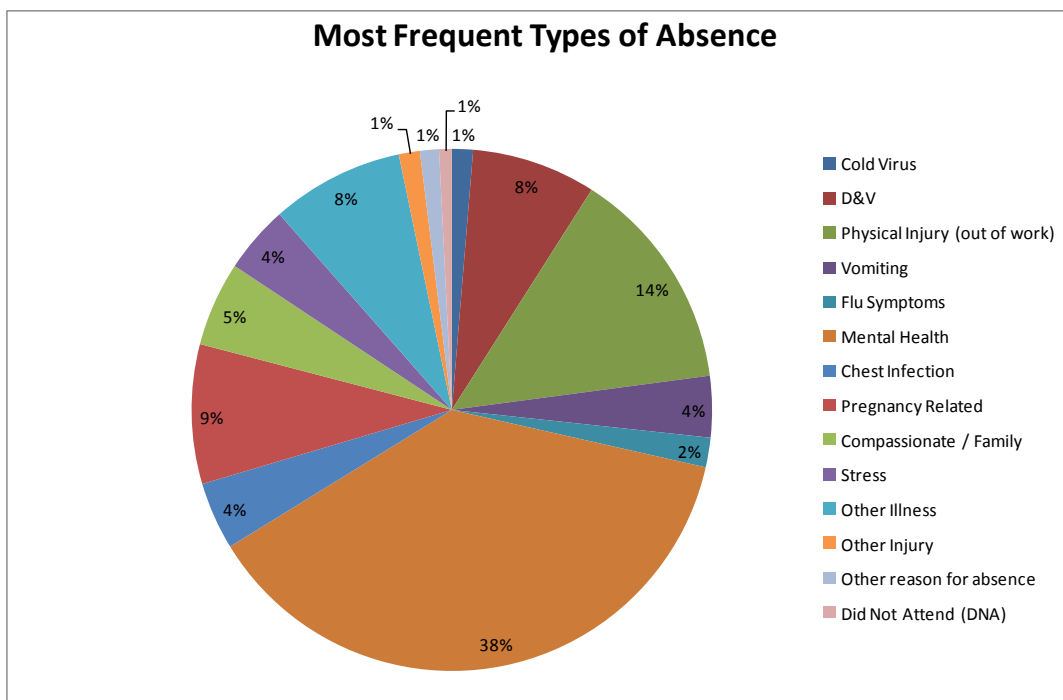
Employee Absence Levels 2011

Me and my graphs are sort of an in-house joke (especially at Foster House which I manage) but over the course of time they have proven to be extremely beneficial and provide us with very clear information about areas such as activities, challenging behaviour and in this article's case, employee absence levels.

It is shocking to learn, for instance, that during 2011 there were a combined 382 days of employee absence which is over a years worth of absence; in a year! Karen Davies, Company Director reflected on this saying:

"We are looking to be more pro-active in supporting staff absence levels. In the current financial climate high absence levels are a huge strain on resources and hopefully with the engagement of our new Occupational Health Service (Health Assured) we are looking to promote wellness and reduce absence. With this new system, we would hope to redirect our resources in a more positive and pro-active way to improving the end product to our service user and enhancing employee job satisfaction."

Below you will find a couple of interesting graphs which make clear the information about absence in 2011.



Talking Point 1:

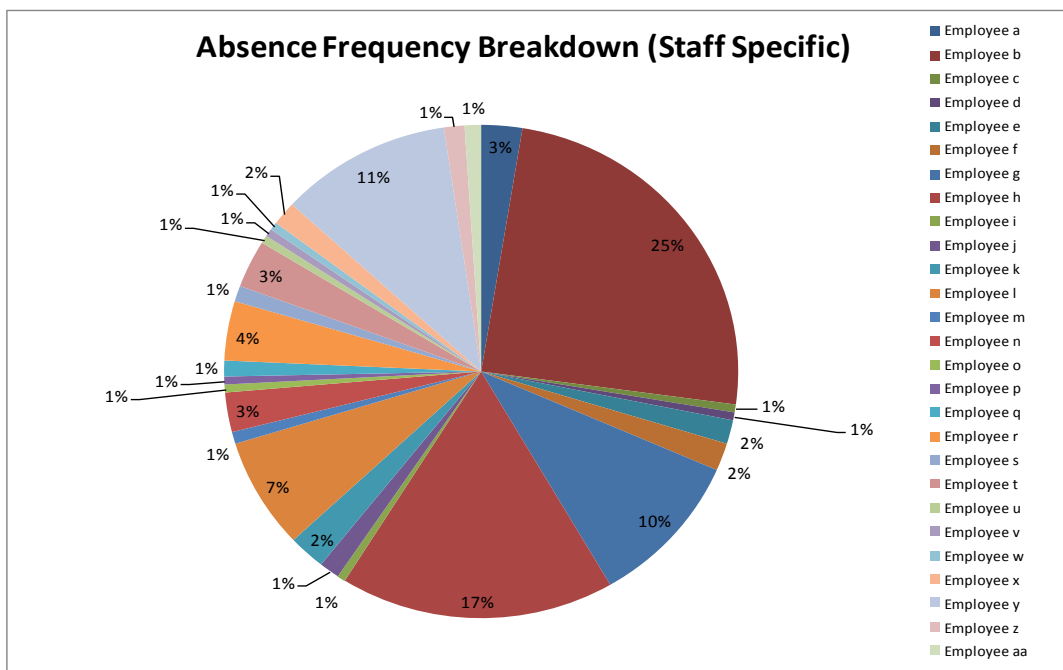
"There were a startling 382 days of absence in 2011 and this is not including employees who have since left the company"

Talking Point 2:

"Mental Health accounts for 38% of employee absence where colds, flu and D&V illnesses account for roughly 27%"

Talking Point 3:

"It's clear that while a large number of staff are individually responsible for a small proportion of absence a select few are responsible for at least 70% of all absence in 2011"





Premier Care
(Plymouth) Limited

Premier Care (Plymouth) Limited provides support and care services for individuals who have learning disabilities, individuals who have physical disabilities, older people with learning disabilities, people with sensory loss, and individuals who may have related mental health problems and behaviours that challenge.

We strive to provide effective, quality services to individuals who by means of illness, injury, disability or vulnerability, needs support to live fulfilled lives.

If you have any compliments, comments or suggestions to make with regards to this newsletter please get in touch with Martin Malloch (Community Engagement Officer) by any of the methods shown below.



Martin Malloch (Community Engagement Officer)



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